

Trauma in Marina Carr's Trilogy-*The Mai*, *Portia Coughlan*, and *By the Bog of Cats*: A Psychological Perspective

أ/ مها خالد محمد آدم (*)

Abstract:

This paper aims to proffer a psychological analysis of Marina Carr's trilogy: *The Mai*, *Portia Coughlan*, and *By the Bog of Cats*. The researcher's perspective on these plays is focused on trauma theory which lies at the heart of the trilogy, and their consequences that are going to be examined by psychological autopsy technique. This article aims also at defining the nature of the traumatic experience the heroines suffer from throughout the plays. Carr's tragedy focuses on the psychological aspect of her characters, so the research will involve analysis of the heroines' suicide. Each heroine is distinguished by "hamartia", which is a defect or a fatal flaw of the character leading to her self-destruction (Kaufmann 64). According to Clare Wallace, the dramatization of destiny and fate in the plays reveals an engagement with the struggle of self with its own instability and insufficiency (437). The plays share numerous significant thematic and structural similarities, but what changes across the trilogy is the articulation of tragic destiny. The heroines of the trilogy are mature women. They all are mothers and have children whom they are not the center of their attention. Each of them is driven by uncontrolled obsessional hunger. The Mai, Portia Coughlan, and Hester Swane in *By the Bog of Cats* are also exposed to a conflict between their sense of self and their own reflection which they see in their husbands and their children. Agonized longing for someone missing is a prominent characteristic in her trilogy. The heroines share the inability to ensure their worth and rights along with self-effacement that result in suicide. Through this paper, the researcher is going to present a psychological study based on trauma theory which lies at the heart of the trilogy, and the causes that lead to the protagonists' suicide by using psychological autopsy technique.

Keywords: *psychological autopsy, psychology, suicide, Trauma, Marina Carr, The Mai, Portia Coughlan, By the Bog of Cats.*

(*) معيد بقسم اللغة الإنجليزية كلية الآداب جامعة الوادي الجديد

Marina Carr (1964-) is a contemporary Irish playwright. She was born in Dublin, but grew up and spent most of her childhood in the Irish midlands, exactly in County Offaly. Marina Carr attended University College Dublin and graduated in 1987. Up till now, she has written about eleven plays, including *The Deer's Surrender* (1990), *This Love Thing* (1991), *The Mai* (1994), *Portia Coughlan* (1996), *By the Bog of Cats* (1998), *On Raftery's Hill* (2000), *Ariel* (2002), *Woman and Scarecrow* (2006), *Sixteen Possible Glimpses* (2011), and *Hecuba* (2015). Marina Carr started her career with a comedy to mimic the Beckettian theatre of the absurd. This is obvious in her second play *Low in the Dark*. Starting with *The Mai*, Carr adopted a tragic tendency by depicting family drama. Later, she continued to apply this naturalistic style in *Portia Coughlan* and *By the Bog of Cats*. Melissa Sihra in her book *Women in Irish Drama* states that Carr perfectly creates an alternative world on the Irish stage by mixing everyday life with the other worlds of folk tales, myth, fairies, and ghosts (19).

Carr's midlands trilogy, namely *The Mai*, *Portia Coughlan*, and *By the Bog of Cats*, is the focus of this thesis and is considered the basis of Carr's career. All of them take place in the rural society of Ireland using Hiberno-English. She insisted on depicting the female protagonist with a very pessimistic outlook. For example, the reader can easily observe the female protagonists suffer from suicidal thoughts, self-destruction, and severe longing when reading the text. Between the lines, the reader can identify emotions of grief, loss, and trauma. Marina Carr tends to portray the psychological aspect, violence, and aggression in the characters of her heroine in each play in a way that amuses the reader. Briefly, Marina Carr is very talented when dealing with females. Her plays have been translated into many languages around the world. *By the Bog of Cats*, the last play in the trilogy has considerable success exceeding the borders of Ireland.

What is Psychological Autopsy?

In its simplest definition, Psychological autopsy is an approach that aims at illustrating the nature of death and it concentrates on the psychological sides of death. This means that it aims at constructing a person's psychological conditions before death whether the mode of death was accidental, malicious, or self-inflicted. It can also be defined as the cornerstone of suicide research, providing more detailed information than other methods. Over almost three decades, a psychological autopsy has been employed to examine risk factors related to suicide. Its main objective is to retrieve full

information about suicide and to throw light on a decedent's feelings and thoughts before the death. This information helps to identify death causes. Edwin S. Shneidman is considered the father of modern suicidology. He defines psychological autopsy as “nothing less than a thorough retrospective investigation of the intention of the decedent -that is, the decedent's intention relating to his being dead-where the information is obtained by interviewing individuals who knew the decedent's actions, behavior, and character well enough to report on them.” (42) Shneidman dedicates his life to understanding why people kill themselves. He believes that the key to studying suicidology is to understand the individual himself. He stresses that suicide occurs when that psychological pain becomes intolerable to the person. And, of course, the degree of endurance differs from one person to another (Qtd. In Leenaars 5, 7).

Melissa Henry and Brian J. Greenfield state that psychological autopsy has five major purposes. The first goal is to determine the mode of death in equivocal cases. This helps in determining if the death is accidental or suicide. The second goal is that it has a good influence on decreasing the number of suicides through prevention techniques, and this feature is called therapeutic benefits. This means that it helps survivors deal carefully with warning signs before suicide. The third important goal is to determine the circumstances relating to the death. Contributing to suicide research and suicide prediction are very important advantages of this technique. The fourth goal is to decide if the manner of death is matching with the presented evidence (to know if the suicide is accidental, intentional, or homicidal). This technique also helps the decedent's relatives accept this difficult situation and know the reasons behind this tragic end. Psychological autopsy helps in the field of forensic science when it determines risk estimates related to the case. The specialists classify this estimation as low, medium, or high self-harm (21-4). When reading Marina Carr's trilogy, the reader can easily observe that the heroines suffer from the pain of loss, severe longing, and self-destructive thoughts. These situations lead them to commit suicide. Trauma after losing an intimate relationship is considered the main cause of committing suicide.

Trauma

The current paper discusses the concept of trauma from the perspective of Carr's trilogy. That kind of trauma results from the loss of an intimate relationship through a traumatic death or absence. In *The Mai*, the protagonist's husband abandons her after seventeen years, which causes a shock for her. Throughout the play, the protagonist struggles to save her marriage and the happiness of herself and her children despite her husband's frequent cheating. While *Portia Coughlan* portrays the protagonist's traumatic experience caused by the death of her twin brother, Gabriel, fifteen years ago in the Belmont River. Her grief over the drowning of her twin brother torments her and prevents her from being the mother and wife she wishes she could be. *By the Bog of Cats* discusses the protagonist's traumatic experiences related to her mother's abandonment when she was seven years old and her younger husband's abandonment to marry another woman. Throughout the play, Hester Swane spends her life waiting for her mother's return.

It is worth mentioning that trauma has no consistent definition, but numerous explanations at various times and under different terms. In the early part of 1920, Sigmund Freud's (1856-1939) original perceptions concerning psychic trauma were effective and firm. This notion was catalyzed by the study of the reactions of both individuals' and groups' reactions to disasters in World War I. Freud defines trauma as an excitation that comes from the outside with a powerful influence that can destroy the protective shield, and there is no escape from this flooding amount of stimulus towards the mind. Later in his book *Inhibitions, symptoms and anxiety* (1959), Freud declares that the experience of helplessness on the overwhelmed ego is considered the core of any traumatic situation. Freud also states that the reason behind any traumatic experience is not limited to the intensity or the quality of the stimulus, but it depends on the permeability of the barrier. If the barrier is unbreakable, no stimulus can cause a state of helplessness. In accordance with the Freudian point of view, the term "trauma" refers to a mental injury rather than a physical one. Freud speaks of individual trauma, stressing that the traumatized person does not suffer from behavioral disorders, but the problem lies in memory disorders. This means that the person does not grasp the shock as soon as it happens, but it appears later in the form of symptoms such as nightmares, flashbacks, annoying memories, or compulsive acting out (Meek 5).

Trauma theory is best tackled by Shoshana Felman, Cathy Caruth, Charles R. Figley, and William F. Murphy. They are all inspired and influenced by Freud's concept of memory and trauma, stressing the importance of the temporal aspect of trauma. For instance, in her book *Unclaimed Experience Trauma, Narrative and History*, Cathy Caruth defines trauma as a shock that seems to work as a threat to the body, but in fact, it seems to be a break in the mind's experience of time. She continues to describe it as an incident that breaks consciousness and blocks language expression (61). Moreover, Shoshana Felman defines trauma as an incident that has no start, no end, no before, no after, and no during (69). While Charles R. Figley introduces a definition of trauma as a deadly and unexpected experience which have a long-term impact and painful memories (23). Finally, Murphy states that trauma is defined by the intensity of the stimuli, and it is obvious that the physical intensity is less painful compared to the intensity of the meaning (521).

In their book *Life After Trauma* (2010), Dena Rosenbloom and Mary Beth Williams discuss the influence of trauma on the person through numerous common reactions. As for mental reactions, they are mirrored in changes in the way of thinking about oneself. One may think of himself as strong enough, but after exposure to a traumatic event, he cannot believe in himself. Traumatic events also cause a loss of confidence in the world. Regarding emotional reactions, they imply reactions that people experience after exposure to traumatic events. The person who has been traumatized may continue to be angry and irritable toward others, like family and close friends, even the simplest things can push him to a fatal rage. Feeling helpless is another influence of trauma on the person. Through her trilogy, Marina Carr focuses on the theme of loss and its pain. For example, the abandonment of a spouse in *The Mai* and the constant loss of a love object induce severe agony and pain that she cannot endure. The loss of a twin brother in *Portia Coughlan* results in deep trauma and a lifetime of anxiety and isolation for the protagonist. Finally, the loss of the mother in *By the Bog of Cats* is considered a traumatic event in the protagonist's life.

***The Mai* (1994)**

The Mai is the first play in the series and is considered Marina Carr's first step of departure from the experimental writing style. It was first performed at the Peacock Stage of the Abbey Theatre on October 5, 1994. It is considered the first play to bring Carr to international recognition. The play

earned the Best New Irish Play prize at the Dublin Theatre Festival, the Irish Times Award for Best New Play, and received generally positive reviews, as it comprises various storylines and conversations (O'Gorman 489). Carr uses memory to retell a story about a mother's suicide. In the play, the deceased comes "to life in the stories or talk of the living and the past appears on stage as real as the present" (Funahashi 38). *The Mai* is a play told from the perspective of the heroine's daughter Millie. Millie tells the story of The Mai, the heroine, and her relationship with her husband, Robert. The play portrays the protagonist's agony because of her husband's abandonment, then discusses the consequences of his absence in her life. The Mai is the main figure of the story. A middle-aged woman struggles to re-fix her marriage and keep her family together for the sake of her children. The play shows that with all her effort to do that, The Mai only repeats what older women have done before.

This play discusses the psychological impact resulting mainly from a troubled marriage, a dysfunctional family, and illusion. The main focus of the play is The Mai's disordered marriage with Robert who is only in love with his philandering and his cello. The Mai who is forty years old struggles hard to lure back her husband who abandoned her for five years to save her marriage. Another destructive element is the dysfunctional family, and this disorder results in trans-generational traumatic memories. Carr's protagonist in *The Mai* is trapped by imprisoning circumstances in which she cannot free herself. The Mai is trapped and unable to overcome or flee from these circumstances. Eventually, these circumstances become damaging and lead her to drown herself after failing to get Robert back. All of the females in the play go through this experience, and they turn out to be self-destructive as a result of the abandonment of their men besides the haunting past which pursues them. As Marianne McDonald (2002) points out in his article, Marina Carr's dramas are full of mother figures, betrayed by their men. Like the other two plays of the trilogy, *The Mai* also sheds light on the way the heroine treats the past.

Since her youth, The Mai is brought up believing strongly in a dream, that can be called an illusion. This dream is going to affect her entire life and causes a kind of trauma to her. This is evident in her words to Connie, her sister:

*I used to dream that a dark-haired prince would come across
the waves on the wings of an albatross and he'd take me to a*

beautiful land never seen or heard of before and he'd love me as no girl had ever been loved (113).¹

Clinging to this dream all the time makes The Mai dependent on Robert in an exaggerated manner. When she finally understands that her husband is not the prince she desired (Hancock 23), she commits suicide. Grandma Fraochlan, the head of the family and a hundred years old opium-smoking woman, has the primary responsibility for the unrealistic expectations of The Mai and her sisters and she is a bad example for her children to follow. She is even worse than The Mai in her adhering fully to fantasies and dreams. Grandma Fraochlan is considered the start of the damage in the family, and her continuous obsession and bragging about the happy memories with her deceased husband is the main "cause of her clan's insecurities" (Callaghan 373).

For The Mai, believing in romantic fantasy becomes opposed to her ability to achieve her goals of artistic and intellectual fulfillment. Soon, she finds herself miserable because of love. The consequence is that Grandma's unrealistic thoughts about marriage cause her disappointment and heartbreak, and she finally discovers through her experience about marriage and love do not necessarily result in happiness. Oddly enough, Grandma Fraochlan who is always bragging about her "rare and sublime love" has been abandoned by her husband "penniless with seven offspring" (102). She tried to commit suicide because of disappointment and depression but finally failed. Her daughter Julie brings back memories: "I dragged her from the cliffs, goin' to throw herself in. howlin' she couldn't live without the nine-fingered fisherman, opiumed up to the eye ball. She was so unhappy, Mai, and she made our lives hell (103). The family here is responsible for the disruption of the children's normal growth. Grandma Fraochlan's weird stories have affected her children, this appears when her daughter Julie expresses her anger accusing her mother of killing her sister Ellen, The Mai's mother.

From the very beginning and even with Robert's homecoming, Millie steps forward informing the audience that the relationship between Robert and The Mai is a sham. Millie and the family members do considerable effort to wake The Mai from her dream, and they spend the rest of the play

¹ All references to Marina Carr's trilogy are to this edition: Plays One (*Low in the Dark, The Mai, Portia Coughlan, By the Bog of Cats*), London: Faber and Faber Ltd, (1999).

unmasking this sham. Millie tries to inform her that Robert's return is just temporary, but The Mai refuses to see the truth: "He's my husband and he's back and I love him" (96). She describes her feelings about Robert's return to her grandma saying: "You don't realize how awful it's been these few years, and now I have the chance of being happy again and I can't bear anyone to say anything that'll take that away" (86). Millie also loathes her mother's tolerance and patience for her husband urging her to leave him, but The Mai explains that the bond between her and Robert is strong and she cannot explain the nature of the relationship. Apparently, The Mai totally thinks that her happiness revolves around Robert and that he is the only chance for her. She does not even want to try living without him.

The play also reveals a problem in the protagonist's identity-building, and the evidence is that The Mai blindly follows her grandma's hopeful and promising stories. She replicates the faults of her predecessor "like the sleepwalkers along a precipice" (105), with no regard for the destructive consequences which are known in advance. Throughout the play, we notice that The Mai financially supports her four children, which means that her husband does not care about anything. The Mai's words to Robert indicate her resentment towards his actions: "So you want to reduce the conversation to money. Right! Let's talk about money! Add this up! What it costs to feed, clothe, educate four children for five years. Do you know what that cost? (110). Now, it is clear that there is no reason to be so attached to Robert. The Mai is a self-destructive character deprived of mental stability, like her predecessors, The Mai is vulnerable to wounds of the same path she unconsciously follows. Even when Robert cheats on her, she says to her daughter before committing suicide: "Maybe it's just a phase he's going through and in a few years he'll come back to me. I can't think of one reason for going on without him" (127).

The reasons that have led The Mai to be traumatized are psychological ones - her clinging to illusion and her psychological fragility which pushes her to deny reality. The Mai inherited the refusal to accept reality from her grandmother, and this what shapes her future. She repeats a mistake similar to that of Grandma, and so she has been abandoned by Robert for a second time. The Mai keeps "looking for that magic thread that would stitch us together again". But she is traumatized when recognizing the futility of this marriage and her naive soul gets hurt: "he'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" (107).

The Mai drowns herself in the lake because of her excessive devotion to her husband and her realization of the impossibility of living without him. The Mai's psychological autopsy, which indicates the causes of suicide, declares that the reason behind her suicide is her obsessive passion for her husband. Trauma theorists claim that unsolved violent pasts, psychological conflicts, or emotional and physical abuse are responsible for the cycle's repetition. According to theorists like Gabriele Schwab, trauma perpetrators and victims both transmit harmful experiences to their children through unintegrated and unassimilable traces of emotion as well as actual memories and narratives (10). It is clear also that the trans-generational family curse is a recurrent topic in numerous of Marina Carr's plays. Carr's protagonist remains trapped in the cycle of repetition. During the formative years of childhood, The Mai inherits wrong familial attitudes which lead to a kind of trauma. She ignores what had happened to her predecessors devoting her life to an unfaithful man. The play explores how history repeats itself, no matter how tragic the results are.

Portia Coughlan (1996)

Portia Coughlan is considered the second play of Carr's midlands trilogy. The play consists of three acts and it was first performed on 21 March 1996 on the Peacock stage of the Abbey Theatre. Directed by Garry Hynes, the play has been honored with several prizes upon its premiere. In 1997, it was awarded the renowned Susan Smith Blackburn Prize after a successful performance at the Royal Court Theatre (Sihra 93). The play tells a story of a woman who is beautiful and blessed with a wealthy, adoring husband and three young sons. Portia Coughlan lives by the Belmont River. She would seem to have everything, but grief over the drowning of her twin brother, Gabriel, fifteen years ago in the Belmont River continues to torment her and prevents her from being the mother and wife she wishes she could be. Gabriel's ghost haunts Portia and the play throughout, both visually when the audience sees his ghost and aurally as he is evoked by singing. Portia's conversations with lovers and friends highlight her discontent in her home, while her desire to be reunited with Gabriel is connected to the alternative space of the Belmont River, where Gabriel drowned. Portia gets more depressed on her birthday as she recalls Gabriel's death. Finally, she decides to end her life by drowning herself in Belmont River just like Gabriel.

The twin motif or doubling is central to the play. The protagonist is psychologically portrayed as being tormented by her deceased twin brother

Gabriel. Portia appears to have everything, but her sadness over the death of her brother makes her feel like she has nothing. In his book *Fantasy*, Rosemary Jackson declares that many versions of the double end with death, suicide, or madness. Portia confirms that her tight connection with her twin starts during the embryonic stage in the womb: “[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” (175). Portia’s words express her feeling of being united in the womb. Her depiction makes clear the notion that Portia and Gabriel are identical twins who share the same identity and complete one another by realizing their own existence in the other.

As a female character, Portia holds two culturally prescribed roles that shape her identity: wife and mother. She is a character who fights to achieve her individuality but becomes stuck between traditional customs and modern trends. Portia’s traumatic loss of her twin brother is the main cause of the failure in her role as a mother and wife. In his book *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (2014), Dominick LaCapra claims that traumatized individuals are unable to handle the demands and duties of social life. Portia’s obsession with the reunion with her dead twin brother declares that she is embroiled in a traumatic relationship. Their fraternity bond is traumatic and up normal as they have an incestuous relationship, which negatively affects their identity formation. Portia’s conversation with her friend Stacia expresses her dissatisfaction with her domestic life and how she feels suffocated in her home: “These days I look at Raphael ... and I think the pair of us might as well be dead for all the joy we knock out of one another. The kids are asleep, the house creakin’ like a coffin all them wooden doors and floors. Sometimes I can’t breathe anymore” (141). Obviously, Portia is separated emotionally from her husband. With a depressive mood, Portia says to her husband: “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” (151).

As a mother, Portia is non-maternal to her sons unwilling and unable to accomplish the responsibilities expected of her. Instead of caring for her children, she spends more time drinking. Her friend Stacia picks up Portia's kids from school in the morning while Portia gets drunk at home. When Stacia tries to bring Portia's attention to the issues with the younger of her children, Portia is drinking alcohol in the High Chaparral. The bar where Portia frequently goes to drink in order to escape from her domestic duties.

She also turns her back on Raphael's complaints about her careless parenting. On another occasion, Portia appears to be heavily drunk in the bar at 2:00 p.m. when Stacia reminds her of picking the kids up from school forcing Portia to bring them back. These instances from the play highlight the fact that Portia does not value her relationship with the kids. She chooses to drink because she is too preoccupied with her personal issues and finds her children's presence a heavy burden.

On the one hand, LaCapra claims that traumatized individuals must go through a process of "working through" that enables them to "articulate or rearticulate affect and representation" in order to conform to social norms (42). They will be freed from their terrible experiences through this procedure while still being able to express themselves frankly and maintain their social life. Portia finds it difficult to adapt to her current situation because of her memories with Gabriel and cultural norms. For example, Portia expresses her thoughts about her children and responds to Raphael in a heinous way in Act Three Scene One. She expresses that she only wants to be alone herself and avoid caring for her family, saying: "Will ya just stop! Leave me alone! Told ya I can't ... 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!" (160). In an effort to overcome her trauma, Portia freely expresses her rejection of her motherly responsibilities and conventional expectations of how a mother ought to behave at home. Portia's opposition to her spouse demonstrates that she is looking for a way to let go of her terrible emotions.

On the other hand, people who are stuck and repeatedly "act out" the past have a tendency to "remain within trauma" (LaCapra 23). For instance, Portia unconsciously believes that "giving [her children] a bath is a place where [she] could drown them" (161), and this suggests that she is ready to repeat and stay in her traumatic recollections. Because of Gabriel's drowning, she is afraid of drowning her own children. Despite her efforts to come to terms with her past, Portia has tendencies to repeat the painful memories associated with Gabriel's drowning. She struggles to adjust to her surroundings because she is submerged in a difficult situation and finds it difficult to cut off her liminal ties to the otherworld. Now, Portia is torn between traditional gender duties and her own personal motives, failing to adjust to the real world and family responsibilities. She eventually drowns in the liminal space where her emotions are on the verge of death. However,

her suicide is a kind of defiance and represents her release from traumatic experiences and cultural constraints.

***By the Bog of Cats* (1998)**

Since the premiere of *By the Bog of Cats* at the Abbey Theatre on 7 October 1998 during the Dublin Theatre Festival, the play has become a modern classic. It has been produced extensively all over the world such as England, the Netherlands, and the United States and many critics are attracted to. Later, the play earned the prize for best play at the Irish Times/ESB Theatre Awards in 1999. *By the Bog of Cats* is the last play of the Midlands trilogy and it has gained more attention from critics and scholars (Vural 103). Scholars have covered several important aspects of the play, such as the dilemma between exile and staying, the disjointed marriage and home, the conflict between traditions and modernization, the use of a Midlands dialect, and the problems with Carr's feminism. But, despite this rich body of criticism, barely anyone has addressed it from the psychological perspective and trauma studies. *By the Bog of Cats* is a trauma play. Hester's character is shaped by many traumatic events. We can see Carr's exploration of trauma with its expansion into new zones. The play focuses on themes of abandonment, betrayal, and murder as the main sources of trauma.

This play is occupied with special emphasis on the absence of Hester's mother. The traumatic absence of Big Josie leads Hester to an obsession with the role of the mother which creates tension in her perception of motherhood. Hester does not want to leave the place although she is forced to do so by her husband and daughter's father Carthage Kilbride, who is about to marry another woman. Hester feels tied to the bog and has grown deeply connected to its natural and spiritual dimensions, which what makes it so difficult for her to leave. 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, so she decides to kill her daughter and commit suicide.

The original trauma of Hester's character starts with the mother. Hester Swane spends her first seven years with her mother, Big Josie, then her mother left her. So, the bond here between them is psychological, and then the abandonment becomes harder for Hester. She is traumatized by such a loss, resulting in unforgettable marks on Hester's identity, personality, and childhood memories. Obviously, Big Josie shapes her daughter's life permanently, and her sudden departure leaves Hester in tatters. Hester's

tethering to the bog is associated with her mother's promise to return one day. She wants to stay waiting in the place where her mother abandoned her. Facing her mother's absence, Hester clings to things related to her mother. The only thing that remains to Hester is the memories with her mother, and this is why she feels attached to the Bog of Cats in an exaggerated manner. So, Hester's insistence on staying in the bog is directly connected with her mother. Her walking around the bog during the night gives her complete knowledge of the bog and quits down the "longin' in me for her that won't quell the whole time" (188). Hester's status as an abandoned daughter becomes one of the factors motivating her to violent acts, including self-destruction and murder.

Hester's suffering from sleepless nights, the nightly roaming, and adopting her mother's habits are evidence of being traumatized. So when the villagers force her to leave the bog, she feels that it is an exile from her mother's place, and therefore it seems like a deprivation of her mother again. Hester refuses this expulsion from the bog, saying that: "I can't go till me mother comes... Don't make me lave this place or somethin' terrible'll happen" (212). Hester's severe resistance to leaving the bog indicates her fear of retraumatization. In the context of her trauma, this must be understood that Hester's life depends on living in the bog waiting for her mother. In this play, the original trauma of losing the mother sets off a chain of traumas. This is evident in Hester's feeling of anger because no mother should abandon her child, and in her feeling of guilt as she does not know what she has done wrong to be abandoned by her mother. These feelings inevitably lead Hester to take revenge on her brother Joseph by killing him, thinking that he is robbing her of her mother.

It is clear that Hester's motive for this brutal act is the absent mother. Hester's obsession to reunite with her mother drives her to commit a crime, transforming her torture into violent acts. Hester's conversation with her brother expresses resentment and jealousy when she knows that her mother left her to stay with her brother, to have a life that she has no part in and knows nothing of, to have a "whole other life" (223) away from her. Her obsession with names indicates her concern about lineage because Hester wants to properly inherit her mother's traditions, identities, and qualities. So, these feelings of disinheriting and deprivation turn her into a very possessive character: "You've a nerve singin' that song. That song is mine! She made it for me and only me. Can't yees lave me with anything!" (214). Not only does Hester channels all her rage toward her brother, but she tries to conceal

her self-doubt and deep guilt: “Was it something I done on her?” (215). By murdering her brother, Hester tries to move on with her life repairing the wrong her mother did to her. For this reason, she takes her brother’s money to build a stable, land-owning life with Carthage to prove to her mother that she “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” (225).

Hester's struggle to remain in the bog, despite being compelled to do so by Xavier Cassidy, Carthage Kilbride's father-in-law, who does not want Hester to jeopardize his daughter Caroline's engagement, and by Carthage Kilbride, who wants to deprive Hester of her daughter. Hester refuses to leave the bog and brings back her mother’s memories, she also wants to keep her daughter Josie with her. Then, she decides to kill her daughter as an act of compassion, just before committing suicide, out of the fear of future. When Hester tells her daughter that she is going away, Josie begs her not to go: “Mom, 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” (225). Josie’s words terrify Hester that her daughter may live the same fate. The fear of childhood trauma and the constant suffering motivate Hester to kill her daughter. Wallace comments on the final death scene, saying that Hester’s bloody action is to protect Josie from “the trauma of abandonment”. She wants to protect her daughter from waiting for a mother who will never come back. Hester wants to save her daughter from the life she was living because she knows well that this is even worse than death. Simply, she does not want history to repeat itself (440).

Hester Swane is not a flat, helpless character but a well-rounded complex character. She is a strong, responsible, and daring woman who may be embittered by her domestic trauma. Her life is trapped in a cycle of being abandoned, betrayed, and left alone. Carr prepares the audience well for the final scene by highlighting the repetitive nature of trauma. Hester is no longer the helpless young girl watching her mother while she is walking away from her. Instead of escaping, she finally faces up to her own crime and guilt. Looking through the lens of trauma studies, Hester is traumatized by her mother’s loss, she also commits a revenge murder of her brother, then she is haunted by his ghost, and finally, she commits another murder - killing her child- putting an end to her trauma’s chain reaction. Hester does not want Josie to suffer from the same trauma. So, we can say that Carr succeeds in portraying Hester as a victim of trauma and building a strong case for the audience to see her pressing need to end this cycle.

Conclusion

Marina Carr's trilogy focuses on themes of abandonment, betrayal, and murder as the main sources of trauma. In a conversation with Carr, she claims that trauma in the theatre is a very natural part as "trauma is a fact of life, and theatre is about conflict. Theatre is about trauma" (Conversation, 195). Carr embodies the suffering of her heroines who remain to be silenced, suicidal, and oppressed by motherhood and husbands because of tensions, disappointments, and hopelessness resulting from toxic and abusive relationships. The sense of entrapment strongly possesses the heroines and the only way to free themselves is to suicide. In addition, each of them is attached to the legacy of the past. As Frank McGuinness refers in his book, Carr is considered "a writer haunted by memories she could not possibly possess, but they seem determined to possess her". Through Marina Carr's dramas, especially her trilogy, the female figure plays an essential role to the extent that Matt O'Brien emphasizes that Carr is "writing women plays" and that the female should be the main focus of her plays (204). Focusing on the decayed ethos which affects the Irish identity and portraying the female wrath of the nation make Marina Carr the champion of troubled women.

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