

*A Psychoanalytic Reading of The Mother-  
Daughter Relationship in Martin  
McDonagh's The Beauty Queen of Leenane  
and Marina Carr's By the Bog of Cats*

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**Abstract:**

This paper discusses the mother–daughter relationships in two plays by two contemporary Irish playwrights: Martin McDonagh and Marina Carr. Both, McDonagh’s *The Beauty Queen of Leenane* and Carr’s *By the Bog of Cats* present various types of the mother–daughter relationship. This study applies Nancy Chodorow’s concepts of the mother daughter relationship in order to thoroughly investigate Mag and Maureen’s relationship in McDonagh’s play. Additionally, the paper examines Big Josie– Hester/ Hester– Josie relationship in Carr’s play. According to Chodorow, in the first stage, the mother becomes the role model for her daughter. She is the person whom the daughter identifies with and seeks to be another extension to; “to become her double”. This paper proposes two statements of the problem: the first one is how the mother–daughter relationship is formed in the two plays. The second one is that despite the seemingly physical and psychological separation between the mother and the daughter, the connection between the two of them is so deep and subconsciously beyond the imaginable. The study also makes use of the psychoanalysis theory of the Pre–Oedipal/Imaginary stage.

**Keywords:** Psychoanalysis, Mother–daughter relationship,

Chodorow, *The Beauty Queen of Leenane, By the Bog of Cats*.  
Contemporary Irish Drama

ملخص البحث

تناقش هذه الورقة البحثية علاقة الأم بالأبنة من خلال عملين مسرحيين لكاتبتين إيرلنديين معاصرين: مارتن ماكديونا و مارينا كار. تقدم كلا من مسرحية ماكديونا "ملكة جمال لينان" و مسرحية كار "بجوار مستنقع القوط"، تقدم كليهما نماذج مختلفة لعلاقة الأم بالأبنة. تطبق هذه الدراسة مفاهيم عالمة النفس الأمريكية نانسي تشادرو علي شخصيتي ماج و مورين للكاتب المسرحي مارتن ماكديونا. بالإضافة إلي تطبيق نفس المفاهيم علي علاقة جيسي الكبرى و هيوستن ، و علاقة هيوستن ب جيسي في مسرحية مارينا كار. فطبقا لنظرية تشادرو ، فإن المرحلة الأولى من العلاقة بين الأم و الأبنة تتسم باعتبار الأبنة لأبها بمثابة قدي و مثل أعلي يحتذي به بالنسبة للأبنة. فالأم هي الشخص الذي تتحد معها الأبنة ، و تأمل في أن تكون إمتداد لها و صورة منها. و تقدم تلك الورقة البحثية مشكلتين من مشاكل الدراسة : الأولى هي عن كيفية تكون و تطور العلاقة بين الأم و الأبنة في المسرحيتين . و المسألة الثانية هي أنه بالرغم من وجود انفصال ظاهري، علي المستويين الجسدي و العاطفي، فان كلا من الأم و الأبنة تظل كلا منهما شديدة التعلق بالأخري علي مستوى اللاوعي، بطرق لا يمكن أن يتخيلها أحد.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** نظرية التحليل النفسي، علاقة الأم بالأبنة، نانسي تشادرو، مسرحية "ملكة جمال لينان"، مسرحية "بجوار مستنقع القوط".

Psychoanalytic criticism is one of the most influential literary approaches in the twentieth century. It is defined as "a form of literary criticism which uses some of the techniques of psychoanalysis in the interpretation of literature"(Malik and Batra, 2014, p.62). Actually, psychoanalysis as a branch of science is "a form of therapy which aims to cure mental disorders by investigating the interaction of conscious and unconscious elements in the mind" (Barry, 2020, p. 96). The main mission of psychoanalytic criticism is to decode the deep structure of the literary text by identifying the psychological problem, around which the plot of the literary work revolves. The two main prominent figures in the school of psychoanalysis are the Austrian psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud (1856–1939) and his student Carl Jung (1875–1961).

Sigmund Freud, "the founder of Psychoanalysis, "Freudian Theory", is the first one to use the term "psychoanalysis" in 1896. Psychoanalysis is a branch of medicine interested in the study of the human psych. It also aims at finding the reason behind and a cure for the defected behavior. Freud's main contribution in this approach was demonstrated in recognizing that abnormal behavior is unique and intentional, not meaningless or random.

The Pre-Oedipal Stage, Freud argued that all humans are born with a natural inclination to gratify their biologically needs for food, shelter, warmth and sensual satisfaction. Freud was the first one to use the term ‘Oedipus Complex’ in his book “*Interpretation of Dreams*” (1900). According to Sigmund Freud, the concept is “a desire for sexual involvement with the parent of the opposite sex, which produces a sense of competition with the parent of the same sex and a crucial stage in the normal developmental process. The term “Oedipus complex” was affiliated to the Greek mythology. Oedipus was the son of king Laius and queen Jocasta of Thebes, and finally killed his father and married his mother which according to the belief of the writer and people it is an act of fate. Freud suggested three divisions of the human personality: the Id, Ego and Super-Ego. Freud also talked about ‘Trauma’ it denotes the emotional reaction to a very shocking experience. Trauma has many symptoms, such as denial, disconnection, shock, and feeling of hopelessness, anger and anxiety.

In modern Psychology, Freud has the credit for shifting the attention towards the unconsciousness. Sigmund Freud believed that our unconscious was influenced by childhood events. He categorized these actions into developmental stages involving relationships with parents and drives of desire and

pleasure. These divisions reflect the basic level of needs, but they also involve fear of loss (loss of parent’s affection, loss of sexual genitals, and even loss of life) and suppression. Thus, people "eliminate the unhappy psychological events from consciousness, although this action “repression” does not eliminate the painful experiences and feelings, people, unconsciously behave in ways that allow them to ‘play out’ with the painful experiences and feelings, to keep all of this conflict buried in our unconscious"(Chandra and Samy, 104). Freud believed that people develop defense mechanisms such as: selective memory, selective perception, denial, displacement, projection, fear of intimacy, and fear of death.

Sigmund Freud suggested three divisions of the human psyche: Id, Ego, and Super–Ego. Firstly, the Id is the basic needs and desires (eating, drinking, and having sex). Secondly, the Super–Ego (following the rules) rigid, repressive and punishing, it refers to parental standards of right and wrong behavior. It is the area of the unconscious that executes judgment (of self and others),

Lastly, the Ego, It is the moderator and coordinator between the Id and Super–Ego. It tries to find compromises to pacify both. It can be viewed as people “sense of time and place”. The Ego is the major defense mechanism against the

power of the desires, from one hand, and following the rules, from another.

Freud also introduced many terminologies to the field of psychoanalysis such as the term Oedipus complex. Freud believed that the Oedipus complex was one of the powerful driving elements in the child's development. Oedipus complex involves children's need for their parents and the struggle that emerges as children grow up and realize they are not the sole object of their mother's attention: "the Oedipus complex begins in a late phase of infantile sexuality, between the child's third and sixth year, and it takes a different form in males rather than it does in females" (Chandra and Samy, 2011, 111). Freud declared that the offspring, both boys and girls, desire to capture their mothers' love and attention, but with the passing of time, "they begin to sense that their claim to exclusive attention is thwarted by the mother's attention to the father" (Chandra and Samy, 2011, 112). Freud attributed this conflict of attention to the intimate relations between father and mother relation, from which the children are excluded. Freud believed that "the result is a murderous rage against the father, and a desire to possess the mother" (Chandra and Samy, 2011, 112). To sum up, Freud assumed that "during the Oedipal rivalry between boys and their fathers, boys fantasized that punishment

for their rage will take the form of” castration” (Chandra and Samy, 2011, 114). When boys effectively work through this tremendous pressure, Freud believed that the boy learns to categorize himself with the father in the hope that one day he may find another image of the mother, for himself. In the case of the girls, however, the situation is different. Freud believed that the girl’s rejected sensual admiration toward the father give way to a desire to possess a man like her father later in life. According to Rob Lapsley in *The Routledge Companion to Critical Theory* Freud believed that, unlike the mother–son relationship that is oppressed by the society, the mother–daughter relationship, on the other hand is eternal. He goes on explaining this saying: "girls are already castrated, why they should renounce their first love object, the mother"(2006, 70). Freud believed that the impact of the unconscious, id, ego, superego, the defense mechanisms, and the Oedipus complex were inescapable and that these elements of the mind influence all behavior. It even can find an outlet in our dream as adults.

Additionally, Jacques Lacan (1901–1981), is another important figure in the Psychoanalysis. He is the founder of the "Lacanian Theory ". He was a follower of Freud’s ideas about psychology. Lacan argues the fundamental role of the pre–Oedipal stage in the child’s life when it makes no clear

distinction between itself and the external world; when the child harbors no definite sense of self and lives symbiotically with the mother's body. Lacan gives it the name of the imaginary stage or "The Mirror stage", Lacan defines this period as the time when the child begins to draw basic distinctions between self and other. This is the phase when the child feels his own self as an autonomous entity. This is also the stage of learning a language. The 'I' finds an image of it reflected in a 'mirror'.

Contrary to the patriarchal male-dominated perspectives in psychoanalysis, proposed by Freud and Lacan, Chodorow introduced psychoanalysis from a feminist perspective. Nancy Julia Chodorow (1944 - ) was born in New York, her father was a professor of applied physics. She is a sociologist, psychoanalyst and an educator. She is a member of the National Women Study Associations. She got a BA Degree from Radcliffe College. During this time, the main focus of her studies was "personality and culture" in an environment that was dominated by an enveloping feminist epistemology. She is influenced by feminist theories and she approached psychoanalysis from a "feminist perspective". Her main concern is the study of the relationship between mother and child, rather than father and son. She took her Ph.D. from Brandeis University in 1975, where she was highly influenced by the

psychoanalytic sociologist Philip Slater. Chodorow was also influenced by Karen Horney and Melanie Klein, a psychoanalyst, known for her work *Child Analysis*. She teaches sociology at University of California, Berkeley.

Chodorow, in her book, *The Reproduction of Mothering*, believes that mothers see their daughters as their "double" (1979, p.66). They are a second copy of their mothers. She calls this behavior "a narcissistic object attachment" (1979, 67). The mother considers the daughter simply as an extension of her own life. Consequently, this will make the daughters find it difficult to form their own identities. In this case, the daughters are actually deprived of their own independence and freedom. According to Chodorow, the daughter's main problems result from their own inability to separate themselves from their role model: the mother. Problems like blurred gender identity, narcissism, lack of self-control, weak ego, boundaries are direct result of their inability to reach their own autonomy. Eventually, and as a result of the daughter failure to have her own independence, the daughter turns to the father. The father, or the father figure, represents the outside world. This is what makes the daughter infatuated with the advantages of masculinity.

In Chodorow's theory, the male child identifies himself with the father, detaching himself from the mother. The female child, however, affiliates herself with the mother, Chodorow emphasizes that this process helps to explain the subjugation of women. Nancy Chodorow, argues in her book, *The Reproduction of Mothering*, that due to their differing experiences in childhood, girls and boys experience dissimilar developmental journeys. While boys move away from their mother and identify naturally with the father's social power, girls find it difficult to move away from the overpowering mother's influence. This, sometimes, impedes the girls from growing a normal sense of self, which affects their entire life. In Chodorow's theory, women need relationships to define themselves, and that women are resolved to mothering due to men's lack of emotional accessibility.

This paper attempts to apply the psychoanalytic approach of literary criticism, and the main concepts of Nancy Chodorow regarding mother– daughter relationship, on Martin McDonagh's *The Beauty Queen of Leenane* (1996), and Marina Carr's *By the Bog of Cats* (1998). McDonagh's play has been previously discussed, from a postcolonial perspective, in other studies like CAO Jia–Ya's *Rewriting of the Irish Identity and Pastoral*, and *Obscured Personal identity and the Pursuit of Authorship* by

Laura Biesiadecki. Additionally, Marion Castleberry's *Comedy and Violence in The Beauty Queen of Leenane*, discusses McDonagh's use of comedy and satire in the play. Moreover, some studies have been examining the postmodern techniques and the feminist elements in Carr's play. Examples of these studies are: Gulsen Sayin's *Quest for the Lost M/other: Medea Reconstructed in Marina Carr's By the Bog of Cats*, Mellissa Sihra's *Women in Irish Drama: A Century of Authorship and Representation*, and Clare Wallace's *Tragic Destiny and Abjection in Marina Carr's The Mai, Portia Coughlan, and By the Bog of Cats*.

Martin McDonagh is a British– Irish dramatist, director and producer. He was born on 26 March 1970. McDonagh was born and brought up in London, his parents are of an Irish descent, his father is a construction worker, and his mother is a house wife. In the 1960s his parents had immigrated from rural Ireland to London. He remembers how he spends beautiful days with his parents on the west coast of Ireland in Connemara. These experiences shaped his image of Ireland in his head, "McDonagh is one of those second generation Irish, who were raised, socialized and get educated in Britain but also still exists with strong complex connection with Ireland"(Feeney,1998, 25). When asked by Sean O'Hagan as to how he responds to "the

inevitable accusations of cultural stereotyping”, McDonagh responded by saying, “I don’t even enter into it. I mean, I don’t feel I have to defend myself for being English or for being Irish, because, in a way, I don’t feel either. And, in another way, of course, I’m both” (Russell, 2007, 7).

The characters in his literary works use a hybrid language of English and Irish. Due to his identity as a descendant of Irish immigrants and his holiday experience in Ireland in his youth, McDonagh is familiar with the Irish dialect, and his skillful use of the dialect has become a major feature of the language of his plays. He finds that the language of Ireland is a key to his creativity: “In Connemara and Galway, the natural dialogue style is to invert sentences and use strange inflections of speech, especially in Galway” (Feeney, 1989, 28)

McDonagh is highly appreciated for his creative literary works. He was awarded many prizes, such as the Academy Award for Best Live Action Short Film, His first six plays are located in and around County Galway, where he spent his holidays when he was a child. He is famous for his Leenane trilogy which is: *The Beauty Queen of Leenane* (1996), *The Lonesome West* (1997), and *A Skull in Connemara* (1997). The trilogy focuses on the Irish community; by writing about different

problems in Ireland. His other plays include *The Pillowman* (2003), *A Behanding in Spokane* (2010), and *Hangmen* (2015).

*The Beauty Queen of Leenane* is a nine– scene tragedy set in a small village in the Connemara Mountains, County Galway, on the Western Coast of Ireland. The play tells the story of the gloomy fate of Maureen Folan, a mentally fragile and emotionally disturbed spinster in her early forties, and Mag, her aging, selfish and narcissist mother. It’s a story of dysfunctional relationship between Maureen and her mother Mag. During the play Maureen lost her last chance of love, and then lost her mother. The play also has two other characters: Pato Dooly, a formal neighbor of Maureen, and his little brother, Ray. The play was well received in Galway in 1996.

The play demonstrates the dysfunctional familial relationship between the two women. There is a radio which Maureen and Mag always dispute about, and a picture of The Christ (Religious tradition). Mag is seated on the chair most of the time; this makes Maureen always furious with her because she doesn’t do anything to herself or to the house. In most of Irish families the girl stays with her mother to take care of her (country tradition). This monotonous and strict life makes most of the Irish people leave it for work or to achieve their goals.

The setting of the play is carefully chosen by the dramatist; he wants to show us the exact image of Ireland and its culture, language, landscape, tradition, religion (the picture of the Christ on the wall), and even the characters of people. McDonagh also portrays how the setting of the play demonstrates an important role in the relationship between Maureen and Mag. How they live together in their small classic house. Mag never leaves this setting and furiously fights for making Maureen stay with her in this place forever.

The abnormal relationship between the mother and the daughter is clear, right from the beginning of the play. Maureen and Mag are only shouting at each other. They destroyed the image of mother and daughter in normal life as the daughter respect and obey her mother and the mother in turn loves and cares about her daughter. The relationship between Mag and Maureen is one of tension, violence, misunderstanding, and hatred. “Maureen: Do you think I like being stuck up here with you? Eh? Like a dried up owl ... (2013, scene II, 19)”. Maureen expresses her hatred of her mother and this boring life that she is leading. When Mag warns her and tells her about the men who strangled the old woman in Dublin, whom he did not know, she responds offensively, saying:

Maureen: Sure that sounds exactly the type of fella I would like to meet, and to bring him home to meet you, if he likes murdering out women. (2013, scene II, 20)

Maureen continues in her verbal violence and psychological abuse towards her mother Mag, saying:

Maureen: I have a dream sometimes there of you, dressed all nice and white, in your coffin here, and me all in black looking in on you, and a fella besides me there (2013, scene II, 21)

Throughout the play Mag does her best to make Maureen stay with her at her house, and to take care of her. In scene eight, she burns Pato's letter, in which he wants to take Maureen to England with him. Mag cannot understand that Maureen also needs to be the object of care and love of a man. Maureen wants to flee this vicious circle, and to have her own home and family. She wants to be like her two sisters Annette and Margo, who are well-established at their homes, and are leading a happy life with their families. Maureen thinks that she will find this in her nascent relationship with Pato. In scene one Maureen says: "I'm not appreciated." (2013, scene I, 7)

Contrary to what a mother– daughter relationship supposed to be, Mag– Maureen relationship becomes one of possession and hatred. Mag is a seventy– year old narcissist mother. She puts her own comfort over the happiness of her

daughter, Maureen. Mag suffers from a physical disability in her left hand due to Maureen tortures, and Mag had a bad back, and urinary infection. Mag always claim that she couldn't do anything for herself or the house, Mag always complains about her miserable state of affairs, and always asking Maureen to help her whenever it possible. Mag is a selfish woman who wouldn't Maureen get engaged because she want Maureen only take care of her, during the play she destroyed the only chance for her spinster daughter to get into a relationship with Pato. Mag will never let her only caretaker be free like her other two daughters. Consequently, this turmoil between the mother and the daughter causes Maureen to find joy in tormenting her mother:

Maureen: Will you have a biscuit with your tea?

Pato: I will, what biscuits do you have, now?

Maureen: Em, only Kimberleys.

Pato: I'll leave it so, Maureen. I do hate Kimberleys.

In fact, I think Kimberleys, In fact I think Kimberleys are the most horrible biscuits in the world.

Maureen: The same as that, I hate Kimberleys, I only get them to torment me Mother. (2013, III, 25)

(Kimberleys are bad-tasting types of biscuits)

Mag's relationship with her daughter is not the perfect mother–daughter relationship. All through the play, they are only shouting at each other. At the end of the play, Maureen hits her mother so hard in the head in the head in order to murder her. The autopsy, however, proves that the mother was already dead for natural causes. According to Chodorow there is a strong relationship between Mother and daughter, they are attached to each other's, even on the subconscious level. Maureen cannot leave her mother even after trying to kill her. She stayed at her mother's house (after being acquitted), wearing her mother clothes, incarnating her persona, and subconsciously, is still attached to her.

Ray: (exasperated) Feck...

*He turns the radio up*

The exact fecking image of your mother you are,  
sitting there pegging orders and Forgetting me  
ame! Goodbye!

Maureen: And pull the door after you ...

Ray: (*angrily*) I was going to pull the fecking door after  
me! (2013, scene IX, 66)

Nancy Chodorow states in her book, *The  
Reproduction of Mothering*, that girls and boys experience

disparate developmental journeys due to their different experiences in childhood. Boys can identify naturally with the social power of the father, and therefore find it easy to move away from their mothers. Girls, on the other hand, find it hard to escape from the overwhelming influence of the mother, since they recognize their similarity with their mother. Chodorow states, "Girls' identification processes, then, are more continuously embedded in and mediated by their ongoing relationship with their mother. Being emotionally dependent on their mothers, girls sometimes are unable to develop a normal sense of self, which affects their personality and their entire life. During the play Maureen cannot leave her mother although she hates being taking care of her all the times, forty years old and cannot leave her mother although she hopes to leave!, deep inside Maureen and Mag attached to each other's, Mag cannot expect her life without Maureen's care and in scene four Mag tells Pato that she is the one who takes care of Maureen not the opposite, and she mentioned that Maureen had experience in psychiatric hospital. Mag is also taking care of Maureen; she reveals that Maureen has suffered a mental breakdown in her past and has been released from the hospital to be under the guardianship of her mother, Mag.

In the play, Maureen humiliates her mother and exposes her to physically and psychologically torture; Maureen believes that Mag is the cause of all her sufferings. According to Mag, Maureen is a psychologically disturbed person, who has an experience in the mental asylum. Later on, Maureen starts to torture her; pouring hot oil over her arm, and forcing her to take more Complian (food supplement).

According to Chodorow, girls turn to their fathers to break away from their suffocating and monotonous lives that lack rejuvenation from the part of their mothers. As breadwinners, fathers are considered a “symbols of freedom” from the mother. A girl’s turns to her father to reflect not only her urge to escape her mother, but also her ongoing preoccupation with and love of her mother, even on the unconscious level. The mother’s sexualized treatment of men has conveyed that the mother prefers men. So the girl turns to men in hope of finding a successor love who will not reject her as her mother has done, and of winning her mother’s love. During the play it’s clear that Maureen hopes to define herself away from her mother, because of the absence of father. she searches for another man as a symbol of freedom from Mag, she wants to be free to define herself, and here comes Pato as her only chance to takes her with her and escape from Mag, but Mag fighting for

making Maureen away from men. Mag is attached to Maureen emotionally “as her daughter”, and physically “as her caretaker”.

Chodorow asserts that in situations where the parenting is done almost exclusively by the mother, the child girl identifies completely with her mother and she finds it hard to break away from that deep influence and develop an independent identity. She states, her book, *Reproduction of Mothering*, that: “in one of the few studies of the effects of the absence of the father on girls, found that adolescent girls from father-absent homes were uncomfortable and insecure with men and boys” (Chodorow, 1979, 138). The child realizes that her existence depends on her mother, and becomes deeply attached to her. With the absence of the father, the child girl has no male role model to look up to, so she defines herself only in relation to her mother which affects her sense of identity as an individual. In the play, there is no mention of Maureen’s father; the absence of her father is very clear. She defines herself in relation to Mag, her mother, which affects her at the end of the play. Eventually, she becomes an exact image of Mag. Although Maureen constantly tries to distinguish herself from her mother, Mag has left an undeniable mark on her, and their similarities continue to grow.

Accordingly, a girl finds it difficult to break away from the deep influence of the mother. This, sometimes, prevents the

girl from developing a normal sense of self, which affects her entire life. In *The Beauty Queen of Leenane*, Maureen’s deep attachment to Mag affects her life; she isn’t even taking care of herself, and she can’t leave her mother. When she travels to England for a work she cannot deal with other people, who are making fun of her accent. This leads her to have a psychological breakdown.

The relationship between Mag and Maureen is one of tension, violence, misunderstanding, and hatred. The audiences directly realize that the common characteristic that connects the two is their suffering which is primarily can be attributed to psychological and physical violence. “Both of these figures represent the idea of monstrosity at its worst; they are miserable.” (Castleberry, 2007, 43).

At the beginning of the play Maureen has long thought of the idea of killing her mother over and over again. Her crime is carefully planned and done. She herself daydream of this, when she tells her mother “I have a dream sometimes there of you, dressed all nice and white, in your coffin there, and me all in black Looking in on you,” (2013, scene II, 20). She also sees that such a dream will be fulfilled, tells Mag that “At your bloody wake, sure! Is even sooner!” (2013, scene II, 21). Violence is very clear in *the Beauty Queen of Leenane*:

Maureen: Where is the letter?

Mag: (through screams) I did burn it! I'm sorry, Maureen

Maureen: What did the letter say?

Mag: (through screams) Asked you to go to America with him, it did!" (2013, scene VII, 53).

The mother and the daughter are both victims of fear. Mag's fear of her illness and critical condition; she might not find any one to take care of her, and Maureen's fear of loneliness and solitude after the death of her mother. This state of fear manifests itself in some defense mechanisms that result in finding pleasure in torture and harassment.

Martin McDonagh's play shows the relationship between a mother and a daughter, but not in a normal way that is common to see between mothers and daughters. Instead of love and affection, there is hatred and violence. Mag and Maureen are in a relationship that becomes the cause of despair, destruction and death for both of them. This relationship makes Maureen think of ending her mother's life; due to her mother dominance and control over her life. According to Nancy Chodorow's theory, the complex emotional bond between a daughter and a mother cannot be easily shaken off by the daughter especially if the mother is a single

parent and the father is absent. Maureen's only goal is to liberate herself, and to get into a new relationship. This anticipated relationship will make her realize that her life has another meaning, in addition to taking care of her mother. The appearance of Pato in her life represents her very last chance to get her own autonomy.

Pato is a formal neighbor and school friend of Maureen. Twenty years ago, he used to admire Maureen silently, giving her the title of the beauty queen of Leenane. Pato is introduced at a party, in which Maureen was invited, Pato and Maureen have similar backgrounds, and soon after he becomes Maureen's lover. He is Maureen's last chance to break away from her mother's bondage. Later, towards the end of the play, Maureen and the audience are informed that he is engaged to another woman and leaves for America, at the end of the play. According to Chodorow, girls turn to their fathers to break away from their suffocating lives with their mothers. As breadwinners, fathers are considered "symbols of freedom" from the domineering mothers.

According to Chodorow, a girl finds it difficult to break away from the deep influence of the mother. This, sometimes, prevents the girl from developing a normal sense of self, which affects her entire life. In *The Beauty Queen of Leenane*,

Maureen's deep attachment to Mag affects her entire life. She isn't even taking care of herself; she can't leave her mother. Even when she attempted to break the vicious circle that she is caught in by travelling to England for work, she could not deal with other people.

In fact, *The Beauty Queen of Leenane* is an exact representation of what Nancy Chodorow wants to demonstrate in her theory. Although in its surface structure the play seems to be exhibiting familial dysfunction in a mother–daughter relationship, the play in its deep structure portrays the great bondage between the mother and the daughter. In accordance with Chodorow's theory of the psychology of a female child, Maureen was raised with a single parent: Mag. Mage became the role model for Maureen. However, Maureen wanted to break this cycle of infatuation by trying to escape home and be an independent being. In London, Maureen fails to communicate and have normal relationships with people there. She collapses psychologically and mentally, only to return to her mother again. Due to the absence of the father figure in her life, Maureen turns to Pato as her last chance of freedom; the chance that has been intentionally ruined by her mother. Maureen ends up attempting to kill her domineering mother. Nevertheless, in the end of the play, she becomes another copy of her mother;

settings in her rocking chair, acting like her, and even looking exactly like her. She becomes what Chodorow calls it her mother's "double".

Likewise, Marina Carr also portrays the mother–daughter relationship in her Midlands Trilogy: *The Mai* (1994), *Portia Coughlan* (1998), and *By the Bog of Cats* (1998). The trilogy portrays the familial dysfunctional relationships in one place: The Irish Midlands. Marina Carr is definitely one of the most prolific contemporary modern Irish dramatists. She was born in Dublin in the year 1964. However, she was raised in the Offaly County, in the center of Ireland. Carr was a diligent student, majoring in English Literature and minoring in Philosophy in the University College Dublin. She graduated in the year 1987. In her literary works, Carr is predominantly occupied with the Irish culture and the Irish identity. Later on, most of her plays manage to portray a brilliant picture of the Irish landscape and dialect; as fundamental parts of the Irish identity. "Carr, also, discusses in her plays the status of the women of the marginalized groups; "Women from the Midlands and the Travellers group still suffer from Patriarchal domination "(Leeney, 2003, xv).

Marina Carr's *By the Bog of Cats* is a three–act tragedy about the tragic fate of Hester Swane. The Play adheres to the classical structure of a Greek tragedy. It has a unity of time; the

whole events of the play take place within the ring of one single day. It adheres to the unity of place; the action of the play takes place in the Bog of Cats. The play has one action, around which all the events are revolving: the inescapable bloody fate of the protagonist.

Hester Swane is the main protagonist of Marina Carr's *By the Bog of Cats*. Hester is a forty-year old single mother. She has a seven-year old girl, whom she had out of the wedlock. Hester is not accepted, and is marginalized by her own community. At the age of seven, she was abandoned by her mother, and thrown into an industrial school for orphans. Afterwards, she returns to The Bog of Cats in order to reestablish her bond with her lost mother. Hester has "a tinker" or "a traveler" blood in her veins, which means she belongs to a group of people who live in caravans since they do not have a land of their own. Harrower defines this group of people as: "nomads from Roman-Gypsy descent" (22). Thus, the protagonist of the play is a direct descent of a group of people often referred to as Ireland's "national outsiders". Hester; thus, is an outsider; however, she lives in the Bog of Cats and is deeply committed to her birth place. She is emotionally involved with that place, its landscape and animals represented

in the black swan, The Black Wing swan that was born on the same day of Hester's birth.

HESTER: This is auld Black Wing. I've known her the  
Longest time. We used play together when  
I was a young wan. (1999, act I, 7)

Hester's whole life has been wasted in waiting in the Bog of Cats, the place that represents her own anticipation of the return of her mother. Her mother left her there, at the age of seven. Right from this moment, Hester dreams that her mother will come back one day at the very place that she abandons her. It is this fixation which makes her so reluctant to leave the place, and start a new life elsewhere.

HESTER: I was born on the Bog of Cats and on the  
Bog of Cats I'll end me days. I've as much  
Right to this place as any of yee. 1999, act I, 20)

Actually, all of Hester's memories are in one way or another connected to this place. The Bog of Cats becomes like a missing link between the past and the present. This is what creates an emotional and spiritual attachment towards the place. Hester spent her whole life living in a caravan, where her mother, abandoned her. Therefore, although her partner, Carthage built a new house for her by the bog, she never conceives it as her real home, and prefers the caravan. She

expresses her feelings about the home at the beginning of the play saying:

HESTER: Used to; live up the lane now. In

A house, though I've never felt at  
home in it. (1999, act I, 18)

So the Bog of Cats signifies Hester's history which she longs to reestablish. Regaining the past means bringing back her long-gone mother, as Hester quotes from her mother in the following lines:

HESTER: ... And she says, "I'm goin' walkin' the bog, you are 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 I watched her walk away from me across the Bog of Cats. And across the Bog of Cats I'll watch her return.  
(1999, act I, 19)

However, Hester is made by her formal lover and partner, Carthage, to abandon the Bog where she was born, has lived, and is planning to live until her mother comes back. So she spends most of her time roaming around the bog till dawn.

HESTER: Ah, how can I leave the Bog of Cats, everythin' I'm connected to is here. I'd rather die. (199, act I, 22)

Hester has been trying, all over her life, to cope with her sense of loss; due to her mother's abandoning her in her early childhood. She tries to heal her psychological wounds by singing the songs of her mother, Big Josie. The songs are a constant reminder of the bond that she used to share with her absent mother. Hester has been obsessed with her mother. She refuses to hear about the bad qualities of her mother. She does believe neither the Cat Woman nor Cassidy, when they describe her mother as an irresponsible and a neglectful mother. She convinces herself that they are saying this to get her out of The Bog. Although, Hester had other mother figure substituting her real mother, Hester was never really attached to them. The Cat Woman and Monica were acting like mother figures to baby Hester. Whenever, Big Josie used to leave young Hester out, The Cat Woman used to give her shelter from the cold weather. Monica, Hester's neighbor has always considered her like a daughter, especially after losing her only son in a car accident. Nevertheless, this was never enough for Hester, and she kept her fixation about her mother's return to her, one day. This is why Hester was completely shocked to find out that her mother abandoned her to live with her brother. Her reaction was a violent and a furious one. She cuts the throat of her brother and got rid of his body in the lake. Hester then admitted the reason

behind killing her brother. She tells the ghost of her brother that she killed him out of jealousy over her mother.

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. (1999, act III, 58)

Hester confronts another ordeal in her life: Carthage, her formal partner, he wants to take away her house, take the full custody of their only daughter, and kicks her out of The Bog and out of his life for good. Hester will never allow this to happen: "the truth is you want to eradicate me, make me out I never existed" (1999, act II, 31). Hester breaking into the wedding of Carthage and Caroline Cassidy is considered as an act of refusal of all this. She tries to convince him not to get her out of the Bog, and not to take her daughter away from her. Nevertheless, she ends up making a fool out of herself.

Actually, Hester's suicide is a reaction against the acts of extreme cruelty and injustice that she suffers on the hands of Carthage and Xavier Cassidy, his father-in-law. Her act of committing suicide is her "last swan song" to remain physically attached to The Bog, to her mother, to the womb. It is through

the act of death, that Hester can finally be reunited with her mother, Big Josie.

When Hester loses all hope of gaining control again over her life, she goes blind with anger and resentment. Hester burns her own house, which is by The Bog of Cats Carthage's new house, and his livestock. At the end, Hester kills herself and Josie (her seven-year-old daughter). However, Hester kills her daughter, Josie, out of the fear of future. When Hester announces to Josie that she is going away, leaving her behind, Josie begs her not to go.

JOSIE: " 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. (1999, act, III, 78).

Actually, Josie's words have frightened Hester. She did not want her daughter to live the same terrible experience that she had to endure. Hester did not wish that history will repeat itself, and her daughter would lead a life of endless waiting for someone who will never come. Unlike the Greek mythical figure of Medea, who murdered her children in order to take revenge of their father who betrayed her, Hester was motivated by her own concern over the type of life her daughter would lead after her death. So, she decides to kill her daughter, to protect her from a life worse than death itself.

HESTER: Close your Eyes, (Josie closes her eyes).

Are they closed tight?

JOSIE: Yeah.

Hester cuts Josie's throat in one savage movement.

(softly). Mom–mom (and Josie dies in Hester's arms).

HESTER: (Whispers) it's because ya wanted to come,  
Josie. Begins to wail, a terrible animal wail.

(1999, act III, 77)

It is true that Hester's death ends the play, as she lies in the white dress with her heart cut out on top of her chest" like some dark feathered bird", (1999, act III, 79), however, this death is only the beginning of her new reunion with her mother and her daughter. Hester's death is a sign of tremendous victory, since she proved that she would not surrender at all to the laws of her patriarchal community. Moreover, many critics have explained Hester's death as a beginning and not an end. Hester's death at the end is a triumph since it represents, as it is stated by Bernadette Bourke, "a renewal in a return to great nurturing womb of nature, giver of life, death and continuity". (2003, 13)

Hester's final act of performing a "mercy killing" of her daughter, Josie sheds new light on how Marina Carr portrays the "mother–daughter" bond in more than one generation in one family. Carr focuses on Hester, as a daughter, and her misery

for having a selfish and uncaring mother like Big Josie Swane. Her image is contrary to the traditional mother figure which is supposed to be self-sacrificing and sacred. Thus, this torment that Hester had to endure, in her past, is becoming the future fate of her daughter.

*By the Bog of Cats* imitates how mothers and daughters speak to and for each other in relation to conceptions of Pre-Oedipal \Imaginary relation which is part of the psychoanalytic feminist theory. Marina Carr, in *By the Bog of Cats*, presents the mother–daughter relationship in the form of pairs: "Big Josie Swane – Hester Swane" and " Hester Swane – Josie", the critics assume that this division is highly associated with Freud's views about the Pre- Oedipal stage in the child's development. In the Pre-Oedipal period when the child believes itself to be a part of the mother, the child cannot imagine any separation between itself and the world. In the imaginary theory, the catastrophe occurs when the child's pre-oedipal connection with the mother is severely shattered when the child experiences the first separation and agony. Moreover, in the Oedipal predicament the father destroys the sacred unity between the mother and the child. The father, or the patriarchal figure, denies the child's further access to the mother. Thus, from now on, the longing for the mother, or the imaginary unity with her, must be deeply

buried in the subconscious. Juliet Mitchell in her *Psychoanalysis and Feminism* states that "the initial object of desire for little girls as well as little boys is the mother"(1989, 16) and Cixous adds more with special focus on women:

Women, carry from the relation with the Mother the memory of another love, which function as a nourishing and vital force capable of overcoming the father's law of castration. (1996, 17)

While Sellers adds that "mother's love is kept alive as a voice" (1991, 18). This voice, being heard by Hester is a reflection of the songs of her mother.

HESTER: Who's there? Who dares sing that song?

That's my song that me mother made up  
For me. Who's there?... That song is mine!  
She made it for me and only me. Can't yees  
Lave me with anythn'! (Act III, 75)

Additionally, Nancy Chodorow's theory about mother-daughter relationship can also be applied to Marina Carr's *By the Bog of Cats*. Chodorow believes that there are four stages in the development of the mother-daughter relationship. The mother believes that her daughter is her "double", the natural extension of the mother's own life. This can be applied to Hester- Josie's relationship. Hester believes that her daughter

will lead the same miserable life that she used to live. Josie would spend her whole lifetime anticipating the return of her mother. Just like her, she would spend the whole night wandering and roaming aimlessly by The Bog, searching for her mother. She will end up as miserable and psychologically disturbed just like her. This is why Hester killed her daughter, in order to spare her daughter the agony of endless waiting for a figure that will never return. Secondly, according to Chodorow, this mother–daughter strong attachment makes it difficult for the daughter to have her own autonomous identity. All through the play, Hester cannot find an independent identity away from The Bog, the place which her mother promised her to come back to. This bondage with her mother prevents Hester from breaking through and discovering her own potentialities; she is always tied to The Bog. Hester turns to the patriarchal figure (Carthage and Xavier Cassidy) in order to break this cycle, and gain her freedom. Unfortunately, Hester is confronted with the limitations and restrictions imposed on her by the patriarchy.

Finally, in conclusion, the relationship that bonds the mother to her child is one of the most sacred relationships on earth. The connection between the mother and her female offspring is such an exceptional relationship. The mother and the daughter are both connected, consciously and

subconsciously. Martin McDonagh's *The Beauty Queen of Leenane* and Marina Carr's *By the Bog of Cats* are two modern plays by two contemporary Irish playwrights. Both plays examine the mother–daughter relationship, and the implications of this relationship on both the fate of the mother and the daughter. McDonagh's play presents a dysfunctional familial relationship between the forty–year old Maureen and her narcissist domineering mother, Mag. The play ends with the death of Mag. Nevertheless, even death cannot break the bond between the mother and her daughter. Maureen ends up by being an exact image of her mother. Moreover, In *By the Bog of Cats*, Carr presents two types of mother–daughter relationship: Big Josie– Hester / Hester– Josie relationship. Although the play ends with Hester killing her daughter and committing suicide, this could not break the bond between the mother and the daughter. By applying Nancy's Chodorow's theory on both plays, it is revealed that both McDonagh and Carr have managed to confirm that the strong connection between the mother and the daughter exists not only on the conscious level, but on the subconscious level, as well. It is a bond that even death cannot break.

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