

## The Theatre of Marina Carr: A Latin American Reading, Interview, and Translation

By Patricia Novillo-Corvalán (1)

### **Abstract**

*This article brings together three interrelated parts: an interview with Marina Carr, a translator's preface, and a fragmentary Spanish translation of her play *By the Bog of Cats...* (1998). The interview seeks to capture the unique voice of Carr in a relaxed and informal conversation that reflects on her life, theatre, influences, as well as her overall fascination with Spanish and Latin American literature. The translation is the first rendering of *By the Bog of Cats...* into Spanish. It is preceded by a translator's prologue which offers a discussion of Carr's drama and comments upon the several difficulties encountered during the translation.*

Marina Carr (born 1964) has recently been described as 'Ireland's leading woman playwright' (Sternlicht 2001: xv), 'one of the most powerful, haunting voices on the contemporary Irish stage' (Leeney, McMullan 2003: xv), and 'the only Irish woman to have her plays produced on Ireland's main stages in recent years' (Sihra 2007: 19). Undoubtedly, Carr has emerged as one of the most gifted new voices in the Irish theatrical arena and stands side-by-side with prominent fellow Irish playwrights Brian Friel, Frank McGuinness and Tom Murphy. She has written more than a dozen plays, including *The Mai* (1994), *Portia Coughlan* (1996), *By the Bog of Cats...* (1998), *On Raftery's Hill* (2000), *Ariel* (2002), *Woman and Scarecrow* (2006), and *The Cordelia Dream* (2008). She won the E. M. Forster Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters (2001) and the Irish American Fund Award (2004). She has been writer-in-residence at the Abbey Theatre and Trinity College Dublin, and has recently served as Heimbold Chair of Irish Studies at the University of Villanova.

*Patricia Novillo-Corvalán* (PNC): Many of our readers would like to know about your upbringing in County Offaly, and how this countryside setting influenced your work. Could you tell us a bit more about this?

*Marina Carr* (MC): I grew up in a place called Gortnamona, which means 'field of the bog', for the first eleven years, and then moved a half-mile down the road to a place called Pallas Lake. Our house was on the shore of the lake. There were swans, there were bulls, there were

dragonflies, there were fishermen. My sister and I spent long summer evenings sitting on an old oak tree looking out at the lake, laughing our heads off at anything, everything, nothing. The winters were cold, sometimes the lake froze. I went to my mother's school along with my brothers and sister. She was the principal there. She loved history and mythology. When the weather was fine she would let us play for hours outside. She would walk around and around the schoolyard in her sunglasses speaking Irish. We put on plays at home and at school. It was a good childhood, free and fairly wild.

PNC: Your plays have been variously linked to a range of theatrical traditions, including Irish drama, Attic tragedy, Shakespeare and Ibsen. In relation to modern European drama, nobody to my knowledge has yet mentioned the name of the Spanish poet and playwright Federico García Lorca as one of your influences. I recall that while I was reading the final speeches of Sorrell and Dinah in *On Raftery's Hill*, I was transported to the ending of *The House of Bernarda Alba* in which all the daughters have lost their chance of achieving any happiness and will be locked forever in the claustrophobic walls of the maternal house. Also, your play *By the Bog of Cats...* – for all its parallels with Greek tragedy – is above all a blood wedding, with passionate acts of love, jealousy, and revenge. How familiar are you with the work of Lorca? And, do you feel any kinship with his drama?



Joan O'Hara as *Catwoman* and Olwen Fouéré as *Hester Swane* in the 1998 World Premiere of *By the Bog of Cats* by Marina Carr. © Abbey Theatre Photo: Amelia Stein

MC: I love Lorca, he's always fascinated me. I spent a long time reading and re-reading his plays in translation: *Yerma*, *Blood Wedding*, *The House of Bernarda Alba*. They are incredibly powerful, Lorca is a poet of the theatre, like Ibsen, Chekhov, Wilde and Beckett. In 2006 I saw a wonderful production of *Yerma* here in Dublin (Arcola Theatre, in a new stage version by Frank McGuinness featuring Kathryn Hunter as *Yerma*). I'd love to see other productions of his plays. And yes, I feel a strong affinity with Lorca and I wouldn't be surprised if you find echoes of his theatre in my plays. My reading is very eclectic and is not just confined to Irish- and English-speaking authors.

PNC: Are there any other Hispanic or Latin American writers you admire?

MC: I've read most of Marquez's work including *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, *Love in the Times of Cholera*, and recently his compelling autobiography: *Living to Tell the Tale*. I found it so fascinating that I'm still waiting for a sequel to be released! I also adore Borges, although he demands a very different type of reading. Not long ago I was re-reading his *Fictions*, enjoying his paradoxes, and his speculations on infinity. I then realised that there is an Irish poet, Paul Muldoon who's written a book, *The Annals of Chile*, which I think is very Borgesian. Muldoon has a wonderful voice and is always playing intellectual games. His book traces a number of

parallels between Ireland and Latin America and is written in English, mixed with Gaelic and Spanish words. I'd imagine that Muldoon is familiar with Borges's work, the connection is certainly there.

PNC: What you were just saying reminds me of Borges's essay 'The Argentine Writer and Tradition' in which he talks about a sense of brotherhood between Ireland and Latin America. We can think of their marginality, colonial histories, imposed languages, and deeply ingrained Catholicism. Borges advised Argentine (and Latin American) writers to follow the example of the Irish who tried out every subject, 'the universe is our birthright', he said.

MC: I can clearly see the parallels, and I'm not at all surprised that a writer like Borges could so perceptively find a connection between the Irish and Latin American imaginations. Yes, the Irish writer draws from a wide range of sources, and so does the Latin American. They have taken stuff from all over the place, and they are happy to admit it, like Borges. You've got so many wonderful writers out there. For instance, I've started reading a short story collection entitled *Last Evenings on Earth* by the Chilean writer Roberto Bolaño.

PNC: That's fascinating! Have you read any of Bolaño's novels?

MC: No, I haven't yet; this is the first book I encountered. But I'd like to read more. Which one would you recommend?

PNC: Well, there's *The Savage Detectives* and his gigantic masterpiece 2666, which has been praised by Irish writers such as John Banville and Colm Tóibín. Whenever people ask me about it I usually say – tongue in cheek – that if Joyce and Borges ever got together to write a book, this is the book they'd have written (*laughter*).

MC: (*Laughter*) sounds fascinating. Are there any other Latin American writers you'd recommend worth reading?

PNC: I think you'd really enjoy Julio Cortázar's short stories. There's one called 'Letter to a Young Lady in Paris', which is about a man who keeps coughing up little rabbits, a bit like your

Catwoman in *By the Bog of Cats*... who's got mouse fur growing out of her teeth.

MC: I'd love to read it. (Makes note of Cortázar's name).

PNC: Now I'd like to know a bit more about one of your latest plays, *The Cordelia Dream*, which may be read as an afterlife of *Shakespeare's King Lear*. It's significant that Irish and Latin American writers have for centuries talked back to Shakespeare: Wilde, Shaw, Joyce, Borges, Neruda, Carpentier, they have all done it.

MC: In my case I've been dealing with the ghost of Shakespeare for quite a long time. I love *King Lear*, it's one of my favourite Shakespeare plays. I've always been fascinated by the four howls and the five *nevers* in Act 5, when Lear enters with Cordelia dead in his arms: 'Howl, howl, howl, howl! O, you are men of stones./Had I your tongues and eyes, I'd use them so/That heaven's vault should crack [...] Why should a dog, a horse, a rat have life,/And thou not breath at all? Thou'lt come no more./Never, never, never, never'. So I decided to write a play which captured that unique moment, which is in essence the blood bond between a father and a daughter.

PNC: Is the Daughter, then, a twenty-first century version of Cordelia?

MC: Well, she is a version of Cordelia but also Goneril and Regan: a mixture of the three sisters. The father demands a test of love and devotion from his daughter, he asks her to be silent.

PNC: Like Cordelia in *King Lear* when she refuses to perform in Lear's ceremony: 'Love and be silent'.

MC: Yes, the sacrifice that the father demands from his daughter and which eventually kills her.

PNC: Your plays are haunted by the mysterious forces of the supernatural. You bring to the stage the eerie world of ghosts, visions, prophecies, and voices and sounds from the Otherworld. A critic has vividly described this dark dimension of your work as: 'Carr cracks open a window onto the ghost world that troubles her sleep and allows her audiences to overhear the tumult' (Harris 2003: 232). Could

you tell us more about your relationship with death?

MC: I suppose that in transcendental terms there are moments when one realises that there's a link between this world and the next. They are not two completely separate places. How many other worlds are there? That's a question I keep asking myself when I write. I'd say that I'm interested in that shadowy area, the borderland between life and death. It's a different way of seeing the world, it opens another dimension. Having said this, I also believe that you have to make the most of it in the world you are in. It's important to enjoy this life.

PNC: Yet in spite of the powerful tragic forces of your drama, there is an undeniable touch of dark comedy in your plays. How important is comedy for you?

MC: I think it's important to strike a balance between the tragic and the comic, and humour is such an essential aspect of life. Tragedy does not necessarily rule out comedy. I like to transport my readers and audiences into a magical world, to make them feel the power of the theatre, and that also includes amusing them.

PNC: Have your plays been translated into other languages?

MC: Yes, German, Italian, Croatian, Dutch and many others. There have been stage productions all around the world including China, South Korea, Estonia, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Canada, the United States, and here in Ireland, of course.

PNC: Would you give me permission to include a fragmentary Spanish translation of *By the Bog of Cats*... in *Irish Migration Studies in Latin America*?

MC: I'd be delighted to reach out to Hispanic audiences.

### **Reading and Translating Carr's By the Bog of Cats...**

As a young Irish dramaturgist, Marina Carr is writing in the wake of a longstanding tradition of Irish playwrights associated with the birth

and development of the Abbey Theatre at the beginning of the twentieth century – including W. B. Yeats, Lady Gregory, and J. M. Synge. But for all her creative engagement with rural Ireland – its language, people, themes, and landscape – Carr’s theatre also stages the grand-scale subject matter of Greek and Shakespearean tragedy. Marianne McDonald has recently identified a special kinship between Irish literature and ancient Greek tragedy: ‘In the twentieth century, there seem to be more translations and versions of Greek tragedy that have come from Ireland than from any other country in the English-speaking world. In many ways Ireland was and is constructing its identity through the representations offered by Greek tragedy’ (McDonald 2002: 37). Indeed, Greek tragedy – and mythology in a broader sense – has cast a powerful spell on the Irish writer’s imagination: James Joyce’s *Ulysses* is a rewriting of Homer’s *Odyssey*; Seamus Heaney’s *The Cure at Troy* is a modern Irish version of Sophocles’ *Philoctetes*; Tom Paulin’s *The Riot Act* is a Northern Irish translation of Sophocles’ *Antigone*; Euripides’ *Medea* and *Iphigenia at Aulis* have undergone a complex metamorphosis in Carr’s *By the Bog of Cats...* and *Ariel* respectively. The list is endless. The main point here is that Irish writers from Joyce to Carr are able to transcend the parochial limitations of a strictly national art by offering a complex fusion of the Irish tradition they have inherited, and the wider panorama of Greek myth and world literature. The provincial limitations of the Celtic Renaissance may be transcended by this complex lacing of literary traditions, thus allowing the Irish writer to be both national and international, and to be able to speak to audiences at home and abroad.

One of the most remarkable aspects of Marina Carr’s drama is her distinctive use of a regional variant of Hiberno-English spoken in the Irish Midlands. She skilfully portrays the speech patterns of a linguistic community as part of a creative endeavour that seeks to represent the accent, local slang, mannerisms, proverbial expressions, and folklore of a particular region in rural Ireland. Frank McGuinness has pertinently referred to Carr’s theatre as a ‘physical attack on the conventions of syntax, spelling, and sounds of Standard English’ (McGuinness 1996: ix) and Melissa Sihra has

argued that: ‘Carr’s linguistic inventiveness refuses standard English, imagining new modes of expression’ (Sihra 2007: 210). It soon becomes clear that a translation of Carr’s plays must therefore become a recreation, and that the translator should negotiate a form of writing that privileges an essentially transformative strategy. My translation of *By the Bog of Cats...* (*El pantano de los gatos*) aims to rewrite the play in the variant of Spanish known as River Plate, mainly spoken in Argentina and Uruguay. The central decision here was to steer away from translating the play into Standard Spanish, which is precisely what Carr is resisting in her ideological endeavour to give voice to Hiberno-English versus Standard English. It is important to stress, however, that there is a vast repertoire of Spanish dialects from Latin America, Africa and even the Iberian Peninsula, which would have also offered rich and varied alternatives. In *The Subversive Scribe: Translating Latin American Fiction*, the American critic and translator Suzanne Jill Levine addresses this specific translation issue as: ‘Should the translator supplant one local dialect with another? [...] Every translator has a personal version of what a particular slang sounds like, and of which slang is a more appropriate substitution’ (Levine 1997: 67). Levine is saying that no translator could possibly reproduce the Irish Midlands dialect of the original, but should rather try to find a speech variety which may recontextualise the play in an entirely different dialect. For this purpose, Walter Benjamin’s instructive lesson in his seminal essay ‘The Task of the Translator’ (1923) proves extremely relevant. He claims that the translation issues form the ‘afterlife’ of the original, as the work of art extends its life through the redeeming power of the translation, thus embarking on another stage within its continuing life as it moves across language, history, and culture (Benjamin 2000: 16). (3)

My choice of Spanish dialect stems from the crucial fact that there is a long-standing tradition of Argentine writers translating Irish literature into River Plate Spanish. This genealogy begins with Jorge Luis Borges’s fragmentary translation of James Joyce’s *Ulysses*. In 1925 a youthful Borges wrote a pioneering review of *Ulysses* and a translation of the last two pages of ‘Penelope’ for the Buenos Aires avant-garde journal *Proa*.

Borges opened his review of *Ulysses* with a boastful declaration: ‘Soy EL PRIMER AVENTURERO (4) hispánico que ha arribado al libro de Joyce’ (Borges 1993: 23); (‘I am the first traveller from the Hispanic world to set foot upon the shores of *Ulysses*’) (Borges 1999: 12). What is implicit in Borges’s emphatic assertion is not only his belief that he is the first Hispanic explorer of the epic *Ulysses*, but also the awareness that he was touring Joyce’s epic geography for the later enlightenment of the Spanish-speaking world. The most noteworthy feature of Borges’s fragmentary rendering of ‘Penelope’ is its distinctive colloquial tone rich in Argentine diction. Borges’s decision to present the readers of *Proa* with an Argentine-speaking Molly Bloom corresponded to the literary credo he professed in the 1920s, in which he advocated a colloquial use of River Plate Spanish (Novillo-Corvalán 2008: 1). In his overt attempt to challenge standard practices that utilised the Standard Spanish personal pronoun tú as the customary norm for written texts, Borges instead decided to employ the River Plate colloquial form vos in order to give legitimacy to a primarily oral vernacular (see Borges 1997: 201-2). Two decades later, a similar translation practice was adopted by fellow Argentine writer J. Salas Subirat who in 1945 gifted the Hispanic world with the first complete translation of *Ulysses* into Argentine-Spanish. In 1948 the writer Leopoldo Marechal offered a more radical exercise in translation and rewriting by transplanting *Ulysses* from Dublin into the streets of Buenos Aires and from Hiberno-English into River Plate Spanish. This fascinating history of the migration of *Ulysses* to Argentina, its successive translations and metamorphosis, cannot but consolidate the reciprocity between Irish and Argentine writers, and the ever-recurring dialogue between the literatures of Ireland and Argentina. Above all, it celebrates a textual space in which two different cultures, languages, and histories meet and interact with each other. In this way, Marina Carr’s *By the Bog of Cats...* also embarks on a journey to the Southern Hemisphere, and is reborn in the dialectal variety of Spanish spoken in Argentina, absorbing its idiosyncratic linguistic features (yeísmo, voseo, verb conjugation, local slang, and proverbial

expressions), thus offering a rich and distinguishing language on which to transpose Carr’s play.

Another aspect of *By the Bog of Cats...* which presents further challenges to a translator springs from the fact that the names of the dramatis personae carry a wealth of symbolic, evocative, or linguistically playful associations. Indeed, in *By the Bog of Cats...* names are rarely arbitrary and in most cases underscore a set of values, beliefs, and superstitions which are deeply rooted in the play’s natural environment. This onomastic polyvalence cannot be ignored, since the act of naming offers Carr the possibility not only to interact with her landscape, but also to summon the multitude of ghosts that haunt her imagination. This is evident in inventive names such as Hester Swane, Ghost Fancier, Father Willow, Black Wing and Catwoman. For example Carr’s heroine, Hester Swane, is tragically aware of the allegorical significance of her family name. Her mother, Josie Swane, has imposed a deadly curse upon her daughter by reading behind the pun of her name and predicting the exact timing of her death: ‘Swane means swan’ [...] ‘That child’, says Josie Swane, ‘will live as long as this black swan, not a day more, not a day less’ (Carr 1999: 275). Whereas the translation of proper names has always been a questionable subject in translation theory, I decided to recreate Hester’s family name Swane under the new Spanish version ‘Cisnero’ in order to preserve the pun with ‘swan’, as a Spanish speaker would easily associate ‘Cisnero’ with the noun ‘cisne’. Another challenge was presented by the suggestive compound ‘Ghost Fancier’, which results from Carr’s ingenious merging of two previously unrelated words in the English language. In this way, ‘Ghost Fancier’ sounds colloquial and poetical, menacing and humorous. Only Carr’s individual voice may give birth to such a wondrous creature, an ‘angel of death’ – as Sternlicht (2001: xvi) puts it – who comes down to earth to ‘eye up’ ghosts, and whose description in the stage directions renders him as ‘a handsome creature in a dress suit’ (Carr 1999: 261), thus arousing feelings of both fear and affection upon an audience. Whereas the Ghost Fancier has foreknowledge of Hester’s death and is thus a mysterious

instrument of the inexplicable forces of Fate, it is still devoid of the evil and malice of Shakespeare's weird sisters in Macbeth. In his characteristic politeness, he apologises to Hester for getting his timing wrong as he mistakes dawn for dusk during his first visitation. The complexity of a spectral presence such as the Ghost Fancier begs for an inventive translation strategy rather than a word-for-word rendering which would produce an inadequate result. In this way, I turned Ghost Fancier into Fantasma Galante, in a recreative gesture that privileged the imagery of seduction and the supernatural inherent in the original, as well as the poetical quality of the name. (5) Moreover, the expression also allowed a greater play on meaning as the adjective galante in Spanish carries an old-fashioned flavour, serving to reinforce the idea of a galán, a smartly dressed, seductive and handsome figure who, in Carr's play, is also a messenger of Fate who comes to lead Hester into a dance of death. There is thus a literary quality to the word galán, in that it may also bring into mind Lope de Vega's play El galán de Menbrilla, which was based on the Spanish popular folk song of the same name, in which the galán seduces a Spanish maid and takes her away with him. The Ghost Fancier, then, is reborn on a Hispanic stage as a complex figure that yields up a range of meanings and associations, yet still embodies the main features of Carr's character.

Finally, another compelling aspect of Carr's drama resides in her creation of passionate female heroines who have been usually described as exiled, outcasts and dispossessed, living a purgatorial existence in the margins of society (Sihra 2007; Russell 2006; Leeney 2004). Neither innocent maidens nor devoted housewives, Carr's tempestuous women have been interpreted as transgressions of the traditional figure of the virtuous woman in Irish society. 'Carr's disintegrated domestic scene', writes Melissa Sihra, 'challenges the rural idyll fetishized by De Valera in his 1943 address to the nation 'whose countryside would be bright with cosy homesteads [and] the laughter of comely maidens'' (Sihra 2007: 211). Instead, Carr's tortured female beings have more in common with the larger-than-life figures of Greek tragedy: Medea, Electra, Phaedra,

Antigone, hence dramatising the themes of murder, infanticide, sacrifice, incest and revenge which loom large in the tragedies of Sophocles, Aeschylus and Euripides. Carr's female personages also join forces with the emancipated heroines of Ibsen's plays: the restless spirits of Hester Swane, Portia Coughlan, and the Mai could only have been conceived in the wake of Nora's controversial door slam in *A Doll's House*, and Hedda Gabler's discontented married life, manipulative actions and desperate suicide. The sheer intensity, imaginative scope, and Hellenistic revival of Carr's theatre serve to contradict George Steiner's fatalistic oracles in *The Death of Tragedy* of the gradual decline and eventual demise of tragedy. In the vastness of her art and the intensity of her feelings, Marina Carr can prove that tragedy is as alive in the twenty-first century as it was in fifth-century Athens.

Patricia Novillo-Corvalán

*El Pantano de los Gatos*

ACTO PRIMERO

*Cuadro Primero*

*Amanece. El pantano de los gatos. Un paisaje blanco y desolado de hielo y nieve. Música, un violín solitario. Ester Cisnero arrastra el cadáver de un cisne negro por detrás suyo, dejando un rastro de sangre en la nieve. El Fantasma Galante se encuentra allí mirándola.*

*Ester ¿Y vos quién sos? No te había visto antes merodeando por estos pagos.*

*Fantasma Galante Soy un fantasma galante.*

*Ester Un fantasma galante. Nunca en mi vida había escuchado nada igual.*

*Fantasma Galante ¿Nunca viste un fantasma?*

*Ester No exactamente, a veces creí sentir cosas de algún otro mundo, pero nada a lo que me pudiera aferrar y decir: 'Eso es un fantasma'.*

*Fantasma Galante Bueno, donde hay fantasmas hay fantasmas galantes.*

*Ester ¿Es así? ¿Y a qué te dedicás, Señor Fantasma Galante? ¿Andás haciéndole ojito a los fantasmas? ¿Los hacés tus amantes?*

*Fantasma Galante* *Depende del fantasma. Hace rato te vengo siguiendo. ¿Qué hacés arrastrando el cadáver de ese cisne como si fuera tu propia sombra?*

*Ester* *Es el viejo cisne Ala Negra. Lo conozco hace años. Cuando era chiquitita solíamos jugar juntos. Una vez me tuve que ir del Pantano de los Gatos y cuando volví unos años después este cisne se me apareció brincando por el pantano para darme la bienvenida, se me tiró encima y me chantó un beso en la mano. Anoche lo encontré congelado en un hueco del pantano, lo tuve que arrancar del hielo, perdió la mitad de su vientre.*

*Fantasma Galante* *¿Nunca nadie te dijo que es peligroso meterse con cisnes, especialmente cisnes negros?*

*Ester* *Son sólo viejas supersticiones hechas para asustar a la gente, lo único que quiero es enterrarlo. ¿Qué pensás, que me van a fulminar por hacerlo?*

*Fantasma Galante* *¿Vivís en esa casilla rodante?*

*Ester* *Vivía, ahora vivo en el callejón de por allá arriba. En una casa, aunque nunca me sentí muy cómoda ahí. Y vos, Señor Fantasma Galante, decíme ¿Qué fantasma andás acechando por acá?*

*Fantasma Galante* *Ando al acecho de una mujer llamada Ester Cisnero.*

*Ester* *Yo soy Ester Cisnero.*

*Fantasma Galante* *No puede ser, estás viva.*

*Ester* *Lo estoy y quiero seguir vivita y coleando.*

*Fantasma Galante* *(mira a su alrededor, confundido). ¿Está amaneciendo o atardeciendo?*

*Ester* *¿Por qué te interesa saberlo?*

*Fantasma Galante* *Decíme.*

*Ester* *Es esa hora que podría ser tanto el amanecer como el atardecer, la luz es muy parecida. Pero está amaneciendo, mirá como sale el sol.*

*Fantasma Galante* *Entonces me he adelantado. Confundí esta hora con el atardecer. Mil disculpas.*

*(Se empieza a retirar. Ester lo detiene).*

*Ester* *¿Qué significa que estás adelantado? De verdad, ¿Quién sos?*

*Fantasma Galante* *Te pido disculpas por haberme entrometido así en tu vida. No es mi estilo. (Se levanta el sombrero y se va).*

*Ester* *(lo sigue a los gritos). ¡Volvé! No me puedo morir – tengo una hija*

*(Aparece Mónica).*

*Mónica* *¿Qué es lo que te pasa, Ester? ¿A qué le estás gritando?*

*Ester* *¿No lo ves?*

*Mónica* *¿A quién?*

*Ester* *A él.*

*Mónica* *No veo a nadie.*

*Ester* *Allá (señala).*

*Mónica* *No hay nadie, pero vos sabés lo que es este viejo pantano, siempre cambiando y cambiando y engañando la mirada. ¿Qué tenés ahí? Che, es Ala Negra ¿qué le pasó?*

*Ester:* *Vejez, lo apostaría, anoche lo encontré congelado.*

*Mónica* *(Toca el ala del cisne). Bueno, ya vivió sus buenos años, ha requete pasado el promedio de vida de un cisne. Pero vos estás helada, vagando durante toda la noche, ¿no? Te estás buscando la muerte en este clima. Cinco grados menos de lo que anunciaron en el pronóstico y se nos viene peor.*

*Ester* *Juráme que volvió la edad de hielo. ¿No te hubiera hasta gustado, que nos borrara a todos del mapa como a los dinosaurios?*

*Mónica* *La verdad que no – ¿te estás yendo o qué, Ester?*

*Ester* *No me sigas preguntando lo mismo.*

*Mónica* *Vos sabés que las puertas de mi covacha están siempre abiertas.*

*Ester* *No me voy para ningún lado. Acá está mi casa y mi jardín y mi porción del pantano y nadie me va a sacar a patadas.*

*Mónica* *Vine a preguntarte si querías que me la lleve a Josefina a desayunar.*

*Ester* *Todavía está durmiendo.*

*Mónica* *Esa criatura, Ester, vos vas a tener que hacerte cargo de ella, vas a tener que dejar este empecinamiento y rehacer tu vida.*

*Ester* *Total yo no fui la que desbiço todo esto.*

*Mónica* *Y vos vas a tener que dejar esta casa que ya no es tuya. Andaba yo el otro día de compras en*

*el pueblo y me la veo a Carolina Cassidy diciendo cómo iba a tirar abajo todo esto y construirse una casa toda nuevita.*

*Ester Carolina Cassidy. Ya me las voy a arreglar con esa. De todos modos ella ni siquiera es el problema, sólo un mínimo detalle.*

*Mónica Bueno, has llegado un poco tarde para arreglar las cosas con ella, porque ya tiene la mente puesta en todo lo que es tuyo.*

*Ester Si ese se piensa que me va a poder seguir tratando de la forma que me ha tratado, se las va a tener que ver conmigo. A mí no me mandan al carajo cuando a él se le antoja. Si no fuera por mí, él hoy no sería nadie.*

*Mónica Me imagino que todo el pueblo está enterado.*

*Ester Y si lo está ¿qué? ¿Por qué se han cruzado todos de brazos, y dale que cuchichear? Todos piensan que a Ester Cisnero, con su sangre de gitana, no le toca lo que se merece. Todos piensan que ella tiene una cierta noción de las cosas, la que hizo su vida en una casilla al lado del pantano. Todos piensan que dio un paso adelante por llevarse a Cartago Kilbride a su cama. Todos piensan que sabían que eso nunca duraría. Bueno, están equivocados. Cartago es mío para siempre o hasta que yo decida que no es más mío. Yo soy la que elige y descarta, no él, y por cierto ninguno de ustedes. Y no ando con la cola entre las piernas solo porque cierta gentuza me quiere fuera de su camino.*

*Mónica Ahora estás enojada y no podés pensar claramente.*

*Ester Si él hubiera vuelto, estaríamos bien. Si sólo pudiera tenerlo unos días para mí solita, sin nadie metiendo las narices por donde no se debe.*

*Mónica Ester, él te dejó y no va a volver.*

*Ester Ah, vos pensás que conocés todo de mí y de Cartago. Bueno, no es así. Hay cosas mías y de Cartago que nadie sabe excepto nosotros dos. Y no les estoy hablando de amor. El amor es para los niños y los idiotas. Nuestro lazo es más fuerte, somos como dos rocas, machacándonos el uno con el otro y quizá eso nos hace mas unidos.*

*Mónica Esas son cosas que te metés en la cabeza, al tipo ni le importás, si no ¿por qué anda haciendo lo que hace?*

*Ester Mi vida no tiene rumbo sin él.*

*Mónica Estás hablando en acertijos.*

*Ester Cartago sabe de lo que estoy hablando – Supongo que debería enterrar a Ala Negra antes de que se despierte Josefina y lo vea (Se empieza a alejar).*

*Mónica Te vendré a ver en un ratito, te traigo el almuerzo, te ayudo a hacer las valijas.*

*Ester Acá nadie va a hacer las valijas.*

*Salen las dos en direcciones opuestas.*

## Notes

1 I would like to express my gratitude to Dr Aoife Monks for introducing me to the theatre of Marina Carr.

2 Patricia Novillo-Corvalán is a lecturer at Birkbeck College, University of London.

3 Yet as much as theatre translation becomes an exercise in rewriting that transforms an original and situates it within a new context, it also aims to stretch – however slightly – the limits of the target language through its contact with the original, as well as to preserve the ‘essence’ of the original.

4 The upper case is Borges’s.

5 Marina Carr gave her blessing to my rendering of Ghost Fancier as Fantasma Galante: ‘I love fantasma galante. It sounds amazing and captures exactly what the ghost fancier is’ (email correspondence, 20 May 2009).

## References

- Benjamin, Walter, ‘The Task of the Translator’, trans. by Harry Zohn in *The Translation Studies Reader*, ed. by Lawrence Venuti (London & New York: Routledge, 2001), pp.15-25).



- Borges, Jorge Luis, *Inquisiciones* (Buenos Aires: Seix Barral, 1993).
- *Textos recobrados*, vol. 1 (Buenos Aires: Emecé, 1997).
- *Selected Non-Fictions*, ed. by Eliot Weinberger (New York: Viking, 1999).
- Carr, Marina, *Plays 1: Low in the Dark, The Mai, Portia Coughlan, By the Bog of Cats...* (London: Faber & Faber, 1999).
- *The Cordelia Dream* (London: Faber & Faber, 2008).
- Harris, Claudia, 'Rising Out of the Miasmal Mists: Marina Carr's Ireland' in *The Theatre of Marina Carr: 'before rules was made'*, ed. by Cathy Leeney and Anna McMullan (Dublin: Carysfort Press, 2003), pp.216-32).
- Leeney, Cathy and McMullan Anna, 'Introduction' in *The Theatre of Marina Carr: 'before rules was made'*, (see Harris), pp.xv-xxvii.
- Leeney Cathy, 'Ireland's 'exiled' women playwrights: Teresa Deevy and Marina Carr' in *The Cambridge Companion to Twentieth-Century Irish Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp.150-63).
- Levine, Suzanne Jill, *The Subversive Scribe: Translating Latin American Fiction* (Saint Paul, Minn: Graywolf Press, 1991).
- McDonald, Marianne, 'The Irish and Greek Tragedy' in *Amid Our Troubles: Irish Versions of Greek Tragedy*, ed. by Marianne McDonald and J. Michael Walton (London: Methuen, 2002), pp.37-86.
- McGuinness, Frank, 'Introduction' in *The Dazzling Dark: New Irish Plays: Selected and Introduced by Frank McGuinness* (London: Faber & Faber, 1996), pp.ix-xii.
- Novillo-Corvalán, Patricia, 'Jorge Luis Borges, Translator of Penelope', *James Joyce Broadsheet* 79 (2008), 1.
- Richards, Shaun, 'Plays of (ever) changing Ireland' in *The Cambridge Companion to Twentieth-Century Irish Drama* (see Leeney), pp.1-17.
- Russell, Richard, 'Talking with Ghosts of Irish Playwrights Past: Marina Carr's *By the Bog of Cats...*', *Comparative Drama* 40.2 (2006), 149-68).
- Steiner, George, *The Death of Tragedy* (London: Faber & Faber, 1961).
- Sternlicht, Sanford, 'Introduction' in *New Plays from the Abbey Theatre: Volume Two 1996-1998*, ed. by Judy Friel and Sanford Sternlicht (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2001), pp.ix-xviii.
- Sihra, Melissa, 'Introduction: Figures at the Window', in *Women in Irish Drama: A Century of Authorship and Representation*, ed. by Melissa Sihra, foreword by Marina Carr (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2007), pp.1-22.
- 'The House of Woman and the Plays of Marina Carr', in *Women in Irish Drama: A Century of Authorship and Representation*, ed. by Melissa Sihra (see Sihra), pp.201-18).

