

Bogs and the Irish Postcolonial Gothic, 1890-2010

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

English

Department of English and Film Studies
University of Alberta

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Abstract

This dissertation examines how bogs are represented in Irish literature and culture between 1890 and 2010. Bogs – a type of wetland topography similar to mires or fens – are visually deceptive, physically volatile, and conceptually elusive. Bogs sprawl across Ireland and are often associated with history and culture as much as they are with geography and biology. For many Irish writers the bog evinces important sets of concerns: modernization and the environment, nationalism and haunting, mapping and bog bodies, and gender and neocolonialism. This study approaches the bog through a critical paradigm called the postcolonial Gothic. Bogs are unions of opposites and, because of this simultaneity, Irish writers use bogs as both terrestrial (real and earthly) and symbolic (imaginative and conceptual) spaces to explain fissures in postcolonial politics through conventions of the Gothic form. Irish writers use bogs because they are sites of interplay and disjunction and they function as seemingly contrary representational spaces that never quite mold into a single, definite meaning. Moving chronologically, this study covers a variety of works from Bram Stoker’s *The Snake’s Pass* (1890), Frank O’Connor’s “Guests of the Nation” (1931), Seán Ó Faoláin’s “A Meeting” (1937) to Seamus Heaney’s bog poetry and prose (1966-1980). It ends with a discussion of Marina Carr’s *By the Bog of Cats...* (1998) and Deirdre Kinahan’s *Bog Boy* (2010). This study employs a diverse historical and cultural scope and examines both men and women, Catholics and Protestants, nationalists and non-nationalists, and canonical and non-canonical writers in five literary genres representing the novel, short fiction, drama, poetry, and prose, thus testifying to the pervasiveness, range, and tenacity of the bog’s allure.

Preface

As required by the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research at the University of Alberta, I acknowledge that a much earlier version of Chapter One of this thesis was published as Derek Gladwin, "The Bog Gothic: Bram Stoker's 'Carpet of Death' and Ireland's Horrible Beauty," *Gothic Studies* 16.1 (2014): 39-54 (submitted in 2011). In addition, an earlier version of Chapter Four of this thesis was published as Derek Gladwin, "Staging the Trauma of the Bog in Marina Carr's *By the Bog of Cats...*," *Irish Studies Review* 19.4 (2011): 387-400. It is important to note that only very short sections of both articles made it into this final thesis document, and what portions were kept the ideas and language were significantly revised.

Acknowledgements

In a project such as this – spanning over several years – there are many people who have provided support and guidance throughout the process. I am grateful for the funding I received upon entering the doctoral program in the Department of English and Film Studies at University of Alberta in 2010. The Graduate Chair at the time, Teresa Zackodnick, offered guidance when applying for the Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarship through the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. I acknowledge and grateful for Vanier's generous funding that sustained important research travel and concentrated periods of time to complete this project. I also received generous support from the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, the Department of English and Film Studies, and the Faculty of Arts for further research and travel funding.

In addition to institutions, there were numerous individuals who made this project possible. I want to ultimately thank my supervisor, Rob Brazeau, for his initial interest in advising this project and for his ongoing assistance and direction throughout the process. I also want to thank my two readers – Garry Watson and Stephen Slemon – for delivering timely comments and helpful suggestions along the way. I would also like to thank Cecily Devereux for chairing the defence, and to Jeremy Caradonna for serving as one of the external examiners. Additionally, I owe a huge thanks to Claire Connolly (University College Cork) for serving as my primary external examiner. Other integral people in the Department of English and Film Studies (faculty, administrative, and graduate students) offered various threads of support throughout this process: Corrinne Harol, Imre Szeman, Jerry White, Dianne Chisholm, Lisa Szabo-Jones, Libe García Zarranz, Ashley Dryburg, Camille Van der Marel, and Brianna Wells. Lastly, I owe a great deal of gratitude to Kim Brown, who kept everything in order and always responded to my queries in a timely and professional way.

The completion of this project went beyond my network at University of Alberta. I discussed this project and its possible directions with the following people in Canada, Ireland, and the U.K. during summer research programs, conferences, and seminars: Danine Farquharson, Kelly Sullivan, James Fairhall, Moynagh Sullivan, Ellen McWilliams, and Christine Cusick. I would also like to acknowledge the Keough-Naughton Institute for Irish Studies at the University of Notre Dame, Dublin, for providing financial support to attend multiple IRISH SEMINARS. I also want to recognize the Canadian Association for Irish Studies for professional development opportunities throughout my doctoral degree.

Lastly, I wish to thank my extended family for their ongoing support of my academic pursuits. I am also grateful to my two cats – Buster Keaton and Queen Maeve – for serving as constant companions throughout the writing process. I would finally like to thank my lovely partner, Patricia Barkaskas, for enduring a long and difficult period of writing and re-writing. Her love and encouragement remains unsurpassed.

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INTRODUCTION

Indeterminate Bogs and the Irish Postcolonial Gothic

Bogland is an obstructive, argumentative, quibbling, contentious terrain; it demands step-by-step negotiations. (5)

– Tim Robinson, *Connemara: Listening to the Wind*

Viscous landscapes evince a dangerously mesmeric attraction. (77)

– Catherine Wynne, *The Colonial Conan Doyle*

Conceptualizing the Boggyness of Bogs

This dissertation is about bogs – exceptionally numinous and representational terrains in Irish literature and culture. Bogs, as a type of wetland (mires, morasses, swamps, lagoons, fens, and sloughs), are a “halfway world,” neither exclusively water nor land, and yet “part of both” (B. Coles and J. Coles 151). Because of their liminality, bogs are difficult to write about in definitive terms. As unformed landmasses, bogs sprawl across many parts of Ireland and are often associated with culture, politics, and history as much as they are with geography and biology. On the surface, a bog appears to be firm land. And yet, it does not provide solid footing and historically accounts for untimely deaths through drowning and asphyxiation. Bogs also shift without warning, almost like an avalanche, squashing and suffocating anyone or anything in their paths. In this way, bogs are visually deceptive, physically volatile, and conceptually elusive. The doubling quality of the bog – paradoxically both solid and liquid – resists obvious categorization and therefore management, organization, and control. For example, bogs are simultaneously limited and limitless, yielding and unyielding, canny and uncanny, stable and unstable, ordered and disordered, known and

unknown, political and apolitical, spatial and indeterminate, and temporal and atemporal. In the Iron Age, bogs were considered to be gateways to other worlds and therefore places of communication with spirits (Sanders 6). The related metaphor of bogs as doors or gateways signals their transitional qualities, linking two worlds as one even as these worlds are thought to coexist as separate spaces. As the epigraphs from Catherine Wynne and Tim Robinson intimate, wetland terrains (bogs in particular) are both attractive and dangerous because of their viscous qualities, distinct and yet integrated. They are also contentious terrains that demand careful and critical attention.

This study originated from a curiosity as to why the bog topography continually allures, seduces, and draws Irish Gothic writers to its marshy grounds. On the surface, one could deduce that recurring macabre descriptions of bogs were popularized in culture, but bogs' uncanny qualities – supernatural, ambiguous, eerie – do more than merely invite popular attention.¹ The images of bogs somehow enable something to happen in and around creative representation that compel sustained critical attention. How do we critically frame a study about bogs when they are so conceptually and physically deceptive? Looking deeper, I wanted to investigate why bogs in Ireland are often associated with both Gothic aesthetics and politics of colonization.

Bogs belong to the Gothic because they haunt other forms of political or historical literary representation. According to Irish Gothic scholar Jarlath

¹ There are many uses of the Gothic uncanny, some of which I will address more fully in Chapter One through Freud's "Uncanny." When used as a general term, I refer to the Oxford English Dictionary definition: weird, mysterious, unexplainable, and supernatural. The uncanny is also considered a combination of opposing qualities, such as attraction and repulsion. For a comprehensive study, see Nicholas Royle's *The Uncanny* (2003).

Killeen, “What is peculiarly ‘Irish’ about the Gothic tradition is that it emerged from a geographical zone which was defined as weird and bizarre. Indeed, Ireland as a whole was identified as a Gothic space” (“Irish Gothic” n. pag.). Killeen’s description provides a productive starting point for my own study because he recognizes historical links between Gothic production and the geographical spaces represented in certain works. Furthermore, these Gothic spaces relate to Ireland as a whole. Moving away from the totalizing concept that Ireland represents a certain kind of definable “Gothic space,” my study investigates how the bog elucidates this “bizarre” geographical zone through literature and culture. Why are writers seemingly compelled to write about bogs as they explore political ruptures in Irish history over the last one hundred and twenty-five years? For certain writers, bogs elicit both postcolonial and Gothic associations. The reason for this is that representations of bogs allow for certain slippages, or purposeful confusions, to occur – between memory and history or modernization and tradition, for example – by writers wanting to interrogate Irish political history. Bogs are, as the geographer Diane Meredith indicates, “profoundly ambiguous landscapes” (“Hazards” 319), and their ambiguity is what makes them so compelling. Due to their uncanny natures, bogs destabilize a sense of historical and spatial order, and this sense of destabilization resounds throughout Irish politics and history (Sanders 12). The destabilizing capacities of the bog provide an opening for Irish Gothic writers to explore colonial tensions and social struggle.

This dissertation contends that bogs are unions of opposites and, because of this, Irish writers use bogs as both terrestrial (real and earthly) and symbolic

(imaginative and conceptual) spaces to explain fissures in colonial politics. These seemingly contrary representational spaces of opposites also invite writers to address the complexity of political narratives through the Gothic form. The bog, as I argue more specifically in individual chapters, is ultimately a loaded symbol/image/vector to examine in light of other slippery and multilayered topics related to postcolonialism and the Gothic. Some of these topics include, modernization and the environment (Chapter One), nationalism and haunting (Chapter Two), mapping and bog bodies (Chapter Three), and gender and neocolonialism (Chapter Four). Ultimately, I argue that bogs are sites of both interplay and disjunction for cultural producers and demand a multifaceted way of approaching how they are represented in literature and culture. The imaginative and biological qualities of the bog – both contradictory and complementary – are what attract or seduce writers to incorporate them in important works. The bog is resonant for many reasons, but what gives it its energy and what underscores its prevalence is also what makes sure that it never quite collapses into a single, definitive meaning. The interstitial or anomalous phenomenon of the bog challenges clear representations of it in literature because it undermines binaries that are ensconced in culture (Hurley, “Abject” 139).

Theorizing my understanding of bogs a bit further, I suggest they are not oppositional sites in terms of traditional either/or binaries. Rather, I argue bogs are sites that both terrestrially and imaginatively create what the postmodern geographer Edward Soja theorizes as “Thirdspace” – a flexible way of thinking about fluctuating ideas, events, appearances and representations, and how these

affect the material and perceptual ways geographical spaces change (2).

Thirdspace serves as a helpful paradigm for understanding bogs in pluralistic and multifocal ways instead of through a singular or dualistic totalizing analysis.

When looking at the bog in this way, we can move away from, or at least challenge, what Edward Said warned as “the binary oppositions dear to the nationalist and imperialist enterprise” (*Culture* xxiv). Soja’s notion of “both/and also logic,” as he explains in his book *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places* (1996), offers an alternative way to view space beyond the closed logic of either/or, and it does so without privileging one over the other, with the “also” reverberating back to disrupt the implicit closure in two dimensional either/or logic (7). Soja’s articulation of “both/and also logic,” or what I am calling unions/simultaneity of opposites, helps theorize the qualities of the bog in order to demonstrate that there is a critical exchange that moves beyond a limited one- or two-dimensionality and to a limitless multidimensionality of geographical spaces (5).

The concept of Thirdspace helps us conceive of a specific geography with imaginative as well as physical qualities. With the bog there is a special privileging of a certain image/structure of metaphoric association, but this association comes about through the seemingly contradictory biological qualities of the wetland. The bog has not been previously associated with the notion of Thirdspace, but Soja’s theory nevertheless offers a useful introductory remark to help conceive of the both/and unification of opposites underpinning my own

conceptualization of the bog represented in literary culture.² Writers often draw on, consciously and unconsciously, the both/and relationships inherent in the bog to syncretise discrete or opposite ideas and images to produce a rich and complexity.

The repeated inclusion of bogs in Irish Gothic literature is not coincidental to the politics of colonization. Rather, representations of bogs are included, consciously or not, by certain Irish writers as a way of explaining some of the oppositions related to both colonization and the Gothic – such as themes of political instabilities, transgressions, hauntings of the returning past, or even the confusion between history and memory – thereby forming the postcolonial Gothic (outlined in the third section of this Introduction). As literary critic Catherine Wynne acknowledges, the “sodden grounds” of the bog “mirror the colonial landscape” (*Colonial Conan Doyle* 77). Wynne briefly discusses these landscapes within the context of the late nineteenth century in connection with the writings of Arthur Conan Doyle, but wetlands also remain associated with the colonial project and its aftermath into twentieth and twenty-first centuries in Ireland. This dissertation separates itself from previous studies by focusing entirely on the bog

² It is important to note here that the postcolonial theorist Homi Bhabha also discusses a concept of “third space” that is quite different than Soja’s “Thirdspace.” Bhabha’s third space connects to his other theories of hybridity and liminality, which all theorize alternative “locations” in cultures affected by colonization. In *The Location of Culture* (1994), Bhabha conceptualizes third space as an alternative linguistic (based upon Lacanian theory) and cultural space of “otherness.” Bhabha explains, “but for me the importance of hybridity is not to be able to trace two original moments from which the third emerges, rather hybridity to me is the ‘third space’ which enables other positions to emerge. This third space displaces the histories that constitute it, and sets up new structures of authority, new political initiatives” (211). Bhabha’s third space functions as a linguistic and temporal dimension in culture, focused on the “temporal space of enunciation” when two cultures overlap (55), whereas Soja’s Thirdspace remains linked to physical spaces or geographies. Soja’s theory of Thirdspace serves as a more effective introductory remark for imagining the bog’s unusual geographical and cultural characteristics. Hereafter, I will refer to my own notion of how the bog functions as a physical/symbolic space as a union/simultaneity of opposites.

while investigating specific Irish Gothic works in the so-called long twentieth century, from the 1880s to the present. Investigating the bog as a Gothic landscape used as a setting and symbol in literature highlights the relationships among landforms, national identity, and culture, and therefore contributes to an understanding of a multitudinous space that enables writers and readers another way to conceive of political histories tied to specific geographies.

Only a few studies have examined, in part, how bogs specifically relate to colonization, literature, and culture. Wynne briefly examines bogs as “Colonial Topographies” in nineteenth-century literature, though she often treats the moors in England as synonymous with bogs in Ireland. Wynne contends that “the figure of the bog” is a common theme in nineteenth-century literature (*Colonial Conan Doyle* 70). The literary and cultural critic Terry Eagleton recognizes, “Objects preserved in bogs are caught in a kind of living death, and this sense of death as part of life has been a theme of traditional Irish culture” (*The Truth* 31). Eagleton implicitly underscores the union of death and life as part of the uncanny qualities of the bog. While he only briefly remarks about how bogs have become infused in Irish culture, he focuses on their relationship with popular culture and lore. In an archaeo-cultural outlook, Karen Sanders acknowledges, “There is something fundamentally contradictory about bogs. They are solid *and* soft, firm *and* malleable, wet *and* dry; they are deep, dark, and dangerous; but they are also mysterious, alluring, and seductive” (*Bodies in the Bog* 7; original emphasis). While Sanders here alludes to the bog’s simultaneity of opposites, her otherwise incisive study on the “archeological imagination” of bog bodies does not

explicitly define the importance of this dynamic and why it draws people (writers, artists, tourists, etc.) to a bog's muddy waters. Despite their insights, none of these scholars focus exclusively on literary representations of bogs or how Irish writers use bogs to decode recurrent connections they have had with colonial politics. Other studies of Irish bogs mainly focus on geographical, biological, anthropological, or archaeological analyses.³ I expand upon this somewhat narrow body of work and demonstrate, in a full-length study, how bogs can be profitably examined through Irish postcolonial Gothic literature and culture.

The other aim of this project is to examine literary responses to four tumultuous periods in modern and contemporary Irish history between 1890 and 2010. A study about bogs in Irish colonial literature and culture could conceivably begin in 1596 with Edmond Spenser's essay "A View of the State of Ireland," or in 1780 with Arthur Young's travelogue *Tour of Ireland*, or even in 1801 with Maria Edgeworth's novel *Castle Rackrent*. However, I chose to begin with Stoker because the 1890s serve as a transitional period in modern Irish history that, on the one hand, concludes decisive issues in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, such as imbalanced land ownership and Anglo-Irish rule, and, on the other hand, anticipates a shift in political power and a redefinition of national concerns in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

This study is arranged chronologically, beginning with Bram Stoker's *The Snake's Pass* (1890), which was written just after the Land Wars of the 1870s and

³ See David Bellamy's *The Wild Boglands* (1986), Peter Foss and Catherine O'Connell's "Bogland: Study and Utilization" (1997), Diane Meredith's "Hazards in the Bog" (2002), Barry Raftery's "The Archaeology of Irish Bogs" (2003), Stuart McLean's "'To Dream Profoundly': Irish Boglands and the Imagination of Matter" (2007), and Karen Sanders's *Bodies in the Bog* (2009).

1880s. Second, I examine Frank O'Connor's "Guests of the Nation" (1931) and Sean Ó Faoláin's "A Meeting" (1937), both of which reflect back to the revolutionary period during the Independence/Anglo-Irish War (1919-1921). Third, I investigate Seamus Heaney's bog poems and prose from 1966-1980 that address, in part, the sectarian conflict known as the "Troubles" in Northern Ireland. I conclude with Marina Carr's *By the Bog of Cats...* (1998) and Deirdre Kinahan's *Bog Boy* (2010), two plays that bookend the Celtic Tiger years in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. This study employs a diverse historical and cultural scope and examines both men and women, Catholics and Protestants, nationalists and non-nationalists, and canonical and non-canonical writers in five literary genres representing the novel, short fiction, drama, poetry, and prose, thus testifying to the pervasiveness, range, and tenacity of the bog's allure. To this end, the physical and imaginative topography of the bog is one overlooked key to understanding why and how Irish Gothic writers have responded to specific issues in four periods of postcolonial history.

Terrestrial and Imaginative Qualities of the Irish Bog

In Irish Gothic literature, bogs continue to evoke the mysterious, mesmerizing, and macabre. Therefore, it is vital to interrogate and elaborate upon the physical and symbolic elements of the bog before charting the ways in which I situate my study within previous postcolonial Gothic criticism. A considerable amount of Gothic fiction is set on opaque landscapes with unclear demarcations between the known and unknown. Fred Botting acknowledges, "Gothic landscapes are

desolate, alienating and full of menace” (2). Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert similarly remarks that the Gothic is continually “linked to colonial settings, characters, and realities as frequent embodiments of the forbidding and frightening” (229). As indicated previously, it is both the real (or biological) and the imagined (or symbolic) qualities of the bog that create a union of opposition attracting writers to its deathly waters. Such a dynamic creates unclear, menacing, and forbidding qualities that associate the bog with the Gothic. Over the years, Gothic critics have to some extent identified these “undefined zones,” specifically as wetlands, in British and Irish literature. Some notable examples of literary texts with wetlands as a central image include: the Yorkshire moors in Emily Brontë’s *Wuthering Heights* (1847), Egdon Heath in Thomas Hardy’s *Return of the Native* (1887), Dartmoor in Arthur Conan Doyle’s *Hound of the Baskervilles* (1902), the morass-like no place in Samuel Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot* (1953), and the East Anglian fens in Graham Swift’s *Waterland* (1982). While these works exemplify the contradictory qualities of wetlands and the way they are situated in the Gothic form, they do not fit into my study for two simple reasons: they are not set in Ireland and they do not exclusively focus on bogs.

When examining how certain Irish writers use the bog, it is also necessary to overview some of its biological or physical attributes in order to define some terms and provide a useful framework to understand the foundation of my argument. In Ireland, the word “bog” is defined as “soft ground” and is derived from the Irish word *bogach* (Foss and O’Connell 184). Bogs are a shorthand name for biological products of peatlands, which are a specific type of wetlands that

share some similarities with moors and fens. Even though they often appear to be solid ground, bogs can be comprised of anywhere between 85% and 98% water (McLean, "To Dream" 61). Peatlands are a special type of terrestrial wetland ecosystem; they are distinguishable from other wetlands by annual accumulation of peat. There are two general types of peatlands: fens and bogs (also called peat bogs or bogland).⁴ Fens are nutrient-rich and somewhat fertile peatlands, whereas bogs have higher acidity and, as a result, tend to be nutrient-deficient (Doyle and Ó Críodáin 79). While fens tend to be more prevalent in eastern England, as in East Anglia where Swift sets *Waterland*, bogs are found more often in Ireland, Denmark, and Finland. In fact, bogs currently cover one-sixth (1.34 million hectares) of the total land area in Ireland, which is unparalleled in any other country in the European Union except for Finland (Feehan 168). Peat consists of plant and animal remains that were alive and flourishing on the surface of peatlands; after they die and eventually decompose, they become part of the composition of the peatlands due to the waterlogged, anaerobic (oxygen deficient) environment. Since the production of animal and plant matter exceeds decomposition capabilities, partially decomposed organic matter known as peat builds up over time (Doyle and Ó Críodáin 79). This plant and animal material

⁴ Two specific types of bogs are found in Ireland: raised and blanket. Raised bogs are found mainly in lower regions where there is less drainage. In Ireland, the middle part of the country, known simply as the Midlands, contains the vast majority of raised bogs due to its flat, treeless, and low-lying topography. One of the characteristics of raised bogs is their dome shaped centre. Raised bogs originally began as lakes, but then gave way to fen vegetation about 9,000 years ago, and finally turned into bogs about 7,000 years ago. This is why the depths of raised bogs usually far exceed the lowest point of blanket bogs. The average raised bog is about seven meters deep due to preexisting lakebeds below (Feehan 170). Raised bogs, because of their accessibility, are also the sites of the majority of turf removal for fuel. Blanket bogs, on the other hand, are located in higher elevations (above 200 m) near oceans where there is a significant amount of drainage and consistent rainfall throughout the year (Doyle and Ó Críodáin 79-80). Blanket bogs are located in areas of elevated topographies, particularly in the counties of Galway, Mayo, Wicklow, Kerry, and Donegal.

accumulates over thousands of years, coming to form layers of peat that preserve anything found in a bog.

The anaerobic environment of bogs preserves many objects found in them, including ancient butter, oaks, cultural artifacts (weapons and valuables), and bodies, among other things. In this way, artifacts found in bogs are also holders of cultural history that generate memory through both material reality and symbolism. “As the living bog grows,” according to biologists Peter Foss and Catherine O’Connell, “it buries and conserves anything in its path, including the early pine woodland and ‘bog oaks’ often exposed by turf cutters at the cut-edge of bogs” (186). In the bog bodies exhibit at the National Museum of Ireland in Dublin, for instance, one can see how hair and fingerprints are still preserved on corpses over two thousand years old. Bogs also contain artifacts from specific cultures at various points in history. But unlike customary archaeological digs, the wetland archaeologies of bogs preserve these artifacts with a greater distinctiveness in terms of their origins, thereby containing and producing cultural memory – a way of accessing alternate forms of history through society and culture. Particular artifacts – such as the bog bodies that I will discuss in Chapter Three in relation to Heaney’s poems and prose – are both material and imaginative. Sanders argues that in multiple ways bog bodies “negotiate the liminality that comes with having to travel between their material reality as archaeological artifacts (mummies) and the temporality that comes with their humanness” (9). In this sense, bogs record and collect memories of the material and cultural human past, thereby serving as useful tools for writers to account for

re-visitations of certain histories, such as the bog bodies and the discriminatory way in which many people were initially killed before being deposited in bogs. The archaeologist Barry Raftery contends, “In the waterlogged recesses of the dark and silent peat, because of the anaerobic conditions, the story of Ireland’s past is preserved for us, often in startling detail, a detail which has long since vanished on dryland sites” (202). The history of colonial occupation is so strongly preserved in the anaerobic environment of bogs – through metaphor, symbol, and material objects (e.g., bog bodies and vestiges of battles) – that it continues to unfold in the present.

The specific biological makeup of bogs and their composition and positioning in the landscape often leads to greater understanding of how they are used as images in cultural works. Like many other topographies in Ireland, bogs have changed over time in connection with differing land-use systems and cultural practices surrounding them. Bogs remain both a fuel source and a cultural landscape.⁵ The bog continues to be etched in Irish history as both a geographical and human record more than in any other European country except perhaps Denmark (due to the prevalence of bog bodies) (Feehan 168). In fact, the word *bog* in Danish literally means “book” (Sanders 17), which explains the multitudinous ways that the landform can be read/interpreted/imagined and then used by writers in literature and culture. Some of the major areas in Ireland that

⁵ One of the most common uses for bogs in Ireland is fuel. The decomposed peat material is retrieved out of the bog either by hand with a spade (called a *slane* in Irish) or with a small tractor. While cutting turf by hand is still widespread in economically depressed rural areas such as the Midlands, mechanized peat extraction has become the predominant method for larger industrial operations. The removed peat, called turf, is then dried in the oxygen rich air on the banks of the turf-cutting veins. After the turf has dried, it is stored indoors and eventually sold or used for fuel to burn in Irish households or public houses for heat or cooking (Doyle and Ó Críodáin 97-98).

still contain bogs are commonly used as settings in literature, film, and photography. For example, the fictional setting for Stoker's *The Snake's Pass* is actually located in County Mayo, a region home to some of the largest areas of mountain blanket bogs in Ireland.⁶ Carr's *By the Bog of Cats...* and Kinahan's *Bog Boy* are both set on opposite ends of the Irish Midlands, a geographical area containing Ireland's largest section of raised bogs, including the famous Bog of Allen.⁷ Moreover, Heaney's bog poems allude to some of the raised bogs in Co. Derry, Northern Ireland. He even attempts to explain the biological construction of bogs in his poem "Kinship":

This centre holds
and spreads,
sump and seedbed,
a bag of waters

and a melting grave.
The mothers of autumn
sour and sink,
ferments of husk and leaf

deepen their ochres.

Mosses come to a head,

⁶ Henceforth, counties in Ireland will be labeled with the widely used abbreviation "Co."

⁷ In fact, the Bog of Allen still resonates in the Irish literary archive due to the closing line of Joyce's short story "The Dead" in *Dubliners* (1914) describing the "softly falling" snow on "the dark central plain" of the vast bog (233).

heather unseeds,
brackens deposit

their bronze.

This is the vowel of earth
dreaming its root
in flowers and snow,

mutation of weathers
and seasons,
a windfall composing
the floor it rots into.

I grew out of all this
like a weeping willow
inclined to

the appetites of gravity. (*Opened Ground* 123)

The closing stanza specifically reveals how Heaney “grew out of all this” boggy environment, forging a cultural connection with the previous five stanzas that describe the physical qualities of bogs.

Irish Sculptor Remco de Fouw, a contributing artist to *Boglands: A Sculptors' Symposium* in 1990, also explains his own experiences when probing the depths of the bog through landscape art and culture:

To me it's a place that has a terrific presence by itself – this black primordial goo [...] There's a tremendous history there too. I suppose because the vegetation has been deposited over thousands of years [...] like a little store-house of history [...] The bog is such a black soup – almost like a metaphor for the subconscious [...] so I'm trying to make a connection between the sleeping bog and an aspect of ourselves possibly. (qtd. in McLean, "To Dream" 61)

The physical qualities described here by de Fouw, as much as the imaginative or symbolic, inform how and why Irish writers and artists use bogs in their works. In fact, de Fouw demonstrates how human and biological elements blend together as an overarching conception of the luminousness of bogs.

Eagleton offers a few remarks about how bogs relate to the Irish cultural imagination. In *The Truth About the Irish* (2002), a book mainly aimed at tourists and mass audiences, he briefly comments:

If bogs have haunted the Irish imagination, it may be partly because they reveal the past as still present. With a bog, and its buried contents, the past is no longer behind you, but palpably beneath your feet. A secret history is stacked just a few feet below the modern world in which you're standing. This, in fact, has been one way in which the history-plagued Irish have sometimes conceived of their past – not as a set of

events over and done with, but as something still alive in the present. (31)

Bogs have indeed “haunted the Irish imagination” through their uncanny ability to address and redress history in the present. Postcolonial critic Luke Gibbons conceives of the bog similarly to Eagleton when he argues, “The secret disclosed at the bottom of the bog represents indeed the return of the repressed for colonial rule” (“Hysterical Hatred” 15). While part of the allure, it is not only Eagleton’s allusion to or Gibbons direct association with Sigmund Freud’s idea of the return of the repressed in Irish history that induces writers to engage with the bog in their works. The bog’s ability to conceal and reveal elements of history offers writers a fitting literary image for exploration.

The image and structure of the bog provide ways to access both past and present, not only as an awakening to a repressed state, but also as a way to address previously unexamined aspects of history. For example, it is not simply a way to decode history that compels one to explore the bog. It is the bog’s ability to function as atemporal and non-teleological, while at the same time allowing the opposite to occur – through stratified layers of peat, researchers can explore the historical record through material artifacts. Accounts of western history usually move from A to B in a linear fashion. Bogs disrupt this linearity by forging opposites in unity, both distinct from one another and yet occurring simultaneously, and create a multifocal space that disturbs temporality. This effect creates the slippages in history and memory that I will be referring to throughout this study. Time and history can even be proven by carbon dating the organic

matter in bogs. But time, in a cultural context, becomes much less clear. In this sense, repression is not found “at the bottom of the bog,” as Gibbons suggests, because the bog is bottomless and has no centre. In his poem “Bogland,” Heaney reminds us “the wet centre is bottomless” (41). Centre, as viewed by British imperialism, implies periphery, which then suggests that a totalizing binary structure exists. The bog resists this structuring by functioning as another type of space, whether we conceptualize it as Thirdspace or a union of opposites.

Writers who engage with bogs often employ ghosts and hauntings as Gothic conventions because they too exist in spaces that resist and redefine time. The biological makeup of bogs helps explain culture’s penchant to classify them as Gothicized sites, where the union of the scientific and supernatural merge to create mysterious occurrences. According to Irish lore, the “Pooka” – a shape-shifter capable of morphing into various forms – allegedly materializes only on bogs. Another Irish Gothic tale attempts to explain the distant lights that spontaneously appear in uninhabited locations on bogs. These lights represent a spirit known as the “Bog Sprite” or “Water Sheerie” that cajoles wayward travellers out to their ultimately death on the bog (McLean, “To Dream Profoundly” 63). Myth credits this phenomenon to the “will-o’-the-wisps” (*ignis fatuus*), which are flickering lights that dance on the bog indicating malevolent spirits. Biologists, in contrast, claim that bogs produce several gases in the layer just below the surface that assist in the decomposition process. Two of these specific gases – methane (marsh gas) and phosphine – when exposed to oxygen can be highly flammable, and they often spontaneously combust on the surface of

bogs (Bellamy 19). In addition to this gaseous-induced combustion, bogs in Ireland contain over eleven species of carnivorous plants, including sundews, butterworts, bladderworts, and pitcher plants (Bellamy 20). Both literally and metaphorically, then, bogs are geographical zones of mystery; they are also territories of fear-inducing phenomena, consumption, and death. Gothic writers use these inexplicable horrors to support their own literary ends.

In sum, there are three qualities that lend to the bog's characterization of both a physical and imaginative Gothic site: anaerobic composition, fuel source, and gaseous state. The physical and symbolic elements enhance each other. For example, the lack of oxygen (anaerobic) in bogs induces biological preservation, which in turn generates conceptions about time, history, space, and memory. Bogs, as a fuel source, are consumed for heat and food and invoke hospitable or homely qualities (features that are fundamental to the Freudian Uncanny). Lastly, bogs emit gases, which contribute to supernatural interpretations about how they harbour malevolent, ghostly, and eerie manifestations. These three overlapping correlations between the physical and imaginative attributes of bogs exemplify some of the core reasons why Irish Gothic writers use bogs as representational spaces in postcolonial contexts.

Irish Postcolonial Gothic: A Critical Overview

The bog for Irish writers evinces a recurring set of concerns, and one of the more effective ways to elucidate these concerns is through the critical lens of the postcolonial Gothic. For Irish writers, exploring aspects of the bog and its

relationship to Irish culture and history serves as one way to answer some of the unsettled questions about colonial relations – answering through the Gothic mode as a way of speaking back to the colonial encounter, while also obliquely engaging with certain histories related to bogs. In order to provide some methodological form to this otherwise elusive or boggy topic, I draw from the critical vocabularies and techniques of two interpretive paradigms that are distinct and yet also overlapping in various ways. Similar to the qualities of bogs, both postcolonial and Gothic studies generate critical responses to opposing and yet complementary elements in cultural and historical texts. These two critical paradigms question assumptions about historical accuracy, determinate thinking, and power structures related to knowledge, the environment, family history, gender, and national identity.

Postcolonial and Gothic scholars alike are concerned with cultural and literary histories. The Gothic literary tradition, according to William Hughes and Andrew Smith, shares an intimate history with colonial projects, namely through representations of the self and other, the controllers and the repressed, and the subaltern and dominant outsider relationship (“Defining the Relationships” 1). For instance, the Gothic novel was quite popular during the decade of the French Revolution because writers responded to forms of resistance in other destabilized and occupied zones (Botting 3). Irish literary scholar Julian Moynahan maintains, “The Gothic seems to flourish in disrupted, oppressed, or underdeveloped societies, to give a voice to the powerless and unenfranchised, and even, at times, to subvert the official best intentions of its creators” (111). Gothic studies, like

postcolonial studies, identifies political and cultural debates surrounding territories and people of colonial occupation. Gothic studies also reworks, develops, and then challenges new forms of representation and readings to address the subaltern and dominant outsider relationship (Smith, *Gothic Literature* 8). Broadening the critical scope by overlapping Gothic and postcolonial studies into one mode of examination enhances both the generic study of the Gothic and the continual development of the postcolonial theoretical movement, thereby allowing for more specific forms of analysis drawn from commonalities in both critical paradigms (Hughes and Smith, “Defining the Relationships” 2).

In the literary and cultural Gothic form, writers have the flexibility to work with paired opposites or doubling, specifically in how they centralize material and imaginative spaces. For example, landscapes, houses, churches, nation, and bodies all double as real and imagined constructs in Gothic fiction. Chris Baldick, in the Introduction to *The Oxford Book of Gothic Tales* (2009), provides one of the more compelling definitions of the Gothic. For Baldick, a Gothic text contains “a fearful sense of inheritance in time with a claustrophobic sense of enclosure in space, these two dimensions reinforcing one another to produce an impression of sickening descent into disintegration” (xix). Baldick goes on to argue much more concisely that writers of the literary Gothic remain obsessed with old buildings and sites of human decay. These Gothic sites, “[d]oubling as both fictional setting and as dominant symbol,” he argues, “are simultaneously psychological and historical” (xx). Baldick’s definition indicates on some level why Gothic writers

turn to the bog as a fictional setting and prevailing symbol. The bog functions as a zone of enclosure and openness that generates temporal confusion. The tensions of opposites or “doubling” are why, I argue, Irish writers are continually drawn to the bog.

In addition, the Gothic form typically concentrates on themes of transgression and transition couched in ambiguity and instability. Such themes are often presented as way to rewrite history, question familial and political legitimacy, and excavate the hidden secrets from the vaults of society (Kilfeather, “The Gothic Novel” 83). Thus, the Gothic works as an interrogative or intransitive form of critical analysis (Watt 6). The Gothic, functioning as both a proper noun and an adjective, encompasses a wide range of cultural production across several centuries and begins with Horace Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto* (1764). Yael Shapira argues that the “notorious difficulty of defining the Gothic genre lies in its being at once highly formulaic and subject to great variability” (463). Such “variability” could be classified as “ambivalence,” which David Punter in his formative Gothic study *The Literature of Terror* (1980) claims to be one of the fundamental terms of the Gothic tradition (Smith, *Gothic Literature* 3). In this way, the ambiguities of the Gothic help to conceal other possible political motives for writers when addressing the various effects of colonization. Bogs function both biologically and metaphorically as ambiguous and continually misunderstood landforms – paralleling the Gothic’s formulaic and variable tendencies – and because of this effect they serve as a space for Gothic writers to explore and contest mainstream forms of political histories. Drawing from this

critical background, I argue depictions of the indeterminate bog effectively serve Irish Gothic writers as a response to the uncertainties and disjunctions associated with past or present colonial conditions.

Previous critical work on Irish Gothic literature and its association with British expansionism in Ireland mostly concentrates on eighteenth and nineteenth-century literature and culture. John Paul Riquelme recognizes, “Critics have yet to explore extensively the way in which elements of the Gothic tradition have become disseminated in the writings of the long twentieth century, from 1880 to the present” (5). Addressing this gap in scholarship, I show that the Gothic tradition remains relevant in the “long twentieth century” precisely because some of the residues of British colonization have yet to be resolved. Irish postcolonial scholar Seamus Deane has noted, “The territory of Ireland, with all its Gothic and all its nationalist graves, with all its estates and farms, its Land Acts and its history of confiscations, was in need of redefinition by the early years of the [twentieth] century” (“Production” 133). Colonial administrations in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries left Ireland in an uncertain position by the 1890s. Because the twentieth century witnessed the ostensible collapse of British imperialism in Ireland during the Irish War of Independence/Anglo-Irish War (1919-1921), the controversial relationship between Irish culture and colonization continues to be revisited and examined. More generally, criticism of twentieth-century Gothic studies, although still less examined than in previous centuries, is considered to be a “counter-narrative” to some of the “high” cultural movements in the century (Spooner, “Gothic” 38).

The broader literary and cultural directions of the postcolonial Gothic remain a relatively new and uncharted critical territory in need of further development.⁸ In fact, the postcolonial Gothic only develops as a critical paradigm in the early to mid-2000s. William Hughes and Andrew Smith, editors of *Empire and the Gothic: The Politics of Genre* (2003), were the first to fully recognize in a larger study that “postcolonialism explains the Gothic’s instabilities by other means” (12). In *The Gothic* (2003), David Punter and Glennis Byron maintain that some of the revealing characteristics of the postcolonial Gothic include: obfuscations of desire, oppression and confinement of the marginalized (especially through gender and race), revenants of imperialism, dislocation and disorientation, hauntings of ineradicable paths not taken, and impossible hybridities (54). A special issue on the postcolonial Gothic, in the journal *Gothic Studies* (also published in 2003), represents another one of the initial publications to conflate these two interpretive paradigms. In the Introduction, editors Hughes and Smith state:

There is a sense, though, in which the Gothic is, and has always been, *post*-colonial, and this is where, in the Gothic text, disruption accelerates into change, where the colonial

⁸ Prior to any real formation of a body of criticism known as postcolonial Gothic beginning in 2003, some scholars did consider ways of engaging with imperialism and the Gothic in literature. The most notable example would be the imperial Gothic, which is a subset of Gothic literature that focuses on geographical exploration of empire (Punter and Byron 45). Many imperial Gothic novels incorporate themes of the occult and spiritualism as a response to the anxieties that resulted in anticipation of and as an eventual result of the decline of the British Empire. Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* (1902) and H. G. Wells’ *The Island of Doctor Moreau* (1896) are two prime examples of imperial Gothic novels. Patrick Brantlinger’s *Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism, 1830-1914* (1988) remains the most substantive study to include a chapter on the imperial Gothic. For Brantlinger, “Imperial Gothic combines the seemingly scientific, progressive, often Darwinian ideology of imperialism with an antithetical interest in the occult” (227).

encounter – or the encounter which may be read or interpreted through the colonial filter – proves a catalyst to corrupt, to confuse or to redefine the boundaries of power, knowledge and ownership. (1; original emphasis)

Gothic writers speaks back to the colonial encounter through disrupting and redefining relationships of self and other, confinement and openness, control and repression, or even identifying the subaltern milieu and ubiquitous outsider culture (1). In this regard, the imbrication of the “Gothic” and the “postcolonial” serves as an effective way to address some historical layers and seeming contradictions in literary representations of bogs in Ireland.

A larger question here, one that I further explore in the following chapters, is why does the context of Ireland provide one of the more demonstrative examples of postcolonial Gothic? In addition, why do Irish Gothic writers engage with the current and residual politics of colonization? Applying a postcolonial Gothic paradigm to the Irish context brings together the critical work emerging from the “Gothic turn” in the 1970s and the Irish “postcolonial turn” in the 1980s.⁹ Gibbons argues that the literary Gothic provides a more reliable template for rewriting history than other recognized literary forms such as realism because

⁹ It is, however, important to note that the Irish Gothic as a critical mode of study is relatively contemporary and continues to garner more attention as the international popularity of Gothic studies rapidly expands. Only in the last forty years or so – paralleling the “Gothic turn” as a critical movement in the 1970s and the subsequent rise of the Irish Gothic as a specific form in the same period of time – have critics revisited the Gothic in Ireland and labelled it with the distinctive national marker “Irish Gothic.” The term Irish Gothic originated in 1972 when John Cronin categorized Somerville and Ross’s *An Irish Cousin* (1903) with what he called an “overlay of Irish Gothic” (qtd. in Kreilkamp, *The Anglo-Irish Novel* 118). Although Cronin’s distinction eventually became a specific subfield within the popular rise of Gothic studies during this same decade, Irish Gothic, through recurring tropes associated with Gothic literature in general, had been less formally recognized as a mode of writing since the eighteenth century.

it attempts to explain what has already been considered unknown or indefinable (*Transformations* 15). Gothic scholars investigate social disruptions and fractures in the social sphere, or explain instability by other means, but they are less interested in rewriting history than they are in highlighting and interrogating ruptures in history. These less-defined Gothic narratives do not rewrite or reform existing histories into other totalizing accounts. While exploring the unknown is equally as important as the known in forms such as realism or naturalism, the combination of the known/unknown – epitomized by the uncanny of the bog – illuminates a range of concerns. By the same token, this study documents tendencies by Gothic writers to expose moments of Irish colonial histories through literary representations of the bog. The literary and cultural texts I examine present the bog as both an unstable and stable topography of power and knowledge that further elucidates such concerns.

Despite some of the postcolonial Gothic critical output in the 2000s from Punter, Byron, Smith, and Hughes, a specific form of the Irish postcolonial Gothic has yet to be significantly charted as a critical medium. One exception is Jim Hansen, who locates the beginning of the Irish postcolonial Gothic (although he does not actually use this phrasing) with the 1990 publication of Stephen Arata's "The Occidental Tourist: *Dracula* and the Anxiety of Reverse Colonization." For Arata, Stoker's *Dracula* offers a poignant study of the political and cultural complexities within colonized Ireland (Hansen 8). In *Dracula's Crypt: Bram Stoker, Irishness, and the Question of Blood* (2002), conceivably another Irish postcolonial Gothic study, Joseph Valente scrutinizes Stoker's association with

Ascendency Protestants and simultaneous support of cultural nationalism. Arata and Valente serve as two examples of critics who have previously investigated connections between colonization and the Irish Gothic in the long twentieth century. However, critics have yet to articulate a specific form of Irish postcolonial Gothic scholarship. I also mention Arata's essay and Valente's book – as opposed to other similar studies that examine the relationship between colonization and the Irish Gothic, such as Jarlath Killeen's *Gothic Ireland: Horror and the Irish Anglican Imagination in the Long Eighteenth Century* (2005), Margot Gayle Backus' *The Gothic Family Romance: Heterosexuality, Child Sacrifice, and the Anglo-Irish Colonial Order* (1999), and Luke Gibbons' *Gaelic Gothic: Race, Colonization, and Irish Culture* (2004) – because Arata and Valente specifically engage with Stoker as a writer addressing late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century concerns. Killeen, Backus, and Gibbons, in contrast, focus exclusively on earlier periods of the Irish Gothic outside of the purview of my study.¹⁰ In addition, Stoker serves as an important writer because he almost singlehandedly transitioned the popularity of the Irish Gothic from the nineteenth

¹⁰ Gibbons' *Gaelic Gothic* represents the only work focused entirely on the "Gaelo-Catholic" Gothic as a subversive form of resistance. In his study, Gibbons turns to early forms of the Gothic ranging between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries to investigate racialization that dominated colonial representations of Irish culture. Gibbons argues that the dominant strain of anti-Catholic rhetoric in the eighteenth century accounted for the deep anxiety of racial difference embedded in the Irish Gothic. Such writers were largely Anglo-Irish. I footnote Gibbons' study here because as a postcolonial critic who often writes about the twentieth century *Gaelic Gothic* could be considered a foregrounding text to my own study. Unlike Gibbons, however, I do not locate the Catholic position as exclusive to the bog in Irish Gothic literature merely because the majority of writers engaging with the bog are Catholic. Gothic writers who happen to be Catholic do tend to dominate literary production in the twentieth century, particularly through political responses to systemic colonization and representations of rural sensibilities and the landscape. However, they are not the only group to examine disruptions, repressions, and hauntings associated with both the Gothic and postcolonization in Ireland. In addition to Stoker, Elizabeth Bowen and Samuel Beckett are two well-known Protestant writers who engage with themes related to the postcolonial Gothic.

into the twentieth century with the publication of *Dracula* (1897). Stoker serves as a dynamic figure who engages with the colonial project in provocative ways: as both a nationalist and supporter of Home Rule, Stoker's Protestant Anglo-Irish classification complicates what might initially appear to be a predictable relationship with Ireland. As I argue in Chapter One, it is Stoker's first novel *The Snake's Pass*, as opposed to *Dracula*, highlighting his paradoxical politics through the equally enigmatic bog.

Jim Hansen's *Terror and Irish Modernism: The Gothic Tradition from Burke to Beckett* (2009) constitutes the most extensive study of the Irish postcolonial Gothic to date. Even though *Terror and Irish Modernism* spans over two hundred years of Irish Gothic writing – from Edmond Burke to Samuel Beckett (as the title suggests) – its general thesis identifies the relationship between specific forms of modernism and the Gothic. Drawing from Adorno's theories of the dialectical, Hansen investigates the double bind “that observes how the dichotomous logic of colonial consciousness in Ireland actually produced Irish cultural identities that were structurally bipolar and, as a result, very often politically static” (11). This “irreducible doubleness” of Irish culture and literature, he argues, responds to empire, terror, and modernism (11). *Terror and Irish Modernism* informs my study because of its association with twentieth-century Ireland and its use of doubleness found in Irish postcolonial Gothic writings. Indeed, the “structurally bipolar” identities Hansen discusses are similar to the union of opposites that characterize and explain the phenomenon of the bog (a point I will address in Chapter Two). However, Hansen's argument for half of the

book scrutinizes nineteenth-century Gothic literature and for the other half attends to modernist writers such as James Joyce and Samuel Beckett. Thus, even though his study ends in the twentieth century, many of Hansen's concerns remain rooted in the nineteenth century with such Gothic writers as Charles Robert Maturin and Oscar Wilde. Although my study deals more with writers' responses to terrestrial and symbolic bog topographies pertaining to the postcolonial Gothic, as opposed to specific literary periods such as modernism, Hansen's book on Irish Gothic modernism provides an important critical framework for any project on the twentieth-century Irish postcolonial Gothic.

Arata, Valente, and Hansen all address recurring concerns with respect to anxieties and fears exemplified by Anglo-Irish Protestant and Catholic Irish cultures in the Irish Gothic archive from the 1890s forward. They successfully pinpoint how writers locate some of the disruptions and inconsistencies that directly relate to colonization in Ireland. Regardless, critics have yet to directly emphasize the importance of the Irish bog and its function as a postcolonial Gothic space. In fact, scholars of neither postcolonial nor Gothic studies have interrogated the bog as a key landscape in any great depth, particularly in twentieth-century texts, despite its ongoing presence in Irish cultural production. This study examines how Irish writers have responded to colonization both implicitly and explicitly through the marginal space of the bog within the historically peripheral "Celtic Fringe" – a space that is considered outside of the English centre, while at the same time within the Gothic tradition (Killeen, *Gothic Ireland* 18). The English viewed Celtic landscapes, according to Killeen, as

“zones of the weird,” or “repositories of all that which England wished to deny and banish (the irrational, the superstitious, the perverse, the Catholic, the cannibal).” They were places of the “primitive and the atavistic which the modern world had not yet touched” (“Irish Gothic” n. pag.). Bogs are zones of the ephemeral and repositories of culture and history where the past can be recovered as a reminder of colonial abuses. At the same time, bogs also resist this sort of definition by concealing or obfuscating such histories through their simultaneous inaccessible and preservative qualities. In this respect, an unacknowledged feature of the Irish postcolonial Gothic is how literary and cultural representations of bogs can be used to explore some of the lingering questions and assumptions about an ever-changing postcolonial milieu in the twentieth century. The bog functions as a numinous representational terrain in this period of history, and can be described as a simultaneity/union of opposites; it is both a geographical and cultural site of struggle, conflict, and, at times, resolution.

In the following chapters, I focus on several Irish works featuring the bog that include the novel, short story, poetry, non-fiction prose, and drama; the chapters are arranged in chronological order from 1890 to 2010. Chapter One, “‘Carpet of Death’: Environments of Empire in Stoker’s *The Snake’s Pass*,” examines the environmental impacts that colonization had on the bog. Colonial and environmental themes underpinning Gothic fiction provide a productive way to see the bog as a location where British industrialization threatens and ultimately destroys much of the bog. Gothic tropes, such as aspects of the uncanny, materiality, and transgression, explain some of the anxieties about land

ownership and land-use within colonial models of administration in *The Snake's Pass*. Stoker's ideology of nationalism, as it is portrayed in the novel through the protagonist Arthur Severn, can be understood as a union of opposites: he both mourns the loss of the bog as part of Irish identity and justifies its elimination for economic and political sovereignty for Ireland. I argue that the bog serves as a tool for understanding colonial politics and Stoker's vision of nationalism in the novel, but I approach this somewhat obliquely by emphasizing that the "environmental" significance of bogs in Ireland is key to this understanding. Therefore, my approach is to examine how the novel may help to address some of the unanswered questions related to the environmental impacts of land-use policies, not as a way to redress the past, but as a way to foreground the future.

Chapter Two, "'down towards the fatal bog': Spectral Histories in O'Connor's 'Guests of the Nation' and Ó Faoláin's 'A Meeting,'" investigates how Irish writers in post-Independence 1920s and 1930s Ireland use the bog as a specific site of haunting in order to address some of the uncertain histories of social violence from the Irish War of Independence/Anglo-Irish War period. Ghosts materialize after this tumultuous and historically unresolved period as a way to dissolve time and challenge previous conceptions of the nation. Frank O'Connor and Seán Ó Faoláin use the bog in "Guests of the Nation" and "A Meeting" not as a space representing the nation, but as a space that both confuses and illuminates the slippages in history, memory, and identity that have occurred since the Irish War of Independence. Despite their proclivity for literary realism, O'Connor and Ó Faoláin use the bog as a haunting symbol and setting of a past

that has not resolved itself in the present for them and perhaps never will. For O'Connor and Ó Faoláin in the 1930s, I argue, national identities formed during the War of Independence are treated in both stories as unsettled ghosts that are bound by the bog. The bog, then, serves as an ideal location for O'Connor and Ó Faoláin to address unresolved moments in and feelings about the post-Independence era of Irish history, where traces of power, violence, and oppression subtly remain. These writers draw from and employ what we can now call postcolonial Gothic conventions – entailing hauntings associated with anti-colonial struggles – and the bog is central to these political encounters.

Chapter Three, “‘The wet centre is bottomless’: Mapping Heaney’s Gothic Bog Bodies,” studies how bodies symbolically and physically function as literary maps in Heaney’s bog poems and prose from 1966 to 1980. Literary cartography provides a way to examine maps of creative work through actual physical features and metaphorical images. Literary maps, similar to bogs, function as unions of opposites because they are both real and imagined spaces rife with contradictions and imbrications. Mapping and bodies remain significantly linked to both postcolonial and Gothic studies: the body can be mapped and colonized, while it also conjures Gothic themes and images. I argue that bog bodies – drawing them into conversation together as a constellation of symbols and physical objects – serve as maps that can be charted and interpreted in Heaney’s poetry and prose. When examining the mapped bodies unearthed from bogs, I specifically analyze five of Heaney’s bog poems: “Digging,” “Bogland,” “The Tollund Man,” “The Grabaulle Man,” and “Punishment,” as well as some of his earlier prose about

bogs. This chapter surveys various mapped bodies as both a product and process of real (physical, organic, corporeal) and imagined (symbol and memory) bogs.

Chapter Four, “‘the bog is fuckin’ third world it is’: Neo-Gothic, Neocolonialism, and Gender in Carr’s *By the Bog of Cats*... and Kinahan’s *Bog Boy*” explores how Irish women in these two plays resist the neocolonial Celtic Tiger years by embracing the bog as a space of both struggle and liberation. I examine the recurring penchant for feminizing the rural landscapes in Ireland. As notoriously represented in W. B. Yeats’ play *Cathleen Ni Hoolihan* (1902), there remains an ongoing cultural perception in Ireland that feminine and nature are interchangeable. This chapter draws attention to the fact that both plays respond to these traditional paradigms in Irish literature. Although Carr and Kinahan place women in rural settings, they quickly subvert the way representations of femininity function in relationship to a quintessential rural landscape like the bog. For Brigit and Hester, the two protagonists in each play, the bog triggers responses to social challenges. The bog serves as a gendered landscape, not as a symbol or metaphor of male nationalism, but for female autonomy from a neocolonial society. I argue that Carr and Kinahan subvert the traditional binaries of land/bog and mother/feminine into something empowering and sustaining for women who want to own their subjecthood. The bog can serve as a place of refuge and liberation for Irish women like Hester and Brigit precisely because it is non-domestic and not already inscribed with nationalist gender narratives of home and motherhood.

The goal of this dissertation is not to limit the ways in which we approach writings about the bog, but to understand why the bog resonates in the fictional register. The bog, like the Danish signifier of it as a book, is a kind of narrative that reveals some of the potentially unanswered questions in Irish literary history. I explore why the bog often appears in the literary and cultural archive and what approaches might be best suited to understanding its placement in a text. Bogs in literary, historical, and cultural depictions tend to be for the most part overdetermined sites or signifiers and this is precisely why so many writers approach them as an effective place to accentuate issues related to postcolonial politics. Indeed, there are many more questions than clear answers. The difficulty in writing about bogs, and the issues that surround them in texts, is that they defy definitive meaning. Bogs and the lore that surrounds them, according to the contemporary Irish landscape writer Tim Robinson, are “like patches of mist, sometimes merging and becoming indistinguishable, sometimes fading into thin air for a time and then re-forming themselves out of nothing” (*Connemara* 16).

In an attempt to bring some meaning and structure to a subject that defies definition, I have a guiding critical approach: the bog for Irish Gothic writers provides an effective means to analyze colonization, in its various iterations of prefixes (post-, anti-, de-, and neo-), during four major political junctures in Ireland throughout the long twentieth century. As the postcolonial geographer Derek Gregory maintains, the goal of critical geography is “[t]o uncover the underlying multivocal codes which make landscapes cultural creations, to show the politics of design and interpretation, and to situate landscape at the heart of the

study of social process” (45). In this respect, cultural and literary Gothic writings featuring bogs uncover some of the underlying questions both during and after colonization in Ireland, and show how they relate to the larger social process in the development of modern Irish literary history.

CHAPTER ONE

“Carpet of Death”:

Environments of Empire in Stoker’s *The Snake’s Pass*

Mapping the un-consciousness of the island, the bog is established as the emblem of colonial politics. (323)

– Catherine Wynne, “The Bog as a Colonial Topography”

A Foreigner, having come to a land by the accidents of history, he has succeeded not merely in creating a place for himself but also in taking away that of the inhabitant, granting himself astounding privileges to the detriment of those rightfully entitled to them. (9)

– Albert Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*

“The Seedbed” of the 1880s and 1890s

This chapter investigates the environmental effects of colonization in relation to the bog in Bram Stoker’s first and only novel set in Ireland, *The Snake’s Pass* (1890). In the novel, Stoker relies on the ambiguities and contradictions inherent in the literary Gothic form to work out his conflicting views of Irish nationalism and land development. The first chapter of this dissertation begins at the end of the nineteenth century with *The Snake’s Pass* because this transitional period in Ireland marks a shift from when physical landscapes were recurrently defined through somewhat inefficient modes of colonial administration, politics, and economics (Deane, “Production” 119). Moving into the twentieth century, progress and modernization appeared to be the answer to Ireland’s economic stability and political independence. Thus, any study on land, geography, or landscape in twentieth-century Ireland must first recognize the entangled land-use policies administered in the preceding century. In this context, Stoker’s novel provides an ideal historical and geographical setting – on a preternatural bog in the culturally and politically tumultuous West of Ireland in the 1880s and 1890s –

during a period and in a location that historian Roy Foster calls “the seedbed of cultural revolution” (263). In this chapter, I explore how Stoker’s depiction of bogs as Gothic spaces reveals some of the underlying tensions surrounding land-use and ownership that underscore the relationship between the environment and the colonial administration in Ireland at the end of the nineteenth century.

Land has long been a focal point of geopolitical strife in Ireland. Land can be viewed as an economic, political, and ethnic category, as well as a geographical one (Eagleton, *Heathcliff* 4). Unequal distribution and ownership of land existed for several centuries under colonial administrations in Ireland. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the battle for land ownership, which equated to political legitimization, reached its pinnacle around the time of Gladstone’s first Land Act of 1881. Before and after Gladstone’s Acts were the Land Wars of the late 1870s and early 1880s. During these Land Wars, disenfranchised Catholic tenants fought the Protestant Anglo-Irish landowners for land rights, including the right of ownership, to create an “owner-occupying farming class” (Bartlett 320). In fact, Co. Mayo, in the West of Ireland and arguably the setting for *The Snake’s Pass*, was one of the most tumultuous zones during the Land Wars. Mayo was home to Michael Davitt who, along with Charles Stewart Parnell, led the Irish National Land League. The Land War of the 1880s drastically diminished the power of the Anglo-Irish as a dominant class, both in terms of land wealth and cultural legitimacy, and consequently signaled a serious threat to the future of colonial rule (Daly, *Modernism* 68-69). The Land Acts and Wars caused significant shifts in ownership and power during this turbulent period and

ultimately provide the historical, political, and geographical backdrop for *The Snake's Pass*. Land and legitimacy not only represent palpable anxieties continually expressed in the Anglo-Irish Gothic tradition, but they also become increasingly important leading up to and through the Irish revolutionary period between 1912 and 1923. Between 1870 and 1923, land ownership shifted considerably to the Catholic middle class. In 1870, for example, only 3% of Irish householders owned land, many of whom were Anglo-Irish, but by the 1916 Easter Rising as many as 63.9% of householders owned land (Dudley Edwards 168).

Stoker's novel illuminates some of the contested rural spaces that are home to the bog and that are central to understanding Irish land identity both in the past and moving into the twentieth century. While Stoker does not specifically refer to the Land Wars in the novel, he was clearly preoccupied with the issues surrounding the land struggle since he sent both England's Prime Minister William Gladstone and Michael Davitt copies of *The Snake's Pass* upon its publication (Daly, *Modernism* 69). In fact, Stoker's protagonist Arthur Severn travels by way of Co. Mayo as a detour to Co. Clare so that he could "improve" his "knowledge of Irish affairs" (11). Mayo, after all, was a "seedbed" of such affairs at the end of the nineteenth century (Foster 263). *The Snake's Pass* is set on the uncanny and unstable bog-covered mountain of Knockcalltecore (Hill of the Lost Golden Crown) and the rocky pass of Shleenanaher (i.e., The Snake's Pass) located in the scenic West of Ireland. While the novel is set in the ambiguously fictitious town of Carnaclif, it clearly resembles Connemara –

including Co. Galway and Mayo – particularly in terms of the overarching land politics and topographical descriptions. *The Snake's Pass* is considered a Gothic novel because of its intersecting themes of romance, usurpation, and murder, all of which are accompanied by a sense of foreboding that hints at the supernatural. In addition to the constructed romance plot, there exists in the novel an incongruity between what we would now call conservationist views of Irish tenant farmers and the commercialization or modernizing efforts of bog reclamation by Anglo-Irish Protestant landowners. Indeed, Stoker refers to the bog as a “carpet of death,” where “scientific and executive man exerts his dominance” over the shifting bog at the peril of those near it (55).

The novel specifically tells the story of a wealthy English tourist, Arthur, who has received a substantial inheritance from his aunt. While travelling from Co. Mayo to Clare to visit some friends, Arthur's coach is caught in a storm and delays his trip for a few days. During his stay at a local pub, he witnesses a contentious meeting between Phelim Joyce, a local farmer, and Murtagh “Black” Murdock over a land leasing and ownership dispute. Murdock has taken Phelim's farm as restitution for late payments. Murdock is known as “the village gombeen man” – a nineteenth century term characterizing people conducting shrewd practices of money-lending as an “agent or middleman” for absentee landlords (Eagleton, *Heathcliff* 31). As the novel progresses, Arthur falls in love with a woman on the mountain bog whose identity remains unknown to him until later in the novel (she is Norah Joyce, the daughter of Phelim). Arthur quickly immerses himself in local politics about land ownership and it almost results in his own

death. As Arthur courts Norah, he also finds himself in conflict, both attracted to and repelled by the bog on Knockcalltecore (or the “Hill”). Arthur purchases the entire mountain of Knockcalltecore to protect Norah and the land she and her father Phelim have temporarily lost to Murdock. Simultaneously and coincidentally Murdock hires Richard (Dick) Sutherland – a geologist and old university friend of Arthur who is originally from Ireland – to help him locate an alleged lost treasure of French gold in the bog. Murdock’s meddling with the topography of the bog ultimately causes his death – the shifting bog slides off of the mountain into the sea taking him with it.

The Snake’s Pass provokes two key critiques that call into question its relevance as a literary text. One is that the novel contains standard, and at times hackneyed, Gothic themes of romance, adventure, treasure hunting, and horror not too dissimilar of other imperial Gothic novels and stories of the period written by H. Rider Haggard, Rudyard Kipling, and Arthur Conan Doyle. The other is character-based because the human characters never move beyond stale two-dimensionality often reminiscent of popular nineteenth-century fiction. We might explain the brittle characters as a shortcoming attributable to the fact that this is Stoker’s first novel. One might even argue that the early work appears unbalanced, with the bog receiving far too much attention in the text, robbing human characters of dimension. This chapter proposes the bog serves as a multidimensional character, not only a physical topography, central to the novel’s action in every way. The overabundant narrative about the bog, couched in a tumultuous period of Irish colonial history, is precisely why *The Snake’s Pass*

provides an ideal starting point for a critical analysis of other twentieth-century Gothic writings about the bog. The topography of the bog – simultaneously centralized and marginalized in the text – serves as an important link to further understanding colonial politics in this period. Stoker focuses on the bog, with its union of opposites that help explain both the symbolic and physical characteristics, to synthesize dominant themes of colonization, industrialization, nationalism, and supernatural folklore that can all be examined through the critical lens of the postcolonial Gothic.

The Snake's Pass has received relatively little critical attention largely because it is considered a minor work next to Stoker's masterpiece *Dracula* (1897). Nicholas Daly has concentrated the most scrutiny on *The Snake's Pass*, beginning with his article "Irish Roots: The Romance of History in Bram Stoker's *The Snake's Pass*," which was later expanded into a chapter in his monograph, *Modernism, Romance, and the Fin de Siècle: Popular Fiction and British Culture, 1880-1914* (1999). Primarily focusing his reading of the novel on the "imperial" marriage plot in the larger genre of the imperial adventure novel, Daly considers Stoker's story to be an allegory of English imperialism because it presents uneasy parallels to the treasure hunt genre in an "imaginary imperial space" (*Modernism* 55). Daly analyzes the novel as an imperial adventure romance that provides colonial discourses outside of the typical imperial romance genre, which is usually set far away from the epicentre of Britain. However, Daly's analysis centres more on imperial relations with England, particularly the allegory of the treasure hunt, than it does on the bog and its relationship to Ireland. The bog

receives attention inasmuch as it supports Daly's argument about spaces in the imperial imaginary – a colonial landscape that becomes “domesticated” in Stoker's novel (*Modernism* 54) – and therefore an ideal backdrop for the colonial wedding between Arthur and Norah. In contrast to earlier scholarship about the novel, Daly nevertheless initiates critical conversations focused on the bog in the novel even if it merely represents one of “the blank spaces” of the colonial “map” of the adventure novel (54).¹

Postcolonial critic Luke Gibbons focuses briefly on *The Snake's Pass* to show the conflicting structures of a colonial economy within a system with deep roots in the older Gaelic order. While Gibbons' analysis is worth noting here because of its focus on the bog, it is largely based on the Gothic notion, coupled with psychoanalysis, of the return of the repressed, which reveals how people who were subordinated through colonial projects in the past will eventually haunt the present. Gibbons examines how plunging into the bog unintentionally “reactivates” the past, instead of the colonizer's goal to “repudiate” it (“Some Hysterical Hatred” 14). However, Stoker's use of the bog questions the contemporary moment (in the 1880s and 1890s) in Irish and English relations, with anticipation of the future, rather than as a form of repression of the past. As Gibbons suggests,

¹ In 1995, the same year Daly published “Irish Roots,” Chris Morash's “‘Ever Under Some Unnatural Condition’: Bram Stoker and the Colonial Fantastic” came out in Brian Cosgrove's collection *Literature and the Supernatural*. Morash's essay examines Stoker's political identity, which partly draws from *The Snake's Pass*. One could argue that both essays renew critical discussions about Stoker's first novel in the 1990s, but I cite Daly's critical treatment of the novel (expanded in *Modernism*) more extensively in this chapter because it focuses entirely on *The Snake's Pass* and colonial spaces, one in which the bog occupies, whereas Morash's essay uses *The Snake's Pass* and *Dracula*, as well as other writings, to support his position about Stoker's colonial relationship with Ireland. While both essays essentially put Stoker's first novel back on the map, Daly – and later Gibbons, Wynne, and Hughes – focuses more on the bog than does Morash.

it is important to consider the bog as a symbol of repression in Stoker's novel; but, the bog also undergoes conflicts and challenges to it from the omnipresent narratives of progress and modernization of the future.

Gothic scholar William Hughes' position on *The Snake's Pass* resembles claims made by Daly and Gibbons, insofar as the colonial connections to Ireland that appear in the novel highlight the tensions between English capitalism and rural Ireland in the late nineteenth century. Hughes maintains that Stoker's "ambiguous relationship to Ireland" is critically outlined and understood in *The Snake's Pass*. The novel serves as a "fable of reconstruction" that identifies "representative Irish problems" (17). Hughes' argument largely aims at readers who are not already familiar with *The Snake's Pass*, or those who have yet to fully realize its importance in Irish Gothic literature; to be sure, he provides an overview of the novel's place in the Irish Gothic and supports its critical relevance. Hughes challenges W.J. McCormack's claim in *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing* (1991) that Stoker's first novel offers little critical relevance. McCormack essentially argues that *The Snake's Pass* should not be considered a key text in the Irish Gothic tradition. Hughes responds to McCormack's claim by arguing that "Stoker does not sit comfortably within the Irish canon of *The Field Day Anthology*" because he does not sit comfortably within the Irish Literary Revival (17). *The Snake's Pass*, more than any other novel written by Stoker, investigates the ambiguous relationship between Ireland and England (Hughes 17). However, the bog again only receives limited exposure in Hughes' examination of the novel and its relationship to Ireland. More than any other aspect of *The Snake's Pass*,

the bog serves as a porthole for understanding this ambiguous relationship through its own misunderstood classification and indeterminate qualities.

The bog remains important not only because of what it reveals in the novel, but also because it is an important environment in Ireland and one compelling enough to warrant such sustained attention by a writer. *The Snake's Pass* discloses some of the key oppositional qualities of the bog, emphasizing the relevance of the bog in debates about the land as a natural resource in Ireland's economic future. For Daly, Gibbons, and Hughes, the bog is subordinate to the colonial politics that it underpins and functions as one of many factors in the novel relating to larger colonial concerns. These critics tend to align the bog with the past rather than connections or signs to the future. In contrast, Catherine Wynne considers the bog as an allegory for nineteenth-century colonial politics: "the colonial condition of nineteenth-century Ireland is evidenced in the anomalous and unstable depiction of bog and moor" ("The Bog" 310). Wynne's argument locates the bog and moor as a key to understanding a range of colonial issues in nineteenth-century British and Irish writing, one of which includes *The Snake's Pass*. For Wynne, the [s]odden grounds" of a "primeval past" function "as sites of agrarian and political strife" (311). The associations with the past, as many critics mention, remain crucial to examine and build upon, but the novel reveals a looming threat pointing the reader forward as much as to the past. The bog in late nineteenth-century literature serves not only as a nexus for shifting histories in rural areas associated with colonization, but it also points to future encounters as we will see in the next three chapters. The elimination of the bog through

reclamation in Stoker's novel, and the depleting effect of these actions in Ireland, anticipates a future in the twentieth century when the bog continues to maintain a relationship with political fissures related to colonization, industrialization, and nationalism.

Stoker acknowledges how the bog can ameliorate Ireland's economic independence from Britain; however, Stoker also recognizes that such independence might result in complete exploitation of the environment. Previous criticism has addressed issues of land ownership and nationalism, but the environmental impacts of the bog subtly discussed in the novel remains unexamined. This chapter demonstrates that the bog serves as a tool for understanding colonial politics, particularly through Stoker's vision of nationalism, but I approach this somewhat obliquely by emphasizing that the "environmental" significance of bogs in Ireland is vital to this understanding. *The Snake's Pass* reveals historical undercurrents about the preservation of bogs, even if they appear peripheral to the predominant arguments in support of bog reclamation during the nineteenth century. In the novel, the bog serves as a representative environment related to Irish colonial politics. At the same time, such politics are couched in a Gothic aesthetic that Stoker uses to explain some of the limited and limitless qualities of the bog. The bog is a nexus for these concerns; it is not strictly the "ecological" or "environmental" history of the bog that conjures up these associations, but also its socio-economic, cultural, and ethno-religious history in relation to a specific topography. In other words, there is a bifurcated environmental history of the bog: on the one hand, a scientific

history frames the bog as a specific environment; on the other hand, a disputed political history remains associated with ownership of the bog. The bog has been simultaneously a colonized space and a space that resists colonization due to its symbolic and biological qualities, both of which appear in *The Snake's Pass*. My approach in this chapter is ecocritical – a way of examining the intersections among literature, culture, and the environment – to the extent that the bog, framed through the devices of the Gothic tradition, is subordinate to British land management and industrialization and therefore exploitable both as a capital resource and as a symbol of Ireland.

While this chapter focuses on what could be considered a postcolonial examination of Stoker's novel, similar to the arguments of Gibbons, Hughes, Wynne, and Daly, I build upon and, at times, challenge these critics' perspectives by further interrogating Stoker's representation of the bog as both an imaginary and terrestrial topography used in the novel to reflect some of the perceptions regarding land and natural resources in late nineteenth-century Ireland. Environmental manipulations of the bog, seen as both a Gothic and colonized space, underscore the contradictions and instabilities of its sodden grounds. Colonial and environmental themes underpinning Gothic fiction provide a productive way to see the bog as a place where British industrialization – imported through the protagonist Arthur – threatens and ultimately destroys the bog. Gothic tropes, such as aspects of the uncanny, materiality, or transgression with respect to the bog, help to explain anxieties about land ownership and land-use within colonial models of administration in *The Snake's Pass*. In this way, the

influence is reciprocal: Gothic themes uncover land-use questions in colonial Ireland and environmental readings expand our understanding of the Gothic.

Thus, it is fruitful to analyze *The Snake's Pass* through the lens of the postcolonial Gothic because it offers another way of examining the environmental practices of British imperialism. We see this process unfold through the English character Arthur, as well as Stoker's own hybrid relationship with Ireland and England – a dynamic of biography, history, and fiction that intertwine in the novel. Stoker, through his protagonist, reflects on the larger consequences and confusions of colonization as it relates to Irish natural resources. This approach, resembling the anomalous state of the bog itself, offers no identifiable or totalizing conclusions. Instead, it opens up other ways of considering Stoker's theory of modernization, in combination with acknowledging the bog as a threatened environment, as both conflicting and complementary. Stoker's ideology of nationalism portrayed in the novel can be understood as one of the primary unions of opposites framing the bog: he both mourns the loss of the bog as part of Irish identity and justifies its elimination to assist economic and political sovereignty from England. Ultimately, *The Snake's Pass* raises the question: should Ireland embrace modernization despite its potential effects on the environment and culture? Critical approaches to the novel have focused on notions of British industrialism, colonial consciousness, and the way the bog serves as an allegory for Ireland; however, focusing on environmental depletion of the biological bog, in combination with its symbolic significance, takes a different direction in postcolonial Gothic criticism related to *The Snake's Pass*.

In the following two sections, I examine how the novel addresses unanswered questions related to the environmental impacts that relate to changing land-use policies. The first section provides an account of the tensions surrounding land-use and bog reclamation, particularly in how they intersect with colonization, culture, and Stoker's Anglo-Irish background embedded in the novel. I argue that Stoker's noticeable biographical interjection generates one of the simultaneous oppositions between modernization and preservation: he both supports and resists the bog's destruction. The novel raises the question: should we preserve or use bogs as natural resources to promote economic independence from England? In the second section, I further explore the features from the first section as they specifically relate to the text. In doing so, I interrogate how the environmental complications of the bog connect to industrialization and commercialization by examining Gothic themes of opposition, the uncanny, material ecocriticism, and transgression. Viewing the bog as a threatened environment through a Gothic novel that remains peripheral in Irish Gothic literature reveals ways of understanding colonial politics and land-use practices in the late nineteenth century.

Reclaiming and Demonizing Bogs

This first section begins by examining how debates about land specifically relate to the bog and what we would now call the environmental impacts to it as an important and ubiquitous landform in Ireland. Frequent critical approaches to land ownership and tenant anxieties concerning the Anglo-Irish and Catholics in Irish

Gothic literature speaks to the gap between economic practices of land-use and management. Land, for instance, was not only a politically charged space; it was also a repository of culture where tenuous lines between history and memory were drawn. Uses for the material environment were based on the division among Irish Catholic labourers (tenants who worked or leased the land without much economic or political benefit), Protestant Anglo-Irish landowners (those who held on to political power due to land holdings), and English tourists (those who wanted to enjoy the landscape as an aesthetic commodity in the empire). Nationalists wanted to preserve the bog as a place of cultural identity. Indeed, the bog served as a repository of culture with its ability to localize forms of information through stratification. For nationalists, bogs needed to remain a physical and symbolic presence in order to reinforce national identity and Irish tradition prior to colonial occupation (Trumpener 54).

The literary historian Katie Trumpener indicates that bogs in Romantic novels are “a place where outlines of the past can still be glimpsed” and where there are “visible marks of many centuries of continuous human presence, the scars of military battles, and the traces of occupation” (52). Even for the Anglo-Irish landowners in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the bog was under threat as part of a colonial imperative to increase the amount of usable agricultural land. According to Trumpener, bogs served as an “emblem for Ireland’s intractable national character” (46-47). Ethno-religious tensions surrounding the land debates contained cultural, economic, and environmental implications. In this context, a disputed association existed between conservation and modernization. I

want to suggest that an opposition – the bog as commodity and yet the bog as land of fertile arability – underpins these tensions in *The Snake's Pass*. Although Trumpener's previous remarks elucidate the relationship between bogs and Ireland in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, they also point to a conservationist trend embedded in the land debates during the latter half of the nineteenth century.

Bogs are often perceived throughout Irish history as wasted space and zones of decay. As a result of the pejorative association with bogs, policies were put in place to reclaim them through drainage projects, with the intent to increase agricultural production for the British Empire and the Anglo-Irish landowners. This process dispossessed Catholic peasants, as many of these people lived on the bogs for economic reasons. Reclamation projects were a new land reform that attempted to “beautify” the sublime qualities of bogs. The government-appointed Bogs Commission, established in 1809 to research bogs and their commercial uses, remains a primary example of these bog-reclamation projects. The commissioner's reports, published between 1810 and 1814, outlined the formation and composition of bogs, while also including maps, drawings, and advice on drainage. The report estimated that 1.4 million acres could be reclaimed for tillage and 2.3 million for pasture (McLean, *The Event* 41-42). By this calculation, the elimination of bogs would result in agricultural improvement and further displacement for the Catholic majority. In the context of *The Snake's Pass*, as Daly reports, “The bog suggests that what is really at stake in the murkiness of the Anglo-Irish past is the violence of colonial history” (*Modernism* 75). But what is

really at stake in the murkiness of history in the novel is systematic bog eradication.

In addition to the economic benefits, reclaiming bogs justified culturally and religiously pejorative associations connected to those who lived on them. Anglo-Irish landowners imposed a darker, ominous, and therefore Gothicized view of bogs in Ireland in order to justify the exploitation and elimination of bogs in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Demonizing bogs and effectively the people who live on or near them benefited a larger aim of the reclamation project: to dispose of the Irish peasants and generate profit from bogs. Just as the Anglo-Irish Gothic form became an expression of cultural anxieties that responded to an increasing minority status, the perceptions of bogs conveniently served as a way to marginalize topographies that buttressed the interests of the status quo. As part of a preexisting English prejudice, bogs were, according to Hughes, “an overt signifier of Irish topography, and the source of derogatory racial stereotypes” (18). Donal Clarke, past President of the International Peat Society, cites from an unknown nineteenth-century account in his write-up about bogs. Based upon this account, people who lived near them were “miserable and half-starved spectres who inhabited the dreary waste” (7). In a literary example, George Moore’s *Parnell and His Island* (1887) describes the Irish peasant class in Co. Mayo as a race “that has been forgotten and left behind in a bog hole; it smells of the wet earth, its face seems as if made of it, and its ideas are moist and dull, and as sterile as peat” (99). These three examples demonstrate how the Irish peasants were often demonized through their association with bog topographies.

These derogatory characterizations of bogs through rhetoric of reclamation and demonization also signal a Gothic aesthetic associated with them, an overtone depicted in *The Snake's Pass*. In *Empire and the Gothic*, Andrew Smith and William Hughes argue,

One of the defining ambivalences of the Gothic is that its labeling of otherness is often employed in the service of supporting, rather than questioning, the status quo. This is perhaps the central complexity of the form because it debates the existence of otherness and alterity, often in order to demonize such otherness. (3)

Bogs and the people who lived near them were collectively marginalized in order to reinforce their subordinated “otherness” status. In the eighteenth century, bogs were considered to be sources of “sin and sloth, a site of social and moral darkness” where “drainage takes on the status of an exorcism” (Trumpener 52). Thus, bog reclamation achieved two important aims for the Anglo-Irish in their relationship with the Irish Catholics: it increased economic revenue for the Anglo-Irish landowners and it eliminated the iniquities of the bogs and the people who lived on them (namely Catholic peasants). Rhetorically framing bog reclamation through proselytization – saving Irish Catholics from sin and eternal damnation – generates another form of religious and economic conversion through the materiality of the bogs. These accounts of the Land Acts and Wars, coupled with a history of bog reclamation, all contextualize the dominant issues underpinning the narrative of *The Snake's Pass*.

Arthur, the novel's landowning English character, views the bog on two opposing levels. On one level, Arthur takes more interest in the Hill (consisting of bog) than the local Irish because of his desire to possess and transform it as part of a larger commercialization project. On another level, Arthur wants to preserve the beauty of the landscape for his own visual pleasure as an English tourist. When looking at the blanket bog on the mountain, Arthur remarks, "The sight of the Hill filled me with glad emotion" (206). Ireland's scenic landscapes in the West, often depicted in bucolic paintings found in English homes, function as places of refuge for the nineteenth-century English traveller because of their close proximity, inexpensive travel itinerary, and distance from England's polluting factories. The novel begins with Arthur as such a traveller who immediately becomes "arrested" by the beauty of Ireland's landscapes (8). Maintaining what we would now call environmental balance was paradoxically more important to the gaze of the English traveller – often desiring an aesthetic escape or picturesque experience distinct from increasingly industrialized England – than it was for the local Irish tenant farmers who were a labour force resigned to work for Anglo-Irish landowners. At the opening of the novel, Arthur's description of the Irish topography of the West provides an example of the environment's aesthetic:

Between two great mountains of gray and green, as the rock
cropped out between the tufts of emerald verdure, the valley,
almost as narrow as a gorge, ran due west towards the sea. [...]
The whole west was a gorgeous mass of violet and sulphur and
gold—great masses of storm-cloud piling up and up till the very

heavens seemed weighed with burden too great to bear. Clouds of violet, whose centres were almost black, and whose outer edges were tinged with living gold. [...] The view was the most beautiful that I had ever seen; and accustomed as I had been only to the quiet pastoral beauty of grass country, with occasional visits to my great aunt's well-wooded estate in the south of England, it was no wonder that it arrested my attention and absorbed my imagination. (7-8)

Arthur appears as the gentleman English traveller who eventually purchases "the whole mountain" so that he can save Norah's Cliff Fields and then Phelim Joyce's farm from Black Murdock's economic and psychological oppression (180). However, beyond these chivalrous intentions Arthur wants to profit from the land's productivity. In this way, Arthur resembles an Anglo-Irish landowner more than an English tourist.

Despite his English birth and upbringing, Arthur appears more Anglo-Irish than English because of his opposing identities between Ireland and England. For example, he becomes a landowner in rural Ireland and eventually a developer even though he is merely an English tourist. Daly has taken a similar position to Arthur's identity:

While Arthur is English, to the extent that he is also Stoker's most obvious representative in the text he may also be seen as having Irish roots. He is an orphan, his parents 'lost in a fog when crossing the Channel' (11). His father 'had been

pretty well cut off by his family on account of his marriage with what they considered his inferior' (11). The doubled sense of isolation – his father's disinheritance and his own orphanhood – as well as the suggestion of inferior blood on the mother's side, make Arthur an appropriate figure for a class whose identity might well seem to have been lost overboard, albeit somewhere in the waters between Ireland and England. (*Modernism* 75)

The “doubled sense of isolation” further explains the pervading opposition in the novel. Daly's description of Arthur provides a tragic tone and draws attention to some of the Gothic elements in the novel with references to inheritance, “orphanhood,” and inferior blood lineage. In fact, Arthur's ambiguous identity, vacillating between English and Anglo-Irish, parallels Stoker's own conflicted background and the inherent opposition of the bog. I would argue that Stoker's own Anglo-Irish background serves as a template for Arthur, a character in which Stoker discloses some of his own anxieties about Irish identity in a novel about land ownership and bogs.² Understanding Stoker's identity and perspectives about Ireland helps to elucidate some of Arthur's actions in the novel and the character of the bog.

Even though Stoker was Anglo-Irish, he was considered a “philosophical Home Ruler,” inasmuch as he supported an independent Ireland and considered

² Morash argues that Stoker's ancestry is English (102-103), whereas David Glover links Stoker to the Ascendency Anglo-Irish (9). Stoker's identity remains a debated subject but I support the arguments that he is Anglo-Irish.

himself a nationalist (Gibbons, “Hysterical” 15).³ He also lived in London for most of his writing career, despite having Irish roots and growing up in Dublin. Such self-identification reveals his own “doubled sense of isolation” – a characteristic also ascribed to Arthur – because Stoker’s brand of nationalism supported an independent Ireland, as long the Anglo-Irish remained the ruling and landowning class. Stoker believed Ireland’s previous landowning practices needed to be eliminated, or at least reformed, and because of this stance he did not sit comfortably with either the nationalists or the Anglo-Irish landowners even though he supported both of them for different reasons. The dysfunctional landlord system in Ireland at the time, which disenfranchised too many people, largely fueled this belief. According to Barbara Belford, in her biography *Bram Stoker* (1994), Stoker observed the harsh realities in rural Ireland when he travelled around as Inspector of Petty Sessions. Among many abuses, he “witnessed how farmers in the countryside suffered under the English landlord system” (77). Due to these experiences, Stoker sympathized with the plight of the tenants in the current system and the land in which they worked.

Understanding Stoker’s contradictory and elusive identity remains crucial when reading *The Snake’s Pass*. Declan Kiberd maintains Stoker had produced a sort of “Catholicized Protestantism” that was later featured in Irish modernism from Augusta Gregory and W.B. Yeats to Bernard Shaw (*Irish Classics* 386). Kiberd’s simultaneous and oppositional phrase provides greater insight into why Stoker initiated the practice of using occult symbolism and supernaturalism drawn

³ In addition, Morash documents that Stoker’s wife acknowledged John Dillon, the militant Irish nationalist, to be a family friend in a letter she wrote (112).

from the Catholic peasantry in *The Snake's Pass*. Indeed, this practice was later perfected in *Dracula*. These ties to both Protestant and Catholic traditions suggest sympathy for the fraught position of the Catholic tenant class, despite Stoker's precarious identity as a member of the landowning Anglo-Irish class. Anglo-Irish writers like W.B. Yeats, George Moore, and J.M. Synge equally took up support for Irish nationalist politics, which often took the form of a particularly Catholicized Protestantism, by blending together ideas of pre-colonial Gaelic mythologies with colonial notions of landowning elites. Andrew Smith has also pointed out that Stoker's Anglo-Irish position informs his other novels in how he reconstructs Irish politics in landscapes that symbolically and imaginatively represent Ireland (23). Such biographical details provide critical insight, adding new and compelling layers to *The Snake's Pass* that might not be as apparent in the superficial structure of the romance plot. Stoker's biography and possible intentions for the novel underline the importance of the bog for both the Anglo-Irish and Catholics, as well as for Ireland's interests as a whole.

Stoker further questions his own Anglo-Irish identity in the novel when Arthur, under Dick's guidance, decides to drain the bog in order to extract limestone for profit. After seeing the streaks of limestone buried in the bog, Dick tells Arthur, "This is what we have wanted all along" (243). By framing Arthur's character as a prototypically Anglo-Irish industrialist who initiates bog reclamation through his economic and landowning privilege, Stoker manifests a colonial preoccupation dating back to the Tudor period where the "wild Irish landscape," according to archaeologist Aidan O'Sullivan, transforms "into a

model of English settlement” designed “to exploit in a much more organized and entrepreneurial way its rich resources of woodland, river and land” (89). The Anglo-Irish traditionally managed the land through utility, organization, and commodity, thereby reproducing policies previously established by the Tudors. Early Gaelic and later Catholic models, in contrast, predominantly practiced subsistence farming. Trumpener acknowledges some of the Anglo-Irish views of land that developed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries:

Anglo-Irish landowners secure their right to the land they occupy by molding the surface of the country in their own image, bringing new Irelands into being out of the void. Here colonialism and expansionism appear as progress and as the incontrovertible economic salvation of the whole country, Irish peasantry and all. (42-43)

The Snake's Pass, however, simultaneously supports and rejects this notion. Arthur's application of imperial land-use ideology – although initially motivated by chivalrous actions designed to protect Norah and her father against Murdock (striking an another parallel to the conflated feminization of the land and the colonized) – mirrors an environmental history of bog reclamation in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The novel concurrently challenges and maintains such policies. Stoker, while also supporting a future of Irish self-subsistence through natural resource extraction, questions the consequences of this action on the very soil that the nationalists extol. While the novel promotes the capitalist idea of “progress,” it also tests it, particularly by framing the

narrative through Gothic tropes that typically revisit the past instead of projecting into the future.

The tension throughout the novel centres on Arthur's purchase of the land and subsequent plans for commercialization. Arthur's plans have haunting repercussions for him, and the Gothic form of the novel provides a useful platform to explore unexplainable paranoia through dreams. Arthur's dreams repeatedly assault him with worry and dread about the dangers of the shifting bog, the threat of Black Murdock, and his own precarious hybrid position in rural Ireland. The first instance of these fears appear in a dream that occurs right after he finalizes "the purchase of the whole mountain" with Mr. Caicy, the solicitor from Galway (182). Arthur notes, "I did not sleep very well" because "there seemed to grow a fear – some dim, haunting dread of a change – something which would reverse the existing order of things" (182). Arthur's fears indicate a colonial unconsciousness brought into consciousness by unearthing the bog, a symbol of Irish conflict and resistance in the midst of colonization. The French treasure Murdock attempts to locate in the bog, for instance, signals an alternative history also buried in the bog – when the allied French troops, under the direction of General Humbert, attempted to liberate Ireland from British colonial rule in the 1798 Rebellion. Arthur's subsequent fear acts, in part, as an unconscious reminder of the colonial history that recurs in his dreams. He refers to these nightmares as "a sort of Mazeppa in the world of dreams" (221). Mazeppa is a Russian opera written by Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky that essentially tells the tale of love, political persecution, vengeance, murder, and madness. Arthur explains,

Again and again the fatal Hill and all its mystic and terrible associations haunted me; again the snakes writhed around and took terrible forms; again she I loved was in peril; again Murdock seemed to arise in new forms of terror and wickedness; again the lost treasure was sought under terrible conditions; and once again I seemed to sit on the table rock with Norah, and to see the whole mountain rush down on us in a dread avalanche, and turn to myriad snakes as it came.

(221)

For Arthur, the bog represents danger as much as it does an investment. The more Arthur visits the bog and makes plans to reclaim it, the more his unconscious fears generate these terrifying dreams. The recurrent symbol of the snake – often considered in dream analysis to signify the unconscious or warn of upcoming transitions in one’s life – portends something unknown and unsettled in Arthur’s future.

Dreams, as a frequent theme in Gothic novels, often contain symbols and warnings for characters, and are deployed as a literary device of foreshadowing (Smith, *Gothic Literature* 6). Dreams appear in *The Snake’s Pass* to foretell someone’s death on the bog, but they also predict possible consequences of Arthur’s plans to reclaim the bog. In another dream, Arthur recalls,

That night again I kept dreaming – dreaming in the same nightmare fashion as before. But although the working of my imagination centred round Knockcalltecrore and all it

contained, and although I suffered dismal tortures from the hideous dreams of ruin and disasters which afflicted me, I did not on this occasion arouse the household. (218)

Arthur continues to be haunted for two primary reasons: developing the bogs on Knockcalltecore for his personal aesthetic luxury and reclaiming bogs to generate revenue from his investments. In this regard, industrialization – in the form of reclamation and drainage for wealth accumulation – underscores the lingering colonial ethos of reclaiming bogs for agriculture. However, both reclamation schemes – for agriculture and for industrialized projects – environmentally and culturally affect bogs. Instead of recalling the past, as in many Gothic narratives, Arthur’s dreams disclose possible futures and challenge the idea of progress as it relates to the Anglo-Irish understanding of land-use.

Arthur Young, in his multivolume *Tour of Ireland* (1780), identifies earlier accounts of bog reclamation and emphasizes that supporting large-scale reclamation projects advantaged Anglo-Irish landowners and provided an economic union with Britain (Trumpener 37). Since bogs were seen as unused space, policy administrators proposed they should be drained to produce higher profit yield for landowners and resource development for the British Empire. Irish bog reclamation projects mostly began in the mid-eighteenth century when clearing bogs for agricultural land became an Act in 1731 titled, “Encourage the Improvement of Barren and Waste Land, and Bogs” (Clarke 7). Later, during transitional years between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, peat from bogs became an increasing priority for fuel production. At the time, reclamation for

agriculture and peat extraction for fuel were both considered beneficial to rid Ireland of these cesspools of “unused” and “wasted” space. However, these actions primarily benefitted the landowning classes. References to wasted space appear in these opposing and yet overlapping positions about the bog. Dick explains to Arthur how bogs can be an economic drain on the landowner and tenant:

[Joyce’s] farm is almost an ideal one for this part of the world; it has good soil, water, shelter, trees, everything that makes a farm pretty and comfortable, as well as being good for farming purposes; and he has to change it for a piece of land which is irregular in shape as the other is compact; without shelter, and partly taken up with this very bog and the utter waste and chaos which, when it shifted in former times, it left behind. (53)

Through his more industrious characters Arthur and Dick, Stoker generates an underlying tension in the novel about whether to commercialize or conserve bogs. *The Snake’s Pass* suggests that bogs can contribute to Ireland’s economic enhancement, and therefore possible independence, if some form of reclamation and draining can be successfully implemented.

Stoker was clearly aware of early writings about bogs in Ireland. Through his character Dick, for instance, Stoker introduces several early writings about bogs, many of which promote industrializing these so-called wasted spaces for economic gain within the British Empire. In addition to Young’s account, Gerard

Boate's earlier work *Irelands Naturall History* (1652) documents the taxonomy of bogs (114). Boate also discusses the "opportunity" of draining the bogs for the land (117). Dick references writings from Boate, as well as from Edmund Spenser, as precursors to his current research about bogs. In one passage, Arthur recalls how Dick described the importance of Irish bogs through the project of reclamation: "He told me of the extent and nature of the bog-lands, of the means taken to reclaim them, and of his hopes of some heroic measures being ultimately taken by Government to reclaim the vast Bog of Allen, which remains as great evidence of official ineptitude" (55). Dick claims that one of the most important Anglo-Irish writings on Ireland's bogs is by William King. Initially an Anglican cleric and later Archbishop of Dublin, King followed Boate's study with his own paper titled, "Of the Bogs and Loughs of Ireland," which was presented at the Royal Society in 1685. King identifies bogs, with significant overtones rooted in imperial thinking, as the hallmark of "every barbarous ill-inhabited country" (qtd. in McLean, "To Dream" 62). Dick's reference to Ireland's "evidence of official ineptitude" indicates Ireland's inability to reclaim the Bog of Allen, which echoes King's earlier assertions that bogs are "barbarous." For King, bogs were "a shelter and refuge to tories, and thieves, who can hardly live without them" (King 969-970). Dick then follows this harsh characterization with some suggestions on how to drain and reclaim the bogs for their own economic gain.

The point here is that Stoker has an awareness of these foregrounding writings about bogs and deliberately introduces them in *The Snake's Pass*, even though such a move inhibits the literary structure of the novel's romance plot by

focusing more on the natural history of bogs than on Norah. For instance, Stoker incorporates the writings of Boate, Spenser, and King to acknowledge a longer history where the Irish bogs were viewed as a resource for the British Empire. What these earlier English writings indicate through their tone and language is that bogs were not only desirable for economic gain; their ongoing existence also impedes further control of the local Irish population and therefore they must be removed. In fact, Gibbons' argument about *The Snake's Pass* examines the sordid relationship between commercialization and the past:

The bog, in fact, stands for those aspects of the Irish past which will not go away, but whose threats to the social order are actively reproduced by the forces of modernisation which consigned the poorest of the peasantry to these outlying areas. [...] This dysfunctional form of modernisation, which reactivates rather than repudiates the past, was bound up with the anomalies of the landlord system, a caste which, while aspiring to anachronistic pretensions of aristocracy, yet presided over the unrestrained commercialisation of the Irish economy. The affront which this presented to the philosophy of progress is amply illustrated in the complex relation of Black Murdock to modernity in *The Snake's Pass*. ("Hysteria" 14)

It is not only that modernization "reactivates the past," as Gibbons argues; it also challenges the future where bogs – anomalous and uncanny symbols of Ireland –

are eliminated for certain types of nationalist interests to gain economic independence from England based upon resource extraction. For Gibbons, these interests are bound up in the landlord system enabled by the Anglo-Irish. Stoker's nationalism that emerges in the novel might appear only to serve the interests of the Anglo-Irish, or what Gibbons goes on to identify as "the full-scale commercialisation of land, and its disenchantment through the scientific discourse of geology" (15). However, the novel presents a more ambiguous outcome in the oblique way it promotes bog reclamation while simultaneously questioning the impact of commercialization on the land for the Irish. Discourses of geology are additionally contradictory in the novel: science is used both as a justification to commercialize and as a way to underscore the intrinsic or "environmental" value of Irish bogs. Stoker offers these two opposing outcomes of progress and which might be more beneficial to Ireland. To this effect, progress has a two-pronged effect: modernization provides economic prosperity for Ireland, not England, securing independence through Home Rule; modernization eliminates some of the landscapes that are quintessential to Irish culture and identity.

While the question of the past relates to the bog, modernization, in addition to reactivating the past, also ignores the material history of the actual bog as an important topography. After all, the impact of progress has consequences for Ireland even beyond ruling class dynamics. Even Stoker, who remains on one level a supporter of commercializing the Irish economy through resource extraction, presents a contradictory position. The novel implicitly asks the question: what happens when Ireland commercializes their natural resources for

political or economic gain? Do they only react to or repudiate the past? Or, in addition to reviving the past, do they question the integrity of the land and its role in the future? Stoker's novel may not be an environmental treatise for climate change science one hundred years later, but it serves as an earlier warning by subtly questioning the impacts of developing the environment for profit rather than subsistence.

The Snake's Pass raises the possibility that Stoker, and some of the Anglo-Irish ruling class like him, also lament the necessary loss of bogs in support of economic independence from England. The novel reinforces the idea that bogs, although often understood and shrouded in mysteries of the occult, are fundamentally part of Irish consciousness. Eliminating bogs might provide immediate economic gain, but it also causes greater environmental damage in the future, culturally depleting local populations. Indeed, *The Snake's Pass* presents an argument about the complexities of industrialization in a modernizing Ireland during the 1880s and 1890s and how these ideas of nationalism contrasts with other views of conservation. Stoker's novel provokes the reader to engage with these opposing positions and uncovers how they reflect the qualities of the bog as a union of opposites. In this sense, both the structure of the novel and the imaginative and material qualities of the bog match each other, reflecting the inherent oppositions in Irish colonial politics.

Through various micro-fissures of Irish politics, bogs in *The Snake's Pass* become topographies where anxieties about legitimacy can be worked out. By the end of the novel, Stoker never fully resolves the question about whether to

embrace reclamation or conserve the bog. Even though the bog tumbles into the ocean after a heavy storm, thereby exposing the limestone on the mountain, the reader is left with a sense of ambivalence about this outcome. Arthur and Dick never have to make the decision whether to reclaim the bog since the heavy rains in combination with Murdock's digging and prodding are what ultimately destroy it. Arthur clearly wants and expects to embrace industrialization because of his position. But the novel suggests, particularly through Arthur's dreams, legitimate trepidation remains about the cost of destroying the bogs. This is why the bog retains so much attention in the novel: to draw attention to the importance of this landform in Ireland, as both a material resource and a cultural symbol. *The Snake's Pass* presents industrialization as one way for Ireland to escape economic dependence upon Britain moving into the twentieth century. The novel explores the tensions between possible economic salvation and the consequences of drying the bog, bringing into awareness cultural anxieties about a commercialized economy based largely on resource extraction. Stoker cloaks industrialization in the cultural construction of the subordinate, whether it is the land, Norah, or what I explore in the next section of the chapter as the inherent oppositions in bogs' supernatural and terrestrial qualities.

Environmental Opposition, Materiality, and Transgression

In this second section, I examine how oppositions are used as a method of constructing tensions in *The Snake's Pass* through the uncanny, material ecocriticism, and transgression, which all underscore threats to the environmental

integrity of the bog. *The Snake's Pass* taps into the collective trepidations about modernizing in Ireland at the end of the nineteenth century by framing bogs as supernatural spaces that are in opposition to industrialization. Overlapping oppositions, as I explain in the Introduction, are central to bogs. They are also significant to the Gothic form, where relations among real and fantastic, supernatural and natural, modern and atavistic, civilized and barbaric, and rational and fantastic remain in constant tension (Botting 9). Some of the more noticeable intersecting oppositions in *The Snake's Pass* include Ireland/England, Anglo (masculine)/Celtic (feminine), Norah/Bog, landowner/tenant, past/future, conservation/commercialization, and supernatural/material. Many of these oppositions are revealed through the local Irish storytellers (Andy Sullivan, Bat Moynahan, and Jerry Scanlan), who orally convey the myth of the King of the Snakes and the mysteries of Knockcalltecore, and through Dick, who investigates what he calls "the correlation of bog and special geological formations" (64).

Hughes argues that Murdock "functions as a negative Other" who stays in constant opposition to Arthur and all of the elements that constitute Arthur's identity as the colonizer (19). A more subtle opposition nevertheless exists between Dick and Murdock, both of whom seek a sort of treasure in the Irish bog. Geological exploration and excavation motivate Dick's actions. He claims,

The main feature of the geological formation of all this part of the country is the vast amount of slate and granite, either isolated patches or lying side by side. And as there are

instances of limestone found in quaint ways, I am not without hope that we may yet find the same phenomenon. (64)

In contrast, superstition and story compel Murdock. Stoker switches the implied opposition and contrasts antiquated land-use practices as employed by Murdock with theories of English industrial capitalism as articulated by Dick. This opposition between pursuing and exploiting natural resources (Dick) and the nineteenth century method of absentee landlordism (Murdock) contributes to the novel's tension and influences how each character attempts to locate treasures in the bog.

Three divergent and yet complementary visions can be seen through the treasures buried in the bog on Knockcalltecore: the jewelled crown of the King of the Snakes, the French chest of gold, and the layer of limestone submerged under the bog. These three treasures serve a greater purpose than to simply move the narrative forward; they indicate an imbricated history of paganism, supernaturalism, colonialism, and industrialism, all linked through the bog. First, the pre-Christian pagan story serves as a reminder of a time before colonization. According to the legend, the King of the Snakes resided over the bog on the Hill and insisted he receive a sacrificed infant once a year. Eventually St. Patrick expelled the King to the sea, but ostensibly the King left his crown buried somewhere underneath the bog on the mountain before banishment. The symbolic link between pre-Christian and Catholic Ireland is obvious; however, the correlation between the bog and buried treasure links to the other two treasures. Second, the treasure chest of bullion-gold highlights a particularly contentious

period of imperial history when a French expeditionary force had allegedly delivered gold to Ireland via Killala, Co. Mayo, to facilitate Irish resistance against England in the 1798 Rebellion. As it turns out, the soldiers were never seen again after they headed out to the bog carrying the gold. These uncertain accounts of colonial history linger in the bog along with the gold.

Lastly, the actual bog remains the most significant treasure. Arthur and Dick want to industrialize the natural resources that lay underneath the bog, especially the deposits of limestone that are hypothesized to be quite large. This third and most important treasure propels the driving narrative and the historical context in which the novel is situated. “Limestone,” as Hughes notes, “becomes a metonym for the changes that will take place consequent to Arthur’s possession of the land and draining of the bog” (20). By dividing the “productive from the commercial” in English capitalism (Hughes 20), Arthur and Dick challenge Irish methods of subsistence “productive” farming and quickly realize that the real treasure is not in the mythic or supernatural traditions buried in the past, but the economic capital obtainable in the present and future. Dick agrees that it “will be a fine investment for you” as Arthur prepares to “buy the whole of the mountain” (179). If and when Arthur and Dick “find the limestone,” they would be, according to them, “the most prosperous set of people to be found in the country” (205).

After realizing the resource potential of Knockcalltecore, Dick acknowledges, “With limestone we could reclaim the bogs cheaply all over the neighbourhood – in fact a limekiln there would be worth a small fortune. We

could build walls in the right places; I can see how a lovely little harbour could be made there at a small expense” (64). For Dick and Arthur, an underlying expectation is that they “could fathom the secret of the Shifting Bog, and perhaps abolish or reclaim it” (64). This outcome would allow them to commercialize the purchased land at the expense of the bog to access the limestone, slate, and granite. Dick imagines,

A limestone quarry here would be pretty well as valuable as a gold mine. Nearly all these promontories on the western coast of Ireland are of slate or granite, and here we have not got lime within thirty miles. With a quarry on the spot, we can not only build cheap and reclaim our own bog, but we can supply five hundred square miles of country with the rudiments of prosperity, and at a nominal price compared with what they pay now. (205)

But, in opposition to the modern explanation of commercial progress, the novel provides a mythic explanation bordering on the supernatural that the bog conceals the crown of the King of the Snakes. In this context, Arthur mentions, “that remarkable mountain must have been a solid mass of gnomes, fairies, pixies, leprechauns, and all genii, species and varieties of the same” (107). Such supernatural histories provide a ready-made environment in which to set a novel of Gothic proportions. Stoker’s engagement with supernatural elements serves as an effective way to use Gothic themes in order to emphasize divergent perspectives of the bog and recognize how they overlap and oppose each other.

These supernatural elements, as a counterpoint to the scientific explanations purported by Dick, relate to some of the uncanny characteristics of the bog and are essential in setting up the opposition that mirrors the qualities of the bog.

In his landmark essay “The Uncanny” (1919), Freud investigates under what conditions the simultaneous “familiar” (*heimlich* or homely) and “unfamiliar” (*unheimlich* or unhomely) can become “uncanny and frightening” (124). Instead of assuming that the unfamiliar solely evokes fear, Freud argues it is the simultaneity of the unfamiliar coupled with the familiar that creates the uncanny. Freud’s uncanny unites both familiar and unfamiliar elements as both the same and separate; it unites two oppositions as both connected and opposite. When applying the uncanny more directly to *The Snake’s Pass*, the bog can be viewed as a familiar landscape in the West of Ireland, where people live and depend on it, as well as look at it daily. And yet, despite this familiarity, it continually contains unknown and unexplainable qualities. In this sense, the bog remains uncanny because of its simultaneously familiar/known and unfamiliar/unknown oppositions. When Arthur arrives in the West of Ireland, he does not appear to have any fear of the bog, although he immediately recognizes its uncanny elements: “From the first moment that my eyes lit on it [bog], it seemed to me to be a very remarkable spot, and quite worthy of being taken as the scene of strange stories, for it certainly had something ‘uncanny’ about it” (56). He often walks on the bog, particularly when he frequently (yet under clandestine circumstances) meets Norah on the other mountain called Knocknacar. On the one hand, the unfamiliarity of the bog should evoke some element of terror in Arthur. On the

other hand, the fear lies within the community that knows about the terrorizing qualities of the bog – the way it can shift, engulf, and threaten any human or non-human. Indeed, the familiar might evoke more fear than the unfamiliar or, as Freud claims, “not everything new and unfamiliar is frightening” (125). Fear can be experienced on two levels: the familiarity of the bog frightens people due to its known qualities and the unfamiliarity of the bog frightens people due to its unknown qualities. What is particularly useful about investigating the bog in Stoker’s novel is that several of the taxonomies of the uncanny exist in varying registers, from non-human agency and anthropomorphism to the fear of being buried alive and fear of repetition (Punter and Byron 293). One way of explaining the work of the uncanny in Gothic texts is that it animates terrestrial objects, calling into question material identity.

In order to provide a way to explain why the bog in *The Snake’s Pass* is described as oppositional (terrestrial/supernatural) and imbued with a form of non-human identity, I want to draw from the critical concept of “material ecocriticism.” We are now, in a contemporary light, able to decipher Stoker’s explanation of the bog as containing some form of environmental importance because it serves as one of main characters in the novel even though it is a landform. Material ecocriticism is a form of environmental criticism that interprets the distinctiveness of matter in two different ways. First, the nonhuman capacities of matter (or nature) imbued with some form of identity can be described or represented in various narrative texts, such as literary, cultural, or visual. Second, the narrative power of matter creates meanings and substances

that enter into and interact with human lives “into a field of co-emerging interactions” (Iovino and Oppermann 79). There are many examples of how material environments contain forms of non-human identity in literature and culture; however, two specific wetlands are exemplary to cite here for my purposes in this chapter: the unnamed bog in *The Snake’s Pass* and Egdon Heath in Thomas Hardy’s *The Return of the Native* (1878). The Egdon Heath topography has a powerful non-human distinctiveness that resists attempts to control its forces. In the opening of the novel, Hardy writes that Egdon Heath “was at present a place perfectly accordant with man’s nature – neither ghastly, hateful, nor ugly; neither commonplace, unmeaning, nor tame; but, like man, slighted and enduring; and withal singularly colossal and mysterious in its swarthy monotony” (55). Likewise, Stoker writes of the bog,

a long, low gurgle, with something of a sucking sound – something terrible, resistless, and with a sort of hiss in it, as of seething waters striving to be free. Then the convulsion of the bog grew greater; it almost seemed as if some monstrous living thing was deep under the surface and writhing to escape. (233)

In these two excerpts, Stoker and Hardy assign the bog and the heath meaning as characters with distinctive non-human identity. Indeed, the bog and heath appear to be entities with some level of autonomy in the text, much like an individual character. When matter shows non-human identity, it is capable of producing its own meaning and provides an exchange between human and non-

human agents (Iovino and Oppermann 79). Instead of subordinating landforms to an inferior non-human position, Stoker and Hardy depict the bog and heath as both containing non-human identity, even if such relevance becomes menacing and dangerous at times to the humans interacting with them. The echo of the phrase “the mountain holds, and it holds tight” reverberates in Arthur’s head as he thinks about trying to leave the dangers of the bog at one point in the novel (207). In *The Snake’s Pass*, Stoker demonstrates the complexity of the bog’s non-human identity, which has the effect of questioning its elimination as a resource.

Material ecocriticism also enables us to further understand some of the interpretations of the uncanny. The familiar material object and the unfamiliar image of a landform that assumes identity are used to both repel and draw the reader closer to the bog. Dick, for example, refers to the bog as a “carpet of death” that resembles both human and non-human qualities and simultaneously repels and attracts people.

What you see is simply a film or skin of vegetation of a very low kind, mixed with the mould of decayed vegetable fibre and grit and rubbish of all kinds, which have somehow got mixed into it, floating on a sea of ooze and slime – of something half liquid, half solid, and of an unknown depth. It will bear up a certain weight, for there is a degree of cohesion in it; but it is not all of equal cohesive power, and if one were to step on the wrong spot –. (58)

Dick's definition brings together corporeal and scientific understandings of this topography, while it also invokes a Gothic tone in the context of land in colonial Ireland. Placing somatic characteristics on topographies personifies the haunting and horrific actions of the bog and portrays what one would typically define as a terrestrial landform instead as a living creature waiting to devour intruders. Dick references the corporeal qualities of bogs in connection with medical science when he states, "we cure bog by both a surgical and a medical process. We drain it so that its mechanical action as a sponge may be stopped, and we put in lime to kill the vital principle of its growth. Without the other, neither process is sufficient; but together, scientific and executive man asserts his dominance" (55). The bog, then, serves as non-human matter with corporeal characteristics that becomes at times in the novel subordinate to the "executive man" who decides to assert dominance in the name of science or, more specifically, capital and political gain.

Stoker's representation of the bog alludes to the possible benefits of industrialization, as proposed by Arthur and Dick, where the bog exists solely as a resource to increase capital. However, I argue that Stoker writes about the bog in the novel to explore his ideas about whether exploiting the natural resources will help Ireland with its own economic position in the British Empire. In his article from *The World's Work*, published in 1907, Stoker argues that Ireland should exploit its natural advantages in agriculture, fishing, and mineral possibilities. He maintains that the vast areas of the bog if used as a fuel source could be "sufficient alone for national wealth" ("The Great White Fair in Dublin" 573).

While Stoker supported such industrial practices, in part, he did so to suggest that Ireland could function without English economic support during the series of Home Rule debates in the British Parliament. Stoker's ostensible support of commercializing the bog, as exhibited in *The Snake's Pass*, could be a metaphor for industrializing Ireland to escape the economic and colonial yoke of England. This seemingly contradictory stance raises another question for consideration in relation to the novel: is there ultimately a choice between the environment and the people existing under colonial rule or can both concerns be addressed in tandem?

According to Serenella Iovino and Serpil Oppermann, material ecocriticism allows for an understanding of "the corporeal dimensions of human and nonhuman agencies, their literary and cultural representations are inseparable from the very material world within which they intra-act" (84). The bog can be viewed in *The Snake's Pass* as a terrestrial object that has non-human identity, especially through its cultural and literary representations, and as a possible resource for economic independence from England. There are concurrent uses and perspectives for colonial landscapes, and this opposition pervades the novel, leaving the reader questioning the value of the bog in the context of Ireland and its future. Arthur queries, "Is it a quagmire, then, or like a quicksand?" Dick responds, "Like either, or both" (58). The conflict and cohesion of the bog's elements overshadow the novel's narrative about land-use options and political oppositions. The bog – both real and imagined – challenges such fixed positioning and mirrors the mutable political and economic circumstances facing Ireland at the time.

By focusing directly on the bog, we can recognize the significance of the Irish landscape in the novel. But Stoker also establishes it as a central character and asks us to identify identity not in categories of living or non-living, but human or non-human, both of which contain physical and symbolic distinctiveness. This opens the possibility that once an inanimate object becomes animated, it assumes living qualities, thereby complicating any actions toward its elimination or oppression. The bog in the novel, as an environmental non-human agent, projects itself as a textual form of matter through the material imagination of its human counterparts (Iovino and Oppermann 82). For example, the folklore surrounding the bog animates what is already present as a biological reality: it is a “carpet of death” because it shifts and suffocates humans. Despite Stoker’s complicated position on commercializing rural areas of Ireland, he also considers the bog important and multidimensional enough to frame it as a character with unique non-human identity. In this respect, *The Snake’s Pass* serves as a text that actively engages with environmental materiality as a central literary concern; it establishes a way of imbuing matter with non-human identity that can also interact with human agents, especially as its own character, in the primary narrative of the novel. After all, “executive man,” despite many efforts to subdue the bog, never completely controls it in the novel – it eventually slides off of the mountain due to a heavy storm on its own accord.

In addition to animating the bog through oppositions of the material and uncanny, the Gothic motif of transgression plays a significant role in *The Snake’s Pass*. Murdock’s transgression against the environment – particularly his

disruption of the bog – culminates in his horrific demise: he is sucked into the pit of the shifting bog as it slithers toward the ocean during a torrential storm. Since transgression remains a literary Gothic trope, we can read *The Snake's Pass* as an environmental parable: violating the ecological “law of nature” will result in retributive consequences on the transgressor. In relation to the nineteenth-century Gothic, Fred Botting remarks:

In an age that developed philosophical, scientific and psychological systems to define and classify the nature of the external world, the parameters of human organization and their relation to the working of the mind, transgression is important not only as an interrogation of received rules and values, but in the identification, reconstitution or transformation of limits. (8)

The function of transgression in the late nineteenth-century Gothic novel moves between earlier issues of virtue, estate takeovers, and lineage disputes, to concerns of race, political sovereignty, and modernity. What I am calling the “environmental transgression” associated with Murdock’s obsessive treasure hunt is reminiscent of earlier Gothic writings where greed and selfishness result in retributive consequences. Indeed, the pursuit of excess is one of the markers of transgression in Gothic writings (Botting 6). In Murdock’s case, transgression against the environment results in his untimely and gruesome death, caused by the very topography he seeks to destroy, which occurs due to his excessive desire to

obtain the gold at any cost. Murdock's actions reinforce violations of not only the moral, but also the environmental codes in society.

Murdock initially hires Dick to locate the metal deposits (i.e., the treasure of gold) in the bog. On several occasions, Dick warns Murdock of the dangers of the shifting bog, cautioning him, for instance, that his plan to dam the bog in order to find the gold will ultimately lead to environmental catastrophe. While the desired effect is to limit the water content in the bog so that Murdock can dig in possible treasure locations, the actual effect is that the bog itself continues to rise to dangerous levels where it could at any point shift or slide off of its rock base due to the rise in the water table between the *sphagnum* moss (bog moss) surface and lower solid layer of limestone. Murdock's resistance to Dick's warnings about the bog results in a judgment that accentuates the limits of the human in relation to the external world. Murdock transgresses against the environment, despite warnings, by attempting to manipulate and control the bog. As the cataclysmic ending of the novel demonstrates, reconfiguring the bog's ecological integrity in order to extract the buried treasure proves to be fatal. Transgression is frequently employed as a motif in Gothic writing to reinforce social values. As Botting contends, "The terrors and horrors of transgression in Gothic writing become a powerful means to reassert the values of society" (7). *The Snake's Pass* reveals what happens to transgressors of social and environmental mores through the horror of Murdock's demise as he is "sucked below the surface of the heaving mass" of the bog, and all that could be heard is his "wild cry" (233).

In *The Snake's Pass*, values centre on how individual characters transgress the environmental codes through forms of excess for monetary and political gain. These transgressions occur against the backdrop of the system of landownership established in nineteenth-century Ireland. Such excesses underpin the limits and boundaries of the bog as a representative environment in the novel. A character's internal pathologies and irrationality, as forms of excess, manifest themselves outwardly and affect the treatment of the bog. Murdock, Dick, and Arthur all transgress against the bog; their actions follow the model of a tortuous Gothic tale of how social behaviours or rules are neglected through vice, corruption, and depravity (Botting 7). Set in a colonial milieu of the late nineteenth century, the vices presented in the novel do not result in some absolute retribution or a clear moral direction. Instead, their vices signal, as they do in many Gothic writings, the ambiguities and oppositions inherent in socio-cultural notions of the period. In the case of *The Snake's Pass*, the socio-cultural dilemma concentrates on whether to industrialize or conserve rural landscapes in Ireland or, perhaps, some combination of the two, as Stoker suggests through the action in the novel.

Arthur and Dick transgress against the environment by persisting with their plans to commercialize the bog through natural resource development, enhancing economic production for their own investment. They spend most of their days researching the bog as part of Dick's scientific inquiries. However, after Arthur purchases all of Shleenanaher and Knockcalltecore, he prioritizes resource development over any other possible research projects that involve the

bog. Arthur initially plans to build his future estate there, but then focuses on more lucrative possibilities from reclaiming the land. Dick remarks to Arthur,

Let us once be able to find the springs that feed the bog, and get them in hand, and we can make the place a paradise. The springs are evidently high up on the Hill, so that we can not only get water for irrigating and ornamental purposes, but we can get power also!” (179)

Dick first envisions how Knockcalltecore will provide all of the necessary elements to live quite comfortably. He then contradicts himself when he claims, “I suspect, that there is a streak of limestone in the Hill, the place might be a positive mine of wealth as well!” He continues, “We can build a harbor on the south side, which would be the loveliest place to keep a yacht in that ever was known – quite big enough for anything in these parts – as safe as Portsmouth, and of fathomless depth” (179). Propelled by the potential of development for both personal and capital gain, Arthur insists, “Dick, this has all to be done; and it needs someone to do it” (179). Ultimately, Arthur decides to be the person to do it and makes plans to “buy the mountain” in an area where “land is literally going a—begging” (180).

Modernity supplants previous notions of subsistence living as Arthur and Dick plan a development project that will ultimately produce extensive environmental changes on the mountain and surrounding land. In this respect, the novel invites the reader to reimagine time. To recognize such an environmental manipulation is to enter into a suspension of time, which robs the colonial project’s strategic timeline of cultural and topographical disruption. But it does so

differently from the writers in the Irish Literary Revival – a project I will examine in then next chapter that attempted to manufacture a pre-colonial utopia of Celticism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Indeed, such a colonial ideology hinges on the assumption that there are limitless resources in the colonies and that such spaces are ripe for economic exploitation executed in an efficient and timely manner. Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin maintain that doctrines of resource exploitation remains central to colonial projects: “Such places, after all, were apparently untamed, unowned and above all, *unused*; and, accordingly, settlers set about rendering them productive and profitable through imported methods rather than by accommodating them to local circumstances” (8; original emphasis). The bog serves as both a limited and limitless space in the novel, challenging the slippages between time and history as much as resource management and exploitation; it does so as a warning to the future, as much as a recognition of past resource exploitation. The novel not only reactivates the past, as Gibbons argues, but it more directly engages the future.

Arthur never intends to stay on Knockcalltecore until his courtship with Norah begins and then he decides to settle permanently in the West of Ireland. At this point, Arthur acknowledges the economic potential of the bog. Instead of viewing the bog as a tourist enjoying the natural aesthetic, he exploits the untamed, unowned, and unused space that the bog inconveniently occupies. Arthur attempts to justify his transgressions against the bog through modern theories of innovation and science that were pervasive in the 1880s and 1890s. In nineteenth-century Gothic writing, for example, scientific theory and

technological innovation were often used to validate various forms of excess. Knowledge, as Smith observes, is a subject that Stoker keeps returning to in all of his writings, particularly in terms of “knowledge of the national and/or the racial Other” (“Demonising” 20). Certainly the nomenclatures of knowledge pervasive in the nineteenth century influence expansions of scientific theory. In Arthur’s case, the bogs were simply unowned and unused landscapes waiting to be exploited. Dick and Arthur draw from the scientific and technological innovations in their plan to industrialize the bogs, but ultimately create an unintended consequence: they alienate themselves from their surroundings through a vocabulary laced with objects of fear and anxiety (Botting 12).

There is a sense, however, that Arthur’s actions will affect not only the future of the bog, but also the futures of both he and Norah. He realizes, “There was a curse on the Hill!” (206). The Hill’s curse relates to Arthur’s transgressions that are continually manifested in his nightmares. After a spate of these nightmares, Arthur reflects that the “terrible dreams, whencesoever they came, must not have come in vain; the grim warning must not be despised” (222). Although he is consciously referring to Norah, the dreams indicate that such grim warnings are also about the bog. Norah, like the bog, is also referred to as “Unknown” (126). Arthur speaks about going to the “bog,” by which he means seeing Norah. This occurs before he realizes that Joyce’s daughter and the mysterious “Unknown” woman he meets on the bog are the same person. In addition, Andy consistently chides Arthur about his infatuation with Norah by comparing her to the bog: “Begor, a bit of bog to put your arum around while

ye're lukin' at it" (57). Andy continues the bog/Norah parallel throughout the novel: "I'm not the man to go back on a young gintelman goin' to luk at a bog. Sure doesn't all young min do the same? I've been there meself times out iv mind! There's nothin' in the wurld foreninst it! Lukin' at bogs is the most intherestin' thin' I knows" (49). Ultimately, Arthur's purchase of Knockcalltecore is also a purchase of Norah, who symbolizes both the bog and Ireland for Arthur. This ownership of the land reinforces Arthur's intention to also reclaim Norah. For instance, he sends her to become educated at finishing schools in England, Dresden, and Paris, an act that ultimately drains her of any Irish cultural identity but increases her capacity to enhance Arthur's wealth and status in Ireland. Nora and the bog are interchangeable and synonymous throughout the novel, underlining an allegory of not only the imperial marriage between Ireland and England, as Daly examines, but also an allegory of the land and commercialization practices through subordination.

Critics have previously acknowledged that Irish women are used as desired colonial objects in earlier nineteenth-century national tales by writers such as Maria Edgeworth and Sydney Owenson,⁴ but the direct doubling of women and the bog points forward as much as backward in literary history.⁵ Hughes notices that women, as they are represented in the novel much like the bog, require colonization and domination by male power because of their perceived unpredictable actions (18). The bog, then, reflects the colonial history of Ireland:

⁴ See, for example, Ina Ferris' *The Romantic National Tale and the Question of Ireland* (2002) and Claire Connolly's *A Cultural History of the Irish Novel, 1790-1829* (2011).

⁵ Chapter Four in my study demonstrates how women continue to be coupled with the bog in contemporary Irish literature.

an occupied geography misunderstood by its occupier. However, Arthur's action against the bog is also a transgression against Norah and affects their future. Both the bog and Norah are commercialized; the former through reclamation and the latter by combining Norah's Cliff Fields with Arthur's recently purchased land to create a monopoly of property wealth in the region. In fact, they eventually locate the French treasure on Norah's inherited land. Her property also becomes a key piece to Arthur's bid to buy the entire mountain. The marriage between them allows for Arthur's landowning and subsequent wealth to swell, much like the bog. By reclaiming Norah and the bog, Arthur reinforces his dominance over both of them and destroys each of their distinctly Irish identities. Moreover, Arthur's actions provoke another opposition in the novel. Arthur loves the bog because it, like Norah, symbolizes a mysterious shifting object – as in the colonial Object – that represents colonial desire. Andy's humorous metaphor between the bog and Norah exists for more than mere comedic effect in the novel; it underscores Arthur's Anglo-Irish desire to possess more than a mere deed to the land, but instead to obtain the knowledge of the unknown secrets of the bog (land) and Norah (woman). In this respect, Arthur's transgression against the environment can be compared to his union with Norah: as an allegory for his relationship with Ireland and the bog, it holds the significance of the past while it inevitably foreshadows the future.

Looking Forward

In this chapter, I investigate how bogs function in Stoker's *The Snake's Pass* as contested and peripheral spaces, and that these significant cultural markers nevertheless have been treated as zones of waste that are ripe for exploitation. Gothic tropes of opposition, materiality, and transgression appear in the background of a story about land ownership and reclamation, and through these themes we can investigate the threatened environment of the bog. Previous arguments have been made that suggest the Irish Gothic can be read as a representation of certain colonial anxieties.⁶ I argue that landforms, particularly the bog, present one of the underdeveloped elements to this argument. "For the native," argues Edward Said, "the history of colonial servitude is inaugurated by loss of the locality to the outsider; its geographical identity must thereafter be searched for and somehow restored. Because of the presence of the colonizing outsider, the land is recoverable at first only through the imagination" (*Culture* 225). In *The Snake's Pass*, Stoker provides such an imaginative reclamation by re-establishing geographical identity of the land not by looking backward through the crumbling codes of the Anglo-Irish Gothic, but through questions about progress and modernity related to Ireland's independence in the immediate future. We can mourn the status of the bog through Stoker's deployment the Gothic mode within a colonial context, thereby recognizing the political and environmental legitimacy of the land. If, as Gibbons asserts, "The bog [...] stands for those aspects of the Irish past which will not go away" ("Hysterical" 14), then despite

⁶ See, for example, Julian Moynahan's *Anglo-Irish: The Literary Imagination in a Hyphenated Culture* (1994) and Jarlath Killen's *Gothic Ireland: Horror and the Irish Anglican Imagination in the Long Eighteenth Century* (2005).

its near extinction the bog will haunt the imagination of those who continually explore its cultural and environmental depths in the twentieth century.

At the same time, *The Snake's Pass* leaves us with a contradictory question: should Ireland commercialize in the name of progress to seek economic independence from England or should Ireland preserve some of its culturally and environmentally significant landforms such as bogs? Although the novel provides an ambiguous and shifting answer to this inquiry, it nevertheless raises such a question about a topography that has largely been overlooked in literary and cultural criticism. *The Snake's Pass* introduces bogs to an audience beyond Ireland to show the potential importance of this indefinite and mysterious landform. In this sense, the novel reclaims the bog in the narrative of the social order. In one of the most telling lines in the novel, Dick states,

although the subject [of bogs] is one of vital interest to thousands of persons in our own country – one in which national prosperity is mixed up to a large extent – one which touches deeply the happiness and material prosperity of a large section of Irish people, and so helps to mould their political action, there are hardly any works on the subject in existence. (54)

The importance of bogs should not be understated in Irish history. Bogs, which are mixed up among issues of national prosperity, cultural identity, and geopolitics, serve as a “seedbed of activity,” referring back to Foster’s comment, not only in the West (as showcased in *The Snake's Pass*), but also in other parts of

Ireland. Examining bogs may not provide clear answers, but, like their limited and limitless qualities, they can offer important questions in the future, as much as in the past and present. To this end, *The Snake's Pass* is a forerunner of later twentieth-century Irish Gothic fiction that deals with bogs and the effects of colonization, whether it is environmental as in this chapter or social hauntings in the revolutionary and post-revolutionary periods in Chapter Two. As Chapter One and Chapter Two both show, contradictory links between the supernatural and nationalism in connection to bogs continue to emerge in literary and cultural narratives about postcolonial Ireland.

CHAPTER TWO:

“down towards the fatal bog”: Spectral Histories in

O’Connor’s “Guests of the Nation” and Ó Faoláin’s “A Meeting”

Haunting is one way in which abusive systems of power make themselves known and their impacts felt in everyday life. (xvi)
– Avery Gordon, *Ghostly Matters*

Ghosts of Post-Independence Ireland

Ghosts, like bogs, unite opposites because they simultaneously appear visible and invisible, dead and alive, material and immaterial, and are both feared and welcomed (del Pilar Blanco and Peeren 2). As explored in Chapter One, Ghosts and bogs also share a similar relationship with mythical, irrational, and mystical powers in culture, especially in how they are often associated with social disruptions related to colonial histories (Gikandi 80). In this chapter, I investigate how two writers in post-independence Ireland in the 1930s use the bog as a specific site of haunting – sometimes directly, sometimes obliquely – in order to address some of “the unresolved social violence” and social decay from the Irish War of Independence/Anglo-Irish War a decade earlier (Gordon xvi). Irish writers employ ghosts and hauntings in literary and cultural narratives to offer another way of explaining ruptures in postcolonial history, challenging both past and current political histories. “What is distinctive about haunting,” argues Avery Gordon, “is that it is an animated state in which a repressed or unresolved social violence is making itself known, sometimes very directly, sometimes more obliquely” (xvi). Sometimes ghosts are conjured up as spirits of the past to clarify the present, but sometimes ghosts appear in times of chaos and disorder as connectors between an unresolved past and the present. The discussion to follow

looks specifically at two short stories, Frank O'Connor's "Guests of the Nation" (1931) and Seán Ó Faoláin's "A Meeting" (1937). I examine how haunting is used as a theme to challenge and disrupt nationalist history in the revolutionary period between 1919-1923. These two stories, albeit in different ways, explore how ghosts materialize in and around bogs and challenge previous conceptions of the Irish nation.

Critical vocabularies around hauntings, ghosts, and bogs would usually stem from Gothic studies, and while I draw from Gothic critics, Gordon's sociological study *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination* (2008) most effectively underscores some of the social consequences that conjure up ghosts and hauntings in national discourses.¹ For Gordon, the notion of haunting is more complicated than social or cultural critics might assume because it interrogates the evidence of traces or unexplainable phenomena and what this tells us about exchanges of power, knowledge, and experience in contexts of slavery, torture, or other forms of oppression. *Ghostly Matters* assists in

¹ The so-called "spectral turn" in theory is typically marked by the publication of Jacques Derrida's *Specters of Marx* (1994) (del Pilar Blanco and Peeren 2). After this publication, ghosts have been increasingly examined through critical vocabularies of Marxism and capitalism, particularly in light of Derrida's hauntology and Franco Moretti's analysis of vampirism as a metaphor for the capitalist system in *Signs Taken For Wonders* (1983). In terms of spectral theory and nationalism, Pheng Cheah published *Spectral Nationality: Passages of Freedom from Kant to Postcolonial Literature of Liberation* (2003) and an article in *Boundary 2* titled "Spectral Nationality: The Living-on of the Postcolonial Nation in Neocolonial Globalization" (1999), both of which address a range of issues related to spectres in Marxist, capitalist, and postcolonial works. Since this chapter does not examine political economies, I rarely draw from Derrida or Moretti. I do, however, draw from a bit from Cheah, in addition to Gordon, because both position their arguments within social and postcolonial theory. Cheah, however, predominantly focuses on how postcolonial narratives of freedom connect to German idealism, specifically to the German philosophers Kant, Hegel, and Heidegger. Therefore, I mainly draw from Gordon in this chapter because her study more explicitly examines ghosts and hauntings in the social sphere. Despite this short critical history, scholars have yet to significantly explore the relationship between ghosts and nationalism in Irish literature, particularly in relation to bogs.

theorizing my own argument in this chapter because it provides a way of viewing ghosts, spectres, and revenants in a historical, cultural, and sociological context. While Gordon locates her study on racism and capitalism in certain power structures, her formulations about haunting are equally relevant to Irish nationalism. Haunting, for example, confuses and complicates linear perceptions of time and history. Gordon argues, “Haunting raises specters, and it alerts the experience of being in time, the way we separate the past, the present, and the future” (xvi). While haunting disrupts time, as Gordon suggests, it does so not merely by separating the temporal nomenclatures of an historical record, but by creating simultaneity of time, thereby rendering it non-linear. O’Connor’s and Ó Faoláin’s characters, for instance, relate to and reminisce about an actual time in Irish history that is fraught with unresolved outcomes. In this chapter, I aim to show that the ghosts of Irish history materialize on bogs in O’Connor’s and Ó Faoláin’s short ghost stories, particularly in how spectres of the nation haunt fragmented memories of the present and past.²

“Guests of the Nation” and “A Meeting” are both ghost stories, but there are many ghosts throughout both stories. In this sense, I am not defining ghosts as simply a materialization of dead people. Rather, ghosts are hauntings of an uncertain national identity in Ireland over a decade after both O’Connor and Ó Faoláin experienced these events. According to Gothic scholar Andrew Smith, “In

² Admittedly, I use the terms “ghosts,” “spectres,” and “revenants” interchangeably and quite freely as they relate to anything with a spirited, energetic, or even imagined presence that haunts. In the Introduction to the *Spectralities Reader* (2013), María del Pilar Blanco and Esther Peeren also define ghosts quite generally, “appearing as anything from figments of the imagination, divine messengers, benign or exacting ancestors, and pesky otherworldly creatures populating particular loci to disturbing figures returned from the dead bent on exacting revenge, revealing hidden crimes, continuing a love affair or simply searching for a way to pass on” (1). Gordon similarly maintains, “The ghost is a crucible for political mediation and historical memory” (18).

its unsettling of the relationship between the living and the dead the ghost story ostensibly raises some radical, putatively, metaphysical questions about identity” (*Gothic Literature* 122-123). The ghosts of the nation materialize in “Guests of the Nation” and “A Meeting,” thereby raising questions about identity and how it is established through acts of violence. O’Connor and Ó Faoláin re-examine a tumultuous period of Irish history in order to question ideas of nationalism and national identity. The decision to explore this historical material within the genre of the ghost story forces certain issues to the forefront in each work. For example, both stories contain the relationship between the dead and living, national and personal identities, and temporality and atemporality. Furthermore, in each story the bog’s symbols complicate ideas of home and hostility connected to the nation because it functions as a space of confusion and uncertainty. We have already seen similar uncertainties explored in *The Snake’s Pass* when Arthur feels both connection and dislocation from the bog through his own developing identity to Ireland.

Ultimately, then, this chapter explores how ghosts in “Guests of the Nation” and “A Meeting” are projections of a haunted nation. They appear not simply as visible bodies of energy, but they materialize in various forms and affect the characters on the bog in different ways – namely, through narratives of identity, decay, and violence. Indeed, images of hauntings and spectres were often used in nationalist propaganda campaigns to give shape and form to debatable and formless histories.³ If the Irish landscape is, as Seamus Deane argues, an

³ See, for example, Caoilfhionn Ní Bheacháin’s “Seeing Ghosts: Gothic Discourses and State Formation” (2012).

archetypal marker of Irish nationalism (*Celtic Revivals* 14), then we can approach O'Connor's and Ó Faoláin's use of the bog not as a space representing the nation, but as a space that both confuses and illuminates the slippages in history, memory, and identity that have occurred since the Irish War of Independence. The idea of nation serves as a type of ghost that relies on the imagined consciousness of the collective through colonial histories. Richard Kearney maintains that the "spectre of Irish nationalism might be said to represent Britain's return of the repressed" (11). In national ghost narratives, the idea of nation is often viewed as a spectre because its form and existence derives from the imagined collective consciousness of individuals and groups that rely on an interpretation of the past. For example, nationalism is often haunted by history, which is both perceived and read by people who are also haunted by history. In this regard, "nation" serves as the "big idea," whereas "nationalism" represents the smaller ideological fragments that people believe in – real or perceived – which people perform, act out, or live in order to achieve the larger idea of "the nation." Nationalism is built around a range of concepts, such as freedom, culture, and ideological life, that ultimately support the specific needs of the nation in colonial, decolonial, and postcolonial contexts (Gikandi 77). Whether through religion, language, economics, or culture, Irish nationalism has remained versatile and "extremely variegated" (Kearney 8). Irish nationalism, like many other global nationalisms, is also a totalizing concept, even in its various manifestations; and the bog, with its oppositional and yet simultaneously bonding qualities, is used in these two stories to resist such certainty about the nation.

O'Connor and Ó Faoláin use the bog as a haunting symbol and setting of a past that has not resolved itself in the present for them and perhaps never will. Used as a specific site of haunting, the bog defies, confuses, and, even at times, reinforces the definite meanings often associated with ideas of the nation. National identities formed between 1916 and 1923 are treated as unsettled ghosts in both stories and are bound by the bog for O'Connor and Ó Faoláin in the 1930s. Before taking up the main subject in this chapter, it is necessary to outline some historical background of the Irish Literary Revival – a period marked by cultural nationalism that affected O'Connor and Ó Faoláin and ultimately shaped their response to Irish nationalism – and overview each story and the related criticism supporting my own argument about hauntings.

The transition from the late nineteenth century into the first third of the twentieth century serves as one of the more turbulent periods in modern Irish history. Monumental political events occurred in the early half of the twentieth century, which significantly changed Ireland and subsequently triggered more impassioned literary responses from writers. For example, the 1916 Easter Rising was staged during this period, but many people in Ireland did not support it due to its poor timing in relation to the First World War.⁴ After the British state indiscriminately executed some of the leaders of 1916 as a response to the uprising, the nationalist movement garnered more support in Ireland; the people even elected Sinn Féin (Irish nationalist party) for the first time. This turning point in Irish support and sentiment initiated the guerilla-style Irish War of

⁴ For more on the history of the Easter Rising, see Charles Townshend's *Easter 1916: The Irish Rebellion* (2005) or Fearghal McGarry's *The Rising: Ireland, Easter 1916* (2011).

Independence (1919-1921), which resulted in the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921. The Treaty separated the Northern Irish State, six Irish counties still governed by the United Kingdom, and the Republic, or Irish Free State, consisting of the remaining twenty-six counties in the south. Due to substantial opposition to the Treaty, because it separated the island “nation,” Ireland broke out into civil war from 1922 to 1923, which was fought between the Free State Pro-Treaty and the Republic Anti-Treaty sides. As a result of this political history in the modern period from 1880-1930, when Ireland transformed from part of a British state and into a modern independent state, notions of society and stability were far from normal in the Irish experience and this had a particularly profound effect on literature and culture (Deane, *Celtic Revivals* 12).

The modern Irish literary movement in the early twentieth century largely responded to British imperialism by redefining, reimagining, and reconstituting the idea of an Irish nation. This cultural movement is commonly referred to as the Irish Literary Revival – a period also known as the Irish Literary Renaissance, Celtic Revival, or the Celtic Twilight – which celebrated Irish culture and literature supporting an independent Irish nation. Before, during, and after the events of 1916 and the tumult during the two wars, writers of the Revival responded to British occupation by re-engaging with earlier forms of Irish cultural nationalism in the nineteenth century. Irish nationalism of the Revival, argues Deane, “was and is so imbued with the sense of the past as a support for action in the present that it has never looked beyond that” (*Celtic Revivals* 14). If colonialism attempted to destroy national cultures, then national legitimacy

depended upon rehabilitating the cultural past (Gikandi 76). In an attempt to rehabilitate the past, writers of the Revival focused specifically on casting current cultural and political events in pre-modern mythologies, what David Lloyd has called a “mythopoeic space” (*Ireland After History* 24), from Celtic myth to Nordic and Greek myth. Many writers in the depressed post-independence period of the 1930s, like O’Connor and Ó Faoláin, revisited historical moments and often depicted them with biting realism instead of relying on abstract myth far removed from the current political moment. Another reason O’Connor’s and Ó Faoláin’s stories are biting and realistic is because both writers were involved in the wars; history for them remains both personal and political.⁵ The Revival intended to focus on a pre-colonial and pre-modern Ireland where Gaelic culture, language, and myth flourished. The problem was that such an idyllic reimagining of historical Ireland was largely constructed by cultural nationalists and resulted in another form of hegemonic nationalism.

O’Connor and Ó Faoláin, both of whom came to be known as masters of the modern short story, were too young during the Revival to fully participate in the literary discussion. When they were in their prime, publishing in the 1930s to the 1950s, they rejected Revivalist writers and topics of mysticism and nostalgia, despite the fact that Irish nationalism continued to flourish in this period. Joe Cleary defines this era of modern Irish writing as the “field of counter-Revivalist realism” (*Outrageous* 144). Other notable writers of the movement include the novelist Liam O’Flaherty, the dramatist Sean O’Casey, and, to a lesser extent, the

⁵ Both O’Connor and Ó Faoláin were also politically and militarily active in this period – not just writers reflecting on others’ action, but their own. O’Connor was in the IRA and Ó Faoláin was in the Irish Volunteers.

poet and novelist Patrick Kavanagh (*Outrageous* 144). Indeed, this realist period of modern Irish literature still remains in the shadow of earlier, more canonized writers of the Revival, such as William Butler Yeats, George Moore, Douglas Hyde, Lady Gregory, John Millington Synge, and James Joyce.⁶

Post-Revival writers like O'Connor and Ó Faoláin respond to the Revival by raising concerns about nationalism and ideas of national building in this earlier period from a now distant and retrospective vantage point. One of Cleary's critiques of the post-Revival naturalism that O'Connor and Ó Faoláin exhibit in their own writing is that it fails to offer "its own informing criteria of evaluation and assessment" (176). "For Ó Faoláin and O'Connor," he argues, "literature is conceived as an instrument capable of changing society, yet the mechanics of social change seem scarcely ever to be an object of serious reflection in their own fiction" (176). Cleary largely critiques the post-Revival generation for its failure to respond to the Revival with the literary complexity, structural vigour, and political forcefulness that are characteristic of Revivalist writings. Michael Neary, in contrast, views Ó Faoláin – and we could extend this to O'Connor as well – as working in the nebulous area of opposition and ambiguity in his fiction. "For Ó Faoláin," argues Neary, "withholding the center, the 'telling detail,' does fictional justice to the murky, painful, 'in between' moments of life, leaving the imagination with the task of ordering those moments" (Neary 11). O'Connor and Ó Faoláin write in a gloomy period of nation formation in the 1930s, and although

⁶ Joyce largely rejected the ideas of the Revivalists but is nevertheless often associated with them. In his later book *The Irish* (1947), Ó Faoláin frames the style of the Revivalists as Romantic (142-143). According to Cleary, Joyce was, for Ó Faoláin, the "exemplary realist and the tutelary figure for all later twentieth-century Irish writing" (*Outrageous* 147).

they attempt new ways to interrogate the past in the very “productive dialectical relationship” that Cleary supports, they do so through haunting forms of realism as a counter to the aesthetic and structurally rigorous writings of the Revivalists. O’Connor and Ó Faoláin do indeed offer serious reflection and address the “mechanics of social change” by confronting the catastrophic consequences of romanticizing the nation in a sparse and sobering form of realist ghost fiction set on the bog.

While “Guests of the Nation” and “A Meeting” are not typically characterized as having a Gothic aesthetic, they nevertheless evoke themes associated with ghosts, histories, violence, and hauntings. Even though literary naturalism remained a popular form in the Irish Free State period of the 1920s and 1930s, literature and culture that deployed ghosts and hauntings also began to surface, although the texts were predominantly pro-republican and nationalist in scope and often referred to the nation as a “phantom Republic” (Ní Bheacháin 44-45). Gothic conventions allow writers to explore “a spectre of unfinished historical business” where “ghosts demand redress and destabilize the certainties of the living” (Ní Bheacháin 45). Franco Moretti reminds us, “The literature of terror is born precisely *out of the terror of a split society*, and out of the desire to heal it” (*Signs* 83; original emphasis). “Guests of the Nation” and “A Meeting” challenge rather than support ideas of nationalism through the Gothic forms that erupt out of a “split society.”

O’Connor’s “Guests of the Nation,” first published in the collection *Guests of the Nation* (1931), resonates in Irish literature as one of the starkest,

most poignant, and non-romanticized depictions of violence related to war and decolonization. Set at some point during the Irish War of Independence, “Guests of the Nation” tells a disturbing story about two Irish Republican Army (IRA) soldiers (Bonaparte and Noble) ordered to execute two British soldiers (Belcher and Hawkins) in reprisal for the killing of four IRA men in British custody. The major tension in the story centres on the fact that the Irish and British soldiers have become “chums” and are noticeably affected by the prospect of execution “down towards the fatal bog” (8). Jeremiah Donovan, the IRA commander, communicates to Bonaparte that the English “hostages” are the “enemy” despite their friendly disposition. He informs Bonaparte that the enemy has “prisoners belong’ to us, and now they talk of shooting them. If they shoot our prisoners we’ll shoot theirs, and serve them right” (6). This news comes as a shock to Bonaparte, who “went back to the cottage, a miserable man” (6). After this clear foreshadowing, the story eventually leads to the executions of Belcher and Hawkins out on the bog. The bog enters the story as a prevailing metaphor for death, political violence, and the supernatural on both sides of the war. “Guests of the Nation” presents nationalism as a damaging and life-threatening discourse stitched into narratives similar to those rooted in the Revival. O’Connor’s short story offers this critique by examining the complex relationship between the IRA and the British soldiers, but also by showcasing the fundamental human connections that can exist and flourish between some combatants. The story also explores in between spaces, particularly through themes of absence and silence where the ghosts dwell on the bog.

The frequent adaptations of this evocative tale throughout the twentieth century have only increased its imposing status as one of the greatest short stories in the Irish literary canon (Cleeve 101).⁷ Despite being such a canonical story, there has been surprisingly little critical attention devoted to it. Stanley Renner addresses the inherent “hidden powers” that seem to propel and mystify the story. He argues that Bonaparte’s and Noble’s failure to recognize their own human responsibility, more than merely cosmic circumstance guided by fate, is largely responsible for their murderous actions. While the opposition between fate and human responsibility provides a productive way to scrutinize “Guests of the Nation,” the bog remains fundamentally a place where these hidden powers appear. Renner explores almost every aspect of these powers, including referencing the ending scene that takes place in “vacant cosmic immensity” (375), without actually pinpointing the bog as a central trope and a possible way to confront a history of distressing human responsibility amidst anti-colonial circumstances. Michael Storey, in contrast, recognizes some of the links to anti-colonial struggle, while comparatively analyzing O’Connor’s “Guests of the Nation” and Albert Camus’ “The Guest.” Storey relates colonial conditions between French-occupied Algeria and British-occupied Ireland in order to offer an analysis of the way O’Connor underscores colonial struggles relevant in other literary contexts. Storey provides a perceptive point that connects to my own

⁷ There have been many notable adaptations of “Guests of the Nation” since its publication, namely Denis Johnston’s silent adaptation *Guests of the Nation* (1935), Brendan Behan’s Irish language play *An Ghiall/The Hostage* (1957), Neil Jordan’s critically acclaimed film *The Crying Game* (1992), and Daniel Speers’ most recent film adaptation *Guests of a Nation* (2012). In fact, O’Connor’s story had been adapted so often that he once commented to Yeats that he was not aware it had been adapted by a specific person since it had already been used so often by the collective (*My Father’s Son* 216).

analysis in this chapter: he compares the setting in both stories and identifies a similar environment of desolation. In Camus' "The Guest," the characters endure "on the vast expanse of the high, deserted plateau [...] where nothing had any connection with man" (qtd. in Storey 250-251). The bog, too, is often perceived as a space disconnected from humanity, but for O'Connor it stands at the heart of the story teeming with national ghosts vacillating between past and present.

Eugene O'Brien's more contemporary engagement with O'Connor in his essay, "Guests of a Nation; *Geists* of a Nation," does examine ghosts. O'Brien's perceptive argument focuses on the way in which Derrida's concept of "hauntology" reveals ideas about guests and hospitality in the story.⁸ O'Brien argues,

It is this movement – from guest of a nation to ghosts of a nation – that encapsulates the effect of violence and death on the perpetrators. These two men clearly affected all of the rest of Bonaparte's life: they fulfilled a ghostly function, physically absent, yet present and influential, changing his perspective about everything and about his future. (116)

For O'Brien, the haunting in "Guests of the Nation" is more "open and emancipatory" than traditional forms of ghosts of the nation, who are hostile rather than hospitable (116-117). While I agree with O'Brien's premise that guests become ghosts of the nation, I want to interrogate how confusions about

⁸ Although my analysis references Derrida's notions of haunting on a few occasions, this chapter does not provide a Derridian analysis of hauntology for two reasons. Firstly, Derrida has become the main source for spectral readings of literary texts and I want to provide a different direction. Secondly, Gordon's approach to spectral theory provides a clearer direction for my own argument about social and national connections between the characters and the bog.

Irish nationalism reflect the oppositional qualities of the bog, and then explore why both O'Connor and Ó Faoláin locate the climactic scenes of their stories on the bog.⁹

Ó Faoláin's "A Meeting," from the collection *A Purse of Coppers* (1937), describes a spontaneous encounter between two people who once knew each other during "the Revolution" (273). The unnamed protagonist, also the first-person narrator, meets Sally Dunn in the town of Burnt Hall, just outside of Limerick. During the revolution, the narrator admired Sally for her unflinching commitment to the Irish cause. They decide to take a walk and reminisce. This walk takes them out to "the fields" where the bog stretches for "miles and miles" (275). Although the narrator begins their "meeting" with enthusiasm, he becomes depressed with Sally's current life. He wants to revisit the "good times" in the past, but for Sally, unlike the narrator, the past remains in the past and no longer part of her life. The story takes place in two locations: the imaginative (the memories of the past and present moving back and forth) and the real (on the bog). The bog, in fact, generates the reveries of the past. Prior to arriving on the bog, the narrator appears elated at the sight of Sally. But once they arrive at the bog, the mood of the

⁹ Other than O'Brien, and to some extent Storey and Renner, past critical examinations of O'Connor's story are not as relevant to my exegesis, likely because my focus is on the bog, a space often perceived as peripheral in the story. Another reason "Guests of the Nation" has received less critical attention is that O'Connor wrote in a period where scholarship has tended to scrutinize more celebrated writers such as James Joyce and W.B. Yeats. The realist fiction of O'Connor is, ironically, reflected in the scholarship about his work. Some scholars, for instance, focus on the "real" and "fictive" events surrounding the anti-colonial accounts in his fiction. Storey's comparative analysis also examines the colonial biographical connections between Camus and O'Connor, but Robert C. Evans' and Michael Probst's "'Fact' and 'Fiction' in Frank O'Connor's 'Guests of the Nation' and *An Only Child*" makes literal historical connection a prime objective of their analysis. Evans and Probst link accounts in O'Connor's autobiography, *An Only Child*, with similar moments in "Guests of the Nation," finding alignment between the facts and fiction that exist in the story.

conversation, or the narrator's feelings about the conversation, dominate and darken the mood of the story.

The story raises questions about forms of decay – eroding buildings (houses and shops), places (the bog), people (the narrator), ideology (Irish nationalism), and history (nostalgic memories of the past). From the opening lines, Ó Faoláin indicates a sense of loss and decay emerging from the past in the present. “Many towns in Ireland,” writes Ó Faoláin, “suddenly begin to decay; and ‘decay’ is the word for it” (273). The story also raises questions about nationalism: the nationalism the two protagonists supported together twelve years ago as younger revolutionaries and the decayed remains of that nationalism as viewed from the present. In this regard, the story moves back and forth temporally while the setting of the bog triggers the contradictions and uncertainties occurring throughout the story. “A Meeting,” in fact, serves as a microcosm of Ó Faoláin’s entire body of work because it reflects upon the revolutionary period with both regret and reverie, concern and critique, thereby forging an “in-between” or “center” space that similarly reflects the qualities of the bog (Neary 11).¹⁰

Ó Faoláin’s short fiction has garnered significant attention among scholars, but the sheer volume of stories has limited the amount of critical attention devoted to the more peripheral ones.¹¹ As a result, previous criticism has yet to examine “A Meeting” in any great detail. In one article, however, Katherine Hanley briefly

¹⁰ Ó Faoláin is equally known for his criticism and editorial stewardship of the journal *The Bell* (founded in 1940) as he is for his ability to superbly craft a short story.

¹¹ In addition to dozens of essays, there are, although now quite dated, several substantial book-length studies about Ó Faoláin. See, for example, Paul A. Doyle’s *Sean O’Faolain* (1968), Joseph Storey Ripplier’s *The Short Stories of Sean O’Faolain* (1976), Richard Bonaccorso’s *Sean Ó Faoláin’s Irish Vision* (1987), and Pierce Butlers’ *Sean O’Faolain: A Study of Short Fiction* (1993). Despite the volume of critical writings about Ó Faoláin, “A Meeting” has only received a cursory glance.

overviews three of Ó Faoláin's less "frequently studied" short stories, one of which is "A Meeting" (6). Hanley describes the narrative technique as "a progressive restraint, a movement from the carefully stated to the unsaid, from the simple to the elaborately cryptic" (6). Hanley focuses on the writing technique rather than some of the larger issues related to haunting and nationalism, and in particular how these relate to the bog. Despite the lack of critical attention on "A Meeting," I engage with critics, such as Neary and Bonaccorso, who have analyzed Ó Faoláin's relationship to nationalism more generally.

Ghosts materialize in both stories as a way to dissolve time and challenge previous conceptions of the nation. The bog, nationalism, and ghosts are all what Benedict Anderson calls "anomalies" of the nation that resist classification despite their forceful presence in the stories themselves (4). Nationalism may work on the social terrain in Ireland, but it has less sure "footing" on the bog (to use Daniel Corkery's term examined later in this chapter). Through the Gothic form, both O'Connor and Ó Faoláin are able to question some of the narratives that typify identity politics in Irish culture, particularly during the revolutionary and post-revolutionary periods of Irish history. Postcolonial theory addresses, in part, the "after" of colonization as a way of assessing and redressing hegemonic policies of the past where, according to Punter and Bryon in a postcolonial Gothic framework:

the attempt to make, for example, the nation in a new form is inevitably accompanied by traces of the past, by half-buried histories of exile, transportation, emigration, all the panoply

of the removal and transplantation of peoples which has been
throughout history the essence of the colonial endeavor. (55)

The bog allows O'Connor and Ó Faoláin to employ Gothic tropes to their stories about the nation accompanied by traces of the past through its ambiguous doubling. But the bog also allows them to double the cultural and symbolic anomalies in the stories that we can now interrogate through a postcolonial Gothic lens that supports such an overlapping analysis.

In what follows, I track how the bog functions as a space where O'Connor and Ó Faoláin resolve anomalies of nationalist sentiment through the haunting narratives about the violence and decay of nationalism. By using the critical vocabulary and social definitions of hauntings, I explain how residues of nationalism and ideas of the nation create a haunting effect for the characters in each story. These hauntings emerge when the characters find "footing" within the bog. In the first section, I examine how violence and decay work in both stories as indicators of hauntings. In the second section, I move to a broader concept of national identity and narratives of nationalism through names and story titles. Both stories confuse national identities through the real and imagined space of the bog. I also examine the contentious relationship between O'Connor, Ó Faoláin, and Daniel Corkery, and show how all three writers use the bog differently as a symbol for Irish nationalism. The bog serves as an ideal location for O'Connor and Ó Faoláin to address unresolved moments in and feelings about the post-independence era of Irish history, where traces of power, knowledge, and oppression subtly remain. These writers draw from and employ what we now

would call postcolonial Gothic conventions – entailing how hauntings are associated with postcolonial struggles – and the bog is central to these political encounters.

Hauntings of Violence and Decay

In this section, I explore how writers like Ó Faoláin and O'Connor use the bog to further refute the seemingly definite view of Irish nationalism through themes of violence and decay that ultimately relate to the compression of time and space.

The complexity of the bog topography functions like a heritage artifact: it is polyvocal, with many histories, and has the ability to express and represent multiple conflicting ideologies (Graham, "The Imagining of Place" 195).

O'Connor uses the bog in "Guests of the Nation" as a site of execution for two British soldiers because of its contradictory qualities, as a site of both death and birth – two men are killed, idealisms are killed, friendships die but a man is born (it is also a coming of age story), eyes are opened, and realisms are found. The bog is the space of both/and that contests notions of either/or nationalism in the story. Ó Faoláin's "A Meeting" shows that the bog similarly hosts the ghosts of revolution and these ghosts haunt the narrator when he attempts to conjure up the nationalist spirit he and Sally shared twelve years previously.

The past in the Gothic form, according to Killeen, never completely ends and "it has a nasty habit of bursting through into the present, displacing the contemporary with the supposedly outdated" (*Gothic Literature* 28). Pheng Cheah has also argued that the relationship between nationalism and the desire for an

atavistic past “suggests that nationalism destroys human life and whatever future we may have because its gaze is fixed on the frozen past” (*Spectral Nationality* 1). O’Connor’s and Ó Faoláin’s stories caution the present as much as they interrogate the past by demonstrating the flexibility and fluidity of the temporal – thereby intimating that ideology is ever-changing and complex. Ghost stories challenge seemingly stable worlds where the past represents a dangerous place that nevertheless must be visited, often at the initial desire or reluctance of the narrator or the characters in the narrative. These ghost stories also inherently challenge the notion of the static, determinate, and unmovable often associated with national ideologies through the bog.

Fiction functions as a social and cultural method for exploring time since the form itself often defies time by creating an unreliable sense of action in an equally unreliable space in the text. Anderson argues that fiction remains a form of writing, along with newspapers, that helps imagine the nation (25). Fiction in general can be used as a device for what Anderson, referencing Walter Benjamin’s notion of Messianic time, calls “simultaneity in ‘homogenous, empty time,’ or a complex gloss upon the word ‘meanwhile’” (25). Using the ghost story set on the bog to explore the compression of time and space of “homogenous empty time” allows both writers to move freely between the notions of pasts and presents, thereby creating a haunting effect in their fiction. The collapsing of time, especially to recall moments of violence and decay, permits the writers to bring forth ghosts of unresolved pasts and grapple with the social and political confrontations from which these spectres emerge.

“A Meeting” most exemplifies the displacement of time through the notion of decay. Ó Faoláin sets the tone of the story in the first two paragraphs, talking about the past through decay, melancholia, dream, and emptiness (Hanley 10-11). Through the first-person narrator, Ó Faoláin writes:

Many towns in Ireland, after fifty or sixty years of prosperity, suddenly begin to decay; and ‘decay’ is the word for it, because they become not so much old as, in literal truth, decayed. Houses fall idle. Then they fall down. The street becomes gapped like an old man’s mouth. (273)

The opening paragraph foregrounds the tone and theme of the entire story and depicts the loss and demoralization of the past that such spaces embody. This description also points to ghost towns that have been abandoned and yet still have some form of life. This town, however, is located on a bog – also a perpetually haunted space. The ghosts of history in the opening lines invoke the notion of decay through past histories and linger as unrealized forces that are unresolved and disconnected from the present. Burnt Hall is a town where the “English cavalry began to train,” but after the war “the English cavalry is gone” (273). The reference to burning in the title increases the sense of doubles: fire both destroys and purges in a process toward regrowth; fire is dangerous and illuminating. That the hall is “burnt,” however, makes it clear the fire itself has decayed the town and only the ghostly traces remain. Even the bog is described at one point as “dry as dust” in the summer heat, indicating further signs of decay (275). The spectral traces of war and violence in the town do not incite a celebrated post-

revolutionary spirit as one might assume. Instead, the story portrays Ó Faoláin's own loss of enthusiasm after the revolutionary period in the 1930s (Hanley 6), mainly because of national support to predominantly stay, as Cheah argues, "fixed on the frozen past" (1). Burnt Hall is "crumbling to pieces" and the people of the town are "staring emptily at the mirror of their own future" (273). Nationalism, as the ghost of the past, shimmers through the town, both through real (decaying structures) and imagined (vestiges of the English cavalry) manifestations that haunt the narrator.

The decay does more than foreshadow the haunted nation through the ghostly town of Burnt Hall; it sets the scene for a moment on the bog when the narrator questions his own unyielding nationalist support. By the third paragraph, the unnamed narrator walks "down this melancholy street one afternoon" in summer and decides "to go for a walk on the bogs" (273). This walk leads him through the half-conscious, ghostly stares of some of the people in the town on the edge of the bogs: a "man strolled out of the mossy gateway of the barracks and looked at me with suspicion," while the narrator "smelled the dinner-bones burning in the cabins" (273). The smell of dinner-bones reinforces an already pervasive feeling of decay through a history that continues to haunt the present as a reminder of the rotting past without any hope of a future. Eventually, after moving through the ghost town of Burnt Hall, the narrator sees a woman who had been staring at him; it turns out to be Sally Dunn from the revolution days twelve years earlier. The narrator describes Sally as she was in past, not in her present

state: “If there was a dangerous dispatch, or a bomb or two, or a gun to be carried through the British patrols, she was the safest girl in Limerick for the job” (273).

The physical and temporal setting of this reunion/meeting provides a clear sense of deterioration through the physical buildings of the town, the people who still inhabit it, the colonial history haunting it, and the bog that looms over everything. Moreover, the emptiness of the town is largely due to the English cavalry leaving after the war. Ó Faoláin, in fact, delivers an odd juxtaposition. In one respect, paralleling a renewed national identity through revolutionary activity decades earlier would seem to also be reflected in the current state of Burnt Hall. In another respect, Burnt Hall functions as an economically and culturally depressed ghost town largely because of Ireland’s transformation into a nation. This concurrence shows not only the painfully real reason this place became a ghost town – because the English left – but it also reveals Ó Faoláin’s difficulty with the revolutionary period: full support of the nation left Ireland dispensing with the spectres of the past in a decaying present.

What scholars of Ó Faoláin’s work have called fragmented memories are actually ghosts haunting the narrator in the present. In his book *Sean Ó Faoláin’s Irish Vision* (1987), Richard Bonaccorso maintains, “Ó Faoláin’s fiction often evokes an opposing kind of hidden Ireland to Corkery’s: one of cultural frustration rather than cultural integrity. He portrays Irish people who long for more than their indigenous past can provide, who seek self-realization in moral and intellectual experimentation” (51). In the first issue of *The Bell* in 1940, Ó Faoláin describes how Ireland in the 1930s contains the traces of “dead” symbols,

such as “Cathleen ni Houlihan” and “the swords of light,” both of which once resonated for Revivalists as pre-colonial symbols of the nation (5). Although Ó Faoláin often employs realist conventions in his fiction, he also incorporates disjointed memories that conjure ghosts of the past. The Revival’s “dead” symbols mentioned in *The Bell* illustrate a similar decay and crumbling of reimagined visions to that of the degenerating histories of the revolutionary period portrayed in “A Meeting.”

The description of Ó Faoláin’s cultural frustration resembles similar characteristics in O’Connor’s “Guests of the Nation” because it revisits earlier periods of Ireland when nationalist vitality resulted in haunting repercussions. In the words of Irish playwright and film director Denis Johnston, who adapted O’Connor’s “Guests of the Nation” into a silent film in 1935, “The birth of a nation is never an immaculate conception” (qtd. in Kiberd, *Irish Classics* 482). As “A Meeting” suggests, the “birth of the nation” left Ireland with scars of decay rather than progressive momentum for the future. According to Donal McCartney, Ó Faoláin believed the anachronistic but nevertheless pervasive nationalism, largely opposed to innovation and progressive nation building, prevented positive development toward a dynamic industrial future (79). Setting “A Meeting” in the 1930s, as opposed to the past like “Guests of the Nation,” allows Ó Faoláin to introduce the ghosts of nationalism from the revolutionary period through the narrator’s memories of fighting twelve years earlier, and in the current state of Burnt Hall. Setting the story in the 1930s and reflecting on the past enhances the power of haunting through decay because it suggests that Ireland’s national

narratives have not resulted in a dynamic industrial future; rather, the present or future continually looks backward because of nationalism's obsession with the past. In this sense, stories that centre on absence, exclusions, and invisibilities are ghost stories (Gordon 17).

In "A Meeting," silence indicates an absence or "decay" of nationalism. As the narrator and Sally talk, he quickly laments that Sally's life has shifted a little to comfortably into the domestic sphere. The narrator withdraws from the conversation the more Sally discusses her life with her husband who is a dentist. As they walk along the bog and talk, the narrator becomes increasingly silent until the climactic moment when he finally ends the conversation. Before this, however, the narrator admits Sally "was draining" him. He goes on to reflect, "Life – these few hours of it, anyway – was become [sic] like music in the distance, as quiet as the bees wandering near us into the thistle-flowers and the furze" (277). Life becomes distant for the narrator because Sally, by mostly avoiding discussing the "rebelly" days, engages with him in the present rather than the past. He muses,

As we walked back our talk was like the dusty smell of the
boreens – a musk – hardly a scent, something so faint and
slight that it really hardly touched the senses. It was just
pleasant, companionable talk – getting its meaning from old
memories – nothing more. We might otherwise be strangers.
(277)

The absence of Sally's nationalist support equates to the "dusty smell of the boreens" that "hardly touched the senses" for the narrator. The relationship

between he and Sally resembles that of strangers if the link of nation does not bind, motivate, or identify them. The “music in the distance” recalls the sound of the past that only the narrator still hears and it too, like Burnt Hall, decays into the recesses of a once vibrant and energized nationalist past. Now it only haunts the narrator as Sally has seemingly resolved her past and moved forward without the spirit of the nation guiding her.

The ghost town of Burnt Hall is used as an overt symbolic setting where the ghosts can manifest, but the “dusty smell of the boreens” winding through the bog ultimately conjures the ghosts of the nation. When waking out on the bog, everything shifts for the narrator. The bog becomes the connector for the overlapping tensions in the story: the decay of the past is clearly extant in the present independent nation because of unresolved issues related to colonization. The price of independence, according to the story, results in the decay of the nation. Since the reality of independence ultimately disappoints an idealized nation, then the nation that decays is an ideal one that could not come into being. The meeting with Sally on the bog inadvertently activates the confusion between the past and the present for the narrator and ultimately leads to his moment of clarity on the bog. The first three paragraphs of “A Meeting” provide enough evidence to suggest that the ghosts of Burnt Hall, a rural town located in the middle of the bog, still haunt from the revolutionary past in the decaying political present. The ghosts emerging from the decay challenge the direction of the nation as a decaying ghost itself, much like Burnt Hall.

A violent nationalistic past also haunts O'Connor's "Guests of the Nation." Hauntings and war often closely align as a way to explain some of the known and unknown motivations for justifying and supporting violence. "Nationalism," Cheah argues, "has almost become the exemplary figure for death" (*Spectral Nationality* 1). Indeed, nationalism frequently relies on haunting narratives to garner military and public support in times of death and violence. But death seems too one-dimensional to properly frame nationalism in terms of violence and war. It is, rather, the simultaneity of life and death that constructs an equally potent idea of "enemy" or "other" constructed to justify national violence. The concept of the "enemy," or the many "others" used in O'Connor's story, could easily be broken down into or us/them or either/or binaries, but spectre theory complicates what might initially seem like an easily split opposition. Gordon argues,

What is this enemy if not a conjuring malevolent specter? It is not what it seems to the visible eye. It has extraordinary powers to take familiar shapes and to surreptitiously mess up boundaries and proper protocols. It travels across fields promiscuously. It shimmers through the walls of factories and schools. It emerges uninvited from plots of land (125).

Gordon describes the ephemeral ghost "enemy" related to violent conflicts such as war. The spectres permeate throughout society not only in predictable forms of haunting, such as visible ghosts, but also psychically and emotionally for the people who remain in the destructive aftermath of war.

Since the concept of the enemy relies on perpetually indistinguishable, unclear, and often changing forms, the enemy used in the story does not signify the British soldiers, who are clear markers of opposition in sectarian conflict, but rather as the ghosts of the nation. Nationalism conjures “malevolent specters” of the past. The enemy is the ghost. Ghosts, much like bogs, can be difficult to pin down and discuss in concrete terms, as can be fiction itself – difficult to articulate or accept as real – and there, too, it is the “not-quite” or “in between” which brings allure and artistry. Therefore, it is important to recognize how ghosts relate to nationalist histories: they contain “extraordinary powers” and take many forms that ultimately disrupt boundaries; they “shimmer” through the walls of state institutions; they constantly morph into new manifestations; and they emerge from “plots of land” such as bogs. In this sense, then, the spirits materializing from nationalism represent the primary ghosts haunting Bonaparte and Noble in “Guests of the Nation” because they penetrate their psyches and possess them. Thus, national spirits frighten them into allowing acts of unwitting violence against those who may be more like them than other supporters of the nation for whom they are supposed to represent. Further, Bonaparte is haunted for the rest of his life because, as he admits, “I didn’t want him [Hawkins] to be bumped off” (9).

In “Guests of the Nation,” hauntings related to violence correlate with the characters’ ideas about nationalism and ultimately manifest on the bog. Violence is perpetuated through binary oppositions, such as the construction of “enemy” or “others.” O’Connor presents this tension in the closing lines when Bonaparte describes saying “good-bye to the others” before he and Noble leave “along the

desolate edge of the treacherous bog without a word” after they bury the corpses of the British soldiers, Hawkins and Belcher (12). Who are the ambiguous “others” that Bonaparte and Noble feel compelled to say good-bye to? Is it the dead men? Is it the other IRA soldiers? Is it other ghosts from the bog? The word “other” is loaded with meaning related to violence, and unpacking it elucidates a key to understanding the story’s connection to nationalism and haunting. According to Homi Bhabha, “The ‘other’ is never outside or beyond us; it emerges forcefully, within cultural discourse, when we think we speak most intimately and indigenously ‘between ourselves’” (“Narrating the Nation” 5). The “other” in “Guests of the Nation” is represented in many ways, all of which support the underlying “cultural discourse” in the story. Thus, the use of “other” complicates the relationships and presumed alliances in the story, and ultimately, the nationalism that O’Connor directly challenges.

First, “others” appear to be literally and functionally Donovan and Feeney, the other IRA Brigade soldiers at the execution site who dislike the relationship Bonaparte and Noble forge with Belcher and Hawkins during their captivity. Second, “others” invoke the idea of ghosts at the heart of this chapter. What is “others” but a nondescript title for undefined spirits, whether they are the subordinated Other in postcolonial discourse, as Bhabha suggests, or the ghosts that resist definite meaning in a national narrative. Although Belcher and Hawkins die at the end of the story, they remain both physically present (as warm corpses in the bog) and continually live beyond the present (in memory and in spirit). The soldiers are two of the most obvious ghosts in the story; they challenge the

temporal zone of activity on the bog and the imaginative space of knowledge related to the nation (Gordon 63). Belcher and Hawkins also represent the “guests” in the story, an idea that challenges the concept of performing one’s duty for the nation. Hawkins, for example, wants to join the IRA as opposed to die for his own nation. He claims, “You won’t come over to my side, so I’ll come over to your side. Is that fair? Just you give me a rifle and I’ll go with you wherever you want” (10). “Sides” are treated as formalities that rhetorically frame an often unwanted national identity and reinforce an either/or binary not well suited to either side. Hawkins goes on to proclaim, “I’m through with it all” (10). Indeed, the loyalty to friendship supersedes the duty to nationalism for both Hawkins and Bonaparte. Their duty is not to promote violence, but to support the “guests” in the nation. In this regard, O’Connor raises questions that directly challenge nationalism. How can one kill one’s guests? How hospitable is the nation if it murders its guests? The “others,” as my third point, signify the collective (un)dead or generations of ghosts from national conflicts buried in the “fatal bog,” where the penetrating silence of their being and not being in the world triggers a ghostly response from Bonaparte and Noble (8). The bog poses as a silent, omniscient historical witness, both in the past and the present, for various acts of sectarian violence. Noble muses, “the boglands was like the pain of death in my heart” (9). At this point in the story, Bonaparte and Noble have reacted to the haunting by “saying goodbye” to their idealistic and youthful support of the nation, to the guests they hosted, and to the generations of the dead in Ireland. The dead shimmer through the

silence of the bog as a reminder of unresolved violence resulting from extreme forms of nationalism.

Some ghosts materialize explicitly in hauntings, while others do not. When ghosts are less explicit and serve as an unexplainable essence, such as an absence or deficiency, they provide a symptom of what is missing as much as what is known (Gordon 63). In spectral theory, argues Gordon, “the ghost or apparition is the principal form by which something lost or invisible or seemingly not there makes itself known or apparent to us” (63). The ghost “makes itself known” through the various processes of haunting, but the process by which one is haunted can also be unknown or interpreted as an absence or silence of a presence/energy/spirit known to be present. In this sense, moments of history haunt both stories as much as they haunt the characters themselves. For O’Connor and Ó Faoláin, the bog serves as a real topography and imagined symbol that supports and challenges narratives of nationalism. By framing such narratives as ghost stories, they interrogate the certainty attached to nationhood.

In “Guests of the Nation,” silence signifies violence through the state of an unmarked grave out in the bog, one that exists without any language inscribed on a gravestone indicating individual identity. Silence culminates “out in the middle of a blasted bog” (10), where the characters were forcibly still and “silent in the boglands” (9). Belcher’s silence mirrors the spirit of the bog. Belcher, the larger more affable British soldier, is so reticent that Bonaparte calls him a “ghost.” Bonaparte states, “he had an uncommon shortness – or should I say lack – of speech. It took us some time to get used to him walking in and out like a ghost”

(4). The others responded to Belcher's presence much like that of a spectre, appearing in both known visible and unknown invisible form. Likewise, Hawkins is called "a fright to argue," which signals another ghostly kind of being (5).

The story does not focus on the corpses after the killing; instead, it turns attention to the setting of the black bog as a descriptive emotional reminder for Noble and Bonaparte. Bonaparte reflects, "It was all mad lonely, with only a bit of lantern between ourselves and the pitch blackness, and birds hooting and screeching all round disturbed by the guns" (12). The bog, as an emblematic translator, transmits the feelings after the execution, with loneliness and blackness dominating the mood. The bog and the actions therein create an affective response for Bonaparte and Noble where their emotional states, not supporting the idea of the nation, are mirrored upon the bog.

The bog functions as one large unmarked grave permeated by the collective spectral presence of violence compressed in the silent history of the peat. Bonaparte reflects on the killing of Belcher and Hawkins: "I don't remember much about the burying, but that it was worse than all of the rest" (12). This particular bog contains the ghosts of Bonaparte's own past haunting him through an experiential, visceral association with the landscape. The graveyard of the bog similarly relates to the "others" that represent the generations who died to support nationalism. O'Connor enhances the scene by evoking sensorial details of the "windy" bog and the aural sounds of the familiar birds collectively responding to the gunshots. "A Meeting," in fact, contains similar sensory affects with the heat and smells of the burning brens (rural unpaved roads). These "unmarked"

graves are discernable through the spectral presences around the bog and felt, in part, through the senses. The markings appear through the absence of life and the silence hovering over the bog. Bonaparte laments, “Then having smoothed all signs of the grave away, Noble and I collected our tools, said good-bye to the *others*, and went back along the desolate edge of the treacherous bog without a word” (12; my emphasis). Desolation and silence permeate the graveyard of the bog, which are both interchangeable and equally penetrating in the story.

O’Connor’s story clearly comments upon the state of Ireland within a violent conflict, using the bog to portray nationalism as a confusing and ambiguous concept that cannot be celebrated, sentimentalized, or buried in Irish history. Whereas Ó Faoláin focuses on national decay, O’Connor emphasizes the inherent violence in nationalism. The impact of violence is certainly relevant for Bonaparte as he delivers the tormenting lines at the end of the story while reflecting upon “the little patch of black bog with the two Englishmen stiffening into it.” He states,

But with me it was the other way, as though the patch of bog where the two Englishmen were was [*sic*] a thousand miles away from me, and even Noble mumbling just behind me and the old woman and the birds and the bloody stars were all far way, and I was somehow very small and very lonely. And anything that ever happened [*sic*] me after I never felt the same about again. (12)

Bonaparte copes with the immediate aftermath of his violent experience by distancing himself from the physical space that has resounded in his memory. The old woman, birds, stars, and bog serve as visceral reminders for Bonaparte of his friends Belcher and Hawkins. While on the bog, Bonaparte's personal and national memories entwine. Here, space and time have become compressed: Bonaparte remains simultaneously "a thousand miles away" while also minutes away from the bog grave. Bonaparte experiences haunting effects of not only his actions, but a longer history of violence supported by nationalism. The memories that will recurrently haunt Bonaparte become a transformative experience activated by this sense of the bog, a space associated with killing not only Belcher and Hawkins, but also many others in support of the nation.

The ghosts of Belcher and Hawkins haunting Bonaparte do not allow forgetting or reimagining the events of the past with nationalist vigour. The ghosts highlight a doubled sense of disease for Bonaparte; he is both traumatized and inoculated by his past. Bonaparte laments, "I began to perceive in the dusk the desolate edges of the bog that was to their last earthly bed, and, so great a sadness overtook my mind" (9). Ghosts manifest as a result of abusive systems of power, and in so doing impact the everyday lives of people who have been a part of these power systems (Gordon xvi). Bonaparte, Noble, Hawkins, and Belcher are all people whose lives have been affected because of the abusive systems of power that continually emerge from various forms of nationalism.¹² In the story, these

¹² Beyond the Irish context, there is a larger commentary about abusive systems of power with regard to capitalist and community themes at work in the story, specifically in connection to the First World War where capital and capitalistic power overarched the Gothic, liminal battlefields in

systems of power haunt the characters immediately after the violence incurred on the bog, thereby questioning a national identity based upon this violent past.

Spectres of National Identity

In this section, I examine how hauntings on bogs, seen as spaces of the supernatural and irrational, dismantle and disrupt national identities. O'Connor's and Ó Faoláin's subtle invocation of ghosts and nationalism challenges notions of identity and names. Narratives of nationalism and identity are as elusive as ghosts and hauntings, and the one way to address such histories is through similar ambiguities and complexities of the bog. Smith maintains, for example, the Gothic has a tradition of focusing on complex models of identity (*Gothic Literature* 87). Bhabha observes that political histories are half made with the intention and process that they will fully be made in nationalist models through constructed (or narrated) forms of identity ("Narrating the Nation" 3). The larger question in this section explores how these two short stories reveal legitimate concerns about national identity and bogs.

"Guests of the Nation" and "A Meeting" fundamentally question the effectiveness of nationalism and ideas of nation during a time when support for it ran high. O'Connor and Ó Faoláin share histories steeped in Irish nationalism, and both offered varying degrees of support of it at times in their lives. Their positions, however, remained contradictory throughout their lives because they both opposed the extremes of nationalism, while at the same time they remained

France. If this argument were to be examined further, which is out of the range of this chapter, then Derrida's *Spectres of Marx* would be a necessary critical lens.

nationalists on some level (McCartney 86). Daniel Corkery, an Irish writer and scholar who at one point served as a mentor to the younger writers Ó Faoláin and O'Connor, eventually shunned them because of their less fervent support of developing an Irish national literature. Corkery was, quite simply, a zealot of Irish nationalism and approached it with what Ó Faoláin recognized in *Dublin Magazine* (in 1936) as an admiration for the “masculine and belligerent” (qtd. in Bonaccorso 49). Both O'Connor and Ó Faoláin, as younger, impressionable writers, shared Corkery's views. By the time they had published “Guests of the Nation” and “A Meeting,” however, O'Connor and Ó Faoláin had moved away from Corkery's “belligerent” forms of nationalism and turned to other liberatory ideas of individualism and universalism (Bonaccorso 48).¹³

What links Corkery, O'Connor, and Ó Faoláin are not only their connections to the Revival, nationalism, or writing, but also their engagement with bogs. In a famous quote, from his book *Synge & Anglo-Irish Literature* (1931), Corkery calls for a need to establish an exclusive form of Irish national literature. He does so through the curious metaphor of a “sod” (or bog):

The difficulty is not alone a want of native mould; it is rather the want of a foundation upon which to establish them.

Everywhere in the mentality of the Irish people are flux and uncertainty. Our national consciousness may be described, in a native phrase, as a quaking sod. It gives no footing. It is not English, nor Irish, nor Anglo-Irish. (14)

¹³ This is why, in part, Corkery would not even acknowledge his support for their literary work due to his own ardent support of the Irish nation. In fact, Corkery refused a signed copy of *Guests of the Nation* from O'Connor upon its publication (Bonaccorso 50).

Corkery's frequently cited statement emphasizes the need to return to an alleged idyllic era of pre-colonial stability or a "native mould" in Ireland. For Corkery, Irish national literature, as distinct from English literature, should contain three main ingredients: religious consciousness of the people, land, and nationalism (19). The "quaking sod," or bog (connecting land, Catholic religion, and nationalism), served as a recognizable symbol of Irishness to express his particularly dogmatic and aggressive views about Irish national identity and history. The sod, like the national consciousness, does signal flux and uncertainty in Irish political history, but it also reflects the instability of nationalism and the ways in which writers like Corkery attempt to frame the nation. Corkery argues that there is something essentially "Irish" about the Irish to re-discover through a national literature. But, much to his chagrin, national consciousness more readily resembles the "quaking sod" as a moving, changing, and complex idea that eludes definition and determinate logic. Like other Revivalists, he idealizes earlier forms of Gaelic culture when the bog – often a symbol of the peasantry in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries – served as an unusually stable symbol of Irish identity. However, what both he and the Revivalists overlook is that Irish identity remains as uncertain, unstable, and indefinable as the bog.

O'Connor and Ó Faoláin demonstrate how the ghosts of nationalism materialize when each story's action takes place on a bog – a space that Corkery reappropriates from earlier Gaelic culture as a symbol of the Irish nation – for the very reason that it negates some easy definitions of the nation. In fact, much of Ó Faoláin's social commentary during the 1930s and 1940s consciously responded

to and refuted Corkery's earlier writings (Bonaccorso 51).¹⁴ Ó Faoláin disagreed with Corkery's idealization of an uneducated peasant culture as the model citizenry in a post-independence Ireland (Fanning 252-253). The bog for Corkery symbolizes the peasants – his idealized symbol of the nation – which maybe why Ó Faoláin returned to the bog in “A Meeting” as a place of confusion and ultimate questioning for the nationalist narrator. Cultural developments in nationalism present more complexity than Corkery's absolutist position indicates, and as David Pierce reminds us, “we need to bear in mind that from the outset the knife cuts both ways, that passionate realism frequently accompanied passionate idealism, and that Irishness, as Joyce, too, understood, was at once a natural feeling and a contestable concept” (96). Both O'Connor and Ó Faoláin find balance between the realism and idealism suggested here by Pierce. In an era of intense national sympathies – particularly in the 1930s when Éamon de Valera with his recently formed Fianna Fáil party took power and cemented a socially and culturally conservative and reactionary state for decades to come in Ireland – it is no accident both writers couch their interrogative politics in literary narratives set on the bog.

As mentioned in the previous section, both stories speak to violence and decay through the physical and symbolic bog. Ó Faoláin and O'Connor uncover a relationship between the bog and language, and in particular, the narrative of “nation” or nationalism. In “Guests of the Nation,” Bonaparte and Noble are

¹⁴ Ó Faoláin's book *The Irish* (1949) serves as a key example. In it, he argues that Irish literature and culture expands much further than the limitations of Corkery's paradigm. For Ó Faoláin, the taxonomy of branches include: The New Peasantry, The Anglo-Irish, The Rebels, The Priest, The Writers, and The Politicians.

fighting for the Irish nationalist cause in the midst of an anti-colonial war against the British over the ostensible tyrannies that have lasted in Ireland for hundreds of years. Since they are part of the IRA, they are considered “rebels” by the governing British state structure until its dissolution in 1922. However, the language of nationalism, as well as national identity, decays for Bonaparte and Noble as they increasingly become entwined in what function as their Gothic doubles – Belcher and Hawkins. The story blurs the divide between imperial soldiers and nationalist rebels through the cultural and linguistic “chumming” between both sides. The four men not only become friends, they become almost indistinguishable. Neither pair, for example, supports either nationalist cause (Irish or British) in their dialogue or actions. In fact, Belcher and Hawkins could have easily taken on, in another circumstance, a “native” Irish identity. Bonaparte comments,

I couldn't at the time see the point of me and Noble being with Belcher and 'Awkins at all, for it was and is my fixed belief you could have planted that pair in any untended spot from this to Claregalway and they'd have stayed put and flourished like a native weed. I never seen in my short experience two men that took to the country as they did. (3)

Such Irish identity is predicated on and imparted by the actual geography of Ireland. Bonaparte reflects, “But little ‘Awkins made us look right fools when he displayed he knew the countryside as well as we did and something more” (3). The term “native weed” is particularly striking in reference to the knowledge

Belcher and Hawkins have of Irish geography because it reinforces the rootedness of identity upon a landscape while also underscoring the intransigence of a “weed,” which can thrive anywhere upon “native” soil. There is an implicit interchange of identity in this description of the two British soldiers; the implication is that Belcher and Hawkins could be Irish as much as Noble and Bonaparte. The scene infers the recognized notion in postcolonial theory that new incarnations of nationalism eventually replaces the power structures that precede them. Kearney has argued that “Irish and British nationalism are Siamese twins” (9), which implies a co-equal exchange of power and identity. Bonaparte and Noble become British in a sense because they replace the hegemonic power backing Belcher and Hawkins by executing them on the bog for the nation. These exchanges of identity confuse what outcomes arise from duty or serving the nation.

The Gothic double bind between British (Belcher and Hawkins) and Irish (Noble and Bonaparte) in the cultural logic in the story questions the whole notion of identity and therefore specific strains of Irish nationalism dedicated to blind duty that O’Connor challenges. Jim Hanson examines the concept of the “Gothic double bind” that connects the genre’s use of doppelgängers to instances in Irish culture where the construction of an identity appears materially, psychically, and structurally doubled, producing definitions based upon their own disjunction in the social context (11). Bonaparte and Noble contain what Hanson would call their own “dark doubles” through Belcher and Hawkins (11), or “Siamese twins,” further complicating the question of Irish identity in nationalist discourses. However, these doubles then become the ghosts that haunt the nation because they

are simultaneously guests and hosts of the nation. In fact, the words “guest” and “host” are etymologically linked to the Indo-European root *ghosti-*, similar to other words doubled in the story through the two sets of characters, including “hospitable” and “hostage.” The Latin words *hostis* (stranger or enemy) and *hospes* (hospitable stranger), which stem from *ghosti-*, confuse the distinction between guests and hosts and how they relate to national identity in “Guests of the Nation” (Storey 257). The interplay of word choice and language around “guest” and “host” also provide a basis for ghost, or a “stranger,” “enemy,” or even the “others” discussed in the previous section of this chapter. The identity between guests and hosts become blurred. When the hosts (Bonaparte and Noble) walk away in the end, and double as guests of the nation, it is because they question the very idea of nationalism through their role as hosts. This raises larger questions in the story: Who were the guests of the nation? Are those who own the land also those who own the narratives of the nation?

O’Connor questions the idea of who owns the rights to narrate the nation – guests, hosts, or even ghosts. This ambiguous question – explored through both the anomalies of nationalism and the bog – serves as an ambiguous background marker to the stories. David Lloyd contends that nationalism and identities of “Irishness” are built around a narrative. Controlling these narratives reinforces legitimacy within political and legal frameworks (*Anomalous* 6). Even in the nineteenth century when the “crisis of representation” affected the narrative modes in the novel (Lloyd, *Anomalous* 6), or with Revivalists like Corkery who argued for a national literature, the question continually arises about narrating the

nation. The action in “Guests of the Nation” scrutinizes the relationship between nationalism and the presumed authority over narrative in Ireland. O’Connor does not explicitly address this overtly nationalist question, but through other morbid means it seems clear that he sympathizes with the uncertainty of the answer. Indeed, the question of “who owns the right to narrate the nation” has continually loomed in Irish history and, for O’Connor and Ó Faoláin, appears on the bog where answers are as ineffable as the questions.

What O’Connor does do, however, is to summon the ghosts of nationalism through some of the names used in the story, which provides a more concrete reading of hauntings in contrast to some of the themes of decay and absence explained in the last section. The names of characters are also ghosts of other nationalisms, all of which are directly or indirectly related to Irish history. Both surnames Bonaparte and Noble have cultural meanings rooted in revolution and nationalism, which invoke notions of fighting for land rights in the long nineteenth century (bookended by 1798 and the fourth Home Rule Act in 1920). Bonaparte’s name harkens back to Napoleon Bonaparte who haunts Irish history as a figure capable of transforming colonial dynamics in the late eighteenth century. Similar to the dormant French chest of gold in Stoker’s bog, Bonaparte signals an alternative course of history might have taken place if the French allies provided the Irish with more support during 1798 and beyond.¹⁵ In short, the idea

¹⁵ According to historian Thomas Bartlett, Napoleon Bonaparte is hailed as the greatest hero in Irish Catholic folklore, other than “The Liberator” Daniel O’Connell (258). This elevation existed despite the failed attempt on three separate occasions by the revolutionary Theobald Wolfe Tone to persuade Napoleon to help with the 1798 rebellion. Napoleon’s lack of support resulted in the Acts of Union as a response to 1798 that significantly challenged progress toward Catholic sovereignty and reinforced Protestant land ownership throughout the nineteenth century.

of land/nation and the name of Bonaparte share a revealing history in Ireland that O'Connor teases out in the story.

Noble's name signifies loyalty without question to a political cause; the name is also synonymous with Donovan's nationalist call to "duty" and "obeying our superiors" (9). Noble is the one who carries a lantern in the middle of the bog during the execution, indicating his connection to Catholicism and carrying the "light" of God for the group in the dark recesses of violence. In addition to the fact that his brother is a priest, Noble engages in debates with Hawkins over religion, "answering in his best canonical style that there was" (6). Hawkins even uses Christian reverse psychology on Noble as a way to extricate himself: "What d'you think I'd do if I was in Noble's place and we were out in the middle of a blasted bog? I'd go with him wherever he was going. I'd share my last bob with him and stick by 'im through thick and thin" (10). If Bonaparte's name represents a national figure, then Noble's name signifies a balance to this position or a reminder that killing the "guests" will only create ghosts that plague Irish history.

While Feeney and Donovan serve as more peripheral characters in the story, their names invoke the most Irish nationalist connection, which reflects their own unrelenting support for the nation. Feeney derives from Fenian, which recalls warrior bands in Gaelic Ireland and denotes an early form of Irish nationalism, beginning with the Fenian Brotherhood, then to the Irish Republican Brotherhood, and later the Irish Republican Army. Jeremiah Donovan's name references back to Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa, who Patrick Pearse mentions as one of the "ghosts" of the Fenian dead during the IRA struggle in mid nineteenth-

century Ireland (O'Brien, "Guests" 122). In addition, O'Donovan is O'Connor's original surname. O'Connor took his mother's maiden name as a penname, which ultimately stuck. O'Connor's pejorative depiction of Donovan as a dogmatic nationalist in "Guests of the Nation" might be explained by the fact that during a long stretch of his life he denounced his own O'Donovan lineage (Ellmann viii).

Both Bonaparte and Noble challenge the cultural etymology of their names through their transformative experience on the bog where they emblematically bury their own nationalist identities as they submerge the still warm corpses of Belcher and Hawkins. For IRA combatants, questioning the Irish nationalist duty typically led to dire consequences. Unlike the rigid codes of nationalism within the anti-colonial/revolutionary struggle, the bog functions as a witness to events rather than a rhetorical tool, conjuring moods and moments of history rather than dogmatic doctrine, and challenges definitions of identity. Bonaparte lays awake at night imagining ways he can "prevent the Brigade from shooting 'Awkins and Belcher" (7). He hesitates in "a cold sweat" because only one outcome to this recourse remains – he will end up in the bog along with them. He reflects, "Because there were men on the Brigade you daren't let nor hinder without a gun in your hand, and at any rate, in those days disunion between brothers seemed to me an awful crime. I knew better after" (7). This last thought, "I knew better after," reveals that Bonaparte does not imagine his physical death, but a figurative one through participation in the executions. Bonaparte recognizes that due to his reluctant support for the nation the ghost of Hawkins will haunt him hereafter, but he also understands that its better to bury a constructed identity

related to the nation rather than that of a “brother.” In the end, both Noble and Bonaparte share a similar fate as Belcher and Hawkins: they lose a firm sense of national identity on the bog because of the violence they must commit on it. While they do not physically die, they execute a part of themselves by killing two “chums,” as their Gothic “dark doubles” or Siamese twins, whose only crime was a superficial commitment to England.

In “A Meeting,” unlike in “Guests of the Nation,” names are almost non-existent, reflecting the absence and decay dominating the story. We never know the narrator’s name or that of any of the characters except Sally. Even the fictional town name, Burnt Hall, sounds more like an abandoned building than a town in Ireland. Ó Faoláin uses the absence of traditional identity markers (such as names) as a determining narrative in the story. Distinct from O’Connor, who celebrated more apparent closure in stories, Ó Faoláin detested obvious conclusions or symbolism (Neary 12). Rather, Ó Faoláin strove for ambiguity and absence in his fiction. In contrast to the explicit identities connected to nationalism in “Guests of the Nation,” “A Meeting” emphasizes the ghosts of nationalism through the lack of names and an emptiness of story (i.e., there is very little plot or action), both of which parallel the vastness of the bog. The absence of distinct Irish identity and nation, as opposed to the overt markers of it in O’Connor’s story, reveals another type of ghost: the impression of identity left lingering in memories and dreams. The markers of nationalism peek through when the narrator and Sally discuss the past, but the past materializes as fragmented memories that function as dreams or even ghosts that convolute the histories unfolding in the story. Ó Faoláin reveals

situations in Irish history by providing material (bog) or imagined (memories) spaces where specific content suggests what Neary calls the elusive “whispers” in the story (11). “A Meeting” ends by describing the geography of the “little country town” where the story is set: “the bog into which it all sank behind the train was already whispering and dim” (277). Rather than overtly narrate the nation, Ó Faoláin creates a sense of absence to indicate the ghosts “whispering” out on the bog.

Even the titles of the stories evoke explicit connections to nationalism and ghosts. The “guests” become the ghosts of the “nation” and the “meeting” implies a union with a ghost. In his analysis of “Guests of the Nation,” O’Brien incisively foregrounds the idea of the ghost in his article about *Guests/Geists* of the nation and argues that the fundamental notion of “hauntology” in “Guests of the Nation” connects to Derrida’s idea of hospitality and hostility. For O’Brien, guests of the nation are really the ghosts or *Geists* – playing off of the Hegelian term for “ghosts of the nation” that are “some sort of organic energizing force that shapes nations and individuals” (121). I bring up O’Brien’s observation and reference to Hegel because it addresses his thesis that ghosts are the guests of an Irish nation (Belcher and Hawkins), but he also inadvertently references a way of perceiving the bog as a national space with ghostly undertones by demonstrating the German use of *Geist*. Bogs, too, function in “Guests of the Nation” as an “organic energizing force” shaping the nations, individuals, and memories that circulate around them. This “force” is clearly illustrated through Bonaparte and Noble whose actions on the bog are cataclysmic in response to their own nationalistic

questioning through silence and absence. With the concept of “chums” ringing “painfully” in his “memory,” Bonaparte reflects prior to killing Hawkins, “But why should Noble want to shoot him? Why should we want to shoot him? What had he done to us?” (9).

Bonaparte questions nationalism’s *sine qua non* of duty in “Guests of the Nation.” A reluctance to embrace a nationalist identity rings true for Bonaparte and Noble who carry forth “doing our duty” while also demonstrating an inner conflict prompted by these actions (9). Even Donovan, who lives by the nationalist code about “duty and obeying our superiors” (9), begins to question this process himself prior to shooting Belcher in the head while out on the bog, a position that changes from earlier in the story. “You understand,” he claims, “it’s not so much our doing. It’s our duty, so to speak” (11). O’Connor describes that Belcher raises his head “like a real blind man’s” because he wears an execution blindfold. Framing him in the tradition of sightless seers, Belcher admits, “I never could make out what duty was myself” (11). Indeed, the idea of duty appears to be as elusive as the apparitions in the story because it is a concept that has so much personal impact while it also reinforces national identity. This microcosmic scene frames the story as a whole: the spirit of nationalism confuses duty as much as it does identity and such obscurities materialize out on the bog. Belcher responds to his own puzzlement about duty, “but I think you’re all good lads, if that’s what you mean. I’m not complaining” (11-12). Blind and unjustly killed, Belcher provides a realistic glimpse at the world O’Connor so penetratingly paints about definitive forms of nationalism. The bog provides an enduring primordial place

where the horror of a murky colonial history has been buried, even though this past never actually forgets and continues to haunt the present. The action in “Guests of the Nation” takes place in the midst of nation-formation where a sense of spirit manifests out on the “fatal bog” (8).

The title of “A Meeting” also invokes narratives of nationalism and ghosts tied to identity. How do the ghosts of the revolutionary past materialize into existence for the narrator? How do the title of the story and the bog relate to personal and national identity? The “meeting” occurs in two co-existing places: the imaginative past and present of fragmented memories on the real bog that symbolizes both the memory and the physical decay in the story. The meeting begins at the edge of the bog, moves to the streets of Burnt Hall where the two characters sit near Sally’s little villa that was “originally built by some English colonel” (275), and finally ends back on the boreens winding through the bog. At the moment when the narrator rests in front of Sally’s villa, ironically built by the colonizer, he begins “to feel a lack in her talk” (275). Sally then leaves to attend her crying child and while away the narrator looks at her bookshelf: “Only on the little book-shelf did I find any memories of the old days – pamphlets from Russia, poems by this rebel leader who was shot in action, and that one who died in a hunger-strike – and even they were down on the lowest shelf behind the armchair” (275). These memories, or ghosts of the revolutionary past, are as much buried in the past as are the generations of ghosts/bodies submerged in the bog in “Guests of the Nation” because of violence. When Sally comes back and tells the narrator she is ready to walk “in the fields,” she notices him “fiddling” with the relics of

the nationalist past that bind them together in the current moment. Sally “just laughed and lifted her eyes comically to the ceiling, and shook her head a little as if to say...I did not know what” (275; original ellipses). Ó Faoláin, in only a few sentences, demonstrates the movement of time from present to past and past to present through fragmented memories.

Neary argues that Ó Faoláin’s writing “is not his creation of large worlds from spare materials, but his location of these spare materials in characters’ memories, in the dimly perceived personal and national histories characters must reconstruct if they are to establish identities” (11). We can expand Neary’s claim and show that ghosts of national histories continually haunt the narrator. Sally, in contrast, no longer feels haunted by the past because she has buried it. The past does not represent living memories haunting Sally, but decaying relics of the revolutionary period stored in the “lowest shelf behind the armchair” (275). The climactic moment in the story transpires when the narrator attempts to excavate some of Sally’s memories while they walk on the bog. Because she will not openly offer them to him, the narrator states, “I promised myself to find out while we walked in the fields” (275). Ó Faoláin writes, “The bog was dry as dust and in the heat it trembled like a mirage. For miles and miles it stretched across Ireland, dark purple with heather, and bright with furze” (275). The “mirage” described in this scene parallels the mirage of the nation that continues to linger in the narrator’s mind: still visible but only reconstructed in the imagination. The mirage, like the bog, stretches across Ireland and appears as both dark and bright. Nationalism still burns bright for the narrator, but for some like Sally, Bonaparte,

and Noble, it remains an elusive spectre that now appears as haunting memories of the past rather than manifesting as something definable or comprehensible in the present. Gordon maintains that in instances of social hauntings the “ghost is not simply a dead or missing person, but a social figure, and investigating it can lead to that dense site where history and subjectivity makes social life” (8). The bog in the story, a space where “history and subjectivity makes social life,” reflects this quality of contradiction and ambiguity that attracts writers to stage such poignant scenes on its topographic and imaginative contours.

The change in the narrator from quixotic nationalist to questioning brooder occurs at the point when he walks on the bog, and reflects the confusion and ambiguity coming over him while on this topography.

But although it was lovely, not merely old but immemorable,
not merely unchanged but unchangeable, it began to weigh
heavily on me; and to that feeling, partly of the day, partly of
doubt about my friend, was added a sense of other hidden
lives when I saw the bog-cabins with the dark water lapping
to their doors, just like arks, all sinking back into the mould.

(275)

While one could argue that Ó Faoláin speaks here about Burnt Hall, or other decaying towns like it in post-revolutionary Ireland in the 1930s, or even Co. Limerick more generally, the description here similarly resembles the union of opposites of the bog: unchanged but unchangeable; lovely and immemorable. The “hidden lives” or ghosts that appear on the bog are part of the characters, the

people in the town, or anyone else buried in history. On the one hand, there is the Sally he once knew (and his memory of her) versus the Sally he speaks to in the story while walking on the bog. Sally now values a different future without the nation as the focus of her action. On the other hand, there are both the real and imagined “hidden lives” buried in the bog (as a result of the violence in a story like “Guests of the Nation”) and in the historical past. Are the people living in the bog-cabins with the ominous “dark” bog water lapping at their doors real or imagined? Ó Faoláin creates a significant amount of ambiguity in this sequence and raises the question about their existence as spectres or “real” people.

Nations are also simultaneously imagined and real spaces. The moment the narrator starts to grow introspective he notices everything “sinking back into the mould” (275). This clearly echoes Corkery’s reference to the “mould” of the Irish “quaking sod.” Much to the lament of nationalists like Corkery, in the new post-revolutionary nation no homogenous national “mould” remains in which to configure Irish people. In addition, Ó Faoláin’s social commentary in the 1930s and 1940s, often embedded in his literary work, consciously attempted to refute much of Corkery’s earlier writings (Bonaccorso 51). In “A Meeting,” Ó Faoláin uses the word “mould” to indicate that the only thing that sinks into the mould of the bog is the decaying nationalism that the narrator espouses. The narrator’s nationalism is also mirrored by the town’s own dilapidation instead of the optimism exhibited by Sally for her new life. The bog here serves as an uncanny space where the narrator recognizes another world outside of his decayed nostalgia for the revolutionary days. “If haunting describes how that which

appears to be not there is often a seething presence, acting on and often meddling with taken-for-granted realities,” argues Gordon, “the ghost is just the sign, or the empirical evidence if you like, that tells you haunting is taking place” (8). In one particularly poignant paragraph set only on the bog, everything shifts in the story and the signs of the ghosts acting as a “seething presence” suddenly become numerous: the people, memories, and fragmentation of time all confuse the narrator’s current state of knowing about his national identity. In this sense, he is haunted. The paragraph ends by describing one of the inhabitants of the bog: “We saw a woman inside one door, her eyes as dark as bog-pools, and as patient and as still” (275). Not only does this woman resemble a spectre, clouding the spaces between life and death, she also indicates the fate of the nation in the eyes of the narrator: “patient and as still” as the bog.

Ó Faoláin chooses to set the story and locate the climactic scene on the bog precisely because it defies logic and structural certainty and serves as a transformative space that invites hauntings. According to Neary, “Many of Ó Faoláin’s stories create the feeling of characters being haunted by something uncontrolled from the past, something that *cannot be grasped*, cannot be made sense of” (15; original emphasis). Despite such a description, Ó Faoláin has yet to be examined through a postcolonial Gothic lens. What *can* be grasped, therefore, are the ghosts of nationalism that exhibit unexplainable contradictions and who appear to the narrator while on the bog. As they leave the bog, the narrator re-embraces his national identity and attempts to draw Sally back to discussing the “old rebelly days and nights” (276). He quickly realizes, upon exchanging some

meaningless banter, that at this point he and Sally “might otherwise be strangers” because she chose to embrace her own personal identity over that of the nation (277). He laments, “I felt like a person giving a transfusion of blood. She was draining me.” The narrator equates Sally’s vampiric effect on him to what happens when national identity is lost and buried: it becomes a ghost. Being haunted, as in the example of the narrator, “draws us affectively,” often a bit magically and unwillingly, into the experience of “transformative recognition” (Gordon 8). The narrator’s transformative recognition of the past, more than nostalgic reveries, percolates into consciousness while on the bog, only to be lost again as he leaves Burnt Hall.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I argue that “Guests of the Nation” and “A Meeting” function as ghost stories in which O’Connor and Ó Faoláin attempt to revisit history in the post-revolutionary period through narratives of haunting. The bog in “Guests of the Nation” appears on the margins of social and political discourse because, at the time, 1930s Ireland was still confronting the nationalistic fervour of a past that once led to violent social disruptions. “A Meeting” stages a moment of clarity on the bog when the ghosts of the past speak to the narrator and confront his present state of nostalgia. In this respect, both Ó Faoláin and O’Connor suggest that one way to approach these issues is to revisit the past by going on the bog and confronting the ghosts of the violent revolutionary struggles that continue to haunt the nation. Haunting can be a frightening experience because it reveals the social

violence of the past in the present (Gordon xvi), which is surrounded by and steeped in the decaying idealism of that past. Regardless, Bonaparte and Noble, and the unnamed narrator in “A Meeting,” reflect upon the site of their haunting experiences and revisit the past at the end of the stories.

In both stories, a critique of Irish nationalism clearly appears through the direct engagement of the bog. O’Connor and Ó Faoláin use the mutable and uncertain qualities of the bog to interrogate the certainty and stability of supporting the idea of the nation. “Guests of the Nation” and “A Meeting” draw out the inherent contradiction of nationalism: the spirit of the nation can only occur if oppressive power is neutralized, but in doing so it is often replaced by a similar oppressive power. O’Connor and Ó Faoláin challenge the idea of nation as a fixed and attainable space by casting it against the bog, an unfixed and uncertain space associated with the Gothic. The nebulous qualities of the bog reflect and refract the uncertain qualities of the real and imagined nation. O’Connor and Ó Faoláin use the ghost story as a narrative of the nation, but they do so in order to confront nationalist sentiment rather than support it. Building on O’Connor’s and Ó Faoláin’s challenge to nationalism through narratives of haunting and ambiguity, the next chapter examines how the topographical and Gothic elements of the bog confuse and raise questions about some of the entrenched politics in a postcolonial Ireland during the Troubles. In the same ways bogs create congruent oppositions through ghosts, bog bodies in Heaney’s bog poems challenge notions of the human and non-human, temporal and atemporal, and political and apolitical through how they mediate history and culture.

CHAPTER THREE

“The wet centre is bottomless”: Mapping Heaney’s Gothic Bog Bodies

You can take the man from the bog, but you cannot take the bog
from the man.

– old Irish proverb

The act of writing itself might be considered a form of mapping
or a cartographic activity. (45)

– Robert T. Tally Jr., *Spatiality*

Troubled Bog Bodies

In his early writing career from 1966 to 1980, Seamus Heaney compiled four volumes of poetry and one collection of prose that addressed, among other things, the phenomenon of the bog. Heaney produced the bulk of his “bog poems” after major political tensions and violence erupted in 1969 during what is known as “the Troubles” in his hometown of Derry, Northern Ireland.¹ This period of sectarian tumult serves as the third political era related to colonization in this study, after the Land Wars of the 1880s in the first chapter and the Irish War of Independence from 1919 to 1921 in the second chapter. Heaney turns to the bog, like Stoker, O’Connor, and Ó Faoláin before him, to explore some of the contestations of the period. However, the focus of this chapter will not entirely be about the Troubles – inasmuch as this period of Irish history demands careful, step-by-step negotiations that is out of the scope of my analysis – but it serves as a backdrop to Heaney’s bog poems and a way of understanding the use of the bog

¹ Although there is no clear consensus on the subject, Heaney’s “bog poems” generally include the following: from *Death of a Naturalist* (1966): “Digging”; from *Door in the Dark* (1969): “Bogland”; from *Wintering Out* (1972): “The Tollund Man,” “Bog Oak,” and “Nerthus”; from *North* (1975): “Come to the Bower,” “Belderg,” “Bog Queen,” “The Grauballe Man,” “Punishment,” “Kinship,” “Strange Fruit,” and “Act of Union.” In addition to these poems, I draw from Heaney’s first collection of prose, *Preoccupations: Selected Prose, 1968-1978* (1980), where Heaney frequently describes his relationship with the bog.

as a metaphoric and material symbol to address his own troubled connection to Irish politics and culture.²

This chapter investigates how Heaney's bog body poems function as a type of literary cartography. A traditional map provides lines, dots, and shapes that simulate the contours of land and deploy names to classify and describe topographies, whereas literary maps are a way of seeing real and imagined spaces more clearly through written texts. Focusing mostly on bog bodies, originally made famous through P.V. Glob's book *The Bog People*, Heaney diagrams physical and imagined features of the bodies found in the bogs. Bog bodies, similar to the bogs from which they emerge, elicit both postcolonial and Gothic associations. According to literary critic David Kennedy,

Reading terrorism in terms of ritual, sanctuary and the sacrifice highlights the particular role of the body. The body in the present both narrates and is narrated by acts of violence. Through this narrating and narration the body itself comes to function as a site and transcript of the recursive history exemplified in the origin myths. (39)

Kennedy then concludes, "the victims of violence become literal transcripts of this recursive history" (39). Rather than survey Heaney's bog bodies as agents of terrorism mediated through sacrificial Iron Age bodies, a theme Kennedy and others explore, I focus on how bog bodies are used as transcripts, not only

² History leading to the resurgence of the Troubles is far too broad and complex to sufficiently explain in this chapter. However, I do provide a short overview in this chapter introduction and make connections to the Troubles throughout. For more, see J. Bowyer Bell's *The Irish Troubles: A Generation of Violence, 1967-1992* (1993) and Tim Pat Coogan's *The Troubles: Ireland's Ordeal 1966-1996 and the Search for Peace* (1995).

“narrated through acts of violence,” but also mapped or charted by Heaney to provide connections between the bog and culture. In some of Heaney’s bog poems, for instance, bog bodies serve as real and symbolic maps for readers to follow through notions of the haptic and Gothic body. Linkages between literary cartography and the body find support in the sustained work in and around synesthesia. Later in the chapter, I explore “The Grauballe Man” with the notion of haptic visuality, which serves as a way of visualizing images of the bog body through simultaneous senses of touch and sight, or seeing through touch. In “Punishment,” Heaney maps bodies in the bog poems as both human and non-human, or what Gothic scholar Kelly Hurley calls the “abhuman,” which is a type of cast off object (or abject) in between human and non-human used in Gothic fiction to depict monsters or other unexplainable bodies dislocated from society (“Abject” 138).

Reading bodies in the bog poems, as Kennedy advocates doing, could help illuminate slippages of time, which allow comparisons between past ritual sacrifices and present-day acts of terrorism and violence. There are, however, other ways to understand Heaney’s body maps that lead to less examined areas of exploration, such as the haptic and abhuman body. Kennedy argues, “The body as re-enactable and legitimating origin and as literal and historical transcript is central to Seamus Heaney’s ‘bog poems’” (39). While I agree with Kennedy’s main assertion here – the body as something we can decode – I differ to the extent that instead of examining the body as transcript, based upon what he calls “text and narration” (39), I investigate how these bog body poems create a type of

literary cartography that draws from both physical and imaginative elements quite similar to examinations made of the bog itself in previous chapters. Bog bodies, viewed as maps, tell stories and can be deciphered in various ways. “To ask for a map,” claims Peter Turchi, “is to say, ‘Tell me a story’” (11). To map the bodies, then, draws out how they tell a different story about Heaney’s bog poems. The bog and the bodies found in them are both able to be creatively mapped and charted, despite their distinctive differences; they are also part of larger political and social circumstances of the Troubles that underpin some of the bog poems.

The ethno-religious conflict commonly referred to as the Troubles initially stemmed from some of the social injustices and political incongruities occurring in Northern Ireland between Protestants and Catholics in the 1960s. The modern Troubles, however, date back to when the Treaty of 1922 separated the six counties in the north (Northern Ireland/Ulster) from the twenty-six counties in the south (originally the Irish Free State that later became the Republic after the Irish War of Independence). The Protestant majority in the Northern Irish State, still a part of Britain and yet considered separate from it as its own state of Ulster, maintained political power from 1922 to the 1960s, when the Catholic minority began to speak out vociferously against an increasingly anti-democratic governance. As David Lloyd states, this outcome created a “self-governing enclave” with an “artificially constructed majority of Protestant citizens” (*Anomalous* 18). The problems in Northern Ireland resulted, in part, from a Protestant majority holding 95% of top public service positions, which not only created a system of income, civic, and legal inequality; it also allowed for

systemic manipulation of voting systems (called gerrymandering), giving Protestants more votes per person than Catholics and therefore enacted a constant majority rule for over fifty years. The largely disenfranchised Catholic communities received lower wages, fewer jobs, derelict housing, and other social inequalities compared to the Protestant communities. Many have already marked and subsequently explained this history as a significant part of postcolonial Ireland, and I briefly introduce it here and focus on the Catholic position to contextualize Heaney's involvement as both an artist and an individual who lived amidst the Troubles until he moved to Co. Wicklow in 1974.³

Heaney's bog poems remain linked to the Troubles on some level due to the turbulent history from which both he and they arose. Many Catholic nationalists from Northern Ireland were encouraged and in many ways expected to respond to the escalating conflict. Heaney chose to respond, in part, to the political violence through the unconventional and yet familiar landform of the bog because of its symbolic and real qualities that mark similar tropes of uncertainty in Heaney's own poetic voice. The bog serves as an ideal metaphor for Heaney's

³ Eugene O'Brien, however, offers another view that connects the contemporary history of the Troubles, which is linked to modern Irish history more generally, to the 1947 Education Act. This Act opened up third-level education for the first time to a generation of Catholics (*Heaney* 18), which sparked a group of writers, artists, and civic leaders to arrive on the scene in the 1960s, one of whom was Heaney. During the 1960s, when a generation of educated Catholics was old enough to critique and confront political inequalities, the Civil Rights movements in the United States were responding to similar forms of racial and class discrimination. The fight in Northern Ireland originated as a push for democracy against the state, but this quickly dissolved into military forms of protest that lasted for decades. After many demonstrations of civil disobedience and parades in the late 1960s, which were deemed illegal, Catholic nationalists faced increasing resistance from the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) and Protestant Governments. In one particular "illegal" demonstration in Belfast, on October 5 1968, the RUC charged a crowd of protesters and injured many of them. This event, as many have noted, marked the beginning of the Troubles (O'Brien, *Heaney* 18-19). Seamus Deane, in contrast, marks 1972 as the starting point of the Troubles because of three monumental events that changed the political landscape of Northern Ireland: Bloody Sunday, the proroguing of Stormont, and the collapse of a constitutional arrangement in parliament that had lasted since 1922 (*Celtic* 179).

poetics, but it also highlights political connections to the actual geography from which Heaney lived in Derry/Londonderry.⁴ In the west of the city, the majority of Catholics live in a section called the “Bogside.” The name Bogside typically associates pejoratively with the sinking, decomposing, and stagnant mire of peat bog. In addition, the Bogside is also where the events of “Bloody Sunday” occurred on January 30, 1972 – a day when the British Army open fired on civilians marching for civil rights and killing thirteen people (Ferriter 626). The name Bogside derives from the fact that many of the impoverished Catholics worked as labourers on the bogs, just outside of Derry; in his poem “Digging,” for instance, Heaney shows his family as these labourers on the bog. Heaney uses the bog as a general symbol and metaphor to address postcolonization in Northern Ireland; however, the bog also serves as a terrestrial and symbolic space that draws writers to investigate the contradictions of political violence more than it serves as an attempt to speak with certainty about them. In an otherwise uncertain and unstable situation, Heaney uses the bog to explore issues he otherwise might not have been able to do as a Catholic from Derry in the 1970s.⁵ In this chapter, I examine the ways Heaney’s poems use bog bodies and the bogs in which they are found as creative maps, both connected to and separate from the Troubles, and

⁴ Despite the controversial place-name differentiation between Londonderry and Derry, I will be referring to this city as Derry based upon Heaney’s own usage. In pre-Christian times Derry was known as *Daire-Calgaich*, or the ‘oak wood of Calgach’. During the reign of James I, particularly while under a charter granted to London companies in 1613, the name Derry was switched to Londonderry in order to reflect British occupation (Smyth, *Space* 136-137). Because of this contested colonial history, the divide between using Londonderry or Derry still exists. “Derry,” as Shaun Richards remarks, “is the unhappy home of significant events whose anniversaries have resounded bloodily across centuries of the city’s history” (61).

⁵ Michael Longley, a Protestant poet from Northern Ireland, similarly responds to the Troubles through what he calls “[m]y nature writing,” which, he goes on to say, “is my most political” (qtd. in Pierce 271). Other writers and poets use metaphor to scrutinize the Troubles, but I focus on Heaney in this chapter because of his singular devotion to the bog.

argue that this serves as a key to understanding some of the links to the postcolonial Gothic bog.

Heaney, as a cultural, political, literary, and international figure, has received a formidable amount of critical attention.⁶ While many critics acknowledge bogs and bog bodies in Heaney's poetry, they tend to position them as purely mythic symbols or totalizing concepts functioning as portholes into the Irish psyche or imagination. Most critics agree that the bog in Heaney's poetry and prose serves as a loaded vector for fruitful interrogation. The disagreement largely exists in what specific subjects the bog stimulates and how Heaney arrives at such themes. Debates vary widely, of course, but the major arguments generally range from the ethno-religious conflicts in Northern Ireland (E. Longley 154), national "soil" and Irish identity (Deane, *Celtic* 175), and the feminization of Irish land and bodies (Coughlan, "Bog Queens" 42), to the aestheticization of violence (Lloyd, *Anomalous* 17) and archaeological metaphors between pre-history and present (Vendler 38-39). For my own purposes, I will outline some of the criticism that directly examines the bog from literary, cultural, anthropological, archaeological, geographical, and postcolonial perspectives to gather a range of approaches that foreground my own direction in this chapter.

In his first book on Heaney, literary and cultural critic Eugene O'Brien asserts that the bog poems "have formed a powerful symbol of the racial memory of the nationalist community, a memory which allowed violence to thrive in the

⁶ Over three dozen full length studies on Heaney are in circulation and the amount of articles and conference papers devoted to what Desmond Fennel calls the "Heaney phenomenon" far exceed that of any other contemporary Irish writer (O'Brien, *Heaney* 1). With this in mind, my chapter addresses some of the critics who have engaged solely with Heaney's treatment of the bogs and bog bodies.

thirty years of Northern Irish ‘troubles’” (*Heaney* 5). According to O’Brien, Heaney probes the past in the peat in order to explore the psychic history of Ireland and how such a past uncovers a “nationalist-republican narrative of history” (5). O’Brien claims Heaney’s verb/metaphor “digging” examines the Irish past as it relates to the Irish present during the 1960s and 1970s in Northern Ireland. In her book *Seamus Heaney* (1998), Helen Vendler argues, “the bog poems are, for the poet, as much a replication of self as a symbolic representation of history” (48). Heaney represents a poet of “undoing, of dilution, of loss” that ultimately leads to “the processes of unmaking” (47). For Vendler, the shift between *Door in the Dark* and *North* occurred when the quaint archaeologies of preserved objects in the bogs, such as butter or the elk in a poem like “Bogland,” became an interrogation of sectarian violence in *North*. Vendler, like many other critics, argues that the poems in *North* directly respond to Northern Irish politics, whereas the earlier three volumes of poetry did not as much (39). What O’Brien and Vendler overlook, however, is Heaney’s ability to chart and diagram meanings not only in the bogs, but also in their concurrently and yet opposing qualities that are grafted onto the Gothicized bodies found in them. Both critics’ books, while illuminating and incisively argued, do not explicitly recognize any of the Gothic aesthetic found in his poetry.

If Heaney’s work contains a Gothic aesthetic, a virtually uncharted critical analysis, it is because he is obsessed with the dead through the metaphor of national terror and sacrificed bodies, or what Helen Vendler describes more obliquely as “the appurtenances of archeology” that are “blood-tinged and corpse-

haunted” (55). John Wilson Foster comparably remarks, “Heaney’s bog poems are a longer sequence in that horror film [of Northern Irish history]” (*Colonial* 177). Neither critics, nor any others, explicitly recognize Heaney’s Gothic aesthetic. And, since the bog functions as a Gothic space, Heaney also acknowledges the bog as a way to interrogate terrifying and macabre circumstances surrounding sectarian violence. The Gothic flourishes in zones of uncertainty and social upheaval whether writers fixate on the actions of disorder or not (Punter and Byron xix). Heaney’s bog poems resonate in the Gothic archive because the bog remains a Gothic space with its contradictory qualities and unexplainable phenomena.

In fact, a case could be made that the Gothic qualities of the bog are what initially attracted Heaney to them in his poetry. In his first collection of prose, *Preoccupations* (1980), he recalls the uncanny qualities of bogs:

This was the realm of bogeys. We’d heard about a mystery man who haunted the fringes of the bog here, we talked about mankeepers and mosscheepers, creatures uncatalogued by any naturalist, but none the less real for that. What was a mosscheeper, anyway, if not the soft, malicious sound the word itself made, a siren of collapsing sibilants coaxing you out towards bog pools lidded with innocent grass, quicksands and quagmires? (18)

In *North*, Heaney again signals to his own Gothic impulse in the second poem of “Mossbawn: Two Poems in Dedication” titled, “The Seed Cutters.” Here, he

references Pieter Breughel who was a Flemish landscape painter in the sixteenth century. Many celebrate Breughel not only for his depictions of peasants in rural settings, but also for his apocalyptic depictions of mass death that have continued to be recognized as part of the Gothic tradition. Heaney writes, “They seem hundreds of years away. Breughel, / You’ll know them if I can get them true” (95).⁷ Heaney tacitly compares Breughel’s famous paintings of mass death that may seem historically remote as actually existing in the present of the Troubles. The Gothic aesthetic that appears in some of the bog poems also reflect some of the actual geographical qualities of bogs that have attracted more than just literary and cultural scholars.

Many scholars outside of literary or cultural studies continue to examine Heaney’s bog poems through geography, anthropology, and archaeology. The human geographer Dianne Meredith argues that Heaney’s poetic imagery of the bogs actually provides insights into humanistic geography. She considers how place-creation is subjective and based not only on cultural perceptions, but also on environmental factors. Rather than using the “bog landscape as a metaphor for the Irish psyche” or an “icon for Ireland” (Meredith 127), I argue that Heaney uses the bog as a way into the bodies submerged in them to uncover other uncertainties. This is not to say that an allegory does not exist between the bog and Irish psyche, but such a characterization oversimplifies his approach and reinstitutes overdetermined criticism of his poetry: i.e., Heaney = bog = Ireland = Irish imagination. Bogs, and the preserved bodies in them, create other worlds, some of

⁷ All subsequent quotes from Heaney’s poetry in this chapter, regardless of the volume, come from the collection *Seamus Heaney: Opened Ground, 1966-1996*.

which directly connect to Irish politics and some that do so more obliquely like memory. The anthropologist Stuart McLean argues that it is the transformative power of collective memory drawn from the bog bodies that enables both human and non-human understanding (“Bog Bodies” 306). Memory is not limited to human understanding, but, instead, materializes out of the bogs through bodies and the process for collecting these memories, whether they are through poetry (in the case of Heaney) or through technologies (CT scans and carbon dating of the corpses), philosophies, or geography. Similar to McLean’s focus on bodies as collective memory holders, this chapter also underscores how bodies serve as markers to be mapped. For instance, I investigate in the poem “The Grauballe Man” how bog bodies can be read as a memory map, holding both collective and individual memories. Heaney’s mapped bodies uncover the depths of memory as something that is more textured and nuanced than an overt political impulse.

In a surprisingly short section on Heaney, especially for an otherwise excellent book exclusively focused on bog bodies, the archaeologist Karen Sanders argues that the bog serves as a place of national Irish identity (84). Sanders’ totalizing argument regarding Heaney, similar to Meredith’s claim about the Irish psyche, could more carefully reflect some of the nuanced and incisive arguments in other parts of the book, which examine more closely the impact bog bodies have had on what she calls the “archeological uncanny” (47). It appears that Sanders overlooks in Heaney’s poetry some of the complexities that reveal the instabilities and contradictions of the bog bodies. Sanders maintains that Heaney aims “to mend a conflicted present in Ireland by understanding the depth

of the bog,” and in so doing affirms “the poet’s love for his country” through “ritual and process” (85). What is neglected here, I would argue, is Heaney’s ambivalence about what “love for his country” actually means. What is really at stake in terms of commitment, politics, or nation? Instead of offering clear answers, Heaney uses the bog as an entry point, mirroring his own uncertainty, to explore both national and personal incongruities and ambiguities further.

Lastly, the postcolonial critic David Lloyd – who offers one of the more pointed and referenced critiques of Heaney’s earlier poetry – upholds that Heaney continually returns to the intersection where “place, identity and language mesh” (24). For Lloyd, Heaney echoes previous articulations of cultural nationalism in the nineteenth century, but he avoids political specificity by concentrating on aesthetics. Lloyd argues that Heaney’s poetry, despite his reliance on aesthetic representation, is in fact political and continues to raise the central question that Irish nationalist writers have been asking since the nineteenth century: what is Irish identity? (13). Lloyd ultimately argues that Heaney reduces “history to myth,” which has the effect, in addition to creating an identity of place, to aestheticize violence (27). Lloyd’s densely argued chapter understates the ambivalence in Heaney’s poetry, what Deane alternatively recognizes as “that note of uncertainty, of timorousness which recurs time and again both in this poetry and in his prose” (*Celtic* 174). Reading Heaney’s bog bodies as literary maps highlights this ambivalence and ambiguity, reflecting similar qualities of the bog.

All of these critical readings offer important insights and form powerful responses to Heaney’s bog poems from many disciplinary and theoretical

perspectives. Building upon and challenging these critical approaches, as well as others in the chapter, I argue that bog bodies – drawing them into conversation together as a constellation of symbols and physical objects – serve as maps that can be charted and interpreted in Heaney's poetry and prose. In Heaney's bog poems there remains a fundamental ambivalence and reluctance in tone and meaning about his commitment to politics and the nation. The indeterminate elements of the bog allow for this sort of slippage when national identities, histories, and memories are being re-examined in violent times. On one level, a slippage of time and certainty resembles qualities of bog and bodies found in them. On another level, his poetry draws a map of the bog bodies that reveal some of their uncertain histories and features (through personal and collective memories). Maps are, after all, fundamentally flawed and subjective documents and body maps are doubly so. Heaney turns to bogs and bodies found in them to purposefully create such uncertainty about some of the polarizing sectarian debates in the late 1960s and 1970s, a move that would seem to contradict the whole project of mapping.

Mapping the body through literature might be best approached through a process known as literary cartography, which examines written creative work as a type of map through actual physical features and metaphorical images. Literary cartographers plot certain points and draw various lines that result in a literary map, whether it is a poem, a play, or a novel. According to Graham Huggan, in his formative study *Territorial Disputes* (1994), the literary map is both a "product and process: it represents both an encoded document of a specific

environment and a network of perpetually recoded messages passing between the various mapmakers and map readers who participate in the event of cartographic communication” (4). For Heaney, I contend, the “encoded document” is the body (or bog in certain cases) described in specific poems, where the “product and process” is negotiated through the mapmaker (poet/writer), map (speaker), and audience. Bogs are what Heaney initially plots through his own poetic impulse. He also diagrams the artifacts that emerge from them, namely the bog bodies. Literary maps, like bogs, function as a unity of opposites because they are both real and imagined spaces rife with contradictions and imbrications. Spatial theorist Robert Tally Jr. similarly acknowledges there is “an almost simultaneous figurative and literal aspect of literary cartography” (*Spatiality* 46). Bog bodies are also simultaneously literal and figurative; for example, the bodies in the poems are concurrently human and non-human, liquid and solid, prehistoric and contemporary, temporal and atemporal, feminized and masculine, and political and apolitical.

Heaney’s poetic maps describe the topographic contours of the bogs, but they also chart the anatomical and imagined features of the bog bodies that have been famously unearthed from the bogs and touted as archaeological discoveries. Moynagh Sullivan further contends the body of a poem (form), particularly in the case of Heaney, is also simultaneously the body of Ireland (metaphor) (“Treachery” 454). Body maps are where individual and collective stories, as well as recollections, overlap and exist instantaneously. In this regard, body mapping is a process that recognizes, through organic objects (bogs or bog bodies), the

imagination associated with collective and individual stories. Heaney even describes why the bog serves as an ideal vector for his poetry:

I had been vaguely wishing to write a poem about bogland, chiefly because it is a landscape that has a strange assuaging effect on me, one with associations reaching back into early childhood. [...] So I began to get an idea of bog as the memory of the landscape, or as a landscape that remembered everything that happened in and to it. (*Preoccupations* 54)

Mapping and bodies – drawing from memory, bogs, and nation in Heaney’s poetry – both remain significantly linked to postcolonial politics and a Gothic aesthetic. Bog bodies can be mapped and colonized, while they also conjure Gothic imagery of the tenuous line between living and dead.

In the following chapter, I principally look at five bog poems. The first section begins with “Digging” and “Bogland.” Both poems are examples of earlier literary maps that stem from and reveal Heaney’s own embodied experience and connection to the bog. Although both poems do not technically have bog bodies *in* them, they do show bodies *on* bogs and reveal Heaney’s synesthetic attraction to bodies and bogs. The second section studies how Heaney charts both the textual and physical bodies in his poetry. In “The Tollund Man,” I investigate how Heaney’s bog poem offers a more journalistic approach to the body, which serves as a clearer model for body mapping that later becomes more complex and nuanced in other poems. Next I examine “The Grauballe Man,” which is considered Heaney’s most famous bog poem. First, I argue the quasi-

visual feel of the poem provokes a haptically visual response (seeing through tactility) that serves as another form of body mapping. As Heaney's bog aesthetic develops, the haptic becomes more pronounced within it. Second, I look at how bodies/corpses can also be mapped through memory, what are called "memory maps," which is a way to record subjective memories tied to specific political geographies. Lastly, the poem "Punishment" reveals the symbolic and physical mapping of a feminized abhuman Gothic body. The poem shows how sexuality and desire are used in oppositional ways that create an abhuman bog body – both human and non-human and yet neither. Literary cartography, as I use it in this chapter, allows us to examine various mapped bodies in Heaney's poetry as both products and processes of real (physical, organic, corporeal) and imagined (symbol and memory) bogs.

Digging/Writing/Mapping the Bogs

Heaney's interest in bogs formed early in his life and subsequently became a topic of artistic and cultural importance. He and the Irish painter T.P. Flanagan, to whom he dedicated his first bog poem "Bogland," would travel to the neighbouring Co. Donegal in order to seek artistic inspiration in the countryside. Flanagan has noted, similarly to Heaney, that the bog is "the fundamental Irish landscape" with connections to a Pagan and supernatural past (qtd. in Meredith, "Landscape" 127-128). The bog hoards objects that hold culture, history, and memory, all of which are charted in Heaney's first ten years of publishing poetry.

“With the bog as a locus of preservation,” according to Heaney, “that guaranteed a link to a verifying history and culture” (“The Man” 3).

By way of introduction, I want to provide a longer citation from “Kinship,” a poem in *North*, because it plots a “real” bog; it also serves as a synecdoche for all of Heaney’s bog poems, where the confusion of the physical and symbolic bog fold together and contain traces of Gothic and political markers. In the second section of the poem, Heaney paints a vivid picture of bogs:

Quagmire, swampland, morass:
the slime kingdoms,
domains of the cold-blooded,
of mud pads and dirtied eggs.

But *bog*
meaning soft,
the fall of windless rain,
pupil of amber.

Ruminant ground,
digestion of mollusk
and seed-pod,
deep pollen bin.

Earth-pantry, bone-vault,

sun-bank, embalmer
of votive goods
and sabred fugitives.

Insatiable bride.
Sword-swallower,
casket, midden,
floe of history.

Ground that will strip
its dark side,
nesting ground,

Outback of my mind. (121-122; original emphasis)

On the one hand, this description demonstrates the seductive wetness of the bog that descends into the depths of time and space, a reason writers and readers alike are attracted to its muddy waters. In the opening two quatrains, Heaney contrasts two perceptions of the bog, setting them apart and then talking about the aliveness, the soft fecundity, and fertility of memory grafted on the bog. Beginning with the word “Quagmire” in the first stanza and then questioning “[b]ut *bog*” with its “[r]uminant ground” in the second and third stanzas, the poet juxtaposes traditional notions of bogs as wastelands against bogs as revealers of memory with “votive goods” that provide ways to discover and explore their depths. Even the structural elements of the poem descend narrowly down deep onto the page.

On the other hand, these six stanzas demonstrate how bogs are living spaces where human history continually endures political conflicts in the “domains of the cold-blooded” in the “dark side” with “sabred fugitives” and “nesting ground.” The words demanding and dangerous might best characterize the bog, in what Heaney labels “the slime kingdoms,” but these adjectives also summon the political and horrific climate associated with bogs in Northern Ireland. These elements overshadow all of Heaney’s bog poems in some way or another, but before moving to the mapped bog bodies, I will first explain how “Digging” and “Bogland” lay the groundwork for later bog body poems through the poet’s own embodied relationship to the bog.

In “Digging,” from *Death of a Naturalist* (1966), Heaney creates an obvious analogy between digging potatoes in the bog and writing, another act of digging and foraging deep within. Although Foster, among other critics, notes that Heaney’s early poetry “startled with its physicality” (*Colonial* 82), I want to suggest that using “physicality” as a descriptive limits the imagined qualities of his early poetry, particularly in how the early poetry foregrounds later poems about mapping bodies. However, using a term like “physicality” to describe Heaney’s poetry has another unintended consequence: it signals features related to the body. Physicality can reflect a form of stasis, similar to superficial perceptions of the bogs, whereas mapping entails the idea that the physical (whether topography or bodies) triggers many narratives through imaginative forms of expression. The verb “digging” serves as a metaphor for anything that explores, excavates, or investigates. The verb indicates an obvious connection to

“physicality,” to be sure, but it also contains the opposition of real and imagined: although digging is a physical action, it signals an imagined excavation into something unknown or unexplored deep within something. While Heaney makes an explicit comparison to writing, he also establishes this relationship through mapping. Probing the depths of the bog provides an effective symbol for exploring our own inner unknown, the bottomless hole in our psyche. The bog poems attempt to locate and map geographies, histories, material objects, and memories for others to decipher some form of meaning. As a way of doing this, Heaney first attempts to dig them out with his spade/pen as he famously suggests in “Digging.” The metaphor bog/poem, then, extends to the idea of a map. Instead of just “digging” in the bog, Heaney is also mapping the bog; in some cases it is artifacts (such as in “Bogland” and “Relic of Memory”) and the unconscious (as explored by Meredith, Gibbons, O’Brien, and Rowland, among others), and in other cases it is bodies.⁸

Mapping, like writing and digging, comprises both physical and imaginative terrains. The bog serves as an archaeological site of creation and inspiration in “Digging;” the poem also imagines histories and genealogies threaded in the bog. Heaney admits that the poem “Digging” was “dug up”

⁸ Many critics argue the verb “digging” in Heaney’s eponymous poem, as well as other bog poems, relates to psychoanalytic functions of the unconscious. Meredith identifies the bog as “a sort of Jungian as well as a geological memory-bank” (“Landscapes” 127). O’Brien argues, “the bog is seen as an image of the social unconscious of Ireland” (*Heaney* 16). Meredith’s and O’Brien’s claims resemble Gibbons’ earlier observation about the bog as a repository of Irish history in Stoker’s *The Snake’s Pass*. While I agree with these readings, I also contend that Heaney does not simply identify the bog a repository. Instead, Heaney attempts to map not only the bogs, but also the contents in them, some of which include bodies, artifacts, memories, and the historical unconsciousness.

because it was “laid down in me years before” as a child exploring bogs just outside of Derry (*Preoccupations* 42). The poem begins with Heaney’s sensorial responses to digging, an earlier foregrounding to visibility and the haptic:

Under my window, a clean rasping sound
When the spade sinks into gravelly ground:
My father, digging. I look down

Till his straining rump among the flowerbeds
Bends low, comes up twenty years away
Stooping in rhythm through potato drills
Where he was digging. (3)

The digging action of the father attracts the speaker’s attention through the body’s sensation of movement. The act of digging is a process of excavation, particularly since the act of digging attempts to locate an object, such as potatoes for farmers or bodies for archaeologists. Digging generates body sensations – “his straining rump” and “[s]tooping in rhythm through potato drills” – and investigates the terrain through movement and feeling. The speaker goes on to say:

The cold smell of potato mould, the squelch and slap
Of soggy peat, the curt cuts of an edge
Through living roots awaken in my head.
But I’ve no spade to follow men like them.

Between my finger and my thumb

The squat pen rests.

I'll dig with it. (4)

The literal spade is an inadequate tool for the speaker's own form of cultural labour as a writer. However, he demonstrates a clear relationship between the pen and spade; they are, in many ways, extensions of each other and interchangeable as textual metaphors. The pen and spade are essential tools for exploration and mapping because both provide the terrestrial (digging in the earth) and imaginative (digging in one's history and past) elements involved with the mapping process. Just as the "curt cuts of an edge" of the bog provide a chart of the physical ground, the "living roots awaken" of the imagination in the speaker's "head." The spade is one-dimensional and limited as a tool to explore the bog, memory, and genealogies, whereas the symbolic pen contains multitudes of possibilities not limited to the terrestrial. Writing, then, is mapping – it is a means by which one structures personal experience (Huggan 27); it is a way of conveying something to others just like the process and purpose of a map; and, it functions as a "process and product," always in flux and never exact (Huggan 4). Literary cartography remains both metaphorical (digging/writing process) and actual (physical and textual product).

In "Digging," as well as in other bog body poems, the body mediates this process as a digger, writer, and mapper. Heaney "archaeo-culturally" excavates (Vendler 38), or maps, as a writer: digging/writing with the body on the bog generates a way to articulate this as both product and process. It is the very presence of the body that generates inspiration for the poet in "Digging," in

addition to the sensorial details of the “potato mould,” the “squelch and slap / Of soggy peat,” or “the curt cuts of an edge,” all forging a connection “[t]hrough living roots awaken in my head” (4). By evoking the visual, aural, and olfactory senses, the poem suggests that the process and product of digging/writing/mapping the bog comes first from the physical body:

Nicking and slicing neatly, heaving sods

Over his shoulder, going down and down

For the good turf. Digging. (4)

The physical body digging the turf becomes mapped onto the textual body of the poem. The tactile sensation of “slicing,” the visual depiction of “heaving,” and the sounds of “digging” all arouse multi-sensual embodied actions, whether it is digging, writing, or even mapping the bog. Ending with the idea that the pen will serve as the digging implement instead of a gun or a spade does not simply conclude with what Lloyd claims is a common “aesthetic resolution” found in Heaney’s poetry (*Anomalous* 21). Instead, the ending indicates an ambiguous structural metaphor of exploration; the process of digging is to excavate without any way of knowing the outcome or product. Digging/writing/mapping all function as actions that investigate and probe more than show certainty. Choosing the gun as opposed to the spade might appeal to nationalist militarism – one of the choices offered as a way forward – but the speaker of the poem instead chooses the pen as an instrument that confuses and surveys political violence more than it aestheticizes or promotes it. Mappers/writers do not decipher their encoded documents; they create them.

If Heaney's formal impulses for mapping bogs appear in "Digging," then his experiential and imaginative instincts develop further through his own body as a child in "Bogland," another poem about bogs in *Door in the Dark* (1969). Heaney recalls some compelling cultural objects beyond the potato that were found in the bog:

They've taken the skeleton
Of the Great Irish Elk
Out of the peat, set it up,
An astounding crate full of air.

Butter sunk under
More than a hundred years
Was recovered salty and white.

The ground itself is kind, black butter (41)

The relics that Heaney describes are actual memories from his childhood. Mappers, as people who literally make claims about land, subjectively chart symbolic coordinates as well. Literary maps are similarly not objective documents; in fact, they thrive in imaginative realms that often materialize from real geographies. The human geographer Paul Rodaway argues, "Although maps depict what is actually visible, they also can 'visualise' what is not visible in everyday experience, and through the selectivity of the map-maker certain elements are shown and given relative importance whilst others are not" (133). Heaney infuses these sensorial evocations into his literary maps that develop

through his own body experience. He recollects, “As a child I used to imagine my helpless body whistling down a black shaft forever and ever: now I imagine the imagination itself sinking endlessly down and under that heathery expanse” (Broadbridge 39). Heaney subtly plots out this experience in “Bogland,” setting the foundation for later bog poems. The speaker states,

Our pioneers keep striking

Inwards and downwards,

Every layer they strip

Seems camped on before. (42)

The visceral experience of seeing the elk and butter in the bog transitions to his ancestors who continually search to unearth deeper cultural experiences that have been “camped on before.” The pioneers, like his family, use their bodies on the bog through both labour (farming) and culture (artifacts), and explore inwards and downwards. Heaney equally uses his body to map the bogs both inwards (personal and familial) and downwards (historical) through his own cultural labour as a writer.

Rodaway also maintains that geographical experience is fundamentally mediated in the body; it begins and ends there (31). The combination of the bog (as a physical part of geography) and the body (as a mediator) allow Heaney to draw literary maps through personal experiences that might otherwise stay buried or unidentifiable. As a child labouring on bogs, Heaney comments about what he calls his “genuine obsession” with the bog:

It was an illiterate pleasure that I took in the landscape. The smell of turf smoke, for example, has a terrific nostalgic effect on me. It has to do with the script that's written into your senses from the minute you begin to breathe. Now for me, 'bogland' is an important word in that script and the first poem I ever wrote that seemed to me to have elements of the symbolic about it was 'Bogland.' (Randall 17-18)

Heaney's description and ultimate lure to the bog contains many sensuous and symbolic qualities related to the physical geography. The bog's essence was "written" into his "senses" at an early age and that enhanced his ability to understand the physical and imagined qualities that he was then able to chart specifically through bodies in his poems. Heaney recollects, "I loved the textures of the bog banks after the spade had done its work in the turf-face" ("The Man" 3). The process of mapping these memories through sense perception contains a lasting effect for the reader, as well as the poet, and moves beyond other readings of "Bogland" that only relate to family or community.

In his essay "Mossbawn," Heaney further describes how he used his own body to establish an early, and in many ways, embodied experience between the body and bog. When describing the "wet corners, flooded wastes, soft rushy bottoms" of bogs, he recalls,

It is as if I am betrothed to them, and I believe my betrothal happened one summer evening, thirty years ago, when another boy and myself stripped to the white country skin

and bathed in a moss-hole, treading the liver-thick mud,
unsettling a smoky muck off the bottom and coming out
smeared and weedy and darkened” (*Preoccupations* 19).

Heaney became, in part, a living bog body through his experience bathing in the bog waters. As I will examine in more detail in a portion on “Punishment,” the word “betrothal” here underscores a recurring erotic desire rooted in his embodied experience of the bogs. In this sense, Heaney’s ability to map the bodies in the bogs stems from his own experience of mediating the sensual qualities of the bog through his own body. Rodaway’s claim that the mapmaker selectively includes what elements sustain greater importance underscores Heaney’s mediated experiences. For Heaney, this is the body.

Furthermore, “Bogland” functions as a doorway for later bog poems. Since it is the only poem actually named after the bog, it explains the importance of bogs and the ways in which they reveal multi-dimensions. “When I called my second book *Door in the Dark*,” Heaney later admits,

I intended to gesture towards this idea of poetry as a point of
entry into the buried life of the feelings or as a point of exit
for it. Words themselves are doors; Janus is to a certain
extent their deity, looking back to a ramification of roots and
associations and forward to a clarification of sense and
meaning. (*Preoccupations* 52)

Although words refer to doors here, he also defines the appeal of the bog as a similar “door” that looks backwards to the past as much as forward to the future to

unearth buried lives and bring to light new futures. Bog bodies, for example, surface in the past but will continue to be mapped in future literary works through their own real and imagined timeless qualities. Hence, the invocation of Janus – the doubled faced god of transitions and beginnings symbolizing doors or passages – resembles the opposition and concurrent qualities of the bog and the bodies in them. The bog poems remain the vehicles to chart a path to the “buried life of the feelings.” However, Heaney moves quickly from looking at bogs as doors to examining the bodies – equally uncanny and charged symbolic and physical objects – as other kinds of doors that establish continuities and discontinuities between time and space.

Jay Parini hails “Bogland” to be “a watershed poem in the Heaney corpus” because it “refuses to go much beyond a literal representation until the last line: ‘the wet centre is bottomless’” (106). Parini also acknowledges elements in “Bogland” that develop further in later bog poems. “Bogland” serves as a “watershed poem” not only because of its obvious literal representation of the bog topography that ultimately raises his poetry to international audiences, but also because it demonstrates the connection between the actual bogland, as a personal and collective geography for Heaney, and Heaney’s body as a cultural digger/mapper. In “Bogland,” according to Heaney, he entered “into a place” that he “knew already,” a place that “now promised to reveal still more” (“The Man” 3). Instead of digging in the bogs, as he does in “Bogland” and “Digging,” Heaney’s later poems focus on specific objects – bodies – found in the bog that reveal complex, rich, and mysterious maps.

Bodies out of the Bogs

Heaney's specific interest in bog bodies came about while reading the Danish archaeologist Peter Vilhelm Glob's book *The Bog People* (published in Danish in 1965 and translated in English in 1968). In fact, both of his poems "The Tollund Man" and "The Grauballe Man" specifically focus on the two real bog bodies located by turf cutters in Denmark, even though many bog bodies were found in Ireland as well.⁹ Glob's pioneering archaeological digs of bog bodies discovered the two male figures named in Heaney's two poems. Heaney has often described the experience of reading about Glob's bog bodies. In his opening speech, "Face to Face with Your Past," for the exhibition of bog bodies at the Silkeborg Museum in Denmark in 1996, Heaney discussed his "discovery" of Glob's book and the way Glob wrote "so lovingly" about the "boggy landscape." According to Heaney, it "was all completely familiar to me" (3). He went on to point out that bogs could be physical, imaginative, and embodied. Heaney's experience upon first seeing bog bodies was felt in his "very bones" ("The Man" 4). Reciting the old Irish proverb, "you can take the man from the bog, but you cannot take the bog from the man," Heaney argued that the reason we are still acknowledging the relevance of bog bodies is precisely because you cannot "take the bog from the man" ("The Man" 3). "If bogs are slippery," Sanders relatedly comments, "the bodies in them are double so" (8).

⁹ Although Glob's book focuses on two of the most well-known preserved bog bodies found in Denmark in the 1950s, the first recorded bog body was found in Ireland in 1781 in Co. Down (what was then Ulster). Heaney's poem "Bog Queen" is about this particular bog body.

With Heaney's comments in mind, mapping the bodies is equally as important as describing the bog. Bodies themselves are bog-like; they are organic liquid and solid matter containing over seventy percent water and exhibiting an accretion of layers of skin, muscle, bone, and organs. Scientists have been able to determine the genesis of death in each of the bodies found in the bogs through the carbon dating of microscopic pollen grains preserved in the tissues, a process that can also be duplicated with bogs.¹⁰ Heaney sets out in his poems to verify, explore, and map forms of history and culture through some of the bodies found in the bogs. The bog bodies, which, for Heaney, build upon his interest in how bodies mediate between the terrestrial and imagined, become one of the concentrations in his next two volumes of poetry.

"The Tollund Man," from *Wintering Out* (1972), serves as possibly the most objective and journalistic bog body poem. It contains a cautious structure and tone that the other poems do not. "The Tollund Man" provides a blueprint for later, more controversial bog poems in *North* about conflicts and cultural accretions. For example, "The Grauballe Man," "Bog Queen," "Kinship," and "Punishment" all present a more binocular view of past and present, archaeological and contemporary, and sexual and religious (Vendler 43-44). Elmer Andrews maintains that "The Tollund Man" serves as a pilgrimage for the poet balancing "sacrificial demands" and "individual values" (65-66). In his analysis of Heaney's work, Kennedy focuses on the body, what he calls "corpses

¹⁰ The Grauballe man's death, for instance, dates back to the Iron Age, around 310 CE (Glob 45). However, he was discovered much later in 1952 during a peat-cutting operation at the Nebelgård Fen, just outside of the village of Grauballe in Jutland, Denmark. After carbon-14 dating some hair off of the bog body in 1996, the time of death was pushed back to around 290 BCE (McLean, "Bodies" 303).

as sublime art objects,” which Heaney takes from Glob and appropriates as a “contemplative form of address” (40). Both positions underscore important strains of collective ritual and aesthetics in the poem. However, the bog poems highlight the uncanny phenomenon of bodies in the bog that have been found through various turf-cutting operations in both Ireland and Denmark – what Heaney calls in “The Tollund Man,” “Trove of the turfcutters’ / Honeycombed workings” (164). Rather than view the Tollund Man body as an object of art or a symbol of religious ritual, Heaney maps the body with almost the precision of an investigative journalist.

The poem is composed of three sections: the first contains five stanzas mapping the anatomical features of the body; the second contains three stanzas charting personal and familial relationships of the body; the third also includes three stanzas and draws a historical and geographical context for the body. In the opening stanza, the speaker indicates a spatial difference between him and the body:

Some day I will go to Aarhus
To see his peat-brown head,
The mild pods of his eyelids,
His pointed skin cap. (64)

The opening line indicates that the speaker has not yet visited the body in Aarhus, Denmark. The words “[s]ome day” imply spatial and temporal distance that must be traversed between the body and the poet. Heaney does, however, draw the contours of the body’s head through shape (pointed), colour (peat-brown),

anatomy (eyes), and imagination (skin cap). The speaker goes on to describe the topography where the body rested in the bog:

In the flat country nearby
Where they dug him out,
His last gruel of winter seeds
Caked in his stomach, (64)

The “flat country” describes the physical terrain of the bog. We later know this to be Jutland, the larger peninsula where the town of Aarhus is located. Even though the Tollund Bog is not in Ireland, Heaney demonstrates an almost visceral understanding of bogs because of his own family background working on them – what he recalls as “all completely familiar to me” (“The Man” 3). For the speaker, the bog embraces or envelopes the body: “in the flat country near by / Where they dug him out.” In this sense, Heaney’s own mediated experience between the body and bog articulated in “Digging” or “Bogland” fill in some of the empty space between “flat country” and “dug him out” that substantiates the description of topography and a visceral understanding of bogs.

Heaney next maps the anatomical interiors of the body itself. The juxtaposition of the first two lines about geographical proximity and the second two lines about the contents of the stomach accomplishes two aims in the literary map. First, charting the stomach’s food residue recognizes the overarching biology of the bogs through the man’s diet. Scientists, for example, were able to identify some of the contents of the man’s last meal ingested immediately before his death. It consisted of a vegetable gruel of clover, spelt rye, Yorkshire fog, rye-

grass, goosefoot, buttercup, lady's mantle, black night-shade, yarrow, wild chamomile, and smooth hawksbeard (Glob 56-57). Second, the quatrain contrasts the anatomical and the geographical body. The body not only comes from the bog, but also functions as a type of bog.

The poem curiously shifts from objective to subjective language when the speaker personifies the bog as a body:

She tightened her torc on him
And opened her fen,
Those dark juices working
Him to a saint's kept body. (64)

This stanza animates the bog as a body, not only through sexual innuendo and gendering, but also how it shifts to the subjective experience in poem. Poetically mapping the topography equally provides insights into the bodies found in the bog. These descriptions all suggest that even the science of retrieving bog bodies views the bodies as themselves maps. Due to the preservative qualities of the anaerobic environment of bogs, bodies retrieved out of them still contain many distinguishable external features and internal organs, including hair, fingernails, fingerprints, lines on the soles of the feet, eyeballs, and even the brain (Glob 48-49). These body maps allow archaeologists to examine histories, ages, environments, and diets, much like a forensic scientist would after a suspicious death to obtain clues.

The physical descriptions of the body in the first section of the poem shift to the more personal descriptions in the second section. This transition also shifts

from what has remained mostly a cultural analysis in the last two poems to increasing political undertones in this one. Although a change occurs, the focus remains on mapping the bog body's experience:

The scattered, ambushed
Flesh of labourers,
Stockinged corpses
Laid out in the farmyards,

Tell-tale skin and teeth
Flecking the sleepers
Of four young brothers, trailed
For miles along the lines. (65)

The purely physical and scientific features mapped in verse from the bodies now shift to the more personal and imaginative. Who were these people? What sort of lives did they live? The temporal shifts between the body of the Tollund Man, meticulously described, and what Neil Concoran calls the “incorrupt bodies of Catholic hagiology” (35). Beyond the ungratifying deaths of the labourers “scattered, ambushed,” the last quatrain suggests a way of understanding these bodies through the form, not only political metaphors. The lines of the poem lie next to each other, as do the bodies “in the farmyards “[f]or miles along the lines.” In addition, the hard consonant sounds of these two stanzas reflect the harshness of the subject. The violent alliterative sounds of “Tell-tale skin and teeth” invoke an experience of the way people died more than a description of the bodies

themselves. The structure of the poem holds the map together not as an aesthetic escape from politics, but as a description of bodies used as markers of location and time. These other “bog bodies,” which are bodies the speaker claims “germinate” into being, are victims of sectarian violence and contemporary bodies; they are also not actual or physical. The format of the poem itself germinates the bodies – the bodies lie “along the lines” of the poem. The poem brings them to life as though it too were a bog.

The third section provides an overview of the geographical region in order to contextualize the more local personal and physical features related to the actual bog bodies. The speaker of the poem lists the various bodies found in bogs, “Tollund, Grauballe, Nebelgard,” almost like an invocation or a litany (65). In addition to being obvious town names, they also identify the names of the bodies. In this regard, bog bodies mediate geographies and cultures in another important way: they are named after the locations of the bogs in which they are found. The nomenclatures of bog bodies remain geographical in almost every way. Not only are they part body and part bog; they are also a point on a map, such as a town or region, reflecting a real location with imaginative associations to history, culture, and literature. Therefore, the name of the body is the same name as the cartographic coordinate on topographical map.

Even though Heaney attempts to map these bodies through knowledge and understanding of the bogs based upon his own family history and through studying Glob’s *The Bog People*, he indicates some elements of unknowing and uncertainty in the penultimate quatrain: “Of country people, / Not knowing their

tongue” (65). Maps do not provide accurate descriptions, but flawed, subjective ways to understand a geographical region that is entirely limited upon what Huggan calls the “process and product” in literary cartography (4). The process of literary cartography matters as much, if not more, than the product because the process remains experiential and rooted in the body, much like the importance of “digging” in Heaney’s earlier poem.

Heaney’s speaker begins “The Tollund Man” excited to “get to Aarhus” to see the “peat-brown head” of the bog body. But after plotting the features of the body in the poem, his excitement fades into pain:

Out there in Jutland
In the old man-killing parishes
I will feel lost,
Unhappy and at home. (65)

In the final line, the speaker feels at home presumably because it is a similar bog landscape to what he knows, but it is also a similar “man-killing” parish. So, there is some way in which this map merges the physical and the political (as all maps do) through a simultaneous opposition between homely and vanished people. The last quatrain foretells some of the themes in his later bog poems, such as loss, despair, death, violence, and dispossession. Indeed, all of these motifs underscore postcolonial and Gothic undercurrents that persist in these poems. The last quatrain returns to the beginning of the poem, coming full circle in order to complete the literary map, which both articulates the somatic contours of the body and the imaginative and personal ones that emerge out of Heaney’s own objective

and distinctive perspective of the actual Tollund Man. O'Brien maintains that "The Tollund Man" should be viewed as "an intellectual" response to the body, one read about and viewed through photography (Heaney 25). However, Heaney's description, besides "an intellectual" approach, serves more as a distanced, technical literary map. Heaney develops an inventive technique based on the personal and collective when charting out bodies in his third volume of poetry.

In *North* (1975), "The Grauballe Man" exhibits another mapped bog body. Along with "Punishment," it is also the most discussed and controversial of Heaney's bog poems. In the poem, Vendler argues, "The poet overturns the objectivity of history by the insult of the actual, putting his contemplative power to aestheticize squarely in conflict with his political power to sympathize" (45). Vendler then raises the question, "Is it wrong to aestheticize?" (45). Anthony Purdy comparably suggests that a "figural language" parallels the "aesthetic preservation of the body" as it compares to the peat ("Bog Body" 97). Sanders remarks, Heaney's bog poems present "a representational minefield" that challenges what the bog, bodies, or symbols therein represent in the larger context, whether it is political or aesthetic (87). The bog body in the poem serves as more than simply an aesthetic object employed with the intention to politicize the present through the discontinuities of time in the past; rather, it remains simultaneously a physical, organic object for archaeological examination and an imaginative object for cultural interrogation. Both lines of inquiry might be approached productively through literary cartography, where the poet maps the

physical and cultural contours of the body. The imbrication of both the organic and the imaginative body creates further contradiction in the poem, which moves beyond claims of aestheticizing violence or reducing history to myth, as Lloyd contends (*Anomalous* 27), and opens pluralistic readings of the body as a map of the senses and memory.

The first half of “The Grauballe Man,” consisting of six quatrains, meticulously diagrams the physical condition of the body:

the ball of the heel

like a basalt egg.

His instep has shrunk

cold as a swan’s foot

or a wet swamp root.

His hips are the ridge

and purse of a mussel,

his spine an eel arrested

under a glisten of mud

The head lifts,

the chin is a visor

raised above the vent

of his slashed throat (115)

Through Heaney's visual mapping of the body in the poem, the reader *feels* the anatomical features of the bog body through the visual imagery. The speaker moves down the body as though the visual and tactile senses were aligned through both image and touch, from the "ball of the heel," the "instep," and the "foot," up to the "hips," "spine," "chin," and "throat" that has been "slashed." Heaney's charting functions like a film camera slowly tracking up the body literally from heel to head. Yet despite its physicality, the poem is surprisingly void of actual contact with the bog body (O'Brien, *Heaney* 35).

The visual qualities in "The Grauballe Man" produce a process of "haptic visuality" – what Laura Marks defines as a sense of touch (haptic) through the visual encounter in a film or photograph (162). Through this tactile, quasi-visual experience the viewer develops a deeper relationship with the subject/object in the image, thereby bridging the separation of viewer and object in what media scholars have called "embodied spectatorship" – where the seemingly contradictory sense perception and cognition do not detach but work in tandem (Marks 151). This haptic approach integrates images within our own embodied experience so that the visual can also become tactile (subjective and close) instead of remaining solely optical (objective and distant). For example, "The Tollund Man" is more optical, whereas "The Grauballe Man" appears more tactile. The viewer can feel the visual image as though it were apart of him/her, contained within as a visceral experience.

Mapping the body through the senses, offering a deeper experience in the poem, evokes a type of haptic visuality. For example, "The Grauballe Man" opens,

As if he had been poured
in tar, he lies
on a pillow of turf
and seems to weep. (115)

The last line creates more pathos from the image and directs the viewer to empathize with the body. The softness of the pillow of turf contrasted with the sticky tar in which the body lays stresses the touch sensation evoked through the visual of a soft and yielding white pillow juxtaposed against the dark, black tar. The Grauballe Man's body appears, drawing again from Vendler, "almost vegetative, almost bronze" (44). The simultaneity of opposites appears in the sensuously mapped body: preserved skin, hair, and fingernails mark a sense of a living body even though the body remains dead. This description additionally charts the oppositional qualities of the bog. The bog appears to be squishy and soft to the touch on the surface, but once submerged in the bog, the sticky quicksand qualities hold the body in place.

The real and imagined Grauballe Man appears in various manifestations: in Heaney's poem, in a glass case in a museum, and in various forms of visual media (photographs, films, texts, and interactive digital displays) (McLean, "Bodies" 305). The visual elements of the poem resemble other forms of the real Grauballe Man put on display, which Heaney observed many times when initially writing the poem. Even Heaney, as the poet, experiences haptic visuality on some level through his own embodied experience. He examines the various methods of displaying the real Grauballe Man while mapping his own poetic and imagined

version of the bog body. Heaney recalls the power of the bog body photographs upon first seeing Glob's book: "And the unforgettable photographs of these victims blended in my mind with photographs of atrocities, past and present, in the long rites of Irish political and religious struggles" (*Preoccupations* 57-58). Likewise, Heaney reflects upon the photographic and visual elements of the bog bodies in "The Grauballe Man":

I first saw his twisted face

in a photograph,
a head and shoulder
out of the peat,
bruised like a forceps baby, (116)

The literary mapping that Heaney constructs here resulted from a visual process of looking at photographs, not the actual body of The Grauballe Man. This visual process assists Heaney in drawing a literary map that does more than deliver aesthetic pleasure; it also provides a small glimpse into the bog's history through the contours of the body itself. As Purdy comments, bog bodies "allow us to *see* time" through the physicality of the body and the science of carbon dating (94). Heaney articulates the contours of the body to accentuate visual elements through other senses.

Seeing the poem through the haptic brings the viewer closer to the body, while it also adds an element of compassion and empathy for the victim. As Heaney suggests, there are obvious parallels of the bog body to the dead corpses

from the Troubles. In an interview he once stated, “I’ve tried to make a connection lately between things that came to the surface in bogs [...] and the violence that was coming to the surface in the north of Ireland” (Broadbridge 10). Through provoking other senses, the poem draws personal connection to both victims in the poem, one that is physical (Grauballe Man) and one imagined (bodies from the Troubles). Rather than aestheticizing violence in these lines, the poem elicits empathy for victims of violence in general, whether they are from the Iron Age or contemporary Belfast. Provoking an intense visual invokes knowledge of our own physical body as it relates to the dead bodies of victims of violence. Through haptic visuality we can touch the body through various iterations of it as charted in the poem and feel the corporeal qualities that confuse history. The visual qualities of the poem emit a haunting effect that compresses time and space through the body of the corpse of both the biological and imagined qualities and highlights the ambiguities about death, time, memory, and violence. This body, similar to the bog, attracts a poet like Heaney because it works in a limited and limitless register where both real and imagined elements can be explored subtly without having to evoke overt political symbols.

In addition to the visual qualities of the poem, “The Grauballe Man” raises some provoking questions about the identity of the “corpses” compared to bodies, leading us to a form of memory mapping. Years later, in Denmark, Heaney reflects on the bog bodies in his earlier poetry:

Once upon a time, these heads and limbs existed in order to
express and embody the needs and impulses of an individual

human life. They were the vehicles of different biographies and they compelled singular attention, they proclaimed “I am I.” Even when they were first dead, at the moment of sacrifice or atrocity, their bodies and their limbs manifested biography and conserved vestiges of personal identity: they were corpses. But when a corpse becomes a bog body, the personal identity drops away; the bog body does not proclaim “I am I”; instead it says something like “I am it” or “I am you.” Like the work of art, the bog body asks to be contemplated. (“The Man” 4)

Heaney explains how these sites of memory in both the bog and the bodies diffuse contested identities and establish a collective memory where the “I” transforms into a pronoun “it” or “you.” In this regard, individual identity attributed to a corpse transforms into collective identities of bog bodies. Bog bodies, then, speak for the collective as an unmanipulated memory. Collective memory functions as a shared, less individualized approach because the public at large accesses it without limitation – people see/feel/experience mapped identities in poems or museum cases. These bodies, like the bog from which they emerge, hold memories that can be examined publically as memory maps, whether they are encased in a museum, photograph, or poem. Memory maps, according to Purdy, emerge out of a diverse interplay of photographs, drawings, texts, and excavated objects (“Memory Maps” 262), all of which relate to bog bodies. The bog body, as the speaker in the poem recognizes, “asks to be contemplated” – or,

investigated and mapped through these various sites of interplay. The speaker in “The Grauballe Man” states:

but how he lies
perfected in my memory,
down to the red horn
of his nails, (116)

Similar to the visual elements in “The Grauballe Man,” the memories of the speaker occur when he follows the map of the body’s nails through the interplay of the photograph from Glob’s book transformed onto the page of the poem.

Memory maps are creative ways to record subjective memories that fundamentally root in specific geographies. The Canadian geographer Joan Schwartz argues that “memory maps” do not describe the real topographical contours of the land, but are “cartographic expressions of a sense of place,” mediated, reinforced, and shaped by memory (13). According to Schwartz,

[Memory] maps are neither detailed nor accurate. The spatial relations they communicate are more idiosyncratic than cartographic. The maps reveal more about dynamics than distances, more about the geographical imagination than topographical reality, more about identity than genealogy, more about the character of memory than the nature of land.
(11)

Heaney’s bog bodies – more imaginative than cartographic, more about memory than actual topographies – function as memory maps. In “The Grauballe Man,”

for instance, a relationship is documented between the collective geographical record and individual identity through a “sense of place” that is also mediated by memory. Body maps are descriptions of the body mediated through space, history, identity, and memory. Body maps do not accurately detail the terrain of certain topographies in technical cartographic terms, but they do illuminate issues of the past through memory that directly relates to the present in a form of identity and the cultural impulse of a certain place.

In the second half of “The Grauballe Man,” Heaney raises two key questions with regards to corpses and bodies related to his previous statement about bog bodies proclaiming, “I am it”:

Who will say ‘corpse’
to his vivid cast?
Who will say ‘body’
to his opaque repose? (115)

The difference between “corpse” and “body” involves a spatial shift from the pronoun “I” to “it,” thereby distinguishing the change from the particular (individual) to the general (collective). Bog bodies are found, exhumed, curated, and observed by the collective and transcribed into a memory map for cultural consumption in public places. Corpses, on the other hand, are the remains of humans who once had personal histories that are no longer created and narrated through the collective archive. Corpses remain highly individualized in death; for example, tombstones mark each corpse’s association to its individualized life. Bogs transform the individual corpses into collective bodies when the bodies are

found and examined by the cultural collective. These differences of identity and memory in “The Grauballe Man” become more salient when framed within the political violence of the Troubles. Thomas Docherty, for example, views the above stanza as a question of history in terms of death and life: “is history dead, a thing of the past; or is it alive, vivid, a present of the past?” (70). Bog bodies bear marks of memories that were buried, covered, and erased, but now come to exist as part of the collective memory and are divorced from specific identities. The discovery, documenting, and displaying of bog bodies reinterns them to the collective memory, and once in that realm museum curators and poets alike use methods to map the memories for various audiences that are part of the collective.

“The Grauballe Man” reveals this ambiguity about the difference between the individualized corpse and the collective body. Through the process of charting dead bodies the poem differentiates between the “body” as an “opaque repose” from the “corpse” as a “vivid caste” (116). The “opaque repose” signals obscurities about the identity of the body read by the collective, whereas the “vivid caste” gestures to a clear individual identity of a certain group, not the general collective. The corpse reference underscores the deaths of the contemporary Troubles, whereas the body functions as a remark on the unknowable deaths of the unknowable people who are now the bog bodies that Heaney explores in the poem. For example, both the Tollund and Grauballe Man are named after the place they were found by the collective. Corpses become bodies once they are discovered simply as bodies, stripped of specific ideologically-inflected identities. The poem locates the corpse in the actual realm

(decomposed material matter) and the body in the imaginative (memories of the body and the correlations made between the past and present). The identity of the body has been “perfected in my memory” for the speaker, while the corpse, “the Dying Gaul,” is “too strictly compassed” (116). The mystery of the bog bodies is more compelling to decipher for society than the corpses of the Troubles (through a cartographic tool of the compass even) because they are older and disconnected from contemporary politics. Heaney maps the bog body, rather than the corpse, to direct attention on the memories associated with not only the body, but also where it is buried in “a dark / elderberry place” of the bog (115).

Bog bodies, similar to the corpses from the Troubles, initially met their demise through violent means – as sacrificial rituals to fertility goddesses and punishment for “crimes” similar to other sacrifices and “crimes” connected to sectarian ideologies of nationalism or loyalism. Heaney’s Grauballe Man, for instance, was a “hooded victim, / slashed and dumped” (116). In turn, it is “each hooded victim” implying a specificity that is “actual” and indeed ideological. While these lines remain a description of the Troubles’ dead, they also appear to parallel the description of the Grauballe man upon his own violent demise as a punishment for an unknown crime. The corpses that have become bog bodies bear evidence of death by sacrifice in the Iron Age and by execution in more recent colonial circumstances. Bogs have been and still are used as nameless graves for those dispatched through acts of violence. The bodies dug up in Jutland that Glob describes in *The Bog People* met their deaths from acts of violence. The Tollund Man was found with a rope around his neck from a hanging and the Grauballe

Man had an incision across his neck from ear to ear. In this regard, violence is literally mapped onto their bodies to be deciphered and remembered by society, whereas corpses organically decay in the earth and remain only a memory without a corresponding map. Heaney lays this groundwork in “Bogland” and then in “The Tollund Man” before exemplifying it in “The Grauballe Man.”

Bog bodies, therefore, show recorded memories that effectively and ambiguously chart uncertain identities that are shared and interpreted by the collective. Memory and representation directly relate to questions of identity, nationalism, power, and authority (Said, “Memory” 176), which are at the root of the ethno-religious conflict of the Troubles. Sectarian politics hold that it is not *what* you say, but *who* says it. As Heaney writes in his poem, “Whatever You Say, Say Nothing,” “The famous / Northern reticence, the right gag of place” (132). The goal of sectarian violence is, in part, to eliminate traces of identity from the opposition through silencing people and transforming them into corpses (recognizable identities that have been neutralized). Corpses remain identifiable as individuals – they are “too strictly compassed” – despite attempts at disfiguration seen in “The Tollund Man” (116). While the “too strictly compassed” might refer to the Dying Gaul’s beliefs – he is compassed on his shield and circumscribed by it – the phrase also refers to the corpses’ ideological identities.

However, corpses quickly disappear and decay, like the ideologies attached to them, while bog bodies continue to survive in collective forms of memories; the bodies are documented in photographs, books, museums, or poems after they are discovered and unearthed from the ground. For example, the

Grauballe Man exhibit at the Moesågrd Museum of Prehistory in Denmark showcases the body in a glass case for viewers to inspect. Alongside the body are placards that explain and recognize the assembly of human and non-human agents involved with the discovery and subsequent preservation process; it also includes an accompaniment of texts and images as part of the museum display. All of these examples demonstrate ways to record memories of the bog body that speaks to the collective (McLean, "Bodies" 307).¹¹ Through the differences between corpses and bodies (mapped through memory), Heaney's bog bodies offer possible ways to examine violence without explicit identities attached to them. Mapping through haptic visuality and memory provokes empathy for the bodies because they evoke responses in our own bodies that are both attracted to and repulsed by the bog bodies. Heaney's poem "Punishment" goes further toward explaining the ambiguous relationship of the object/abject body, which also reveals the union of attractive and repulsive oppositions through a feminized body.

The poem "Punishment" portrays the bog body known as the "Windeby Girl." This body was deposited in a bog over two thousand years ago and found blindfolded with a halter around her neck; her crime was allegedly adultery or possibly premarital relations.¹² "Punishment" shows the symbolic and physical

¹¹ This exhibit is part of a larger project titled, *The Mysterious Bog People*, which toured Europe and Canada in 2004-5, in addition to having a permanent home in Denmark. This exhibit further extends the idea that bog bodies are sites of collective memory that have been mapped by archaeologists and poets alike.

¹² After extensive DNA testing, the Canadian anthropologist Heather Gill-Robinson concluded that the "Windeby Girl" excavated in Northern Germany (in 1952) is actually a "boy." The body was fourteen years old at the point of death (Sanders 115). Given this information, I will refer to the body as a "feminized" body to reflect both the incongruity of the body's sex, now known to be male, but also the speaker's gendering and feminization of the body in the poem as female. The variance in gender further complicates and promotes arguments about the body's sexual allure. The abhuman descriptor serves another important purpose: it de-genders the body. The abject

mapping of a bog body – but not just any body, a feminized body – and the implications involved in her death and the treatment of the body after death. In the poem, there is a clear and deliberate gendered association with women and transgressive sexuality, a recurring point in some of Heaney’s other bog poems in *North* such as “Bog Queen” and “Strange Fruit.” Heaney has been significantly criticized about “Punishment,” and many argue that the poem justifies the harsh punishment carried forth by the nationalist community for Catholic women who dated British soldiers during the Troubles (O’Brien, *Heaney* 38).

I who have stood dumb
when your betraying sisters,
cauled in tar,
wept by the railings (118)

The above stanza indicates parallels to Catholic women who were tarred and feathered for these alleged relationships and suggests the speaker’s tacit condoning of the practice (which he acknowledges, and calls into question even as he continues to condone it).

One way to examine the poem, particularly in connection with themes related to the bog, is to understand how temporality functions. O’Brien describes time in “Punishment” as a “past-present dialectic,” which serves as a “structural and thematic kernel of the poem” (*Heaney* 38). The poem purposefully confuses two histories. The woman in the bog and a contemporary Catholic woman are

body in “Punishment” now appears also as a queer body, void of gendered identity and yet also evoking erotic attraction despite the unknown gender. Rather than pursue this other line of inquiry – the abhuman queer body – I instead focus on the feminized body since it relates more to the speaker’s intent in “Punishment.”

both “punished” ritualistically by their communities for alleged actions related to sexual freedom and pleasure. The overlap between the past and present appears to justify contemporary violence because it safely hides behind the veneer of the past rather than confronting current practices. Indeed, the preservative qualities of the bog allow for this historical confusion. The “laid-open turf-bank is also a memory bank,” as Foster argues, which serves as a place for Heaney to excavate history and memory (*Colonial* 88).

Instead of taking up precisely the same argument made by Foster, O’Brien, and others, I want to demonstrate how this particular bog body is mapped as a Gothic abhuman feminized body. Because the body is described as abhuman – both human and non-human and yet not either – the speaker can desire it, both in spite of and because of her alleged transgression, allowing him to project on to her his present desire and repulsion for women who are perceived to own their sexuality. Throughout the speaker’s process of mapping this body, however, there remains an inherent ambivalence about women’s fates in the past and the present. The speaker’s ambivalence is predicated on his judgment as pronounced against this feminized bog body precisely because she is mapped as abhuman, which signifies sub-human, through a mix of possessive and eroticized language. Her body is safe to be desired and condemned because she has been controlled and charted in the poem. Much like the body/corpse dynamic in “The Grauballe Man,” the abhuman body in “Punishment” loses identity and subjectivity as the speaker diagrams it as something vacillating between human and non-human.

In her book *The Gothic Body* (2004), Hurley claims that the "abhuman subject is a not-quite-human subject, characterized by its morphic variability, continually in danger of becoming not-itself, becoming other" (3). Hurley's use of the abhuman originates from Julia Kristeva's notion of abjection, but Hurley reappropriates it to demonstrate that the abhuman body is a place where human identity dissolves into another form. Hurley explains that etymologically the word "abject" means "cast off" or "cast away" and relates to words such as debased, degraded, humiliated, and despicable. Pulling from Kristeva's *Powers of Horror*, Hurley locates the abject as "the in-between, the ambiguous, the composite" ("Abject" 138). For Kristeva, the human corpse is "the utmost of abjection" (Hurley, "Abject" 144). The abject body provokes a concurrently oppositional response: both fear and fascination. When defining the abhuman body, Hurley concludes, "One cannot bear to look upon it, but cannot bring oneself to look away from it either" ("Abject" 138).

Hurley's definition of the abhuman accurately describes the bog body in Heaney's poem that both repulses and attracts readers through the disturbingly preserved human remains, even though she has been dead for thousands of years. In fact, Heaney elsewhere claims, "in the figure of the bog body, the atrocious and the beautiful often partake of one another's reality, coexisting inextricably in the lineaments of the transformed human features" ("The Man" 4). The abhuman, or the "figure of the bog body," fruitfully conveys the oppositional qualities of the bog and the ambivalence Heaney emits throughout these bog poems more generally about political realities in the present. In addition to the bodies,

Heaney's statement about the atrocious and beautiful seems to question the commitment to or certainty about a political or religious belief at any cost. This phrase repeats the opening two lines in the penultimate stanza in "The Grauballe Man": "hung in the scales / with beauty and atrocity" (116). The speaker's desire for the feminized body in "Punishment" reveals a larger ambivalence about certainty and commitment to violence against women through the uncanny juxtaposition between beauty and atrocity desired in the body.

Some critics scrutinize "Punishment" for depicting women as silent and passive objects of desire through the speaker's entrenched language of male-centred nationalist rhetoric. Coughlan's essay "Bog Queens" remains the exemplary model of this analysis. In it, she argues "Punishment" portrays the bog woman as an object who is not only silenced, but who also receives the passive gaze of the speaker – an issue of objectification and disempowerment that contemporary women living in Ireland continually face.¹³ Although the speaker's intent in the poem might be read as compassion and empathy for the bog woman, Coughlan maintains the result becomes a "scopic spectacle of the girl's utter disempowerment" (55). But the poem demonstrates a perverse sort of sexuality through the Gothic bog/abhuman body: the speaker maps his own sexual desire onto her because she has become gendered in the poem as a Gothic abhuman body. Bog bodies often evoke subjects of sexuality, sacrifice, disgust, adultery, and homosexuality in literature and poetry because of their phenomenological and

¹³ See also Elizabeth Butler Cullingford's "Thinking of Her...as...Ireland": Yeats, Pearse and Heaney" (1990) and Moynagh Sullivan's "The Treachery of Wetness: Irish Studies, Seamus Heaney and the Politics of Parturition" (2005) for two other feminist readings of Heaney's bog poems.

mysterious allure (Sanders 121). Women's bog bodies (also in "Bog Queen" and "Strange Fruit") are mapped differently than the men's bog bodies in "The Grauballe Man" or "The Tollund Man," and are portrayed as concurrently sensationalized and disgusting through erotic desire and repulsion.

When the speaker maps the woman's body in "Punishment," he maps her alteration from woman to feminized abhuman bog body. He describes her "naked front" and "her nipples" or "amber beads," but also "her shaved head" with "exposed" brain and "darkened combs" (117-118). His description juxtaposes the Gothic elements against erotic symbolism. The speaker even acknowledges, "I almost love you" (118). While Heaney's poem calls attention to the compelling and potentially horrifying loyalties of nationalism and identity, he also disarms the violence in the poem by mapping the contours of the woman, providing an intimate connection to the body without explicitly recognizing or re-enacting sectarian violence in the present. The inherent ambivalence in this bog body poem produces a pervading sense of indeterminacy about current politics, while it also exists on some level, and this is reflected in the voice of the speaker who also contains a similar indeterminate outlook of desire and horror. Although the speaker is not invested in the political situation of women – historically or presently – he is at once permitted to be disgusted and attracted to the feminized abhuman body because she has been made a monster. He claims, I "would have cast, I know, / the stones of silence," which indicates his tacit judgment of her and other transgressively sexual women in the present (118). He can only "almost love" her, but he can sexually desire her (118). In this sense, "Punishment" presents

doubt about the ultimate motivation of the speaker even as the poem clearly pinpoints, through the mapping of the feminized abhuman bog body as an erotic object/abject, an attempt to acknowledge violence against sexually transgressive women in the both Iron Age and the Troubles. As Vendler comments, “if Heaney had no ambivalence about the fraternizing women and their abusers, he would not have been moved to write the poem” (49). The poem’s approach works in a way that may both reaffirm and reflect the inherent disempowering motives of the speaker.

The speaker of the poem considers himself an “artful voyeur” (118), which reveals the act of visualizing and thereby imagining how to possess the woman’s body from a distance. The ambivalence in the poem is, in no small part, about sense and perception – the speaker remains a distanced observer and this attachment makes him uncomfortable. Eroticizing the abhuman body heightens the audience’s awareness of this voyeurism in order to call attention to the predicament of perception made about political violence and national identity. The opening two stanzas place the speaker in a seemingly empathic position of imagining what the woman might “feel” lying in the bog:

I can feel the tug
of the halter at the nape
of her heck, the wind
on her naked front.

It blows her nipples

to amber beads,
it shakes the frail rigging
of her ribs. (117)

The voyeuristic characteristics of these opening lines immediately create a passive body (object) for the viewer's gaze (subject). Like "The Grauballe Man," the poem reveals a haptic map of the body creating sensations for the audience. Unlike the male Grauballe body, "Punishment" disempowers and exposes the woman: the body lies vulnerably face up with a descriptive plotting of her breasts as opposed to other body parts such as the Grauballe Man's heel or chin. The description provides an erotic overtone that differs from the visual diagramming employed in the two other male bog bodies found in Tollund and Grauballe. The woman, as Coughlan argues, is silent and vulnerable while the speaker of the poem performs the scopic gaze (55). By viewing the bog body as an abject – cast off and disposed of due to its status as in-between object and subject – the poem additionally invokes repressed erotic thoughts that increase the oppositional forces of repulsion and desire associated with the abhuman feminized bog body.

Both the pathos for her condition and the erotic desire the narrator has for her, as suggested by the body's visual description, displays an odd juxtaposition that takes us directly to the feminized body in the poem. The speaker evokes pathos in the third stanza:

I can see her drowned
body in the bog,
the weighing stone,

the floating rods and boughs. (117)

Like the lines, “I can feel the tug / of the halter at the nape / of her neck,” the speaker attempts to place himself in the position of the bog body in a display of empathy. The speaker scopically gazes at himself as well as the bog body in order to transfer the feelings so that he can then continue to provide an accurately sensuous map of the body. He then contrasts this stanza with the following three, which elicit the monstrous qualities of the preserved feminized abhuman body through its demise:

her shaved head
like a stubble of black corn,
her blindfold a soiled bandage,
her noose a ring

to store
the memories of love.
Little adulteress,
before they punished you

you were flaxen-haired,
undernourished, and your
tar-black face was beautiful.

My poor scapegoat, (117-118)

These three stanzas map the physical bog body not only through a “scopic gaze,” but also through the way in which they ascribe animalistic qualities to the silent abhuman body. The halter, the scapegoat, and even the noose as a ring – a wedding band image and signaling a bullring through the nose – all compare her to an animal. The feminized body is not only silent, but also controlled and attached both to the speaker in the present and to her betrothed in history. Surprisingly, the monstrosity of her appearance and tragic demise does not repel the speaker; rather, it provokes reactions ranging from compassion and love to fear and desire. Despite the empathetic attempts by the speaker, he still judges her as a “little adulteress” and furthers her state of abjection.

The abhuman body in “Punishment” complicates the sexual language associated with it and exposes the macabre overtones of erotic desire; after all, the sexual craving in the poem is aimed at a two thousand year-old dead body. Despite clear indications from the mapped body that the woman is dead, the language in the poem suggests the body lives on and generates desire for the speaker. The speaker states,

I almost love you
but would have cast, I know,
the stones of silence.

I am the artful voyeur

of your brain’s exposed
and darkened combs,

your muscles' webbing

and all your numbered bones: (118)

While these two stanzas present a clear and familiar example of the mapped body through descriptive anatomical parts of the brain, muscles, and bones, they also identify the qualities of the Gothic abhuman femized body. Through the view of sexual invasiveness of the "artful voyeur," they describe the speaker's desire as well as his clinical description of the decomposed body. The horror of the bog body impels the voyeur and provokes the conflicting feelings of erotic desire and repugnance. Although this contrast might appear extreme, it is a common motif in Gothic writing. Vampires, for instance, are also considered to be abhuman bodies, evoking simultaneous feelings of desire and repulsion that support sexual feelings for an undead demon. While a vampire might be the undead, and not the actual dead, the abhuman bog body is what Hurley defined as that not-quite-human form with "morphic variability." The Danish poet Palle Luring, when commenting on the Windeby Body in 1957, similarly acknowledged this "morphic variability" of the bog bodies: "For 2000 years she lay, rigid in her half-brutish attempt not to die" (qtd. in Finn 80). These conflicting feelings of abhorrence and attraction evoke an almost sexual tension that subtly suggests a forbidden and consciously unimaginable physical allure and desire.

While the speaker maps the erotic qualities of a woman's naked body in "Punishment," he quickly moves to the horror of the actual abhuman, as this body is both sexualized as a woman and made hideous as a monster. This approach speaks to Coughlan's argument that women in Heaney's poems are created and

silenced at the hand of the poet's voice (53). But Heaney's mapping of the Gothic abhuman body also demonstrates the ambivalence with which women are silenced. Made into monster, with which the audience is implored to have simultaneous empathy and desire for, this approach to "Punishment" complicates the typical parallels between feminine/nature and sexuality/fertility. The poem invokes an almost grotesque association with transgressive women, who are made abhuman through a particular process and product of dehumanization in life and then again by mapping the body found in the bog as a sexualized object. Accessing the feelings through repulsion and desire, instead of turning away from the image of the body's decayed state, the audience is placed in a position, like the speaker, to make judgments about the alleged acts of women, rather than the unfortunate fate of the women.

"Punishment," then, raises questions about how political symbolism quickly dissolves into conflicting feelings of desire and condemnation. Instead of having sympathy for Catholic women punished for alleged transgressive sexuality, the speaker focuses on ambivalent feelings of longing and judgment while mapping an abhuman body. Bogs are commonly associated with fertility and, according to Sanders, "are paradoxical places that connote both a dead end and a point of origin, gestation, regeneration, and rebirth" (13). Rather than drawing the shapes and lines of a woman's body in "Punishment" as an abused victim of violence, the poem reveals a map of erotic desire for a feminized abhuman body. I am not necessarily suggesting that Heaney somehow condones the speaker's process – this is also part of the ambivalence sketched throughout – but that the

poem provides a glimpse at how women can be unwittingly objectified even through a grotesque body preserved in the bog for thousands of years. The speaker of the poem attempts to empathize with her through his own body, but ultimately judges her predicament, despite the obvious fact of past and current violence committed against women like her. The speaker's attempt at reading the mapped body from a distance turns into another form of objectifying women. Through the charted body, the speaker provokes a type of visual penetration that, although attempting to chart the woman's unfortunate plight, instead disempowers her as a monstrous abhuman through his own erotic projections.

Conclusion

This chapter outlined five of Seamus Heaney's major bog poems in order to demonstrate the tenacity and scope of the bog's allure in Irish literature and culture. Heaney's attempt to create literary maps of bog bodies in his poetry produces many outcomes, some intentional and some unintentional. To map is an effort to reveal the "unknown," although it may be well-known to others.

Mapping is also a form of exploration and exploitation. Through mapping, as well as writing, we can question, consider, and explore possibilities (Turchi 11). Tally maintains that in literary cartography "the individual writer or mapmaker is not simply making choices, selections or omissions, but is participating (perhaps even unwittingly) in larger historical and cultural processes by which these moments and places gain greater significance" (*Spatiality* 58). Mapping, like poetry, has many unintended outcomes; the sheer act of writing/mapping makes claims and

assertions, while also projecting and defining in the “larger historical and cultural processes.” The reader also brings an interpretation, a view. The reader may be as complicit, or culpable, as the writer. A map is a guide, but we also read maps and interpret them. Maps also uncover, allowing for self-reflection and doubt, and show a tremendous amount of ambivalence about the ultimate product or subject being mapped or even the process by which we get to the product.

Heaney’s bog poems serve as literary maps for further understanding/reading/viewing the bodies that emerge from the bogs and that exist on them in all their various manifestations. The bog bodies are both real (the actual bodies examined by scientists) and imagined (the bodies conceived of by writers and viewers as cultural artifacts). Bog poems are politically, structurally, and socially unstable because they reflect the qualities of the bogs. Instability exudes from the bog and this space serves as an ideal focus for a poet discussing both volatile political circumstances and ways to avert our attention from them. Heaney’s maps of the bog bodies do not find a solid bottom or point of origin at the centre of the bog. His form of ambiguous and uncertain mapping resembles the refrain from “Bogland”: “the wet centre is bottomless” (42). Deciphering his literary maps is an endlessly deep process. He even admits that bog bodies “have a double force” between reverie and intellect that “derives from the fact that the bodies erase the boundary-line between culture and nature, between art and life, between vision and eyesight” (“The Man” 4). However, the ostensible erasure of boundaries of the bog bodies provides compelling evidence to conclude that a

poet like Heaney would be drawn to map them in unconventional ways since the bog bodies themselves defy logical convention.

Concluding this chapter with depictions of women in “Punishment” serves as a fruitful transition into Chapter Four, which ends this dissertation with two contemporary literary examples of woman protagonists living on bogs. Written by two women playwrights, both plays illustrate how women reject notions of objectification and disempowerment through their lives on the bogs.

CHAPTER FOUR

“the bog is fuckin’ third world it is”: Neo-Gothic, Neocolonialism, and

Gender in Carr’s *By the Bog of Cats...* and Kinahan’s *Bog Boy*

So much time was spent, in our childhoods, getting excited by the beauty of the bog. It is not a substance I could ever mention in a book: too sacred, too overworked, it will, besides, never be mine. (n. pag.)

– Anne Enright, “At Turner Contemporary”

Capitalism, Colonialism, and patriarchy, for example, are figured as a mire. [...] Yet the pejorative use of the mire metaphor is implicated (“mired”) in the capitalist, colonialist and patriarchal repudiation and vilification of wetlands. (9)

– Rod Giblett, *Postmodern Wetlands*

Women, Bogs, and Staging the Nation

The sectarian divisions of the Troubles, lasting from the late 1960s to mid 1990s, overshadowed much of Irish literary and cultural production in that period.

Themes of violence, nationalism, sectarianism, economic depression, and reactionary politics pervaded cultural critique. In the 1990s, political change swiftly came through Mary Robinson’s presidency (1990), the Northern Ireland ceasefire (1994), and the beginning of the Celtic Tiger economic boom (1994).

The so-called “Celtic Tiger” was a phenomenon in the 1990s and 2000s that ushered in a new era of economic prosperity and cultural capital in a period of neocolonialism where neoliberal economics exploited previously colonized countries to avail of lower tax rates and a cheaper, educated workforce. This historical period serves as the predominant historical background for this chapter.

One of the most significant advances in Irish literary culture during the 1990s and

2000s, one typically outlying to critical approaches of Celtic Tiger culture, was the rise in popularity of and critical attention to contemporary women's writing.¹

This chapter examines Marina Carr's *By the Bog of Cats...* (1998) and Deirdre Kinahan's *Bog Boy* (2010), two neo-Gothic plays about disenfranchised women who are pushed to the edges of Irish society and onto the bog because of their resistance to prescribed gender norms and socio-economic class expectations. In both plays, women are denied agency in favour of economic and national development in Irish society; however, when the same women engage with the real and imagined bog, it provides them a space of opportunity, power, and relative choice. Contemporary Irish literature often employs themes related to what Eve Patton calls the "neo-Gothic," a term used to indicate a revival of the Gothic form in a contemporary context which "signalled a haunted or traumatised Irish society and deep-seated disturbances in the national psyche" (259).² Carr and Kinahan, through their respective protagonists Hester and Brigit, comment on these haunted and traumatized occurrences in Irish society by reflecting on the conditions for women during and in the aftermath of the Celtic Tiger. Although never directly mentioned in the play, *By the Bog of Cats...* is clearly set against the backdrop of the Celtic Tiger in the 1990s. *Bog Boy*, in contrast, takes place in Post-Celtic Tiger Ireland of 2008 to 2010 (and beyond) in the aftermath of a

¹ For a comprehensive outline of women's writing in this period, see Susan Cahill's *Irish Literature in the Celtic Tiger Years 1990-2008: Gender, Bodies, Memory* (2011).

² Patton's use of the term indicates a revival of the Gothic form for many contemporary Irish fiction writers. The term was originally used to explain the revival of the Gothic in the nineteenth century. In fact, the neo-Gothic more commonly refers to architecture than literature in the nineteenth century. However, the terms neo-Gothic and Gothic, as contemporary markers of the form, are almost interchangeable. Throughout this chapter I will refer to the neo-Gothic when specifically addressing Carr's and Kinahan's plays and Gothic when referring to the form more generally to stay consistent with previous chapters.

devastated economy, culture, and national psyche. Both plays document the darker, neo-Gothic side of the Celtic Tiger years where, despite the ubiquitous narratives of progress and Irish economic independence, impoverishment and dispossession of marginalized populations increased. Each play responds to the Celtic Tiger phenomenon by locating the action on rural bogs at the precise moment when modernization and consumerism was at its apex. Carr and Kinahan focus instead on a recurring theme of land and gender – as part of the larger narrative of the land/gender relationship in Irish nationalism – in order to subvert and ultimately reclaim it during a time when many sectors of the economy, culture, and society were flourishing. Typically the rural/bogland location would limit women’s roles to the purely domestic, with urban spaces as the modern equivalent of opportunity and potential equity, but both plays invert this division. While the bog might be feminized, it has rarely belonged to women in the way that it does in these two plays. Instead, the bog serves as a space of refuge and opportunity for women who want to escape limiting domestic roles.

In the Introduction to *Theorizing Ireland* (2003), literary and cultural scholar Claire Connolly recognizes, “Contemporary work by women writers, critics, painters and sculptors turns again and again to the interrelation between body and land, seeking to make sense, perhaps, of the embodied nature of citizenship and subjecthood” (3). Carr and Kinahan exemplify Connolly’s description of contemporary women writers in their exploration of the relationship between subjectivity and landscape. They do so, however, in order to resist the narratives of progress and modernization inherent in the nationalist discourses that

merged into economic narratives of growth and development in the 1990s and 2000s. Carr and Kinahan reconsider, through their women protagonists, what it means to be a mother for the nation and embody the land. Feminist scholar Anne McClintock has argued, “Women are typically construed as the symbolic bearers of the nation, but are denied any direct relation to national agency” (62). Stuck somewhere between the limited past and the limitless future, Hester and Brigit disrupt national narratives of economic progress by living on bogs. Instead of reinforcing the nationalist stereotypes that define women’s experiences in rural Ireland, Carr and Kinahan revisit and revision this highly problematic assumption. Both plays interrogate the parallel drawn between women and land as a nationalist metaphor, and instead reappropriate this imagery to describe the relationship impoverished women have with spaces of the patriarchal discourses so often applied to the Irish landscape. These two plays show impoverished women interacting with the bog – a space considered unprogressive and so often perceived in gendered terms in Irish national mythology. Hester and Brigit do not function as typical rural Irish women who represent, as Patricia Coughlan warns against in connection to the nation, “mother-figures, who are associated with unmediated naturalness” (“Bog Queens” 42). Instead, these protagonists remain uncomfortable in the stereotypical domestic sphere allocated to rural women in Ireland and resist it by locating themselves on the bog. Ultimately, this chapter explores these historical interventions in *By the Bog of Cats...* and *Bog Boy* and how they are overshadowed by the Celtic Tiger phenomenon, where neocolonial

narratives surface in the form of economic modernization and consumption for the nation.

The plot of *By the Bog of Cats...* retells the revenge tragedy of Euripides' *Medea* in a contemporary, Irish neo-Gothic context. The entire play is set on a bog and this space becomes integral to the actions of the characters. Setting the play on the bog also allows Carr to draw on the bog's intrinsic oppositional characteristics, creating both a sense of fixed time in the contemporary moment and timelessness in Irish history. Located in the Irish Midlands, the play stages the overlapping tensions around Irish Travelling People, landscape, class, and women. *By the Bog of Cats...* is a neo-Gothic play because it uses themes of ghosts, inheritance, and transgression, all in combination with post-nationalist undertones in contemporary Irish literature. In the play, the audience learns that Big Josie Swane abandoned her daughter Hester Swane on the Bog of Cats at the age of seven. Hester's long-time partner and only love, Carthage Kilbride, also rejects her. Carthage abandons Hester and marries the much younger Caroline Cassidy because of her age, family connections, and willing acceptance of conventional domesticity. Hester and Carthage have a daughter together, Josie Kilbride, and they continue to disagree about her future – should Josie be raised in a house with Carthage and Caroline or in a caravan with Hester on the bog? Carthage comes from a working class family in the Midlands and Hester is an Irish “tinker,” one of the Travelling People.³ When threatened with the potential loss of custody over

³ The term Irish “tinker” (not capitalized) will be used throughout this chapter when referring to *By the Bog of Cats...* because of its congruency with Carr's own usage in the play. The terms “tinker” and “itinerant” were once dominant nomenclatures, but these names are now considered to be discriminatory terms in Ireland. I will, however, use the preferred title “Irish Travelling People,”

Josie to Carthage and Caroline, Hester curses the whole community with vengeance. She destroys the wedding of Carthage and Caroline and then lights their house and cattle on fire – an act reminiscent of the Big House Gothic genre where writers in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries depict nationalists burning older Anglo-Irish homes to symbolize transition and change from a colonial history to a postcolonial present. The play’s action quickly accelerates and in the dénouement Hester sacrifices Josie and then kills herself in a bloody stabbing – an action asserting her resistance to allowing Josie to be raised in a domestic sphere where Josie and Hester will lose agency as women. Although the play follows a similar tragic structure as *Medea*, issues of displaced peoples, ethereal landscapes, and economic misfortune in the context of Celtic Tiger Ireland dominate the play’s narrative context.

Previous criticism examines the play as a tragedy and, to some extent, analyzes how oppressed women overcome or succumb to the difficulty of life in rural Ireland. Drama critics, for example, situate *By the Bog of Cats...* in the lineage of Greek tragedy, but they also tend to explore some of its commonalities with Irish mythology. Melissa Sihra recognizes that the figure of Big Josie resembles Cathleen Ni Houlihan in the eponymous play W.B. Yeats published in 1902, as a re-imagined metaphor for mother Ireland, but one who now represents

or “Traveller” for short, when discussing this ethnic group outside of my direct analysis of *By the Bog of Cats...* Using the term “tinker” triggers a longer racial history that will not be addressed specifically because it is beyond the scope of this chapter. In short, the Irish Travelling People are currently a recognized ethnic group in Ireland. Mary Burke contends, “The Travellers, or to most Irish sedentary people before the 1960s, the ‘tinkers,’ are members of a historically nomadic minority community defined by anthropologists as an ethnic group that has existed on the margins of Irish society for perhaps centuries” (2). For a compressive literary and cultural history, see Burke’s Introduction in *“Tinkers”*: *Synge and the Cultural History of the Irish Traveller* (2009). For an extended racial and ethnic analysis, see Jane Helleiner’s “Gypsies, Celts, and Tinkers: Colonial Antecedents of Anti-Traveller Racism in Ireland.”

the nation as a sort of anti-mother through her eroticism, cursing, and transgressions (“Cautionary” 582). Sihra argues, “Big Josie embodies the unattainability of the past and its narratives and changes that can be imposed on a nation” (583). Hester and Josie are not just relegated to roles as nationalist figures related to the geographies of the past, even if these roles underscore “the notion of otherness” ascribed to women (Sihra, “Cautionary” 583). Instead, these women’s relationships to the symbolic and terrestrial space of the bog reveal their shared dispossession in neocolonial discourses of economic and social failings. While Big Josie inverts the image of Mother Ireland, Hester forgoes it altogether by reinventing the rural bog as a liberating space separate from the domestic sphere. Rather than identifying Hester as “the female as outlaw or deviant” (Sihra, “Cautionary” 584), this chapter gives an account of Hester as a subversive figure, but one who rejects expectations placed upon her as a woman and a Traveller living on the bog.

Critics have also commented on the liminal location of *By the Bog of Cats*.... Sihra regards the play’s *mise en scène* as a “non-place,” which creates a link among “place, identity and memory” (586). Sihra connects Carr’s non-place bog to Samuel Beckett’s landscapes of material nothingness in, for example, *Waiting for Godot*, through their similar presentation of unformed space. Enrica Cerquoni comparably regards the “vividly physical image” of the play’s landscape as “a Beckettian expanse of water and mist, frozen, surreal, harsh and wild” (178). Bernadette Bourke draws attention to the dramatic connections between the grotesque and liminal aspects of the bog landscape, but she

emphasizes the qualities of the carnivalesque more than the bog. Drawing from Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of the carnivalesque, Bourke argues that the carnival qualities in the play – where order and stability succumb to an unpredictable world of chance and uncertainty – mirror the characters, historical conditions, and landscape. According to Bourke, the carnivalesque “is a strategy that allows for the blurring of boundaries between the real and the surreal, the natural and the supernatural, the past and the present, and between high and popular cultural influences” (129). In this respect, the play's action shares similar qualities to the bog on which it takes place. However, Bourke's focus largely remains on the play's “topsy-turvydom” inherent in the carnivalesque as opposed to the landscape that it reflects.

Both Sihra and Bourke view the bog as a lack or absence of setting rather than a specific space through which to investigate the action in the play. Cerquoni, in contrast, explores the theatrical space in the play and how it relates to the performative qualities of the stage production. She does so by referencing various productions of *By the Bog of Cats...* and studying how individual directors construct space in the play, both in terms of the bog and characters' movement on stage. For Cerquoni, the bog catalyzes a broader argument about how space contributes to the visual qualities of the actual performance: “As spectators, we are in a shifting and permeable land which moves between contrasts” (179). While presenting the atmosphere of the bog in technical staging terms presents a compelling angle of exploration, it does not get to the heart of the matter in the play: how the bog connects to oppressed women in a postcolonial Gothic frame.

Kinahan's *Bog Boy* addresses the subject of "disappeared" bodies buried in bogs stemming from the sectarian violence of the Troubles in Northern Ireland. The historical backdrop of the play, however, amplifies the effect of the Post-Celtic Tiger collapse in Ireland – a period of Irish history beginning in 2008 that, according to *The Irish Times* journalist and author Fintan O'Toole, "swept away the hopefulness and the sense of possibility" (4). The sense of loss described here by O'Toole particularly affected the lower classes in Dublin, a demographic group of primary focus in *Bog Boy*. The play opens with Brigit hearing about the death of her friend Hughie. She subsequently begins to write a letter to his sister Bernie about a nineteen-year-old boy who Hughie had to bury years earlier in the bog because of an order from an IRA commander. The contents of this letter are sporadically written and weaved throughout the action of the play. Brigit is a thirty-year-old recovering heroin addict who has been sent by her social worker, Annie, to a remote location on a bog in Co. Meath for a work/rehabilitation assignment. Brigit is also a single mother whose newborn baby Kaylie has been taken from her by the state because of Brigit's drug addiction. We discover that Brigit met Hughie when she moved to the town of Navan near the bog. The play's climactic action occurs when Brigit and her ex-boyfriend Darren clash during a visit with Kaylie and Annie. Hughie shows up late as a character reference for Brigit during Annie's visit because he is seized by his own fears about the authorities currently digging in the bog for bodies from the Troubles deposited years earlier. In addition to arriving late, Hughie is drunk, which creates a devastating situation for Hester. As the play progresses, we find out the IRA

ordered Hughie to bury a body in the bog twenty years ago, and even though Hughie was not the person who killed the boy, he remains disturbed and haunted by that event.

Since 1999, Kinahan has written several plays, such as *Be Carna* (1999), *Moment* (2012), and *Hue and Cry* (2010), all of which have been performed in smaller theatres in Ireland. Two of her recent plays were produced and performed in Dublin: *Halcyon Days* (2012) at the historical Smock Alley Theatre and *Piigs* (2013) at the Royal Court Theatre. I include *Bog Boy* as a primary work in this chapter because it offers a perceptive analysis of oppressed women and the bog, and includes undercurrents of hauntings and ghosts. *Bog Boy* reflects upon the aftermath of the Celtic Tiger years, and therefore effectively bookends many of the concerns raised earlier in the 1990s in *By the Bog of Cats*.... The play, as an example of a postcolonial Gothic text, examines the intersections of haunting, death, bodies, neocolonialism, and landscape. Brigit's and Hughie's haunted pasts, as well as the ghostly presence of the boy buried in the bog, generate overlapping elements of the literary Gothic with contemporary themes of sectarianism, as well as class and gender struggles. There is an important connection between the disappeared body (Gerard) from sectarian violence and the disappeared women (Brigit) from neocolonial circumstances in Post Celtic Tiger Ireland. Despite these relevant themes in contemporary Irish culture, *Bog Boy* remains peripheral in Irish literary criticism.

So far, critics have offered less discussion about Hester's or Brigit's direct relationship with the bog. Carr and Kinahan juxtapose women against the

backdrop of the bog because it too is an ostracized landscape. Rather than existing as a “non-place,” as described by Sihra, the bog generates and mediates peoples’ actions as a real and imagined space. My approach, then, is to demonstrate that *By the Bog of Cats...* and *Bog Boy* challenge us to imagine a new Ireland, one that can expunge some of its traumatic past, and one that also functions under a different criteria than before. If one looks at the bog as a symbol of Ireland’s past which was quickly forgotten in the Celtic Tiger era, then both plays can be seen as resisting this forgetting and as a reminder that the colonial past has only transformed into a neocolonial present and future. Part of this resistance is that women in Ireland continue to face equality issues. The bog, intrinsically functioning as a union of opposites, challenges the definition between solid and liquid or stable and unstable. This nebulous dynamic effectively serves the purpose of both plays: to keep the expected past and unexpected present in flux. This is why both Hester and Brigit, in connection to the bog, represent the past and challenge those in the present to reimagine an alternative future. They are characters whose role it is to signal a more generative refiguring of women’s relationship to and with the land. The bog creates a kind of palimpsest that holds all of those past associations even while it acts as an ideal site for writers to reinscribe new associations to it.

Before examining each play separately in the following two sections, I want to first outline some of the circumstances contributing to the Celtic Tiger and how they underscore forms of neocolonialism in Ireland that foreground the plays. Kevin Gardiner, who was a banker in London, originally coined the term

“Celtic Tiger” in a 1994 report for Morgan Stanley (Cahill 4). The Celtic Tiger initially referred to an economic “boom” period in the Irish Republic from 1995 to 2000, a time when the GDP grew to almost 12%. Between 2000 and 2008 there were visible signs that such rapid economic increases were unsustainable, but the GDP still hovered at around 5%, considered by many to be a great rate compared to Ireland’s economic history prior to 1994 (Barrett, Kearney, Goggin 1). During the 1990s, Ireland became a country where many transnational corporations relocated operations. This economic phenomenon was largely due to an unprecedented influx of global capital in Ireland where companies were offered lower corporate tax rates. Ireland also provided a highly educated workforce that could speak English and had more flexible environmental laws than anywhere else in Europe. The so-called “boom” resulted in an unthinkable transformation from a vastly economically depressed Ireland in the 1980s into a decade of prosperity and over-abundance in the 1990s. O’Toole argues the Celtic Tiger was a period in which Ireland was trying to reinvent itself and created a “substitute identity” from previous narratives of nationalism and Catholicism in the 1980s that were no longer working (3). By 2008, however, the surplus of the Celtic Tiger years evaporated and Ireland became the first country in the European Union to move into recession.

Postcolonial critics have pointed out that the Celtic Tiger links to the four East Asian economies, called “tigers,” that emerged through and as a result of colonization. These include Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, and South Korea (Cleary, *Outrageous* 46). A common linkage is that infrastructures in these “tiger”

economies were still recovering from previous subordinated relationships with imperial powers. The Celtic Tiger, as a cultural, social, and economic marvel, could be considered a neocolonial phenomenon, insofar as neoliberal economic practices dominated in a period of delicate national circumstances resulting from a history of colonial servitude. Neocolonialism has been used as another way of explaining the power structures of globalization and the postcolonial world within the last thirty years. Such an unprecedented global expansion of capital both fueled and tanked the Celtic Tiger. The social economist Ankie Hoogvelt maintains, “Imperialism, in both the colonial and neocolonial periods, was characterized by a geographical expansion of the capitalist mode on a world scale” (47). Neocolonialism is based upon “geographical expansion” through economic restructuring rather than government or military occupation of traditional colonization, and it appears where underdeveloped nations, particularly with colonial histories such as Ireland, are subjected to new forms of oppression through modernization and progress. Proponents of neocolonial forms of modernization support economic expansion even though such growth polarizes wealth distribution, diminishes social advancement, and promotes favourable tax schemes for large investors with no stake in fostering Ireland’s cultural and social vibrancy.

Neocolonial states are characterized by struggling economies from years of colonial servitude that offer transnational corporations cheap labour, low corporate taxes, and little to no environmental regulations. According to the political economist Michael Barratt Brown, neocolonialism remains the “survival

of the colonial system in spite of formal recognition of political independence in the emerging countries, which became the victims of an independent and subtle form of domination by political, military, or technical [forces]" (256).

Postcolonial critics have subsequently underscored the auspicious neocolonial circumstances that created the Celtic Tiger phenomenon in Ireland. In this regard, neocolonialism can be defined another way: as an attack on the social and cultural fabric of a postcolonial nation in the name of economic progress for wealthy investors. Or, as postcolonial critic Robert Young argues, "Neocolonialism thus comprises not only the half-hidden narratives of colonialism's success in its continuing operations – but also the story of a West haunted by the excess of its own history" (3). In spite of the fact that Ireland expanded its economy during the Celtic Tiger, much of the wealth aggregated in clusters at the top of the socio-economic sector. Since the 1990s, social and cultural inequalities have only increased in the face of such economic success. Women, for example, were particularly and negatively affected by the so-called progress of Irish modernity in the Celtic Tiger years. Among other disparities compared to their male counterparts, women experienced lower wages, little job security, and lack of union protection (Coughlan, "Feminism in Postmodernity" 178). Culture, however, continues to provide a space where people critically engage with economic and political oppression. Cultural producers, for instance, respond by focusing on sites of struggle where the battle of social meanings can be challenged and redefined (Kirby, Gibbons, and Cronin 4). In terms of Irish culture,

some playwrights in this period responded to the neocolonial crisis and subordination of women by critiquing these social failings.

“Independent Ireland,” according to the postcolonial drama critic Victor Merriman, “is a neo-colonial state and that reality must be acknowledged in any consideration of contemporary Irish theatre” (“Poetry shite” 147). Merriman speaks more directly to this approach in theatre:

Irish theatre is thus created as a site of public conversation on the type of social order emerging in anti-colonial nationalism. Such founding principles are uniquely available as the principled basis to interrogate the neo-colonial conditions of contemporary society, and to critique prevailing theatre practices. (149)

Over the past century, Irish theatre has regularly responded to cultural fractures and socio-political inequalities. J.M. Synge’s *Playboy of the Western World* (1907), Sean O’Casey’s Dublin Trilogy – *The Shadow of a Gunman* (1923), *Juno and the Paycock* (1924), and *The Plough and the Stars* (1926) – and, later, Brian Friel’s *Translations* (1980), were all theatrical reactions to specifically historical circumstances of colonization. Notably, though, these examples, among others, exhibit a primarily male legacy in Irish theatre. My approach in this chapter acknowledges Merriman’s claim that neocolonialism must be examined in contemporary Irish theatre. However, I want to build on Merriman’s assertion by suggesting that neocolonial approaches must also recognize women as a significant part of these discussions. *By the Bog of Cats...* and *Bog Boy* are plays

that speak to these economic instabilities in the bottom sector of the economy, but they primarily relate to women's experiences in Ireland. Merriman's larger study, *"Because we are poor": Irish Theatre in the 1990s* (2011), which offers a postcolonial/neocolonial reading of contemporary Irish drama, argues that neocolonialism as a "recapitulation between colonial relations" actually "sharpens the focus of critical practice in drama" (6). While Merriman scrutinizes the links between neocolonialism and Irish theatre, he largely excludes women playwrights in his analysis. *"Because we are poor,"* in addition to briefly mentioning Lady Gregory in connection with Yeats' plays, includes only one women playwright (Carr) in its analysis.

This chapter, in contrast, seeks to position women playwrights, similar to women novelists in the 1990s and 2000s, as central to these contemporary political and social circumstances in order to avoid the historic tendency to recast nationalist discourses that appropriate gender for male hegemony. Women's writing may not register as a primary concern for many critics, particularly those working within Irish postcolonial studies, which has tended to propagate patriarchal forms of nationalism whether intentionally or not. Susan Cahill traces this development and comments that "contemporary writing by Irish women challenges exclusionary constructions of Irishness and hegemonic narratives of Irish history, both underpinned by a sense of place that is conservatively bound up with representations of the female body as land" (14). Carr and Kinahan, two writers revisiting previous constructions of feminine and land, draw attention to women of the lower classes mired in neocolonial dynamics in relation to a "sense

of place.” The divide between urban and rural grew exponentially and provoked questions about the prevailing nationalist idea of Irishness as rooted in the land, the West, or as a tradition during the Celtic Tiger (Coughlan, “Feminism in Postmodernity” 178).

By the Bog of Cats... and *Bog Boy* challenge ideas of economic modernization in connection to rural existence for women. On one level, each play demonstrates that modernized economic policy and prosperity do not necessarily translate into progressive social change, especially for women and minority groups. In order to progress as a society, some proponents of modernization argue, there also needs to be an invented narrative of the past as a point of reference.⁴ The problem with this position is that in these “progressive” national narratives women are relegated to the past, objectified, and, as feminist critic Moynagh Sullivan contends, are used to reinforce Irish “otherness” as part of the invented postcolonial narrative (“Feminism” 249-250). This is largely why Irish feminists have been skeptical of modernization narratives in the last few decades (Coughlan, “Feminism and Postmodernity” 178). On another level, what illuminates the concerns for women and their relationships to Ireland directly also relates to the space in which the plays are set – the bog – which serves as a challenge to both the future of progress and the invention of the past.

Carr’s and Kinahan’s two plays refocus Irish drama on women’s concerns and in so doing respond to neocolonial circumstances. By revisioning the contentious women/land relationship (by way of the bog), they re-vision

⁴ As I point out in Chapter Two, O’Connor and Ó’Faoláin resisted similar national narratives in the post-revolutionary period and attempted to challenge them through the elusive bog.

nationalist narratives in ways that empower women rather than subjugate or erase women's identities. Victoria White argues that as a point of entry for women onto the Irish stage at the Abbey Theatre *By the Bog of Cats...* has "fearlessly put women at the centre of it" (16). Surprisingly, *By the Bog of Cats...* was the first play written by a woman dramatist to be produced at the Abbey Theatre in many decades (Cerquoni 176). In *Facing Forward*, a program of professional development for Irish theatre artists, Annette Clancy comments, "As Ireland's national theatre, the Abbey's mission is to offer world class theatre to the widest public, to help develop Irish theatre to its full potential and to offer an artistic platform for national debate" (qtd. in Merriman, "A Responsibility" 493). One might question how a national theatre continually supports productions that generate a robust "national debate" when Irish women's voices are continually underrepresented.

In addition to positioning women at the centre of the theatrical stage in Ireland, this chapter also places women at the centre of national depictions of land. Feminist critics have previously critiqued depictions of women as the land in Ireland because these reduce women to a position of symbolic and literal fertility for nationalist politics.⁵ Historically, the British stigmatized Ireland as feminine in colonial discourses, which were based upon, in part, Matthew Arnold's observations that the Celtic races were more feminized (i.e., passionate, sensual, and non-rational) (*Celtic Literature* 80-81). This is why, as Sullivan has argued,

⁵ See, for example, Eavan Boland's *A Kind of Scar: The Woman Poet in a National Tradition* (1989), Elizabeth Bulter Cullingford's "'Thinking of Her...as...Ireland': Yeats, Pearse and Heaney" (1990), and Catherine Nash's "Embodied Irishness: Gender, Sexuality, and Irish Identities" (1997).

the word “feminine” is used, as opposed to “woman,” in both colonial and anti-colonial discourses (“Feminism” 249). One way to focus on women, instead of employing objectifying notions of the feminine, is to examine the body and discourses of embodiment. As Cahill argues, “Irish feminism has been involved in a continued effort to question and subvert such traditional associations between body and woman, woman and land” (16). Rather than follow the tendency to allegorize the female bodies of Hester and Brigit as the land, thereby subverting their power, I examine how both characters relate to the material and imaginative qualities associated with the bog through a shared sense of dispossession in a neocolonial Ireland. Since women have functioned “as an object through which Irish studies can mediate its relationship to itself” (Sullivan, “Feminism” 250), Hester and Brigit mediate themselves as subjects through the bog as a neutral space that represents their socio-economic background and their transgressive existence as marginalized women.⁶

Notwithstanding such disempowerment, both plays show Hester and Brigit imagine the bog as a space of empowerment, despite the traditional associations with rural land and the feminine national mother. Hester and Brigit are not silent

⁶ Social and political difficulties for Irish women are not exclusive to the Celtic Tiger years; they have existed for centuries. Irish women have been silenced and chastised for questioning and resisting traditional reproductive roles and matriarchal service to the nation. If the subaltern as male is subjected to silence, Spivak contends, “the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow” (287). The subjected male, McClintock argues, responds to this silence through discourses of masculinized nationalism. In these constructed male nationalisms, “*gender* difference between women and men serves to symbolically define the limits of national difference and power between men” (62; original emphasis). Women, in contrast, are systematically excluded from these discourses as citizens of the nation. In addition, Irish women are elevated as symbols of the nation through various constructions of gender (i.e., feminine, goddess, Mary, Mother Éire, Cathleen Ni Houlihan, Queen Maeve, land, etc.). Carr and Kinahan make this point clear through Hester and Brigit, who are disposed and marginalized, whereas the men in both plays command and receive respect from society simply due to their gender.

observers admired as prescribed cultural symbols or representatives of the domestic realm. Rather, they resist this sort of casting. Both playwrights use voice (both characters have the most lines in each play) as a way to empowerment, sexual freedom as a way out of traditional domesticity, and the bog as a way to reappropriate women's relationship with rural Ireland and challenge previous notions of gender and geography as representing one type of cultural identity (Nash, "Embodied" 117). In this dynamic, women's relationships with geography are not relegated to only ideas of homeland and nationhood as mediated by or through men, but instead they are seen through an empowering experience constructed by each woman herself. The feminist geographer Catherine Nash explains that one of the ways to achieve this aim is for Irish women to revisit cultural traditions of what Irishness and femininity can mean through themes of nature and women's bodies ("Embodied" 120). It is in this sense that both plays respond to the traditional paradigms in Irish literature by placing women in rural settings, but they quickly subvert the way expected representations of femininity function in relationship to a quintessential rural landscape like the bog. For Brigit and Hester, the bog triggers responses to social challenges and serves as a gendered landscape, not as a symbol or metaphor of male nationalism, but for autonomy from a neocolonial society. This chapter argues that Carr and Kinahan subvert the traditional binaries of land/bog and mother/feminine into something empowering and sustaining for women who want to own their subjecthood. Thus, bog can serve as a place of refuge and liberation for Irish women like Hester and

Brigit precisely because it is a non-domestic space not already inscribed with nationalist gender narratives of home and motherhood.

The following two sections demonstrate that Carr and Kinahan, while working in the neo-Gothic mode, challenge the perception that the land/woman binary can only stem from masculine narratives of Irish identity. They create female protagonists who are connected to the bog without becoming the prescribed nationalist allegory for it. The first section outlines the importance of location in *By the Bog of Cats...* and shows how topographies of the bog underscore Hester's doubly subjugated identity as a tinker woman. I argue that Hester resists social expectations and subverts them through reappropriating myths from nationalist traditions and her connection to the bog. In creating this character, Carr rejects notions of home, homeland, and women's places in Ireland through Gothic themes of ghosting and transgression. In the second section, I contend that Brigit represents another type of "disappeared" people – paralleling the literal disappeared bodies of the Troubles – resulting from the neocolonialism of the Celtic Tiger period. *Bog Boy* suggests that the bog represents a space free of judgment and for Brigit it eschews some of the malaise and malevolence of modernity connected to the Celtic Tiger. As uneducated, but self-contained women, both characters struggle to survive in a world where geography, class, and gender continually legitimate one's social identity. And yet, by revisiting tropes of feminization in various ways, Carr and Kinahan endow Hester and Brigit with a sense of agency that allows them to access power to some degree. The bog,

with its associations to the Gothic, uncanny, and simultaneous oppositions, is a space that allows freedom from preconceived notions of womanhood.

Tinker Women on the Midland Bogs

Exploring aspects of rural Ireland illuminates the relationship between the Travellers and the land in *By the Bog of Cats*.... Merriman recognizes, “Although few commentators acknowledge it, *By the Bog of Cats*... is primarily a play about travellers, the land, and rural Ireland” (“Poetry shite” 154). However, women’s relationships to each of these three elements remain fundamental to the play. In this section, I argue Hester is the human counterpart to the bog, both through her body and through her relationship with rural Ireland as a tinker woman. She connects more with ghosts than to the living and more with the uncanny bogs than to urban zones. Hester negotiates the physical and imaginative contours of the preternatural bog through her identity as a tinker and from her matriarchal lineage of women who have lived on the bog. In connection to this lineage, Xavier Cassidy, who is Caroline’s father and a pillar of the patriarchal community in the play, recalls,

Let me tell ya a thing or two about your mother, big Josie Swane. I used see her outside her auld caravan on the bog and the fields covered over in stars and her half covered in an excuse for a dress and her croonin’ towards Orion in a language I never heard before or since. We’d peace when she left. (294)

Topographies of bogs in the Midlands underpin other representations of women tinkers and rural Ireland in the play. The Irish Midlands, which consist of mostly raised bog, are at the heart of understanding *By the Bog of Cats...* and, I would argue, Carr's theatrical oeuvre since many of her other plays are set here. To understand the Midlands is to gain significant insight into Carr's characters and settings, particularly the bog. Although the Irish Midlands have seen an exponential disappearance of bogs, they are still home to vestiges of Monaghan Bog, Clara Bog, Boora Bog, and part of the Bog of Allen, all of which contain large areas of raised bogs that once covered much of this region. Clara Bog, in Co. Offaly, remains the most significantly preserved raised bog in Ireland and it continues to receive international attention from scientific communities (Crushell et al. 89). While Carr is not specific about the setting of *By the Bog of Cats...* in the stage direction, she does provide enough circumstantial evidence in the play to suggest Clara Bog is the likely location of the fictionalized Bog of Cats. With only 7% of Ireland's raised bogs still intact, it is particularly poignant that Carr would create such vivid settings around bogs and centre the action on them (Crushell et al. 89). The play implies their role as cultural and biological sacrifices to the globalized economy, and they are also entirely reflective of the sacrifices women have to make every day in rural Ireland. It is no accident that Carr stages a play about women in this location and under these social circumstances.

Carr recognizes the harsh elements of the Midlands in the "Afterword" of her earlier play *Portia Coughlan* (1996): "The open spaces, the quicksand, the

biting wind, the bog rosemary” (qtd. in Harris 217). Much like Anne Enright’s epigraph at the beginning of this chapter, Carr retains early memories of the bog through her childhood. Unlike Enright’s resistance to “mention” them “in a book” because of their “beauty,” Carr focuses most of her earlier plays on or near bogs in the Midlands. Carr explains her memories of the Midlands:

I find myself constantly there at night: lights off, head on the pillow and once again I’m in the Midlands, I’m wrestling, talking, laughing, reeling at the nocturnal traffic that place throws up. Now I think it’s no accident it’s called the Midlands. For me at least it has become a metaphor for the crossroads between the worlds. (qtd. in Harris 217)

The bog in *By the Bog of Cats...* is commonly referred to as a liminal non-place that bridges the empirical with the mysterious (Sihra, “Cautionary” 586). “And Carr, the interpreter,” argues Claudia Harris, “stands at the crossroads between these worlds, buffeted by the biting wind blowing across the Midlands bog, dispersing the mists for only a brief moment, may the scary haunting continue” (232). However, Carr’s relationship with the bog functions as more than merely a haunted setting or a nebulous liminal space. The bog fundamentally affected Carr due to her upbringing in Co. Offaly. As a child, Carr often created worlds outside of reality where abandoned rules and regulation submitted to what Bourke has called the “carnival” in her Midland plays, where the carnivalesque produces a drama of subversion celebrating alternative circumstances to the ones typically prescribed to women (128). Even though Carr attempts to create such

carnavalesque moods, there is also a sense that the surrounding bog already provides and generates these moods because of its own indeterminate qualities. The bog, for instance, creates an atmosphere of subversion and ambiguity, as well as concurrently stability and predictability, which reflects the characteristics of the protagonists. The topography of the bog mirrors the mood in the play and, to a greater extent, Hester herself.

In the Introduction to *The Theatre of Marina Carr* (2003), Cathy Leeney and Anna McMullan contextualize Carr's work in Irish theatre as a whole and show how it specifically connects to history, gender, and space. For Leeney and McMullan, "Carr's plays reveal a secret history on stage of this in-between space, where women are caught between inner security and outer freedom, both painfully elusive, their paradox powerfully theatrical" (xvii). Even though Leeney and McMullan do not make this connection, their description parallels the state of the bog as a union of opposites or an "in-between space." Hester's lineage of tinker women, with its expansive history now facing potential elimination, is pushed to the peripheries by a modernizing Celtic Tiger Ireland. Indeed, Hester's comfort with the bog results in part from being marginalized as a woman, along with her ethnic status as a tinker, both identifications that demand constant challenging and renegotiating of the rules of the social order. But the outer freedom of the bog through its disruption of order and cultivation of the supernatural does not negate Hester's "inner security"; it expands it. Hester claims, "I'm goin' nowhere. This here is my house [the caravan] and my garden and my stretch of the bog and no wan's runnin' me out of here" (268).

Bogs have been mischaracterized through a history and culture associated with Irish rural labourers whose livelihoods have been supported by this very topography. Many prevailing stereotypes label rural people who live near bogs as “eegits,” “bog-brained,” or “Culchies,” and such stereotypes have a long historical precedent. The archaeologist Barry Raftery outlines the pejorative image continually fostered about the Irish who lived near bogs: “To compound the insult they were labeled ‘bog-trotters,’ the ultimate confirmation of their sub-human states (12). In fact, the expectation that each consecutive generation of rural Irish labourers will continue the legacy of living and working on the bog perpetuates the stereotype and serves as an important backdrop to the play. At the wedding of Carthage and Caroline, a young waiter remarks, “I want to be an astronaut but me father wants me to work on the bog like him and like me grandfather. The Dunnes has always worked on the bog” (298). As though literally trapped by the bog, young Dunne cannot become an astronaut because he is from the bog. Catwoman reaffirms to the waiter, “Oh go for the astronaut, young man” (298). It is no surprise that Catwoman – a character who is socially ostracized and considered insane because she too is a woman who refuses to accept gender norms in Irish society and serves as an anti-Celtic Tiger figure – advises this young man to take a direction that traverses the margins, making a choice of personal empowerment and fulfillment. Catwoman appears to be the character most associated with the bog. Unlike Hester, however, Catwoman’s status in the play as a woman is not in flux; instead, it is solidly in opposition to social construction. Hester, on the other hand, has anxiety about her ambiguous status as a tinker woman, and she wants to

reconcile her duties as a mother and as an empowered woman while also refusing to submit to social constructions of domesticity.

Hester rebukes social expectation and separates herself from rural “bog people” when she professes, “And as for me tinker blood, I’m proud of it. It gives me an edge over all of yees around her, allows me see yees for the inbred, underbred, bog-brained shower yees are” (289). Hester initially hesitates to accept full ownership of her embodiment of the bog, which is why she stays with Carthage so long and entertains living a domestic life. She recognizes the contemporary cultural label of Midlands “bog people” as bumpkins and dolts, while also drawing on her historical identification with Irish tinkers, as they share a connection to the bog but are also distinct from “bog people.” This distinction highlights a significant factor of cultural minimization experienced by communities who have historically survived by actually living on the bog, extending even to its contemporary inhabitants. While Hester hears comments from the community about her “sub-human” status, she in turn provides a long-awaited voice of empowerment to women living on the bog and is “proud of” her “tinker blood.” In doing so, Hester separates herself as a tinker from the rural Irish stereotypes. Even though both groups use the bog, for the tinkers the bog is synonymous to them – they are the bog and the bog is them, much like the representation of Catwoman who lives on the bog and smells like peat. As such, women, as producers of babies, become the eternal connection to the bog and it is passed through them. Women in the play resemble the bog, not in nationalist molds of feminizing land, but in a way that gives them power because the bog

signifies freedom from patriarchy. Hester first rejects Carthage on personal grounds as a rural Irish man; she then embraces her ethnic and gender status in an oblique response to prevailing nationalist narratives of domestic women who serve the nation. Such resistance to disempowerment is a response to the ethnic, class, and gender codes that continually materialize in Carr's theatre throughout the Celtic Tiger years. Within tinker circles, women can find empowerment precisely because they eschew the typical values of Celtic Tiger ideology. They resemble the bog: unyielding, resisting, transient, and vacillating between indefinable polarities within a prescribed world of consumerism and development.

Irish Travelling People or "tinkers" emerge here as another set of marginalized people paralleling depictions of women and the bog. Carr, however, conflates both tinker and woman to produce a "doubled other," one with subjugated ethnicity and gender, thereby positioning Hester as a tinker woman who embodies the bog. Central to the play is not only the Irish Travelling People, a topic surprisingly underrepresented in previous criticism, but also women Travellers. In both Frank McGuinness' and Victoria White's reviews of the play, neither critic mentions Hester's identity as a Traveller (Merriman, "Poetry shite" 156). Irish tinkers were historically travelling families who roamed the landscape in caravans while doing traditional artisan work for money; in fact, the name "tinkers" derives from frequent work as tinsmiths, mending domestic utensils such as pots and silverware. Tinkers have been historically connected to the bogs because they provide freedom and open space from persecution and allow

mobility and transience. As a result, tinkers have understood the limited and limitless qualities of the bog almost as a mirror to their own existence.

Some social historians link the origins of tinkers back to the English colonial project; in fact, their origins began in pre-conquest Ireland (Helleiner 535-536). Forms of pastoralism as a decentralized political system thrived before the imported English model of agriculture and plantation, which, in the latter case, began to encroach until it dominated during the first major phase of colonization in the Tudor period (1485-1603). What began as a life of mobility in the twelfth century eventually became more static amidst later Tudor campaigns to “civilize” and suppress the “barbarism” of itinerant peoples. As a result of the Tudor reconquest, many Irish landowners were displaced through the system of plantation and many Catholics were replaced with Protestant settlers (Helleiner 535-536). Even though both the Catholics and Protestants persecuted the tinkers, they were historically perceived as a threat to the social and political order by the colonial regime because they were more connected to Catholicism, and therefore rebellion (Helleiner 538), and because they embraced their status as transient and marginalized. Accordingly, systemic racism of the tinkers has deep roots in the colonial project. During the initial conquest of the Normans, discrimination resulted from religion. Later in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, during the height of British imperialism, discriminatory ideologies were based on the notions of the inferiority of the Celtic race as opposed to the Anglo-Saxon race (Helleiner 540). Therefore, perceptions of inferiority, which carry weight even into the

contemporary moment for Travelling People, combined race, religion, and landscape.

Hester, as a tinker woman, and the bog share a similar history of and resistance to oppression. Irish society wants Travellers to settle in the same way that it wants women to be domesticated and the bog to be productive. Centuries of drainage and other attempts to contain bogs mirror the expectations of productivity and domesticity placed on women and tinkers in Irish society. For example, social demands of domesticity and nationhood extend to the other outsiders in Irish society, whether they are landscapes or people. Carr effectively addresses such outsiders by employing a neo-Gothic mode. Subjugated outsiders, much like spectres who haunt the bog in the play, exist between real and imaginary worlds. The uneasiness about the haunted bog resembles social unease about the Irish tinkers who, as J.M. Synge observed during his travels in rural Ireland, “have a curious reputation for witchery and unnatural powers” (*Travels* 20). Xavier underscores this point when he labels Hester a “dangerous witch” (331), which refers to both her preternatural connection to the bog and her ability, despite being a woman in rural Ireland, to own land and demonstrate self-sufficiency without a man to support her. Indeed, Xavier even suggests that women such as Hester should be burned as witches because she is a woman and tinker and so doubly a threat to his patriarchy. As a result, bogs and tinkers are continually associated with the Irish Gothic. Bogs, much like the tinkers who live on them, continually evoke unexplainable, culturally cacophonous, and subversive aspects in Irish culture. Even though they are perceived as stationary in their

physical topography, the shifting bog resembles the transience of the tinker: they both spontaneously migrate to new locations despite logical expectation.⁷ The caravans that house the tinkers often appear on these marginal lands, and the dispossessed inhabitants with different discourses, customs, beliefs, and rituals, all function outside social norms. Consequently, Hester proudly wears the mark of the tinker and independent woman, but this certainly comes at a compromising cost within her social milieu.

Hester finds refuge on the bog because it provides unprejudiced and resolute support. This is especially the case during the Celtic Tiger. Paddy Woodworth remarks, “tinkers suffer more discrimination in our democratic Republic than they did under British rule” (“Introduction” 12). Woodworth’s comment implies that the “democratic Republic” has replicated the colonial power structure and even outdone it as an economic neo-colony. Under British rule, for instance, tinkers were granted more leeway for rural caravanning without as much persecution as in contemporary Ireland during the Celtic Tiger (Woodworth 12). “Carr’s protagonists,” as Bourke argues, “live in the democratic Ireland of equal opportunities, yet find themselves trapped and marginalized” (133). In addition to Carr’s protagonists, I would further suggest the bog setting functions in the play as a separate character that is additionally persecuted. Hester, who translates these qualities to society, connects to and identifies with bog. Hester’s inability to integrate within the rural community in the Midlands stems partly from the abandonment she experiences by her mother, father, brother, and

⁷ Blanket bogs shift from their limestone foundation after heavy rainfall, much like a shifting glacier. This uncanny phenomenon occurs in the climax of Stoker’s *The Snake’s Pass*.

Carthage. She tells Josie, “Another that had your name walked away from me. Your perfect Daddy walked away from me. And you’ll walk from me too. All me life people have walked away without a word of explanation” (326). By taking refuge on the bog, Hester exhibits her connection to the land and demonstrates her choice to exist on the peripheral social space of the bog. In fact, there is nowhere else she can be free. Cerquoni asserts, “The space of the bog then is characterized by loss and longing, yet it also represents her only site of connection and survival” (183). Expanding upon Cerquoni’s point, the bog functions in the play as a viable home free from the domesticity for those who choose, or in some cases, are forced to live disconnected from and at the fringes of society.

Hester’s inability to live in a house with Carthage further demonstrates her relationship to this marginal landscape. It also demonstrates that she resists gender norms by rejecting traditional Irish domesticity and the nationalist idea of home or homeland relegated to women. By doing this, she contests the Irish idea of home and domesticity and celebrates and relishes the freedom of the bog. Emplacement is located in the home, whereas displacement connotes the perceived absence of place or home, which could include living on a bog in a caravan (Chaudhuri 182). Cerquoni suggests that Carr challenges the Irish idea of domesticity by questioning the idea of homeland and revisiting it from a woman Traveller’s perspective (175). In Hester’s case, displacement functions as emplacement since home equals the caravan on the bog.

Typical constructions of gender for women related to the idea of home in Ireland often equates to marriage, femininity, and family in support of the nation.

Sihra similarly acknowledges,

In Carr's plays the family is a site of contestation, disunity, and violation where the tenacious exploration of womanhood and issues of gender and sexuality crucially resist the monological nationalist, masculinist, colonial, and postcolonial issues of identity and history that have tended to dominate Irish dramatic narratives over the last century.

(“Nature” 134)

I want to argue, however, that one of the ways Carr confronts nationalist notions of the home, homeland, and women's place in Ireland is by employing the use of ghosts as a neo-Gothic element. The supernatural dimension is central to Carr's deployment of Gothic tropes and settings because ghosts, like the topography of the bog, have no requirements related to domestic expectation or limits within social spaces. Irish literary critic Anne Fogarty, although referring to Irish women novelists, places the Gothic as the dominant mode of contemporary Irish writing because of its emphasis on disrupted families, haunted domestic space, and instabilities of self-identity, all of which typically focus on the mother (Cahill 21). Such a classification reinforces Patton's claim that contemporary Irish fiction often employs “neo-Gothic” tropes of dysfunctional families, alienated children, and abused victims (259). Ghosts, as spectres or images of the past and future, are simultaneously part of Irish homeland and contestations to it. As discussed in

Chapter Two, ghosts circulate on bogs in periods of national complexity and incongruity and are used by writers as a way to address the instabilities of political history. Hester's status as existing between both real and imaginary worlds parallels similar qualities of the bog, and this connection in the play is emphasized by her associations with ghosts and the supernatural.

As much as the bog exists as an indescribable place, fluctuating between physical and imaginative worlds, Hester too lives between life and death, the supernatural and real, and on the fringes of the status quo. The play opens with a conversation between Hester and the Ghost Fancier, a type of Grim Reaper figure who comes to take Hester away. Although the Ghost Fancier ostensibly mistakes the time of Hester's death, there is a clear sense that Hester might already be dead. Hester fails to adhere to any social protocol and becomes dislocated from society and consequently dead to the nation because she refuses to support women's function within it. One could even argue that Hester is also partly a ghost as she fades into death because she is visible to the world but has no material function in it. Her relation to the living is not only informed by her definition of home, but also through her matriarchal tinker lineage on the bog, passed to her from Big Josie and then through her to her daughter, Josie. Hester notices her pending and fluctuating state when she remarks, "It's that hour when it could be either dawn or dusk, the light bein' so similar" (266). This mistaken time of day solidifies the irrelevance of time for Hester, who poses as an eternal object in nature, transcending the limitations of the temporal. Even though Hester is the only person who can see the Ghost Fancier, Monica Murray, one of her only friends,

assumes it has something to do with the bog. Monica remarks, “There’s no wan, but ya know this auld bog, always shiftin’ and changin’ and coddin’ the eye” (267). It is as though anything can happen on the bog; it transcends logic or empirical judgment, while also serving as a real space of liberating potential for women like Hester in the wake of an oppressive Celtic Tiger culture.

The traditional Gothic aesthetic ascribed to the bog appears immediately in the opening stage direction with Hester dragging “*the corpse of a black swan after her, leaving a trail of blood in the snow*” (265; original emphasis). This stark visual of burgundy blood splattered on the white snow of the bog juxtaposes an image of Hester’s dwindling essence against the cold, dead repose of the landscape. In this sense, Hester and the bog generate a similar atmosphere of death and isolation in the *mise en scène* of the play. Hester’s uncompromising roots in the landscape indicate that she refuses to leave the bog even to save herself and Josie. Hester reflects, “Ah, how can I lave the Bog of Cats, everythin’ I’m connected to is here.” She continues, “I’d rather die [...]. 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 yees, more, for it holds me to it in ways it has never held yees” (314). For Hester, dying is the ultimate act of freedom, not cowardice or disempowerment, because it is better to die free than become eradicated through adherence to the gender roles enforced by nationalism, the nation, or Celtic Tiger Ireland.

As an embodiment of the bog, Hester asserts her position as a physical and imagined body on the precipice of death amidst the ghosts of many worlds. She is

an extension of the bog on which she was born and where she will soon die. Hester's blood – signifying lineage, ethnicity, and womanhood (coming from a line of independent women) – also pours onto the external landscape of the bog when she stabs herself. But the swan ultimately represents Hester's liminal and imagined relation to society, as she negotiates the internal and external order as a woman and Irish tinker. The swan is bleeding because Hester “found her frozen in a bog hole last night, had to rip her from the ice. Left half of her underbelly” (266). There is an accompanying song titled, “the Black Swan,” that was used during the production of the play. The last stanza of the song relates to Hester's position, similar to the image of the swan, caught between two worlds:

I wish I was a black swan
And could fly away from here,
But I am Josie Swane,
Without wings, without care. (263)

Hester, too, has been ripped from the bog, half of her in the physical world of the bog and the other half torn in the internal world of the unfamiliar domestic relationship with Carthage and Josie. This opening scene with the swan foreshadows Hester's ultimate act: to die free rather than live stuck in the limits placed upon her through a largely patriarchal society.

When looking to the cosmic birth order of creation, death, and rebirth, Hester represents the unnamed, dislocated generations connected to the bogs, who are also ultimately more liberated. One significant aspect of her relationship to the bog is that she stands outside of society. As a woman Irish tinker, she is

discriminated against because of her class and ethnic identity, and as an independent and empowered woman playing by her own rules. By living a mythologized present, Hester defies the continual displacement of disregarded Irish tinkers, and consequently exists simultaneously in both the mythic past and the present. In one sense, this concept supports a nationalist reading of Hester as Mother Éire or Cathleen Ni Houlihan, who are considered to be mythologized symbols of Ireland. However, these depictions are creations of men. As Elizabeth Butler Cullingford remarks,

The personification of Ireland as a woman has served two distinct ideological purposes: as applied by Irish men it has helped to confine Irish women in a straitjacket of purity and passivity; and as applied by English cultural imperialists it has imprisoned the whole Irish race in debilitating stereotype. (“Thinking of Her” 1)

Rather than follow the nationalist allegory of the maternal in Irish society, Hester’s role in the play emphasizes her matriarchal lineage as opposed to a patriarchal world order where women are somehow subordinated and made to symbolize land for the Irish nation. Therefore, Hester’s connection to the bog buttresses her own agency as part of a matriarchal line; the bog concurrently allows her to resist forms of Irish nationalism and neocolonialism of the Celtic Tiger as depicted through characters like Xavier and Carthage. If men create the nation, then what does the nation look like for Hester? The motherland is the bog, where Big Josie, Josie, and Hester will all return in the cycle of death and rebirth,

but the motherland has been reappropriated by Carr to empower women rather than objectify them. Hester's last words before she dies are directed to Carthage, who represents the nation that she is leaving:

Ya won't forget me now, Carthage, and when all of this is
over and half remembered and you think you're almost
forgotten me again, take a walk along the Bog of Cats and
wait for a purlin' wind through your hair or a soft breath be
your ear or a rustle behind ya. That'll be me and Josie ghostin'
ya. (340)

Death for the Swane women initiates rebirth as a symbol of freedom and the bog forms these natural ties to the cosmic cycle.

Big Josie demonstrates that the connection between the bog and their family is ultimately tied to their lineage as women and tinkers, not to Ireland as a nation. Big Josie promises to Hester that she will return to the bog of her origins; however, after disappearing on the bog, Hester could only assume this will not be in physical form. Hester reminisces to young Josie, "Ya know the last time I saw me mother I was wearin' me Communion dress too, down by the caravan, a beautiful summer's night and the bog like a furnace." She recalls, "And I watched her walk away from me across the Bog of Cats. And across the Bog of Cats I'll watch her return" (297). The reminder of Big Josie's early exit from the material world as a discriminated tinker woman leaves an indelible imprint on Hester: she alone is in control of her life, even if that means death. Instead of expecting Big Josie to physically return to the bog someday, she is reminded of her mother's

symbolic presence every time she looks at the bog. The bog in the play triggers these opposites in Hester's vision. Hester continually walks on the bog in the evenings and anticipates her mother's return, while realizing that Big Josie's ghostly presence has been there all along as reminder of their own matriarchal history.

The play's dénouement suggests, similarly to *Bog Boy*, that killing or consuming one's child is a better course of action than allowing her to grow up in a world of discrimination or disempowerment. In a final assertion of agency, Hester underscores her power as a woman and mother to take her child's life and then her own, thwarting any patriarchal oppression from Carthage, Xavier, and especially the nation. Hester responds to Carthage after he realizes Josie is dead: "Yees all thought I was just goin' to walk away and lave her at yeer mercy. I almost did. But she's mine and I wouldn't have her waste her life dreamin' about me an yees thwartin' her with black stories against me" (340). As Carthage implies earlier in the play, Hester's role is over now that he and his subordinate Caroline will raise Josie – an act supporting the nation, in a house, for the greater good of the economy. Killing Josie is an ultimate anti-nationalist action because it rejects the primary function of women as bearers of children who serve as future economic producers for the nation. Dead or erased children haunt the scenes in the play, but, as Carr's text connotes, dead children avoid the traumatic fate of living in a neocolonial world where women and tinkers still struggle to be legitimized. Emphasizing this notion of the bog as the site of a cosmic/mythic cycle of rebirth somehow lessens or makes more palatable the horrific climax of

the play, which parallels Medea's ultimate justification for killing her own children to reassert her own agency as a woman and mother.

Within the matriarchal family lineage, strong liberatory overtones suggest that Hester insists on returning to the bog as part of a cosmogonic cycle of birth, death, and rebirth into and through the bog, and based on her own volition.⁸ Hester performs her own sacrifice, as opposed to relinquishing to the narratives of goddess sacrifice propagated by nationalists to justify their subordination of the women (Cullingford, "Thinking of Her" 1). Bourke acknowledges that Carr "reworks the folk belief in the earth as grave and womb, that 'swallows up and gives birth at the same time'" (132). This sacrificial tradition had been inherited not only through Hester's immediate experience, but also through oral accounts handed down through her folk traditions. Big Josie stitched a song in this vein:

By the Bog of Cats I finally learned false from true,
Learned too late that it was you and only you
Left me sore, a heart brimful of rue
By the Bog of Cats in the darkling dew.

By the Bog of Cats I dreamed a dream of wooing

⁸ When Hester burns Carthage's house and cattle as her ultimate Medean act of revenge, she fulfills a destruction myth in the cosmogonic cycle, which usually results in either a flood or fire. Hester seeks to purge history of abuse and abandonment through the trial of fire rather than floodwater. The latter would recall her adoption of the watery nature of the bog with its sunken memories that, once unraveled, arouse pain and trauma. Flood myths align with the human psyche, identified with the "Great Mother," and represent the symbol of new life born of the cosmic waters of the Great Mother. Fire myths, with exceptions such as Ragnorak in the Icelandic myth *Prose Edda*, signify total annihilation – an absolute destruction of the old world order (Leeming 43). Through fire Hester reifies the traditional form of destruction against the patriarchal order as represented by Carthage and Xavier.

I heard your clear voice to me a-calling
That I must go though it be my undoing.
By the Bog of Cats I'll stay no more a-rueing—

To the Bog of Cats I one day will return,
In mortal form or in ghostly form,
And I will find you there and there with you sojourn,
Forever by the Bog of Cats, my darling one. (232)

The cycle of death, birth, and rebirth reinforces the continual recitation of Big Josie's song throughout the play. Passing down the matriarchal line from Big Josie to Hester to young Josie, the song indicates that the life cycles of these women are vital to the greater cosmogony of their mythologized existence on the bog. Big Josie, Hester, and Josie will not be isolated and seduced by men; instead, they will reappropriate nationalist and imperialist images of the bog/land for their own purposes, in order to avoid being socially conditioned by these dominant narratives of sexuality and nationhood.

Hester relies upon the bog to reincarnate the memory of her remote past with the knowledge that her mother will return to her in "mortal form or in ghostly form"; in this way, Big Josie has never left her. The bog is a living memorial to her mother and also the alternate reality experienced by women tinkers living on the bog. Hester recalls, "I made a promise, Monica, a promise to meself a long while back, all them years I was in the Industrial School I swore to meself that wan day I'm comin' back to the Bog of Cats to wait for her there and

I'm never lavin' again" (324). Hester memorializes the loss of Irish tinker women, which include Big Josie, Josie, and herself. She muses, "For too long now I've imagined her comin' towards me across the Bog of Cats and she would find me here standin' strong" (336). *By the Bog of Cats...* addresses both the bog and the Irish population as a whole when translating Hester's sense of abandonment of the nation itself. When we more narrowly inquire how bogs depict such unconscious emotions, we discover that their typography reflects patterns of colonial manipulation, control, and eradication. Hester confronts this neocolonial reverberation when she states, "The truth is you want to eradicate me, make out I never existed" (315). Hester's status as a tinker woman, like the bogs, has been systematically eradicated through erasure in Ireland's colonial history. Although the bog could be viewed as merely a quagmire, it supports Hester's ability to break free from social expectations and domestic attachments. The bog serves as a space that provides freedom from preconceived notions of womanhood. There is a reason Hester never escapes the bog – she embodies it and must return to it even in death.

"Disappeared" Women in Neocolonial Ireland

Approximately a decade after Carr wrote *By the Bog of Cats...*, Kinahan introduced *Bog Boy*, a play bringing into focus many relevant social and economic issues pertaining to Post-Celtic Tiger Ireland after 2008. Oristown Bog, where Kinahan sets the play, is located just over an hour northeast by car of Clara Bog, the assumed setting of *By the Bog of Cats...* Since both Clara Bog in Co.

Offaly and the smaller Oristown Bog in Co. Meath are located in rural Ireland, they both deal with similar social and cultural preconceptions about the people who live on them and the places associated with them.

This section explores the “disappeared” women who are lower class single mothers and social causalities of neocolonial modernity. Although women in Ireland have continued to advance in social equality, particularly in the 1990s, class remains an issue often overshadowed by other examinations of sexuality and gender.⁹ Feminist analysis tends to regard economic disparities between men and women (unequal pay and opportunity for work) as an assault on all women, but even beyond one’s gender, according to feminist critic Sinéad Kennedy, one’s class “position mediates one’s experience of oppression” (95). Merriman argues, “Postcolonial critique [...] seeks to demonstrate that engaging with Irish neocolonialism as, in important respects, a recapitulation of colonial relations, sharpens artists’ engagement with the social contradiction of Independent Ireland” (496). Contemporary Irish theatre responded to economic and cultural strategies propagated by the neocolonial elites who continued to support Celtic Tiger policies even after such policies had been proven to increase inequality among Irish citizens (Merriman, “A Responsibility” 496). Beyond the economic dimension of these policies are cultural and social repercussions, particularly pertaining to women. Kinahan’s play *Bog Boy* examines these issues in relation to

⁹ This period of advanced equality began with Mary Robinson becoming the first woman president in 1990, an appointment that ignited changes in contraception legislation, Homosexual Law Reform, and divorce laws (1993). In 2010, a Civil Partnership Bill passed, which provided more rights to unmarried couples, same-sex relationships, and children of civil union partners (Cahill 5).

women and class, and demonstrates the bog, like in *By the Bog of Cats...*, serves as a space of liberation free from oppression.

Bog Boy begins when the protagonist Brigit is placed in Navan, Co. Meath, for a drug rehabilitation work assignment by her social worker Annie. Brigit had previously been living on the streets in Dublin. Hughie is her neighbour in Navan and appears at first to be the classic foil to Brigit – stable, connected to nature, and rural. Thus, he initially provides her friendship and support. However, overshadowing their relationship is a dark secret: Hughie was responsible for submerging a dead body into the Oristown Bog, right behind their houses, when he was part of the IRA thirty years earlier. The buried body of Gerard, who is the eponymous nineteen-year-old “bog boy,” becomes the secret haunting the action in this neo-Gothic play. The stage notes for one specific scene in Act One indicates that the RTE News can be heard on the television in the background as Hughie sits in the café where Brigit works. The distant voice on the news announces, “digging is reported to have commenced at a bog near Navan Co. Meath for the body of a nineteen-year-old boy missing from Belfast since 1972. This is the third confirmed location of a body from the group now known as ‘the disappeared’” (21).¹⁰ Gerard is one of Ireland’s “disappeared.” This identification typically refers to a group of people who were casualties of the Troubles in the 1970s, but whose bodies were never found. In 2001, the Irish Government gave amnesty to the Provisional IRA (Provos) and loyalist paramilitary groups, such as Ulster Defence Force (UDF) and Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF), in order to gather

¹⁰ Since *Bog Boy* is an unpublished play, all quotes in this chapter are from the New York and Irish tour script in June 2011 that was sent to me by Deirdre Kinahan. As a result, the page numbers following each citation will be different than in any subsequent publications of the play.

information about where some of the bodies from the sectarian violence might be located.¹¹ Brigit tries to recall what is being said on the television for Hughie's sake since he cannot or will not listen to the broadcast. She crassly summarizes, "there's an amnesty or something, so they got a tip-off about the bog" (22). Many of the disappeared were deposited in bogs, much like Gerard. Although search campaigns have found some of the bodies, only about half have of them have been recovered in since 1999.

While Hughie's connection to the disappeared body of Gerard might appear to be the focus of the play, it is more directly about Brigit and her relationship to the bog. Brigit represents another form of the "disappeared," serving as a spectre of neocolonialism that has arisen out of the Celtic Tiger era. Rather than being literally buried in the bog from sectarian violence, Brigit symbolically (as the socio-economic poor) and physically (dispossessed to Navan) functions as the disappeared people of the Celtic Tiger. In a *New York Times* review of the play, Rachel Saltz claims that in "a play about lost people, Ms. Kinahan almost lets her best creation, Brigit, get lost among the big themes of violence, guilt and complicity" (n. pag.). The play focuses less on the larger issues of "violence, guilt and complicity" in the social backdrop even though Brigit is also considered "lost." Instead of lost, Brigit is "disappeared" because she represents what has been neglected, forgotten, and even erased amidst the priorities of the Celtic Tiger economy. Whereas Gerard was deposited in the terrestrial bog, Brigit remains stuck in the symbolic bog away from the urban

¹¹ The Provisional IRA were largely responsible for bodies buried in the Republic of Ireland during the Troubles in the 1970s and 1980s, but other paramilitary loyalist groups were also part of this act of removing evidence.

centre.

Although it might seem that substantial increases in national wealth during the 1990s would benefit everyone in Ireland, distribution of wealth continued to remain uneven and predominantly favoured a minority of top income earners. By 2000, for instance, income of the poorest 20% only rose 1%, while the income of the middle classes grew to 2-3% and the top 30% of earners witnessed a 4% increase (Smyth, "Irish National Identity" 133). The Justice Commission of the Conference of Religious in Ireland (JCCRI) estimated that in 2001 the average income gap between people with money and without was as much as £1R191 per week, which was the largest disparity in the EU at that time (S. Kennedy 98). Shawn Pogatchnik buttresses this point when referencing the director of JCCRI Rev. Sean Healey: "Ireland has not succeeded in balancing the social with the economic. We have focused primarily on boosting the economy and failed to tackle poverty." "But for the first time in our nation's history," according to Healey, "we actually have sufficient wealth to eliminate poverty – if we have the political will" (qtd. in Pogatchnik n. pag.).

This data suggest that economic disparities grew worse for those already economically depressed at start of the Celtic Tiger, and socially impoverished single mothers like Brigit were the most affected. In "Irish Women and the Celtic Tiger Economy," Kennedy argues that the risk of poverty for a single woman during the Celtic Tiger was about 24%, but if the same single woman was raising a child, then this poverty rate rose to as much as 31.7% (65). Kennedy also maintains that the problematic dimensions of the Celtic Tiger extend significantly

beyond the realm of the economic (95). Among many social problems that range beyond the purely economic, drugs were more accessible at affordable rates both during and after the Tiger. According to the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA), between 2001 and 2007 illegal drug use rose from 18% to 24%. This figure has increased again to 27% in 2011 (“Country Overview: Ireland” n. pag.). Most notably, after the economic collapse in 2008 drug-use continued to rise primarily among younger populations. These figures outline the economic disparity among the classes and drug use in Ireland from 2001 to 2011. This data makes clear the social and economic malaise evident to residents and writers in Ireland at the time; Kinahan uses the character Brigit as a representative casualty of Post-Celtic Tiger Ireland. As a single mother fighting heroin addiction, Brigit lives not only on the margins of society, but also literally relocates to the edges of the bog as an attempt to overcome her addiction.

By looking at disappeared women in the socio-economic climate of Ireland during and after the Celtic Tiger, we are able to see that neocolonial outcomes create another form of the disappeared – the living “bodies” of those who have been forgotten in Ireland’s quest to modernize at unsustainable rates. Bruno Latour, an outspoken critic of modernity, contends, “modernization is not a movement that breaks radically with the past, but rather something that brings the past back with a vengeance in expanded scale and more entangled complexity” (4). In this sense, spectres of the disappeared resulting from the profit driven period of the Celtic Tiger reappear “with a vengeance” in its aftermath due to failed neocolonial policies that favour the economic oppressors. The disappeared

women suffer most from what might initially appear as a forgotten past in the shadows of modernity is actually a past of inequality “in expanded scale.” In *Bog Boy*, Kinahan juxtaposes Brigit against Hughie, as well as against the bog, to demonstrate a comparative reading of two types of disappeared in Ireland. On the one hand, Hughie provides a living memory of the disappeared from the Troubles; on the other hand, Brigit represents the disappeared social classes of the Celtic Tiger – both historical events having given rise to inequalities linked to different forms of colonization. When living near the bog, Brigit becomes more visible to herself and to those around her. When she leaves Navan the night after an incident with Darren and Kaylie, she becomes invisible, disappearing into modern, neocolonial Dublin. Brigit writes in the letter to Bernie, “Took a bus back to Dublin and all that came with it. Went back on the smack. And back on the game. [...] And I never got Kaylie, Bernie...never got nothing. I disappeared” (48).

Kinahan’s confrontation of socio-economic factors in the play brings with it macabre, neo-Gothic overtones of terror, both in terms of the terrorism of the Troubles in the past and a form of economic terrorism in the present. For example, terrorism looms in the shadows as a spectre haunting Hughie; Brigit battles her own terror of disenfranchisement as a woman faced with abject poverty. The redress of the bog, like it does for Hester, provides catharsis for Brigit. Brigit recalls in her letter to Gerard’s sister Bernadette Robins (Bernie) that Gerard’s killing was “his killing in my bog” (24). Brigit’s use of possessive pronouns hints at her sense of belonging in rural Ireland and to the bog. The play informs us that the Irish state has decreed Brigit unfit to raise her own child. She has also been

sent to Navan on a rehabilitation work assignment, with some intimation that such a rural community on the edges of the Oristown Bog will help her to overcome her addiction and subsequent poverty. We also know that while on the bog Brigit progresses on many of these fronts: she holds down a job, ceases drug use, and begins to integrate into the community. Initially she shows prejudice against bog culture by admitting “the bog is fuckin’ third world it is” and “I’m used to a bit of life around me ya know...CIVILIZATION” (9; original emphasis). But she later admits to Annie, “I never thought I’d say it but I like it here in the bog, can you believe it?! I mean it’s different, real different” (25).

Brigit’s use of the preposition “*in* the bog” instead of “*on* the bog” indicates a cultural attitude that connects rather than separates her to the topography (my emphasis). Brigit and the bog connect as a union of opposites: human/non-human, woman/land, civilization/third world, and modernity/tradition. “In” suggests a relationship to or connection with the bog, while “on” infers hierarchy of human over non-human and a sense of ownership. Unlike her associations with society, Brigit does not mediate her experience through the bog; she is in it. In contrast, Hughie later talks about the picture of Gerard that he found “on the bog” (32). The material photograph is on the bog, but people, particularly the bodies (living and dead) are in the bog. By using the phrase “in the bog,” Brigit unconsciously connects herself to other women like Hester, who are the ghosts of the disappeared in a neocolonial Ireland, a culture that exalts investment, property development, and consumerism, while attempting to erase the marginalized groups most negatively affected by this economic structure.

Brigit has been expelled from so-called “CIVILIZATION” as a single mother besieged by addiction. At the same time, her ex-boyfriend and the father of Kaylie, Darren, who also abused drugs, retains custody of the baby and remains in Dublin. Brigit is neglected as part of the lower classes because they are not instrumental to economic progress and witnessed very little, if any, personal improvement during the Celtic Tiger years. In fact, women like Brigit are viewed in many cases as hindrances that needed to be erased or removed; they are another type of disappeared resembling ghosts. Although Brigit moves outside of Navan to rehabilitate, she remains symbolically somewhere outside of the Celtic Tiger “in the bog” because of her lack of apparent contributions toward economic progress and support of the nation. Brigit relocates to a space on the edges of society, or as she states, the “fuckin’ third world.” Brigit’s reference to “Third World” presupposes that Dublin is somehow “First World,” despite the increasing poverty rates within the city during and after the Celtic Tiger. At the beginning of the Celtic Tiger period, Luke Gibbons memorably stated, “Ireland is a First World country, but with a Third World memory” (*Transformations* 3). Gibbons’ remark underscores Brigit’s position in abject poverty on the outskirts of the city, where desperation and subjugation are the only known currencies, in contrast to a First World economy booming in the centre of Dublin.

The notion of a “Third World memory” that Gibbons emphasizes might exist for some of the privileged classes supported by the economic boom. Nevertheless, the Third World remains a reality for women like Brigit whether she resides in rural or urban spaces. Brigit faces an almost impossible task of

prospering because of her economic position; even without factoring her drug addiction, her gender, age, and single parent status precludes her from social success. Unfortunately, this scenario is all too common for Irish women, a point Coughlan perceptively makes:

Women are typically required, in a painful contradiction, both to sustain care and nurture at home and to meet the instrumental demands of increasingly pragmatic workplaces. The inherited cultural construction of the Irish mother still functions as a powerful background ideal, intensifying this strain. (“Feminism in Postmodernity” 177)

We see the same tensions surrounding constructions of mother with Hester, though in *By the Bog of Cats*... Hester’s tinker status and age allow her more power to rebuke these expectations. Due to this social “strain,” Brigit cannot satisfy her role as “mother” or as caregiver and provider. In fact, her “painful contradiction” is exacerbated because she does not have a “pragmatic” workplace. Although Brigit initially speaks about the Oristown Bog when she references the “fuckin’ Third World,” she later comes to believe that the bog has sustained and supported her existence more than in the modernized First World of Dublin. When Brigit returns to Dublin, away from what she initially calls “the middle of no-where” (9), she relapses and starts using “smack” again, eventually living in a shelter while she medicates with methadone in an attempt to counter her addiction. When she lives near the bog earlier in Navan, Brigit claims that it was different than Dublin because she “had that hope” and “had something ahead” (21). Little

hope remains for Brigit in Dublin as an alienated woman legislated unfit to be a mother with no prospects of work. Through her gender, social class, and disability as an addict, she embodies nothing more than one of the ghostly disappeared of the Celtic Tiger. Brigit even confesses, “I suppose I feel disappeared meself sometimes” (31).

In *Bog Boy*, the bog represents a space free of judgment. Upon first arriving to Navan, Brigit notices, “It’s a wilderness it is [...] a bleedin’ wilderness. I mean there’s not a bus!” (9). But she also recognizes, “ya never see a sinner walkin’ round. No-one and nothin’. Except fuckin’ cows” (9). Brigit, in her own limited way, admits that she feels no judgment about her past “in the bog.” The past, recalling back to Latour’s comment, haunts modernity with a “vengeance” (4). For Brigit, the bog eschews some of the modernity connected to Dublin. Living near the bog neutralizes the expectations of prescribed identity for Brigit; it provides a location where modernity associated with Dublin, with its shelters and methadone clinics, has less impact. The bog represents a living space much more real than the illusory progress of modernity in the economic system. Brigit reflects in her letter to Bernie, “it’s a beautiful place your Gerard’s bog...low and brown but living if ya know what I mean” (12).

The equanimity of the bog shifts for Brigit when Darren arrives with Kaylie and brings some of the entrapments of modernized Dublin. The liberatory space of the bog changes because they bring with them the societal expectations and definitions of what Brigit, as a mother, should be in the new national economy. Darren mutters, “where the hell is this anyway?” (34). When Darren

gets out of the car, the stage direction indicates that he “*stands in shite*” (34; original emphasis). He responds, “me new runners and I just stood in shite!” (34). This is Darren’s first time to set foot on the rural ground of Navan and the surrounding Oristown bog, all of which he considers to be shite. Darren, with his new shoes, represents the commercialization of Dublin and his own consumer addiction in contrast to the bog. He is also depicted in the play as the embodiment of the neocolonial patriarchy through his attempts to control and judge Brigit economically, socially, and personally. Darren’s runners are juxtaposed against the bog as a representative symbol of shite itself. This parallel echoes Brigit’s early comment, “I’m always attracted to shite” (31).

The narrative of the play implies that Darren has full custody of Kaylie even though it never explicitly addresses the legality of the custody arrangement. This outcome occurs despite Darren’s own drug issues in the past, most likely because he has more financial security because of his lower middle class family background. In a telling moment, Kinahan demonstrates how Irish males are given deference in the structure of the traditional Irish family. Darren refers to his “ma” in front of the social worker Annie and Brigit on three separate occasions. First, when Annie asks Darren what he has in the heavy bag, he responds, “I dunno, me Ma packed it” (35). Second, Brigit compliments Kaylie’s “little shoes” and Darren unenthusiastically responds, “that’s me Ma, she dotes over her she does” (36). Lastly, Darren insists that they have to get back soon, even though they just arrived, because “Ma wants us back before six” (36). In fact, there is never any mention of Darren’s “Da.” These three examples accentuate the

Oedipal partnership between Darren and his Ma, the “couple” who are raising Kaylie. Brigit comments, “Sure it’s all they ever wanted anyway...to get me out a the picture” (37). Beyond the Oedipal undertones that suggest a culture of entitled Irish masculinity, Darren’s Ma abnegates Brigit because of her refusal to adhere to the proper women/mother role. Darren not only has financial security but also we see that “proper” mothers like Ma are idealized in Irish culture. Darren’s behaviour and entitlement proves to be ironic because he is actually emasculated by his mother, who packs his bags and takes care of his daughter; he also appears to live with her. The play subtly implies that a matriarchal system actually drives the nation, while the patriarchy holds all of the power and responsibility. Male entitlement, as seen through Darren, projects a larger issue that the play confronts through a female protagonist disappeared and erased in contemporary Irish society.

In this regard, Brigit remains subjected to the entrapments of abject poverty because of her inability to fulfill the social gender norms ascribed to her as a “mother” by patriarchy, the Catholic Church, and neocolonialism. Due to her class and inability to fit into a “proper” mother role, Brigit is viewed as an incompetent mother. She cannot care for Darren in the same way that his Ma can, a woman who clearly serves as a feminized nationalist ideal. In contrast, society forgives Darren, the prodigal son, for his previous transgressions, which include dating a woman like Brigit and using drugs. Darren, with the support of society, decides to erase Brigit from the picture because of her substance abuse and social standing. Annie, also part of the social structure, reminds Brigit, “You didn’t help

yourself” (37). The mechanisms designed to support Brigit have actually failed her because as an unmarried mother with a child she is invisible and without a voice. The Irish state/nation ultimately sides with the child and the father, as we see expressed in both *Bog Boy* and *By the Bog of Cats...*, not the single mother. Indeed, Brigit remains one of the many types of disappeared people who fell through the cracks in a failed economic and social policy during and after the Celtic Tiger.

One of the recurring themes in traditional Gothic texts, as well as neo-Gothic ones, is that women attempt to escape from confining social spaces and expectations, such as churches, the law, or family (particularly marriage), which are most assuredly patriarchal and abusive. While men demonstrate transgression in various novels, they become the main threat to women in the Gothic form. As Punter and Byron explain, the woman in these Gothic texts “is usually depicted enjoying an idyllic and secluded life; this is followed by a period of imprisonment when she is confined to a great house or castle under the authority of a powerful male figure or his female surrogate” (278-279). In *Bog Boy*, female entrapment expands to socio-economic space in addition to its traditional relationship to physical spaces (castles, houses, bogs) and imagined spaces (isolation and confinement). The men in Brigit’s life – namely Darren and Hughie – both disrupt and destroy her nurturing and secluded life near the bog.

Darren represents the main threat in Brigit’s life as what Punter and Byron call a “powerful male figure” (278-279). During his brief time in Brigit’s house, Darren’s actions are controlling, abusive, and authoritative. Upon the arrival of

“furious Darren,” as Gwen Orel emphasizes in her review of play in the *Irish Examiner*, he “destroys the peace of the bog with his anger” (12). His abuse begins when he demands that Kaylie stay sleeping, even though this is the only time Brigit will have a chance to see her daughter. After only a few monosyllabic exchanges with Brigit, he claims, “you’re not fit to have her near ya” (36). Darren, who continues to dominate everyone including Annie, whispers to Brigit, “Ya see I’m only humourin’ these assholes. Humouring them Brigit, like me Ma said; till you fuck it up so bad the social [Annie] won’t let ya near her either” (41). Darren even whispers to Brigit in private, “Ya might have this clueless cunt [Annie] coddled but I seen ya fuck it up...everytime” (37). When everything collapses for Brigit, and Darren storms out of the house with Kaylie, Brigit cries, “I want Kaylie, I want her back...I want me life back Darren” (41). Darren responds, “The only life you get is the one that I give ya” (41). Even Annie, although supportive of Brigit at times, ultimately sides with Darren as they leave the house. Annie functions as the male’s “female surrogate” (Punter and Byron 278-279), both as an agent of control over Brigit and an agent of the patriarchal state that dictates the social worker’s movements.

Bog Boy reveals evidence of Darren’s abusive strategies as a critical undercurrent in the play, particularly by showing his psychological and verbal abuse, as well as intentionally withholding Kaylie from Brigit. In a study for the *American Journal of Public Health*, researchers claim that for many women in violent relationships where they have been sexually assaulted forced pregnancy or pregnancy as a result of rape are common strategies applied by their abusers

(Amaro et al. 575). Research also indicates that one in five Irish women have experienced some form of violence in their relationships with men and 20% of these women experience sexual assault (Kelleher and O'Connor 3). Based on this data, coupled with Darren's abusive actions and language in the play, an argument could be made that Brigit's pregnancy likely resulted from sexual assault in some way. Kaylie is the "life" Darren claims he gave her. This is why Brigit yells back to them as they leave that she wants her "life" back. Darren is granted custody of Kaylie partly because Brigit, while affected by heroin addiction, tried to throw Kaylie into the Dublin canal when she was an infant. Brigit's potentially unwanted pregnancy could very well have been a result of sexual assault, as a form of coercion, which is all too often used by abusive men as part of a pattern of violence and intimidating behaviour intended to control their partners (S. Kennedy 105). Thus, Brigit may have been driven to commit infanticide because abortion was not a possibility within Irish law and she had no other choice based upon her socio-economic limitations.¹² The play reveals some of the ongoing domestic abuse, drug use, and unwanted pregnancies, all of which reflect social issues that were significantly ignored amidst Ireland's economic prosperity period.

The bog serves as a site of control for women in both *By the Bog of Cats...* and *Bog Boy* because it provides an alternative kind of narrative resisting the power structures of both economic and social policy supporting empowerment for

¹² Since abortion is outlawed in Ireland, even in instances of rape and incest, Brigit would have had little or no choice other than to have the child regardless of the circumstances of her inception. And due to her poverty, she does not even have the option to go to Europe or the United Kingdom for an abortion. The cost would simply be too prohibitive for travel and the medical procedure. Because of these financial and social limitations, working or lower class women often continue with pregnancies against their will and in spite the circumstances in which they occur (S. Kennedy 103).

men instead of women. When Hester and Brigit (attempts to) kill their children, it both literally and symbolically empowers them in the plays because it gives them power over their own reproduction. In both plays, men have taken their power of reproduction from them, insomuch as the women have little choice and control over their own bodies, lives, and children. Both plays recognize how disempowering it is for the women protagonists who are mothers to have the Irish state or ideological “nation” governed by patriarchal policies take their children. Horrific outcomes result in a kind of death for Brigit and Hester through the separation of the mother and child. Both Brigit and Hester remain part of a larger history in Ireland, where bogs serve as macabre and horrific spaces for infanticide, and signal a type of reproductive liberation and choice not readily available in Irish society for women.

Northern Irish theatre director and filmmaker Carol Moore illustrates this horrifying situation that many women experience in her film short, *Field of Bones* (1997), which is an adaptation of Cathal Ó Searcaigh’s poem, “*Gort na gCnámh*” / “The Field of Bones.” In the neo-Gothic film, a woman flashes back to a memory of herself as a thirteen-year-old girl when she watches her father beat her mother to death in the kitchen of their rural cottage. Since they were poor farmers, the young girl was expected to take the role of “mother” – care for the father, work in the field, and tend the house. One night after her mother’s death, the father comes into her room in the middle of the night and rapes her. This sequence of incest continues over time and the girl eventually becomes pregnant. Moore keeps it ambiguous whether the girl was able to hide her pregnancy from her

father or he was simply in denial. Regardless, he does not appear to know. One night she goes to a clandestine part of “the field,” which is actually a bog, and births the baby by herself. She then buries the baby alive in the bog. Searcaigh captures the crude horror of this situation in his poem: “My midwife was an old dog bitch, / Who lapped up my blood, chewed on afterbirth” (99). Although bleak and ghastly, Moore’s film adaptation of Searcaigh’s poem demonstrates an entire history imbued with another type of disappeared people in Ireland associated with the bog – babies that have resulted from unwanted or forced pregnancies.¹³ It also employs a neo-Gothic aesthetic, as her mother appears throughout the film short as a ghost and focuses on family abuse and depravity.

In this sense, then, Kinahan’s example of Brigit draws from a much longer history of infanticide connected with the bog as a space of necessary liberation from patriarchal laws. Bogs provide a clandestine space for generations of women to hide the bodies of their unwanted pregnancies from society, their families, and their husbands. The ghosts of the babies continually haunt the bog, much like the disappeared who are casualties from the Troubles. Even though Brigit never tried to throw her baby into the bog, her story illustrates what may be a similar circumstance for the urban woman with the canal as the closest wetland

¹³ A well-known example is the Kerry Babies Tribunal where a local woman was blamed for a newborn baby that was found stabbed to death on White Strand beach at Cahirciveen, County Kerry. A six-month tribunal followed where a team of forty-three men, including lawyers, police officers, doctors, and psychiatrists, probed the accused woman in court for six months. As the Irish journalist Nell McCafferty notes, much of the tribunal focused more on the woman’s sexual history than it did on connecting her to the dead newborn. Indeed, the murder investigation was clearly obfuscated by religious morality, in that the woman was on trial for all of the women of Ireland battling for social progress in sexuality. The Kerry Babies Tribunal also reminded the Irish public that infanticide still exists for socially dispossessed women. For more, see Nell McCafferty’s *A Woman to Blame: The Kerry Babies Case* (1985). Heaney’s poem, “Limbo,” in *Wintering Out* (1972) (see the collection *Opened Ground* in the Works Cited page) also addresses a woman in the West of Ireland who decides to drown her illegitimate son. Similar themes about abortion and infanticide are also explored in Margo Harkin’s film *Hush-a- Bye Baby* (1989).

equivalent. The bog also represents a sympathetic landform in the play, something that offers freedom through its permeability – it is a space where one can hide an unwanted baby, and, for marginalized women an opportunity or a kind of agency. The important connection though is the bog itself, and it plays both a symbolic and a physical role in the lives of each woman protagonist.

In addition to Darren, Hughie also entraps Brigit. He is the one man she trusts during her short-lived and yet empowering life near the bog until Darren and Annie bring over Kaylie. In the plan that Brigit concocts, Hughie agrees to come over asking for some sugar in order to demonstrate that Brigit has stability and community in her new life in Navan. Instead, he is so paralyzed with fear about the authorities currently digging for the boy in the bog that he arrives intoxicated, which only makes matters worse for her situation with Darren, Kaylie, and Annie. Darren shows even more hostility toward Hughie than he does toward Brigit, which is perceived as a response to Hughie's intoxication. However, Darren's resentment also contains deeper forms of discrimination related to Hughie's connection to the rural bog landscape. From Darren's perspective, Hughie is a "Culchie," a derogatory name for people who live in rural areas, particularly outside of the M50 motorway in Dublin. Brigit had similar prejudices toward Hughie earlier in the play when she also considered him a Culchie. Darren mutters, "you're not passin' me daughter to that" (30). "That" refers to Hughie. Darren sees Hughie as a new partner for Brigit and therefore a threat to his position as father figure and patriarchal leader of the (broken) household. Despite

the fact that Hughie arrives at her house drunk on an important day for Brigit, she still forgives him: “It wasn’t your fault [...] fuckin’ nothing new in it” (42).

Hughie resembles all of the other destructive men in Brigit’s life when he insists on foisting his own buried secret on her. He tells Brigit the story about when he thought he was only burying guns in the bog for the IRA, only to then see them shoot “a rat” who could not, ostensibly, keep his “gob shut” (45). For thirty years Hughie has repressed this secret at the cost of his own psychological and physical health. After dumping the secret onto a resistant Brigit, he then requests she inform the police that they are digging in the wrong spot of the bog because he cannot bring himself to do it. Hughie insists, “I’ve tried all week but I can’t. I’ve not had the courage for thirty years Brigit and I don’t have it now” (46). Hughie’s lack of courage pertains more to abandoning Brigit than confronting his past. He even attempts to displace his own imprisonment onto Brigit, which she describes as “Using me to do your dirt” (47). Brigit’s own response to patriarchy – in the forms of Darren, the state worker Annie, neocolonialism of the Celtic Tiger, and Hughie – builds to this climax at the end of the play. Before leaving Hughie to stew in his own paralyzing memories, while also refusing to contact the police on his behalf, Brigit delivers the climactic lines of the play:

And I thought you were different...I thought you were...for
once...just for once...someone...someone good...someone
decent. Someone who didn’t want shit from me but you’re
just as bad...no, you’re worse...worse than Darren, worse

than me Da...worse than any of them usin' me. (47; ellipses original effect)

Bog Boy's dénouement underscores the dispossession and oppression for women in neocolonial Ireland. For Brigit, the bog is a stable, idyllic place for a short period of time in her life, even though she had to overcome her own prejudices about rural Ireland as the "Third World" in order to experience such a feeling. According to Brigit, Hughie is "worse than Darren, worse than me Da" because she trusted him. But the bog, with its "big bog holes seeping" (12), provides a space of hope, stability, and the potential of freedom, even if only for a brief moment. She writes in her letter to Bernie, "Seeping like this is the place [bog] where the world opens up, opens up and sighs" (12). For a moment Brigit was free of her urban confinement; she then opened up and sighed, only to tragically return to Dublin and embrace the terror as one of the disappeared women in the neocolonial state of Post-Celtic Tiger Ireland.

Conclusion

This chapter explores how Hester and Brigit are outcasts in a society that does not provide support or freedom in the same way that the bog does. Both Carr and Kinahan offer an implicit relationship between the marginalization of the bog and women in Ireland, but they do so by reinscribing previous perceptions of the relationship between women and land. In doing so, Carr and Kinahan resist the neocolonialism of the Celtic Tiger era by challenging traditional representations

of domesticity through the cultural practice of theatre. The bog challenges neocolonialism, which during the Celtic Tiger years insisted modernity, in the form of consumerism and development, was the only way to shirk the colonial past. The lower classes, and particularly women in this socio-economic register who were not the focus of modernized policies, suffered the most. Analyzing the bog in *By the Bog of Cats...* and *Bog Boy* brings to the fore social issues during the Celtic Tiger, steeped in a neo-Gothic aesthetic, and allows the audience to witness social repercussions from another angle.

Both Kinahan and Carr use the traditional rural settings of the bog to promote the idea that women can redefine their role in contemporary Ireland from mothers of the nation to mothers of self-liberation. Women, in both plays, find liberation in these marginalized topographies. While living on the bog, Brigit stays clean and sober, but when she moves back into “civilization” in Dublin, she relapses. The metaphor of Ireland embracing modernity in a technological and cosmopolitan future rather than “a form of perpetual hesitancy,” according to Killeen, “may not be altogether possible in Celtic Tiger Ireland since it appears that the Irish have finally made a choice and reflected the hyphenated mind of the past” (“Irish Gothic” n. pag.). Such a “hyphenated mind” in contemporary Ireland is not only about hybridization between modernity and the past, but also about modernity and the future. Brigit’s return to “civilization” as opposed to continuing to “live in the bog” challenges the notion that the only way forward for herself, and symbolically for Ireland, is to ignore the Gothicized past of the bog and embrace a modernized future. The play suggests that in the bog and its collective

memory resides hope for the present, particularly for those “disappeared” by modernization and post-nationalist neocolonial patriarchy. As Kinahan intimates through her protagonist Brigit, Ireland must face the hangover left by the years of Celtic Tiger over-indulgence – a future of debt and imposed austerity that is not dissimilar to recovering from substance abuse. Even though this does not represent an easy future for Ireland, perhaps there are still empowered places for Brigit and Hester in both the rural and the urban spheres. Returning full circle back to Stoker’s *The Snake’s Pass* in Chapter One, the bog again functions as a space where writers return in order to counter some of the narratives of modernization that permeate the status quo. By using the past to challenge the present in order to promote a better future, the bog is used to address some of the temporal, social, and cultural issues that remain indeterminate in an otherwise unstable history.

CONCLUSION

Historical Intervals and Speculative Futures of Bogs in Irish Writing

A bog is its own diary; its mode of being is preservation of its past. (47)

– Tim Robinson, *Connemara: Listening to the Wind*

This dissertation has examined bogs in Irish Gothic literature between 1890 and 2010. As I have demonstrated, bogs in Ireland remain more than just peripheral wetlands reduced to the pages of scientific studies. Rather, the indeterminate qualities of bogs – both contradicting and complementary, both stable and unstable – allow writers to shape and reshape their symbolic and actual meanings in literary texts. Indeed, what may have seemed like a fringe topic at the outset of this study has engaged poignantly with a wide range of disciplines (geography, politics, culture, history, archaeology), through a variety of literary works (novels, short stories, poetry, prose, and drama), and across many critical vocabularies (postcolonial, ecocritical, spectral, Gothic, literary cartographic, and gender studies). I have shown how writers continue to be attracted to and seduced by the numinous and uncanny bog as a way to address – sometimes overtly and sometimes obliquely – political narratives and social ruptures in Ireland. Using the critical vocabularies of the postcolonial Gothic to examine bogs serves as a profitable method of inquiry because it elucidates how culture and politics related to colonization also function as unstable and haunted. What all of the writers in this study have in common is the way in which they perceive the bog as a real and symbolic landform, challenging totalizing concepts about history and nation, land and identity, ambiguity and certainty, and gender and agency. As a union of

opposites, simultaneously two separate qualities, the bog serves an important purpose for Irish writers who interrogate equally volatile and contentious topics.

According to the human geographer Yi-Fu Tuan, topographies, like that of the bog, demonstrate “the affective bond between people and place or setting” (136). The “affective bond” of the bog draws writers to its muddy shores and in doing so writers interrogate anomalous circumstances in history and culture. The opposition between industrialization and conservation of the bog in Stoker’s *The Snake’s Pass*, outlined in Chapter One, begins my discussion and in some ways it also ends it. The dilemma Stoker poses in *The Snake’s Pass* – whether to industrialize the bog for greater economic and national independence or conserve it as part of Irish identity and environmental integrity – continues to dominate discussions into the twenty-first century. Nationalism and haunting, to which I turn in Chapter Two, similarly reveal some of the instabilities around literary narratives that focus on the bog, allowing a space of uncertainty and flux to somehow stand in for an otherwise difficult subject about nationalism during a key revolutionary period in Irish history. O’Connor and Ó Faoláin underscore the importance of ghosts in Irish history as a way to redress the past and allow imaginative spaces for generative futures rather than focus on decaying histories. Mapping Gothic bog bodies, a focus in Chapter Three, generates a way for Heaney to explore the gruesome circumstances of the Troubles, as well as general issues of violence, history, and memory, in his poetry and prose. Heaney’s bog poems – through the bodies that emerge from the bog – provide a literary map of ambiguously real and imagined spaces in order to explore notions of commitment

and identity to the nation, religion, collective communities, and individual people. Finally, the theme of reappropriating gender and land, to which I turn in Chapter Four, appears in two contemporary plays about bogs with two female protagonists and written by two women playwrights. Kinahan and Carr challenge the notion of gendered landscapes decoupling female as land from nationalist symbolism in order to then promote women's autonomy within a neocolonial and modernized Celtic Tiger period. The bog serves as a space of refuge and opportunity for women in both plays, despite its usual correlation with waste, lethargy, and stagnation. At the end of the Celtic Tiger, according to Fintan O'Toole, there was an "uneasy feeling of going back to the past" because the past no longer contained a comfort for Irish society (4). Carr and Kinahan both presciently use the bog not as a way to return to the past, but rather to reinvent national narratives in the present and future about women and domesticity within socio-economic registers. In this way, bogs continue to stay relevant into the twenty-first century, but they too, like Ireland after the economic collapse of the Celtic Tiger, face significant challenges in the future.

The contemporary cartographer and landscape writer Tim Robinson observes that the bog "is a stage, in both senses: people enter it and exit again, and their time in it is an interval between two periods of social existence. They are solitaires, paths of mist, almost ghost already" (*Connemara* 20). Although this study only offers a slice of time in the existence of the bog, "its own diary" as Robinson asserts in the epigraph to this conclusion, my task has been to display some of the many ways the bog shimmers in the literary and cultural register for

Irish Gothic writers. From 1890 to 2010, we have entered and exited the bog at many stages (to echo Robinson again) and witnessed the way its nebulous spaces illuminate key moments in Ireland's colonial history. Histories, like ghosts, morph over time. Historical intervals are like mists that confuse and disorientate moments of the past while they, at the same time, also offer some clarity for reflection moving forward. If the bog is a "stage" and provides a way to witness the interval between two periods of social existence, where does this leave us in the time ahead? What stage of the bog will writers enter it in the future or revisit it in the past? What will materialize out of these paths of mist emanating from a well-trodden landform used by Irish writers?

Examining how the bog functions in literature and culture over the last one hundred and twenty-five years has led me to speculate on two future advancements in contemporary works. Both speculations reflect upon some of the unexamined gaps in my study and, at the same time, offer future areas of exploration that might provide profitable critical direction for studies that focus on bogs in works from the contemporary period – from the 1970s to the present. As I began this study, I assumed that the subject of bogs in Irish literature would not or could not extend beyond my current project. After all, bogs are landforms and typically aligned with non-literary studies such as geography and geology. How much could I possibly draw from to illuminate specific issues related to history, culture, and politics in Irish writing? Surprisingly, many new areas of exploration appeared during the course of my research, but they suggested larger studies that are beyond the theme and scope of my project. My research led me to a specific

conclusion that I have argued throughout this dissertation: the indeterminate bog for certain writers between 1890 and 2010 elicits both postcolonial and Gothic associations and provides an unusual way to examine national histories through literature and culture. However, future work on literary and cultural representations of bogs could take a slightly different course. Thus, I want to conclude by identifying two speculative directions about bogs that materialized through my own research, but which could not be fully addressed in the confines of my study: Irish crime fiction and writing confronting environmental threats to bogs.

The first speculative direction involves crime and justice as they relate to bogs. Bogs are geographical spaces where historical events disclose “things,” whether they are relics like the treasure of gold or the jewelled crown in *The Snake’s Pass*, bog bodies in Heaney’s poetry, corpses in O’Connor’s “Guests of the Nation,” or decayed relics of memory in Ó Faoláin’s “A Meeting.” One of the questions that continue to arise is how crime and justice specifically relate to bogs. Many forms of criminal activity appear in all of the texts. For example, in Stoker’s *The Snake’s Pass*, Black Murdock swindles land from Phelim Joyce – while also attempting to murder Bat Moynahan on the bog – and Arthur attempts to destroy an entire bog that supports the region for his own profit. In O’Connor’s “Guests of the Nation,” Bonaparte and Noble assist in murdering two other innocent soldiers on the bog, but both soldiers never committed a crime other than holding an opposing national identity. Ó Faoláin’s narrator in “A Meeting” recalls and revels in some of the heinous crimes that he and Sally committed during the

revolutionary period. Heaney's bog body poems concentrate on bodies – both in the Iron Age and during sectarian conflicts in Northern Ireland – of people who were killed for alleged criminal activity. In *By the Bog of Cats...*, Hester sacrifices her own daughter and then kills herself. These horrific events follow crimes of arson on Carthage's land. Finally, Kinahan's *Bog Boy* discusses some of "the disappeared," those who were indiscriminately killed and clandestinely buried in bogs during the Troubles. As these examples suggest, the bog also functions as a criminal site.

Although I interrogate critical connections to postcolonial and Gothic studies, there continue to be compelling questions linking bogs to crime and justice. In fact, previous criticism acknowledges Gothic fiction is an important precursor to modern crime writing (Ross 21). Writers also challenge the tenuous demarcation between crime and justice in postcolonial contexts where two sets of laws between the colonized and colonizer often work in contrast to one another. If bogs are inherently a union of opposites, then how do Irish writers address the relationship between crime and justice and the way it relates to bogs? Does the bog help demarcate the tenuous line separating crime from justice? Since bogs both conceal and preserve, as well as functioning as repositories for both real objects and imagined symbols, they are ideal locations for depositing bodies, guns, drugs, food, or even memories. Their dangerous and menacing qualities tend to keep people away, including anyone attempting to enforce the law. The limited and limitless qualities of bogs challenge the limits and limitlessness of the law; both bogs and notions of justice function beyond clearly defined codes.

Looking forward, then, Irish detective fiction is one area of Irish writing containing political and Gothic narratives about bogs. What is commonly referred to as “Emerald Noir,” “Dublin Noir,” or “Hibernian Homicide,” Irish crime drama has become recognized as an Irish cultural study of representation, identity, and space.¹ Over the last two decades during the rise and fall of the Celtic Tiger economy – amidst Catholic Church scandals, the Good Friday Agreement in the North, political cronyism leading to EU bailouts, and austerity measures – Irish Noir continues to perform as a cultural mirror and moral compass charting definitions of criminality and social space. Irish crime fiction has quickly become one of the leading cultural responses to Ireland’s Post-Celtic Tiger crisis because it serves as an exemplary mode where shifting spatial dynamics – displacement of families, environmental degradation, increasing immigration, and moribund development projects (such as the “ghost estates”) – are incisively confronted and mapped in Ireland. Irish crime writers like Patrick McGuinley, Erin Hart, Tana French, John Galvin, Ken Bruen, and Brian McGilloway, have already partly turned to the bog as space where the lines between crime and law blur together, and I suspect other writers will continue to do so as the genre develops in the twenty-first century.

The second speculative direction considers if bogs continue to disappear through environmental exploitation and de-regulation, how will they influence Irish writers or culture? While I explore this topic to some extent in Chapter One,

¹ See, for example, Declan Burke’s edited collection *Down These Green Streets: Irish Crime Writing in the 21st Century* (2011). In addition, there is a forthcoming special issue (in 2014) on Irish Crime Writing from 1921 to Present, edited by Ian Campbell Ross and William Meier, in the journal *Éire-Ireland: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Irish Studies*.

I do so through the larger lens of the postcolonial Gothic. However, an entirely different study could be conducted solely on the environmental approaches to bogs in Irish writing. In addition to their political and supernatural associations, bogs remain the most endangered ecosystem in Ireland. Over 92% of them have been used for fuel or damaged through continual urban development and industrialization. When the state body of Ireland *Bord na Móna* was established in 1946 to promote industrialized peat extraction for commercial use, it was estimated that over half of the large Midland raised bogs that had been recorded since 1814 had been cut away for fuel. This amount equaled two million tonnes of turf, or 800 hectares a year (Feehan 173). But because there are over three thousand people who still cut turf as a personal fuel resource in Ireland, in addition to larger industrial turf-cutting operations, controversy continues over cutting in protected areas. In fact, the Irish Government was recently in breach of EU environmental regulations because twenty-one out of thirty-one protected bogs designated as “Special Areas of Conservation” suffered damage through cutting, burning, or draining in 2011 alone (Tomlinson 185).

Conserving bogs is not only about aesthetics or supporting cultural identity; bogs also contribute toward fighting climate change, one of the largest environmental threats facing the twenty-first century. Not only do bogs present scientists with records of over ten thousand years of a changing climate and environment in Ireland (Raftery 202), they also act as carbon sequestration units, or places where carbon dioxide is captured from the atmosphere. In fact, 20% of the world’s terrestrial carbon is stored in bogs located in the northern hemisphere

(“Climate Change” 3). In addition to their cultural connections, bogs are ecosystems that help to reduce greenhouse gases. This is why the destruction of bogs, and even to a larger extent wetlands around the globe, accelerates global warming by releasing carbon dioxide back into the atmosphere.

In Chapter One through Stoker’s *The Snake’s Pass*, I identified some of the environmental threats to bogs at the end of the nineteenth century, which was largely based upon theories of commercializing natural resources that would provide economic sovereignty and thus political separation from the British Empire for Ireland. Although the British Empire is no longer a concern, similar threats of neocolonial commercialization and resource development from both national and multi-national corporations challenge the existence of bogs in Ireland. In this sense, very little has changed over the last one hundred and twenty-five years from the beginning of this study with Stoker in 1890: bogs remain a source of fuel for local populations, as well as for larger industrial campaigns, and continue to disappear through commercializing practices related to economic forms of colonization. Contemporary Irish writers, to a large extent, have yet to respond to these forms of modernization specifically relating to environmental threats of bogs.

One exception, however, is the non-fiction landscape writer Tim Robinson. For Robinson, the bog is “an occasion, a locus, of wild speculation” (*My Time* 185). At the height of the Celtic Tiger, a business association in Clifden proposed building an airport on Roundstone Bog for tourism and faster business travel to Dublin. Robinson wrote pieces defending the Roundstone Bog from these

neocolonial modernizing development schemes to build an unnecessary airport. In response to Robinson, many critics claimed, “It’s only a bit of old bog,” to which he replied:

as if there were no distinctions to be noted between upland bog and the rarer oceanic lowland blanket bog, between bog that has been ruined by machine turf cutting and bog that is still miraculously intact, and above all between all other bogs and Roundstone Bog itself, which has no parallels anywhere on the Earth. (*My Time* 189)

Robinson’s bog essays – briefly mentioned in the epigraph to the Introduction and earlier in this Conclusion – also recognize the Gothic or ghostly elements that both attract and repel writers to the saturated grounds of bogs. Elsewhere, he speaks of bogs as spaces where people continually see ghosts, the dead of the past and the stories of the future. “The bog is not for me an emblem of memory,” he claims, “but a network of precarious traverses, of lives swallowed up and forgotten. I plan to revisit every part of it and rescue all its stories” (*Connemara* 20). A contemporary writer like Robinson, who partly engages with both neocolonial threats of modernization to the bog and contemporary Gothic stories about it, also appreciates the environmental threat facing bogs in the future. If a “bog is its own diary,” as he claims, then writers must read the pages of it, of lives forgotten, before it completely vanishes (*Connemara* 47).

My final speculation calls into question the fate of Irish bogs as a way of transitioning into prescient twenty-first century concerns related to politics,

writing, and culture. Based upon substantial evidence by environmental scientists, bogs will continue to decrease in size and eventually disappear. Will there be an exclusively twenty-first-century examination of bogs in literature and culture? Does the Gothic as a mode of fear, as exhibited in a critical form called the Eco-Gothic, provide a contemporary critical vocabulary to address the environmental threat to bogs? Are contemporary writers invested in bogs the same way writers were in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries? How will neocolonial economic policies continue to affect the environment? If the last few hundred years provide any sort of guide, Irish writers will continue to engage with the uncanny qualities of bogs and the way they illuminate issues of unexplainable phenomena and political and social ruptures. In the short term, neo-Gothic Irish writers could turn to the bog, as writers before them did, to address political disturbances in the twenty-first century. As I acknowledge in the Introduction, the bog raises more questions than can be answered and so it is fitting that this study ends with several open-ended questions about the future of Irish writing about bogs. The goal of this dissertation was to highlight some of the ways we can approach bogs in the literary register. By offering two speculative directions for future study, I hope to show that writers continually return to bogs to engage with social issues that are equally unstable and contentious as the terrain of the Irish bog.

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