

The land of heart's desire: Nostalgia and the Irish fairy landscape

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Abstract

This thesis argues that multiple fairy sites in Ireland are constructed and produced as nostalgic places. Nostalgia is used for its affective properties in the production of Irish fairy sites in order to authenticate and perpetuate a particular effect and response. These fairy sites are aligned with powerful discourses of nationalism, heritage, and the sacred, allowing particular groups to control the narratives and space of these sites. The dominant and enforced discourses that construct and control these sites have implications in terms of the definition and use of space, and the Irish fairy landscape has become a site of political and social struggle over meaning and identity. I identify through my research an unequal distribution of power in favour of particular groups, limiting the possibility of alternative and diverse readings of and engagement with these sites, and by extension with nostalgia, folklore, and the Irish landscape.

This thesis is comprised of a critical analysis and a creative work. Utilising the spatial theories of Doreen Massey (2005), the critical analysis focuses on the construction of Irish fairy sites as places, specifically how nostalgia is deployed to legitimise and control the narrative and physical space of these fairy sites. This is achieved through site-specific analysis on the three ‘new’ fairy sites of the National Leprechaun Museum in Dublin, the ‘Last Leprechauns of Ireland’ site in Carlingford, County Louth, and ‘Gillighan’s World: The Field of Dreams’ in County Sligo, and the three ‘old’ fairy sites of Lough Gur in County Limerick, and Newgrange and the Hill of Tara in County Meath. Included in these analyses is a critique of the dominant nostalgic narrative of each site. The creative work, a novella entitled *Astray*, operates as a further contestation of the powerful discourses and narratives controlling these sites, and also aims to expand the definitions of nostalgia, place, and fairies. Through interwoven narratives, *Astray* works to make these six Irish fairy sites multivocal, and connected to the broader Irish fairy landscape.

Author Declaration

I certify that the work in this thesis entitled has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of the requirements for a degree to any other university or institution other than Macquarie University.

I also certify that this thesis is an original piece of research and that the work herein is entirely my own, except where acknowledged.

Hannah Claire Irwin

August 2017

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Introduction: Out of this dull world

1.1 Introduction

My first impression was disappointing, “an imposing, barren, solitary mound”, nothing like the faerie place we all imagine ... I recall feeling rather sad and lonely, and an overwhelming sense of “being in the world, but not of it” (*Gillighan’s World The Field of Dreams* 2017).

Melody Urquhart, owner and founder of ‘Gillighan’s World: The Field of Dreams’ recorded this statement as part of her first impressions of Knocknashee, an Irish fairy site in County Sligo. Disillusioned by her experience, Urquhart spent six years constructing Gillighan’s World which opened to visitors in 1999. Urquhart claimed that the motivation behind the project was to preserve the folklore and ‘tell the story’ of Knocknashee (*Gillighan’s World: The Field of Dreams* 2017). However, upon my visit to Gillighan’s World as part of a research trip to Ireland in June 2014, I discovered a disconnection between Urquhart’s motivation and the site itself. Gillighan’s World comprises botanical gardens, picnic areas, artificial landscape features, and fairy and toadstool figurines, and makes no reference in its production to Knocknashee either as an archaeological site or to specific Irish folktales relating to the site. Instead, Urquhart created the ‘faerie place’ of her imagination that Knocknashee had failed to deliver, a nostalgic construction based on an idealised version of Ireland and its history.

Upon further investigation, I discovered several other sites in Ireland that shared attributes with Urquhart’s creation. The ‘Last Leprechauns of Ireland’ site in Carlingford, County Louth, and the National Leprechaun Museum in Dublin, demonstrated similar characteristics both in their production, and in the motivations of their creators to preserve knowledge relating to Irish folklore which was perceived to be under threat. The creation of these ‘new’ fairy sites is a contemporary phenomenon, beginning with Gillighan’s World and continuing with the opening of the National Leprechaun Museum in 2010. As there is no existing scholarly analysis of these ‘new’ sites, I became interested in comparing the representation of these sites with ‘old’ fairy sites, a label which refers to places named in Irish folklore texts as being associated with fairies, and in the use of nostalgia in their construction.

1.2 The research problem and current research

The research problem identified within this thesis is that the fairy sites of Ireland are constructed and produced as nostalgic places with monologic narratives. For the purposes of this thesis, I define a ‘fairy site’ as a location associated with fairies either through oral and written sources of Irish folklore, or through other forms of representation. These sites are aligned with the powerful discourses of nationalism, heritage, and the sacred. Discourse ‘transmits and produces power ... [and] reinforces it’ (Foucault, 1998, p. 101), allowing particular groups to control and delimit these sites. The issue with the naturalising of these fairy sites as places is that they become ‘assumed, closed down as areas of contestation or debate’ (Massey, 1995, p. 183). The individuals and groups which control the use and meaning of these sites not only limit alternative engagements or critique of these sites, but also reinforce an idealised and problematic representation of Ireland. Nostalgia, defined in this thesis as a longing for a lost and idealised version of place (Boym 2001), is used for its affective properties in the production of Irish fairy sites by these groups in order to authenticate and perpetuate a particular effect and response. I identify through my research an unequal distribution of power in favour of particular representations of Ireland and uses of space, and unpack the political and social struggles over meaning and identity taking place at these fairy sites, such as the problematic association of the Irish people with the nostalgic ‘folk’, and the clash of heritage and neo-pagan groups over the definition and use of sacred sites.

This thesis argues that nostalgia is used to construct and produce fairy sites in Ireland as places, limiting the possibility of diverse readings of and engagement with these sites, and by extension, with nostalgia, folklore and the Irish landscape. The critical analysis component focuses on how these sites are constructed as places, specifically how nostalgia is deployed to legitimise and control the narrative and physical space of these fairy sites. This is achieved through site-specific analysis on the three new fairy sites of the National Leprechaun Museum, the Last Leprechauns of Ireland, and Gillighan’s World, and the three old fairy sites of Lough Gur in County Limerick, and Newgrange and the Hill of Tara in County Meath. Included in these analyses is a critique of the dominant nostalgic narrative of each site. The creative work operates as a further contestation of the dominant discourses and singular narratives controlling these sites by attempting to make these fairy sites both multivocal and

interconnected. The intent of the creative work is not to replace the existing dominant narrative of each site with my own narrative, but rather to unsettle these dominant discourses through the inclusion of marginalised voices, multiple nostalgias, multiple places, and a more nuanced depiction of Irish fairies.

1.3 The current field

The focus of this thesis on Irish folklore, nostalgia, and the production of place necessitates an interdisciplinary approach to the research problem. As previously mentioned, there has been no scholarly research undertaken on Ireland's 'new' fairy sites, and the majority of work in Irish folklore studies continues to be focused on ethnographical research and the collection of folklore. The connection of Irish folklore to place or nostalgia therefore offers productive possibilities for research. Some possibilities that have been explored include the relation of fairies to the spatial theory of liminality (Narváez 1991), the connection of the representation of fairies in the nineteenth century with nostalgia (Bown 2001), and the prevalence of nostalgia for the pastoral landscape in twentieth century Irish literature (Frawley 2005). However, as I demonstrate in the literature review, nostalgia can be seen to inform and continue to influence Irish folklore collection and scholarship, suggesting a need for further engagement with nostalgia and its effect on the field of Irish folklore studies.

The concept of nostalgia is fraught with tensions in terms of its use and value in scholarly analysis. Nostalgia is commonly associated with time rather than with space, with the nostalgic subject pining for a lost 'Golden Age', and has been critiqued for its tendency to idealise and reconstruct the past. This has resulted in a very narrow definition of nostalgia within academia and the trivialisation of the term, 'Nostalgia is to longing as kitsch is to art' (Maier, 1999, p. 273). Many academics have therefore attempted to broaden and complicate the definition of nostalgia, including the acknowledgment of a sense of 'displacement' associated with nostalgia, addressed by a collective return to a perceived home or homeland (Boym 2001). My own research builds on this trend through its focus on spatiality, and furthermore suggests that a reconfiguration of the use and definition of nostalgia is

needed for future research, specifically regarding the existence of a multiplicity of nostalgias at both the individual and collective level.

My research is also situated at the intersection of cultural studies and geography in the field of cultural geography. Of the two distinct theoretical strands of phenomenology and materialist geography that continue to define research in this field, the site-specific analysis I undertake in this thesis utilises the materialist strand, and in particular Doreen Massey's idea of places as 'spatio-temporal events' (2005, p. 130). Cultural geography has not often intersected with folklore studies despite their common focus on landscape, perhaps because the relationship of folklore with spatiality is assumed in scholarly analysis, or the tendency of folklorists to focus on ethnographical studies. My research focuses on the construction of Irish fairy sites as nostalgic places and the power relations associated with their production and use. However, I also emphasise the need for engagement with these sites as interconnected and multivocal spaces.

1.4 Objective and methodology

The objective of this thesis is not to undertake a comprehensive analysis of all the fairy sites of Ireland, nor even to suggest that every fairy site in Ireland is necessarily nostalgic. The concept of place to which I adhere renders this impossible, as the identity of places, and even 'the very identification of places *as* particular places' is maintained by the production and maintenance of the narrative of that place by the 'exercise of power relations in some form' (Massey, 1995, pp. 189 - 190). Not all fairy sites in Ireland are produced and represented as nostalgic, either because the site is no longer recognised as a fairy site, or because the hegemonic narrative of the site is serving a different purpose. For example, the hill of Tiveragh in County Antrim is recognised as a fairy site (*The heart of the glens* 2016), but its status as private property and use as pasture limits the amount of possible engagements with, and access to, the site. Unlike Lough Gur, the Hill of Tara, and Newgrange, which are significant heritage and sacred sites, the dominant meaning and use of fairy sites such as Tiveragh go largely uncontested. My rationale for choosing Lough Gur, the Hill of Tara and Newgrange as the three 'old' fairy sites for analysis is based on the ongoing contestation between heritage and neo-pagan groups over the use and

meaning of these sites, as well as the nostalgic representation of both Ireland and fairies evident within their construction.

I execute this argument primarily using the research methodologies of discourse analysis and textual analysis. Discourse analysis focuses on the connection between ‘language, communication, knowledge, power and social practices’ (Muncle, 2006, p. 74), and in combination with Massey’s theory of place as constituted through interactions and negotiations, and as always under construction (2005), allows for discussion of how my chosen fairy sites are ‘produced, given meaning, constructed and represented through particular configurations of knowledge’ (Muncle, 2006, p. 74). These sites are primarily constructed as nostalgic through texts such as websites, brochures, plaques, books, maps, photographs, and films. The methodology of textual analysis is therefore also useful for ‘grounding claims about social structures, relations and processes’ (Kovala, 2002, p. 4), by providing textual evidence of the effect of power relations and nostalgia on the construction of these sites.

Other methodologies utilised in this thesis include the classification of my selected sites, categorised as ‘old’ and ‘new’ sites, in order to differentiate between and draw conclusions from their construction, and site-based fieldwork. In June of 2014, I undertook a month of fieldwork in Ireland, visiting the six sites I focus on in my critical analysis among other Irish fairy sites. The field notes and photographs taken during this research trip were instrumental in the development of both the critical analysis and creative work which comprise this thesis. The creative work takes the form of a novella. It is often the case that the critical analysis bears the burden of articulating the original contribution to knowledge made by a thesis, as the creative artefact is seen as unable to ‘embody knowledge’ in itself (Candy & Edmonds, 2011, p. 121). However, it is my intention that the creative work will also ‘illuminate new apprehensions’ (Candy & Edmonds, 2011, p. 121) about nostalgia, space, and Irish folklore alongside the critical analysis.

1.5 Defining major terms

For the purposes of this thesis, I define fairy folklore as the Irish oral and written traditions concerning these creatures, rather than the broader European genre of fairy

tales. This is because fairy tales are gathered from geographically and historically disparate sources, in which fairies become part of an ensemble of beliefs including witches, dwarves, and elves. The folklore that has been collected concerning Irish fairies tends to take one of three forms: the folk-belief (*sgéal*), the folk-tale (*sean-sgéal*) (Evans-Wentz, 1911, p. 23), and the ‘hero-tale’ (Jacobs, 1892, p. 237). Folk-beliefs are short, conversational stories relating to real people and their encounters with fairies and other supernatural beings, while folk-tales are longer, more complex stories ‘describing marvellous adventures of otherwise unknown heroes’ with defined plots and supernatural characters (Jacobs, 1892, p. 237). Comparatively, hero-tales focus on ‘national or mythical heroes’ (Jacobs, 1892, p. 238), and tend to be translations or retellings of one of the ancient literary texts of Ireland such as the Book of Leinster, a compilation of Irish prose and verse from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

The Irish term for fairies is *daoine sídhe*, meaning the people, or spirits, of the mounds (Yeats, 1888, p. 2), although the fairies were never mentioned by name, for fear of attracting their attention and possibly their malice. Instead, fairies were known euphemistically by titles such as the ‘Good People’, the ‘Fair Folk’, the ‘Wee Folk’, the ‘Gentry’ or the ‘Little People’, as a means of flattery, propitiating goodwill. The etymology of the term ‘fairy’ is thought to be derived from the Latin ‘fata’, or ‘fate’, referring to the Greek goddesses of fate Lachesis, Atropos, and Clotho, which then developed into the Old French ‘fae’, and the Middle English ‘faerie’ (Williams, 1991, p. 462). Any attempt to form a singular and all-encompassing definition of fairies is difficult, as the oral and written lore which concerns fairies is inherently geographically and historically specific. Furthermore, these sources often disagree, as they are drawn from contrasting accounts of sightings and folktales, and translated, or otherwise amended when published, as I will discuss in the literature review.

The efforts by folklorists to define Irish fairies may be grouped into three categories: by their ontological status, their origins, and their physical attributes. Firstly, fairies are defined by their status as neither fully corporeal nor fully divine, being ‘of a middle nature betwixt Man and Angel’ (Kirk, 1893, p. 15), and existing as a separate race of supernatural beings. Fairies have been described as liminal beings, suggesting that the placement of fairies ‘betwixt and between’ the human and

supernatural worlds reflects their liminal status in oral tradition, between purity and danger, heaven and hell, and the living and the dead (Narváez 1991, p. ix). Secondly, fairies are defined by their origin stories, the most popular being that fairies are descendants of the legendary race of heroes the Tuatha de Danann, the remnants of pagan gods, the spirits of the dead, or fallen angels, a theory that developed under the influence of the dominance of Christianity in Ireland (Prem 1979). Finally, fairies are defined by their physical attributes. Fairies may be recognised by their diminutive stature, their green clothing, and their ‘irritable’ and ‘capricious’ attitudes towards humans (Carleton, 1845, p. 72). However, other accounts of Irish fairies suggest that they are closer to human stature and beautiful, with ‘long yellow hair sweeping the ground, and lithe light forms’ (Wilde, 1887, p. 220). These inconsistencies in height and appearance have been explained by the fairies’ ability as shapeshifters (Yeats 1888). Because of the difficulty involved in defining fairies, the terms ‘trooping’ and ‘solitary’ introduced by William Butler Yeats (1888) are commonly used in scholarship to differentiate fairies into two basic groups: the trooping fairies that live in groups governed by a king or queen, and the solitary fairies such as the leprechaun, the *púca* (pooka), and the *beansídhe* (banshee), which are generally encountered alone in the wilderness.

1.6 Structure of research

This thesis is comprised of five critical chapters and the creative work. The critical section is divided into the literature review, followed by an outline of the major theorists and theories utilised in this thesis, and then by three analysis chapters focusing on fairy sites and the discourses of nationalism, heritage, and the sacred respectively. The creative work, entitled *Astray*, is divided into four interconnected parts.

The first chapter, ‘Literature Review: Hungry thirsty roots’, reviews the collection of Irish folklore concerning fairies from the nineteenth century to the ‘new fairylore’ of the twenty-first century. This chapter examines the publication of Irish folklore as a nostalgic practice, highlighting the field’s historical tradition of anti-Irish sentiment and identifying a shift towards a nostalgic preoccupation with the preservation of oral lore, along with the idealisation of the Irish ‘folk’, which became prevalent

during the Irish Literary Revival. This chapter identifies a cyclical resurgence of interest in fairies at times of significant social change, and further posits through an examination of recent scholarship that there is an ongoing concern amongst researchers that Irish oral lore, including fairy belief, is under threat of extinction.

The second chapter, 'Theory Chapter: In a place apart', identifies the major theories and theorists utilised throughout this thesis. This chapter argues that nostalgia, Irish fairy folklore, spatiality, and power all intersect in the construction and production of Irish fairy sites as nostalgic places. Svetlana Boym's typology of 'restorative' and 'reflective' nostalgia (2001), and Doreen Massey's theories regarding place and power (2005), are identified as the most conducive to the thesis argument. This chapter also argues for a more nuanced definition and use of both nostalgia and place, which will be expanded upon in the creative work, and outlines the role that nostalgia plays in the power relations that construct and control place.

The third chapter, 'Nationalism: Green jacket, red cap', focuses on the discourse of nationalism, and the use of restorative and 'collective' nostalgia (Baker & Kennedy 1994) in the production of the new fairy sites of the National Leprechaun Museum and the Last Leprechauns of Ireland site. This chapter argues that these two sites are constructed as versions of the idealised and nostalgic homeland for Irish visitors using simulacra, storytelling, and the national symbol of the leprechaun. A critique of the dominant nostalgic narrative of each site follows, outlining the problematic history of the leprechaun as both a colonial stereotype and kitsch object, and discussing the sites' further commodification of the leprechaun, along with Ireland itself.

The fourth chapter, 'Heritage: Up the airy mountain', concentrates on the discourse of heritage, and the use of restorative and 'historical' nostalgia (Stern 1992) in the production of the new fairy site of Gillighan's World: The Field of Dreams and the old fairy site of Lough Gur. This chapter argues that these sites are constructed as 'authentic' nostalgic representations of Ireland's historical past for heritage tourists using reconstruction, preservation, and the mythologisation of place and history. The critique focuses on the issue of staged authenticity in heritage sites, as well as the problematic role that nostalgia plays in the commodification of the 'heritage

industry'. The critique also introduces the contestation between heritage managers and neo-pagans over the representation and meaning of heritage sites and sacredness.

The fifth chapter, 'Sacred: Spirits of wood and water', engages with the discourse of the sacred, and the use of restorative and 'performative' nostalgia in the production of the old fairy sites of Newgrange and the Hill of Tara. These two sites are constructed as nostalgic sacred sites by neo-pagans using ritual performances, pilgrimage, and political activism as part of the ongoing contestation between the discourses of sacredness and heritage. The site-specific analyses are followed by a critique concerning the problematic relationship with authenticity in neo-pagan discourse, the consumption of sacredness through New Age tourism, and the nostalgic representation of Irish fairies as *genii loci*.

The creative work, a novella entitled *Astray*, operates as a contestation of the dominant discourses and narratives constructing Irish fairy sites. Through interwoven non-fiction and fictional narratives, *Astray* works to make these sites multivocal by engaging with multiple voices, nostalgias, spaces, and understandings of Irish fairies. The three aims of the creative work are: to explore the existence of a multiplicity of nostalgias through the use of Boym's idea of 'reflective nostalgia' (2001); to destabilise the dominant discourses and narratives of the fairy sites discussed in the critical analysis utilising Massey's theory of place as simultaneous, constituted through interactions, and interconnected (2005); and to challenge the dominant depiction of fairies in these sites by engaging with a series of understandings and representations of fairies in Irish folklore.

Chapter One

Literature Review: Hungry thirsty roots

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I will review the collection of Irish fairy folklore from the nineteenth century onwards, and trace the developments in theory and research methodology by folklorists and various researchers. This chapter argues that the collection and publication of Irish folklore is itself a nostalgic practice, situated at different historical moments within a tradition of anti-Irish sentiment, the idealisation of the Irish peasant, and an ongoing belief in the idea of Irish folklore and the ‘fairy-faith’ being under threat. I define ‘fairy folklore’ as texts which centre extensively or exclusively on Irish fairies, as well as others which include a substantial collection or discussion of Irish fairy lore as part of folklore in general. I have also differentiated between academic and amateur analyses of the topic; works of the latter are only discussed where the author has made a significant contribution to the field through their research.

Firstly, I will discuss the collection of Irish fairy lore by folklorists in the early nineteenth century, starting with Thomas Crofton Croker in 1825, and the anti-Irish sentiment which influenced both Croker’s work and the work of his contemporaries. Secondly, I will attend to the folklorists of the Irish Literary Revival (1880-1920), including Lady Jane Wilde, William Butler Yeats, and Douglas Hyde, and engage with the idealisation of the Irish peasant class along with their beliefs as the spiritual ‘folk’ which occurred as a result of the Revival. Thirdly, the chapter continues with a discussion of the revival of interest in fairies more broadly in British folklore collections of the 1960’s, and identifies a movement away from the predominately ethnographic method of engaging with folklore towards analysis in the late twentieth century. Finally, I speak to the current focus on alternative spiritualities along with the continued focus on preservation of Irish folklore in the field, and the cyclical resurgence of interest in fairies which has led to the ‘new fairylore’ of the twenty first century.

2.2 Early collections (pre-1880)

The collection of folklore in Ireland in the nineteenth century was predominately characterised by anti-Irish sentiment (see Curtis 1968, Curtis 1971, Kenny 2007, Golightly 2007). Anti-Irish sentiment was demonstrated in folklore collection through a general disregard for citing the individual who provided the folktale or belief, and in the stereotypical depiction of the Irish peasantry. Although several of the collectors were Irish natives, they demonstrated in their work an ‘English prejudice against the Irish via folklore ... based on race, education, religion and class’ (Golightly, 2007, p. i). The ‘Celts’ were considered to be inferior to the ‘Anglo-Saxon’ race (Kenny, 2007, p. 364), resulting in the English regarding the Irish as ‘childish, emotionally unstable, ignorant, indolent, superstitious, primitive or semi-civilized, dirty, vengeful and violent’ (Curtis, 1968, p. 53).

Depictions of the Irish peasant in English literature and art reflect this prejudice. Representations of the Irish ranged from comical characters such as ‘Pat’ and ‘Mick’, to the menacing ‘Paddy’, who resembled ‘a cross between monstrous ape and primitive man’ (Curtis, 1971, p. xxii). These characters also appear in published folklore collections of the time, as the purpose of the majority of these texts was entertainment for the upper classes rather than for research (Golightly, 2007, pp. 4 - 5). The predominant writing style was ethnographic in nature, involving ‘fieldwork, interviews and collecting of accounts from people who sought out or accidentally came upon fairies’, from which collectors could ascertain their ‘physiology, social organization, customs and celebrations, beliefs and law’ (Davis, 2007, p. 32). The following collections of Irish fairy lore demonstrate the overall condescension towards Irish folk belief by early folklorists which the authors of the Revival would later oppose with their idealised and nostalgic version of the Irish peasant.

Thomas Crofton Croker was arguably the first folklorist of the nineteenth century to collect Irish fairy lore. Croker translated the stories from *Gaeilge* (Irish Gaelic) into English and published the collection *Fairy legends and traditions of the south of Ireland* in 1825. Croker becomes significant as he was publishing at a time when interest in oral tradition was waning, dismissed as peasant superstition in the wake of the Enlightenment in the eighteenth century, wherein reason and science became privileged over folk traditions (Ó Giolláin, 2000, p. 70). Croker’s editor, Thomas

Wright, claimed in the preface to the 1870 edition of *Fairy legends* that until Croker began to collect folktales and legends there was little appreciation for such stories in Ireland, writing that ‘our popular traditions were generally despised, and were rapidly disappearing’ (Golightly, 2007, p. 37). Croker’s collection ably demonstrates the prevalent condescension of the upper class collector towards the Irish peasantry. The majority of the stories in *Fairy legends* focus on a stereotypical ‘Mick’ character who pits his wits against the fairies and is either defeated or triumphs through comic circumstances, such as the farmer Tom Bourke, described as having a ‘quick but limited intellect’ (1825, p. 47), the ‘strapping’ Carroll O’Daly who is struck by the same boulder he threw into a fairy cave in ‘The legend of Knockfierna’ (1825, pp. 9 -13), and the drunkard Larry Hoolahan who tricks a fairy in the shape of a white calf by riding on its back in ‘The legend of Knocksheogowna’ (1825, pp. 2 - 8).

Croker has been criticized by later folklorists for modifying his stories, including adding humour to make them more entertaining for his genteel readership. William Butler Yeats, for example, saw Croker as a product of his class, who did not ‘take the populace seriously, and imagined the country as a humorist's Arcadia’ (1888, p. xv). In the preface to the second edition of *Fairy legends*, Croker claimed that he had published the stories ‘as I found them – as indications of a particular superstition in the minds ... of my countrymen – the peasantry’ (1826, p. xxv), but folklorist and literary scholar Douglas Hyde believed that Croker invented many of the stories in his collection (1890, p. x). Croker’s research provided the impetus for other collectors to publish their own works, including Samuel Lover’s collection *Legends and stories of Ireland* (1831), Thomas Keightley’s two volume work *Fairy mythology* (1833), and Philip Dixon Hardy, who referenced Croker’s work as a source for his book *Legends, tales and stories of Ireland* (1837), who all followed Croker’s lead in failing to identify the individual sources of their stories. Scholar Karen B. Golightly points out that this ‘disassociation of folklore from the individuals who created or perpetuated it’ was characteristic of the folklorists of the nineteenth century (2007, pp. 9 -10).

In 1845, William Carleton published *Tales and sketches, illustrating the character, usages, traditions, sports, and pastimes of the Irish peasantry*. Carleton was of the peasant class, and is a contentious figure in Irish folklore, receiving praise from Yeats for having ‘a much more serious way with him, for all his humour’, than his

predecessors (1888, p. xvi), but was scorned by Hyde, who claimed that Carleton ‘only published some incidental and largely-manipulated Irish stories’ (1890, p. xi), and who chose to ignore Carleton in his own review of significant folklorists. The value of Carleton’s work lies in the fact that, unlike his contemporaries, he names his sources, stating that ‘the very names, as well of the individuals as of the places, and the scenery described are, with scarcely an exception, real’ (1845, p. viii), thus lending his work an authority which previous authors such as Croker and Lover lack. Carleton was followed by William Robert Wilde’s *Irish popular superstitions* (1852), Patrick Kennedy’s *Legendary fictions of the Irish Celts* (1866), and *The fireside stories of Ireland* (1870). Wilde clearly shows his contempt for the Irish peasantry in his justification for publishing his collection, ‘Nothing contributes more to uproot superstitious rites and forms than to print them’ (1852, p. vi). Wilde also makes no pretence as to accuracy, his stories written for his own amusement ‘as a relaxation from severer toil’ (1852, p. vi). However, Kennedy’s work may be seen as symptomatic of a broader shift in attitude towards the Irish peasantry and their beliefs, from condescension to nostalgia and the urge to preserve and publish Irish folklore.

Kennedy writes in his introduction to *Fireside stories* that he was motivated to collect Irish folklore out of regret at the loss of stories which he recalled from childhood. This urge set him to ‘preserve the naïve, and in many cases, excellent narratives which once delighted the unlettered folk of half the world’ (1870, p. viii). Kennedy’s focus is no longer on entertaining his readers, although he emphasises that his stories are presented ‘in a form suitable for the perusal of both sexes and of all ages’ (1870, p. viii), but on the preservation of the beliefs and stories against extinction. To this end, Kennedy transcribed the stories ‘at times as the story-tellers uttered them, and in the correct form at others’ (1870, p. viii), and Hyde supports this objective, stating that ‘many of the stories which he gives appear to be the detritus of genuine Gaelic folk stories’ (1890, p. xi). Hyde goes on to mention that two of the stories included in Kennedy’s work, ‘Jack the Cunning Thief’ and ‘Shawn an Omadawn’, he had also heard during his research in Wicklow (1890, p. xi). Kennedy’s shift in attitude and research method in his collection of Irish folklore was in reaction to political and cultural changes taking place in Ireland at the time, including the beginning of the Irish Literary Revival in 1890.

The Revival was a patriotic movement that rejected the stereotypical depiction and disdainful attitude of the English towards the Irish people, and celebrated Irish literature, art, music and folklore. The creative works inspired by the Revival, including the collection of folklore, demonstrated nostalgia towards Gaelic culture, resulting in the idealisation of the Irish peasantry.

2.3 The Irish Literary Revival (1880-1920)

2.3.1 Early Revival

The Irish Literary Revival was part of the broader Gaelic Revival that manifested across literature, poetry and theatre in Ireland in the nineteenth century. The Revival, also known as the ‘Celtic Twilight’ after the title of one of Yeats’ books, reached its peak in terms of ‘concentrated will, energy and genius’ between 1880 and 1920 (Foster, 1987, p. xi). Revival authors were distinguished by their focus on cultural nationalism, romanticism, heroism, folklore, the occult, the peasantry, and Gaelic culture, as well as their rejection of ‘realism, democracy, individualism, modernization, the bourgeoisie, and cultural union with England’ (Foster, 1987, p. xi). The Revival was the reason why the majority of fairy lore and beliefs of the peasantry were gathered, preserved and published in Ireland. The members of the Revival strove

with growing intensity and sophistication to ‘return’ to an identity in Ireland’s Gaelic past that would dichotomize Ireland from England, unite the members of its different religious and social groups, and provide alternative models for national economic, social and political development (Hutchinson, 1987, p. 49).

One of the earliest texts of the Revival was Lady Francesca Wilde’s book *Ancient legends, mystic charms and superstitions of Ireland* (1887). Wilde contributed to the rise of the Irish nationalist movement from the mid-nineteenth century in Dublin, writing revolutionary poems and articles for the ‘Young Ireland’ movement of the 1840’s that were published under the pseudonym ‘Speranza’ (Howes, 2006, p. 5). Wilde shares her predecessors’ disdain for recording sources, and is also criticized for her attempts to translate Gaelic terms and words. Wilde did not understand Irish, and wrote in *Ancient legends* that the folklore was collected by ‘competent persons

skilled in both languages, and as far as possible in the very words of the narrator' (1887, p. xii). Yeats in particular commended Wilde as a folklorist, comparing her favourably to authors such as Croker and Lover, 'The humour has all given way to pathos and tenderness ... Here is the Celt, only it is the Celt dreaming' (1888, p. xv), but Hyde criticises Wilde's 'entire ignorance of Irish', and goes on to deem her various works 'hardly as valuable as they are interesting' (1890, p. xiii).

Wilde's work demonstrates the nostalgia towards Irish folk beliefs and the Irish peasantry prevalent during the Revival, in terms of both her representation of Irish fairies and of the Irish peasantry. Wilde explicitly links fairies and the Irish in her descriptions, describing fairies as loving 'music and dancing and frolic' and, like the Irish, having a 'fine sense of the right and just, and a warm love for the liberal hand and kindly word' (1887, p.10). Overall, Wilde considers fairies to be 'the best and truest expression of Irish nature that could have been invented' (1887, p. 10). Notably, until the Revival, folklore collections tended to depict fairies as diminutive, ugly, capricious and irritable (see Keightley 1833, Carleton 1845, Wilde 1852). The fairy host or horde in particular was a threatening image in English collections, as fairies were considered childlike and ungovernable, with the 'behaviour of savage or barbarous people', lacking 'civilized virtues' (Silver, 1999, p. 150). This description is remarkably similar to English representations of the Irish, reflecting the anti-Irish sentiment prevalent in the nineteenth century, and indicative of an ongoing national anxiety towards Ireland as a 'troubled land', the 'locus of potential mob violence' in the British Empire (Connors & MacDonald, 2011, p. 169). Parallels between the Irish people and Irish fairies continue to be drawn in contemporary Irish culture, which I will expand upon in the three analysis chapters. However, during the Revival these unflattering descriptions of fairies changed, perhaps to suit the prevalent image of the spiritual, idealised peasant. The most popular recorded origin theories for fairies in this period were fairies being fallen angels, some benevolent towards humans and others malevolent (see Wilde 1887, Yeats 1888), and that fairies were the tall and beautiful descendants of the magical race called the Tuatha de Danann, 'the people of the goddess Danu', who invaded Ireland and were eventually defeated and diminished by another race called the Milesians (see Wilde 1887, Yeats 1888, Hyde 1890). This suggests that folklore collectors may have been influenced by the prevailing attitude towards the Irish and their beliefs; when the Irish were despised

and patronised, stories were chosen for publication which depicted fairies as ridiculous or menacing figures, but when Irish culture began to be celebrated, a different set of folk tales were published which elevated fairies to the level of gods and angels to suit the idea of the idealised peasant figure.

The idealised Irish peasant which emerged from the works of Revival authors was a reaction to the English stereotype of the 'stage Irishman' or the 'Paddy'. For the English, the Irish peasant 'incarnated the barbarism and savagery of Irish rural life, becoming an emblem of the Irish national character' (Hirsch, 1991, p. 1119). The authors of the Revival worked to invert this stereotype, turning the Irish peasant into a 'spiritual figure', the 'living embodiment of the "Celtic" imagination ... [and] the essence of an ancient, dignified Irish culture' (Hirsch, 1991, p. 1120). However, by dismantling the 'Paddy' stereotype, Revival authors aestheticised the Irish working classes into a 'single undifferentiated entity', called 'the peasants' or 'the folk' (Hirsch, 1991, p. 1117). The 'folk' were characterised by their 'supposed lack of materialism, their spirituality, their ties to the land [and] their being uncorrupted by the bourgeois mind of the urban centers' (Fleming, 1995, p. 51). For Revival authors the peasant became an idealised nostalgic figure, representative of a vanishing 'Golden Age' of Ireland. The peasants that Wilde writes about in *Ancient legends* are indicative of this nostalgic idealisation. She emphasises their simplicity and their love of poetry and myth, to the point of labelling the Irish race as 'eternal children', with 'childlike instincts of superstition' (1887, pp. 11 -12).

Another Revival author to idealise the idea of the Irish peasant was William Butler Yeats. Yeats was at the epicentre of the Revival, publishing the compilation *Fairy and folk tales of the Irish peasantry* in 1888, which contained stories sourced from earlier folklorists including Wilde, Carleton, Croker and Lover. He subsequently published *The Celtic twilight: faerie and folklore* in 1893, his famous collection of prose and lore from the West of Ireland in which he mourned the passing of the 'authentic' peasant class and the fairy-faith that they held. Yeats' personal nostalgia for an 'authentic' folk culture is considered to be one of the driving motivations behind his work, although Yeats himself did not know Irish, or emphasise the need to preserve the language as did Hyde, only placing value in the translation of the lore into English (Golightly, 2007, p. 135). This longing for an authentic peasantry led Yeats to adopt a form of 'redemptive ethnography' in his writing, that attempted to

preserve and ‘salvage “lost” or “vanishing” cultures’ (Castle, 2001, p. 41). Yeats’ passion for folklore and the peasantry also led him to harshly criticise those collectors who came before him. He particularly disliked Croker and Lover, accusing them of perpetuating the ‘irresponsible’ stereotype of the stage Irishman (1888, p. xv). Yeats idealised the Irish peasant as a ‘repository of ancient wisdom and natural virtue’ (Fleming, 1995, p. 53), and often as a visionary, in contact with fairies and other spirits of the land (Thuente, 1979, para. 21). Scholar Mary Helen Thuente points out that, ‘By his own account, Yeats sought ‘powerful emotion’ and ‘noble types and symbols’ in the life and character of the Irish peasantry’ (1979, para. 7). Yeats’ belief in a peasantry ‘capable of deep passion and tragedy’ (Thuente, 1979, para. 25) explains why he was so critical of early collectors who reduced the Irish peasant to a comic stereotype, and preferred the works of folklorists such as Carleton and Hyde.

In 1889, folklorist Douglas Hyde published *Leabhar Sgéulaigheachta*, or *The book of storytelling*. This book was the first collection of folklore published in Irish, reflecting Hyde’s attempt to ‘preserve the language, dialect and customs of the native culture from England’s cultural imperialism’ (Golightly, 2007, p. 107). Hyde maintained that Irish was the only language through which Irish folklore could ‘properly, if at all, be collected’ (1890, p. xiii). Yeats wrote of Hyde that his knowledge of the ‘people’ and Irish culture meant that he was ‘perhaps, most to be trusted of all’ (1888, p. xvi). Hyde also published English language works, such as *Beside the fire: a collection of Irish Gaelic folk stories* (1890). This latter work is notable for the fact that Hyde ensured that he wrote the stories in the ‘exact language of my informants, together with their names and various localities’ (1890, p. xvii), and included a review of Irish folklore collections in which he criticized various collectors on their methods, including Croker and Wilde.

Hyde’s work can also be considered nostalgically motivated. Hyde was one of the founders of the Gaelic League in 1893, an organisation which attempted to prevent the decline of Irish as a spoken language by promoting its everyday use, and in doing so moving beyond a ‘mere restoration of Irish as a literary medium’ to the idea of a ‘general regeneration of a Gaelic community with its customs ... storytelling, crafts, festivals and political institutions’ (Hutchinson, 1987, p. 128). In 1911, Hyde observed that belief in fairies, a significant folk belief of the Irish peasantry, was

fading and ‘ceasing to be any longer a power’ (Evans-Wentz, 1911, pp. 26 - 27). This can be partially attributed to the Great Famine of the 1840’s which decimated the population of Ireland, particularly affecting the rural peasant class who ‘were most attached to traditional lifestyles, from speaking Irish to believing in the fairies’ (Ó Giolláin, 1991, p. 205). This perceived decline in belief was not only recognised by folklorists but also by the individuals who provided the lore. In Wilde’s *Irish popular superstitions*, an Irishman called Darby Doolin comments that ‘The *good people* are leaving us fast: nobody ever hears now the tic-tac of the leprechaun ... the *sheogue* and the *thivish* are every year becoming scarcer; and even the harmless *linane shee* is not talked about now-a-days ...’ (1852, pp. 13 -14).

In the wake of the Famine, there was a change in attitude towards the importance of folklore and traditional beliefs in Irish society. This was collectively caused by the dominance of Christianity, literacy levels increasing, improvements in agricultural methods, and the decline of Irish as a spoken language (Ó Giolláin, 1991, p. 205). This shift led folklorists to believe that the fairy-faith, along with other traditional beliefs and customs, was in a slow decline in Ireland, and would one day be forgotten completely. The collection, translation and publication of Irish folklore during the later years of the Revival therefore continued, fuelled by a nostalgic urge to preserve as much as possible of these traditions and superstitions before they were irretrievably lost.

2.3.2 Late Revival

In 1918, folklorist Thomas Johnson Westropp observed during his study of the traditions of the Connacht coastline that

The old beliefs are being forgotten by the elder and despised by the younger, and much must be lost when the old peasantry die. The work done by me had been better done by dwellers on that wild coast; but few indeed show interest in such a pursuit, and the old Ireland is passing away for ever, more and more speedily (1918, p. 305).

Westropp’s concern for the loss of folk beliefs is indicative of Irish collectors of the early twentieth century, motivated by nostalgia for a romanticised Gaelic past promoted by Revival authors. The sense of urgency felt by folklorists at this change is demonstrated in the efforts of writers such as geologist George H. Kinahan, who recorded the folk beliefs he gathered incidentally in his research and sent them to

journals such as the *Folk lore record*, now called *Folklore*, where they were preserved for other researchers (1888, p. 96).

Following Hyde's example, Irish collectors began to translate and publish ancient Gaelic texts and oral lore. Lady Isabella Gregory, whose book *Gods and fighting men: the story of the Tuatha de Danaan and the Fianna of Ireland* was published in 1904, translated into English and retold the first and third cycles of the ancient Gaelic literary tradition of Ireland, which are, in order, Mythological, Ulster, Fenian, and the Cycles of the Kings (Mackillop, 1998). The Mythological and Fenian cycles focus on the ancestors of the fairies, the Tuatha de Danann, and their dealings with humans. In his preface to the text, Yeats commended Gregory on writing *Gods and fighting men*, asserting that without her, the children of Ireland would never have known these stories (1904, p. ix). Similarly, linguist and Irish language scholar Kuno Meyer translated the saga *The voyage of Bran* (1895), which featured Celtic gods such as Manannan mac Lir, Arthur Herbert Leahy translated and published the *Heroic romances of Ireland* (1905), a two volume work which included two versions of 'The Courtship of Etain', and James Stephens translated and retold the Fenian Cycle in *Irish fairy tales* (1920).

In 1910, Thomas Johnson Westropp published *Folklore of Clare: A folklore survey of county Clare and county Clare folk-tales and myths*, a collection of his articles on the folklore of County Clare gathered during his research into stone monuments. In the introduction to *Folklore of Clare*, folklorist Gearóid Ó Cruaíaoich commented on Westropp's contribution to folklore, calling him an 'enlightened and progressive scholar to whose labours the study of folklore in Ireland, and in general, is much indebted' (2000, para. 9). In his work, Westropp comments on the state of folklore collection by Revival authors, which he calls the 'literary movement', stating that the Revival 'will probably affect the folklore very soon, as it is already affecting historical tradition ... shown by the variations in certain legends collected at long intervals at the same sites' (2000, p. 4). Here, Westropp appears to suggest that the importance of accuracy in folklore collection to Revival authors was being overridden by the need to preserve and publish folk beliefs.

While Thomas Westropp was researching in County Clare, another folklorist was collecting oral beliefs about fairies from not only Ireland, but from Scotland, the Isle

of Man, Cornwall and Brittany. Walter Yeeling Evans-Wentz published his research, based on his Oxford doctoral thesis, in 1911 as *The fairy faith in Celtic countries*, which has since been recognised as one of the foundational texts on the regional folklore of Great Britain, Ireland and France (see Evans-Wentz 1911, Briggs 1967). Evans-Wentz's text contains surveys of these regions regarding fairy-faith, and his examination of the results. Evans-Wentz organised the beliefs he collected by region, and ensured he recorded and sourced the lore as accurately as possible. Hyde approved of Evans-Wentz's research, writing in the introduction to the chapter on Ireland that he could 'bear witness to the fidelity with which Mr Wentz had done his work on Irish soil' (1911, p. 23).

Following Evans-Wentz, Lady Augusta Gregory published *Visions and beliefs in the west of Ireland* in 1920. Having accompanied Gregory in the gathering of her research, Yeats celebrated the result, calling *Visions and beliefs* 'the most considerable book of its kind', and proudly asserting that Gregory 'was not guided by any theory of mine, but recorded what came, writing it out at each day's end and in the country dialect' (1920, para. 1). Gregory is meticulous in her research, not only giving the names of her sources and presenting the beliefs in their original form, but also including a detailed section of notes written by Yeats to accompany each chapter. *Visions and beliefs* is not as acclaimed a work in folklore as Evans-Wentz's *The fairy faith*, although their research method is almost identical.

After Gregory's *Vision and beliefs* (1920), popular interest in fairy folklore declined rapidly, due in part to the end of the Irish Literary Revival. But the Revival authors had left an ongoing legacy in the form of their ethnographic research methods, and their nostalgia for folk beliefs and an idealised version of the Irish peasantry, and I argue that the eventual revival of interest in Irish folklore and fairies reinforces the idea of folklore collection as a nostalgic practice. Firstly however, I will speak to the reasons for the decline in interest in fairies during the twentieth century, and the movement away from ethnography as the dominant methodology of folklore collection towards analysis of folk tales and beliefs.

2.4 Movement from ethnography towards analysis (1920-1990)

Between 1920 and 1960, the amount of folkloric research being published on Irish fairies was considerably reduced in frequency and depth. The reason for this lack of activity is attributed to a combination of different factors. One factor is that the end of the Irish Literary Revival, and of the Irish Romantic movement which influenced it, meant that fairy folklore and the occult would have been reduced in popularity as an area of study. Scholar Carole Silver also believes that the prevalence of fairies during the nineteenth- and early twentieth-centuries in art and literature across Britain led to their fall from public favour; the ‘excessive and trivialized representation’ of fairies forced them ‘back underground’ (1999, p. 9), and industrialisation and urbanisation further contributed to their decline.

Although popular interest in fairies was waning, the collection and preservation of folklore continued in Ireland, evident in the creation of the Folklore Society of Ireland and its associated journal *Béaloides* in 1927. The Folklore Society of Ireland was created under the rule of the Irish Free State (1922-1937) in order to collect and preserve Irish traditions. Folklore collection was of national importance to the state because Ireland was considered to ‘possess a folk tradition, particularly in the Irish language, incomparable in its richness to anywhere else in western Europe’ (Briody, 2008, p. 19). The collection of folklore, similar to the promotion and celebration of Irish by the Gaelic League, was a tool for the construction of an independent cultural and political identity for Ireland separate from England. The work of the Society was later aided in their task by the establishment of the Irish Folklore Commission in 1935 (Breathnach, 2016, p. 35). The Commission focused on preserving ‘elements of the Irish tradition that were in danger of becoming extinct’, with particular effort given to recording the traditions of the West of Ireland, which was considered the centre of traditional belief and the Irish language (2016, p. 35). Seán Ó Súilleabháin, as both a folklorist and archivist for the Commission, published several significant works on Irish folklore during this period, including *Láimh-Leabhar Béaloidesa* (1937), which was written in Irish, *A handbook of Irish folklore* (1942), which became a guide-book for the Commission’s collectors and is ‘lauded’ by Irish folklorists (O’Connor, 2005, p. 19), and *Irish folk customs and belief* (1967), which focused extensively on fairies as a folk belief.

When popular interest in fairies across Britain was renewed in the 1960's, the focus of folklore research had shifted from assembling lore to analysing it through a variety of theoretical lenses. It was Katherine Mary Briggs' collective works, including *The fairies: in English literature and tradition* (1967), *An encyclopedia of fairies: hobgoblins, brownies, bogies and other supernatural creatures* (1976), and *The vanishing people: fairy lore and legends* (1978) which revived scholarly and creative interest in fairies in the late twentieth century, with folklorist D.L. Ashliman naming her 'the undisputed dean of fairy studies' (2006, p. 169). One of Briggs' most important contributions to the field of fairy folklore was her extraordinarily detailed *Encyclopedia*, which has been used as a reference book on British fairies by folklorists, authors, and artists alike. Another of Briggs' books *The fairies: in English literature and tradition*, traces the idea of the fairy through the poetry and literature of the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The value of this text does not lie in its brief section of regional surveys of folktales, but in Briggs's extensive compilation of literary texts regarding the fairy, in which she is careful to mention the origins of each story. Briggs' method of approaching the idea of the fairy differently from her predecessors, including examining existing and emerging theories as to their origin, served as an example for subsequent writers such as Bridget Prem.

Prem published *The wee folk: an examination of the fairy and mythological culture of Ireland* in 1979. Although not a scholarly text, *The wee folk* is significant for its recording of contemporary Irish fairy belief and associated traditions. In her introduction, Prem outlines her motivation for her book, which significantly is not based on an urge to preserve lore, but in reaction to the continued belief in fairies she encountered during her stay in Ireland. Prem maintains that the 'energy' of fairy belief in Ireland, in contrast to the rest of Europe, 'where acceptance of a supernatural culture is very much a thing of the past', prompted her investigation of this belief 'as it exists in the present day' (1979, p. 4). Unlike her Revival predecessors, Prem shows no evidence of the urgency which fuelled the collection of Irish folklore in the early twentieth century, nor any nostalgic idealisation of the past. Similarly, Briggs mentions the idea of fairy belief as being under threat very rarely, and with no palpable sense of regret; 'As usual, it is the old people who are vocal on the subject, and it is generally said that the belief in the fairies will soon be a thing of

the past' (1967, p. 148). This lack of urgency may be attributed to the continuation of the fairy-faith in Ireland, which had survived despite the prophesising of its eventual loss by folklorists for decades. However, the resurgence of interest in Irish folklore and fairies in academia and popular culture, begun by authors such as Briggs and Prem, would soon reignite these anxieties, in what I have called the rise of the nostalgic 'new fairylore' of the twenty first century.

2.5 The new fairylore (post-1990)

I have taken the term 'new fairylore' from the title of the 1991 collection *The good people: new fairylore essays*, edited by Peter Narváez. *The good people* is symptomatic of 'new fairylore' research, being a combination of ethnographic collections of living traditions, including Patricia Lysaght's interviews with a female Irish storyteller, and analysis of collected lore through the lenses of religion, culture, medicine, and semantics. These analyses include Richard P. Jenkins' discussion of seventeenth-century witchcraft focusing on fairy involvement, and Diarmuid Ó Giolláin's outlining of the struggle between the fairy-faith and hegemonic Christianity. In his essay on Newfoundland fairy belief, Narváez applied the spatial theory of liminality to fairies, arguing that fairies were '*liminal personae*' (1991, p. ix), a theory I will return to in the following chapter. Narváez observes in his introduction that 'for centuries there have been reports of fading fairy traditions' and claims that 'the idea of the fairies' disappearance itself is part of the fairylore belief complex' (1991, p. xii), thus suggesting that the continual threat of the loss of fairy folklore is now considered an essential part of the belief itself. This ongoing anxiety, the legacy of the nostalgic Revival authors, and now seemingly inseparable from the practice of Irish folklore collection, continues to motivate both creative and academic ethnographical works. However, I will first speak to the cyclical nature of the resurgence in interest in fairies and Irish folklore, and demonstrate the relationship between the popularity of fairies, and periods of uncertainty and social progress.

Irish fairies and folklore have enjoyed cycles of popularity at points of social and cultural change. The cyclical nature of the popularity of fairies may be understood as the result of prevalent disillusionment with mainstream culture or authorities,

resulting in nostalgia for the past in response to a perceived uncertain present or future. The past therefore comes to represent ‘a point or points of continuity and stability ... [as] a stable reference of identity and meaning’ (Blain & Wallis, 2007, pp. 21 - 22). In terms of Ireland, this nostalgia for the past is ‘inextricably linked to the land’s literal and cultural appropriation in the course of colonization’ by England (Potts, 2011, p. 7). The representation of Ireland by Revival authors, and by extension Irish folklore and fairies, is characterised by nostalgia for the pastoral and the ‘harmonious rural society’ of its associated peasant class (Ó Giolláin, 2000, p. 92). The pastoral is often critiqued for portraying a ‘dream of childlike simplicity and security’ rather than an accurate observation of country life (Lasch, 1991, p. 83), but it must be stressed that nostalgia for the pastoral in Irish literary tradition, although influenced by English pastoral, had radically different motivations and meaning behind its use. Oona Frawley writes that ‘pastorals written under the rule of a colonial government about nature and landscape are necessarily different’, as is the case with Ireland, containing ‘not only idealizations of culture lost under colonial rule, but also critiques of that rule itself. Colonial pastorals are quite literally about ‘homesickness’; the nostalgia contained in them is very real indeed’ (Frawley, 2005, p.5). As I will further outline in Chapter Two, fairies have become symbolic of the pastoral and its associated nostalgia. Fairies represent not only an idealised representation of Ireland’s past, but are also more broadly representative in British folklore and literature of a connection to the land and traditions that have been ‘lost’ in the modern world (Bown 2001).

The resurgence of interest in Irish folklore and fairies in the 1960’s and 1970’s further reinforces the idea of a cyclical nostalgia based on anxiety and discontent with the present. This is because it emerged at the same time, and was influenced by, the rise of alternative spiritualities and neo-paganism in Ireland (Cosgrove et al 2011). The growing popularity of neo-paganism and other ‘new religious movements’ indicates a ‘counter-cultural move’ towards the ‘recovery of supposedly ancient beliefs and practices’ in the face of cultural anxiety towards progress (Cosgrove et al, 2011, p. 9). This interest in neo-paganism is reflected in the authors of the ‘new fairylore’, such as Diane Purkiss (2000), and Juliette Wood (2006). Purkiss’ book *Troublesome things: a history of fairies and fairy stories* (2000), re-released as *At the bottom of the garden: a dark history of fairies, hobgoblins, nymphs*

and other troublesome things the following year, focuses on the pagan origins of fairies. Purkiss claims that the concept of fairies originated in Mesopotamia, Egypt, Greece, and Rome (2001, p. 12) and associates the malevolent habits and appearance of fairies to the supernatural creatures of these cultures. Wood's article 'Filming fairies: popular film, audience response and meaning in contemporary fairy lore' (2006), which focuses on the transfer of fairies from written texts to film, also mentions the rise in popular interest of fairies in the 1990's and its association with the 'growing movement of modern paganism' (2006, p. 280).

Examining contemporary research into Irish folklore reveals that, along with a focus on alternative spiritualities, the ethnographic method of folklore research is still dominant (see Tilleson 2010, Butler 2011, Gaffin 2012, Parry 2013, Monaghan 2014). The nostalgic urge which characterised Revival authors to preserve and publish Irish folklore is also evident in the work of other contemporary researchers, such as filmmaker John Walker. In 2000, Walker released a documentary called *The fairy faith*, in which he recorded his interviews with authors, artists and inhabitants of various countries including Ireland. Walker's intention was to discover if people still believed in fairies, lamenting that, 'In the past several generations we seem to have abandoned them, relegated them to the nursery, transformed them into cartoon characters that have no significant place in the modern world' (2000). Similarly, researcher Eddie Lenihan was motivated to transcribe the stories of what he calls 'hidden Ireland', and the fairy-faith which still exists 'in spite of attacks from all sides' (2003, p. 1).

Lenihan released his book *Meeting the other crowd: the fairy stories of hidden Ireland* in 2003, in which he published the stories he had been gathering since the mid-1970's. Lenihan was concerned that these stories would be irretrievably lost when the last generation of Irish tradition holders died, arguing that 'as Ireland's modernization gained pace from the 1980's on, and as the old people were listened to with less and less attention and appreciation, this ancient lore began to wither' (2003, p. 2). Lenihan also claims that the importance of preserving and passing on oral lore has ceased to be of importance in modern Ireland, demonstrating nostalgia towards a past, in the form of the older generation which he calls the 'tradition-bearers', which is under threat by progress and the disinterest of the younger generation of Irish people. He writes that 'Within a single lifetime Ireland has

changed from a predominately rural to a mainly urban society ... Old people, the tradition-bearers, have become virtual exiles in their own land, disregarded, undervalued' (2003, p. 4). Lenihan attributes the loss of traditional beliefs and ambivalence towards preserving local lore to the urbanisation of Ireland, which has led to higher education levels amongst the population, the spread of electricity, which changed people's attitude towards darkness and the night when 'most supernatural occurrences were felt to happen', and a decline in religious belief and practice, with which fairy belief 'has declined almost in tandem' (2003, pp. 4 -6).

Despite the variety of research that has taken place on fairy lore to date, a detailed overview of the subject had not been undertaken until D. L. Ashliman's work *Fairy lore: a handbook*, in 2006. In *Fairy lore*, Ashliman provides not only a section on the definition and classification of fairies, but also a review of the existing scholarship, and an examination of the historical and cultural contexts in which the folklore has occurred. Ashliman's objective is to 'present a sampling of these legends and to examine them – if this is possible – both sympathetically and objectively' (2006, p. vii), concentrating his research on north-western Europe, and in particular the regions of Germany, Scandinavia, Britain and Ireland, which demonstrate similarities in the 'content, structure and function' of fairy belief (2006, p. 1). Ashliman's focus is not ethnography like many of his contemporaries, but rather on analysis of existing sources and scholarship. However, Ashliman is also preoccupied with the preservation of folklore as evidenced by his compilation of several digital libraries, including the invaluable *Folklore, folktales, and fairy tales from Ireland* begun in 2009, which contains online transcripts of many nineteenth- and twentieth-century texts that are immensely difficult to obtain in print.

Most recently, more analytical perspectives on the Irish fairy have emerged in the field, primarily from researchers working in the areas of literary criticism and history. In 2014, Jan Beveridge published *Children into swans: fairy tales and the pagan imagination*, which analyses Irish folktales as part of the literary tradition of fairy tales, while in the same year Anne Markey examined the relationship between Irish folklore and Gothic literature in her book chapter 'The gothicization of Irish folklore', suggesting that Irish folklore is the source for multiple Gothic tropes. Audrey Robitaillie's 2015 doctoral thesis "*Away with the fairies": the motif of fairy abduction and of the changeling, from Irish mythology to the Irish diaspora*" analysed

fairies as motifs in contemporary Irish literature, finding that the figure of the fairy is used as a metaphor for emigration and exile. In 2016, medieval scholar Mark Williams published *Ireland's immortals: a history of the gods of Irish myth*, which traces the evolution of the Tuatha de Danann as divinities through Irish and English texts from the Middle Ages to the present. Rather than attempting to reconstruct the beliefs of pre-Christian Ireland, Williams focuses on why interest in the Irish gods persisted, as well as the 'work which the native gods performed within Irish culture during the Middle Ages' (2016, p. xvi). Finally, historian and folklorist Robert Curran published *The truth about leprechauns* in March of 2017, an in-depth study of the figure of the leprechaun and how it developed its current popular status in Irish folklore.

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter has argued that by tracing the publication of Irish folklore concerning fairies, it can be concluded that folklore collection from the nineteenth to the twenty first century is a nostalgic practice, cyclical in nature, and characterised by the idealisation of the figure of the Irish peasant and the enduring belief that Irish oral lore is under threat of being lost. The 'new fairylore' of the twenty first century is the result of the latest resurgence of interest in Irish folklore and fairies, and is characterised by both the traditional ethnographic method of folklore collection, and the more recent trend of analysing existing sources.

Nostalgia can be seen to underpin, inform, and influence the work of contemporary folklore collectors and researchers, in the form of interest in alternative spiritualities, and in the continuing focus on the preservation of oral lore before it is 'lost', the legacy of the authors of the Irish Literary Revival. What also becomes evident is the neglect of cultural geography as a lens through which to analyse Irish folklore, despite folklore's essential connection to the landscape. The following chapter, 'Theory: In a place apart', therefore concentrates on defining the theoretical concepts of nostalgia, space, the Irish fairy landscape, and power, and outlining how these theories will be used in conjunction to analyse the fairy sites of Ireland.

Chapter Two

Theory: In a place apart

3.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces the major theories and theorists that will inform this thesis. Through an analysis of the concept of nostalgia and its relation to fairies, place, and power, this chapter argues that that nostalgia, Irish fairy folklore, space, and power all intersect in the construction and production of Irish fairy sites as nostalgic places. In this chapter, Svetlana Boym's typology of 'restorative' and 'reflective' nostalgia (2001) and Doreen Massey's definition of place as 'spatio-temporal events' (2005) are identified as most conducive to the thesis argument.

I begin this chapter by situating nostalgia within academic scholarship through a review of definitions, critiques and defences of the term. I then identify Svetlana Boym's typology of restorative and reflective nostalgia (2001) as most suitable for the critical analysis and creative work that comprise this thesis. However, I will also argue that the various sub-categories of nostalgia that have been developed suggest a more nuanced understanding of nostalgia is needed in academia, an argument which will be engaged with in the creative work. The chapter continues with an analysis of the relationship between fairies and nostalgia, specifically the development of contemporary representations of fairies through nineteenth-century British nostalgias directed towards childhood and the pastoral. This leads to an outline of the relationship between Irish fairies and the natural landscape, and the definition of Irish fairy sites as liminal spaces and fairies as liminal entities by Peter Narv  ez (1991). I then turn to nostalgia and place, first by speaking to the spatial turn in academia and its effect on the field of cultural geography, then by examining the complicated relationship between the terms space and place, and in doing so identifying Doreen Massey's definition of place (2005) as the most beneficial for both the site-specific analysis and creative work. Finally, I consider the role of power in the production and politicisation of place, by connecting Michel Foucault's definition of power (1980b) to the place-making and place-defining practices

discussed by Massey (2005), and outline the role that nostalgia plays in the power relations which construct and control place.

3.2 Nostalgia

3.2.1 Situating nostalgia

The term nostalgia originates from the Greek roots of *nostos*, meaning to ‘return home’ and *algia*, meaning ‘longing’ (Boym, 2007, p. 7). Initially attached to pathology, the term was used as a medical diagnosis by physician Johannes Hofer to explain the particular homesickness suffered by Swiss mercenaries in the seventeenth century (Bonnett, 2010, p. 5). Nostalgia was believed to be curable with ‘opium, leeches and a journey to the Swiss Alps’ (Boym, 2007, p. 7). By the end of the nineteenth century this understanding had shifted to the idea of nostalgia as a psychological condition, ‘an incurable (indeed unassuageable) condition of the spirit or psyche’ (Hutcheon, 2000, para. 8), and by the twentieth century nostalgia had been detached from its pathological base and was more likely to be associated with emotions such as love or jealousy (Davis, 1979, pp. 4 -5).

Nostalgia has been harshly criticised in academia in multiple disciplines. Svetlana Boym notes that nostalgia ‘frustrates psychologists, scientists, literary theorists and philosophers’ alike (2007, p. 10). Criticism of nostalgia is generally focused on nostalgia’s idealisation of the past, and its problematic association with history and memory. Nostalgia has been defined as the opposite of progress, and as a defensive reaction to modernism (see Turner 1987, Pickering & Keightley 2006, Boym 2007, Bonnett 2010), in which disillusionment with the present leads to a sense of loss for a positively perceived past. The sense of loss felt by the nostalgic subject results in an idealisation of and attachment to the past which David Lowenthal condemns as ‘truly pathological’ (1985, p. 11). Christopher Lasch criticises nostalgia for exaggerating the simplicity and naiveté of the past (1991, p. 118), while Susan Stewart considers that nostalgics are ‘enamoured of distance’ (1993, p. 145), rather than of the referent within the past itself. The idealised past that the nostalgic subject longs for exists in a problematic relationship with memory and the ‘historical’ past. Nostalgia has a tendency to construct a ‘complete, stable, coherent [and] safe’ past

(Hutcheon, 2000, para. 9), departing from and sanitising the ‘true’ historical past. An example of this is the nostalgia film, which Fredric Jameson identifies as relying on stereotypes and narratives set in a nostalgic past ‘beyond history’ (1991, pp. 117-118). The ‘mass marketing’ of nostalgia in the twenty first century (Huyssen, 2000, p. 24), particularly in relation to heritage, is troubling for critics because of the distance between the historical past and the idealised past of the nostalgic subject. Lasch condemns nostalgia as an ‘abdication of memory’ (1991, p. 14) and Stewart denounces the concept as a ‘social disease’ (1993, p. 22) in reference to the uncertain relationship nostalgia has with memory.

However, recently theorists have been attempting to construct a more nuanced view of nostalgia. Boym disputes the claim that nostalgia, in its focus on the past, is hostile towards modernity, suggesting that they are instead ‘doubles’ and ‘mirror images’ of each other (2007, p. 8). She further argues that nostalgia is not always retrospective, but can be directed ‘sideways’, as the nostalgic subject can feel ‘stifled within the conventional confines of time and space’ (Boym, 2007, p. 8). Alistair Bonnett critiques the idea that nostalgia is conservative through his examination of the avant-garde movement of the late nineteenth century. At the time, nostalgia was marginalised in mainstream society, and became a ‘forbidden and alluring resource for cultural transgression’ (Bonnett, 2010, p. 30). For Bonnett therefore, nostalgia can be a ‘moment of creativity ... discord and danger’ rather than of ‘drooping repose’ (2010, p. 10). Even Lowenthal in his criticism of nostalgia points out the fallacy of imagining that there can be a ‘non-nostalgic reading’ of the past that is ‘honest’ or ‘authentically ‘true’’ (1989, p. 30), problematising the perceived gap between the historical past and the idealised past of nostalgics. Several theorists have developed their own types, or sub-categories, of nostalgia to combat the issues associated with the term (see Davis 1979, Stern 1992, Holbrook 1993, Baker & Kennedy 1994, Appadurai 1996, Blunt 2003, Ladino 2004, Boym 2001, 2007, Walder 2011, Howard 2012, Smith & Campbell 2017). For example, Alison Blunt created the term ‘productive nostalgia’ (2003) to address the negative connotations associated with nostalgia’s preoccupation with the past by suggesting that nostalgia can also be oriented towards the present and the future, and Scott Alexander Howard uses ‘Proustian nostalgia’ (2012) to discuss negative nostalgic experiences, questioning the idea that nostalgia always idealises the past as positive.

What emerges from these defences of and engagements with nostalgia is that the common definition of nostalgia is limited in its usefulness; nostalgia is not always focused on the past, or conservative in nature, or hostile towards modernity and progress. Sean Scanlan argues that nostalgia is ‘always complicated – complicated in what it looks like, how it works, upon whom it works, and even who works on it’ (2004, pp. 3-4). Boym proposes that the past, rather than always simply being idealised against an unfulfilling present, ‘opens up a multitude of potentialities’ for the nostalgic subject (2007, p. 16). In comparison, Howard maintains that the assumption that nostalgia ‘depends’ on comparing the past with the present does not take into account the ‘full range of recognisably nostalgic experiences available to us’ (2012, p. 641). In light of this, I will now discuss how nostalgia will be defined for the duration of this thesis.

3.2.2 Defining nostalgia

When nostalgia was separated from its pathological definition in the twentieth century, the definition of nostalgia as relating to a longing for a specific place or ‘home’ also shifted. Nostalgia now predominately refers to a longing for the past, moving from ‘spatial dislocation to temporal’ and the sense of ‘feeling oneself a stranger in a new period’ (Pickering & Keightley, 2006, p. 922). The loss was no longer the nostalgic subject’s home or homeland, but of a ‘mythic’ Golden Age (Lowenthal, 1985, p. 372). This is arguably a more grievous loss because unlike space, time is ‘irreversible’ and cannot be returned to (Hutcheon, 2000, para. 8). Boym theorises that nostalgia could also be a rebellion against the ‘modern idea’ of time, ‘the time of history and progress’ (2007, p. 12). The relationship between nostalgia and space has therefore been subjugated by time; Stewart suggesting that this detachment from space results in contemporary nostalgia being a ‘sadness without an object’, the ‘desire for desire’ (1991, p. 23), and Lowenthal writing that nostalgia, once a localised and temporalised longing, now seems to ‘engulf the entire past’ (1985, p. 6). The ramifications of this shift must be considered when defining nostalgia, as my argument focuses on the role of nostalgia in the construction and production of place.

Nostalgia has proven difficult to define. It has even been suggested that nostalgia cannot be reduced to a single definition, as its ‘meanings and significance are

multiple' (Pickering & Keightley, 2006, p. 919). Defining nostalgia is further complicated by its position as an affect (see Sedikides, Wildschut & Baden 2004, Wilson 2005, Boym 2007, Howard 2012), the fact it is constructed (see Hutcheon 2000, Caton & Santos 2007), and that it can be both an individual and collective experience (see Shaw & Chase 1989, Turner 1987, Tannock 1995, Boym 2007), all characteristics that will be analysed later in this chapter.

One of the most authoritative definitions of nostalgia is attributed to sociologist Fred Davis in his seminal text *Yearning for yesterday: a sociology of nostalgia* (1979). Davis defines nostalgia as 'a positively toned evocation of a lived past in the context of some negative feeling toward present or impending circumstance' (1979, p. 18), a definition which remains popular amongst academics writing on nostalgia (see Dann 1994, Batcho 1995, Pickering & Keightley 2006, Caton & Santos 2007). This definition, although useful as an entry point to, or overarching description of nostalgia, does not adequately cover the various complexities of nostalgia as a concept, which Krystine Batcho describes as a 'multifaceted, composite construct' (1995, p. 131). In response to this challenge of definition, academics have produced various sub-categories of nostalgia, including 'simple', 'reflexive', and 'interpreted' nostalgia (Davis 1979), 'historical' nostalgia (Stern 1992), 'personal' nostalgia (Holbrook 1993), 'simulated' and 'collective' nostalgia (Baker & Kennedy 1994), 'imagined' and 'armchair' nostalgia (Appadurai 1996), 'productive' nostalgia (Blunt 2003), 'official' and 'counter' nostalgia (Ladino 2004), 'restorative' and 'reflective' nostalgia (Boym 2001, 2007), 'postcolonial nostalgia' (Walder 2011), 'Proustian' nostalgia (Howard 2012), and 'reactionary' and 'progressive' nostalgia (Smith & Campbell 2017).

Of these sub-categories, it is Svetlana Boym's typology of restorative and reflective nostalgia that will inform both the critical analysis and creative work comprising this thesis. Boym defines nostalgia as 'a longing for a home that no longer exists or has never existed' (2007, p. 7), an interpretation that foregrounds the spatial longing experienced by nostalgics, rather than focusing on temporal longing. Boym defines restorative nostalgia as focusing on the concept of home, in which nostalgics attempt a 'transhistorical reconstruction' of the lost home or homeland (Boym, 2007, p. 13). This reconstruction of the lost home involves an 'attempt to conquer and spatialize time' through the use of rituals and symbols (Boym, 2007, p. 15). Restorative

nostalgia is suitable for my critical analysis for several reasons. Firstly, Boym's association of nostalgia with the homeland, and therefore place, is compatible with my site-specific analysis. Secondly, Boym places restorative nostalgia 'at the core of recent national and religious revivals', maintaining that restorative nostalgia does not see itself as nostalgia but rather as 'truth and tradition' (2007, p. 13). As I will demonstrate in subsequent chapters, this sentiment is present in the construction of my selection of Irish fairy sites, and informs the power relations and conflicts present in the Irish fairy landscape. Finally, the nature of restorative nostalgia allows it to be used in conjunction with other sub-categories of nostalgia associated with the nationalism, heritage, and sacred discourses which control Irish fairy sites, namely collective, historical, and performative nostalgia.

The various sub-categories of nostalgia mentioned above suggest a need for more nuanced understandings and definitions of nostalgia; specifically, that nostalgia should be reconfigured as an umbrella term, for a multiplicity of nostalgias. Therefore, in the creative work I engage with the idea of a range of nostalgias through Boym's concept of reflective nostalgia. Reflective nostalgia can be ironic, humorous, and critical, as it focuses on the 'gap between identity and resemblance' in the subject of its longing, rather than trying to reconstruct the 'mythical' home in the present (Boym, 2007, p. 15). Furthermore, reflective nostalgia suggests that the past 'opens up a multitude of potentialities [and] non-teleological possibilities of historic development' (Boym, 2007, p. 16), an idea that I engage with subsequently in the conclusion and the creative work.

3.3 The Irish fairy landscape

3.3.1 Fairies and nostalgia

Fairies are mutable figures in Irish folklore; as shapeshifters, even the question of their appearance is not easily apparent. Ashliman observes that descriptions of fairies from observers 'substantially disagree' with each other even when the sightings are from the same localised area and relative time period (2006, p. 6). The mutable nature of the fairy has allowed it to survive and pass into popular culture and imagination, currently taking the prevalent image of 'cute little creatures with

transparent wings and sparkling wands' (Lenhihan, 2003, p. 330). However, the representation of fairies in contemporary Western culture as small, winged, mischievous, and ultimately benevolent figures is not a recent creation, but originated in the nineteenth century as the result of both temporal nostalgia for childhood, and spatial nostalgia for the pastoral.

The connection of children to fairies is well established in folklore (see Keightley 1833, Wilde 1887, Yeats 1893, Evans-Wentz 1911, Gregory 1920, Briggs 1976). Many Irish folktales focus on the abduction or near abduction of children by the fairies, either as infants to be replaced with fairy changelings, or when older if particularly virtuous or beautiful. It was thought that children with golden hair were particularly prized by the fairies (Briggs 1976). However, the association of children with fairies in contemporary culture has its origins in nineteenth-century English society. At that time, nostalgic connections were made between fairies, children, and childhood in art and literature connections which represented childhood as a 'lost fairyland' (Bown, 2001, p. 172). Nicola Bown contends that this nostalgia was specifically for a child's experience of time that 'stretches out endlessly or is gone in a moment' (2001, p. 174). This nostalgia for childhood was because Victorians experienced an 'acute sense of the linearity of time' (Bown, 2001, p. 174), caused by scientific advances in evolutionary theory and archaeology and the increasing secularisation of society.

Late nineteenth-century art and literature represented fairies as sanitised and domesticated figures, having more in common with angels than the 'powerful and even malevolent figures' of the pre-Elizabethan and Elizabethan eras (Stewart, 1993, p. 113). This depiction also influenced Irish representations of the fairy, particularly as more illustrated Irish folklore collections were published in England. Croker's *Fairy legends*, for example, featured engravings by William Henry Brooke, which offered 'generally playful and distinctly unthreatening' images of the supernatural (Schacker, 2003, p. 69). Brooke's illustrations, according to Jennifer Schacker, 'inhabit that corner of fairy painting in which the "good people" appear charming, delicate, unthreatening', in stark contrast 'with the fairies as described in the narratives themselves' (2003, p. 69).

This ethereal and delicate representation of fairies may also be seen as part of the idealisation of the pastoral prevalent in nineteenth-century Britain. Fairies came to symbolise the rural and the pastoral that was under threat from industrialisation, and nostalgia for ‘some real or imagined state of harmony and centeredness once experienced in rural settings’ (Buttimer, 1980, p. 166). Bown suggests that Fairyland, as a version of the pastoral, became the ‘Arcadia for the industrial age’ (2001, p. 85). Comparatively, the pre-industrial age was perceived as a ‘world of farms and villages, commons and hollow hills ... where the fairies left footprints from their midnight revels on the village green’ (Bown, 2001, p. 85). The presence of fairies in such landscapes in late nineteenth-century art, poetry, and literature thus suggests that they are ‘nostalgic constructions’ (Bown, 2001, p. 85). As mentioned in the previous chapter, pastoral nostalgia in Irish literature differs from English pastoral in its longing for a ‘pre-Christian, pre-conquest Ireland’, with Irish writers depicting the country as a ‘green unspoiled landscape’ in order to assert Irish claims to the land and ‘contrast themselves favourably to industrialized England’ (Potts, 2011, p. 7). The pastoral, along with fairies, thereby became a tool Irish writers could use to criticise colonisation and establish a distinct national identity separate from England (Potts 2011, p. 7). This link between fairies and nostalgia for the pastoral demonstrates that the current popular image of fairies represents not only a longing for a lost time, but also for a place; in pastoral nostalgia ‘it is literally *space and place* that is being alluded to and for which people long’ (Wilson, 2015, p. 482). The connection between fairies and the natural world is also made apparent in Irish folklore, which has resulted in certain enduring traditions and attitudes towards fairy sites in Ireland.

3.3.2 Fairy folklore and the Irish landscape

Irish fairies are typically associated with features of the natural world. These include hills, mountains, rivers, forests, lakes, hawthorn trees, and raths (also known as hillforts, ringforts and fairy forts), which are the remains of Iron Age dwellings or strongholds surrounded by a wall, usually located on the summits of hills (Lenihan, 2003, p. 10). The relationship of fairies to the landscape is made evident in any of the collections of the fairy lore of Ireland. In Irish lore, to speak or write about fairies also meant to speak and write about the landscape. This relationship is represented in folklore in various ways, such as the fact that groups of fairies were commonly

identified by the county they were said to reside in, which also served to further differentiate them from the fairies of Scotland and England (Kennedy 1866), or were referenced in the name of the place itself. For example, in the Book of Leinster, a short section of prose recounts the naming of Rath Cruachan by Midir, one of the Tuatha de Danann, during his abduction of Etain (Chadwick & Chadwick, 1986, p. 283). These collections of Irish poems and prose which explain the origins of place-names are known as *dinnsenchas*, and date back to the ninth, tenth and eleventh centuries (Chadwick & Chadwick, 1986, p. 283). Fairies were also often represented by features of the landscape. Even if they were not visible, their presence could be inferred by the geographical features of the area, such as a lone hawthorn or rath nearby (Lover 1834).

The abodes of the fairies were considered dangerous areas governed by certain rules. For example, Yeats recorded that ‘No wise peasant would hum "The Pretty Girl milking the Cow" near a fairy rath, for they ... do not like to hear their songs on clumsy mortal lips’ (1888, p. 3), and Evans-Wentz mentions the widely-held belief that building on fairy tracks or preserves was bad luck; ‘Everything will go wrong. Their animals will die, their children fall sick, and no end of trouble will come on them’ (1911, p. 38). The consequences of destroying a fairy abode ranged from bad luck to disfigurement to death in extreme cases; the punishment for a person building on or damaging a rath was that the fairies would ‘put a blast on his eyes, or give him a crooked mouth for no human hand should dare to touch their ancient dancing grounds’ (Wilde, 1887, p. 77). Even an act as innocuous as cutting bushes associated with fairies for firewood could lead to death for the perpetrator (Evans-Wentz, 1911, p. 33).

Therefore, it is not surprising that the long tradition of respect and avoidance of fairy sites has continued into the customs of contemporary Ireland. It is still considered bad luck for farmers to cut down a ‘fairy thorn’, or for builders to remove a fairy tree or bush during the construction of a house as ‘no luck could be expected for its occupants’ (Prem, 1979, p. 28). It is the association of particular parts of the Irish landscape with fairies which has led to the preservation of Irish fairy sites into the twenty first century. Lysaght asserts that the ‘ambivalent status’ of these sites ‘guaranteed their survival’ into contemporary times, writing that ‘There is no doubt that the association of these raths, mounds and other antiquities with the fairies was

the principal reason for the preservation of such large numbers of them in the Irish countryside' (1991, p. 45). This ambivalent status to which Lysaght refers is the idea that sites associated with fairies are liminal spaces, that is, threshold spaces between places, and that fairies themselves are '*liminal personae*' (Narváez 1991, p. ix).

3.3.3 Fairies and liminality

The concept of liminality was explored first by Arnold van Gennep in 1909. Van Gennep studied rites of passage, 'ceremonial patterns which accompany a passage from one situation to another or from one cosmic or social world to another' (1960, p. 10). Van Gennep categorised rites of passage into three types: preliminal rites or rites of separation, liminal rites or rites of transition, and postliminal rites, or rites of incorporation (1960). In 1967, Victor Turner used van Gennep's concept of liminality for his study of African society and ritual, in the process introducing the idea of 'liminal entities', individuals in the liminal or transitional stage of a ritual who are 'neither here nor there ... betwixt and between' (1969, p. 95). An individual in this liminal state is described as wavering 'between two worlds' (van Gennep, 1960, p. 18), indicating that this state is a spatial as well as a temporal phenomenon. Liminality is also a 'widespread theme' in Irish culture and literature, drawing on Ireland's colonial and postcolonial history and its temporal and spatial 'borders and states of in-betweenness' (Nordin & Holmsten, 2009, p. 7). The tendency for liminality to be described as a boundary, doorway or border itself argues for the term having spatial connotations (Andrews & Roberts, 2012, p. 1). Narváez utilised this interpretation in his work on fairies, shifting the idea of liminality as a temporal stage in a ritual to a spatial understanding (1991, p. 337). For Narváez fairies are liminal beings, 'creatures of ambivalent status and inclination' (1991, p. 338), but also inhabit liminal spaces in the landscape.

Fairies are considered liminal beings in folklore research because they are encountered at thresholds of both time and space. In Irish folklore, the majority of fairy encounters occur in what can be described as temporary and 'magico-religiously' exceptional situations (van Gennep, 1960, p. 18). Purkiss records that fairies are encountered in 'festive' situations 'marked out from ordinary life', and during transitional periods in the day and year such as midday, midnight, seasonal transitions, Halloween, May Eve, and before other significant feasts and seasonal

events (2000, p. 86). Fairies were also more likely to be encountered at ‘moments of social or physical transition’ in an individual’s life, including birth, adolescence, marriage, ‘defloration’, and death (Purkiss, 2000, p. 86). Meeting a fairy during these transitional points in life or time was considered particularly dangerous, as the individual was then exposed to the possibility of physical harm or abduction. However, there are records of people, particularly bards, deliberately seeking out fairies on May Eve and sleeping on raths in order to obtain fairy gifts (Wilde 1887).

Fairy sites in Ireland are also considered to be liminal in nature, in which the usual rules of time and space are distorted. Narváez argues that fairy sites exist in areas between known space, or areas of purity, and unknown space, or areas of danger, where an individual might experience benign or malignant entities (1991, p. 338). Irish fairy sites are generally not located in the wilderness but rather ‘on the edge of human civilization’ (Cavallero, 2011, p. 32). Many fairy sites were thought to act as liminal gateways to the Otherworld, known in Ireland as *Tír na n-Óg* (Yeats 1888), including Lough Gur and Knockma, a hillfort in County Galway, although these gateways were subject to conditions such as appearing only on a particular day or time of the year. For this reason, Regina Buccola calls fairy sites ‘liminal zones’, as they exist on the border between the human and supernatural realms (2006, p. 43). Fairy behaviour in these liminal spaces was unpredictable and often dangerous; people attempting to cross or enter fairy sites were often ‘led astray’ and wandered lost for hours or days (Narváez, 1991, p. 343), and fairies were ‘alternately figured as protecting or attacking those who enter liminal zones’ (Buccola, 2006, p. 43). It is these liminal attributes that has led to the ambivalent status of fairy sites in Ireland and their associated practices of avoidance and respect. The established connection of fairies to liminality in folklore research suggests that fairy sites can be both a ‘physical as well as psychic space of potentiality’ (Andrews & Roberts, 2012, p. 1). The connection of Irish fairies with liminal spaces is further explored in Chapter Five, in which I examine how the ambivalent status of fairy sites is utilised by neo-pagan groups to destabilise the established place-identities of heritage sites. I also utilise liminality in the creative work, using the concept to challenge and undermine the dominant discourses and narratives that construct Irish fairy sites.

3.4 Space and place

3.4.1 The spatial turn

Spatial theory is continually growing in importance within the humanities and social sciences. This trend has collectively been called the ‘spatial turn’ (Tally, 2013, p. 38), referring to the shift in focus from ‘time, chronology and history’ to ‘location, geography and mobility’ in these disciplines (Faisst, 2014, p. 66). Prior to the turn, space was a marginalised concept, subordinate to time since the Industrial Revolution of the nineteenth century. The world was theorised about through the ‘lens of historicism’, a ‘despatialized consciousness’ with little importance placed on geography (Warf & Arias, 2009, p. 3). The spatial turn resulted in a reworking of the significance of spatiality in which geography was recognised as ‘intimately involved’ in the construction of social relations (Warf & Arias, 2009, p. 1). The spatial turn in cultural studies and other disciplines is itself the result of a ‘cultural turn’ in geography in the 1970’s. Geographers became frustrated with the restrictions that the then popular spatial science methodology placed on their research (Soja 2001), and out of their discontent a new critical human geography was formed. Human geography developed along two distinct strands of theory: a phenomenological or humanist understanding of geography, and what was dubbed materialist or ‘Marxist geography’ (Soja, 2001, p. 2). Humanist geography emphasised personal experience and understanding of landscape most clearly expressed in its concept of ‘sense of place’, while materialist geography and spatial science emphasised ‘trends and structures’ (Ekinsmyth & Shurmer-Smith, 2002, p. 20).

Of the various sub-disciplines of geography that began to utilise cultural theory in their research, cultural geography experienced one of the most significant shifts in focus away from landscape towards cultural politics. Until this change, the main interest of cultural geographers was cultural landscapes, defined by Carl Ortwin Sauer as having been ‘fashioned from a natural landscape by a culture group’ (Sauer, 1963, p. 343). Sauer, the ‘father of cultural geography’, and founder of the Berkeley School of Researchers (Anderson et al, 2003, p. 3), was primarily interested in material culture and artefacts in rural landscapes. Sauer’s practice ultimately came under criticism in the 1980’s by various geographers (see Duncan 1980, Cosgrove

1983, Jackson 1989), resulting in Denis Cosgrove and Peter Jackson publishing a joint article in 1987 introducing their idea of a revitalised and new 'cultural geography'. According to Cosgrove and Jackson, cultural geography would be contemporary as well as historical, social as well as spatial, urban as well as rural, and centre on the 'contingent nature of culture, in dominant ideologies and in forms of resistance to them' (1987, p. 95). Jackson and Cosgrove were influenced by the idea of 'cultural politics', a theory that emerged from the combined research of Raymond Williams, Stuart Hall, and other members of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at the University of Birmingham. The Centre developed the idea of a plurality of cultures inhabiting a multiplicity of landscapes and representations where 'meanings are negotiated and relations of dominance and subordination are defined and contested' (Jackson, 1989, p. 2). The Centre also adopted geographical terms in their research, the most famous of which is the understanding of culture as 'maps of meaning through which the world is made intelligible' (Jackson, 1989, p. 3), after which Jackson named what could be considered the first textbook of the new cultural geography, *Maps of Meaning* (1989).

Currently in cultural geography, both the 'traditional' method of research associated with Sauer, and the 'new' method of research originating with Cosgrove and Jackson, continue to be used by scholars. The relationship between culture and space remains one of importance in the fields of cultural studies and geography, and in the discipline of cultural geography which bridges the gap between them. Brian Longhurst et al argue that culture can only be understood in relation to space and place, as it is 'plural, fragmented and contested' (2012, p. 107), while Edward Soja posits that 'there is no unspatialised social reality' (1996, p. 46). However, place and space as terms have an uneasy and complex relationship within academic scholarship which must be acknowledged before any association with nostalgia can occur.

3.4.2 Place versus space

The terms 'place' and 'space' have come to represent the two distinct approaches that emerged from the spatial turn and the creation of a critical human geography. Phenomenology has become associated with place, and materialist geography with space (Hubbard 2007). In academia, the terms space and place are frequently used interchangeably, but Phil Hubbard points out that for human geographers, these

terms are 'related but distinct concepts' (2007, p. 41). Either term should not be used casually as they carry multiple associations and connotations in different academic fields, and the definition of space and place is continually contested and renegotiated. Nigel Thrift acknowledges this complication, calling space the 'outcome of a series of highly problematic temporary settlements' (2009, p. 95).

Academics writing from a phenomenological or humanist geographical position tend to be critical, if not outwardly hostile, towards space. Phenomenology is founded on the importance of 'lived experience' and 'being-in-the-world' (Relph, 1985, p. 2), a position that conceives place as stable (see Relph 1976, Tuan 1977, Malpas 2004), and meaningful (see Relph 1976, Tuan 1977, Casey 1996, Ingold 2009). Space is therefore defined as the opposite of place, either as open and threatening (Tuan 1977), or as homogenous and uniform (Malpas 2013). Yi-Fu Tuan argues that space is 'transformed' into place when it 'acquires definition and meaning' (1977, p. 136), a popular sentiment amongst phenomenologists echoed by more vehemently anti-space scholars such as Tim Ingold (2009). In his work, Ingold refers to space as an 'abstract' and 'empty' term which is 'detached from the realities of life and experience' (2009, p. 1). However, what constitutes a place is contested amongst humanist geographers. Jeff Malpas argues that places are bounded spaces (2013), while Edward Casey considers places to be events, 'places not only are, they happen' (1996, p. 27), and Ingold argues that places are delineated by movement, describing human existence as 'place-binding' rather than 'place-bound' (2009, p. 5).

In comparison, materialist geographers consider place to be a particular type of space. Place is theorised as a particular construction of space amongst multiple spaces (see Foucault 1967, Lefebvre 1991, Soja 1996, Massey 2005, Thrift 2009). Examples of these multiple spaces include Michel Foucault's notion of the 'heterotopia', spaces which are linked to other spaces in such a way as to 'invert' the relations they were originally designed to reflect (1984, p. 3), and Soja's idea of 'thirdspace', a space that is both real and imagined (1996). Henri Lefebvre contends that space is produced in various ways, from absolute or natural space to social space (1991, p. 48). He further argues that there are three ways space may be conceptualised: as spatial practices, representations of space, and as representational space (Lefebvre 1991, p. 33). It is unclear where place falls within this conceptual triad, although Hubbard suggests that Lefebvre considers place a type of space

‘created through acts of naming’ as well as through ‘distinctive activities and imaginings’ associated with social spaces (2007, p. 42). Doreen Massey argues for the idea of places as ‘spatio-temporal events’ (2005, p. 130). She proposes that places be recognised as constituted through interactions, as containing the possibility of ‘contemporaneous plurality’, and as always under construction (2005, p. 140). More recently, Nigel Thrift argued for the existence of four different constructions of space in current research: empirical, block, and image space, and place, which is conceived as a way of ordering space that confirms and naturalises its existence (2009). For Thrift, differentiating space in this way allows for a more ‘relational view’ of space (2009, p. 96), demonstrating the centrality of space in the construction and production of culture.

3.4.3 Place as a plurality

Of these scholars, it is Massey’s spatial theories that most inform my analysis of the fairy sites of Ireland. Firstly Massey argues for a definition of place that contains the ‘possibility of the existence of multiplicity’ (2005, p. 9), a theory that informs the multiple nostalgias and voices I introduce in the creative work. Secondly, Massey’s work focuses on the relationship between place, politics, and power (see Massey 1994a, 1994b, 1995, 1999, 2005, 2012), a connection that underpins my analysis of the power relations that construct my chosen fairy sites as nostalgic places.

In her work, Massey reconceptualises place in a way that rejects hegemonic understandings of place as coherent and stable. This involves breaking down the differentiations made in cultural geography between space and place, resulting in a view of space as simultaneous, plural, and unfinished ‘stories-so-far’, and of place as a collection of these stories, a ‘particular constellation within the wider topographies of space’ (2005, pp. 130 -131). Massey maintains that her position is not hostile towards the concept of place, suggesting that her definition is instead an ‘alternative positive understanding’ (2005, p. 140). However, Massey does criticise how place is contrasted with space in phenomenological texts. She argues that space needs to be separated from connotations of uniformity and abstraction, and resettled amongst ideas including ‘heterogeneity’ and ‘liveliness’ (2005, p. 13). Massey emphasises that her understanding of place is not campaigning for the dissolution of places into

space, but rather to present places as a temporary and dynamic ‘coming together of trajectories’ (2005, p. 141).

Massey considers places to be events, a set of negotiations and interactions between human and non-human actors. This is a position which rejects the ‘assumption of coherence’ traditionally associated with place (2005, pp. 140 -141). The literary heritage of Ireland can also be seen to centre around sets of interactions between the human and non-human, with Irish literature demonstrating a ‘preoccupation with place’, and a sense of place having ‘particular resonance’ in Ireland (Cronin, 2012, p. 107). Reconceptualising place in this way allows for the exposure and challenge of the discourses that are mobilised in the construction of places; in the case of this thesis, the discourses of nationalism, heritage, and the sacred. Understanding places as unsettled and interconnected undermines the dominant discourses that construct place, so that there can be ‘no assumption of pre-given coherence, or of community or collective identity’, thus forcing us to ‘confront the challenge of the negotiation of multiplicity’ in our interactions with place (Massey, 2005, p. 141). It is this notion which informs my engagement with fairy places in the creative work.

The motivation behind Massey’s redefinition of place is the ongoing politicisation and reliance on place in reaction to the uncertainties of globalisation. Massey argues that in political argument and policy there is a tendency to retreat from perceived invasion or difference into the ‘politically conservative haven’ of place (2005, pp. 5 - 6). The assumed coherence of place can only be threatened by, and therefore must be protected from, ‘external forces’ (Massey, 2005, p. 141), a theory that I will expand upon in Chapters Two and Three regarding the discourses of nationalism and heritage. David Featherstone and Joe Painter consider that Massey’s work has resulted in an awareness that politics and space are co-constitutive, and that ‘to think spatially is never an innocent, politically neutral activity’ (2013, p. 3). Massey also argues that globalisation has resulted in the conceptualisation of space as a ‘surface’ to be ‘crossed and maybe conquered’ (2005, p. 4). This theory has political implications in terms of power imbalance and the rights of particular groups and cultures, and is further discussed in Chapter Five, focusing on neo-pagan use of sacred sites. What becomes apparent from Massey’s analysis of the politicisation of place is the role of power in place-making and place-defining practices. Massey confirms that the identification and characterisation of places can be central to

political conflict (1995, p. 189), as place-making not only constructs ‘ruling notions’ of what a place is, but can also determine the ‘identity of a people or group’ and the ‘characteristics of ‘communities’’ (2012, p. xiv). The relationship made evident here between place and power necessitates further discussion of both power as a concept, and its connection with discourse in place-making practices.

3.5 Power

3.5.1 Power and place-making

Michel Foucault is arguably the most influential theorist to write about power, and it is his definition of power that informs Massey’s connection of power and place. In his various publications, Foucault has argued that power is multiple and mobile, unstable, related to social networks, both a repressive and productive force, produced by and through subjects, and inextricable from knowledge (see Foucault 1879, 1980a, 1980b, 1982). Foucault argues that power manifests itself in ‘localized settings’, which mark the points where power affects the bodies, actions, and attitudes of individuals, inserting itself into their ‘discourses, learning processes and everyday lives’ (1980b, pp. 37 - 38). Places can be considered localised settings, as they are ‘discursively constructed’ (Feld & Basso, 1996, p. 5), and are sites of ‘knowledge generation, information control, and power execution’ (Gregory et al, 2015, p. 5). Derek Gregory et al similarly emphasise power in their description of place as characterised by ‘specific configurations, facilities, and resources that enable or impede certain actions’ (2015, p. 5).

Massey’s definition of place can be connected to Foucault’s writings on power, specifically in her focus on negotiation and interaction. Massey argues that her idea of place as constituted through interactions emphasises the ‘necessity of negotiation’, which in turn ‘raises the question of power, and of differential power’ (2012, p. xiv). Places for Massey are the product of place-making and place-defining practices, and ‘power-filled social relations’ (1999, p. 41), a position which parallels the idea of power relations as ‘rooted’ in social networks put forward by Foucault (1982, p. 41). Foucault suggests that power relations cannot be established without the accompanying ‘production, accumulation, circulation and functioning of a discourse’

(1980b, p. 93). Power and knowledge are inextricable; the exercise of power ‘perpetually’ produces knowledge and knowledge ‘constantly induces’ effects of power (Foucault, 1980b, p. 52). This idea is reflected in Massey’s argument that the identity of places are established and maintained by powerful ‘claimant groups’ (1994a, p. 169). These groups utilise discourse by ‘laying claim’ to a particular moment or location, the definition and dominant social relations of which are to that particular group’s advantage (1994a, p. 169). By ‘freezing’ the meaning of particular places, which Massey describes as ‘envelopes of space-time’ (1994a, p. 188), powerful groups and institutions can thereby control the identity and use of places, as I will demonstrate in the site-specific analyses of my selected fairy sites in Chapters Three, Four, and Five.

Massey and Foucault also agree that power is neither static nor stable in its influence. Foucault writes that power is always in tension with, and indeed produces, forms of resistance (1979, 1980b), and Massey argues that the dynamic nature of place leaves it continually open to contestation (1994a, p. 169). Foucault differentiates between power and domination in his work, emphasising that although states and effects of domination may seem fixed, they are ‘never completely stable’ (1978, p. 102) and can be reversed through resistance. Similarly, Massey contends that attempts by powerful groups to stabilise and fix the meaning of places inevitably leads to contestation because of their reliance on discourse. Discourse may produce and reinforce power but also ‘undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart’ (Foucault, 1998a, p. 101), as demonstrated in the critique sections of the following three analysis chapters. Through her argument that places are always under construction and cannot be defined by ‘some essential, internalized moment’ (1994a, p. 169), Massey challenges the idea of places as coherent and fixed in meaning, and in the process exposes any attempt to fix the identity of places as a temporary and inherently unstable process (1995, p. 190). The identity of a place is imposed through the maintenance of that place’s narrative, which is itself dependent on a dominant reading of that place’s history (Massey, 1995, p. 188). Therefore, by deconstructing the narrative and dominant reading of a place utilising its prevailing discourse, the established meaning and identity of a place may be resisted, a theory I put into practice in both my critical analysis of fairy sites as well as in the creative work.

3.5.2 Power, nostalgia, and place

Earlier in this chapter, I briefly discussed the complexity of nostalgia as a concept and its characteristics as an affect, as constructed, and as both an individual and collective experience. I consider that it is because of these characteristics that nostalgia is utilised in place-making and place-defining practices. Place-making is largely concerned with the idea of authenticity and the creation of a coherent narrative. The ‘authenticity’ of a place is judged by visitors to that place, their interactions within it, and their reactions to it. Nostalgia plays a role in this determination of authenticity because of its ‘affective structure’ (Sedikides et al, 2004, p. 202). ‘Affect’ is defined by Janelle L. Wilson as connoting ‘emotion, thought, and in some sense, behaviour’ (2005, p. 25); nostalgia is therefore described as an ‘affective yearning’ (Boym, 2007, p. 10). Because nostalgia is understood to associate the past with ‘positive affects’ such as pleasure and satisfaction in comparison with the present (Caton & Santos, 2007, p. 372), nostalgia can be considered an ‘embodied experience’ (Wilson 2015, p. 483). Viewing nostalgia as an embodied experience relates to Massey’s argument that places are constituted through interactions, and involves the ‘negotiation of intersecting trajectories’ by individuals, a process she describes as the ‘practising of place’ (2005, p. 10). This idea of ‘practising place’ is expanded on by Britta T. Knudsen and Anne M. Waade, who argue that because we ‘do’ and ‘perform’ place through our actions and behaviours, places are authenticated by our ‘emotional/affective/sensuous relatedness to them’ (2012, p. 12). As an embodied affect, nostalgia therefore becomes part of a ‘performative notion of authenticity’ (Rickly-Boyd, 2013, p. 681) enacted by visitors, reinforcing the power relations that construct and control place.

Nostalgia also has a tendency to construct the past as orderly, coherent, and idealised. Christopher Shaw and Malcolm Chase point out that the past ‘as reconstructed is always more coherent than when it happened’, and looks more ‘definitive’ and ‘magisterial’ than the present (1989, p. 30). In contrast, the present and possible future is constructed as ‘complicated, contaminated, archaic, difficult, ugly, and confrontational’ (Hutcheon, 2000, para. 9). The coherence that nostalgia gives the past is associated with and produced by powerful discourses such as nationalism and heritage in the construction of place. Similar to place, nostalgia involves the juxtaposition of ‘particular constructions of the past with particular

constructions of the present' (Caton & Santos, 2007, p. 372). By evoking nostalgia in place-making and place-defining practices, the established history and identity of a place is thereby given both affective power and cohesion. However, as Elizabeth Outka warns, 'creating nostalgic places in the present requires that they be both constructed and, to various degrees, commodified' (2008, p. 93). The commodification of place, particularly heritage sites, is the basis for much of the criticism levelled at nostalgia, and the commodification of fairy sites in Ireland as part of their production as nostalgic places is discussed in the following three analysis chapters.

Despite the role nostalgia plays in the production and control of place, nostalgia's position as an affect, as constructed, and as both an individual and collective experience, also suggests the existence of a multiplicity of nostalgias. The proclivity for nostalgia to construct an idealised past does not necessarily suggest that nostalgics all share the same vision of, and emotion towards, the past. Nostalgia can operate at both an individual or collective level, with certain classes or 'strata' within society more likely to 'experience a more public and collective nostalgia' (Shaw & Chase, 1989, p. 15). Nostalgia is also often written about as a personal emotion, specifically in the sense of personal agency and identity. Stuart Tannock defines nostalgia as the sense that personal agency and identity are blocked or threatened by a 'separation from an imaginatively remembered past, homeland, family or community' (1995, pp. 455 - 456). Similarly, sociologist Bryan S. Turner considers nostalgia to involve the loss of 'individual freedom and autonomy', 'personal authenticity' and 'emotional spontaneity' (1987, p. 151), leading the nostalgic subject to turn to the past to find or construct sources of identity, agency, or community. In contrast, Boym argues that nostalgia is situated between personal and collective memory, and is about the relationship between 'individual biography and the biographies of groups and nations' (2007, p. 9). These understandings of nostalgia, along with the various sub-categories of nostalgia introduced earlier in this chapter, suggest the existence of a multiplicity of nostalgias at both the individual and collective level. Therefore, although nostalgia can be seen as part of the power relations which construct and control place, when paired with Massey's idea of place as a contemporaneous plurality, nostalgia has the potential to include a 'genuine

multiplicity of trajectories, and thus potentially of voices' (2005, p. 55), a potentiality I engage with in the creative work.

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter has identified the major theories and theorists I will draw on throughout this thesis, and argued that nostalgia, place, and power all intersect in the construction and production of Irish fairy sites as nostalgic places. This chapter discussed Svetlana Boym's concept of restorative nostalgia (2007), and Doreen Massey's definition of places as spatio-temporal events (2005), and concluded that these theories were most conducive to an analysis of the role nostalgia plays in the construction of Irish fairy sites as places. It was also acknowledged that a more nuanced definition of both nostalgia and place were needed, and would be returned to within the creative work.

In the final section of this chapter, I outlined the reasons why nostalgia is utilised in the construction of place. I contended that nostalgia's attributes as an affect, as constructed, and as both an individual and collective experience, allows nostalgia to play a central role in the power relations that produce and maintain place. In its idealisation of and preference for a coherent past, nostalgia can be utilised in place-making and place-defining practices to present places as authentic. The authenticity of places is also enforced by the discourses that aid in their construction, and perhaps the most powerful of these discourses is nationalism and its idealisation of the national past. It is to nationalism and the construction of two Irish fairy sites as representations of the nostalgic homeland that I now turn in the first of the three analysis chapters, 'Nationalism: Green jacket, red cap'.

Chapter Three

Nationalism: Green jacket, red cap

4.1 Introduction

This chapter analyses the first two of six Irish fairy sites examined in this thesis: the National Leprechaun Museum, located in Dublin, and the ‘Last Leprechauns of Ireland’ site, located in Carlingford. Focusing on the discourse of nationalism and the use of restorative and ‘collective’ nostalgia (Baker & Kennedy 1994) in the production of these two new fairy sites, this chapter argues that these sites are constructed as versions of the idealised and nostalgic Irish homeland using simulacra, storytelling, and the national symbol of the leprechaun.

I begin by defining the concept of nationalism, with emphasis on how power operates within and is produced by the nation-state in terms of its place-making and place-defining practices. I also introduce the idea of the ‘nation-as-home’ (Duyvendak 2011) and identify the idealised homeland as underlying the restorative and collective nostalgia evident in the construction of both my chosen sites. I then outline how the nation-state utilises the idealised homeland, which is itself a product of Irish-American diasporic nostalgia, and suggest that the adoption of the leprechaun as a national symbol may be attributed to its ability to encapsulate the image of ‘romantic Ireland’ (Negra 2001). The chapter continues with the site-specific analyses of the National Leprechaun Museum and the Last Leprechauns of Ireland site respectively, in which I examine how the narrative of each site is constructed and authenticated by appropriating the title and associated status of the term ‘national’, and how simulacra, storytelling, and the figure of the leprechaun are used to construct a version of the idealised Irish homeland within each site. Finally, I critique the dominant nostalgic narrative of the two sites through an analysis of the history of the leprechaun as a colonial stereotype and kitsch object, and discuss the criticism of these sites by the Irish media for their commodification of the leprechaun, and by extension of the Irish people and Ireland itself.

4.2 Nationalism and the power of place

There are three major strands of theory in nationalism studies concerning the formation and definition of nations: primordialism, ethno-symbolism, and modernism. Primordialist theorists (see van der Berghe 1978) argue that nations are natural phenomena, extensions of ‘primitive kinship groups’ who share common ancestry (Puri, 2004, pp. 43 - 44). Primordialism has been criticised for focusing on nations as ‘biological’ or naturally developing, rather than as social and political constructions (see Smith 1998, Hearn 2000). Ethno-symbolist theorists (see Armstrong 1982, Hutchinson 1987, Smith 2001, Smith 2009) consider nations to be connected to ethnic communities, who possess common myths, a distinct culture, and a connection to a ‘perceived homeland’ (Smith, 2001, p. 13). In contrast, modernist theorists (see Kedourie 1960, Gellner 1983, Anderson 1983, Hobsbawm 1992) contend that nations are modern creations. These conflicting theories have produced two dominant understandings of nationalism: ‘civic’ nationalism and ‘ethnic’ nationalism, a distinction first introduced by Hans Kohn (1944). Civic nationalism has been related to modernism and Western nations, being ‘voluntaristic, rational and activist’ (Smith, 2006, p. 170), while ethnic nationalism is organic and inescapable, largely related to Eastern nations and primordialism (Hearn, 2000, p. 7).

As demonstrated by these different theories, defining the term ‘nation’ is problematic. Some theorists consider defining the term impossible (Hobsbawm 1992), while others suggest that a universal definition does not exist (Mayall 1999). Roger Brubaker advises against attempting to define the nation at all, but rather focuses on how ‘nationhood as a political and cultural form [is] institutionalized within and among states’ (1996, p. 16). To that end, I will not attempt to form a definitive definition of the nation, but rather focus on how power operates within and is produced by the nation-state, specifically in spatial terms. Primordialist and ethno-symbolist theories of nation have been critiqued for failing to acknowledge the role power plays in the construction of nations and nationalism; as Daniele Conversi notes, in their focus on the past these theories do not engage with the nation’s relationship with politics and political power, particularly the state, and its ‘crucial border-generating’ (1995, p. 75). Modernist theories of nation, however, do engage with power, specifically the idea that nationalism is produced through the state, civil institutions, and the participation of the people (Puri, 2004, p. 45). This idea of

nationalism being dependent upon participation is demonstrated in Benedict Anderson's theory of the nation as an imagined political community (1983, p. 5). Anderson writes that nations are 'imagined communities', whose members are connected by a perceived 'deep, horizontal comradeship' enforced by a 'common imaginary', a set of stories and values that encourage this feeling of connection (1983, pp. 5 -7). The common imaginary, which emphasises a collective or national identity, is used to generate and maintain a sense of unity and identity amongst people dwelling in a particular nation-state (Elder, 2007, p. 24). These feelings of unity and national identity are also generated spatially, through the nation-state's enforcement of borders, its associated politics of belonging and exclusion, and its place-making and place-defining practices.

The idea of place is essential to the nation-state in order to generate a sense of unity and identity amongst its citizens. Massey argues that place is constructed by the nation-state through the 'mobilisation of power' (2012, p. xiv), such as the generation and defence of its borders, achieved through enclosing and bounding space which is defined in 'counterposition against the Other who is outside' (Massey, 1994a, p. 168). These boundaries and borders which separate the nation from the Other are both spatial and social in nature; Joel S. Migdal defines boundaries as 'monitoring devices' used at actual and virtual checkpoints to control and divide spaces (2004, p. 6). Borders and boundaries also act as physical and symbolic reminders of collective identity and belonging, which can become 'articulated and politicised' when threatened (Yuval - Davis et al, 2006, p. 3). Such threats include exclusion or rejection from the nation (Antonsich, 2010, p. 650), or invasion from outside the borders (Massey, 2005, p. 5). Place is increasingly constructed as coherent, enclosed, authentic, and secure by the nation-state, in which place is equated with home in the 'politics of belonging' (Trudeau, 2006, p. 423). Constructing the 'nation-as-home' (Duyvendak, 2011, p. 2) evokes a sense of 'familiarity, comfort, security, and emotional attachment' (Antonisch, 2010, p. 646) on the part of its members, conflating place, nationalism, and belonging into the construction of individual and collective identity. It is this concept of the 'nation-as-home', specifically the idealised homeland, which underlies the restorative nostalgia utilised by the fairy sites that I discuss in this chapter.

However, the borders and boundaries of nations are ephemeral, temporary, and mobile. Zygmunt Bauman writes that the borders of nations are continually redrawn and 'forever unfinished' (2001, p. 17). This results in what Massey calls 'constant struggles to define, and to make cohere, their internal characters' (1995, p. 188). As nations rely on the idea of place as coherent and secure repositories for national identity, this constant shifting and reworking of their boundaries is counteracted by place-making and place-defining, attempts to 'construct singular, fixed and static identities for places' (Massey, 1994a, p. 168). Places are utilised by the nation-state to link geography with the history of the nation, providing a location for 'imagined belonging' (Walder, 2011, p. 50). As nation-states are preoccupied with the promotion and maintenance of a coherent origin story, place in the form of the homeland provides a site for the nation's 'narrative of origin' (Walder, 2011, p. 51). It is therefore crucial for the nation-state to establish and maintain the identity of places in order for the homeland to fulfil this role as the site of the nation's 'genesis stories' (Bauman, 2001, p. 17).

The idea of the homeland also serves the nation-state by linking the people of a nation with national stories, myths, and images through a sense of situated collective belonging. These stories and myths are selected and utilised by the nation-state to encourage members of the nation to identify with a particular image of the nation over any alternatives, reinforcing a national connection with a 'particular historical past' (Elder, 2007, pp. 24 -26). The national stories and symbols that are promoted by the nation-state tend to reflect the 'experiences and desires of powerful groups' rather than the experiences of citizens (Elder, 2007, p. 27). Boym suggests that the power of these national stories can confuse the actual and imaginary home, creating an idealised 'phantom homeland' (2007, p. 9), for which members can be persuaded to fight and sacrifice their lives. National myths, stories, and symbols are what Eric Hobsbawm calls 'invented traditions', and are used by the nation-state to construct a coherent and continuous history (1983, p. 7). Notably, the national history which emerges from the use of invented traditions is often what has been 'selected, written, pictured, popularized and institutionalized' by the nation-state, rather than what has actually been 'preserved in popular memory' (Hobsbawm, 1983, p. 13).

National myths and symbols are used in place-making practices to establish and legitimise the 'nature and coherence of a place' (Massey, 1995, p. 186). National

symbols are particularly powerful in representing the nation as their dissemination through the media means that they can reach and influence large numbers of people (Smith, 2000, p. 73). The attachment between members of a nation and national symbols is also aided by the fact that most national symbols involve historical references shared and understood by all members of a nation, but inaccessible to those from outside the nation (Geisler, 2005, p. xviii). National symbols can include national flags, borders, anthems, national folklore, heroes, and specific landscapes, ‘all those distinctive customs, mores, styles and ways of acting and feeling’ shared by the members of a nation (Smith, 1991, p. 77). In the case of Ireland, I argue that the leprechaun is a powerful national symbol in terms of evoking nostalgia for the homeland, both within and beyond the nation.

4.3 The wearing of the green: Evoking nostalgia for Éire

The nation-state’s reliance on the homeland has been read as a reaction to the perceived loss of unity and collective identity in contemporary society (Duyvendak, 2011, p. 2). Another theory is that the nation-state is attempting to counter the ‘deterritorialization’ and ‘disembedding’ of culture from place as a result of globalisation (Huyssen, 2003, p. 151). The nation-state therefore delves into the national past in search of a time period or an image of the nation which can be (re)produced as evidence of the stability, continuity, coherency, and unity of the nation. The national homeland can be read specifically as an act of restorative nostalgia, as the aim of the nation-state is to ‘restore’ a particular image and idea of the nation.

Restorative nostalgia focuses on the ‘restoration of origins’ (Boym, 2001, p. 41), demonstrated by the emphasis on national origin stories and myths by nation-states. Boym links restorative nostalgia and politics explicitly in her work, writing that restorative nostalgia is ‘often sponsored from above, however populist, homey, and “grass-roots” it appears to be’ (2007, p. 18). Restorative nostalgia is used by the nation-state to re-establish ‘social cohesion, a sense of security, and an obedient relationship to authority’ (Boym, 2007, p. 53), and in doing so aids in constructing a coherent and stable origin story for the nation. This pursuit of a ‘single teleological plot’ means that any gaps or discontinuities in the origin story of the nation are filled

with invented traditions (Boym, 2007, p. 53). Restorative nostalgia is aided in its reconstruction of the homeland by 'collective' nostalgia (Baker & Kennedy 1994), which Stacy M. Baker and Patricia F. Kennedy define as a 'sentimental or bittersweet yearning for the past which represents a culture, a generation, or a nation' (1994, p. 171). As the name suggests, collective nostalgia is a 'collectivistic' rather than an individualistic term, with the intent of evoking a consistent nostalgia between individuals (Baker & Kennedy 1994). By evoking a common nostalgia for an idealised national past, the nation-state is able to both stabilise its origin story and 'restore' the nostalgic homeland.

Paradoxically, the image of the idealised homeland often does not originate within the nation-state, but from outside the national borders as the result of diasporic nostalgia. The Irish-American diaspora, as I will soon discuss, is responsible for the dominant image of the Irish homeland both within and outside Ireland, demonstrating how both 'migrants, displaced people and those who live in diasporas' (Antonsich, 2010, p. 651) as well as members of nations can long for the same idealised homeland and its associated values and customs. Diasporic nostalgia is a reaction to exile from the 'nation-as-home', in which individuals or communities feel alienated from their current country of residence (Walder, 2011, p. 49). Huyssen suggests that a diasporic community's nostalgic idealisation of the homeland is the result of their 'tenuous and often threatened status within the majority culture', combined with the 'unfulfilled desire to return' to their country of origin (2003, pp. 149 -151).

However, diasporic responses to the homeland are understood to be increasingly more complex beyond the sense of loss experienced by 'classic' diaspora groups (Shuval 2000). Not all members of a diasporic community desire a return to the homeland, nor do all diasporic groups wish to return permanently, particularly younger generations (see Cohen 1997, Tsuda 2009). Furthermore, the country of residence may have replaced the ancestral homeland as 'home', with the homeland functioning as more an emotional or symbolic than 'functional' attachment for diasporic communities (Huang et al, 2016, p. 63). Frawley argues that the 'loyalty' of diasporic memory communities is 'not narrowly directed toward a nation', and that the terms 'home' and 'away' can become interchangeable for these communities

over time (2012, p. 4). Dennis Walder suggests that for diasporic subjects memories of the homeland open up the possibility of ‘multiple forms of identity within and beyond the nation-state’ in which there is an ‘increasing lack of certainty and finality about home as a place of origin’ (2011, p. 49). For Walder, this idea also challenges the understanding of diasporic nostalgia as a ‘phenomenon of positive identifications and affiliations’ (2011, p. 49).

The Irish homeland both within and outside the nation-state is represented textually and visually as a pre-modern, idyllic, and pastoral landscape, an image that Diane Negra calls ‘romantic Ireland’ (2001, p. 88). Ireland is predominately constructed as a nation ‘steeped in past traditions and ways of life’ (O’Connor, 1993, pp. 68 - 69). This image of the Irish homeland, subsequently adopted by the nation-state to promote Irish tourism (Gibbons, 1996, p. 10), is grounded in Irish-American diasporic nostalgia. In the aftermath of the Great Famine in the late nineteenth century, millions of Irish citizens settled in other countries, including America. By 1890, there were approximately two million Irish residing in the United States, as well as a further three million of the second-born generation (Mulligan, 2002, p. 222). New York in particular received large numbers of Irish emigrants, and there ‘Irish nationalism grew at an infectious rate – the city becoming a virtual extension of Ireland’ (Mulligan, 2002, p. 222).

The trauma of the Famine and dislocation was dealt with by the Irish-American diaspora through the creation of an ‘Irish radical memory’ (Gibbons, 2002, p. 60). This resulted in the generation of a ‘wistful mirror-view of history where the past [was] ... available merely as sentiment’ (Gibbons, 2002, p. 60). The result of this ‘mirror-view’ of history was the idealised pastoral Irish homeland, located in a ‘premodern past’ (Frawley, 2012, p. 6). A demand arose in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries for ‘roots tourism’ (O’Connor, 1993, p. 73), in which Irish-Americans visited Ireland as tourists and bought souvenirs including sculptures, postcards, and leprechaun figurines. This practice created an ‘entirely mediated’ version of Ireland (Thompson, 2012, p. 81) which is still presented to tourists and nationals today, a ‘timeless, ethnically pure and bucolic Ireland in the face of modern, post-industrial, urban, secular, immigrant and consumerist society’ (Clancy, 2011, p. 303). Frawley suggests that this distortion and alteration of memory resulted

in the construction of a 'new Ireland, one that never was, and passes it on the descendants for whom Ireland never was' (2012, p. 4).

The adoption of the leprechaun as a national symbol by the nation-state, despite its history as a colonial stereotype, may be attributed to its ability to encapsulate the image of 'romantic Ireland'. The figure of the leprechaun simultaneously represents Ireland's political past, Irish folklore, and the idealised folk culture. Leprechauns are associated with the colour green, recognised as the national colour of Ireland. Wearing green originated as a 'political statement of Irish identity', as both the colour of the Irish Republican revolutionary party, and as a marker of Irishness before Ireland gained independence from Britain in 1922 (Wulff, 2013, p. 233). Because of its cultural significance, green continues to be heavily utilised as the 'signature color in the branding of Ireland as a tourist destination' (Wulff, 2013, p. 234). Furthermore, Irish national identity is centred on the idealised folk and their culture, including folklore, which is combined in the figure of the leprechaun. For the Irish nation-state, the idealised peasant class serves as a point in national history when 'populations were – supposedly – still homogenous' (Duyvendak, 2011, p. 2). It is this 'ethnically pure' homeland (Boym, 2007, p. 10) that the nation-state attempts to restore by using the leprechaun as a representation of contemporary Irish identity.

Irish folk culture and folklore also aid the nation-state by legitimising and authenticating the particular historical past and origin stories associated with the nation. National myths, including folklore, contribute to a nation's authenticity, as all nations 'require a past to justify their current existence' (Storey, 2001, p. 22). Folklore aids in this process because folklore and myths are gathered by collectors from the 'folk', who are considered to be the 'true' or authentic people of the nation. The folk were thought to speak in the 'voice of the nation' and folklore was therefore considered a 'national text' (Anttonen, 1994, p. 33). The relationship of folklore to nationalism was particularly critical in the development of Ireland as a nation. The tradition of collecting Irish folklore, popularised in the nineteenth century as discussed in the literature review, coincided with the development of cultural nationalism into political nationalism in Ireland. Irish nationalists attempted to 'reflect as well as to recreate the oral traditions of the people' (Thuente, 1989, p. 42) in order to inspire citizens using the 'authentic voice' of the nation (Baycroft, 2012,

p. 1). This association with folklore has led to the Irish being portrayed as ‘intimately in touch with fantastic realms’ (Fee, 2007, p. 3). But for the Irish people, association with the folk ‘implies an accompanying set of less-than-favourable understandings of Irishness’ (Fee, 2007, p. 3), and reactions to the leprechaun as a national symbol are varied, as will be demonstrated in my site-specific analysis and critique of both the National Leprechaun Museum and the Last Leprechauns of Ireland sites.

4.4 The National Leprechaun Museum

The National Leprechaun Museum opened in March of 2010 on the grounds of Twilfit House in Dublin, and is promoted on the museum’s website as the ‘first ever attraction dedicated to Irish mythology’ (*National Leprechaun Museum* 2017). The creator and director of the museum, Tom O’Rahilly, first conceived of the idea for the museum in 2003, at the peak of the ‘Celtic Tiger’, and received funding for the 6.8 million euro museum from Irish investors (O’Mahoney 2010). The conception of the National Leprechaun Museum at the height of an economic boom, and its official opening coinciding with a recession, can be read as a nostalgic act. I argue that the creation of the museum is an act of restorative nostalgia because O’Rahilly’s intention, as I will demonstrate, is to connect contemporary Irish identity to the idealised folk culture through the idealised Irish homeland and the national symbol of the leprechaun.

The National Leprechaun Museum comprises multiple interactive exhibits that unfold along a ‘narrative path’ (Core Jr 2012), telling the story of the leprechaun (see Figure 1.1). Entry to the museum is only by guided tour, and each small group of visitors is led through and informed about each space by a guide. The entrance emulates a traditional museum exhibit, with leprechaun figurines, artwork and literature, along with a map of the museum tracing the path that visitors follow. Hidden behind a mirror on one of the walls is the path to the second space, a ‘magic tunnel’ that distorts the visitors’ perception of size through an optical illusion. The tunnel leads to a series of spaces including a representation of the Giant’s Causeway, a ‘giant’s room’, an interactive map of Ireland, a peasant’s cottage, a fairy fort, and a wishing well. Visitors then exit the museum through the museum’s gift shop.

4.4.1 Authenticating the National Leprechaun Museum

The National Leprechaun Museum is privately owned and funded, most recently receiving funding in 2011 from the IE Domain Registry (O Nuallain 2011). Despite having no official standing, the site is constructed by its creators as a ‘national museum’. National museums ‘act as guardians and interpreters of the nation’s cultural heritage’, are usually funded by the nation-state, and are used to construct a distinct cultural identity by nationalist movements using ‘selective interpretations of history’ (Reid, 2005, p. 206). Although national museums may appear subjective to the visitor, they are ‘by nature subjective, their collections and displays shaped by political and cultural biases’ (Reid, 2005, p. 206). An example of this is the National Museum of Ireland, which under the rule of the Free State was restructured to function as a ‘useful national symbol’, with ‘certain artefacts prominently displayed’ to reinforce the independent national narrative of the governing body (Crooke, 2000, p. 144). National museums also function as sites of restorative nostalgia, where the lost national homeland is both evoked and constructed through the display of artefacts. These sites aid in the construction of a nation’s origin story by presenting a singular and coherent ‘master-narrative’ of the nation (Scorrano, 2012, p. 346). National museums generate ‘an aura of infallibility’ (Scorrano, 2012, p. 347), with visitors ‘trusting the artefacts and the [museum’s] (re)-interpretation of them to be authentic’ (McLean, 1997, p. 22). This in turn strengthens the legitimacy of the nation, and the sense of collective national identity experienced by visitors.

The National Leprechaun Museum can be considered a ‘postmodern’ museum, characterised by its ‘anti-elitist emphasis’ on participation, performance, and multimedia experiences (Brown, 1995, p. 74). O’Rahilly has stated that one of the purposes of the museum is to educate the Irish people about their own identity and culture, choosing to focus on folklore because of his belief that ‘we really are about the stories we tell ourselves’ (*Tom O’Rahilly at IGNITE #3 Dublin 2010*). To achieve this, it is necessary for the site to be connected to the nation by appropriating the title of ‘National’ and utilising the national symbol of the leprechaun. Defining the National Leprechaun Museum as a national museum lends the site the status of national importance and authenticity required to elicit collective nostalgia in visitors, and to authorise its nostalgic construction of the idealised Irish homeland.

The creators of the National Leprechaun Museum utilise the national symbol of the leprechaun to emphasise its connection to the nation and contemporary Irish identity. Through the popularisation of Saint Patrick's Day, the leprechaun has become a nostalgic symbol for Irishness and Irish national identity. Held on March 17, St Patrick's Day is typically celebrated with a parade held in cities including Dublin, New York, and London. The current manifestation of St Patrick's Day as a 'public, 'carnavalesque' celebration of all things Irish' is actually the creation of the Irish-American diaspora, popularised in the nineteenth century (Scully, 2012, p. 120). Leprechauns feature extensively in the St Patrick's Day celebrations in both Ireland and other countries. They are represented primarily through the costumes of the spectators and participants in the parade, and on occasion the subject of the parade floats (see Figure 1.2). Dressing up as leprechauns on St Patrick's Day is a way of performing Irishness, in which identity is produced through performance (Monks 2005). For the Irish-American diaspora this is a nostalgic performance, as a connection to national identity and the Irish homeland can only be reached through the use of the nostalgic symbol of the leprechaun. For citizens of Ireland, however, this engagement is far more playful, and can be both ironic, in the sense that the leprechaun is understood by citizens as a commodified symbol of Ireland for tourists, and 'self-expressive', as a way to celebrate their collective identity (Thompson, 2004, p. 201). O'Rahilly has stated that he did not originally intend the museum as a commercial venture, but rather as a way to reclaim the leprechaun stereotype from Hollywood and the Irish-American diaspora (O'Mahoney 2010). The museum's use of the leprechaun and central location in Dublin suggests that O'Rahilly intends to achieve this through further linking the leprechaun, and by extension, the nation and the nostalgic homeland, to contemporary Irish identity.

The National Leprechaun Museum uses guided tours to control the narrative and experience of visitors. In order to create an enclosed and coherent identity for the site, tour guides are used to narrate the story of the museum. O'Rahilly admits openly to controlling the narrative and experience of the museum, citing his focus on overturning the leprechaun stereotype and educating the Irish citizenry about their national culture and identity as necessitating such explicit control (*Tom O'Rahilly at IGNITE #3 Dublin* 2010). O'Rahilly states that the point of the tour guides is to control and modulate visitors' experience of the museum, to 'deepen the experience'

of the ‘narrative path’ of the museum (Core Jr 2012). The only space where the tour guide does not control the experience of visitors is the map exhibit, their interpretative authority replaced by an audio-visual presentation about the folklore of Ireland. This allows the museum to present the ‘seamless coherence of character’ considered essential to coherent place-making and place-defining (Massey, 1994a, p. 168).

The singular narrative presented by the museum about leprechauns is enforced in several ways. The cultural history of the leprechaun is presented as ‘fact’ to visitors, both through the presence of leprechaun-related artefacts in the entrance to the museum, and through the ‘seamless account’ of the tour guides (Macdonald, 1997, p. 170). The museum also enforces a particular way of moving through the site through the control of space. The maze-like structure and hidden passages mean that visitors must move through the museum at a particular speed and direction following the tour guide, whose constant commentary negates ‘some of the possible sources of unplanned and alternative readings’ of the museum (Macdonald, 1997, p. 170). Although a map hangs in the entrance to the museum (see Figure 1.3), the nature of the guided tour, use of darkness and maze-like structure means that its usefulness for navigating the museum is limited. The map therefore functions as another method by which the creators of the museum can control the site’s narrative.

The museum’s control over the interpretation of the site by visitors also continues beyond the tour itself. O’Rahilly states that the museum ‘continues to interact with users long after they have left’ (Core Jr 2012) through regular events held at the museum, the museum’s official website, and most recently by establishing a podcast focusing on Irish folklore (*National Leprechaun Museum* 2017). The monologic and coherent narrative presented by the National Leprechaun Museum, and the methods used to make this narrative authoritative and accepted by visitors, reinforces the idea that museums are not ‘neutral institutions’ (Scorrano, 2012, p. 348), but the result of a series of deliberate choices as to what stories and objects will be included and excluded to serve the purpose and creators of the site.

4.4.2 Constructing a ‘leprechaun-sized world’

The National Leprechaun Museum constructs the idealised Irish homeland primarily through the use of simulacra. Simulacra are signs or images which, rather than

representing the real, substitute ‘signs of the real for the real itself’ (Baudrillard, 1983, p. 2), creating a ‘partially or entirely simulated’ hyperreality (Oberly, 2003). The mass reproduction and proliferation of simulacra in contemporary society is considered to have problematised the ability to distinguish between the real and the imaginary (Jameson, 1990, p. 17), resulting in an intensification of nostalgia for the ‘real’ (Baudrillard, 1983, p. 7). The National Leprechaun Museum presents its restored idealised homeland as ‘reality’ to visitors, aided by its self-appointed status as a ‘national museum’, and the control of its space and narrative. The simulacra in the museum are presented as representations of extant historical sites, such as the exhibit of the peasant’s cottage and the fairy fort. However these exhibits do not represent any specific or existing archaeological or historical sites, but an idealised world that never existed, which the museum identifies as ‘mythical Ireland’ (*National Leprechaun Museum* 2017). The only exception to this is the Giant’s Causeway space; however this exhibit’s maze-like structure which visitors must navigate, representing walking underground beneath the stones of the Causeway, is a hyperreal representation of the geological site. The entire narrative of the museum is also set in an unspecified past; none of the exhibits reference a specific period of Irish history, and dates referenced in the guided tour are deliberately vague (*National Leprechaun Museum* 2017). Therefore, while the museum is presented as recreating ‘experiences typically associated with leprechauns’ (*National Leprechaun Museum* 2017), suggesting a historical past where these experiences could and did take place, the exhibits instead reflect the idealised homeland of ‘mythical’ or ‘romantic’ Ireland and its associated folk culture.

Although the National Leprechaun Museum encourages international visitors, its main focus is to evoke collective nostalgia in the Irish citizenry through its representation of the idealised homeland. Visitors are encouraged to enter a nostalgic state of mind when visiting the museum, which is marketed as an ‘experience’. This is directly referenced in the description of the museum on the official website:

Feel what it’s like to journey deep beneath the rocks of the Giant’s Causeway, open up your mind to the sights and stories of Ireland’s mythical otherworld on a trip to a fairy hill. Find yourself in a leprechaun-sized world and take a journey to the end of the rainbow to see if the elusive crock of gold really exists (*National Leprechaun Museum* 2017).

The museum is promoted as physically and mentally transporting visitors into Ireland's past. Spatially, this is partially achieved through the tunnel, used in the museum to transfer visitors into 'the world of the leprechauns, the world of mythology, the world of folklore, the world of identity and culture' (*Tom O'Rahilly at IGNITE #3 Dublin 2010*). The map exhibit further reinforces the connection between the idealised homeland represented by simulacra and the nation through an audio-visual presentation. A large topographical map of Ireland is centred in the middle of the space around which visitors stand. During the presentation the location of archaeological sites associated with fairy folklore, the abodes of particular types of fairies, and the tracing of famous journeys across the landscape from folklore, such as the Children of Lir, are projected onto the map's surface. Here, Ireland is once again introduced as 'mythical Ireland', the idealised homeland connected to national folklore and the folk culture.

The National Leprechaun Museum also evokes collective nostalgia through its representation of storytelling as an essential Irish cultural tradition. The museum exhibits are conceived as different chapters of a story (Core Jr 2012) and the tour guides as storytellers whose role is to explain the spaces and tell multiple stories from Irish folklore along the route, which collectively outline a 'continuous and singular history' of the leprechaun with 'uninterrupted progress to the present' (Massey, 1995, p. 189). There are two separate tours that visitors can take, the day tour, and an evening tour called the 'Dark Land', in which storytellers 'explore the dark twisted side of Irish story-telling' (*National Leprechaun Museum 2017*). This focus on storytelling is more than just a method to transmit the message of the museum, but an attempt to restore storytelling as a cultural tradition in Ireland, a tradition associated with the idealised folk.

The Irish tradition of storytelling is constructed within the museum as originating from the same amorphous past as the simulated homeland. Storytelling is further connected to the traditional folk culture, which produced national folklore as the 'voice' of the nation, through the exhibit of the peasant's cottage as the site where these stories were told. Storytelling as a national tradition is also referenced through the museum's use of the symbol of the leprechaun. Rather than engaging with the leprechaun's problematic history as a stereotype, it is presented as part of, and representative of, the Irish tradition of storytelling. The museum website states that

‘Irish people have told stories about the Leprechaun for more than a thousand years’ (*National Leprechaun Museum* 2017), and O’Rahilly has confirmed that he uses the leprechaun as an ‘easy way in to the labyrinth of Irish myths and legends’ (Core Jr 2012). As the narrative path of the museum follows the story of the leprechaun, it becomes central to the construction of the nostalgic homeland and to the tradition of storytelling.

The attempt of the museum to connect storytelling and the leprechaun to the Irish people also necessitates a connection between the idealised Irish folk and contemporary Irish citizens, explored further later in this chapter. The folk’s connection with storytelling is promoted as a valuable and desired national trait which Irish people should adopt. Furthermore, the museum makes the nostalgic claim that storytelling as a cultural practice is under threat. This is shown on the museum website, which states that Ireland has one of the ‘finest heritages of traditional culture and story’, and suggests that the continuation of this heritage, and the ‘survival’ of Irish folklore and mythology, relies on ‘generations across the world sharing these tales’ (*National Leprechaun Museum* 2017). This ‘threat’ of the loss of Irish folklore and the cultural practice of storytelling is countered in the existence and purpose of the museum, and periodically through special events held by the museum. For example, in 2015 the museum held a short storytelling course that was specifically marketed towards locals. The museum website urged Irish residents to attend and develop this national trait, ‘Irish people are known for their storytelling ... Put yourself in contact with 6,000 years of storytelling tradition’ (*National Leprechaun Museum* 2017). The construction of storytelling by the museum as an essentially national tradition is an attempt to evoke collective nostalgia in the Irish people towards an idealised version of Ireland’s past. However, this focus on storytelling is also indicative of restorative nostalgia on the part of O’Rahilly. As I will now demonstrate, the connection between storytelling, the idealised folk culture, and leprechauns is also evident in my analysis of the Last Leprechauns of Ireland site.

4.5 The Last Leprechauns of Ireland

The Last Leprechauns of Ireland new fairy site is comprised of multiple interconnected sites centred around and on the mountain of Slieve Foye near the town of Carlingford, which is part of the Cooley mountain range in County Louth. The creator and manager of the site is Kevin Woods, also known as ‘McCoillte’, or the ‘leprechaun whisperer’, who is a local of Carlingford (*The Last Leprechauns of Ireland* 2017). Like the National Leprechaun Museum, this site can be read as an act of restorative nostalgia in both its attempt to construct the idealised Irish homeland through the use of the national symbol of the leprechaun, and its ongoing connection of contemporary Irish identity to the idealised folk culture.

Slieve Foye is both the supposed abode of the last 236 leprechauns in Ireland, who according to Woods live under the ‘Slate Rock’ near the summit, and the location for an annual National Leprechaun Hunt, which takes place on March 29 each year (see Figure 1.4). The first Hunt was held in 1989, attracting four thousand visitors, and has since grown in popularity (O’Murchu 2014). The Hunt begins in Carlingford, where visitors purchase a five euro prospecting licence, before a procession leads the participants up to the mountain gate and onto Slieve Foye. One hundred ceramic leprechaun statues are hidden on the mountain for participants to find. The event raises funds for charity, and only people with authenticated licences are allowed onto Slieve Foye to participate in the hunt (O’Murchu 2014). Slieve Foye itself contains multiple fairy sites including the Slate Rock, ‘Queen Sadhbh’s Fairy Village’, an ‘enchanted stream’, and the ‘Leprechaun and Fairy Cavern’, where the stream surfaces as a wishing well (*The Last Leprechauns of Ireland* 2017). The cavern is an artificial underground cave located in Folklore Park on the shorefront of Carlingford. Like the National Leprechaun Museum, entrance to the site is only by appointment with Woods, who acts as a guide. The cavern contains a display of a leprechaun costume, two dioramas containing leprechaun figurines and taxidermy animals, a ‘fairy house’ and a wishing well said to be carrying water from the enchanted stream on Slieve Foye.

Woods published a book in 2011 called *The last leprechauns of Ireland*, which records the events leading to the site’s creation. In 1989 a local publican in Carlingford called P.J O’Hare heard a scream from the slopes of Slieve Foye. He

climbed up to investigate, and found the suit of a leprechaun, four gold coins and several bones near a patch of scorched earth. O'Hare displayed the suit and bones in his pub, and the popularity of the story resulted in the first National Leprechaun Hunt on Easter Sunday of the same year, attended by four thousand people. After O'Hare's death, Woods discovered the gold coins inside a stone wall on his property, and later had an encounter with three leprechauns while walking his dog on Slieve Foye. Woods made contact with the leprechauns, and was informed by their leader Carraig that there were only 236 leprechauns left in Ireland, all residing on Slieve Foye. Woods, who the leprechauns had named McCoillte, gathered supporters to lobby the European Union to have the leprechauns and the mountain protected under the European Habitats Directive, which was granted in 2009 on the grounds that their existence could not be disproved. There are now permanent signs on the mountain stating that the flora, fauna and 'Little People' of Slieve Foye are protected, urging visitors to 'tread lightly', and warning that hunters and 'fortune seekers' will be prosecuted (see Figure 1.5).

4.5.1 Legitimising a leprechaun habitat

The Last Leprechauns of Ireland site is constructed as a national heritage site in order to authenticate its narrative and its version of the idealised homeland. Similar to the National Leprechaun Museum and its appropriation of the term 'national', the official protection granted to Slieve Foye and the leprechaun colony by the European Habitats Directive in 2009 legitimises the site and aids in Woods' place-making and place-defining of Carlingford. National heritage sites are typically used by the nation-state as a 'mechanism for reinscribing nationalist narratives in the popular imagination' (Johnson, 2004, p. 229) through the preservation of artefacts and locations which reinforce national identity. National heritage developed alongside the concept of nationalism in the nineteenth century (Johnson, 2004, p. 229), and was crucial in the consolidation of 'national identification', used to 'absorb or neutralize potentially competing heritages' of other social-cultural groups (Graham et al, 2000, p. 183).

In the case of Carlingford, the 'artefact' being preserved is the colony of leprechauns presumed to live on Slieve Foye, reinforcing the status of the leprechaun as a national symbol of Ireland. Although Woods was not initially affiliated with any

official tourism or heritage boards, his success in having the leprechauns protected led to further legitimisation of the site. The Last Leprechauns of Ireland official website now carries the logo of Fáilte Ireland, the National Tourism Development Authority (*The Last Leprechauns of Ireland* 2017). Woods' Leprechaun and Fairy Cavern is also part of Fáilte Ireland's new 'Ireland's Ancient East' tourism campaign, begun in 2016, along with PJ O'Hare's Bar and Restaurant where the 'leprechaun' bones and suit are still displayed (*Fáilte Ireland* 2017).

The expansion of the Last Leprechauns of Ireland site over the past several years can be read as Woods' attempt to create a stable and coherent narrative for the fairy site, as well as Carlingford in general. Every addition is justified for its relationship with the overall narrative of the site; for example, Woods claims that the Leprechaun and Fairy Cavern was discovered rather than built, stating that 'In a conversation Carraig, the elder Leprechaun, told me where to find the cavern. He said I had to ensure its safety' (Keogh 2016a). Similarly, the addition of Queen Sadhbh's Fairy Village in Folklore Park relates to a fairy that appears in Woods' 2011 book and resides near the fairy tree on Slieve Foye (*The Last Leprechauns of Ireland* 2017). In 2016, Woods campaigned for the transfer of two artefacts related to Irish folklore to Carlingford – the 'Jeninstown Magic Hill', and the 'Long Woman's Grave'. The Jeninstown Magic Hill, a road where parked cars appear to roll uphill by themselves, also featured in Woods' book *The last leprechauns of Ireland* (2011) in which leprechauns are responsible for the hill's supernatural attributes. Woods received permission to reassemble the road opposite his Folklore Park in Carlingford, after plans to widen the road threatened to destroy the site (*The long woman is not going anywhere* 2016).

However, Woods' plan to exhume the Long Woman's Grave, the supposed burial site of a Spanish noblewoman named Cauthleen from Irish mythology, was met with controversy and protests by Omeath locals. I will discuss this case later in the chapter as part of my critique of the commercialisation of these two fairy sites. This form of place-making and place-defining that Woods engages in reflects the heritage industry's tendency of 'telling a story of a place which ... keeps its eye firmly on the place itself, constructing a history which somehow actually happened only within it' (Massey, 1994b, p. 112). Woods claims unrelated folklore sites and stories from neighbouring counties, and justifies the construction of new sites in order to make

the leprechaun colony narrative dominant and uncontested in the region. Woods' book aids in this endeavour by presenting a particular history of the past, in this case the history of the leprechaun colony, in order to 'confirm the views and convictions of the present' (Massey, 1995, p. 186).

The national symbol of the leprechaun is used by Woods to evoke collective nostalgia in visitors. The success of the Last Leprechauns of Ireland site as a national heritage site and tourist destination relies on the idea of the leprechauns as perpetually under threat, a continuation of the tradition discussed in the literature review of viewing Irish oral lore as under threat of being 'lost'. Visitors are continually reminded of the precarious existence of the leprechauns, despite the fact that they have been legally protected since 2009, 'If we die out, we will be lost forever. We cannot be replaced ... Just 236 of us survive' (Woods, 2011, p. 6). Similar to the National Leprechaun Museum, here the leprechaun functions as a symbol of Ireland's national heritage which needs to be preserved and protected from extinction. Within the site, this representation of the leprechauns is annually reinforced at the National Leprechaun Hunt. The event is organised by the Carlingford Leprechaun Preservation Group, which includes Woods as a member. The group advertises the Hunt using language similar to that used in heritage sites, in which emphasis is placed on the national cultural importance and need for preservation of Slieve Foye as a 'leprechaun habitat':

... we ask that if people come across a real leprechaun that they will allow them to pass and not try to capture them. Slieve Foy is now recognised as the home of the last leprechauns of Ireland and we know there are 236 currently living on the mountain. It is important that they are safe, happy and we do not allow them to become extinct (Woods cited in O'Murchu 2014).

The narrative of the leprechauns as endangered is also reinforced outside the site; the marketing director for the Carlingford and Mourne region Frances Taylor was quoted as saying that 'People feel strongly about protecting our little people, who, we must remember, are the touchstone of our heritage and folklore' (O'Murchu 2014). The constant referencing of the exact number of leprechauns left on the mountain, and the use of terms such as 'extinct' and 'preservation', reinforces the idea of these leprechauns as an endangered species that require human intervention and protection. This use of language also invokes nostalgia for the amorphous and vaguely referenced period of history before leprechauns began to decline, as well as

for the leprechauns themselves as a representation of Irishness which is under threat of being lost.

4.5.2 The once and future leprechaun whisperer

The Last Leprechauns of Ireland site is constructed as the idealised Irish homeland primarily through the control of its space and narrative. Although simulacra play a role in the construction of the idealised homeland in the form of the Leprechaun and Fairy Cavern and the Fairy Village, this site is less reliant on simulacra than the National Leprechaun Museum. Rather, Slieve Foye and Carlingford are collectively represented as the idealised homeland through the enclosing and bounding of space, both literally and textually. Woods defines Carlingford as the nostalgic homeland through ‘negative counterposition’ (Massey, 1995, p. 1890), by constructing the rest of Ireland (and the world) as the ‘Other’ (Massey 1994a). The Irish people are included or excluded from this homeland on the basis of their belief in leprechauns which is written as most prevalent in the Cooley region, ‘The only place where belief was still relatively strong was here in Cooley in County Louth. It still had 236 believers, whose spirits matched the 236 of us who survive’ (Woods, 2011, p. 195). In contrast to Carlingford, the rest of Ireland is represented in Wood’s narrative as ‘non-believers’ disconnected from their history and national culture, ‘People thought they were smarter and cleverer than their forefathers. They threw out nearly every bit of their heritage, folklore and faith, in the name of money and property and machines’ (2011, p. 195). Here, a sense of belonging is predicated on being a ‘believer’, and the threat of exclusion from the site on the basis of belief functions as a social and symbolic border to the site (Midgal 2004). Furthermore, as Woods states that only a finite number of believers exist (2011), it follows that only certain people can belong in this version of the ‘nation-as-home’, reinforcing an idea of belonging that justifies ‘forms of socio-spatial inclusion/exclusion’ (Antonsich, 2010, p. 645).

Curiously, however, even believers are restricted from accessing the entire site. On the day of the Hunt, the area of the ‘leprechaun habitat’ on Slieve Foye is roped off, creating a ‘protection zone’, which is patrolled by stewards to prevent trespassing (*The Carlingford Leprechaun* 2010). Controlling access to this area enforces the request of the Carlingford Leprechaun Preservation Group that visitors ‘tread lightly’, but also invites participants to differentiate between the ‘real’ leprechauns in

their demarcated habitat and the ceramic leprechauns they collect during the Hunt. This control of space further authenticates the Last Leprechauns of Ireland as a national heritage site, but also reinforces the threatened status of the leprechauns in Woods' narrative, evoking nostalgia for the 'romantic Ireland' of the past.

Like the National Leprechaun Museum, Woods utilises storytelling to educate visitors and control their experience within the site. As already mentioned, entry to the Leprechaun and Fairy Cavern is contingent on Woods accompanying visitors as a guide and storyteller to interpret the site. There are also various plaques in Folklore Park erected by Woods which outline the narrative of the site and the purpose of the cavern (*The leprechaun whisperer – Ireland AM* 2015). In an interview in 2015, Woods stated that the cavern functions as a 'medium for telling the stories of the area' (Thompson 2015); the simulacrum of the tunnels within the cavern intended to be a visual aid for Woods' storytelling, depicting the world of the leprechauns living within Slieve Foye. Woods rarely conducts tours of Slieve Foye itself, relying upon the permanent signage on the mountain as well as the paths leading up to it to reinforce the narrative of the leprechaun colony to visitors. On Fáilte Ireland's corporate website, the 'Ireland's Ancient East' campaign promises visitors the experience of '5,000 years of history, in lush green landscapes with stories told by the best storytellers in the world', and describes storytelling as the 'DNA of the brand' (*Fáilte Ireland* 2017). Here, as in the National Leprechaun Museum, storytelling is presented as both part of Ireland's national identity, and as the primary method by which visitors interact with, and are affected by, these sites.

Woods' role within the Last Leprechauns of Ireland narrative as 'McCoillte the leprechaun whisperer' can be read as an act of restorative nostalgia. Woods-as-McCoillte is constructed as the last living representation of the lost folk culture. As Ireland's self-proclaimed 'last Leprechaun Whisperer' (*The Last Leprechauns of Ireland* 2017), Woods suggests the existence of an imagined past recognisable as 'romantic Ireland' where there were many 'whisperers'. In the overall narrative of the site, McCoillte emerges as the saviour figure, chosen by the leprechauns to be their 'protector', and blessed with four magic coins which bestow particular gifts, including the ability to see and converse with the leprechauns (Woods, 2011, p. 5). McCoillte resembles, in his shamanic performance as the last leprechaun whisperer, a Druid or similar wise-man figure of the folk culture, able to directly communicate

with the spirits of the land. He is also similarly nostalgically portrayed: receiving magical gifts; gathering ‘true believers’; and most importantly, succeeding in his task to save the last 236 leprechauns; ‘Over six hundred people in this area now believe in you. And that keeps you safe’ (Woods, 2011, p. 199). In Woods’ narrative, the spirits of leprechauns are linked to individual people, meaning that the spirits of the 236 leprechauns are linked to the last 236 believers (Woods, 2011, p. 179). This connects those Irish people who consider themselves believers directly to the idealised folk culture and its beliefs prior to the Famine, during which, according to Woods, the leprechauns aided humans and died alongside them (2011, p. 179).

This idea of leprechauns being linked with human spirits emphasises the importance of active belief and preservation on the part of believers to ‘save’ the leprechauns. Recently, the representation of the leprechaun whisperer role has shifted from Woods as the last to the first of a potential multitude of whisperers. Woods is currently testing visitors to the site for psychic abilities, so that they can succeed him as a whisperer when he dies, continuing the invented ‘tradition’ of the leprechaun whisperers (*The leprechaun whisperer – Ireland AM* 2015). Lowenthal writes that heritage ‘distils the past into icons of identity, bonding us with precursors and progenitors, with our own earlier selves, and with promised successors’ (1994, p. 43). Woods-as-McCoillte is constructed in the Last Leprechauns of Ireland narrative as an icon of national identity, the last link to the idealised folk culture and to the leprechauns, a role that other Irish people may themselves be able to take on if they possess the traits of the folk culture.

Woods’ accumulation of folklore sites into the leprechaun colony narrative, along with elaborate justifications for these additions, is further evidence of his restorative nostalgia. Maintaining a cohesive narrative for the Last Leprechauns of Ireland site is becoming increasingly difficult as more media attention is directed towards the site, particularly after Woods’ acquisition of the Jenkinstown Magic Hill and his attempt to move the Long Woman’s Grave. Boym writes that restorative nostalgia is characterised by ‘anxiety about those who draw attention to historical incongruities between past and present, and thus question the wholeness and continuity of the restored tradition’ (2001, pp. 44 - 45), an anxiety evident in Woods’ behaviour and justifications for the site in the face of recent criticism, which I will now discuss.

4.6 Critique

As demonstrated through the site-specific analysis, both the National Leprechaun Museum and the Last Leprechauns of Ireland site utilise the national symbol of the leprechaun along with the idealised homeland in order to evoke nostalgia in visitors. However, as I will now discuss, neither of these sites engage with the history of the leprechaun either as a colonial stereotype or a kitsch object. Moreover, both have come under criticism by the Irish media for the commodification of the leprechaun, and by extension, of the Irish people and Ireland itself.

4.6.1 Darby O’Gill and the colonial stereotype

The leprechaun is presented by the nation-state as a ‘national type’, with which the Irish people are supposed to identify. However, the visual representation of the leprechaun can be read as a colonial stereotype of the Irish, bearing a close resemblance to the figure of the ‘Paddy’, the ‘harmless and pugilistic drunkard’ (Fee, 2007, p. 4) created by the English in the nineteenth century. Similar to the ‘Paddy’, leprechauns are dressed in eighteenth-century costume, predominately masculine, bearded, happy, musical, and ‘commonly associated with drinking, if not in fact inebriated’ (Thompson, 2004, p. 203). Adoption of the ‘Paddy’ stereotype is an example of the ‘phenomenon of adopting colonial stereotypes as affirmative, nationalist representations’ by the nation-state (Thompson, 2004, p. 203). The leprechaun here becomes a symbol of a ‘national type’ (Elder, 2007, p. 26), and functions as a ‘mythic connection between nationhood and personhood’ in suggesting that the ‘nation arises naturally from the character of its people’ (Shapiro, 1999, p. 47).

As the ‘Paddy’ was a distortion and exaggeration of the Irish peasant class, the leprechaun can also be viewed as a representation of the folk or idealised peasant culture. The use of the leprechaun as a national symbol is therefore not always welcomed by the Irish because of its associations with superstition and stereotypical views of Irishness. An example of these problematic associations can be found in perhaps the most infamous film involving leprechauns, the Disney production *Darby O’Gill and the little people* (1959). The titular character meets the king of the leprechauns, Brian, and his people during the course of the film, which is also responsible for the association of leprechauns with green clothing. The ‘superstitious

nature' of the character of Darby 'goes hand-in-hand with his irresponsible, unfocused, rural, whimsical and old fashioned-character' (Fee, 2007, pp. 3 - 4), a cultural entanglement which is difficult for contemporary Irish citizens to navigate when engaging with the leprechaun as a national symbol.

The authority of the National Leprechaun Museum's narrative and its representation of the leprechaun are undermined by O'Rahilly's refusal to engage with its history as a colonial stereotype. The Irish media met the opening of the museum with uncertainty and in some cases open derision, criticising the use of the leprechaun as the focus of the museum. *The Irish Times* disparaged the ticket prices and use of timed tickets, writing that 'It's a little hard to believe there is going to be such demand for visits to a museum dedicated to something that does not actually exist ...' (Boland 2010), while the *Sunday Tribune* mocked the very idea of the museum using stereotypical Irish slang, 'Ah sure, top of de mornin' to ye, yizzer always after me Lucky Charms, but be the hokey, sure won't ye be able to find them in the new National Leprechaun Museum' (*Admission: one pot of gold, to be sure and begorrah* 2010). In their coverage of the museum opening, *TIME Magazine* interviewed Brian Twomey, Head of Marketing and Communications for Tourism Ireland, who stated that the leprechaun was a 'derogatory symbol from an Irish perspective ... certainly not something we [Tourism Ireland] would use' (O'Mahoney 2010). O'Rahilly acknowledged that there was public 'animosity' towards the museum (*Tom O'Rahilly at IGNITE #3 Dublin* 2010), along with a fear that opening a museum devoted to leprechauns meant that Ireland was 'once again living up to the stereotype' (O'Mahoney 2010) of the Irish as descendants of the superstitious and traditional folk culture; this is a connection, ironically, that the museum emphasises. The criticism levelled at the National Leprechaun Museum by the Irish media works to destabilise the authenticity of the site's status as a 'national museum', reflecting the idea that 'people do not unquestioningly accept what they are told by institutions such as museums ... the curator's intended messages may or may not be received, and even when they are, visitors will not necessarily agree with or adopt them' (Scorrano, 2012, p. 348).

Unlike the National Leprechaun Museum, which gained media attention from its opening in 2010, the Last Leprechauns of Ireland site has attracted criticism only in recent years due to its growing popularity. In 2013, the Last Leprechauns of Ireland

site was reported to be competing with the Boyne Valley as the ‘top visitor attraction in the North East’ on Tripadvisor (*Leprechaun cave competing with the Boyne valley* 2013). Criticism of the site is primarily centred on Kevin Woods, who in his role as the leprechaun whisperer McCoillte, resembles the eccentric and superstitious stereotype of the Irish embodied by characters such as Darby O’Gill. Woods is often represented as an oddity by the Irish media, with article headlines such as ‘Leprechaun whisperer curses gang after two-foot fairy horse status stolen’ (2013) and ‘Meet Ireland’s leprechaun whisperer – ‘We talk through out of body magic’ (Keogh 2016a), emphasising and often subtly ridiculing Woods’ claim to be in contact with leprechauns.

In several interviews, Woods’ narrative has been directly contested, destabilising the coherence and authority of the site. In 2016, academic Ian Sansom interviewed Woods as part of a documentary for BBC Radio 4, in which Sansom laughs at both the test for psychic abilities and the signs on Slieve Foye, and suggests that belief in leprechauns is evidence of ‘human gullibility’. Similarly in March of 2017, Gerry Kelly interviewed Woods for BBC Radio Ulster and laughed at several points during the broadcast, at one point asking Woods if he had ‘been on the green beer’ earlier that day. The interrogation of Woods’ narrative by both Sansom and Kelly, which is met by Woods on both occasions with a defensive response, demonstrates Massey’s point that any attempt to fix the identity of a place is an inherently unstable and temporary process, and that a dominant narrative of a place can be resisted (1995, p. 190). These critiques by the Irish media also reveal that public opinion of the use of leprechauns as a national symbol in Ireland is still predominately negative.

4.6.2 Diasporic nostalgia, kitsch, and the leprechaun figurine

Tracing the leprechaun through Irish folklore reveals it to be an invented tradition transformed into a symbol of national nostalgia. The popularity of the leprechaun in popular culture is due to early folklore collectors, who were responsible for cultivating and promoting its benevolent image. Indeed, leprechauns are actually ‘peripheral to the folk tradition of Ireland’, suggesting that they were not originally part of the Celtic spirit world (Winberry, 1976, p. 68). This is further evidenced by the ‘muddled’ characteristics of the Irish leprechaun, with attributes sourced from the ‘Celtic nature spirit’, the Tuatha de Danann, and the Scandinavian dwarves

(Winberry, 1976, p. 73). This amalgamation of characteristics, the leprechaun's peripheral position in the Irish pantheon of fairies, and the amiable depiction of the leprechaun by folklorists, allowed the Irish-American diaspora and the nation to adapt the leprechaun into a symbol of national nostalgia.

The leprechaun became symbolic of and for the nation, and in particular the lost national homeland, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries due to Irish-American diasporic nostalgia. This nostalgia first manifested itself in the purchase of souvenirs by descendants of Irish emigrants undertaking roots tourism in Ireland, as already discussed. These souvenirs became 'kitsch' objects, exaggerated and sentimental reminders of the lost homeland, including leprechaun figurines which continue to be a staple of Ireland's tourist shops. Kitsch objects may be seen as part of the production of cultural nationalism, achieved by the proliferation and dissemination of national images and symbols (Lloyd 1999). It has been suggested that Irish kitsch objects became popular amongst the Irish-American diaspora as a way to deal with the trauma of the Great Famine and the forced emigration of millions of Irish citizens (Thompson 2012). Spurgeon Thompson argues that kitsch is also used to deal with the effects of colonialism, where the Irish were 'obliged' to use a 'vocabulary of objects, to freight trinkets with meaning, to express dynamics of trauma and memory in leprechaun caricatures' (2012, p. 86). The stylisation and hyper-commercialisation of Irish kitsch functions as a 'mediating modality of culture, one that tries to soften the blow of memory' (Thompson, 2012, p. 75), creating a comfortable distance between the Irish-American diaspora and the homeland, allowing sentiment and nostalgia to develop. Kitsch objects articulate the 'simultaneous desire for and impossibility of restoring and maintaining [national] connection' (Lloyd, 1999, p. 92). However, through kitsch objects such as the leprechaun figurine, the Irish homeland 'receded from the present' (Gibbons, 2002, p. 49), and became idealised.

The authenticity and narrative of both the National Leprechaun Museum and the Last Leprechauns of Ireland site is undermined through their use of leprechaun figurines, both in their displays and in the museum's gift shop. Kitsch objects are meant to evoke sentimentality and 'self-enjoyment' in consumers (Olivier 2009), the 'success' of kitsch relying on the 'universality of the emotions it elicits' (Kulka, 1996, p. 27). Consumers are therefore meant to react in a collectively positive way to kitsch objects, often achieved by the use of 'cuteness' (Morreal & Loy 1989).

Characteristics of cuteness include ‘round protruding cheeks’, a ‘plump rounded body shape’, ‘eyes set low in the head’, ‘short thick extremities’, and ‘clumsy behaviour’ (Morreal & Loy, 1989, p. 68), all of which may be observed in a typical leprechaun figurine (see Figure 1.6). Cuteness is associated with dolls, children’s books, and with children in general (Morreal & Loy 1989), and the inclusion of leprechaun figurines in both sites implies that these sites are meant for a younger audience, a theory refuted by O’Rahilly’s and Woods’ own intentions for their sites as discussed in the site-specific analyses above. Influential travel guide publisher *Lonely Planet* described the National Leprechaun Museum as a ‘romper-room for kids sprinkled with bits of fairy tale’ (2016), suggesting that in popular opinion the inclusion of kitsch objects infantilises the site and Irish culture for adult visitors.

Despite the unpopularity of the leprechaun as a kitsch object, both O’Rahilly and Woods appear to be increasingly utilising kitsch in their respective sites. Over the past several years, the National Leprechaun Museum’s official website has undergone a significant shift in appearance and content. The website now consists largely of whimsical landscapes such as the ‘Mythical Forest’, which contains a link to the museum’s podcast, and the description of the museum itself has shifted from a focus on storytelling and a liminal journey into Ireland’s past to that of a journey into childhood:

... Take a break from your serious self and step into the Otherworld. Come on a voyage back to your childhood, bring back the memories and immerse yourself in a world of myth and legend ... Filled with your imagination and guided by our Storytellers, you'll go on a fantastic adventure. Explore the spaces, listen to the stories and learn about mythical Ireland. We dare you to have fun! (*National Leprechaun Museum* 2017)

The language used in this description entices adult visitors to ‘return’ to their childhood and ‘have fun’ in the museum, while children are promised a ‘fantastic adventure’ into the Otherworld; O’Rahilly’s initial intention for the museum to focus on Irish heritage and identity has seemingly shifted to evoking nostalgia for childhood. Similarly, on the official Last Leprechauns of Ireland website, Woods now offers a leprechaun figurine to each child who takes the Leprechaun and Fairy Cavern tour, and held a ‘Fairy House Building Competition’ for children in Folklore Park on May 14 of 2017 (*The Last Leprechauns of Ireland* 2017).

Although kitsch objects may have commercial benefits for these two sites, their reliance on kitsch destabilises the coherency of each site's narrative. Kitsch objects 'derive their charm from the aura of nostalgia which surrounds them' (Olivier, 2009, p. 63), which in the case of the leprechaun figurine is nostalgia for 'romantic' or 'mythical' Ireland, but can only 'touch' or move visitors on its own sentimentalist terms' (Olivier, 2009, p. 71). Kitsch items cannot be critically reflected on by the viewer, particularly in terms of the authenticity of the memory inspired by the object, because this 'destroys the illusion on which kitsch relies for its affect' (Olivier, 2009, p. 71), an illusion particularly difficult to maintain for an Irish audience because of Ireland's problematic history with the leprechaun as a national symbol. Therefore, the singular narrative of the leprechaun presented by each of these sites, in which different experiences and interpretations the Irish people have of the leprechaun are 'subsumed' into 'one historical experience of the nation as a single community' (Witcomb, 2003, p. 155), must inevitably be challenged by Irish visitors because of their use of leprechaun figurines.

4.6.3 Commodifying the little people

The commodification of Irish fairies is inextricably linked to colonialism. What Tok Thompson calls the 'mundanization' (2004, p. 199) of fairies began with England's colonial domination of Ireland, which involved the 'denigration of Ireland's culture and peoples' and the 'progressive belittlement' of fairies, both literally and culturally (2004, pp. 205). The leprechaun in particular was subjected to this belittlement, resulting in a sanitised and benevolent figure ideally suited as a touristic representation and national symbol of Ireland. Sanitising the figure of the leprechaun primarily involved the censoring of folktales which portrayed leprechauns as ambiguous or malevolent beings. In Irish folklore leprechauns were originally recorded to be ugly, spiteful creatures that were 'bitterly malicious' if offended (Wilde, 1887, p. 21), and encounters with them could provoke unease and even fear. There were also several aspects or possibly geographical variations of the leprechaun, including the *cluricaun*, the *lurikeen*, and the *fear dearg*, also called the 'Red Man', a malicious being that played 'gruesome' practical jokes on mortals (Yeats, 1888, p. 81). However, these more malevolent characteristics were overlooked in favour of portraying the leprechaun as a 'lovable, amusing, mischievous, solitary, old elf-cobbler' (Winberry, 1976, p. 73).

The US media has also played a significant role in the commodification of the leprechaun. In the 1960's, a famous series of television advertisements for the cereal 'Lucky Charms' was created, featuring 'Lucky' the leprechaun. Negra writes that these advertisements 'code Irishness as an available ethnicity, equating consumption of the breakfast cereal with consuming Irishness itself' (2001, p. 82). The representation of Ireland in the US media since the 1960's is characterised by Irishness being 'set up as the primitive, the undeveloped or the romantic' (Negra, 2001, p. 77). Ireland itself is constructed as 'incomplete until it is commodified/transformed into a tourist market', themes which are also reproduced by tourism campaigns within Ireland itself (Negra, 2001, p. 90).

The leprechaun, therefore, is understood by the Irish people as a commercialised symbol for tourism. This belief is reinforced by evidence from the ubiquitous presence of leprechaun figurines and costumes in souvenir shops across Ireland to street performers dressed as leprechauns entertaining tourists in Dublin. When the National Leprechaun Museum opened in 2010, articles covering the opening in the Irish media were inclined to focus on the economic aspects of the museum such as ticket prices and how the museum was initially funded, suggesting that the museum was viewed as a money-making venture because of its association with the leprechaun. Presently, public interest in the museum tends to resurface at times when it either struggles or flourishes financially; for example, in June of 2017 when *The Sunday Times* reported a 'surge in visitors' to the museum after a leprechaun character called 'Mad Sweeney' was introduced in the Amazon Prime television series *American Gods* (O'Driscoll 2017). Any attempt by the National Leprechaun Museum to separate the leprechaun from its origins as colonial stereotype, kitsch object, or commodified touristic symbol is compromised by its own further commodification of the leprechaun. The use of simulacra throughout the museum fuels 'hyperconsumerism' (Walsh, 1992, p. 59). Furthermore, all visitors must exit the museum via the gift shop, in which there is a large plush model of a leprechaun and leprechaun-themed souvenirs, including leprechaun figurines. Despite the museum's claim to present an alternate history for the leprechaun, its continued commercialisation within the museum has the result of reproducing and reinforcing rather than overturning the dominant stereotype of the leprechaun.

The commodification of the leprechaun further problematises the authenticity of both the National Leprechaun Museum and the Last Leprechauns of Ireland sites. Jill Vaughan argues that the ‘maintenance of authentic status’ for sites and practices that are considered ‘authentic’ is difficult because commodification and authenticity exist in an ongoing state of tension and struggle (2016, p. 67). This maintenance is particularly difficult when these sites become subject to nostalgia or are constructed as nostalgic, which in turn leads to commodification, because the authentic status of the site is constructed ‘necessarily fictively’ through ‘linkage to an idealised past’ (Vaughan, 2016, pp. 66 - 67). Furthermore, the apparent ‘over-commodification’ of sites or products may ‘lead to distaste as individuals perceive the lack of authenticity’ (Vaughan, 2016, p. 67). This distaste is particularly evident in recent coverage of the Last Leprechauns of Ireland site, as Woods attempts to add folklore sites into his leprechaun colony narrative.

Woods’ site already commodifies the leprechaun, through both the creation of the Leprechaun and Fairy Cavern which charges admission, as well as through the National Leprechaun Hunt. The Hunt involves the selling of hunting licences as well as ‘leprechaun whisky’, clothing, and other leprechaun-themed souvenirs to participants (*The gathering at the leprechaun hunt in Carlingford* 2013). However, Woods’ commercialisation of Irish folklore was not extensively criticised in the Irish media until Woods announced his intention to move the Long Woman’s Grave from Omeath in County Louth to his Folklore Park in Carlingford in 2016. Woods justified the move by commenting that the original burial was an ‘injustice’ and that his proposed re-interment site in Folklore Park would be ‘reverently tended to’ and ‘has magnificent views ... worthy of a Spanish noblewoman’ (Keogh 2016b). The *Irish Mirror* pointed out that there is no record of anyone being buried in the Long Woman’s Grave to exhume (Keogh 2016b), while Dunkalk website *Talk of the Town* promoted a rally held by Omeath locals protesting against Woods’ plan (*Protest rally to take place in Omeath on Friday against plans to move the Long Woman’s Grave* 2016). In the wake of the rally, which was attended by approximately 200 protesters, *The Argus* reported that locals were ‘unsure whether Kevin’s proposal was a serious threat to remove part of their heritage or a publicity stunt’ (*The long woman is not going anywhere* 2016). The Long Woman’s Grave is the number one attraction in Omagh and one of the most popular attractions in County Louth, and as Woods

had already constructed his proposed burial site at Folklore Park (Keogh 2016b), it can be concluded that Woods intended to move the folklore site in order to attract more visitors, as well as potential revenue, to Carlingford and the Last Leprechauns of Ireland site.

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter has analysed the two new fairy sites of the National Leprechaun Museum in Dublin and the Last Leprechauns of Ireland site in Carlingford. This chapter has argued that these two sites are constructed as versions of the idealised and nostalgic Irish homeland for Irish visitors using simulacra, storytelling, and the national symbol of the leprechaun. Focusing on the discourse of nationalism and the use of restorative and collective nostalgia in each of these sites, this chapter has concluded that the creators of these sites utilise nationalism in the form of the leprechaun along with nostalgia for the national homeland in an attempt to construct, authenticate, and control a monologic and coherent narrative and identity for each site.

However, because place-making and place-defining is an inherently unstable and temporary practice, and both the National Leprechaun Museum and the Last Leprechauns of Ireland sites have been critiqued by the Irish media for its commodification and selective history of the leprechaun, the coherent identity these sites seek to establish is always ‘in process of formation’ and ‘forever unachieved’ (Massey, 1995, p. 186). The site-specific analyses undertaken in this chapter have identified an assumption of legitimacy bestowed upon sites associated with Irish nationalism. A similar sense of authenticity is granted to sites connected with heritage; however, the use of nostalgia complicates and problematises this inferred association with consequences that I will now explore in the second of my analysis chapters, ‘Heritage: Up the airy mountain’.

Figure 1.1 The National Leprechaun Museum



Figure 1.2 Spectators at the 2015 St Patrick's Day Parade, New York



Figure 1.3 Map of the National Leprechaun Museum

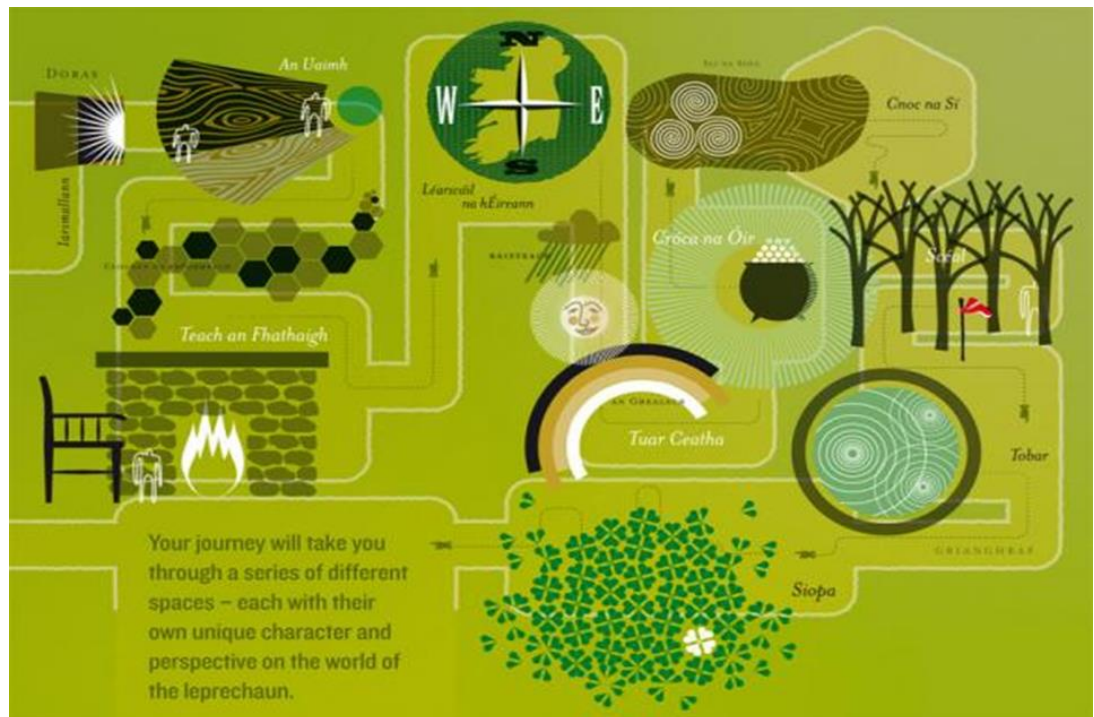


Figure 1.4 Carlingford with Slieve Foye in the background



Figure 1.5 Leprechaun protected area, Slieve Foye



Figure 1.6 Leprechaun figurines, Dublin



Chapter Four

Heritage: Up the airy mountain

5.1 Introduction

This chapter considers the third and fourth fairy sites examined in this thesis: the new fairy site of Gillighan's World: The Field of Dreams, located in County Sligo, and the old fairy site of Lough Gur, located in County Limerick. This chapter concentrates on the discourses of heritage, and the use of restorative and 'historical' nostalgia (Stern 1992) in the production of these sites as 'authentic' representations of Ireland's historical past for heritage tourists using reconstruction, conservation, and the mythologisation of place and history.

I begin firstly by defining the concept of heritage and its relationship with power and representation, and summarise its multiple manifestations at the local, regional, and national level. I then discuss the association of heritage sites with place-conservation, and the focus of the heritage discourse on the establishment of coherent place-identities. I also introduce the idea of the 'romantic gaze' of the heritage tourist (Urry & Larsen 2011), and the construction of particular tourism sites in Ireland as 'unspoilt' nostalgic places (Massey 1995). Secondly, I outline the relationship between heritage tourism and nostalgia, and suggest that the representation of Irish heritage sites as unspoilt, 'timeless', and idealised places may be attributed to the influence of the idea of 'romantic Ireland' (Negra 2001) on the tourism industry. It is these concepts, along with the mythologisation of the past and the creation of 'place-myths' (Shields 1991) as part of the formation of heritage sites' place-identities, which informs my analysis of these two fairy sites. The chapter continues with the site-specific analyses of the new fairy site of Gillighan's World: The Field of Dreams and the old fairy site of Lough Gur, in which I examine how these sites reconstruct and mythologise the idealised historical past, and how fairies become part of the nostalgic place-myth of each site for heritage tourists. Finally, I move to a critique of these two fairy sites and their construction as versions of Ireland's idealised past, through a discussion of staged authenticity and monologic place-identities in heritage sites, the problematic role that nostalgia plays in the commodification of the 'heritage industry', and also introduce the conflict between

heritage stakeholders and neo-pagan groups over the appropriation and use of sacredness in heritage sites.

5.2 Heritage and the conservation of place

The concept of heritage is not easy to define. It has been called a ‘conveniently ambiguous’ term (Harrison, 2013, p. 14), and Jo Littler and Roshi Naidoo point out that the meaning of heritage has morphed over time (2004, p. 2). Although heritage is often associated with nationalism, as discussed in Chapter Three in regards to the Last Leprechauns of Ireland site, not all heritage sites are funded by the nation-state or constructed for a national audience. Heritage sites can also exist at both the local and regional level. For example, Rodney Harrison defines ‘official heritage’ as that authorised by the state, while ‘unofficial heritage’ are ‘practices that are represented using the language of heritage, but are not recognised by official terms of legislation’ (2013, pp. 14-15). Harrison further characterises heritage as ‘tangible’ and ‘intangible’, in which ‘tangible heritage’ refers to objects, buildings, and other material artefacts, while ‘intangible heritage’ refers to beliefs and cultural practices, including languages, mythologies, and sacred sites, which ‘wrap around’ these tangible artefacts (Harrison, 2010, p. 10).

The idea of heritage is further complicated by its relationship with power, representation, and association with a range of activities and practices. Brian Graham and Peter Howard argue that heritage is actually ‘less about tangible material artefacts’ than about the ‘meanings placed upon them and the representations which are created from them’ (2008, p. 2). Laurajane Smith asserts that ‘there is no one defining action or moment of heritage’ (2006, p. 83), and the multiple producers, managers, and stakeholders involved in the creation and management of heritage sites suggests that ‘pasts, heritages and identities should be considered as plurals’ (Graham & Howard, 2008, p. 1). Furthermore, heritage is characterised as a ‘set of attitudes to, and relationships with, the past’ that are formed in the present as a result of relationships between ‘human and non-human actors’ (Harrison, 2013, p. 14). Therefore, heritage can be considered the result of interactions, conflicts, and power relations between multiple stakeholders. In light of this, I have utilised Graham and Howard’s definition of heritage for the purposes of this chapter, a definition in which

heritage refers to ‘the way in which very selective past material artefacts, natural landscapes, mythologies, memories and traditions become cultural, political, and economic resources for the present’ (2008, p. 2). This definition emphasises the constructed nature of heritage sites, as well as the power relations present in their selective representation of the past.

Heritage sites are predominately concerned with the conservation of place, in terms of physical artefacts and landscapes as well as particular place-identities. Gregory Ashworth argues that heritage is a place-based activity, pointing out that ‘whether or not heritage is deliberately designed to achieve pre-set socio-political goals, place identities at various spatial scales are likely to be shaped or reinforced by heritage planning’ (1994, p. 21). The singular place-identity constructed and represented by heritage sites may be understood through Massey’s theory of ‘freezing’ places into envelopes of space-time (1994a), introduced in Chapter Two. Massey writes that the identities of places are ‘very much bound up with the *histories* which are told of them, *how* these histories are told, and which history turns out to be dominant’ (1995, p. 186). David Brett raises a similar argument with the idea of ‘mythic time’, positing that the narratives of heritage sites exist outside of ‘real, concrete time’, ‘categorically distinct’ from historical time and ‘the experiences of actual persons’ (1996, p. 157). The dominant interpretation of the past of a place, Massey reminds us, is used to legitimise a particular understanding and use of that place in the present by powerful groups (1995, p. 185). Lowenthal describes this process as ‘domesticating the past’ so as to infuse it with ‘present purposes’ (1998, p. xv). The place-identities of heritage sites are not only formed by heritage managers and other official stakeholders, but are also constructed through the lens of tourism and consumption, an ‘ideological framing of history, nature and tradition’ that has the power to ‘reshape culture and nature for its own needs’ (MacCannell, 1992, p. 1).

Heritage sites are primarily constructed as authentic and worthy of conservation through what Jenny Blain and Robert J. Wallis call the ‘authorised heritage discourse’ (2007). The authorised heritage discourse is the ‘dominant, legitimised, contemporary discourse pertaining to the past and its artefacts’ (Blain & Wallis, 2007, p. 33). This discourse is ‘largely articulated’ by the archaeologists who excavate and officially interpret heritage sites, as well as the heritage managers who construct and produce the sites for tourism (Blain & Wallis, 2007, p. 33). It is this

discourse, and its associated practices and limitations, which is contested by neo-pagan understandings and uses of place, as heritage sites and sacred sites tend to overlap. The political and cultural implications of the authorised heritage discourse on neo-pagan groups is introduced in the critique later in this chapter, and further discussed in Chapter Five. The authorised heritage discourse relies on a way of constructing and controlling space defined as the ‘preservation ethos’ (Blain & Wallis 2007). This ethos identifies particular places as having both intellectual and fiscal value, particularly sites associated with prehistoric remains and artefacts, which must be preserved ‘for the benefit of future generations’ (Blain & Wallis, 2007, p. 33). The valuing of place based on the artefacts and natural features contained within it, and for the potential financial benefits of those artefacts for academia and tourism, has consequences: ‘the selectivity of heritage discourse can serve to bury and efface certain places at the same time as it reveals and celebrates certain others’ (Byrne, 2008, p. 230), as well as privilege certain uses of place and representations of the past over others, which I will discuss further in the site-specific analyses.

Heritage sites are also constructed to appeal to heritage tourists and the ‘tourist gaze’ (Urry 1990). Stephen W. Boyd writes that the tourism industry is ‘increasingly promoting the past ... as a tourism product, along with understanding and reliving the past as a key tourist experience’ (2000, p. 152). Heritage sites are therefore marketed to suit what John Urry calls the ‘romantic gaze’ of the tourist (2011, p. 2). The tourist gaze tends to be directed at places which are separated from normal experiences, or chosen because ‘there is anticipation, especially through daydreaming and fantasy, of intense pleasures’ (Urry & Larsen, 2011, p. 4). This sense of anticipation is produced through marketing and media representations, with the result of ‘constructing and reinforcing the gaze’ (Urry & Larsen, 2011, p. 4). Multiple actors within the tourism industry work to produce and reproduce new objects and places for the tourist gaze, including heritage managers, photographers, travel writers, hotel owners, and other ‘experts’ (Urry & Larsen, 2011, p. 18). The power balance between heritage tourists and heritage stakeholders is therefore in constant flux; the construction and control of place in heritage sites means that tourists are instructed on ‘how, when and where to gaze’ within the site (Urry, 1990, p. 9), but heritage sites also experience differing levels of popularity depending on

the ‘changing class, gender and generational distinctions of taste among potential visitors’ (Urry & Larsen, 2011, p. 5). Furthermore, the tourist gaze is not passive or homogenous in nature, meaning that visitors can react to sites in unexpected ways.

The romantic gaze associated with tourism constructs places as ‘unspoilt’ (Massey 1995). Heritage tourism is defined as place-bound (Dallen, 2011, p. 4); the subject of the romantic gaze, or the ‘solitary gaze’, of the heritage tourist is therefore predominately natural landscapes such as ‘the deserted beach, the empty hilltop, the uninhabited forest, the uncontaminated mountain and so on’ (Urry & Larsen, 2011, p. 19). The romantic gaze, ‘endlessly’ utilised in tourism campaigns, is characterised by ‘solitude, privacy and a personal, semi-spiritual relationship with the object of the gaze’ (Urry & Larsen, 2011, p. 19). As I will argue in the site-specific analyses, both Gillighan’s World and Lough Gur make use of the romantic gaze in their respective advertising. The construction of particular places as ‘unspoilt’, according to Massey, suggests that these places are ‘as we have imagined it to be in some distant past’, and that the past is seen to ‘embody the real character of the place’ (1995, p. 183). The romantic gaze of the heritage tourist may therefore be seen as a nostalgic gaze, as unspoilt places are considered ‘authentic’ representations of an idealised past. As I will now discuss, Irish heritage sites, as well as Ireland in general, tend to be represented as unspoilt and ‘timeless’ tourist destinations, achieved through the mythologisation of the past.

5.3 Discovering Ireland the ‘timeless’: Heritage tourism and the mythologisation of the past

The relationship of heritage sites with nostalgia is complex, and has been subject to much critique. Heritage sites are considered to present the past in an ‘inaccurate manner’, and are also considered nostalgic, creating anxiety towards the present and future through the idealisation of the past (Harrison, 2010, p. 18), criticisms which I will develop in the critique later in this chapter. Graham Dann writes that tourism marketing, including heritage tourism, relies heavily on nostalgic images, in which the past is represented as both distant and familiar (1994, p. 40). Potential visitors viewing tourism advertising for heritage sites are ‘drawn out of time into an eternal moment where both time and space become incorporated into the structure of myth’

(Dann, 1994, p. 39). This construction of place as eternal and unspoilt, and the conflation of history and myth in the representation of the past in heritage sites, may be understood as an act of restorative nostalgia, as heritage managers and other stakeholders are preoccupied with restoring and presenting the authentic and singular 'essence' of each particular site.

Boym posits that restorative nostalgia 'manifests itself in total reconstructions of monuments of the past' (2001, p. 41), a characteristic evident in the reconstruction and preservation of artefacts and landscapes in heritage sites. The authentication of particular places as heritage sites by archaeologists, academics, and other heritage experts and institutions reflects the tendency of restorative nostalgia to regard its interpretation of the past as the 'truth'. Boym also argues that restorative nostalgia engages in the 'antimodern myth-making of history' (2001, p. 41), a practice which will be further discussed in the site-specific analyses. In its focus on the mythologisation of the past, reconstructive nostalgia may be connected to 'historical' nostalgia (Stern 1992), which is concerned with the presentation of a 'fictive' and superior past representing 'a time before the audience was born' (Stern, 1992, p. 13). Barbara Stern defines historical nostalgia as an expression of the desire of consumers to 'retreat from contemporary life' and 'identify with a past era perceived as a repository of desirable traits and/or values' (1992, pp. 13-14). Significantly, historical nostalgia is not directed towards a specific period of history, but rather utilises 'quasi-mythological characters, exotic settings, and fantastic plots to recreate the past as a golden age' (Stern, 1992, p. 14). In this way, historical nostalgia 'celebrates a more diffuse notion of pastness itself' (Stern, 1992, p. 15), which can be observed in the construction of both the fairy sites of Gillighan's World and Lough Gur. Therefore, by evoking nostalgia in heritage tourists for a non-specific yet desirable mythologised past, stakeholders in heritage sites are able to concentrate on restoring the site to whatever version of the past is considered its authentic and essential character (Massey 1995).

Heritage tourists may also be seen to play a role in the construction of heritage sites as nostalgic places. Dale W. Russell distinguishes between two types of 'nostalgia tourists'; the 'real' and the 'historical' (2008). A real nostalgia tourist 'seeks to revisit their past cultural environment and to relive personal bygone experiences', while a historical nostalgia tourist 'seeks to visit an idealized cultural environment

... that has been conveyed to them through an indirect means' (Russell, 2008, p. 104). For the purposes of this chapter, I define heritage tourists as historical nostalgia tourists because the majority of the heritage sites in Ireland, including Gillighan's World and Lough Gur, are associated with the preservation and reconstruction of prehistoric artefacts and landscapes. Dann suggests that in the marketing of tourism sites history becomes 'appropriated by memory or projection, in order that consumers can fill the void' by identifying themselves with the site being advertised (1994, p. 40). This idea, when paired with Urry's theory of the romantic gaze and its influence on tourism advertising, suggests that visitors play a significant role in the production of the nostalgic place-identity of heritage sites. Smith stresses that heritage is constructed through a range of activities, including 'remembering, commemoration, communicating and passing on knowledge and memories', the product of which are the 'emotions and experiences and ... memories' of heritage sites experienced by tourists (2006, p. 83). The importance of memory in the construction of heritage sites therefore refers not only to a site's representation of the past, but also to the nostalgic memories formed by heritage tourists, which are in turn reproduced in the marketing and place-identity formation of these sites.

The representation of Irish heritage sites as unspoilt, timeless, and idealised places can be attributed to the influence of 'romantic Ireland' (Negra 2001) on the tourism industry. The concept of romantic Ireland, introduced in Chapter Three, is used to promote Ireland as a tourist destination both within and outside the country. Nuala C. Johnson observes that in recent decades there has been an 'increased push towards transforming the Irish countryside from a predominately working agricultural one to a tourism landscape where Irish history can be retailed to the overseas visitor and local' (1999, p. 191). She identifies an expansion in the number of heritage centres and other sites of historical interest in Ireland during this time, arguing that there has been a 'remapping' of Ireland into a 'pleasure periphery', which is designed to 'retail and retell historical narratives to an ever-increasing volume of travellers' (Johnson, 1999, p. 191). This increasing focus on the marketing of Irish history to visitors is explained by the grounding of romantic Ireland in idealised primitive and 'premodern' images and perceptions (Costa 2009). As discussed in the previous chapter, 'romantic Ireland' represents the Irish people as descendants of the nostalgic folk culture, and emphasises the connection between the folk, storytelling, folklore,

and the landscape. Kelli Ann Costa writes that, in the mind of tourists, 'Ireland as a nation and the Irish as a people are not supposed to evolve' (2009, p. 53). This has resulted in the representation of Ireland in tourism imagery as 'occupying 'empty time'' (Johnson, 1999, p. 192).

In dominant representations of Ireland as a tourist destination, Ireland is 'placed 'behind' modern time' (Johnson, 1999, p. 192), and is marketed as 'timeless'. Marion Marwick asserts that the placement of Ireland behind modern time suggests to tourists the 'possibility of a retreat from the pressures of modernity to the apparent simplicity and authenticity of earlier times' (2001, p. 42). The emphasis placed on landscape and particularly pastoral imagery in the marketing of Ireland as a tourist destination, which includes the representation of heritage sites, conveys a sense of permanence and timelessness, as well as serving to depict Ireland as 'empty space', available to tourists for their 'exclusive and unrestricted enjoyment' (Marwick, 2001, p. 42). The concept of romantic Ireland, therefore, may be understood as the selective combination of fact and fiction to create nostalgic 'imaginary geographies' (Marwick, 2001, p. 41), in order to serve the purposes of powerful groups such as heritage stakeholders.

The construction and marketing of heritage sites in Ireland involves the representation of these sites through a very selective and partial series of 'place-images', which collectively form a 'place-myth' (Shields 1991). Rob Shields defines place-images as originating from the over-simplification, stereotyping, and labelling of a place, resulting in a 'set of core images' that 'form a widely disseminated and commonly held set of images of a place or space' (1991, p. 60). Through media dissemination and popular culture, place is 'hypostatized from the world of real space relations to a symbolic realm of cultural significations', in which place-images of a particular place 'may even come to be held as signifiers of its essential character' (Shields, 1991, p. 47). In this way, Shield's notion of place-myths and Massey's theory of place-identities, which also involves the dominance of a particular history and 'essential' image of a place, may be connected.

Powerful discourses such as those of heritage utilise myths in order to authenticate and naturalise the dominant meanings of particular places. The mythologisation process portrays the identity of places as 'obvious and timeless', which can result in

the place-myth replacing ‘the reality it purports to portray’ (Śledzińska, 2015, p. 121). Although Shields writes that place-myths exude power when associated with hegemonic discourses and reinforced in commercial advertising, ‘opposed groups may succeed in generating antithetical place-myths’ (1991, p. 61), which can be seen in the conflict between heritage stakeholders and neo-pagan groups over particular sites, which is the focus of Chapter Five. Furthermore, the propensity of heritage sites to focus on an unspecified and idealised past means that multiple place-images can come to signify one particular site. However, the association of heritage sites with authenticity and truth, and the control of heritage stakeholders over the narrative and space of these sites, means that the place-identities of heritage sites are represented as ‘internally coherent visions’ (Chapman, 2000, p. 187), as I will now demonstrate in my site-specific analysis of Gillighan’s World: The Field of Dreams and Lough Gur.

5.4 Gillighan’s World: The Field of Dreams

Gillighan’s World: The Field of Dreams was created by Melody Urquhart, the site first opening to visitors in 1999. This new fairy site is located adjacent to the hill of Knocknashee in County Sligo, an enclosed hillfort that includes two burial cairns and the remains of hutsites, which was discovered and excavated in 1988 (MacDermot 2000). I categorise Gillighan’s World as an unofficial heritage site because it is privately owned, and lacks the authorisation of any official heritage organisations such as Fáilte Ireland, the National Tourism Development Authority. I further define Gillighan’s World as an intangible heritage site, as the site does not contain any archaeological artefacts, but rather focuses on the preservation of Irish folklore related to the hill of Knocknashee. The folklore that Urquhart concentrates on preserving specifically regards the mythological race of the Tuatha de Danann, the ancestors of Irish fairies, who are associated with the hill (*Gillighan’s World The Field of Dreams* 2017). I argue that the creation of Gillighan’s World is an act of restorative nostalgia on the part of Urquhart, in which she attempts to restore the mythical world of the Tuatha de Danann, and furthermore that the site utilises historical nostalgia in its construction, in terms of evoking nostalgia in heritage tourists towards a romanticised version of the past.

Gillighan's World is comprised of multiple spaces, including 'Fairy Land', the 'water gardens', the 'amphitheatre', the 'Poet's Corner', picnic areas, and the 'faerie ring fort', located at the rear of the property near Knocknashee. Upon arrival, visitors are given a map of the site, and encouraged to direct any questions to the staff at the kiosk (*Gillighan's World The Field of Dreams* 2017). Visitors are then allowed to explore the site at their leisure, using the map as a guide, along with signs placed at various intervals to describe the different spaces. Gillighan's World is constructed so that all the paths loop back to the central courtyard of the site, which contains the tea rooms and the gift shop, as well as the entrance and exit to the site. Similar to the National Leprechaun Museum, Gillighan's World is entered through a tunnel, a child-sized opening in the wall surrounding the site, which is overgrown with ivy. The possible function of this tunnel, as is the case with the National Leprechaun Museum, is to signify a passage from one world into another, from the modern world to the mythologised past. Unlike the new fairy sites of the National Leprechaun Museum and the Last Leprechauns of Ireland, discussed in Chapter Three, visitors to Gillighan's World are not required to have a guide, although as mentioned above, they can voluntarily engage with the staff and inquire about the site. However, this does not mean that visitors are free to interpret the site in whatever way they desire, as the construction of the nostalgic narrative and control of space in Gillighan's World not only affects visitors' experiences of Gillighan's World itself, but also of Knocknashee.

5.4.1 Mythologising the Hill of Knocknashee

The purpose of Gillighan's World, according to its creator Urquhart, is to preserve the hill of Knocknashee and its associated folklore, and prevent the 'story of Knocknashee' from being 'forgotten and gradually becoming unrecognised' (*Gillighan's World The Field of Dreams* 2017). Urquhart works to counter this fear through the construction of Gillighan's World, which functions as a nostalgic representation of the world of the Tuatha de Danann in an unspecified, and mythologised, past. On the official website of Gillighan's World, Urquhart outlines her relationship with Knocknashee and her reasons for creating Gillighan's World. Urquhart's narrative demonstrates her restorative nostalgia towards the mythologised past; 'Visions of a solitary Knocknashee "The Hill of the Faeries" appeared before me ... the peoples of the Tuatha de Danann going about their daily activities or

preparing for battle ... became the inspirational melody of creation' (*Gillighan's World The Field of Dreams* 2017). Urquhart reveals in her narrative that the main objective of Gillighan's World is not to educate heritage tourists about Ireland's history, but rather to evoke nostalgia and positive emotions in visitors, writing that her aim was to create a place that would 'offer joy and hope to all who venture within' (*Gillighan's World The Field of Dreams* 2017).

The positive emotions that Urquhart intends to elicit in visitors are partially evoked through the marketing of Gillighan's World to prospective visitors. The romantic gaze is utilised in the advertising of Gillighan's World, in which the site is depicted as a place to experience individually or with family, particularly children (*Gillighan's World The Field of Dreams* 2017). The home page of the official website of Gillighan's World features a short video as well as a brochure advertising the site. The video provides a brief background of the history of the site, underscored with 'traditional' Celtic music, and focuses on tourists enjoying themselves at the site. There are several photographs of Knocknashee which, in contrast to the rest of the site, is uninhabited, and therefore desirable for its 'unspoilt' nature. These images of Knocknashee serve to construct the heritage site as an object for the romantic gaze, promising a personal and spiritual experience for the viewer (Urry & Larsen 2011).

In contrast, the brochure advertising Gillighan's World conflates the new fairy site with the hill of Knocknashee (see Figure 2.1). The brochure states that Gillighan's World is located *at* 'Knocknashee Ancient Hill Fort', rather than adjacent to it, directly linking the two sites. However, no images of Knocknashee are included in the brochure; instead, there are digitally altered images of Gillighan's World to include the figures of fairies, as well as images of children and the figurines of fairies and toadstools located throughout the site. This suggests that Gillighan's World has constructed its own place-myth regarding Knocknashee, in which the heritage site has become associated with, and represented by, specific place-images concerning tourism, pleasure, fairies, and the idealised past. The relationship formed between Gillighan's World and Knocknashee combines the two sites into a single and coherent representation of the mythologised past, in which 'today is like yesterday and yesterday is like tomorrow' (Johnson, 1999, p. 192). The historical period which these sites represent is unspecified, and indeed, irrelevant; the purpose of Gillighan's

World, and by association Knocknashee, is to evoke nostalgia and desire for the idealised past in heritage tourists, functioning as ‘centres of physical and emotional sensation from which temporal and spatial continuities have been abolished’ (Selwyn, 1990, p. 24).

Gillighan’s World, along with Knocknashee, is primarily represented as a place for visitors to ‘escape’ from the modern world. This is achieved through the language used to describe the site, as well as the spatial construction of the site itself. Heritage tourists are invited to ‘retreat from contemporary life’ (Stern, 1992, p. 13) within the site, with emphasis placed on the site, and by extension the mythologised past it represents, as being a relaxing and pleasurable experience (*Gillighan’s World The Field of Dreams* 2017). Urquhart endows every activity which takes place within the site with these associations of pleasure and escapism, even eating: ‘What could be more enticing and nourishing than to feast by the fairy lake, on a plateau on The Hill of the Fairies, underneath the branches of a towering sycamore tree, or in the privacy of Picnic Corner?’ (*Gillighan’s World The Field of Dreams* 2017). Statements such as these locate Gillighan’s World within ‘circles of anticipation, performance and remembrance’ (Urry & Larsen, 2011, p. 119), where potential visitors anticipate the formation of pleasurable memories at the site, and are stimulated to an ‘imaginative recreation of a past golden age’ associated with the site (Stern, 1992, p. 16). Gillighan’s World is also spatially constructed to reinforce these emotions of pleasure and nostalgia, with various picnic areas and benches distributed throughout the site for the convenience of visitors, and multiple spaces such as the amphitheatre, the fairy gardens, and the faerie ring fort presenting romanticised images of an uncomplicated and idealised past.

The conflation of Gillighan’s World with Knocknashee, in both its marketing and spatial construction, also aids Urquhart in controlling the narrative and physical space of both sites. Although there are no guides, the use of maps and signs work to interpret the site for visitors, and the official website provides a list of activities available within the site, thereby limiting possible alternative uses of the site by heritage tourists. The activities suggested on the website, including walking through the botanical gardens and going on a treasure hunt using provided maps of the site, reinforces Johnson’s argument that Ireland has been transformed into a ‘pleasure periphery’ for tourists (1999). Gillighan’s World promotes activities ‘that will

provide light entertainment, fun and pleasure, for all age groups ... in a peaceful and relaxing setting' (*Gillighan's World The Field of Dreams* 2017), thereby evoking the desired positive emotions associated with historical nostalgia, while further limiting the chance for alternative or critical engagements with the site on the part of visitors.

The dominant nostalgic narrative of Gillighan's World, in which the site functions as a representation of the mythological past of the Tuatha de Danann associated with Knocknashee, is also reinforced through the construction of Knocknashee as subject to the romantic gaze. Although not actively discouraged from climbing Knocknashee, heritage tourists are directed by both the staff, and the spatial layout of Gillighan's World, to engage with the heritage site from a distance through the use of the romantic gaze from the ring fort (see Figure 2.2). Similar to the demarcation of the 'leprechaun habitat' in the Last Leprechauns of Ireland site, Knocknashee is separated from Gillighan's World both physically and textually through its construction as a heritage site in need of preservation. Heritage tourists can indirectly engage with Knocknashee through the invented tradition of the 'Wishing Ritual' inside the faerie ring fort (*Gillighan's World The Field of Dreams* 2017). This 'ritual', which involves tossing a coin into the centre of the ring fort and making a wish to the fairies, relies on heritage tourists interpreting Knocknashee, and by extension Gillighan's World, as inhabiting the mythologised past of the Tuatha de Danann, in which the fairies might grant their wish. The invented tradition of the Wishing Ritual, although created in the present, symbolises similar traditions in the past 'from which we feel ourselves inexorably, inevitably distant' (Massey, 1995, p. 184). Therefore, Urquhart's representation of Knocknashee works to further evoke nostalgia in visitors, and reinforces the nostalgic narrative of Gillighan's World as a representation of the mythologised past.

5.4.2 Reconstructing the world of the Tuatha de Danann

The new fairy site of Gillighan's World works to restore a nostalgic version of the Irish past through the preservation of the hill of Knocknashee, as well as through the reconstruction of heritage artefacts in the form of simulacra. Urquhart writes that her first impression of Knocknashee was negative, as the site did not resemble the 'faerie place' she had anticipated through dominant media representations of fairies and places associated with fairies (*Gillighan's World The Field of Dreams* 2017). The

existence of Gillighan's World may therefore be understood as the result of Urquhart identifying a 'disruption' between the past of a place, in the case of Knocknashee as the former abode of the Tuatha de Danann, and its present purpose and representation, as well as its 'potential future' (Massey, 1995, p. 183). Urquhart, therefore, in an act of restorative nostalgia, determined to 'patch up the memory gaps' (Boym, 2001, p. 41) between the past and present iterations of Knocknashee by constructing a singular and coherent place-identity for the site through the creation of Gillighan's World. The place-myth of Knocknashee, of which Gillighan's World is a part, is constructed from a 'particular reading' of the history of that site by Urquhart, which she saw as embodying the 'real' or essential character of the site (Massey, 1995, p. 189).

In order to authenticate the site's representation of the past, Urquhart utilises heritage language and practices in the construction of Gillighan's World. The connection of Gillighan's World to Knocknashee lends the site an authentic status, as heritage sites have 'identity-conferring status ... involving a strong sense of lineage and inheritance' (Urry & Larsen, 2011, p. 141). Urquhart claims that the motivation behind the creation of Gillighan's World was a need to conserve and tell the story of Knocknashee, which she perceived to be under threat. This threat was the potential loss of what Urquhart considered to be the essential meaning of Knocknashee, as the kingdom of the Tuatha de Danann before they moved to the Hill of Tara (*Gillighan's World The Field of Dreams* 2017). Urquhart therefore attempted to preserve the folklore associated with Knocknashee through the creation of 'The Field of Dreams', the purpose of which was to represent and conserve these stories. This common theme of conservation runs through the place-images of Gillighan's World; native flora and fauna, wildlife and abandoned pets, local folklore, as well as the hill of Knocknashee itself, are all constructed as successfully preserved through the existence of Gillighan's World.

Within this narrative of conservation, Urquhart constructs herself as a nostalgic and idealised figure. Similar to the role Kevin Woods plays in the construction of the Last Leprechauns of Ireland site (Chapter Three), Urquhart positions herself as the link between the idealised past and the present. Despite having no official heritage affiliations and not being of Irish descent herself, Urquhart claims that she has been 'chosen' to be entrusted with the conservation of local folklore and the hill of

Knocknashee. In her recounting of how she came to be involved with Knocknashee, Urquhart personifies the heritage site as a 'she', writing that 'Knocknashee and I were similar, both had a story to tell ... I could feel her calling and reaching out to me and in that moment a bond was made between us' (*Gillighan's World The Field of Dreams* 2017). Urquhart therefore represents herself as chosen by the Irish landscape, as well as by the local community, to preserve the oral lore attached to the site. These locals are never named, and in their collective ambiguity can be considered a representation of the Irish folk: 'They educated me on their folklore and superstitions ... and asked me to tell their story when they'd gone ...' (*Gillighan's World The Field of Dreams* 2017). Urquhart's self-construction as a link between the mythologised past of the folk culture and the present can be understood as an attempt to further legitimise *Gillighan's World* as an 'authentic' representation of Ireland's past, and Urquhart herself as an 'expert' in the authorised heritage discourse.

The use of simulacra in the reconstruction of heritage artefacts in *Gillighan's World* is legitimised through the site's mythologisation of the past. As discussed in the previous chapter, the use of simulacra can undermine the legitimacy of a tourism site in the eyes of visitors because of simulacra's association with hyper-consumerism (Walsh 1992). However, Stern argues that in the case of historical nostalgia, 'empathy calls for a particularly robust leap of imagination on the part of perceivers ... since the era depicted predates the perceivers' real-life experiences' (1992, p. 16). The perceived authenticity of site for heritage tourists partially relies on 'verisimilitude', or the 'illusion of reality conveyed by faithfully depicted details', as artefacts from a particular era 'concretize whatever version of the past is displayed' (Stern, 1992, p. 16). Therefore the simulacra utilised in *Gillighan's World*, such as the amphitheatre, the faerie ring fort and the fairy gardens with their collection of fairy-related ephemera, aid in the construction of this new fairy site as an 'authentic' representation of the mythologised past. The success of this illusion of reality symbolised by the simulacra of *Gillighan's World* can be seen to heavily rely on the ambivalent representation of the Tuatha de Danann within this site.

Urquhart represents the Tuatha de Danann as ambiguously positioned between history and mythology in the construction of *Gillighan's World* and Knocknashee. The Tuatha de Danann are a mythological race of people that invaded Ireland, and who were eventually diminished and dwindled into the fairies, as briefly discussed in

Chapter One. In her description of the Tuatha de Danann on the official website of Gillighan's World, Urquhart alternatively presents them as being either historical or mythological beings. For example, Urquhart writes that the 'history' of the Tuatha de Danann was 'immortalised through the oral passing down by the ancient seanachai', while elsewhere she defines them as a 'mythological magical race' (*Gillighan's World The Field of Dreams* 2017). In her narrative, Urquhart conflates the archaeological excavation of Knocknashee, described as the 'Ancient Celtic Hilltown of Connacht', with the oral lore connecting the Tuatha de Danann to the site, claiming that

Further investigation has led historians to recognise that Knocknashee was in fact the Royal Seat of the original Tuatha De before their move to Tara as their ceremonial centre for the inauguration of the ancient Kings of Ireland, and their power base for the rule over the whole of Erin, as it was then called (*Gillighan's World The Field of Dreams* 2017).

The effect of connecting historians and other experts in the authorised heritage discourse to this evidence is to legitimise the status of Gillighan's World as representing the authentic historical past, as well as to suggest that the Tuatha de Danann actually existed in an unspecified, but legitimised, era of history. The success of Gillighan's World in representing the Tuatha de Danann as ambiguously placed between history and mythology demonstrates the power of myth in the construction of place in its 'business of manufacturing realities' (McCutcheon & Russell, 2000, p. 192). Myth, when utilised as a 'deliberate tool' of the heritage discourse, is a 'master signifier that authorizes and reproduces a particular worldview' (McCutcheon & Russell, 2000, p. 192), as will be further demonstrated in the following analysis of the old fairy site of Lough Gur.

5.5 Lough Gur

Lough Gur, an old fairy site located in County Limerick, was originally excavated in the 1950's. In 1969, the Lough Gur Development Society was formed, and officially inaugurated in 1993 in order to 'promote, preserve and protect the history, archaeology, folklore and environment of the surrounding area' (*Lough Gur* 2017). Currently, the site is part of Fáilte Ireland's 'Ancient East' tourism campaign, begun in 2016, which focuses on the combination of 'lush green landscapes' with

storytelling (*Fáilte Ireland* 2017). Unlike Gillighan's World, Lough Gur is an official heritage site, owned by Limerick County Council, and associated with heritage legislation and organisations at both the local, regional, and national level. Lough Gur is also a tangible heritage site, as it contains material prehistoric artefacts and landscapes, around which the construction of Lough Gur as a heritage site is centred. I argue that the heritage managers and other official stakeholders of Lough Gur demonstrate restorative nostalgia in their preservation and reconstruction of this site. I further identify and discuss attempts on the part of these stakeholders to evoke nostalgia in heritage tourists through the marketing, dominant narrative, and spatial construction of Lough Gur.

Lough Gur comprises multiple archaeological landscapes, ranging from the Neolithic to the post-medieval era (*Lough Gur* 2017). The lake of Lough Gur is surrounded on either side by the hills of Knockadoon and Knockfennel, both of which contain Neolithic artefacts in the form of hutsites and other material remains of dwellings. The landscape of Lough Gur also contains cairns and other tombs, ring barrows, stone forts, and crannogs, as well as the remains of the seventeenth-century manor house of Bouchiers Castle, and the Grange Stone Circle, which dates from the Bronze Age and is the largest stone circle in Ireland (*Lough Gur* 2017). Beside the lake, facing the hills of Knockadoon and Knockfennel, is the Lough Gur Heritage Centre, which contains a permanent exhibition on Lough Gur, and provides information and tours for heritage tourists, including group, personalised, guided, walking, and audio tours of the site. Visitors are provided with maps of the site, and signs are located in the area surrounding the Heritage Centre interpreting the cairns and other prehistoric artefacts in the vicinity. Beyond the Heritage Centre there are no more interpretative signs, meaning that visitors must rely on audio guides, tour guides, or the exhibition in the Heritage Centre which provides an overview of the site, in order to make sense of, and engage with, Lough Gur as a heritage site.

5.5.1 Creating the place-myth of Lough Gur

According to the official website of Lough Gur, the Lough Gur Development Society aims to 'raise awareness of Lough Gur' and 'attract visitors to the area' (*Lough Gur* 2017). This is partially achieved through the marketing of Lough Gur, in which the heritage site is viewed through the romantic gaze of the potential visitor.

The images of Lough Gur on the official website invariably contain no people, therefore representing the site as ‘empty space’ (Marwick 2001) which the viewer is enticed to imagine personally experiencing. The prehistoric artefacts featured on the website reinforce this romanticised image. The habitation sites and burial chambers act as a signifier for romantic, pastoral Ireland by referencing the ‘primitive’ folk of Ireland’s past (Negra, 2001, p. 88). Furthermore, the images included on the website represent Lough Gur as available for the pleasure of heritage tourists, with each photograph featuring the site on a cloudless sunny day, aiding in the representation of Lough Gur as ‘timeless’, existing outside of usual temporal and spatial continuities.

The romantic gaze is further reinforced in the spatial construction and narrative of Lough Gur. A path runs behind the Heritage Centre, passing several sites of prehistoric artefacts at which visitors can gaze, and culminating in a viewing platform overlooking the lake along with Knockadoon and Knockfennel, where the majority of the prehistoric artefacts are concentrated. The construction of this path, and the viewing platform, allows visitors a private and personal experience with Lough Gur, constructed as a desirable experience through the site’s marketing imagery. The dominant narrative of Lough Gur invites heritage tourists to experience ‘6000 years of life’ (*Lough Gur* 2017), conflating the multiple historical eras present within the heritage site into a coherent place-identity, in which Lough Gur comes to symbolise the entirety of Ireland’s historical past. On the official website, visitors are invited to view Lough Gur as a representation of the mythologised past, the experience of which will evoke positive emotions and memories for heritage tourists; ‘Prepare to be enchanted by the tale of the Earl Gearoid Iarla ... marvel at how our ancestors moved hundreds of tonnes of stone to build the largest stone circle in Ireland ... or listen to the wonderful music of Teampall Nua ... on the shores of Lough Gur’ (*Lough Gur* 2017). These pleasurable activities all rely upon potential visitors accepting the version of Ireland’s mythologised past presented to them at the site.

At Lough Gur, Irish fairies are constructed as part of the local folklore associated with the heritage site. Within the site, the figure of the Irish fairy becomes part of the larger belief system of the Irish folk culture, originating in an unspecified era of the historical past. The nostalgic portrayal of fairies at Lough Gur is reinforced through

its dominant narrative, which is related predominantly through guided tours. While visiting Lough Gur during my research trip in June of 2014, I took an audio tour of the site. During the recorded tour, several folktales regarding fairies were recounted by an official *seanchaí*, or traditional storyteller, attached to Lough Gur (*Voices from the Dawn* 2017). The use of a *seanchaí* in the interpretation of Lough Gur, both at the site and in textual representations of the site such as in the website *Voices from the Dawn*, an ongoing archaeological project created by academic Howard Goldbaum, further links Irish folk culture, fairies and the mythologised past represented by Lough Gur. The inclusion of a *seanchai* also legitimises the site's claim to represent the 'authentic' Irish past with their use of an 'authentic' traditional storyteller.

The folktales recounted on the tour also work to associate Irish fairies directly with particular landscapes within the site. For example, Áine and Fer Fí, two figures in Irish fairy folklore, are connected to Lough Gur and Knockfennel (*Lough Gur* 2017), meaning that heritage tourists will make this nostalgic connection when interacting with these sites during and after the tour. The recounting of folklore associated with Lough Gur may be understood as an attempt to evoke historical nostalgia on the part of heritage tourists, in which the mythologised past is represented as more desirable, simpler, and more 'rich' in terms of spirituality than modern times (Stern, 1992, p. 13). These audio and guided tours also aid heritage stakeholders in controlling the space and narrative of Lough Gur, as the authoritative presence of a tour guide, or the use of headsets, make the visitor experience both 'individual' and 'concentrated', in which the possibility of alternative readings of the site are limited (Macdonald, 1997, p. 170).

The place-myth of Lough Gur is constructed from several dominant place-images. The majority of these images reference the prehistoric artefacts found at the site, as earlier established in my examination of the marketing images used on the site's official website. However, heritage stakeholders have also associated Lough Gur with a particular place-image which has been assimilated into the dominant narrative of the site; that of the mythologised past represented in the book *The Farm by Lough Gur* by Mary Carbery (2010). This text is a biography of a local Limerick woman named Mary Fogarty, whose family farm is still located by Lough Gur near Knockfennel (see Figure 2.3). *The Farm by Lough Gur* is presented as a historically

accurate representation of the life of the Irish peasantry in the nineteenth-century (*Lough Gur* 2017). However, Carbery constructs Mary Fogarty as a nostalgic symbol of the idealised past of Ireland, existing within the same mythologised past as the Irish fairies: ‘She told me about the notable banshee Aine ... of fairies in the hollow hills; of a drowned city in the Enchanted Lake ... She had even in her youth heard the lost song sung’ (2010, p. viii). This text reinforces the association of Irish fairies with the idealised folk culture, in which this belief is held by ‘wandering beggars, pipers and harpers, story-tellers, Poor Scholars, drovers and tinkers’ who refuse to sleep near the waters of Lough Gur for fear of enchantment (Carbery, 2010, p. 12). A quote from *The Farm by Lough Gur* is engraved on a plaque near the viewing platform, in which Lough Gur is described as a ‘personality loved, but also feared’ (Carbery, 2010, p. 12), with the result of viewers associating the mythologised past of the book with the present heritage site.

The inclusion of the narrative of *The Farm by Lough Gur* into the place-myth of Lough Gur is an example of how ‘desirable’ place-images may be assimilated into places at will by powerful groups (Shields, 1991, p. 62). The nineteenth-century setting of the book is integrated into the mythologised Irish past represented by Lough Gur, reinforcing Shield’s argument that place-myths do not tend to focus on a particular historical era, but blend and celebrate multiple iterations of ‘pastness’ (Shield, 1992, p. 15). The inclusion of Carbery’s text into the place-identity of Lough Gur is further evidence of the partial and often stereotypical nature of place-images. The assimilation of this narrative into the site also demonstrates the ‘selective marketing of the past’ participated in by heritage sites based ‘on the values that society places’ upon them (Boyd, 2000, p. 152), which in the case of Lough Gur refers to the preservation and idealisation of the mythologised Irish past.

5.5.2 Preserving ‘6000 years of living’

The stakeholders responsible for the construction and production of Lough Gur as a heritage site are preoccupied with the conservation of place, which refers to both the tangible ancient artefacts within the site, as well as the construction of a coherent place-identity for the site. The tagline of Lough Gur’s official website, ‘6000 years of living’, summarises its established place-identity as a site which contains and preserves particular time periods within Ireland’s history (*Lough Gur* 2017). Unlike

Gillighan's World, which constructs its legitimacy as a heritage site by emphasising its relationship with Knocknashee, the status of Lough Gur as an official heritage site lends it an authenticity that is not easily undermined. The connection of Lough Gur with Fáilte Ireland and Limerick Council legitimises its construction of the past at local, regional, and national levels; its association with the authorised heritage discourse lends Lough Gur a sense of authenticity. Lough Gur is further legitimised as a heritage site through its use of the mythologised past, similar to Gillighan's World. The process of mythologisation is a narrative strategy that provides sites with seeming 'ultimate authority' over their place-identities (Selberg, 2010, p. 244), but only if the narrative is 'conveyed by a suitably powerfully, ideologically-marked discourse' such as in the case of heritage (Śledzińska, 2015, p. 121). Lough Gur's use of the mythologised past in its production therefore aids in the legitimising of its place-identity and associated place-myth.

The conservation of the tangible artefacts and place-identity of Lough Gur can be understood as heritage stakeholders 'freezing' the site in what they consider its essential state or character (Massey 1995, p. 188). In order to fulfil its purpose of preserving and representing the historical past, Lough Gur must always be presented as existing outside of modern conceptions of time. Therefore, the narrative and physical space of Lough Gur must continuously be controlled by heritage managers. Heritage tourists play a role in the construction of Lough Gur as timeless, in which the tourist gaze is utilised to reinforce dominant uses and meanings of space within the site. Heritage tourism aligns with the perspective of heritage stakeholders and the authorised heritage discourse on the use and management of heritage sites, in which the site is 'to be preserved rather than used, to be gazed upon but not changed' (Shackley, 2001, p. 185). The conservation of place favoured by the tourist gaze is what allows for the development of the romantic gaze and its associations with anticipation and pleasure. The preservation of Lough Gur in the Irish past allows for historical nostalgia to be experienced by the heritage tourist, in which the viewer can 'transcend his/her discrete biological existence in time and ... feel connected to the continuous flow of humanity' referenced by the material artefacts within the site (Stern, 1992, p. 16).

The heritage stakeholders associated with Lough Gur demonstrate restorative nostalgia in their curation of the site, made evident primarily through the construction of the Lough Gur Heritage Centre. The Heritage Centre functions as a reconstruction of the mythologised Irish past, and can be understood as an attempt to ‘restore’ and ‘rebuild’ the past in the present (Boym 2007, p. 18). According to the official website, the Lough Gur Heritage Centre is a reconstruction of the houses of the Neolithic era, the remains of which have been excavated on the nearby hill of Knockadoon: ‘These structures were circular or rectangular in shape and were made from locally available material – stone, turves and reed ... [and were] located on the southern slope of Knockadoon’ (*Lough Gur* 2017). The reconstruction of buildings and other monuments of the past is identified by Boym as characteristic of restorative nostalgia, part of the ‘paranoiac determination’ of the nostalgic subject to restore the idealised homeland (Boym, 2007, p. 18). Urry suggests that buildings such as the Lough Gur Heritage Centre help to ‘foster the necessary ‘look’ of a place’ needed for the romantic gaze of the heritage tourist (Urry & Larsen, 2010, p. 17), as the construction of places by tourists partially consist of ‘anticipated, designed and remembered buildings’ (Urry & Larsen, 2010, p. 119). The design of the Heritage Centre also contributes to the coherency of the place-identity of Lough Gur, blending into the ancient landscape as part of the mythologised past.

Recently, the role of fairies in the narrative of Lough Gur has shifted, with the figure of the fairy joining the material artefacts in the ongoing conservation narrative of the site. Similar to Gillighan’s World, the conservation narrative of Lough Gur can be seen to be expanding to include more intangible elements. For example, Lough Gur is assimilating the idea of the heritage site as sacred, which is further discussed in the following critique, as well as expanding to include flora and fauna alongside prehistoric artefacts. In 2017, a ‘Tree Trail’ was opened at Lough Gur, in which visitors are given a map and invited to independently explore the heritage site to discover various native species of trees (see Figure 2.4). Significantly, fairies appear on this map in what is described as the ‘Fairy Trail’ portion of the walk (*Lough Gur* 2017). Fairies were first mentioned outside of their established definition as a belief of the idealised Irish folk culture on Lough Gur’s official website in 2016. The language used in the announcement of the ‘arrival’ of the fairies at Lough Gur constructs the event as pleasurable and ‘natural’; ‘They are setting up their new

home outside the front entrance of the Heritage Centre overlooking the lake. Up 110 steps leading to the viewing point you will find more of their abodes' (*Lough Gur* 2017). Although this is a relatively new place-image which is being assimilated into the place-myth of Lough Gur, the presence of fairies at the site is naturalised through reference back to the folklore attached to the site, specifically to the figure of Fer Fí, who is described as 'King of the Fairies' (*Lough Gur* 2017).

This new place-image centred on the figure of the Irish fairy constructs Lough Gur as a 'mythical magical place that can be enjoyed by people of all ages' (*Lough Gur* 2017). This choice of language suggests an effort by the heritage managers of Lough Gur to assimilate fairies into the broader place-identity of Lough Gur as representing the mythologised Irish past, while maintaining the site's coherency in terms of meaning. The inclusion of fairies into the context of Lough Gur as supernatural beings inhabiting the site, rather than as part of Irish oral lore associated with the site, suggests an attempt on the part of heritage managers to appeal to a broader range of potential visitors, including children, as seen in the new fairy sites of the previous chapter, as well as Gillighan's World. However, the recent focus on fairies may also signify the endeavour of the powerful heritage stakeholders associated with Lough Gur to appropriate the rival interpretation of the site as sacred by neo-pagan groups, which I will now discuss.

5.6 Critique

As demonstrated through the site-specific analysis, both the new fairy site of Gillighan's World: The Field of Dreams, and the old fairy site of Lough Gur are produced by heritage stakeholders as 'authentic' representations of Ireland's historical past, in which the mythologisation of place and history, the reconstruction and preservation of place, and the romantic gaze are utilised in order to evoke nostalgia in heritage tourists. However, the coherent and legitimised place-identity produced by these two fairy sites is destabilised by their relationship with nostalgia. As I will now establish, heritage sites have come under criticism in academia for their 'staging' of authenticity and the commodification of history associated with the 'heritage industry'. Furthermore, heritage stakeholders are revealed to be in conflict

with neo-pagan groups over the appropriation and use of sacred sites, which often overlap with heritage sites, and further undermines the established place-identities of heritage sites.

5.6.1 Staging the ‘authentic’ past

Heritage sites are considered to exist in a problematic relationship with authenticity. As established in the site-specific analysis, heritage sites are ‘frozen’ by heritage managers and other stakeholders in terms of their construction and representation, with the idea that there is a ‘unique eternal truth’ to the place, which represents the ‘authentic’ character of that site, and furthermore can be found in the past of that place (Massey, 1994b, p. 119). Massey points out that constructing place in this way fails to recognise the ‘long history of interconnectedness with elsewhere’ that places have, as well as the presupposition that there is a ‘particular relationship between the assumed identity of a place and its history’ (Massey, 1995, p. 183). Heritage sites are therefore critiqued in academia for generating a ‘false consciousness’ (Harrison, 2010, p. 18), and representing the past inaccurately. The use of simulacra in heritage sites is considered particularly problematic, as heritage artefacts and landscapes are replaced by these hyperreal representations. Heritage artefacts are therefore ‘no longer revered for their authenticity, but merely contribute to an imagined re-creation of their reality’ (McLean, 1997, p. 20). Robert Hewison particularly condemns what he calls the heritage ‘industry’, arguing that heritage sites are involved in the construction of a past that is ‘a set of imprisoning walls upon which we reproduce a superficial image of a false past, simultaneously turning our back upon the reality of history, and incapable of moving forward because of the absorbing fantasy before us’ (1987, p. 139).

Heritage sites are therefore accused of ‘staging’ the authentic past. Dean MacCannell created the term ‘staged authenticity’, which he defines as ‘packaging’ the past for tourists to the point where this packaging ‘alters the nature of the product’, resulting in the authenticity sought by the visitor becoming ‘“staged authenticity” provided by the touree’ (1979, p. 596). MacCannell considers staged authenticity in tourism sites to be a result of the idea that tourists are on a ‘quest’ for authentic experiences outside of everyday existence (1976), a concept which can be related to Urry’s idea of the romantic gaze (1991). The romantic gaze of the heritage tourist, as already

established, is a nostalgic gaze, meaning that visitors to heritage sites are looking for ‘perceived authenticity’, which is defined as ‘consistency with nostalgia for some real or imagined past’, rather than whether or not the site is an ‘accurate recreation of some past condition’ (Chhabra et al, 2003, p. 705). What becomes important is whether the heritage site ‘generates the required nostalgic feelings’ (Chhabra et al, 2003, p. 705) for the heritage tourist. As discussed in the site-specific analyses, both Gillighan’s World and Lough Gur are constructed so as to provide these pleasurable feelings to heritage tourists through their respective nostalgic place-identities and spatial construction. Although heritage sites such as Gillighan’s World and Lough Gur construct and represent an idealised and mythologised version of the past, which is then ‘staged’ as authentic, this does not mean that these representations are inherently worthless or negative. For example, Malcolm Crick points out that, in a sense, all cultures are staged and inauthentic, as ‘cultures are invented, remade and the elements reorganised’ (1989, p. 65), and Lowenthal suggests that it is a fallacy to imagine that there is a singular, authentic, and non-nostalgic version of the past (1989).

The mythologised past which is staged as authentic in Irish heritage sites such as Gillighan’s World and Lough Gur can be viewed as having its origins in the legislation of Fáilte Ireland, the National Tourism Authority Board. In 1992, Fáilte Ireland, which was then known as ‘Bord Fáilte’, released a document which would form the basis for the development of heritage attractions across Ireland (Johnson, 1999, p. 192). This document, according to Johnson, suggested a ‘thematic’ rather than ‘chronological’ approach to heritage sites, in which heritage sites were constructed around ‘themed spaces’, and mediated through a series of ‘interpretative gateways’ (Johnson, 1999, p. 192). Heritage sites were encouraged to avoid ‘overlapping’ in terms of their narrative (Johnson 1999), limiting the construction of alternative representations of the past, and furthermore reinforcing the practice of freezing heritage sites at the point in history which best represents their essential character. The ‘singular sense of the past’ (Massey, 1995, p. 184) constructed by Irish heritage sites as a result of this policy works to both discourage contestation from any other heritage sites in the area, as well as allow sites to concentrate on staging a version of the idealised past which will appeal to heritage tourists. Irish heritage sites are therefore focused on the production and reproduction of nostalgic

memories and images in their respective marketing. Presenting the authentic past is not their concern; rather, representing a mythologised, staged, and idealised 'authentic' past is, in order to attract heritage tourists to these sites.

5.6.2 Nostalgia and the heritage industry

Heritage sites have also come under criticism in academia for their association with nostalgia and their commodification of the past. Heritage sites engage in the sanitising of 'unsavoury elements' of the past, and offer a 'bogus' history which 'ignores complex historical processes and relationships' (Johnson, 1999, p. 190). Boym writes that nostalgia is seen as an 'abdication of personal responsibility', as well as an 'ethical and aesthetical failure' (2007, p. 9); heritage sites are therefore also critiqued for these traits by association. Heritage is further accused of commodifying the past by 'making history a selling point', and 'trading on nostalgia' (Samuel, 1994, p. 266). As such, heritage is considered by Graham and Howard to have 'little intrinsic worth', as the meanings of heritage sites are created through processes of consumption (2008, p. 2). The result of this association with consumption and the nostalgic past is the understanding of heritage as a business or an 'industry' (Hewison 1987).

The idea of heritage sites commodifying the past is further reinforced through an examination of Stern's theory of historical nostalgia (1992), and its use in the construction of the fairy sites of Gillighan's World and Lough Gur. Historical nostalgia is conceived of by Stern as aimed at 'stimulating customer empathy', in which a 'successful nostalgia advertisement may persuade consumers to engage in a consumption activity' (1992, p. 16). Historical nostalgia, when combined with the romantic gaze, stimulates heritage tourists to consume heritage sites, and engage in further consumption activities in anticipation of pleasurable emotions, including nostalgia. Both Gillighan's World and Lough Gur are constructed to facilitate this consumption through their respective gift shops so that heritage consumers might re-experience the sites through souvenirs, as well as the multiple forms of guided tours and related activities to further personalise heritage tourists' engagement with these sites.

Both Gillighan's World and Lough Gur may be seen to commodify the past through their common use of kitsch objects. One of the dominant place-images of Gillighan's

World is that of the simulacra of the fairy and toadstool figurines in the faerie gardens (see Figure 2.5), while the fairy house simulacra at Lough Gur is a more recent place-image being assimilated into the identity of the site, as briefly discussed above. These figurines function in a similar way to the leprechaun figurines discussed in Chapter Three; but as kitsch representations of the mythologised Irish past, rather than being specifically linked to nationalism. As previously discussed in Chapter Three, kitsch objects are meant to evoke positive and sentimental reactions in viewers (Olivier 2009), and therefore these figurines may be seen to reinforce the romantic gaze of the heritage tourist in these sites, in which the ‘cuteness’ of these figurines are consumed. These figurines, which comprise leprechaun and fairies, as well as fairy houses and toadstools, create a ‘nostalgic pastiche of a bucolic and idealised past’ (Park, 2013, p. 22) through their references to the Tuatha de Danann at Knocknashee, as well as the fairies associated with Lough Gur and Knockfennel in their respective sites.

Visitors to Gillighan’s World and Lough Gur are invited to directly engage with, and consume, these objects of ‘tourist kitsch’ (Samuel, 1994, p. 262) through the use of maps and activities. At Gillighan’s World, the map given to visitors upon entrance doubles as a map of the various figurines placed around the site. This activity is represented by the official website as an ‘absolute favourite with all our visitors, regardless of age’ (*Gillighan’s World The Field of Dreams* 2017). As with all the activities at Gillighan’s World, interacting with these kitsch objects is anticipated to evoke pleasurable emotions in visitors, described with language such as ‘interactive’, ‘challenging’, and ‘fun’ (*Gillighan’s World The Field of Dreams* 2017). Similar figurines to those displayed in the faerie gardens can be purchased in the gift shop at Gillighan’s World, further reinforcing the construction of these simulacra as meant for the consumption of heritage tourists. Meanwhile at Lough Gur, those visitors who take the ‘Tree Trail’ are likewise given a map which marks the location of the fairy houses at the site. The ‘cute’ and stereotypical depiction of these fairy figurines align with the romantic gaze of heritage tourists at Lough Gur, in which ‘no active intellectual engagement is necessary’ with the site, and the focus is instead on the evocation of pleasurable emotions (Vidal, 2012, p. 16). The kitsch objects at both Gillighan’s World and Lough Gur can therefore be seen as aiding in the ‘beautifying

gloss’ that characterises heritage sites (Bendix, 2000, p. 38), as part of the cycle of anticipation, pleasure, and consumption of the mythologised past.

5.6.3 Magical and mysterious: The appropriation of sacred sites

The established place-identities and dominant narratives of heritage sites are challenged by the alternative representation of heritage sites as sacred sites by neo-pagan groups. Although heritage sites, particularly ones associated with official heritage organisations such as Lough Gur, are lent a legitimacy that is difficult for rival groups to undermine, Graham and Howard remind us that heritage is ‘present-centred and are created, shaped and managed by, and in response to, the demands of the present’ (2008, p. 3). Therefore, heritage sites are ‘open to constant revision and change’ and are both ‘sources and results of social conflict’ (Graham & Howard, 2008, p. 3).

In order to maintain control over the place-identity and dominant uses of heritage sites, heritage stakeholders have begun to appropriate the term ‘sacred’ from neo-pagan groups. For heritage managers, the ‘sacredness’ of the site refers to how the site should be used because of its cultural and national importance; namely, preserved to fit with the established place-identities of heritage sites and their association with the romantic gaze of the heritage tourist. This appropriation of sacredness results in the politicisation of these sites by neo-pagan groups in an attempt to undermine the authorised heritage discourse, and by extension the narratives and place-identities of heritage sites, which ‘privileges and legitimises certain modes of interpreting and engaging with the past to the detriment of others’ (Blain & Wallis, 2007, p. 33). This battle over sacredness forms part of the site-specific analysis of the Irish fairy sites focused on in the following chapter (Chapter Five).

Sacredness is being increasingly incorporated into the established place-identity of Gillighan’s World. Urquhart’s narrative recounting her relationship with Knocknashee and creation of Gillighan’s World emphasises the connection between Knocknashee, the idealised folk in the form of the local people, and sacredness: ‘They taught me about their past, their beliefs, and they guided me to their “sacred places” where as children they had been taken by their ancestors ... to see the faerie folk and the otherworld’ (*Gillighan’s World The Field of Dreams* 2017). Urquhart

regularly arranges for mediums and ‘spiritual healers’ to come and work from the gift shop and library at Gillighan’s World, allowing heritage tourists to consume ‘traditional’ beliefs associated with neo-paganism. The official website of Gillighan’s World has pages under construction focusing on ‘spiritual well-being’, the paranormal, and fairies, and markets the site as providing ‘a personal experience in a spiritual place’ which allows for ‘peace, tranquillity, centring, restoration and the repletion of deleted energies’ (*Gillighan’s World The Field of Dreams* 2017). It can be seen, therefore, that Urquhart is increasingly focusing on integrating sacredness into the place-identity of Gillighan’s World, with the aim of providing a more pleasurable and nostalgic experience for visitors.

In comparison, Lough Gur is in open contestation with neo-pagan groups and their representation of the heritage site as sacred. Neo-pagan interest in Lough Gur is centred on the Grange Stone Circle, which is associated with the summer solstice. Every year, neo-pagans gather to watch the sunrise at the Grange Stone Circle, and participate in rituals and other celebrations. The annual solstice ritual at the stone circle, which is recorded as existing since at least 1998, in which forty celebrants took part (*Voices from the Dawn* 2017), continued with the 2017 summer solstice on June 21. The tradition of the neo-pagan ritual at the Grange Stone Circle aids in legitimising neo-pagan claims to the site, and also serves to undermine the place-identity of Lough Gur as centred on the preservation of the mythologised past, in which ancient artefacts are viewed from a distance rather than directly engaged with.

Therefore, over the past several years the heritage stakeholders of Lough Gur have appropriated the summer solstice, turning the neo-pagan celebration into a festival which lasts for several days (*Lough Gur* 2017). The 2016 solstice festival was advertised on the official website of Lough Gur, in which events such as fun runs, workshops, documentaries, theatre productions, and guided tours were offered to visitors (*Lough Gur* 2017). Heritage stakeholders can therefore be seen as attempting to appropriate the summer solstice celebration from neo-pagan groups, and assimilate it into the narrative of Lough Gur, with its associated practices of consumption and conservation. This appropriation extends to the neo-pagan ritual itself; during the night of the 2017 summer solstice in June heritage managers arranged for the musician Billy Mag Fhloinn and his band Ancient Music Ireland to perform at the Grange Stone Circle, where they played ‘*dord iséal*’, Irish horns

originating from the Bronze Age (Lynch 2017) (see Figure 2.6). In this way, the heritage managers of Lough Gur may be concluded to be increasingly appropriating the summer solstice, and the construction of the Grange Stone Circle as a sacred site, and assimilating it into the established place-identity of Lough Gur, thereby regaining control over this rival interpretation of the heritage site.

5.7 Conclusion

This chapter has considered the new fairy site of Gillighan's World: The Field of Dreams, located in County Sligo, and the old fairy site of Lough Gur, located in County Limerick. This chapter has argued that these two sites are constructed as representing 'authentic' versions of Ireland's historical past through reconstruction, preservation, and the mythologisation of place and history. Centring on the authorised heritage discourse and the use of restorative and historical nostalgia in these two fairy sites, this chapter has come to the conclusion that heritage stakeholders utilise the romantic gaze and place-myths in order to evoke historical nostalgia in heritage tourists, as well as in the construction, legitimisation, and control of their respective place-identities.

However, as heritage sites have come under criticism in academia for their problematic associations with authenticity and nostalgia, the place-identities and dominant narratives of both Gillighan's World and Lough Gur may be undermined, particularly as the nostalgic place-myths constructed within each site are based on 'partial', 'exaggerated', and stereotypical place-images, and therefore may be revealed as inaccurate representations of place and history (Shields, 1991, p. 60). Furthermore heritage managers are in contestation with the conflicting definition of heritage sites as sacred by neo-pagan groups, an alternative way of constructing and representing these sites which challenges their established place-identities. It is this battle between rival place-identities and their associated meanings and control of space by heritage stakeholders and neo-pagan groups, which is focused on in the third and final analysis chapter 'Sacred: Spirits of wood and water'.

Figure 2.1 Visitor brochure, Gillighan's World



Figure 2.2 Faerie ring fort with Knocknashee in background, Gillighan's World



Figure 2.3 Knockfennel Hill, Lough Gur



Figure 2.4 Tree and Fairy Trail Map of Lough Gur



Figure 2.5 Faerie gardens, Gillighan's World



Figure 2.6 Summer solstice at the Grange Stone Circle, 2017



Chapter Five

Sacred: Spirits of wood and water

6.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the final two fairy sites examined in this thesis; the old fairy sites of Newgrange and the Hill of Tara, both located in County Meath. Engaging with discourses of the sacred, this chapter discusses the use of restorative and ‘performative’ nostalgia in the construction of these old fairy sites. The discourse of sacredness is in ongoing contestation with the more powerful heritage discourse, and both Newgrange and the Hill of Tara are therefore constructed as nostalgic sacred sites by neo-pagans using ritual performances, pilgrimage, and political activism.

This chapter begins with a discussion of sacredness as a concept which is inseparable from space, and outlines the relationship of the sacred with processes of power as a socially constructed concept. I then discuss the ‘sacralisation’ of place by neo-pagan groups, and outline the relationship between neo-pagan spirituality and the landscape, in which neo-pagan groups are considered to have a deeper connection to the natural world than other major world religions. I also introduce the ongoing contestation between neo-pagan groups and heritage stakeholders on the representation and use of sacred sites, in which the term ‘sacredness’ has itself become contested, and argue that this contestation is, in essence, a battle over rival place-identities and associated place-myths. I then move on to outlining the nature of neo-pagan nostalgia towards the ‘pre-modern’ past, and the idealisation of Irish folk culture, particularly the mythologised figure of the Druid, in neo-pagan discourse. I suggest that neo-pagan rituals and celebrations are a form of restorative nostalgia, and further that the religious practices of neo-pagan groups can be described as performances of nostalgia, resulting in the creation and use of a new sub-category of nostalgia called ‘performative nostalgia’. The chapter continues with the site-specific analyses of the old fairy sites of Newgrange and the Hill of Tara, in which I focus on how these sites are constructed by neo-pagans as nostalgic places using ritual performances, pilgrimage, and political activism in the form of the reclamation and occupation of space. Finally, the critique works to undermine the monologic place-identity and narratives put forward by neo-pagan groups by looking at neo-pagan

discourses of the sacred and its troubled relationship with authenticity, the consumption of sacredness in New Age tourism at these old fairy sites, and the nostalgic representation of Irish fairies as *genii loci* in neo-pagan discourse.

6.2 Sacredness and the sacralisation of place

One of the most authoritative definitions of sacredness originates from historian Mircea Eliade's *The sacred and the profane: the nature of religion* (1959). For Eliade, sacredness is inextricably linked to space. Eliade defines the sacred as 'religious centers at which the heavenly and earthly meet, a means of access between the human and the divine world' (Eliade cited in Hassner, 2003, p. 5). Eliade's definition of the sacred rests on the idea of a dichotomy existing between sacred and profane space: 'The first possible definition of the *sacred* is that it is the *opposite of the profane*' (Eliade, 1959, p. 10). Profane space is therefore defined as 'amorphous', lacking structure and consistency, while sacred space is 'significant' (Eliade, 1959, p. 20). Eliade's definition has come under criticism because the dichotomy between the sacred and the profane does not take into account the fact that space is 'made sacred through human endeavour' (Kilde, 2011, p. 299), and therefore that the sacred is socially constructed (see Smith 1987, Eade & Sallnow 1991, Ivakhic 2003a, Kilde 2011).

Various scholars have also worked to deconstruct the dichotomy of sacred and profane space (see Chidester & Linenthal 1995, Cave 1996, Digance 2003, Dora 2009, Saunders 2012), associating the sacralisation of space with processes of power. For example, David Chidester and Edward T. Linenthal contend that the sacred cannot be conceived of separately from the profane, as sacred space comprises 'hierarchical power relations of domination and subordination, inclusion and exclusion, appropriation and dispossession', constructed from 'entrepreneurial, social, political and other 'profane' forces' (1995, p. 17). Adrian Ivakhic utilises Massey's spatial theories in his discussion of sacred sites, writing that sacred sites are shaped through interactions between human and non-human actors, in which particular groups attempt to 'anchor' particular meanings in the landscape, and 'orchestrate' space in various ways (2003a, p. 15). Thus, the sacred meaning of a particular landscape is not imposed onto a pre-existing reality, but 'emerges

reciprocally with landscapes, cultures and practices' (Ivakhic, 2003a, p. 14). Robert Saunders points out that Eliade's definition 'proves even more limiting in the contemporary milieu of postmodern religion' (2012, p. 792). Therefore, the idea of sacred sites as socially constructed and associated with processes of power will inform my analysis of the old fairy sites of Newgrange and the Hill of Tara in this chapter.

'Neo-paganism' is a term used by religious scholars such as Jenny Butler to differentiate the 'modern spiritualist movement' in Ireland from 'pre-Christian contexts of so-called "pagan" religions ...' (2011, p. 112). Paganism itself is an umbrella term for a 'broad range' of 'religious and magical beliefs and practices' (Butler, 2011, p. 112), and is 'evolving, fluid and non-codified, and has no orthodox form' (Weston & Bennett, 2013, p. 2). For the sake of coherency, Blain and Wallis identify the four most important pagan 'paths' or 'traditions' as Wicca, Druidry, Heathenry, and Goddess Spirituality (2007, p. 7). Paganism is commonly associated with the natural landscape; all traditions focus on an engagement with the natural world and 'spirits of place', including fairies, believed to reside in the landscape (Blain & Wallis, 2007, p. 7). The relationship of neo-pagan groups with space involves the 'sacralisation' of particular sites considered to hold spiritual meaning or value. The connection of neo-paganism with space is constructed at both the individual and collective levels, in which neo-pagans are represented as experiencing a 'deeper affinity' for the natural landscape than other major religions (Saunders, 2012, p. 792). Saunders posits that the reason for this affinity with sacred space is the result of the 'absence of sacred texts and other religious artefacts and institutions that characterize the major world religions', replaced with the 'real and imagined geographies' of the neo-pagan faith (2012, p. 792).

The sacralisation of space by neo-pagans is observed to occur in different ways and at various levels of intensity; Butler writes that some Irish neo-pagan practitioners believe that 'everything that exists is sacred', while others believe that pagan deities are 'place specific', inhabiting particular geographical locations in the landscape (2011, p. 119). Furthermore, within the context of sacralisation, some sites are considered 'inherently' sacred, while others are 'temporarily inscribed' as sacred through neo-pagan religious practices (Saunders, 2012, p. 793). Both Newgrange and the Hill of Tara may be understood as 'inherently' sacred sites, as their sacredness is

‘marked’ by prehistoric artefacts and monuments (Blain & Wallis, 2007, pp. 27-28). For some neo-pagan practitioners, the importance of Irish fairies moves beyond their connection to the sacred landscape. For example, Dennis Gaffin identifies a group within Irish neo-paganism known as ‘fairyfolk’, people who follow the ‘fairy faith’ and are ‘mystically ensconced in the experience of and belief in the Fairyworld’ (2012, p. 6). Fairyfolk connect with the idea of fairies as the divine messengers of God, ‘seen or sensed in mystical experiences in nature’ (Gaffin, 2012, p. 27), and often believe that they were fairies in a previous incarnation (Rountree, 2014, p. 203).

The ongoing contestation of neo-pagan groups with heritage stakeholders over access to, and meanings of, heritage sites has resulted in the construction of what Shields calls ‘antithetical’ place-myths in sacred sites (1991, p. 61). The place-myths constructed by neo-pagans are used to ‘distinguish themselves’ as a community ‘from other social collectives’ such as heritage tourists (Shields, 1991, p. 63). Furthermore, the narratives associated with, and the rituals performed at, these sacred sites are used to reinforce and legitimise these sacred place-myths, by suggesting that neo-pagans have a more ‘emotionally-powerful understanding of the geography of the world’ (Shields, 1991, p. 63), and a more personal connection with the natural landscape than other visitors and users of these sites. Kevin Hetherington argues that the place-myths constructed by neo-pagan groups are in response to the ‘disintegration’ in modern society of ‘communally created meaningful spaces’, in which place becomes a ‘collective basis for identity and culture’ (2003, p. 89). In this way, place-myths may be understood as not just a place-making practice, but a ‘people making’ practice as well (Akhil & Ferguson, 2001, p. 23), as neo-pagans construct their identities partially from their spirituality and connection with sacred sites.

The contestation between neo-pagan groups and heritage stakeholders over sacred sites is in essence a battle over the establishment and maintenance of rival place-identities. Similar to heritage stakeholders, neo-pagans utilise a version of the mythologised past to present the sacredness of these sites as their ‘essential essence’ (Massey, 1994b, p. 112). The term ‘sacred’ is used by both these groups in different ways to reinforce the place-identities of sacred sites; for neo-pagans, sacred sites are defined as the ancient monuments and archaeological sites in which they perform

their rituals, celebrations, and pilgrimages, lending a ‘reverential and spiritual element to what is otherwise perceived as only an academic resource, a dead past, or a destination on a tourist checklist’ (Blain & Wallis, 2007, 28). However, for heritage managers, the ‘sacredness’ of the site is used as a justification of the control of these sites, and their preservation for future generations (Blain & Wallis, 2007, p. 1). This contestation over the definition of the term ‘sacred’ and the meaning and use of sacred sites is dominated by the powerful heritage discourse, resulting in the politicisation of space. Kathryn Rountree asserts that sacred sites are so ‘saturated’ and ‘resonant with meaning’ for neo-pagan groups that any re-encounter with these spaces will be ‘inevitably political’ (2006, p. 104). As I will now demonstrate, the place-myths constructed by neo-pagan groups involve the idealisation and mythologisation of the past, in which neo-pagans attempt to ‘re-enchant’ place through their nostalgic rituals, narratives, and celebrations.

6.3 Reviving the Druids: Neo-paganism and the performance of nostalgia

Neo-pagans conceive of sacred sites as sites of ‘re-enchantment’ (Blain & Wallis 2007), an idea which foregrounds the nostalgic conception of sacredness and the past on the part of neo-pagan groups. Svetlana Boym argues that modern nostalgia ‘is a mourning for the impossibility of mythical return’ to an ““enchanted world” with clear borders and values’ (2007, p. 12). This idea of an ‘enchanted’, lost landscape may be understood as the spatial equivalent of the ‘Golden Age’ to which the nostalgic subject is striving to return; constructed in Ireland as the idealised pastoral landscape and its associated folk culture, as discussed in previous chapters. Patrick Wright states that modernity has experienced the ‘dislocation ... devaluation and also the disenchantment of everyday life’ (1985, p. 19). In response to this sense of disenchantment, the past, along with its landscapes, cultures, religions, and peoples, become idealised. The ‘true potentialities of human development’ are associated with traditional communities and ways of life ‘that have already been destroyed’ (Wright, 1985, p. 22). Boym identifies the nineteenth century, with its associated industrialisation and secularisation previously discussed in Chapter Two, as marking the point where a ‘certain void of spiritual and social meaning ... [was] opened up’ (2007, p. 14). It is this ‘void’ which may be seen as being recognised and filled by

neo-pagan groups through the reclamation and re-enchantment of sacred sites in contemporary Ireland.

The activities and connection of neo-pagan groups in and with sacred sites can be considered acts of restorative nostalgia. Boym writes that restorative nostalgia is focused on the restoration of ‘universal values, family, nature, homeland [and] truth’ which are perceived to be superior in the past (2007, p. 14). Neo-pagans look to the past to address the ‘perceived lack’ of enchantment in modern life (Blain & Wallis, 2007, p. 22), and therefore look to paganism and its associated and idealised practitioners as sources for ‘belief, practice and identity’ (Blain & Wallis, 2007, p. 26). Neo-pagans view themselves as ‘inheritors of the ‘wisdom’ of ancient cultures’, particularly of the Neolithic, Iron and Bronze Ages (Blain & Wallis, 2007, p. 23). Blain and Wallis suggest that neo-pagans may identify with one of these historical periods to the point where the past becomes an idealised ‘golden age standard’ against which contemporary life is negatively measured, resulting in neo-pagans identifying themselves with ‘pre-modern’ practices and belief systems (2007, pp. 23-27). A typical belief of neo-pagans is that ‘ancient peoples were sensitive to aspects of the physical world that are not appreciated in modern day society’ (Lambrick, 2001, p. 20). Neo-pagan engagements with prehistoric monuments and landscapes can therefore be viewed as a nostalgic attempt to return to this idealised state of connection with the natural world.

Neo-pagan restorative nostalgia is manifested not only in their connection to, and veneration of, sacred sites, but in their rituals and celebrations. There is an understanding among neo-pagan groups that it is ‘not possible to recreate the pre-Christian paganism or indigenous religion in our modern world’ (Butler, 2011, p. 123), because of insufficient archaeological evidence or historical sources, from which rituals and celebrations are reconstructed. In light of this, neo-pagans rely on a sense of ‘spiritual ancestry’, as well as developing an ‘emotional connection with the native landscape’ (Butler, 2001, p. 123), while any new information about pre-Christian religious practices that emerge in academia is assimilated into Irish neo-pagan discourse and religious practice. Butler suggests that this disconnection from pre-Christian paganism has resulted in an idealisation not just of the Neolithic period in general, but also with its people, particularly the Druids (2005). The Druids are constructed in neo-pagan discourse as idealised and romanticised figures, described

as ‘sagacious men, adept in magical practices, who had deep spiritual connections with the lands, living in harmony with the natural cycle and worshipping the old gods’ (Butler, 2005, p. 97).

The figure of the Druid emerges as a representation of the nostalgic folk culture in Irish neo-paganism, in which the Irish peasantry was idealised as living an ‘idyllic lifestyle lived in harmony with nature’ (Weston & Bennett, 2013, p. 3). Donna Weston and Andy Bennett argue that contemporary paganism ‘owes much to the folklore revival’ and its associated revival of interest in and nostalgia for the past, and in particular the ‘*volk*, or people seen to have much in common with idealized peasant’ (Weston & Bennett, 2013, p. 3). In Ireland, there are several major neo-pagan Druid groups who engage with sacred sites such as Newgrange and Tara, including the Celtic Druid Temple, whose members live sustainably in harmony with nature and teach others how to follow a ‘distinctly Irish Celtic Druid Path’ of spirituality in ‘Druidschool’ (*Celtic Druid Temple* 2017), the Druid Clan of Dana which focuses on the integration of humanity with nature through ‘ritual, music, poetry and meditation’ celebrating the ‘way of the mystic’ and the Tuatha de Danann (*Fellowship of Isis* 2017), the Fainne na nDriothe Circle of Druids (*Irish Druid Network* 2017), as well as multiple other groups, or ‘groves’. The restorative nostalgia of neo-pagan groups such as these Druid groves is further deepened by the idea that original pagan rituals and celebrations can never be completely restored to the present; ‘often where there is performativity of legacy and heritage there is a significant temporal disjuncture: nostalgia’ (Collins & Caulfield, 2014, p. 4). Neo-pagan rituals can therefore be conceived as not just performances of spirituality, but as performances of nostalgia.

In response to this idea, I present the sub-category of ‘performative nostalgia’ in order to analyse the nostalgic rituals and celebrations of neo-pagan groups within sacred sites. Performative nostalgia draws on the idea that neo-pagan rituals and celebrations may be understood as performances, in which performance is defined as an ‘intentionally enacted, purposeful social event [s] unfolding in space and time that is marked off from habituated routines of daily social life’ (Lankauskas, 2015, p. 42). Johannes Fabian argues that ‘to qualify as performance, a particular discourse of practice must be imbued with symbolism and charged with extraordinary intensity and heightened significance’ (1990, p. 16). Similarly, Gediminas Lankauskas states

that ‘a performance must contain the betwixt and between (or liminal) dimension of ‘time out of time’ spent in a place located away from quotidian routes and routines’ (2015, p. 42). Neo-pagan rituals can be seen to contain these characteristics of significance, symbolism, and liminality in both time and space. Butler defines Irish neo-pagan rituals as performances, observing that the ‘audience’ for neo-pagan performances includes both the ‘earthly participants’ of the ritual as well as the ‘unseen entities believed to be present during the performance’ (2004, p. 110).

Neo-pagan rituals take place outside of usual temporal and spatial continuities in sacred sites. Neo-pagan festivals, rituals, and other celebrations are situated in a liminal ‘place apart’ from ‘civilized society’, in what Sarah Pike describes as ‘hyperreal landscapes peopled by colourful and bizarre creatures and extraordinary events’ (1996, p. 124). Neo-pagans experience sacred sites during their rituals and celebrations as ‘more real’ than the modern world, in which these sites become ‘familiar, home-like, memory-laden’ places (Pike, 1996, p. 124), suggesting a connection between the nostalgic construction of sacred sites by neo-pagan groups and the idea of the idealised homeland introduced in Chapter Three. Hetherington defines neo-pagan rituals and festivals as transgressive acts, ‘breaking the continuity of time and celebrating the present as if it were eternal ... These visitors worship in essence the aura of the present, of what they see as an living ambiance’ in these sites (2003, pp. 88-89). Sacred sites during neo-pagan rituals and celebrations can be understood as ‘heterotopias’ (Foucault 1984), a temporary and heightened place in which neo-pagans live a ‘transcending experience, in a different place than the surrounding environment’ (Touissant & Decrop, 2013, p. 19). In this way, neo-pagan rituals in sacred sites can be seen as ‘ritualized forms of transgression’ (Hetherington, 2003, p. 86), a method by which these groups construct and enforce their rival place-identities by rejecting the temporal and spatial continuities constructed by heritage stakeholders, as I will now demonstrate in the site-specific analyses of Newgrange and the Hill of Tara.

6.4 Newgrange

Newgrange, or Brú na Bóinne in Irish, is a passage tomb located in County Meath (see Figure 3.1). Newgrange is an official heritage site associated with Fáilte Ireland,

and accessed exclusively by guided tours arranged at the Brú na Bóinne Visitor Centre. Newgrange dates from the Stone Age, and is theorised to have been created over five thousand years ago (*Newgrange* 2017). The site was excavated between 1962 and 1975, although its association with the winter solstice was not discovered until 1967 by archaeologist Michael Kelly (*The Order of Bards, Ovates & Druids* 2017). Newgrange is one of several prehistoric monuments located in the Boyne Valley, all of which are connected in their orientation with the dawn of the winter solstice. The passage within Newgrange leads to a central burial chamber which is aligned with the sunrise, which comes through an opening at the front of the tomb called a 'roof-box', travelling up the passage to illuminate the back wall of the chamber (*Newgrange* 2017). Once the sunrise has illuminated Newgrange it touches several other 'satellite cairns' in the Boyne Valley until 'at sunset it enters the large cairn of Dowth, known locally as the Fairy Mound of Darkness' (*The Order of Bards, Ovates & Druids* 2017).

Newgrange is of interest to neo-pagan groups for several reasons. Firstly, Newgrange is conceived as a sacred site by neo-pagans because of its status as a monument created by the primitive folk of Ireland's past, which are idealised in neo-pagan discourse. Secondly, in Irish folklore Newgrange is the home of Aengus Og and the Daghdá, the 'gods of the Tuatha Dé Danann', and related to the Irish fairies (*Voices from the Dawn* 2017). The site therefore functions as a place where neo-pagans can worship pagan deities, including fairies, through rituals, as there is a belief that the gods and goddesses of the Celtic pantheon along with other deities 'have endured through time and that one can communicate with them today' (Butler, 2011, p. 119). Thirdly, neo-pagans celebrate the dawn of the winter solstice at Newgrange as part of their annual sacred calendar, and therefore frequently come into contact with this 'inherently' sacred site (*Celtic Druid Temple* 2017). Access to Newgrange during the winter solstice is restricted, with the Brú na Bóinne Visitor Centre organising an annual lottery in which people can win one of sixty places to witness the solstice dawn over five days from December 18 to December 23 (*Newgrange* 2017). The number of people who enter this lottery is immense, with 32,682 entries in 2016 (*Newgrange* 2017). Therefore, the winter solstice has become one of the central times of contestation from neo-pagan groups, in which neo-pagans

reclaim Newgrange and celebrate the solstice on and around the tomb as a rival interpretation of this event in their construction of its place-myth.

6.4.1 Reclaiming the solstice at Newgrange

For neo-pagan groups, the winter solstice is one of the most important events on their ritual calendar. On websites such as *The Order of Bards, Ovates & Druids* (2017), which provides information on becoming a Druid and joining the ‘Druid way’, material on rituals and festivals are presented for neo-pagans to study. The language used in this website allows neo-pagan groups to construct and control the place-identity of sacred sites such as Newgrange. The Order, which is a worldwide organisation founded over fifty years ago and ‘dedicated to practising, teaching, and developing Druidry as a valuable and inspiring spirituality’ (*The Order of Bards, Ovates & Druids* 2017), constructs itself as a legitimate authority on the meaning and use of sacred sites. The ‘Eightfold Wheel of the Year’, which comprises the ritual calendar of most neo-pagan groups, is based on the ‘deep and mysterious connection between the Source of our individual lives and the source of the life of the planet’ (*The Order of Bards, Ovates & Druids* 2017), reinforcing the idea that neo-paganism has a deeper and more ‘authentic’ connection to place than other users of these sacred sites. Engaging with sacred sites during these sacred celebrations, such as the winter solstice, is represented as dissolving the binary between neo-pagans and place; ‘As we contemplate the festivals we see how interwoven is the life of our psyche and of our body ... for each festival time marks a potent conjunction of Time and Place in a way that is quite remarkable’ (*The Order of Bards, Ovates & Druids* 2017).

During events such as the winter solstice, neo-pagans can be considered to be embodying sacredness in these sacred sites. Embodiment serves as a way to resist heritage uses and representations of sites such as Newgrange, in which the heritage tourist has a solitary and removed interaction with place through the romantic gaze. In contrast, neo-pagans rituals and festivals are perceived as collective and spiritual experiences with place. Rountree asserts that during neo-pagan rituals ‘dualist constructions dissolve and resolve themselves as continuities: the human body and the earth’s body, the past and the present, inner and outer worlds, self and other, human and deity ...’ (2006, p. 98). Neo-pagans therefore experience themselves in

sacred sites as 'sharing an intersubjective milieu with other pilgrims and with the Earth itself' (Rountree, 2006, p. 99). This is a transgressive act, performed in liminal space and time, in which heritage control of place is challenged by acts of performative nostalgia. The attempt by the heritage managers of Newgrange to restrict the amount of people allowed to witness the solstice dawn is considered by neo-pagan groups to 'block' and threaten neo-pagan identity and connection with the sacred site (Tannock 1995). The heritage managers of Newgrange are viewed by Irish neo-pagan groups as forcibly separating them from 'an imaginatively remembered past, homeland, family or community' (Tannock, 1995, p. 456), which in the case of neo-pagans is the idealised folk which celebrated the solstice at Newgrange in the mythologised past, as well as the site itself, with which neo-pagan groups have a deep spiritual connection. Celebrating the winter solstice at Newgrange can therefore be considered a political act, as some Irish neo-pagan groups feel that they are 'reclaiming sacred sites by practising an animistic religion at these locations that are associated with pre-Christian paganism' (Butler, 2011, p. 120).

The winter solstice at Newgrange is constructed by Irish neo-pagans as a liminal festival existing outside usual spatial and temporal continuities. The popularity of Newgrange during the winter solstice has forced heritage stakeholders to offer free access to the site at this time (*Newgrange* 2017); the solstice is therefore a time where heritage managers, who are usually granted 'greater interpretative power' in 'discussions about access to sites' as well as their representation (Rountree, 2006, p. 104) no longer have control over how the site is represented or used. This is an opportunity for Irish neo-pagan groups to construct and enforce their own dominant place-identity on Newgrange, portraying it as a sacred site used for rituals and other celebrations. Usually, neo-pagan rituals are restricted or otherwise banned from heritage sites, the reason being that neo-pagans 'create ritual litter' and 'demand open access policies' which are believed to compromise and damage these sites (Blain & Wallis, 2007, p. 2). The Irish neo-pagan rituals performed at Newgrange during the winter solstice involve the reclamation and occupation of space, with participants forming large 'magic' circles, lighting ritual fires, singing, dancing, chanting, and playing music (Butler, 2004, p. 110). The circle is used in many neo-pagan rituals, to affirm 'our unity and equality ... as a group of people we symbolise

all of humanity – standing as One People on One Earth’ (*The Order of Bards, Ovates & Druids* 2017). The amount of participants can make these circles huge, taking up most of the space in front of Newgrange (see Figure 3.2), and therefore making the neo-pagan occupation and reclamation of space a public and powerful act.

The sacred place-myth that neo-pagans construct is also reinforced by consistent media attention directed towards Newgrange during the winter solstice. News reports on the winter solstice tend to emphasise images of, interviews with, and viewpoints of neo-pagan participants at the site. For example, in 2013 the *Irish Independent* reported on the solstice, marking the ‘large gathering of New Age followers banging drums and hoisting colourful flags’ who ‘gathered to greet the sun’, and interviewed John Cantwell, a neo-pagan practitioner who ‘heralded the first ray of sun by blowing on a handmade horn ... as part of a large group of New Age and pagan celebrants who formed human circles linking hands at the base of the monument’ (Bray 2013). In 2014 the *Belfast Telegraph* reported on the ‘hundreds’ of neo-pagans that gathered for the winter solstice, in which the event was described as ‘Followers of the ancient belief system came together at the ancient passage tomb for the start of the shortest day of the year’ (*Pagans gather at Newgrange to mark winter solstice* 2014). In 2015, *The Irish Times* reported on the winter solstice, posting a video on their website which emphasised neo-pagan involvement, showing participants chanting and playing instruments in front of Newgrange (*Crowds celebrate the winter solstice at Newgrange* 2015). Most recently in 2016, several Irish news outlets including the *Irish Independent* reported on the poor weather at the solstice, for which ‘hundreds’ attended, in which a picture of a neo-pagan woman is featured, as are other neo-pagan participants in an attached video clip (Feehan 2016). The media attention on neo-pagan rituals and participants during the solstice at Newgrange may therefore be seen to aid in the construction of the site as being associated with discourses of the sacred and neo-pagan spirituality, overpowering the heritage discourse during this liminal time in their rival interpretations of the past, present, and future uses of these sites (Massey 1995).

6.4.2 New pilgrimages, ancient sites: Seeking the temple of the gods

Neo-pagans are often called pilgrims and their journeys to sacred sites pilgrimages (see Ivakhic 2001, Rountree 2002, 2006, 2012, Zwissler 2011). Rountree observes

that in recent decades, neo-pagans have been ‘increasingly visiting a vast range of sites once associated with Pagan gods and goddess’, including Newgrange and the Hill of Tara (2012, p. 20). A pilgrimage is widely accepted by scholars to mean a ‘journey taken for diverse religious and spiritual purposes’ (Damari & Mansfeld, 2014, p. 2). There are three main elements which characterise a pilgrimage: the ‘path’ or journey of the pilgrim; the ‘holy place’ that is the destination; and the ‘pilgrimage community’ of fellow pilgrims travelling together (2014, p. 4). Claudia Damari and Yoel Mansfield argue that the pilgrimage journey functions as a ‘reflection of the pilgrim’s faith’, in which faith is expressed through sacrifice and the ‘hard conditions imposed by the physical dimensions of the path itself (2014, p. 4). In contemporary pilgrimages, this idea of sacrifice is replaced by ‘exertion’ (Solnit, 2001, p. 60). The destination of a pilgrimage is usually a ‘holy place’ where some type of divine event took place, and which is considered to have an ‘aura’ that ‘acts as a magnet for believers’ (Damari & Mansfeld, 2014, p. 4). Furthermore, pilgrimages are characterised by the presence of a ‘pilgrimage community’, comprised of other pilgrims travelling to the same destination, and which provides ‘shelter, solidarity and a feeling of brotherhood among the participants’ (Damari & Mansfeld, 2014, p. 4).

It can be argued that modern neo-pagan rituals and pilgrimages have become nostalgic acts, for neo-pagan ritual generally, and for the original idea of the pilgrimage and its association with religious devotion and suffering. Neo-pagan pilgrimages, however, tend to take the form of guided tours that visit multiple sacred sites, in which the pilgrimage community is formed from the tour group, and in which the idea of sacrifice and suffering to express faith has become a nostalgic search for meaning, identity, and spirituality. The distinctions between pilgrims and tourists in contemporary travel are becoming ‘increasingly tenuous’ (Dora 2009, p. 244), with both types of travel seen as quests for authenticity, ‘for a regenerative experience that breaks from the everyday’ (Dora, 2009, p. 244). The neo-pagan desire for authenticity in their ritual performances in sacred sites is similar to the touristic desire for authenticity in their chosen destinations, and it has been argued that ‘touristic travel in search of authenticity or self-renewal falls under the rubric of the sacred’ (Badone & Roseman, 2004, p. 2). The conflation of neo-pagan

pilgrimage and other forms of tourism has also opened the practice up to criticism in terms of the consumption of sacred places, which I examine further in the critique. Neo-pagan pilgrimages can be understood to contain the same characteristics of liminality as neo-pagan rituals. Pilgrimage centres 'are frequently found in peripheral locations' (Badone & Roseman, 2004, p. 4), and pilgrimages are considered to be a rite of passage, consisting of three distinct states of separation, margin, and aggregation (Van Gennep 1960). The separation occurs when the pilgrim joins the pilgrimage group, and the liminal status of the pilgrim is maintained by the management and itinerary of the tour by the tour guide and tour company. This forces particular modes of respectful and co-operative behaviour in neo-pagan pilgrims, in which deviant behaviour results in the loss of the sacred experience, and the pilgrim transfers to 'another and non-religious environmental dimension' (Damari & Mansfeld, 2014, p. 4). The liminal status of the participants in the tour is also reinforced by the concept of 'communitas' (Ivakhic 2003b). Pilgrimages, along with festivals and rituals, serve an 'anti-structural' or liminal function within societies; 'motivated by the desire for 'communitas', the temporary shedding of social roles, and the experience of unmediated and liberatory relations between people' (Ivakhic, 2003b, p. 98). During these pilgrimages, therefore, neo-pagans are again occupying a liminal space and time outside of secular constructions of place and, within the confines of the pilgrimage group, are able to construct and maintain their own place-identity for the sacred sites which they visit.

The liminal status of pilgrims results in a 'heightened state of consciousness' during their pilgrimage in which anticipated spiritual experiences in these sacred sites cause pilgrims to 'remember' the site 'into being' (Rountree, 2006, p. 102). Such an act is constructed as possibly resulting in a self-transformative and spiritual experience in these sacred sites (Rountree 2006). Rountree argues that for neo-pagan pilgrims visiting a sacred site could involve 'not only a journey to a (usually) distant place, but also, in the imagination, a journey to a distant time, or into a state of timelessness (albeit for a short period)', in which the sacred site 'provides the constant, material link between the past and present worlds' (2006, p. 101). This spiritual journey into the past is suggestive of a nostalgic connection to the sacred, where pilgrims attempt to connect with the idealised past represented by these ancient monuments. Pilgrims

often also take ‘mementos’ from sacred sites, which act as a ‘mnemonic for the pilgrim’s imaginative reconstruction of [their] journey’ (2006, p. 99). These mementos connect the pilgrim to the sacred site beyond the conclusion of the ritual; and can aid in memorialising the experience for both the pilgrim themselves and to other people. Mementos further enable the ‘transference of the sacred from place to pilgrims and thence to other people’, when pilgrims share their experiences with family members and friends (Mazumdar & Mazumdar, 2004, p. 394). The authenticity of the pilgrim experience, and by association the sacred site in which the experience took place, is symbolised by the existence of these mementos.

Through an examination of the marketing and language used by multiple tour groups to promote neo-pagan pilgrimages across Ireland, the construction of Newgrange as a nostalgic sacred site becomes evident. Visiting Newgrange is represented in these tours as either a ‘journey’ or a ‘pilgrimage’, and promises ‘inspiring and empowering transformational spiritual journeys for the Body, Mind and Spirit’ (*Sacred Mystical Journeys* 2017). The ‘Mythical Heart of Ireland’ tour offered by Sacred Earth Journeys is constructed as a journey into Ireland’s mythical past, in which Newgrange becomes part of a nostalgic past characterised by ‘myth, mystery and magic’ (*Sacred Earth Journeys* 2017). These tours tend to be led by people who are considered ‘experts’ in neo-pagan spirituality or the history of Irish sacred sites; the ‘Mythical Heart of Ireland’ tour is led by author Phil Cousineau who is portrayed as an expert in Celtic history and sacred sites (*Sacred Earth Journeys* 2017), while the ‘Sacred Sites of Ireland’ tour offered by Sacred Mystical Journeys is led by Finbarr Ross, described as a ‘mystic and spiritual guide’ (*Sacred Mystical Journeys* 2017). Having these pilgrimages led by neo-pagans and other related experts lends these tours a sense of authenticity for pilgrims, and aids in the construction of ‘communitas’ among the pilgrimage group.

The presence of tour guides on these pilgrimages also aids in constructing and reinforcing neo-pagan place-myths and place-identities. The status of these tour guides as possessors of knowledge, either as experts in paganism or experienced practitioners, lends their interpretation of these sites, and the rituals enacted with them, as authentic and representing the ‘true’ character of the sites (Massey 1995). Newgrange itself is represented as a sacred ‘temple’, associated with the ‘Goddess’

(*Boyne Valley Tours* 2017), at which pilgrims can anticipate having nostalgic sacred experiences such as those described by Rountree (2006). The itinerary of the ‘Sacred Sites of Ireland’ tour involves a recounting of visitors’ sacred experiences at Newgrange: ‘we experienced the inside of this magnificent temple built to honor the Goddess, representing regeneration and fertility’ (*Sacred Mystical Journeys* 2017). The effect of the inclusion of past experiences by other neo-pagan pilgrims on these websites aids in the construction of Newgrange as a sacred site and its associated place-myth as a temple, as well as evoking anticipation on the part of prospective pilgrims as to the sacred experiences one could have whilst on the tour. As I will now demonstrate, the use of past experiences to legitimise and sacralise sacred sites is also present in the construction of the place-myth of the Hill of Tara by neo-pagan groups.

6.5 The Hill of Tara

The Hill of Tara, known as Cnoc na Teamhrach in Irish, is located in County Meath (see Figure 3.4). Tara is an archaeological complex comprising multiple ancient monuments including the Hill of Tara itself (Newman 1997). Tara is an official heritage site associated with Fáilte Ireland and is on the UNESCO World Heritage list. However, unlike at Newgrange, visitors have access to the site with or without a tour guide. The Hill of Tara, also known as Rath Gráinne, lies at the centre of the complex. On top of the Hill is the Fort of the Kings, or Ráith na Ríogh, which comprises a ring fort and a ring barrow known as Teach Chormaic, or Cormac’s House, the name of an ancient Irish king, and the Forradh, or Royal Seat, upon which the ancient stone pillar called Lia Fáil, the Stone of Destiny, stands (Bhreathnach 2005). In neo-pagan discourse, Tara marks the centre of religious and civic authority in ancient Ireland; ‘it was a very powerful Pagan site ... Learning facilities were based here, Warriors were trained here, Druids resided here; there was much activity’ (*Sacred Site Tours* 2017). Until recently, Tara was considered to be the seat of Árd Rí na hÉireann, the High King of Ireland, where the ancient kings of Ireland were crowned (*Hill of Tara.org* 2017). Now Tara is understood as a ‘sacral site associated with kingship rituals’, rather than the abode of the kings of Ireland (*Hill of Tara.org* 2017).

In neo-pagan discourse, the Hill of Tara is one of the most important sacred sites in Ireland, and is associated with the summer solstice on 21 June (*Tara Celebrations* 2017). The Tuatha de Danann are associated with Tara, with Evans-Wentz recording that they appeared on the ‘Great Feast of Samhain’ and can be seen marching around the hill of Tara at night (1911, p. 31). Like Newgrange, the Hill of Tara is therefore a site where deities are embedded in the landscape for neo-pagans to worship. I argue that neo-pagan engagements with the Hill of Tara also demonstrates restorative and performative nostalgia, as Irish neo-pagans both perform rituals and celebrations at Tara through the year, as well as politicise the site in their contestation with the heritage discourse.

6.5.1 Ritual performances in the heart of pagan Ireland

Neo-pagan ritual performances at Tara, considered by these groups to be the heart of pagan Ireland, are nostalgic performances which serve to produce and impose a particular place-identity and associated place-myth onto the site. The rituals held at Tara can be viewed as an attempt at the ‘transhistorical reconstruction’ (Boym, 2007, p. 13) of the mythologised past, as these rituals are reinterpretations and reclamations of ancient ‘authentic’ pagan rituals. There are several rituals held at Tara throughout the year, including a ‘Ritual of Protection’ and ‘full moon ceremonies’ held every month (*Celtic Druid Temple* 2017). In the description of the full moon ceremony held by the Celtic Druid Temple at Tara, which involves forming a circle and participating in chanting, movement, and the lighting of a ritual fire, a ‘facilitator’ is used to lead the ceremony (*Celtic Druid Temple* 2017). Although it is stressed that the facilitator is not ‘in charge’, and that their job is to ‘hold the space’ (*Celtic Druid Temple* 2017), their role within the full moon ceremony is considered crucial, and therefore shapes and controls the experience of the ritual for the other participants. The facilitator of the ritual, whose interpretation of the ritual and its execution is considered authentic by the other participants, is central to the construction of the place-identity of Tara within that liminal time and space.

Although Tara is utilised as a sacred site at several points during the year, including May Eve, November Eve, and the winter solstice, the complex is predominantly associated with the summer solstice. Butler writes that in Ireland ‘particular sacred sites are connected to specific festivals’ (2011, p. 121), and the rituals and

celebrations held at these times tend to attract more people. For example, the sunrise of the summer solstice at Tara in 2015 was witnessed by ‘hundreds’ of people (McGreevy 2015). Not every participant in these celebrations was necessarily a neo-pagan; indeed not all pagans ‘concern themselves with sacred sites’, with Wiccans preferring to conduct their rituals privately, compared to Druids, with ‘many orders purposefully conducting rituals in the full gaze of the media’ (Blain & Wallis, 2007, p. 8). Nevertheless, the rituals performed during the solstices in these sacred spaces are perceived as more ‘authentic’, attract more participants, and evoke more acts of performative nostalgia, than perhaps any other neo-pagan rituals held throughout the year.

Because of the uncertain relationship with authenticity and the historical past that neo-pagan rituals have, they can be considered invented traditions. Invented or ‘restored’ traditions relate to a ‘set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual of symbolic nature which seeks to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition which automatically implies continuity with the past’ (Boym, 2001, p. 42). Boym points out these ‘new’ traditions are actually characterised by a ‘higher degree of symbolic formalization and ritualization than the actual peasant customs and conventions after which they were patterned’ (2001, p. 42), suggesting that restorative nostalgia on the part of neo-pagan groups are resulting in more idealised and formalised rituals and traditions than ever actually existed in the past. She further posits that these invented traditions counter the loss of community and collective identity felt in modern society by offering a ‘comforting collective script for individual longing’ (Boym 2001, p. 42). Massey similarly stresses the nostalgia inherent in the creation of invented traditions, arguing that although they are ‘actively built in the present’, these traditions are seen as ‘something already completed which can now only be maintained or lost’ (Massey, 1995, p. 184).

The disparate nature of the Tara complex, with its multiple archaeological monuments spread over a wide area, means that discourses of the sacred operate in different areas of the site at different times. For example, animist pagans approach sites as ‘living places’, as ‘alive’ and ‘embedded within living landscapes’ (Blain & Wallis 2007, pp. 31-32), expanding the notion of sacredness beyond specific

monuments and artefacts. Jane Hubert comments that ‘many indigenous peoples would extend the concept of sacredness to the whole of their land’ (1994, p. 16), which in the case of Tara would mean the entirety of Ireland is constructed as sacred space. Furthermore, sacredness is thought of in neo-pagan discourse as being ‘temporarily inscribed’ and ‘re-inscribed’ with each ritual, with the result of new meanings and representations of Tara being constantly created by different neo-pagan groups. This idea of continually re-inscribing sacredness onto the landscape of sacred sites such as Tara aids in the construction of Tara’s place-identity and place-myth, as the contestation of place is constant and takes new forms through the rituals and practices of various practitioners. However, the various rituals and celebrations within neo-pagan discourse are used by heritage stakeholders to call into doubt the veracity of their religious practices, as I discuss further in the critique.

The online discussion and recounting of rituals held at Tara aids neo-pagans in the establishment and maintenance of the place-myth and place-identity of this sacred site. The recounting of spiritual experiences may be seen to replace the lack of sacred texts in neo-pagan discourse, and help to legitimise neo-pagan interpretations and practices within sacred sites. For example, Boyne Valley Tours, a company which specialises in tours of sacred sites, has a section on its website about the ‘earth energy fields’ running through Tara (*Boyne Valley Tours* 2017). The description of these fields includes a map of the Tara complex showing the various lines running across it. The site advises potential visitors that ‘If you wish to be open to Earth energies, be sure to ask for spiritual protection ... Earth Energy Lines are part of the Earth’s aura. They feed people with life energy through the human chakras’ (*Boyne Valley Tours* 2017). Spiritual advice and information of this nature is conflated with historical facts about the archaeological monuments of the Tara complex, aiding in the legitimising of this information as fact, and producing Tara as an ambiguous place where ‘visible and invisible worlds intersect and blur into one another’ (Rountree, 2006, p. 99). Similarly, the *Order of Bards, Ovates & Druids* website analyses neo-pagan practices with academic sources in order to authenticate neo-pagan rituals and place-identities of sacred sites. One particular discussion focuses on stone circles and their association with the Druids. In it, neo-pagan understandings of these sites are seen as superior to the experts of the authorised heritage discourse, with recent academic findings demonstrating the ‘increasing

recognition of ritual astronomy in the construction of these monuments', a belief long held by neo-pagan groups (*The Order of Bards, Ovates & Druids* 2017).

6.5.2 Politicising place: the case of Rath Gráinne

The rival place-identity and place-myth of the Tara complex constructed by neo-pagan groups in recent years has also been in the form of the politicisation of place. This politicisation took the form of ongoing protest on behalf of multiple Irish and international neo-pagan groups. In 2003, neo-pagans occupied the Tara complex and performed rituals there in order to protect the site, which was threatened by the construction of the M3 motorway. Neo-pagan groups reclaimed and occupied the Hill of Tara, specifically at Rath Gráinne, where the Lia Fáil is located (see Figure 3.5). Multiple rituals were performed at Rath Gráinne over several days, which may be considered a deliberate political act by neo-pagan groups. Saunders comments that 'local environmental activism often combines with religious sensibilities, resulting in the politicization of neopaganism in defence of certain man-made and natural sites' (2012, p. 798). Butler records that because 'Tara is recognised as a sacred site by the international neo-Pagan community', neo-pagans travelled from England, and from other countries, in order to take part in these rituals (2011, p. 121).

The rituals and protests performed for the protection of Tara as a sacred site acquired a new intensity in terms of nostalgia at that time. In the face of an 'unstable present', neo-pagans longed to return to a 'stable past' in which 'everything is held in its proper place' (Tannock, 1995, p. 455). In this case, Tara, under threat by the secular processes of progress, became a synecdoche for all sacred sites, and the respect with which sacred sites were treated in the idealised Irish past, a past evoked with neo-pagan acts of performative nostalgia. Butler's account of the Druidic rituals held at Tara in October of 2003 demonstrates the performative nature of these rituals, as well as the restorative nostalgia inherent in the utilising of protection rituals to protect the site from the development of the M3 motorway.

Butler recalls that

A number of rituals took place on Tara's mounds over the weekend. One of these rituals was an earth-healing ritual to protect the Hill of Tara from any damage that the road might cause. This ritual involved approximately twenty-

five people, who held hands to form a large circle atop Rath Gráinne, one of the mounds of Tara ... Energy was raised by everyone humming simultaneously in different pitches and, following that, chanting. This was followed by the Neo-pagan ritual dance known as the Spiral Dance ... Participants resumed the circular position after the dance, and the energy that had been raised was channeled. Each person concentrated on visualizing the energy and concurrently focused on sending the energy out of the circle to envelop the group members and the site on which they stood. The intention was for the energy to form a magical barrier around Tara that would protect it from the immediate structural damage that could be caused by the building of the road (2005, pp. 95-96).

The purposeful and public nature of this protest, which gained media attention and continues to be discussed amongst neo-pagan groups, aided in the reinforcement of a sacred place-identity for the Tara complex. During the days of this protest, the association of Tara with heritage was deconstructed, as its status as a heritage site was being ignored by the government (*Celtic Druid Temple* 2017). During this time, therefore, a neo-pagan place-identity was dominant at the site, reinforced with each ritual performed there.

Although heritage groups also protested against the building of the motorway (Newman 2015), the power of the neo-pagan protest in 2003 can be seen to have strengthened their rival place-identity of Tara as a sacred site. In 2005, the summer solstice was attended by two thousand people, drawn by the media coverage of the threat of the M3. Caroline Kenner, a neo-pagan practitioner present at Tara on the solstice, claims that the event ‘was the largest gathering of Druids, Pagans and Witches ever held in modern Ireland’ (2005). The event, which included workshops, rituals, and other public performances, can be considered a political demonstration. Kenner describes Tara as the ‘heart and soul of Ireland’, and prophesies that if the development of the road continues ‘Tara will be permanently changed by the noise, the pollution and the high-intensity lights. It seems that the sanctity of the site and the peace of the Pagan-era graves mean nothing to the current government’ (Kenner 2005). What is at stake with the building of the M3 is not only the archaeological monuments themselves, but also the ‘aura’ of Tara as a sacred site, and its associations with nostalgic ideals of peace, tranquillity, and spirituality.

The politicisation of Tara continued with several neo-pagan groups beginning a ‘Save Tara Valley’ campaign, which involved lobbying government officials and organising protests at the site. This campaign was constructed by Michael McGrath,

an Archdruid of the Order of Druids in Ireland, as a battle between neo-pagan groups and the government. McGrath mentions that throughout 2006 and 2007, protests included in the form of occupation of space and the performance of rituals at Tara; ‘Protestors remain active in the field at Tara, on the frontline, and as long as they can keep up the struggle, the more demands of ours the Government will have to accede to’ (*Wight Druids* 2007). Although the development of the road eventually went ahead, McGrath and the Order of Druids were able to execute a campaign to ‘Keep Tara Beautiful’, including ‘screening of the motorway from the Hill with corridors of broadleaf trees, insisting on Gaelic signage, created by artists and made by crafts people’ (*Wight Druids* 2007). McGrath viewed the decision as an ‘honourable defeat against overwhelming odds’, and mentioned that ‘There are Druids and friends on the Hill of Tara right now ... keeping the Old Spirit alive’ (*Wight Druids* 2007). The Order itself, which is described as ‘founded since time immemorial’, and responsible for leading the ‘return of the Druids to Ireland’, may be seen as motivated by restorative nostalgia. Evoking the warriors and Druids of the past, McGrath draws connections between contemporary neo-pagans and the mythologised past, and in his influential position as an Archdruid, further legitimises and romanticises neo-pagan claims to sacred sites.

Since the protests, the place-image that McGrath and others created in their protection of Tara has become part of its place-myth, demonstrated in the Irish media. In the aftermath of the construction of the M3, several news outlets in 2010 interviewed neo-pagans at Tara and reported that Tara now had ‘negative energy’. In *The Irish Time*’s report on the summer solstice, several neo-pagans were interviewed who stressed that Tara felt ‘wounded’ and was surrounded by negative energy in the wake of the motorway’s construction (McGreevy 2010). Similarly, the *Irish Independent* focused on this idea of negative energy and emphasised neo-pagan representations and opinions on the effects of the motorway (2010). This demonstrates the effect that neo-pagan protests had on the construction of Tara as a sacred site; neo-pagan practitioners were consulted as to the effects of the road on Tara over heritage stakeholders or other experts in the authorised heritage discourse. The dominant place-identity of Tara from 2003 to 2010 was therefore a highly contested one, with neo-pagan interpretations and constructions of place temporarily foregrounded over heritage place-identities.

6.6 Critique

As demonstrated through the site-specific analysis, both the old fairy sites of Newgrange and the Hill of Tara are constructed by neo-pagan groups as nostalgic sacred sites through ritual performances, pilgrimage, and political activism in the form of the reclamation and occupation of space. This political activism forms part of neo-pagan groups' resistance to the dominant place-identities upheld by heritage stakeholders. Neo-pagan groups are focused on the establishment and maintenance of a rival monologic place-identity of Newgrange and the Hill of Tara as sacred, and contestation between the two groups' rival constructions and representations of place continues. Therefore, I will now analyse the problematic relationship of neo-pagan groups with authenticity, speak to the consumption of sacredness evident in New Age tourism, and analyse the nostalgic depiction of Irish fairies in neo-pagan discourse as *genii loci*, discussing how the above undermine neo-pagan representations and narratives of sacred sites.

6.6.1 Contesting authenticity at neo-pagan sites

As discussed in the site-specific analysis, neo-pagan rituals, celebrations, and engagement with sacred sites are constructed as authentic in neo-pagan discourse, reflecting the 'true' and 'essential' character of these places. However, it is the authenticity of neo-pagan practices which is called into question by heritage stakeholders to undermine neo-pagan claims to sacred sites. There is a perceived disjuncture between the rituals practiced by neo-pagans and those practiced by pre-Christian pagans, resulting from a lack of evidence about the 'correct' or authentic way of performing pre-Christian pagan rituals. Blain and Wallis state that neo-pagans deal with this gap in various ways, 'from attempted strict adherence to ritual forms, to appropriation of spirituality seen as more authentic ... to avid readership of archaeological journals or following of current 'experts' in the field' (2007, p. 25).

This focus on authenticity and the 'correct' way to interpret and use these sacred sites is utilised to legitimise both heritage and neo-pagan constructions of place. Massey writes that 'claims and counter-claims about the present character of a place depend in almost all cases on particular, rival, interpretations of its past' (1995, p. 185). This is true of neo-pagans and heritage stakeholders, who each construct and

promote differing versions of the mythologised Irish past. Massey posits that these ‘conflicting interpretations of the past’, which serve to ‘legitimate a particular understanding of the present’, are ‘put to battle over what is to come’, meaning the future dominant interpretation and use of these sites (1995, p. 185). Heritage stakeholders respond to this contestation by calling into doubt the authenticity of neo-pagan engagements with sacred sites. Blain and Wallis explain that authenticity ‘presents a challenge to pagans, not only to their own development of practices but to their apparent rights to practice ...’ (2007, p. 25), which manifests in problems of access to, and rights within, sacred spaces. Heritage stakeholders can claim that neo-pagans, and their rituals and sacred items, are not ‘authentic’ to the time period with which they claim kinship, and therefore justify restricting their access to these sites.

As already discussed, there is a lack of historical and archaeological evidence of pre-Christian pagan practices in Ireland, and neo-pagans therefore tend to rely on ‘spiritual ancestry’ to create their rituals. Folklorist and anthropologist Sabine Magliocco states that ‘neo-Pagan ritual artists are adept at combining and adapting materials from highly divergent sources, cultures, historical periods and media ...they are by nature *bricoleurs*’ (1996, pp. 104-105). For example, Butler records that the Druidic group called the Owl Grove follow an ‘Irish Hereditary Druid Tradition’, passed onto them by a woman whose grandfather had a connection to the old Druids (2005, p. 93).

However, neo-pagans consider the idea that they are carrying on the traditions and legacy of pre-Christian pagans important, as Kathryn Rountree expresses;

Through their bodily presence and ritual enactments in sacred places, Pagan pilgrims assert the ancestral roots of their modern Paganism. Some of the rituals they do – like pouring libations of wine or water on ancient altars, praying, meditating, chanting and dancing – are creative, symbolic performances of the connection they feel with the ancient communities for whom the site was sacred. They are a means of claiming a spiritual heritage, asserting and embodying a shared Pagan identity (2006, p. 104).

Irish Druids, in particular, consider their rituals and practices to be different and possibly closer to older Druidic practices than other Druidic traditions in Europe, because ‘Irish Druids did not experience Roman invasion and therefore that the tradition was conserved and sustained in the country until relatively recent times’ (Butler, 2005, p. 92). However Butler points out that these traditions have ‘come via

different families and been filtered through various perspectives', and therefore these traditions could simply be another example of neo-pagans 'reimagining or reinterpretation of the past' (Butler, 2005, p. 94). This belief on the part of some neo-pagan groups that their uses and interpretations of sacred sites are authentic forms part of the construction and maintenance of a rival place-identity for sites such as Newgrange and the Hill of Tara. Within the liminal temporal and spatial constructions of neo-pagan rituals and other performances, the authenticity of these rituals and celebrations are not called into question, but accepted, as demonstrated by the emphasis on neo-pagan viewpoints during news reports on the winter and summer solstices, and the official websites of neo-pagan groups. However, outside of these liminal times and spaces, the authenticity of neo-pagan narratives and place-identities are easily deconstructed and criticized by 'experts' in the more powerful authorised heritage discourse, preventing either group's place-identity and associated place-myth from dominating these sites completely.

6.6.2 New Age tourism: Consuming sacredness

Neo-pagan pilgrimages can be considered to be engaging in the consumption of sacredness at sacred sites such as Newgrange and the Hill of Tara through New Age tourism, of which neo-pagan pilgrimage is a part. Neo-paganism is not to be confused with New Age spirituality, despite their common belief in 'power sites' and 'earth energies' (Ivakhic, 2003b, p. 97). In fact, pagans often use 'New Age' as a derogatory term, because practitioners are considered to have a 'superficial and tacky approach to spirituality' (Blain & Wallis, 2007, p. 6). This is because New Age spirituality is conceived as part of the trend within advanced capitalism to commodify 'everything', including religion, and 'convert it into a marketplace of choices' for individual consumers (Ivakhic, 2003b, p. 93).

However, neo-pagan journeys to sacred sites can also be read as examples of the commodification of sacredness. Ivakhic argues that neo-pagan pilgrimages, in particular New Age pilgrimage, link peripheral places together, providing pilgrims with a 'geographic anchor for the forging of their identities as part of an alternative culture; a culture that is perceived to constitute a critical alternative to urban-industrial modernity ...' (2003b, p. 99). The issue Ivakhic has with neo-pagan pilgrimage is that

Travel to peripheral places is, of course, hardly a radical act. Reincorporated into the cultural logic of capitalist and neo-colonialist social relations, travel becomes global tourism, a consumption of countries and places by privileged and mobile members of the (largely Western) developed world (2003b, p. 99).

The nostalgic narratives that neo-pagans form in their construction of sacred places, therefore, in which neo-pagans are idealised as having a deep, spiritual connection with place, are undermined by the consumption of sacredness during these pilgrimages. Russell Belk et al argues that ‘sacred consumer domains’ fall into six major categories: the consumption of ‘places, times, tangible things, intangibles, persons and experiences’ (1989, p. 9). As I will demonstrate, the consumption of both places and experiences are marketed in neo-pagan pilgrimage tours. Maria Bittarello argues that these critiques of pilgrimage do not take into account ‘how much the notion itself of pilgrimage has changed in recent years’ (2006, p. 122), as ‘pilgrimage is a product and manifestation of its social environment’ (Reader, 1992, p. 226). For example, there has been a shift from a focus on death, suffering and the afterlife in contemporary culture to gratification within our current life, which has been accompanied by a subsequent ‘shift towards religious movements which promise this rather than other-worldly salvation’ (Reader, 1992, p. 226) such as neo-paganism. However, I argue that the consumption of sacred sites is evident in sacred pilgrimage tours, in which the consumption of sacred and mundane experiences are conflated.

The pilgrimage tour companies discussed earlier in this chapter demonstrate in their marketing of New Age tourism this idea that consumption ‘has become a vehicle for experiencing the sacred’ (Belk et al, 1989, p. 1). In the tour companies of both Sacred Mystical Journeys and Sacred Earth Journeys, experiences of sacred sites are subsumed with other more mundane tourist activities; for example, after a day spent experiencing Newgrange and Tara, both sites described as places of ‘astrological, spiritual, religious and ceremonial importance’, pilgrims are invited to visit famous Dublin tourist attractions such as Dublin Castle and the Guinness Storehouse (*Sacred Earth Journeys* 2017). Similarly, the ‘Sacred Sites of Ireland’ tour with Sacred Mystical Journeys markets leisure activities such as shopping and various restaurants alongside ‘spiritual experiences’ at various Irish sacred sites (*Sacred Mystical Journeys*). Rather than a pilgrimage community, these tours suggest a more

individual experience, in which consuming the sacred aids in the ‘re-production of (the now sacred) Self’ through the experience of these sacred sites (Gilmore, 2008, p. 24). Myra Shackley (2001) suggests that certain sites justify consumption through its conflation with religious experience. I posit that this ‘artificially-created sacredness’ is evident in these New Age tourism pilgrimages, where ‘perceived freedom of religious action’ is combined with the ‘encouragement of consumption as a leisure activity’ (Shackley, 2001, p. 21). This problematises the idea that the neo-pagan pilgrimage advertised by these tour companies results in a liminal state of nostalgic spiritual experience, and furthermore suggests that neo-pagan pilgrimage is no different than other ‘profane’ tourist experiences of the same sites, thus undermining neo-pagan place-identities and place-myths associated with sacred sites.

6.6.3 Irish fairies as *genii loci*

Neo-pagan groups also can be seen to contribute to the nostalgic depiction of the Irish fairy in sacred sites through their construction of fairies as ‘spirits of place’ or *genii loci*. The differences made evident in the following critique between the representation of fairies in Irish folklore and the representation of fairies in neo-pagan discourse works to undermine the construction of neo-pagan place-identities and narratives as authentic. Rather than drawing from folklore to represent fairies in neo-pagan discourse, neo-pagans idealise and trivialise fairies, divorcing them from their understanding of the Tuatha de Danann as gods, and presenting them as benevolent and ultimate harmless supernatural deities associated with particular places in the Irish landscape.

In Irish folklore, one of the origin stories of fairies is that they are the remnants of pagan gods (see Wilde 1852, Yeats 1888, Gregory 1904, Evans-Wentz 1911). Fairies were considered responsible for accidents, disease, death, ‘blighting crops’, ‘raising whirlwinds and storms’ and often ‘beating people most unmercifully’ (Wilde, 1852, pp. 120-121). Offerings were made to fairies in traditional Irish society, therefore, in order to appease them and prevent the occurrence of natural disasters and disease (Evans-Wentz, 1911, p. 72). For neo-pagans, however, fairies are understood as part of a larger pantheon of spirits inhabiting the land, and as *genii loci*, the spirits of place; ‘One aspect of Irish heritage that neo-Pagans relate to is traditions associated with fairies, or the “fairy faith” as it has been referred to in literary sources since

Victorian times’ (Butler, 2011, p. 123). Saunders writes that for many neo-pagans the natural world provided the ‘doorway to the divine, supported by the belief that mystical powers, spirits, or the presence of deities actually shape a place (*genius loci*)’ (2012, p. 794). The fairy tree I saw and photographed on Rath Gráinne at Tara during my tour of the site would be considered one of these doorways (see Figure 3.6). Because of this understanding of fairies, there is a marked difference in how they are interpreted and interacted with in neo-pagan ritual in comparison to Irish folklore. Butler writes that ‘In the Neo-Pagan worldview, the Sidhe seem to be generally thought of as benevolent denizens of the spirit world and the *genii loci* (local spirits) of the Irish landscape’ (2005, p. 105). This association with benevolence could be part of the general nostalgic tradition in neo-paganism towards the tradition of communion with the spirits of the land, or a reference to the notion of fairies as angelic or ‘divine’ in nature. In the case of ‘fairyfolk’ (Gaffin 2012), discussed earlier in this chapter, neo-pagan identities have become conflated with fairies, divorcing them further from their origins and characteristics in Irish folklore.

There is an established tradition, particularly at the festival of Beltaine, or Bealtaine, celebrated on May Eve, for neo-pagans to ‘invoke fairies in ritual’ and attempt to communicate with them (Butler, 2011, p. 124). May Eve, along with Midsummer and November Eve (Samhain), are considered in Irish folklore to be the three great festivals or feasts of the fairies, the nights where they leave their raths and forts and roam the countryside (Yeats, 1888, p. 3). However, in traditional lore, it was believed to be unwise to interact with the fairies at these liminal festive times, ‘marked out’ from ordinary time, as there was a danger of the fairies abducting, maiming, or otherwise making mischief with any person in their path (see Wilde 1852, Walker 2000). ‘Supernatural power’ was considered to ‘break through in a most ominous way on November Eve and May Eve, the joints between the two great seasons of the year’ (Rees & Rees, 1961, p. 89). Precautions included a taboo on sleeping outside during the month of May (Wilde, 1852, p. 70) and particular rituals were performed to prevent disturbing or offending the fairies; ‘The Good People of the hills were at their revels ... by watchfulness, ceremony, prayer and charm, all care was taken to safeguard against their machinations’ (Danaher, 1982, p. 218).

There is also a distinct difference in how neo-pagans interact with landscapes associated with fairies. In Irish folklore, fairy spaces were to be respected, if not

actively avoided, because of their liminal nature. Several fairy sites, including Knocknashee, Tiveragh, Lough Gur, Tara and Knockma, were known to be doorways to the Otherworld or fairy kingdoms, 'betwixt and between' the mortal and spirit worlds. Entering these spaces could often lead to being trapped 'in the fairies', meaning to be led astray or 'fairy-led' where a person lost their sense of time and location, against which protective measures could be taken such as turning articles of clothing inside-out, or carrying bread or breadcrumbs in their pockets (Narváez, 1991, p. 343). If these measures were not taken, mortals could be captured, 'experience fairy scenes, suffer mental and physical injury', or conversely, receive artistic gifts (Narváez, 1991, p. 344). Neo-pagans, on the other hand, deliberately seek out sites associated with fairies for their rituals and celebrations, and attempt to invoke fairies during these rituals. The neo-pagan depiction of Irish fairies may therefore be seen as part of neo-pagan restorative and performative nostalgia towards sacred sites, in which fairies are perceived as idealised benevolent figures that operate as a link between neo-pagan groups and the mythologised nostalgic past.

6.7 Conclusion

This chapter has focused on the old fairy sites of Newgrange and the Hill of Tara, both located in County Meath. This chapter has argued that these two sites are constructed as nostalgic sacred sites by neo-pagans, who are in contestation with heritage stakeholders over the established place-identities of these two old fairy sites as heritage sites. Therefore, neo-pagans can be seen to engage with these sites using ritual performances, pilgrimage and political activism, which involves the reclamation and occupation of space. This chapter also introduced the sub-category of 'performative nostalgia', utilised in the analysis of neo-pagan rituals as nostalgic performances.

The critique which followed the site-specific analysis focused on the problematic relationship neo-pagan discourse has with the notion of authenticity, and analysed New Age tourism involving Newgrange and the Hill of Tara as engaging in the consumption of sacredness. Furthermore, the critique looked at the nostalgic representation of Irish fairies in neo-pagan belief as spirits of place, or *genii loci*. This chapter concludes that neo-pagan groups are engaged in an ongoing struggle

with heritage groups over the use, representation and meaning of Irish sacred sites such as Newgrange and the Hill of Tara, in which rival place-identities are constructed, contested and reinforced through both textual representation and performance.

Figure 3.1 Aerial view of Newgrange



Figure 3.2 Neo-pagans celebrate winter solstice, Newgrange



Figure 3.3 Neo-pagan pilgrims performing a ritual on a Sacred Earth Journeys tour



Figure 3.4 Aerial view of the Hill of Tara



Figure 3.5 Lia Fáil, the Stone of Destiny, Tara



Figure 3.6 Fairy tree, Hill of Tara



Conclusion

7.1 Summary and implications of the critical analysis

The critical analysis of this thesis has argued that multiple fairy sites in Ireland are constructed and produced as nostalgic places with monologic narratives. Through the site-specific analysis of six fairy sites, this thesis has examined how nostalgia is utilised within fairy sites in order to authenticate them, as well as evoke a particular response from, and effect on, visitors. The critical analysis has also analysed the discourses of nationalism, heritage, and the sacred, and outlined how each discourse operates to privilege particular narratives and shapes the use and meaning of space within these sites.

Chapter Three, 'Nationalism: Green jacket, red cap', focused on the discourse of nationalism, and the use of restorative (Boym 2001) and 'collective' nostalgia (Baker & Kennedy 1994) in the production of the new fairy sites of Dublin's National Leprechaun Museum and the Last Leprechauns of Ireland, located in Carlingford. This chapter argued that these two sites are constructed as versions of the idealised national homeland for Irish visitors using simulacra, storytelling, and the national symbol of the leprechaun. The dominant nostalgic narrative of and place-identity of each site was then critiqued, in which I outlined the problematic history of the leprechaun as both a colonial stereotype and kitsch object, overlooked by the creators O'Rahilly and Woods in the construction of their respective sites. Furthermore, an examination of the responses to these two new fairy sites in the Irish media concluded that the Irish people consider the leprechaun to be a commodified touristic symbol, and that both of these new fairy sites perpetuate the further commercialisation of the Irish people and Ireland itself through the production and maintenance of these sites.

Chapter Four, 'Heritage: Up the airy mountain', concentrated on the authorised heritage discourse, and the use of restorative and 'historical' nostalgia (Stern 1992) in the production of the new fairy site of Gillighan's World: The Field of Dreams, located in County Sligo, and the old fairy site of Lough Gur, located in County Limerick. This chapter argued that these two fairy sites are constructed as 'authentic'

representations of Ireland's historical past for heritage tourists through reconstruction, preservation, and the mythologisation of place and history. The 'romantic gaze' of the heritage tourist (Urry 1990), as well as the concept of place-myths (Shields 1992), were identified as methods by which these two heritage sites evoke nostalgia in visitors, as well as in the construction, legitimisation, and control of their respective place-identities. The critique focused on the criticism of heritage sites in academia for their problematic associations with authenticity and nostalgia, which serves to undermine the established place-identities of both Gillighan's World and Lough Gur. Furthermore, the contestation between heritage managers and neo-pagan groups over the meaning and use of heritage sites was introduced, in which it was argued that neo-pagan constructions of heritage sites as sacred sites challenges the established place-identities and place-myths of these two fairy sites.

Finally, Chapter Five, 'Sacred: Spirits of wood and water', engaged with discourses of the sacred, and the use of restorative and 'performative' nostalgia in the production of the old fairy sites of Newgrange and the Hill of Tara, both located in County Meath. This chapter argued these two fairy sites are constructed as nostalgic sacred sites by neo-pagans using ritual performances, pilgrimage, and political activism. The critique which followed the site-specific analyses of Newgrange and the Hill of Tara concerned the contestation over the notion of authenticity between heritage stakeholders and neo-pagan groups, the consumption of sacredness through New Age tourism, and the nostalgic representation of Irish fairies in neo-pagan belief as *genii loci*. The critique concluded that neo-pagan groups are engaged in an ongoing struggle with heritage groups over the use, representation and meaning of Irish sacred sites such as Newgrange and the Hill of Tara, in which rival place-identities are constructed, contested and reinforced through both textual representation and performance.

The arguments presented in the three critical analysis chapters of this thesis have several implications. The first implication is that fairy sites in Ireland are 'frozen' at particular moments which are to the advantage of particular groups, in order to construct and maintain monologic place-identities (Massey 1994). These place-identities are then reinforced through various forms of nostalgia, used for both the authentication of these sites as well as to control the responses of particular audiences. The second implication is that these fairy sites, both new and old, are

aligned with the powerful discourses of nationalism, heritage, and the sacred, in which dominant and enforced discourses are used to construct and control the narratives and physical space of these sites. This has resulted in contestation between different powerful groups over the use and meaning of these sites, with the effect of the Irish fairy landscape becoming a site of political and social struggle over the meaning and identity of place. The third and final implication of the critical analysis is that the use of these discourses in the construction and production of Irish fairy sites has the result of limiting the possibility for alternative and diverse readings of, and engagement with, these old and new fairy sites, and by extension with nostalgia, folklore, and the Irish landscape. I therefore address these three implications of the critical analysis through the creation of the creative work, with the intent of unsettling and challenging the dominant discourses and nostalgic narratives which delimit and idealise Irish fairy sites.

7.2 Aims of the creative work

The creative work, a novella entitled *Astray*, operates as a contestation of the dominant discourses and nostalgic narratives that construct Irish fairy sites. This is achieved through the interweaving of a non-fiction narrative, based on the events of my research trip to Ireland in June of 2014, with three fictional narratives. The purpose of the creative work is to engage with a multiplicity of voices, nostalgias, spaces, and understandings of Irish folklore, achieved through the interweaving of multiple narrative strands centred on the six fairy sites analysed in the critical analysis, along with other sites in the Irish fairy landscape.

The three aims of the creative work are: to explore the existence of a multiplicity of nostalgias through the use of ‘reflective nostalgia’ (Boym 2001); to destabilise the dominant discourses and narratives controlling fairy sites utilising Massey’s theory of place as simultaneous, constituted through interactions, and interconnected (2005); and to challenge the dominant depiction of fairies in these sites by engaging with various understandings and representations of fairies in Irish folklore. I will now explore each of these aims in more detail, beginning with the need for a more nuanced understanding of nostalgia.

7.2.1 Engaging with a multiplicity of nostalgias

As established in Chapter Two, nostalgia is a complex and often critiqued term. Various scholars have challenged and complicated the dominant definition and use of nostalgia through the creation of sub-categories (see Davis 1979, Stern 1992, Holbrook 1993, Baker & Kennedy 1994, Appadurai 1996, Blunt 2003, Ladino 2004, Boym 2001, 2007, Walder 2011, Howard 2012, Smith & Campbell 2017). In Chapter Five, I added performative nostalgia to these sub-categories, a frame through which to analyse the ritual performances of neo-pagans at Irish fairy sites. Due to the proliferation of these sub-categories, as well as its affective properties, I suggest that nostalgia should be reconfigured as an umbrella term, connoting a multiplicity of nostalgias operating at both the individual and collective level.

To this end, the first aim of the creative work is to engage with multiple iterations and definitions of nostalgia through the use of Svetlana Boym's theory of 'reflective' nostalgia (2001). Reflective nostalgia opposes and parallels restorative nostalgia, emphasising '*algia*', or longing, while restorative nostalgia focuses on '*nostos*', or home (2007, p. 7). The benefit of centring on longing, rather than the restoration of the home or homeland, is that reflective nostalgia imbues the past with 'new flexibility', rather than the 're-establishment of stasis' associated with restorative nostalgia (Boym, 2007, p. 15). Reflective nostalgia is a nostalgia 'not for the past the way it was, but for the past the way it could have been' (Boym, 2001, p. 351), indicating the possibility of multiple understandings of the past and present, and therefore of multiple understandings of place.

Reflective nostalgia is utilised in both the non-fiction and fictional narrative strands of *Astray*. I identify my own nostalgic connection to place in the non-fiction narrative strand as reflective in nature, in the sense that 'affective memories do not absolve one from compassion, judgment, or critical thinking' (Boym, 2007, p. 15). The non-fiction narrative draws upon the works and stylistic characteristics of authors associated with ecocriticism and the 'new nature writing' (Smith 2013), which involves a critical engagement with landscape and culture. Meanwhile, the fictional narrative strands of *Astray*, which comprises the interwoven perspectives of ten characters in two countries from the eighteenth to the twenty-first centuries, focus on both individual and collective nostalgias towards place and the past. I

define these strands as exhibiting reflective nostalgia because reflective nostalgia ‘does not follow a single plot but explores ways of inhabiting many places at once and inhabiting different time zones’ (Boym, 2007, p. 13). Furthermore, both the non-fiction and fictional narrative strands of *Astray* are intermittently connected through either the plot or the novella’s stylistic construction, reflecting the fragmentary nature of reflective nostalgia (Boym, 2001, p. 50), as well as Massey’s theory of place as an interconnected simultaneity (2005).

Astray also works to expand the established definition of nostalgia through the contestation of the dominant discourses that control Irish fairy sites. Although Boym’s typology of restorative and reflective nostalgia has informed this thesis, Boym herself notes that these two sub-categories are not ‘absolute binaries’, and suggests that ‘one can surely make a more refined mapping of the grey areas on the outskirts of imaginary homelands’ (2007, p. 130). The potentialities of these ‘grey areas’ have been explored by theorists who reject the predominant definition of nostalgia as longing for a positively perceived past in reaction to a negatively perceived present or future (see Blunt 2003, Pickering & Keightley 2006, Boym 2007, Bonnett 2010, Walder 2011, Howard 2012). *Astray* contributes to this theoretical strand by presenting nostalgia as both ‘melancholic and utopian’, characterised by a ‘desire for engagement with difference, with aspiration and critique, and with the identification of ways of living lacking in modernity’ (Pickering & Keightley, 2006, p. 921). Representing nostalgia in this way does not mean ignoring its problematic aspects as discussed in the three critical analysis chapters, but rather using the creative work to showcase a variety of ways of engaging with place and the past, in which nostalgia ‘can be a poetic creation, an individual mechanism of survival, a countercultural practice, a poison, or a cure’ (Boym, 2007, p. 18).

7.2.2 Destabilising established definitions and uses of place

The second aim of the creative work is to use Massey’s theory of place as spatio-temporal events (2005) to destabilise the dominant discourses and narratives controlling Irish fairy sites. Foucault argues that discourse functions as both an instrument and effect of power, but can also be a ‘hindrance, a stumbling point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy’ (1998, p. 100). This

understanding of discourse is reflected in both the critical analysis and creative work; the critique of the discourses of nationalism, heritage, and the sacred in each of the analysis chapters deconstructed and resisted the place-making and place-defining practices utilised in each site, while *Astray* destabilises these discourses further through the use of Massey's spatial theories.

As discussed in Chapter Two, Massey proposes that places are constituted through interactions, contain simultaneous plurality, and are always under construction (2005). This is a way of understanding place which recognises that 'what has come together, in this place, now, is a conjunction of many histories and many spaces' (Massey, 1995, p. 191). Furthermore, Massey stresses that because space is a 'product of relations-between', space can never be a 'completed simultaneity' in which everything is interconnected, but rather must always contain 'loose ends and missing links' (2005, p. 12). The inclusion of this aspect of Massey's definition of place into *Astray*, prevents my replacing the dominant nostalgic narrative of each Irish fairy site discussed in this thesis with my own complete narrative. Rather, the narrative strands within the creative work meet intermittently, with certain places and characters connected through the stylistic construction of the novella, rather than through the plot, or vice versa.

Astray also works to destabilise these dominant discourses and narratives through its use of liminal space. Throughout the creative work, liminal settings such as hotel rooms, beaches, forests, highways, and mountains are used along with fairy sites in order to undermine the established place definitions of the Irish fairy sites discussed in the critical analysis. Because the liminal 'transcends normal distinctions between separate categories', it 'poses a threat' to social order and hegemonic discourses (Nagy, 1981, p. 135). In Chapter Two, I outlined the relationship between Irish fairies and liminality, discussing the customs of avoidance and respect towards fairy sites that have been maintained into the present, and the characterising of fairy sites as located between the human and supernatural worlds (Narváez 1991). The dangerous and ambiguous nature of liminal fairy sites is emphasised in *Astray*, and used to undermine the dominant discourses and narratives of both the new and old fairy sites of Ireland. Liminal sites are also used in the creative work to link places and characters, as fairy sites were thought to function as gateways to the Otherworld (Yeats 1888).

The non-fiction narrative strand of *Astray* further utilises Massey's definition of place through its stylistic characteristics. In writing the non-fiction narrative, I drew upon the works and style of authors associated with ecocriticism and the 'new nature writing' (Smith 2013), including Robert Macfarlane, Roger Deakin, and Richard Mabey. Stephen Hunt calls works such as Macfarlane's *The wild places* (2007) and Deakin's *Wildwood: a journey through trees* (2007) 'psychoecology', connecting nature writing with 'psychogeography' (2009, p. 71). Psychogeography is defined as the study of the 'specific effects of the geographical environment, consciously organised or not, on the emotions and behaviour of individuals', and is characterised by wandering, known as 'flânerie' (Coverley, 2010, p. 10). Psychoecology is described by Hunt as 'green flânerie', 'richly attuned meanderings' through natural landscapes (2009, p. 71). *Astray* reflects psychoecological writing in its focus on the natural landscape, as well as the agency of the writer in 'constructing as well as describing the natural world' (Hunt, 2009, p. 76). However, the creative work also avoids the singular, cohesive, and 'privileged' perspective of nature writers (Smith, 2013, p. 7), through a multivocal and fragmentary representation of the Irish fairy landscape, in which place is 'open and porous', and challenges 'any possibility of claims to internal histories or to timeless identities' (Massey, 1994a, p. 5).

7.2.3 Representing fairies, women, and the 'half-sídhe'

The third aim of the creative work is to challenge the dominant depiction of fairies in Irish fairy sites by utilising various understandings and depictions of fairies in Irish folklore. In Chapter One, I outlined the four most popular origin stories for Irish fairies: that fairies are the descendants of the Tuatha de Danann; the remnants of pagan gods; the spirits of the dead; or fallen angels (see Wilde 1887, Yeats 1888, Hyde 1890, Prem 1979). In contemporary popular culture, the small, winged, and benevolent representation of fairies is predominant, which has its origins in nineteenth-century British nostalgia for childhood, as well as for the pastoral, as discussed in Chapter Two. In *Astray*, I depart from this dominant image of the fairy, and borrow attributes from all four of the established origin stories for Irish fairies listed above. To focus on only one of these interpretations in my characterisation of fairies would be to oversimplify the complex mythos within which Irish fairies are situated.

As the creative work focuses on incorporating various voices and understandings of nostalgia, place, and fairies, both the non-fiction and fictional narrative strands of *Astray* foreground marginalised perspectives. This is achieved in the non-fiction narrative through my critical engagement with nostalgia and place, and in the fictional narrative strands through emphasis on typically marginalised perspectives in Irish folklore; focusing on female, and what I have called ‘half-*sídhe*’, perspectives. In Irish folklore, women are commonly depicted as either victims of fairy malice and abduction, or in league with fairies in the figures of the wise woman, or the more malevolent witch (Buccola 2006). *Astray* therefore contains female characters and perspectives that draw from these stereotypical roles, but also transcend them.

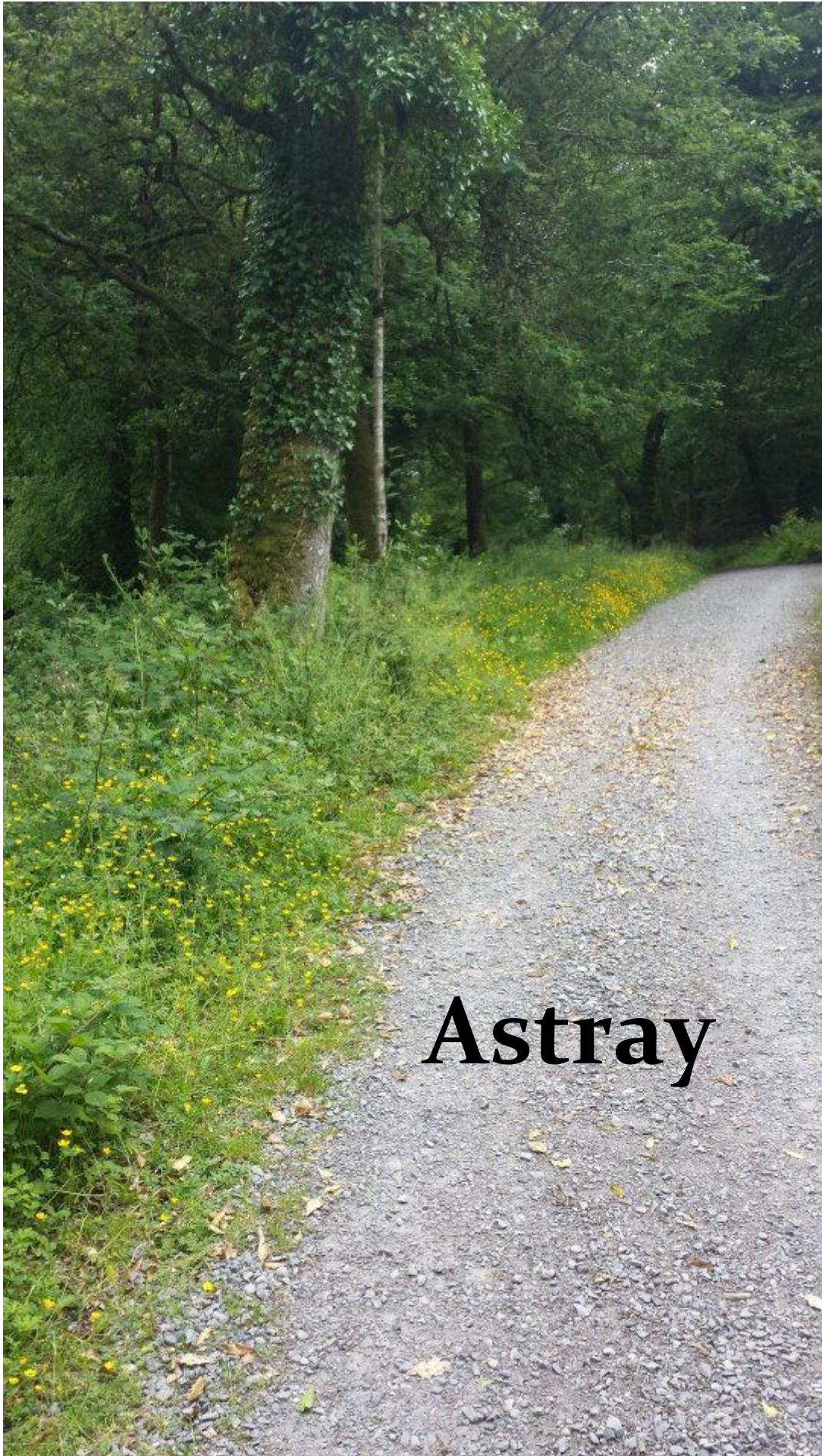
The second main marginalised perspective drawn upon in *Astray* is that of what I have called the ‘half-*sídhe*’ race, described by Lady Francesca Wilde as the offspring of a fairy and a mortal mother. Irish folklore referring to these offspring is rare, and Wilde is one of the only folklorists to mention them in her work. The half-*sídhe* are ambiguous and liminal figures, described as ‘strong and powerful, but with evil and dangerous natures’, possessing a talent for music, and were ‘passionate, revengeful, and not easy to live with’ (Wilde, 1887, p. 11). These offspring could be identified as having fairy blood by their ‘beautiful eyes’ and their ‘bold, reckless temperament’ (Wilde, 1887, p. 11). *Astray* therefore works to incorporate the marginalised perspectives of both Irish women and the half-*sídhe* in the fictional narrative strands, developing these characters beyond stereotypical depictions, and exploring what little is known about the people who were considered the offspring of fairies and mortals in traditional Irish society.

7.3 Future research

The research problem identified within this thesis was that particular fairy sites in Ireland are constructed and produced as nostalgic places with monologic narratives. Furthermore, the alignment of these sites with the discourses of nationalism, heritage, and the sacred allows particular groups to shape and delimit the meaning and use of these fairy sites. Both the critical analysis and creative work therefore worked to challenge the monologic place-identities of these six fairy sites, through

the analysis and critique of these three discourses and the use of nostalgia in the construction of these sites, and the representation of these six sites, along with other fairy sites in the Irish fairy landscape, as containing a multiplicity of voices, nostalgias, spaces, and understandings of Irish folklore, respectively.

The argument presented in this thesis opens up a range of possibilities for research in the fields of folklore, cultural studies, and cultural geography. This thesis is the first to analyse the fairy sites of the National Leprechaun Museum, the Last Leprechaun of Ireland, and Gillighan's World; The Field of Dreams, identify these new fairy sites as a contemporary nostalgic phenomenon in Ireland, and further conclude that old fairy sites are also constructed as nostalgic places. Therefore, there are myriad options to analyse these fairy sites further; for example, the three new fairy sites examined in this thesis can be argued to be utilising liminality in their construction and representation, which could form the basis for further research. The classification of the Irish fairy landscape into 'old' and 'new' sites could be further explored, with new connections and relationships formed between these sites. Within the thesis, I argued that nostalgia should be reconfigured as an umbrella term connoting a multiplicity of nostalgias, which could also be taken further in research concerning nostalgia in any of the above academic fields. In terms of the creative work, the use of creative writing in the destabilisation of monologic place-identities, and the challenge of dominant discourses, could form the basis of further critical analysis and creative works, as well as the effect of experimental writing techniques in the representation of place and nostalgia, such as those used in *Astray*. In terms of my own research, I hope to continue to develop *Astray* beyond this thesis, and further examine the development of the nostalgic fairy landscape in contemporary Ireland.



Astray

Coin

Come away, O human child!
To the waters and the wild
With a faery, hand in hand
For the world's more full of weeping than you can understand.
-W. B. Yeats, *'The stolen child'*

The wind pushed like a fist at her back. Daimhin stumbled, one hand cradling her stomach, the other clutching at her cloak. She had pulled the hood close over her head, but the rich fabric was wet through, and icy water was trickling down her arms and spine. She ached all over. Perhaps They had swapped the child in her belly with a stone as a punishment for escaping.

Daimhin paused a moment to get her bearings. The road that she had been following trailed off into obscurity, quickly turning to mud in the stinging rain. The village had to be near; the scent of peat smoke permeated the air, and she could hear laughter and faint music. Daimhin baulked at the sound, but forced herself forward. She had not endured all that she had, and walked a full day and night besides, to cower outside a public house.

She pushed open the door, flinching at the gust of warm stale air. The raucous crowd quieted as people began to notice her and nudge their neighbours. The fiddle squealed as the fingers of its player slipped on the bow, and an uncomfortable silence descended. Daimhin took a breath for courage, knowing how odd she looked soaked to the skin in attire fine enough for a lady, and heavy with child. Her heart fluttered strangely in her chest.

“Is there a *mná cabharta* in the village?”

No one answered. Daimhin reached for the back of a chair with shaking fingers. The room was too hot, and lights danced behind her eyes.

“What ails you, *cailín*?” someone asked from the crowd. She could not tell who spoke, their faces blurring together in the firelight.

A sudden pain struck her, shocking Daimhin with its savagery. Her knees buckled, and she slid to the floor, rushes sticking to her wet palms. Curling around the ache, she rested her head on her forearms and sucked in the deepest breath she could manage. People were shouting and asking questions, their pounding feet shaking the ground beneath her. A hand hovered hesitantly over Daimhin’s back, settling on her shoulder. She was pulled gently to her feet, and then an arm went under her knees and she was weightless. Sick and exhausted, Daimhin found herself being carried out, back into the rain. She let her head tip backwards so that the rain fell on her eyes and mouth and throat.

She wanted to be washed clean.

The water was frigid on her flushed skin, and tasted like iron and rot. Suddenly the whiskey burned a path up her throat. Hazel fell to her knees, groping for the toilet seat, and vomited, three convulsive heaves splattering her ten dollar steak dinner into the porcelain bowl. Spitting out the foul taste, she pushed strands of hair from her sweaty forehead and peeled herself off the tiles. Hazel clutched at the sink with both hands until the dizziness passed. As she turned to leave, she noticed a fresh burn on her forearm in the bathroom mirror.

“Bitch,” she hissed at her reflection. She knew that Bridget could hear her.

It wasn’t me that burned you, girl. You can thank your lover for that.

Hazel rolled her eyes and stumbled back into the bedroom. Rowan was draped sideways across the bed, the sheets twisted and hanging from the mattress. She stepped over the bedspread crumpled on the carpet and slid onto the bed behind him, one hand cupping the warm curve of his ribs, the other tangled in his curly hair.

For a minute, she thought that he was asleep. Then he shifted his head on the pillow, away from her hand. Hazel grimaced into his back.

“M’sorry.” She muttered, feeling his bare skin shift under her lips.

Rowan sighed and turned onto his back, one of his arms slipping beneath her shoulders. Hazel pillowed her head against his lean chest, listening to the confident beat of his heart.

“Nothing to worry about, love.”

Relief flooded her, and she relaxed against him.

“It won’t happen again.” Hazel promised, although they both knew that was a lie. She worried that one day he would get sick of it, of *her*, and leave. That was the fear that squirmed deep and constant in her gut, even as she trusted that he would always bring her out of it if she went too deep. She didn’t know what she would do if Rowan left her.

You would live, you fool. As you lived before he came. As you will when he leaves, and he will leave, mark my words. That is what the gean cánach do.

“Shut up,” Hazel snarled, and Rowan began to stroke her hair. He didn’t say anything, and Hazel sank back against him in mute gratitude. She loved him, a love so desperate and deep that it scared her sometimes. She hadn’t known that she could love anything so much. But the thought of being without him made it hard to breathe, constricting her lungs until she was dizzy with terror.

Rowan tightened his grip on her hair and pulled Hazel’s head back against his shoulder. He kissed her deeply, nipping her lip with his sharp teeth. Hazel grinned at him and spread the blood across her lips with her tongue.

“Beautiful,” he said.

Cassie lifted her fingers from the piano keys.

“Thank you.” She answered automatically, turning towards the voice in surprise. She hadn’t realised that there was anyone else staying in the hotel besides her and Val.

A man stood beside her, very close to the piano. Her playing must have drowned out his footsteps. He was tall and thin, with long red hair tied back with a piece of leather. Cassie was struck by the man’s eyes. They were tawny-coloured, almost yellow in the dim light.

He asked her something.

“Sorry, what?”

His teeth glinted as he smiled at her.

“The music. Is it your own composition?”

“Yes. It’s, ah ... it’s a work in progress.”

The man leaned on the back of the piano.

“How long have you been working on it?”

“Fifteen years.”

She didn’t know why she had told him that. Cassie looked up to see him still watching her. She suddenly wished that Val would storm back in, even if only to yell at her again.

“Why can’t you finish it?”

His tone was provocative. Cassie’s temper flared and she scanned his face, wondering if he was trying to get a rise out of her.

“That’s none of your business ... *sir*.”

The man let out a peal of laughter, bright and infectious, and despite her annoyance Cassie found herself smiling. She wanted him to keep laughing.

“Play it again,” he suggested, once his laughing fit had died down.

Cassie blinked at him.

“What?”

“Play it again,” he repeated, and rounded the piano to stand beside her. He had a strange scent, musty and sharp all at once, and for an instant Cassie was back home, in the crisp cold silence after a snowfall, branches scratching the white sky.

“*Play*,” he whispered, sitting down beside her. Still in the forest, Cassie shivered and caressed the keys with her fingertips. Then she leaned forward, and music sprang

from her hands, filling the echoing silence of the hotel bar. The tune flowed like a river, light and fast at first, then swinging low and melancholy. Cassie played faster and faster, beads of sweat shining on her brow as she tried to keep pace with the music, now a raging torrent. The man sat beside her transfixed, watching her hands with a fierce intensity. She was losing control, her shoulder blades showing sharp under her sweater as her arms moved. His lips parted to speak, but nothing escaped, as though he feared to break her concentration. The music, jagged and frenzied now, seemed to be reaching its climax.

“Yes,” the stranger said, leaning forward as the wave of sound crested, and then Cassie cried out in frustration as it fell apart. She struck the wrong chord, jarring them both from their semi-trance, and the note trembled thin and faded back into the silence.

Cassie braced her arms on the piano lid. She was weak with disappointment, her heart pounding.

“You were almost there,” he said quietly, and even though Cassie didn’t know what he meant, she nodded in agreement.

“Just there,” she said in despair.

“Every time, right there. I can’t hold it.”

To her surprise he let out a bark of laughter, raking a hand through his hair. Naked delight shone on his face.

“It will be perfect.”

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Someone is crying in the woods.

It sounds like a child, something small and lost and afraid against the great brooding darkness. Cold air prickles your skin. The stars are splinters of blue light fretting against yew and ash and elm.

You crouch with the knobbly spine of an oak at your back, your eyes straining to pierce the gloom. You have certain rules when the night swallows the sun: to bite your tongue between your teeth, to cover your scent with thyme or vervain, to never, never run in case something smells the blood thumping hot in your heart and veins and temples, and runs you to earth.

There are nights when the moon pulses and shakes, or rises blood-tinged and strange. Nights where you have learned to lie hidden under the drifts of leaves, your hand clamped over your mouth to smother the screams burning in your throat. Nights for monsters.

But the moon tonight is marble and cream, an old coin rubbed smooth. In the quiet, you can hear the *céol-sídhe* drifting on the wind, harp and fiddle and distant laughter. The lords and ladies will be dancing in their fine clothes. There will be wine and ale, platters of meat and fruit, bread and honey-

she coughs and chokes, falling to her knees amongst the orange leaves, mushrooms spilling shiny and wet from her mouth-

You shy away from the memory.

Perhaps someone strayed from the hall, drawn by the pale lights amongst the trees.

Or perhaps it is only a *púca*, wearing the skin of a child.

The wind here has teeth.

The airport was rinsed clean from my lungs by the biting cold. It was an afternoon in early June. A bright summer sky, lightly combed with cloud. Coaches pulling out with stop-motion jerks. I stood huddled at the bus terminal in my inadequate coat, rumpled and caffeine-stung. Fellow survivors of long-haul international flights swayed around me. Sunken eyes and thousand-yard stares. A young woman stood among them, a tattoo of roses trailing down her neck and left shoulder, her coat thrown carelessly over the duffle bag at her feet. Thorns twined greedily around her collarbone.

A coach rumbled in, city bound. The crowd shuffled forward, heads drooping like survivors of a late night zombie film. Groping in pockets for tickets. Staggering and

brushing shoulders, moaning incredulously at their own exhaustion. The tattooed girl stepped into a shaft of sunlight, and the roses embedded in her skin burst into bloom. A riot of scarlet and cream against the grey shades of the airport. The sight woke in me a sharp and sudden delight. The wind numbed my lips and fingers, filling my aching chest with fresh cold gusts. I became aware of Ireland, unfiltered by a camera's gaze, no longer a patchwork of green from an aeroplane window. Stretching from horizon to horizon, an unknown country. I knew the selfish joy of the solo traveller – an entire world to explore, where and how I wished, and no one else to appease or accommodate. I was utterly alone, a passing figure, a face in a bus window.

Boarding the coach, I took a window seat and watched County Dublin flow past. Light-drenched fields. Rows of cottages, smoke curling from their chimneys. A ginger cat perched like a gargoyle on a stone wall. Blooming cherry trees. As we neared the outskirts of Dublin, the houses crowded into straight rows. People spilled out onto the footpaths; shopping, walking, laughing, each intent on their own goals and dreams and lives and loves, each equally unaware of my existence. Tiredness crept under my skin, weighing down my eyelids, and I dozed upright in my seat, waking with each jolt and seeing each time more and more people, a sea of bobbing heads and a blur of colours.

Disgorged onto Westmoreland Street, I joined the anonymous crowd. It is always exhilarating to be dropped into the heart of a foreign city. Scuffing footsteps. The lilt of unfamiliar accents. Damp pavement and decomposing rubbish and cigarette smoke. The great stone and brick buildings rearing up all around to block out the sun. Dublin's currents threatened to bowl me off my feet and tumble me away. The sidewalk prickled under my feet.

I found the amulet by accident. Out walking, I came across the National Museum, and spent half a day caught up in its gentle circular rhythm of exhibits. Viking longships and rusted swords. Egyptian sarcophagi and the bog bodies, encased in sea-shell curve tombs. I descended a spiral to where one lay exposed, every wrinkle and whorl etched into its leathery skin naked under the glare of the lights. The noose around its neck was intertwined with its brown-green flesh. They still have eyelashes.

The bog has gifted these men and women a certain immortality. Chemically preserved, their essence mingled with the thirsty earth. Would it be sacrilege to touch them, or the first peaceful act they'd known since being hacked from the peat?

I reached out.

The sensation of gentle fingers woke her.

Daimhin found herself in her shift, stretched out on a bed. The tight bodice she wore had been unlaced and the heavy wool dress was draped over a stool near the hearth. Hands were probing her stomach and chafing her chilled fingers. Another pain struck, worse than the first had been, and she cried out.

"Hush, *cailín*, all will be well," a woman's voice said.

Daimhin had no strength left to even lift her head to see who was speaking. Her body was racked with tremors.

"She's bleeding Muirne, can't you see it? I felt it when I was carrying her over —"

"*Bé Néit fort*, Tadhg! Do you want to scare the child into an early grave?"

"She was asking for a handywoman and I ... I thought that she was just wet from the rain and then ..."

"*Amadán*," Muirne said affectionately as she steered Tadhg to the door. He sounded young to Daimhin, gait unsteady as a new colt. He hesitated at the door, and Daimhin could feel his eyes on her.

"Will she be all right?"

"You go along, Tadhg Connolly. You did well to bring her here. But this is women's business now."

The boy left, and Daimhin turned her head slightly to watch the handywoman approach. Muirne saw her watching and went to collect water from the pot hanging over the fire.

"Sure, and haven't we women brought children into this world since time began, and will do so long after we are both in the ground."

Her cheerful tone rang false, and Daimhin turned her gaze back to the thatched roof, fear creeping along her veins and drying her tongue to leather.

“What happened to your eye?”

Muirne sighed and brought a bowl of steaming water and a rag to the bed. She sat heavily and began to wipe blood from Daimhin’s legs. Daimhin recoiled at the touch of the cloth.

“I was young and foolish. A strange man came to our farm and asked for a midwife. My mother was unwell, so I went along in her stead. I was taken to a house, and assisted the man’s wife with the birth of her son. I was given a small bottle and asked to anoint the child’s eyes. In my weariness, for it had been a long and difficult labour, I accidentally rubbed the liquid on my hands into my eyes. When I looked up, the hovel had been transformed into a fine estate, and the parents into a grand lord and lady, with the *leanbh* sleeping in a cradle of gold. I knew then that I was amongst the Good People.”

“How did you escape?”

“I did not. The man took me back to the farm gate and paid me handsomely. He had turned to leave when he looked back and smiled. I still recall every detail; how his eyes were bright with malice, and his grin that had too many teeth in it. “With which eye do you see me?” he asked me, and I realised that I had seen too much and would be punished for it. His long fingers snapped out and plucked an eye from my head, as though he were picking an apple, and tucked it into his pocket. I was half-mad with the pain of it, and no doubt he thought that his guess had been correct. He walked away without another word, and I watched him disappear as though he had never existed.”

Unshed tears burned in Daimhin’s eyes.

“They told me I would die of it,” she whispered.

Muirne paused at her words, and then continued with her ministrations. She removed Daimhin’s mud-soaked brogues to wash her feet, and Daimhin felt ashamed at being too weak to even lift a hand to clean herself.

“The Gentry lie with every breath they take. ‘Tis to torment you that They said it, and no more. I have never lost a child, and I do not intend to start with yours.”

Muirne rose and shouldered open the door, tossing the dirty water out into the rain.

“Now you must rest. The bleeding has stopped and we have a day at least before the *leanbh* comes.”

She spoke as though it were a visitor, as if the child would arrive on the doorstep neatly washed and wrapped, and not dragged, bloody and screaming, from her body after hours of fear and struggle.

Daimhin closed her heavy eyelids. She felt warm and safe at last, and weary to the bone. She was reassured by Muirne’s capable hands and efficient manner, and by her quiet confidence that Daimhin would live and have a healthy child. Perhaps it would be a boy, dark-haired like her little brothers and full of mischief. They would be grown men now, perhaps with children of their own. She had not seen them for ten years.

Daimhin slept then, and Muirne watched over her with her single shrewd black eye, firelight flickering over her face and deepening the shadow of her empty eye socket.

The night was slow in passing.

You wait, counting the minutes by cloud-drift and owl-call. The sobs quiver on the wind, little whimpering threads of sound that raise the hairs on your arms and neck. You are almost convinced that it is a true child, a little girl perhaps, night-blind and chilled, her arms scratched by branch and briar. Still, you wait until the wind dies and a near dawn glow steals between the trees. Then you stand, shaking the sleep from your limbs, and creep in the direction of the sound.

You follow the crying for what seems like an age, long enough for the sky to brighten with streaks of pink. Then all at once you arrive at a clearing, and before you is a well. The well is made of crumbling stone with a thatched roof, and the bucket swings slightly on its rope.

The sobs stop abruptly, choked off into silent misery. The last cry resonates off the walls of the well.

Inching closer, you steal glances at the moon in case of trickery. But it remains distant and quiet, pale as bone against the soft sky. You are growing bolder as dawn approaches, brave enough to brace your palms, flesh snagging on the rough stone, and peer into the shadowy hole of the well mouth. It smells of moss and cool water, of secrets and drowned things. Some wells are so deep that the stars sink in them, and their lights float in the water even on the brightest summer day. Someone told you that once, although you can't remember who. You bend closer, trying to see the stars.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

“Oh Cassie, *you* are perfect.”

Cassie sat frozen at the piano, watching the man pace back and forth. His eyes had changed somehow, in a way that made her gut clench with dread at the wrongness of it.

“Perfect for what?”

Instead of answering, he reached her in three long strides, pulling her off the seat and twirling her in his arms.

“*Cassie*,” he purred, and as she stumbled, half-falling against him, he held her close. Cassie looked up into his eyes, and saw at once what had bothered her. His eyes were huge and gold, with only a thin ring of white at each side. His pupils were slitted, feline, and they widened to black pools as he drank her in. She couldn't look away.

“I never told you my name,” she murmured, hypnotised by his gaze as he bent his head. His lips brushed hers, and Cassie went hot and cold all over. She stopped trying to push him away, her arms dropping loose at her sides.

The stranger stepped back with a sly smirk. He held out a hand, and Cassie took it. Her veins were buzzing, her thoughts sluggish as though her skull had been poured full of honey.

“Come,” he said, and led her away.

Cassie walked after him. She left her bag and phone without a second thought.

Val’s face came into her head, and she hesitated. They had been arguing, a thousand years ago it seemed, and in the middle of it Val had stalked away across the echoing tiles. He never walked away. He always fought back, eye to eye, insult for insult, and Cassie had stood and watched her brother leave her for the first time with clenched fists. Then she had gone to the piano, tearing off its dusty velvet cover, and punished herself with music.

The man turned and passed a palm over her eyes, and the shard of guilt that was Val was dislodged. He walked away, and Cassie followed.

They passed through the empty lobby. As they crossed beneath the ornate clock it struck the hour, the sound oddly muffled to Cassie’s ears as though they were underwater. She counted twelve chimes before it faded. The lights burned out with a sizzle, but the man kept walking and Cassie trailed blindly after him. Soon, she noticed that their feet had stopped ringing on the polished marble, and wet grass was brushing her ankles.

Cassie could hear the lazy burr of crickets, and she began to make out trees and a purple-black sky as her eyesight returned. They were on a forest path, and the trees were thick with fireflies. A creek gurgled somewhere nearby, invisible in the twilight. Ahead, torches were burning between the trees, and faintly, she could hear music. A full moon swung over the canopy, surrounded by wheeling arcs of stars.

She didn’t recognise any of the constellations.

Hazel fidgeted under the open sky. They had arrived at a little run-down motel off the highway, and there was nothing to look at but flat plains, greyish in the neon lights of the carpark, and the pinpricks of stars above. They stretched off into the horizon north towards Canada, a yawning gulf that made her uneasy when she thought about how small the earth really was, spinning through all that nothing.

It was better than being in the stuffy room with Rowan though. A few nights ago he had taken her to a bar, full of wild-looking men and women with sagging tired rings beneath their eyes, badly hidden under too much makeup. Hazel had sat there trying

to keep the hands of the drunk next to her from creeping up under her skirt, while Rowan held a long muttered conversation with a guy with dirty pale hair and watery blue eyes. She had been bored out of her mind, and it was near one thirty in the morning before Rowan got up from the barstool and walked out, leaving Hazel to hurry after him.

In the car, she had complained to him about the long wait and the guy's wandering hands. Rowan was usually enraged when another man touched her, but he barely seemed to notice, just nodding along until she ran out of things to say. Her anger had mostly burned out by then, and she was appreciating the play of streetlights over the strong lines of his jaw and cheekbone, looking forward to getting back to the hotel. But when they arrived, he took a little paper bag out of the pocket of his jacket and withdrew something small and brown and wrinkled. Rowan put it on his tongue with a look of such desperate anticipation that Hazel couldn't help but stare. After a few minutes, he collapsed onto the bed and began to whisper under his breath. She tried to decipher what he was saying, but it wasn't English. Hazel guessed it was Irish, although he never talked about where he had come from. She was originally from Ireland herself, although she had left when still young. She suspected that was part of what had drawn Rowan to her. She had adopted the Midwestern accent as quickly as possible to fit in with her friends at school, much to her mother's disappointment, but maybe enough of County Clare still lingered on her tongue for Rowan to single her out.

Since then, every night, and sometimes during the day, Rowan withdrew another withered mushroom from the bag and lay immobile for hours on their bed, occasionally breaking into hysterical laughter or random lines of Irish songs. Once, Hazel had found him weeping, tears trickling back into his hair and wetting the pillow. She rocked him in her arms to try and comfort him, but he was too far away to care, and when she left, he was singing something low and sad that made her spine tingle. Afterwards, he was always morose and silent, too unsteady on his feet to drive. It was Hazel who nursed the battered old Ford along, following whichever back roads and landmarks caught her eye.

Hazel hugged herself. The night was getting cold, with no clouds to trap the warmth of the day. Reluctantly, she returned to their room. Rowan was where she had left

him, lying on his back in the middle of the bed. His eyes were tracking something on the ceiling, and Hazel wondered what visions he was seeing. He was starting to give the bag the same hot lingering looks he used to give her, as though she were the only thing that mattered in the world.

Let him gorge himself on them. Let him die from it, the craiceáilte fool.

Hazel felt the acid rise in her throat. She could taste *poitín*, and her stomach turned. Bridget had been getting stronger as Rowan retreated into his own mind, and Hazel could no longer count on him to wake her up when things got bad. She had taken to keeping a pocket knife in her bag and slicing tiny designs into her stomach and thighs. The precise geometry of the shapes kept her in control, and the blood loss tired them both. Bridget usually backed down when she began to hurt herself.

Hazel tested the blade against her thumb.

Its sharp silver edge threatened to break the skin.

The amulet grated against my breastbone. Cold and strange under my questing fingertips, refusing to warm in the summer sunlight. The design had caught my eye on the way out of the museum; a broad scythe of silver decorated with a spiral pattern, topped with the brooding head of a raven. The amulet was Viking in design, a reproduction of an archaeological find in 1877 from Skåne in Sweden. It depicted Mjöllnir, the hammer of the Norse god Thor. Until I saw it, I had not thought of carrying any religious symbols on my journey. But it was beautiful, in a stern, cold way. Amulets such as this were worn for protection, and later in defiance against the rise of Christianity. Perhaps they were also worn for strength, to mark the wearer as a chosen one of the thunder god, to mark them as worthy. I wanted to be worthy, although of what, and why, I wasn't sure.

I had come to Dublin to speak at a conference on liminality, but after my presentation the thought of sitting through hours of panels made my feet itch. Out the windows of the conference building at Trinity College, trees were strummed by the wind. Leaves flashed white with sun. A brown bird hopped along a whippy twig, flirting his tail feathers. His small, streamlined head darted about, peering through the glass at the rows of motionless creatures within. Distracted by the speaker, I looked back to catch the tail-edge of his flight. A glimpse of blurred feathers. A

shadow-bird slicing across the brick and out of sight. The species was unknown to me. The shape of the trees outside the window were alien. I snatched up my bag and jacket and hurried out of the room, flicking apologetic smiles at the organisers standing at the double doors. The stairs slapped my feet. The heavy glass door groaned under my hand. I escaped into the rush and swirl of the streets.

St Stephen's Green, glowing with the heat of the afternoon. Shades of green that burned and soothed the eye. The blurred faces of famous authors in weathered grey stone. Two magpies fluttered across the grass. Beaks clacking, they nipped at each other, flipping about with acrobatic grace.

"Two for joy," a local from the conference said from beside me. He snapped off a crisp military salute to the two birds, which ignored him and continued with their impromptu circus performance. He saw me watching and chuckled with embarrassment.

"Something my grandpa taught me, always salute a magpie. It's from the old rhyme—'one for sorrow, two for joy, three for a girl, four for a boy' ... I can never remember the rest."

We rejoined the others from the conference who were sprawled on the grass basking in the sun. A warm breeze was blowing. Dubliners around us relaxed with picnics or sunbaked. I lay watching cherry blossoms flutter overhead. A mated pair of swans nibbled at the lawn nearby, their fat cygnets dozing in a circle of admirers. I could not bring myself to break the spell of our silent companionship, the sky and the sunlight, the swans and the spiralling blossoms. The knowledge of my own impending solitude made me reluctant to leave the little group and the sunlit park before I had to. We idly discussed where to have dinner on Grafton Street. I brushed petals from my jumper. The pen led her cygnets in a stately parade towards the pond. The cob guarded the rear, hissing at curious children. Afternoon sun warmed every inch of me, except for the amulet, the links of the chain icy where it touched my throat.

I closed my eyes. Under the bluster of the wind and the crunch of feet on gravel, the snatches of laughter and the quiet conversation of my companions, very faintly, I could hear music playing.



When Daimhin woke again, the house was dark. She could hear potatoes bubbling in the pot. Muirne was standing on the threshold, looking out.

“Did I sleep all the day?” Daimhin asked, pushing herself up on her elbows.

Muirne turned at her question, quickly walking across to feel her forehead. Daimhin longed to pull away, but made herself hold still. She could no longer bear people touching her.

“A little hot,” Muirne said, frowning. She checked on the potatoes, and took down a bowl from the shelf.

“You need to eat and regain your strength.”

Muirne handed her the bowl of broth.

“Eat,” she urged, and went to fetch a bowl for herself.

Daimhin could hear people speaking outside, and the lowing of cows as they were driven up into the fields.

“Odd weather we’re having,” Muirne commented from the wooden table. Her eyes were fixed on the shutters above Daimhin’s head.

“Oh?” Daimhin asked, putting her bowl aside.

“The rain has stopped, but the air is heavy. Like a storm brewing in the hills that never comes.”

Muirne’s voice had become strange and distant, and Daimhin began to feel afraid.

“The wind is blowing from the north, too warm for the season. It reminds me of summertime.”

“How?” Daimhin whispered.

“It smells like hay and sun-warmed grass. Spicy almost, like walking through a field of primroses. Folk are calling it uncanny.”

Daimhin sat shaking in the dark.

“Muirne? What time is it?”

Muirne looked at her as the church bells began to ring.

The tolling made Daimhin’s bones ache, as though she were cast of bronze, and each blow of the clapper threatened to rend her to shivered pieces. She had never felt so, before Them.

“Midday.”

Horror enveloped her.

“It’s Him! They’re coming for me, and the Devil lends speed to their horses! Finn –”

“*Don’t say his name!*” Muirne commanded, rising from her chair.

Shocked into silence, Daimhin cowered in the bed as Muirne closed the shutters.

“You would bring Him and the entire host down on our heads, if what you say is true. Better to stay hidden here. They cannot pass my threshold.”

As she spoke, Muirne took a small bottle from the bench and scattered droplets of the contents over the floor and the bed, paying particular attention to the windows and doorways.

“You are a *bean feasa*?”

Finished with the holy water, Muirne crossed herself briskly and returned to Daimhin’s bedside.

“I have been called so. Now do not agitate yourself, for the child’s sake.”

Daimhin lay back. She was light-headed with fear, and closed her eyes to stop the room spinning.

“How far is the village from Cnoc Meadha?”

“Hush,” Muirne said, stroking her hair.

“Not that it matters, with the *sídhe gaoithe* to carry Them.”

“I will not let Them have you, nor the child.”

Daimhin chuckled, giddy with exhaustion.

“Do you know why I have a boy’s name? My parents were told by a fairy doctor that I would be stolen, and they thought to trick the Good People by pretending that I was a boy.”

Her teeth began to chatter uncontrollably, and with a curse, Muirne yanked back the bedcovers to find them soaked with blood.

“The funniest part is—” She gasped, black swirling across her vision.

“The funniest part is that I wasn’t stolen at all, in the end. I asked Them to take me.”

Then all was darkness.

A little girl whimpered as the mirror closed behind us. The guide ghosted past, leaving my group to pick their own way through the maze of hexagonal blocks. Water dripped on a loop through hidden speakers. Red and blue lights glimmered in corners as we spread out and began to search for the exit. I could barely see, but the children thundered past in a wave of giggles. The little girl was among them, no longer clinging to her mother’s hand, fear forgotten in the thrill of the artificial cave.

I chose a likely alcove, but it was a dead end. The shadow of a boy stood there. He laughed, crooking a finger to tempt me to follow, then ran past me back into the maze, his eyes appearing solid black in the dim lighting. I didn’t realise until we had emerged, blinking, into the daylight, what had been strange about the encounter. The little girl grabbed her mother’s hand and pulled her bodily into the gift shop. Our group had been made up of three teenagers, rolling their eyes at the glitter and oversized furniture, an elderly couple, myself, and the mother and daughter.

There were no other children on the tour.

Ducking through the gift shop, I exited the National Leprechaun Museum onto Jarvis Street. I cut through Wolfe Tone Park behind Twilfit House, hands crammed in my pockets against the evening chill. Weeds thrust at odd angles between cracked flagstones. Graffiti crawled across the brick in strips of neon purple and green. Pigeons strutted about in mottled flocks. Headstones leaned against the courtyard

wall of the museum, marking the site of the deconsecrated graveyard of St Mary's Church. Black shadows have been seen in Wolfe Tone Park at night. The notorious 'hanging judge' Lord Norbury appears as Black Shuck, an enormous black dog, dragging chains behind him as punishment for his crimes. A sinister black figure, over six feet tall, walks the courtyard of Twilfit House, between cardboard cut-outs of leprechauns and scenes from fairy tales, legs sunken beneath the level of the street.

There is little difference in Irish lore between the world of the fairies and the world of the dead. The Otherworld and the Underworld blur together; fairy paths and corpse roads, hollows hills and tombs, those stolen in the bloom of youth and those whose lives were cut tragically short. The names on the headstones were too weather-worn to decipher. And there is nothing that the dead hate more than to be forgotten.

It began to rain as I walked back across the River Liffey towards my hotel. Hopping puddles and dodging strangers, I thought about the magpies in their glossy black and white coats, so much smaller than the magpies at home. I had made the mistake, without realising it, of making a claim on Ireland through the tenuous link of blood. I was Irish on my mother's side, but no one in my family had walked on Irish soil for more than three generations. In reality, all I knew of the country had been filtered through film and literature. The Ireland I had grown up with was no more real than the painted props of the National Leprechaun Museum.

You learn the land by walking it, mapping it through touch and footprint, observation and movement, letting the land work itself into you. I was an outsider, a stranger, wearing the pendant of an invading force around my neck. But my eyes were attuned to the natural world, the subtle shifts in hue and shade, the language of birds and the moods of the clouds. For four years I had walked the same route through the native bush near my house in Sydney, learning to read the bush. I knew the hiding places of the shy grey heron. The fallen tree, half-submerged in the river, where the turtles sunned themselves. The white flowers of the climbing weed that blooms in spring, weaving cunning waterfalls over saplings. The cinnamon duck I watched grow from a duckling with her dark feathered siblings. I had walked in summer when the sky whets itself to that sharp Australian blue, and the cicadas

begin their urgent thrumming, and in winter when rain droplets cling to the pine needles and the wattle blossoms glow against their grey-blue foliage.

I was tired of Dublin. It was time to seek out the *áiteanna uaisle*, the noble places, and learn their secrets.

The moon drifted overhead, peeking between clouds like a lost child.

The man led Cassie into a glade, and before her rose a huge, turf-covered hall, as though someone had carved out the side of a hill. Light was blazing from its mouth, and Cassie could see people dancing inside. It looked like an old-fashioned ball, the women in dresses of blush pink and grass green, the men in shades of brown and red. They were all tall, with long flowing hair.

The man raised his left hand, his right still in Cassie's, and the music cut off mid-note. The dancers broke apart, looking towards the entrance where they stood. In the quiet, Cassie heard an owl call in the woods.

Then the man stepped forward, releasing her hand, and flung his arms wide as though to embrace the hall and the dancers and the warm summer night.

"Lords and ladies, honoured guests, tonight I have brought someone to join our revelry and lessen the misery of our interminable exile. Gather close, and hear the waves crash on the forgotten shore of Tír na n-Óg. Drink deep of the waters of Tír na Fonn, wander through the glades of Tír Sorcha. See the shining city on the isle of Tír Tairngiri, beloved of Niamh, wrought in shades of rose and amber in the sunset."

He indicated Cassie, and she felt the weight of a hundred eyes fall upon her.

"I give you the music of an *áit-amhránaí*."

He stretched out a hand, and Cassie turned to see a gnarled tree heavy with pale flowers begin to twist and writhe. The grey trunk bulged and rippled in a way that made her eyes burn. She blinked away stinging tears to see a piano growing out of the living tree, its lid and pedals of grey bark, its keys silver in the moonlight.

"Play," the man ordered, tugging at her hair playfully as he passed.

Cassie shook her head to clear it as the dancers flowed from the hall in a swirl of laughter and rustling fabric to settle on the lawn, glasses of crimson and amber wine held elegantly in their hands. Some of the men and women remained standing, their faces smooth and expressionless. They looked like shop mannequins, dressed in sumptuous costumes with blank, unblinking stares. Cassie turned away with a shudder and went obediently to the piano, taking a seat on a crooked tree stump.

As she began to play, little boys came pelting out of the trees. They ringed the piano, tugging spitefully at her hair, whispering to each other and staring at her with black eyes.

Cassie risked a glance over her shoulder to see every eye fixed upon her, glittering in the torchlight. What would happen if she lost the tune again? A lavender gown twitched, and she caught a glimpse of an unnaturally thin leg beneath, covered in pale fawn fur, and ending in a delicate split hoof. The more she looked, the more she caught the ripple of fur or feathers, the glint of a fang or the sheen of scales amongst the seated company. A scream caught in her throat. If she stopped playing, they would attack, throwing aside silk and crystal to tear into her flesh.

She played on and on, watching with detached terror as the music began to twist away from beneath her hands, the way it always did.

Tears soaked Cassie's cheeks as she battled on, spine rigid with pain. She missed a note as her fingers cramped, and a chorus of howls and snarls rose behind her.

In the forest, something white was flitting between the trees.

The keys shook beneath her hands.

A clear voice called something from the trees in a language Cassie didn't recognise.

Then the piano exploded into deadly splinters, piercing her hands, her face, her *eyes*-

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Hazel opened the door, juggling both sets of keys, their bags, and the dead weight of Rowan as she dragged him through the door. She dumped her lover on the bed and massaged the small of her back with both hands.

Rowan stirred with a groan.

“Wh’are we?”

“Canada,” Hazel informed him. She had driven across the border earlier that day.

“I hate Canada.”

“Too bad,” she retorted. “You were too high for me to bother asking your opinion.”

As she passed the bed, he tried to grab her, but she sidestepped him easily.

Rowan gave up and fumbled clumsily for the bag of mushrooms.

Hazel sighed.

“Why don’t you slow down on those? Too many might send you off to fairyland permanently.”

Rowan laughed bitterly.

“If only. Then I wouldn’t have to deal with your bitching every damn day.”

Hazel ignored him and looked out the window. In the distance she could see a mountain range, like the bumps of a vertebrae gleaming in the moonlight.

“My uncle Pat lives in the mountains,” she recalled. “He has a cabin in Alberta. Up in the Rockies. Ma always said we’d go visit, but we never did.”

“No time like the present.”

She could hear the sarcasm in his tone.

“Maybe I will,” Hazel said provocatively. “Maybe I’ll just hitch a ride and go all the way up to Alaska.”

Rowan slammed her head into the wall.

She hadn’t seen him coming, didn’t realise he could move so fast in his drugged state. He pinned her against the wall, a fist in her hair.

“You don’t get to leave me,” he hissed venomously in her ear.

“You don’t leave until I say you can leave. And the only time a woman leaves me is when she’s dead.”

Hazel struggled, but he was too strong. Rowan had never hurt her like this, only when –

“It’s me! Rowan, it’s *me*, it’s not her! You’re hurting me!”

He bounced her skull off the wall again.

“I know exactly who you are, and the worm-ridden witch that rides you. The little skill she had was stolen, and the only way she can evade death is burrowing into the seams of a meat-puppet like you. Have you asked her about your sister, little Hazel? Have you asked old Biddy what really happened that day, when Ivy followed the white lady?”

“Stop it!”

“Once I knew a *meascach*, a place-singer like your sister. I stripped his flesh and strung his bones from a blackthorn. When the wind blew through them, it sounded like little bells.”

She twisted in his grip, trying to escape his cruel voice.

“Perhaps the white lady did the same to Ivy. What a sweet sound she would have made.”

“Ro, *please* –”

He backhanded her.

“What would Hazel sound like, *cailleach*? Still yearning for me a thousand years hence?”

Bridget moved Hazel’s lips, chanting something in a harsh high voice that made the hairs on her neck rise.

Rowan clamped his hand over her mouth, and Hazel bit him as hard as she could. He released her hair with a shout of pain, and she slammed her head back into his.

Rowan toppled, his nose spouting blood, unconscious.

Hazel stumbled away from the wall. For a moment she stood numbly, staring down at the face of the man for whom she would have burned the whole world.

Then she picked up her bag and left.

Outside, it was beginning to rain, and Hazel turned her face up to the sky.

Cold water for bloodstains, Bridget whispered.

Hazel spat glistening blood onto the pavement, and began to walk towards the highway. The line of mountains blazed clean and cold in her mind's eye.

It will get easier.

“No, it won't,” Hazel said grimly, and kept walking.

Above, the stars were only hazy smudges.

There is no warning, just a rush of fetid air, and then two hands erupt from the well, snatching at your wrists. You throw yourself backwards, crying out in shock and pain, but the hands only grip tighter and begin to pull you, inch by inch, off the damp soil of the forest floor and up the side of the well. You scream and curse, bruising your knees and elbows against the stone as it retreats back into the depths, dragging you with it. Its grasp grinds the delicate bones of your wrists and your ribs are crushed against the lip of the well. It is only a matter of time before you lose your balance and fall –

“Let go!” You howl, and you can see the green-black shine of its skin, the sweep of horns on its bare skull. Its eyes are huge and white, unseeing.

“*Let go*,” the *púca* says back to you in a blurred creaking voice.

You fight against its hold with every inch of yourself, shoulders hunched and teeth gritted, scrambling against the stone with your legs and hips and feet. Dawn light warms the backs of your calves.

“Let go,” it says again, and this time you realise in horror that it sounds like you.

It's stealing your voice.

In desperation, you stop pulling and lash out, fingernails scratching at its eyes. They sink deep and it releases a spiralling wail of outrage and hate. Gathering your feet beneath you, you strike out from the stone, ignoring the pain that shoots up your legs, and tear yourself free of its grip, landing hard on the forest floor.

Every breath was agony.

“Daimhin, listen to me. You must stay awake!”

“Please, Muirne,” she slurred.

“Let me sleep ...”

“You cannot,” Muirne said firmly, shaking her by the shoulders.

Helpless tears wet her shift. Her stomach was exposed, grotesquely huge and covered with blue veins. The wave of pain came again and Daimhin wept.

“I don’t want to die, please sweet Mary, I don’t want to die –”

“Then help me!” Muirne snapped.

“Now *push!*”

A scream ripped from her. The rushlights cast weird shadows that leaped and danced on the wall like Them.

“Brave girl! Keep pushing, I can see the head”

Daimhin didn’t reply, and Muirne looked up to see the girl’s eyes roll back in her white face.

The *leanbh* slithered out into her arms, and Muirne quickly swaddled it, tucking it into the wooden cradle and placing the iron tongs crossways over the cradle for protection. The child began to wail.

“Daimhin?”

Muirne bent over the woman, frantically checking her pulse. It was rapid and faint. Daimhin opened her eyes and gave Muirne a sweet smile.

“I can hear music,” she said in an odd dreamy tone.

“I’m on the hill, and Ma and Pa an’ the boys are sleeping and they don’t know that I’m here. The moon is making a silver path to the top, an’ there are people dancing—”

Muirne sat on the bed, holding Daimhin’s hand in hers, streaked with gore to the elbows.

“And the music is calling, saying hurry, hurry, and the moon is yellow as butter. The ladies are prettier than any I’ve ever seen, and the men are so handsome ...”

Daimhin smiled at someone that Muirne couldn’t see.

“He chooses me to dance with, out of all the ladies there, me in homespun, and he spins me until my feet are barely touching the grass. I feel like we’re flying, with the stars and the moon. I’m so happy, Muirne. That’s the happiest I ever was, that night, dancin’.”

Daimhin blinked, and focused on Muirne’s face.

“Is it a boy?”

“Yes,” Muirne lied.

With a sigh of relief, Daimhin laid down her head and closed her eyes.

A tricky little wind blew open the shutters and stirred up the flames. Muirne could smell primroses and summer grass. As quickly as it came, the wind died, and a low growl of thunder heralded the storm’s coming. In resignation, Muirne covered Daimhin’s nakedness and tucked the blanket around her. Her spirit was fled. Finnbheara had reclaimed his bride.

The poor girl kept breathing for a while, as Muirne bathed the child and swaddled it in a clean cloth. She took the *leanbh* to Daimhin’s breast to suckle, and then returned it to the cradle. She must have slept then, because she woke to birdsong and the child whimpering. Daimhin was dead.

When Fidelma came to lay out the body of the strange woman from the mountains, she found Muirne in the lane with the *leanbh* in her arms.

Muirne nodded at her in respectful greeting.

“The dress is laid out on the table, *an bheann bhán*.”

Fidelma stepped closer to look. The child had the direct, unsettling gaze of a *sídheog*.

“What will you do with the child?” She asked, pausing on the threshold of the death house.

“Keep her, of course,” Muirne replied, giving her a baleful stare.

With a shrug, Fidelma disappeared inside.

“Áine,” Muirne decided.

“That will be your name, little one. And may She protect her namesake.”

Áine opened her toothless pink mouth and screamed.

It was going to be a fine warm day.

Sunlight filters through the swaying trees, and you examine your wrists, swollen and purple, by the dappled light. Brea sprawls on the grass beside you, human-shaped, the fox still lingering in his sharp-edged smile. He laughs and taps your upturned palms hard enough to make you flinch.

“Tell me what you learned from this, little Óinsín.”

He smells like wet fur and pine needles and copper—

the spray of blood soaks your arm and throat, splattering hot against your tightly closed lips, and the doe throws back its head and shrieks—

You lean back against a hawthorn and watch the sky through its friendly canopy of waving white blossom, considering.

“Don’t look in unfamiliar wells.”

Your voice is scratchy and hoarse from screaming. Brea snorts and closes his eyes lazily, head upturned to catch the sun.

“No, *amadán*. Although why you insist upon living in a *púca*-haunted wood is beyond my ability to fathom.”

“Don’t let yourself be tricked?”

Brea hums low in his throat, an near-growl of exasperation, and slides a sideways glare at you from under his lashes.

“Stop trying to save them.”

Tossing your head, you try to appear unaffected, but your heart jolts painfully in your chest.

“I thought it was a child.”

You pick at tufts of grass and avoid his knowing gaze.

“There is always a price,” Brea tells you, as solemn as you’ve ever heard him.

The hawthorn creaks in the wind, and you are both showered with white petals.

You do not reply.

“On your head be it, little fool.”

Swan

We must not look at goblin men,
We must not buy their fruits:
Who knows upon what soil they fed
Their hungry thirsty roots?
-Christina Rossetti, 'Goblin market'

When the weather is fine, you go to the thin places.

You can't find them all the time. They change positions, drifting like clouds. Their outlines are subtle; a shimmer amongst the greenery, or a patch of cooler air on the side of a hill. The first time that you found one, you stepped into a fine mist of warm rain in the middle of a frost-rimed winter field.

There is a thin place at the edge of the forest near the strand, in a clump of silver birches. You probe the air, arms outstretched like a sleepwalker, until you brush against it. It smells like rain and night-time, with acrid notes of electricity and petrol. If you sit in the very centre of a thin place, eyes closed and ears open, you begin to hear things.

People walking, their feet scuffing and scraping on a surface that is neither grass or wood or hard-packed dirt. Laughter, screaming, talking, singing. Music unfurling and streaming past, lyrics snarled with revving engines and slamming doors. Someone passes at an unhurried pace, whistling a tune under their breath that you almost remember. If you concentrate, you can block out the birdsong and the rustle of branches, and pretend that you are there, wherever there is.

“Óinsín.”

Once, you stayed there for three days, until hunger and cramps in your chilled legs drove you back towards the hall. But you suspect that the more you try, the easier it will become. The hunger pangs will fade, and your body will become weightless.

“*Óinsín.*”

Then you can stay there forever.

You open your eyes to a ring of teeth and scrawny limbs, like an untidy flock of ravens roosting on the ground. The *buachailleen* tilt their heads and blink their black eyes in unison.

“A boy is missing.”

The music dissolves note by note into the salt-scented air.

I was stiff and tired, my eyes sore from that particular combination of focus and disconnection that comes from long distance driving. Stretching, I let my legs dangle out of the open car door. I waited for the last strains of ‘Carrickfergus’ to fade before reaching for the keys. The engine sputtered and died, and a small town quiet filtered down the street. Taking a deep breath of sea air, I twisted my spine to release the tension.

The patchy radio signal in my dodgy rental car had frayed my nerves beyond endurance. Static interspersed with obscure radio plays about old women gardening with their cats could only entertain me for so long. A CD of traditional Irish folk music, spotted in the bargain bin of a petrol station, was my new travelling companion. Clichéd and kitschy, no doubt, Ireland distilled and bottled for tourists on driving holidays. But even folk music would be better than two weeks of fuzzy voices irritatingly fading in and out. By the end of my journey, these songs would no longer be heard as words and tunes but part of the atmosphere of the road, background noise to the green fields, the smell of manure and summer hay, and the quiet unfurling of the tarmac.

Carlingford Lough was silken grey, rubbing like a cat against the wooden pier. A squat crumbling castle balanced above the lough on the hill. Behind me, the glowering peak of Slieve Foye hunched over Carlingford, curved around the little town. Slieve Foye once held fire; its slopes are gabbro, formed from slowly cooling molten magma. The peak forms part of the Carlingford ring-dyke, a circle of ancient volcanoes cupping the glacial lough at its centre. Slieve Foye stirred under the woollen clouds. It was here that the giant Finn MacCumhaill defeated Ruiscaire, the

giant of the North, and lay down to rest, flushed with victory. His flesh hardened to stone, his feet resting at the edge of the lapping waves. As a child I could make faces in tree bark, tell stories with cloud shapes. But I could not make a giant out of the mountain face, no matter how hard I tried.

I climbed to King John's Castle, silhouetted on the edge of dusk. Flags of red valerian waved from cracks in the stonework. Two girls raced around the tower, shrieking and catching at each other's sleeves to pull them off balance. A seagull floated overhead, twice the size of its southern cousins. It peered down with ravenous eyes, wide-pinioned as an albatross. I leaned against the sun-warmed stone and attempted to unstitch seals from the grey-green water. Was that the hump of a back there, rising with the swell, or nothing? Was that the gleam of seal skin or just a patch of cold water?

In the folklore of Rathlin Island, seals are part of the fairy folk. All along the Atlantic coast, from Ireland to Iceland, tales of the *roane*, or the selkies, are told. A seal-woman unwisely leaves her coat while walking on the sand, and a fisherman, mad with love-longing, hides the skin so that she cannot return to the sea. Compelled to marry him and bear his children, the tale always ends the same way. The skin discovered beneath a hay bale, or in the thatch of their little cottage. The selkie fleeing down the steep path back to the sea, where no mortal will set eyes on her again. And the children, running home, lungs burning, wind whipping tears into their eyes, to tell their father.

He knew as soon he opened the door.

She had the same penetrating stare of the photograph on his mantelpiece, showing his sister Gwen and the girls bundled together on a picnic rug, all waves of dark hair and identical green eyes. Neither Hazel nor Ivy had taken after their father Murphy, who died before Hazel was born. Pádraig stepped aside without comment, letting the girl edge her way inside. Her eyes darted over everything, arms protectively crossed over her jacket.

It was too early to think without coffee. Pat brewed it black and strong, fetching a packet of biscuits from the cupboard. She was too thin. He walked over the wooden floor, boards protesting under his feet, to the counter where she sat drumming her

heels against the chair leg. She accepted the coffee silently, snaking out a long-fingered hand to take a biscuit. Hunger pinched his stomach, and Pat took one as well, scattering crumbs over the stained wood.

Hazel shook back her loose hair and looked Pat over.

“Hey, Uncle Pat.”

“Hey, kiddo.”

She sipped her coffee, checking out the view from the kitchen window.

“I heard you missed your ma’s funeral.”

Her gaze snapped back to his, the dark bruising around her right eye turning the green of the iris to crystal.

“So did you.”

Pat sighed, leaning against the wall, coffee cup cradled in the crook of his arm.

“I like your place. You get any bears near here?”

“Sometimes. There’s a grizzly and her cubs that hang around. Elk too. I’ve seen moose tracks near here as well.”

It was the longest conversation he’d had in months.

“Good shooting?”

Her back was to the bear skin in the living room, but she had always been observant, even as a little kid.

“Law of the jungle, kiddo. Sometimes you get them, sometimes they get you.”

Hazel snorted and looked away again. Pat used the opportunity to look her over for any more injuries. She had been limping a little when she came in, but that might just be from walking on unforgiving tarmac.

The silence thickened between them. Hazel stifled a yawn with the back of her hand. Pat made a decision.

“Throw your bags in the guest room. Stay a while.”

He could feel her eyes on him as he walked away.

Later, they sat on the porch watching sunset play on the mountains. Hazel, puffy-eyed from sleep, gingerly probed at her swollen cheekbone.

Pat, eyes firmly on the treeline, said, “I hope you gave that bastard as good as you got.”

“And then some.”

Pat grunted in approval, and took a sip of his beer.

“Hey, Uncle Pat ... what do you remember about my sister?”

Pat hid his surprise with another sip of his drink before lowering the bottle to the wooden boards with a clink.

“It was hard to tell you apart. You and Ivy were always together, holding hands, giggling and pulling pranks.”

“Yeah. But about *her*, specifically.”

Pat thought for a minute.

“She liked blueberries. She was loud and bossy, always chose the games that you played. She was scared of storms, always used to go into your ma’s bed. One of her eyes had a little streak of blue in it. Why are you asking?”

Hazel shifted in her chair.

“No reason, just ... I don’t remember much.”

“What do you remember?”

“From photos, mostly. I didn’t remember that thing about her eye until you said. She *was* bossy. She had a great imagination, though. We were always playing mermaids or fairies ... Then she went missing.”

Her shoulders straightened, steeling herself against the memories.

“Forget it. Long gone now, anyway.”

The easy dismissal curls your hands into fists. The bruises on your wrists are only yellow smudges now, and you know from experience that the boys scatter when you hit them.

“Why do you care?”

They laugh, circling you and pulling your hair. One remains crouched at your eye level, ragged shirt-sleeves brushing the dirt.

“They’ve been causing problems. The *duine*. Disturbing our revels and making idle threats.”

“Is the mother of the missing boy with the *duine*?”

“No, she is drunk on midsummer wine and dancing without a care. It’s the others, who refuse to drink.”

You consider the situation. You as good as promised Brea that you wouldn’t interfere any more. Let the mortals take care of their own. The last time you went into their camp, half were deferential, offering food and carefully worded compliments, and the others gave you poisonous glances and ordered you to leave. You owe them nothing.

And yet ...

“There are rumours that the Amadan Dubh is abroad.”

You look back at the boy in alarm, searching his eyes for any hint of a lie.

“Truly?”

He grins, showing little pointed teeth.

“We have odds on how long it will take to find him. Care to place a bet?”

You wave him away, scowling, and he rises to blend with his brothers.

“So, will you look?”

The question could have come from any one of them, so you direct your answer to the sky.

“Maybe. If you’re lucky.”

You ignore them until they retreat, melding with the shadows under the trees.

Your skin crawls –

Something is behind you, and the stench of rotting flesh rolls over you in a wave as a hand digs into your shoulder, and you open your mouth to scream –

You roll over and retch into the bushes.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Cassie fell backwards, blind and in agonising pain. The ground punched the oxygen from her lungs and she rolled, coughing helplessly.

Confusion exploded around her; there were yelps, shrieks, rabid snarls. Something heavy crashed into her and kept running, hoofbeats drumming on the grass. Cassie covered her head and pulled her knees into her chest. Everything fell eerily silent, and all she could hear was her own panicked breathing.

“Brea.”

It was the same voice that she had heard from the forest, smooth and musical.

“My queen.”

The stranger’s voice. Cassie held her breath, trying to hear over the thunder of her heart.

“You dare bring her here, to disturb and inflame the hearts of our people?”

The queen’s voice was terrible, and the stranger replied carefully. Cassie couldn’t think of him as a man anymore, as whatever these people were, it was clear that they weren’t human.

“It has been long since we have heard the music of her kind.”

“The tune of a *meascach* whore is no better than silence.”

It sounded as though she was circling them, and Cassie curled tighter.

“Your lord husband thought differently.”

Light flashed behind Cassie’s eyelids, and the earth heaved beneath her. The cries of disturbed birds wheeled in the sky above. Panicking, Cassie grabbed handfuls of the earth with her stinging hands. Was it an earthquake?

“*Speak not of my husband again, Brea Sionnach, or risk my displeasure.*”

The woman’s voice was ugly with rage, but Brea sounded as unruffled as ever.

“I beg your forgiveness, gentle lady.”

“It is this sort of madness that deprived us of Finnbheara, along with a score of our folk.”

“They may yet live, my lady,” Brea said gently.

“They may. But they are sundered from us, and I do not know if we will see them again.”

There was an ominous silence. Cassie kept still. She felt like a mouse between two warring cats, and wanted to do nothing that might draw their attention from each other.

The queen sighed.

“Come and sup with me, Brea. I would not have us be enemies. Leave the girl. The Amadan Dubh will deal with her soon enough, and the others will forget, in time.”

“Of course, my lady.”

Cassie heard the rustle of grass, as they passed her on their way to the hall. The music had started up, and she could hear the crowd begin to talk and laugh merrily together again, as if nothing had ever happened. Alone and marooned on an island of grass, Cassie’s teeth began to chatter. She was going into shock, and there was no

one around to help her. She tried to remember what the glade looked like, how far away the forest path was. If she could stand, then perhaps she could find her way back to the hotel and Val.

She pushed herself onto her hands and knees, crying out at the pain in her hands. It felt as though they were studded with broken glass. Staggering, Cassie made it to her feet and took a few steps. Her knees hit something hard and unyielding, and she fell hard back onto the ground. Twigs scratched her cheek, and she realised that it must be a limb from the tree that had exploded.

Cassie moaned. She was injured and afraid, and she couldn't see. How was she going to get out of here?

A hand fell onto her shoulder, and she screamed.

"It's all right," a voice said.

"Be calm now, *cailín*. It is nearly time."

The young woman on the bed nodded, breathless and white-faced with nerves. It was her first child, but Neala was healthy and strong, and Muirne did not foresee any problems with the birth.

She felt a tug at her sleeve, and turned to see Neala's younger sister Granuaile, offering her a cup of milk.

Thanking the child, Muirne was reminded of Áine, who had been suspiciously quiet since they had arrived at the house.

"Áine?"

The gathered women looked about, but the girl was nowhere within the cottage.

"I saw her go outside, the *mínádúrtha* thing," old Sinead Dunleavy said, glowering at Muirne from the other side of the hearth.

Not bothering to reply, Muirne strode to the door and looked out. Night was fast approaching, and the weather was bleak and icy.

"Áine! Come inside now, child."

There was a sullen silence, and Muirne lost her patience.

“Áine! *Now!*”

A small shape crept from the side of the house into the light. Muirne looked at her adopted daughter, taking in her ripped dress and mud-covered legs. Áine was watching her carefully, ready to run off again if Muirne began to scold her.

Instead, Muirne sighed. She had long ago lost hope of keeping the child clean and orderly.

“You cannot learn about childbirth by skulking in the lane, girl. Come along inside where it’s warm.”

“I don’t like it in there,” Áine complained.

“It’s too hot, and Sinead Dunleavy pinches my arms if I don’t sit still.”

“You shan’t be sitting with Sinead Dunleavy. You will be beside me, helping with the *leanbh*.”

Áine’s mismatched eyes brightened with interest. She had a fascination with children, which Muirne hoped to cultivate into an interest in the healing arts.

The child leaned forward to whisper to Muirne.

“The old woman smells like a goat.”

Muirne couldn’t help but laugh as she drew the girl to her side.

“You had best keep your distance, then. You know what sharp ears she has.”

Muirne closed the door behind her as Áine walked into the room.

“Here is the little *síofra*,” Sinead said spitefully.

Head high as a queen’s, Áine ignored the old woman and walked to Neala’s bedside, her hair golden in the firelight.

Neala cried out, and looked at Muirne fearfully.

“I – I think it’s starting–”

Muirne beckoned Áine closer, and began to make her preparations.

As she expected, it was an easy birth, and within a few hours Muirne was holding a plump and lively boy in her arms. He screamed with displeasure as Muirne checked him over with quick, experienced movements.

“Nothing amiss with his lungs, in any case,” she said, smiling at Neala, who beamed back at her, drunk on exhaustion and happiness. The other women crowded around to look at the *leanbh*, clucking and weighing his fat limbs in their hands.

“You will take him to the priest in the morning?” Muirne asked Nuala’s mother Eibhlin, who stood delighted at her shoulder.

“Of course, Muirne.”

“I shall do a blessing then, before I leave,” Muirne announced, and took the bottle of holy water from her bag.

The women bowed their heads as she anointed the child.

“I beseech the Holy Three to lave and to bathe the child, and to preserve it to Themselves, protecting it from any evil thing – witch, goblin or evil spirit. Let no dark thing come near to it or disturb its rest.”

“Amen,” the gathered women murmured.

“God keep you,” Eibhlin said gratefully, as Muirne gathered her things and steered a yawning Áine to the door.

As they walked home, Áine sleepily took her hand.

“Why did you say the prayer over the *leanbh*?”

Muirne looked down at the girl.

“Why, to protect him until he is baptised.”

“Protect him from what?”

“The powers of evil. From *pishogues* and witches and all manner of wicked spirits.”

“And from the Good People?”

“Yes, so that they cannot steal him in the night.”

Áine wrinkled her nose.

“Why do They want babies? *I* don’t want him.”

Muirne stopped in her tracks, speechless, foreboding gathering in her heart.

Áine, capricious as ever, tired of her silence and skipped ahead.

The clouds pressed down, squeezing the air from the land.

I stood in Folklore Park, hearing stories of leprechauns by the uncertain storm-light. Kevin kept speaking, hands sketching Little People in the heavy air, while my attention strayed to the statues around us. The Brown Bull of Cooley swung his heavy head aggressively, one foot upraised. A chipped white horse strained forward in full gallop, striving to break free from his cement mount.

I had arrived at the park early, and found the way barred by an enormous black dog. A growl reverberated in his throat, and he rolled the whites of his eyes at me. Recognising the signs, I slowly stepped to one side, talking low and soothingly, and the dog whipped past me, nails clicking on the pavement, and ran off. It was the closest that I had ever come to being attacked by a dog, and adrenaline swirled in my blood for a while afterwards. I was still walking in erratic circles when Kevin showed up to unlock the cavern, and I doubted I showed the same enthusiasm for the fairy dolls and miniature leprechaun suit as his usual patrons.

“You know,” the leprechaun whisperer of Carlingford told me with a tone of faint accusation, “if you had been younger, I would have told you that the Tooth Fairy comes here to the cavern, and that the fairies shed their wings in the tunnels every few days.”

I nodded, and we sat for a moment in awkward silence, painfully aware of every one of my twenty-three years.

“Now,” Kevin said, with the air of a man determined to make the best of things, “let me tell you the story of the white horse of Mountain Park.”

The ocean sighed at our backs. The grass was crusted with sea salt. Slieve Foye was striped with sunlight as clouds rushed over.

“... And if you look closely, you may just see the Cocker O’Reilly, cursed by the fairies to spend eternity as a white horse, grazing on the mountain.”

I turned to look without thinking, and caught the twinkle in Kevin’s eye. Irritation flooded through me.

Later, wandering in the foothills of Slieve Foye looking for the mysterious and possibly imaginary mountain gate, I tried to untangle my thoughts. Was I annoyed at Kevin, who was only guilty of trying to attract some business to Carlingford, and who named the fairies in his book after his grandchildren? Or was it the idea of being treated like a child, stuffed with fairy tales while the adults exchanged indulgent glances over my oblivious head? Hikers passed me, dressed in sensible gear with walking poles while I dawdled along the track, my runners soaked through with mud and sheep manure.

I leaned on a fence, offering grass to some disinterested horses. From my position I could see all the way across to the other side of the lough, where the town of Greencastle mirrors Carlingford, brooded over by the spine of the Mourne Mountains. Sunlight and shade caressed their flanks, and I daydreamed of slipping into the water and striking out for the far shore. It would be a cold and tiring swim, and I wondered what sharp-toothed things might lurk beneath the surface. Still, whatever trials I faced in the water would be worth it to emerge dripping and triumphant on the far shore, and step into that oil painting scene – the smudges of houses and boats, the wavy line of the shore, and the paint strokes on the mountains.

Perhaps it was the simplicity of it that bothered me. Choose a story and mould it to shape the land. Put up signs and fences. Organise events, raise plaques. Involve the townspeople with the lure of more business, more visitors. Tie the knots tighter and tighter until your story quivers taut over the landscape. Ignore the fact that the land beneath is writhing with stories, and that you have only chosen one thread. If you pretend and persuade for long enough, perhaps your story will become the only one there is, and people will walk over the mountain, marvelling at what you have created, while beneath sleep the unquiet skeletons of a thousand forgotten tales.



You begin your search for the missing child at the well with the *púca* in it. You don't dare get too close, but you need to know if it has learned any new voices since the last time you heard it. But the boy is not there, and the *púca* is silent.

Next you go warily to the strand and search up and down the shoreline. Pebbles shift and clatter under your bare feet. The water is pleasantly cool, and sea foam wobbles on the beach in clumps. Up on the rocks, in the wind-flattened grass, you find the delicate prints of a deer. You are afraid that you will meet the Amadan Dubh, who you have heard prefers the bare and scoured expanse of the dunes. But there is nothing in any direction for miles and miles.

Gulls drift on the updraughts from the wind off the ocean. You watch their silhouettes rise and fall. One stutters and blinks out, leaving a patch of empty blue sky. Your heart leaps into your throat –

Not real it's not real none of it is real it's all just –

The bird appears, banking on black-tipped wings. You must have lost sight of it momentarily in the glare of the sun.

The boy is nowhere to be seen, and you retrace your steps to the forest's friendly shade.

There is only one place that you have not searched.

Dead leaves crunch and rasp as something rushes past through the trees.

Cassie tried to back away, but the hand around her shoulders guided her gently forward.

“Do not be afraid. What is your name?”

“It's Cassie. My name is Cassie.”

She tripped on a step, and felt a change in the air. They were in a house, and her saviour guided her carefully to a sitting position on a stone floor, in front of a

crackling fire. Cassie held her frozen hands out towards the heat, biting her lip at the pain.

“My name is Róisín. Let me tend your wounds.”

“Wh-what happened to me?”

“A blast from the *sídhe gaoithe*. I’ve never seen Úna so enraged. I have no idea what could have possessed Grandfather to bring you here.”

“Róisín? My ... my eyes, I can’t – ”

Róisín tilted her chin up to the light to inspect her face.

“One side effect of the *sídhe gaoithe* is the swelling of the flesh wherever it strikes. Did anything hit you in the eyes?”

“I don’t think so.”

“I believe your sight to be undamaged. I’ll prepare a poultice to reduce the swelling. By tomorrow, we will be able to tell more.”

Róisín walked away and Cassie heard bottles being clinked together.

“Did I hear you say ... your grandfather?”

“Yes. Brea, with the red hair.”

“Oh.”

“What is it?”

“He just ... didn’t seem old enough to be a grandfather, that’s all.”

Róisín had Brea’s ripple of contagious laughter.

Cassie could feel her body stiffening up, and rested her aching arms on her knees. The fire cast a red light on the inside of her eyelids, and she dared to hope that Róisín was right in thinking that her eyes were undamaged.

Róisín returned and began to apply a sweet-smelling lotion to her arms and face. Mint and lavender enveloped her, and Cassie felt sleep beginning to take hold.

“Róisín?” She asked drowsily.

“Yes?”

“When can I go home?”

Róisín did not reply at once, continuing to apply the poultice to Cassie’s skin. Then she sighed.

“No one gets to go home here.”

The door banged open on its hinges.

Muirne looked up from the cooking pot as Áine blew into the room. Muirne was so accustomed to her whirlwind entrances that she did not realise at once that anything was amiss. It was not until she brought Áine her dinner where the girl sat slumped on a stool with a face as black as thunder, that Muirne noticed her scratched arms and bruised face.

“*A Mhaigdean Bheannaithe, cailín!* What has happened?”

Áine turned her head stubbornly away.

“Where is your cloak? You are cut and bruised all over! What happened today?”

Muirne wet a cloth and began to wipe away the dirt and dried blood crusting Áine’s face and arms.

“Tell me, child,” Muirne insisted, turning Áine’s chin towards her.

The girl’s eyes were shiny with tears that she refused to let fall.

“We went to play down in the woods. I was going to gather some mushrooms for you. I wanted to go deeper, but the other children were scared and said that we were lost.”

She paused to wipe her nose on her sleeve.

“Yes? And then?”

Muirne could see the fury gathering in the thin little body. Áine’s mouth trembled with indignation.

“It was that *amaideach* Lochlan Delaney! He said that I was a witch and was going to leave them all for the goblins in Inchy Wood! He threw a stone at me!”

She could hold back the tears no longer, and they left clean tracks on her dirty cheeks.

“And then the others did it too, and they sang a song about me! I hate them! *I hate them!*”

Muirne gathered the child into her arms and rocked her.

With her head tucked into the crook of Muirne’s neck, Áine’s sobs died quickly to sniffles.

“That was cruel of them,” Muirne told her. “They were wrong to throw things at you, and hurt you. I will speak to Lochlan’s mother.”

“She will be crying,” Áine said.

Her words were muffled, still pressed into Muirne’s side, but her sudden malicious tone made Muirne push her back and look her in the eye.

“What did you say?”

Áine gave her a bright sweet smile, the very image of her mother’s.

“I said that Lochlan’s mother will be crying, because he hasn’t come home tonight.”

“What do you mean, Áine? Where has he gone?”

“He chased me into the woods but he didn’t know the way back. I hid behind some bushes and crawled away so he wouldn’t know where I went. He’s probably pissed himself by now. He probably thinks that the goblins are coming to get him-”

Muirne slapped her hard across the face. The blow snapped Áine’s head back, and the girl sat there in shock, too stunned to cry.

Muirne leapt to her feet, wrapping a shawl around her shoulders and fetching a lantern from the table.

“You stupid girl!” She raged, taking an extra cloak for the boy.

“How could you even think of such a wicked act? Lochlan may be out there sick, or hurt, fallen in a river or killed by wild beasts! I cannot believe-”

Muirne broke off, looking down in despair at Áine, still crouched on the stool with her hand to her cheek.

Unable to say more, she hurried out into the night, the memory of the betrayal in Áine’s brown and blue eyes etched onto her heart.

But what will she do if the boy is ...

You stand in the entrance of the hall, watching the dancers. The mother of the missing boy whirls in her partner’s arms, an empty smile on her slack features. You hate her.

You hate her fine dress, and her dull, unblinking eyes, and her wine-stained mouth.

As they pass, you throw yourself at her legs, tearing the gauze of her gown, and she topples to the ground. Amid shouts of alarm, you straddle her chest, and strike her across the face as hard as you can.

“Why didn’t you look for him?” You scream, and hit her again.

The vacant smile has dropped from her lips, replaced by distant surprise. You wonder if she can even feel it.

“*Meatachán scéiniúil thú!*”

A red mark is rising on her pale cheek. There are arms under your shoulders, prying you away.

“*Tú máthair olc í!*”

You are thrown from the hall and the grass breaks your fall. A group of children are playing with the *buachaille*, squealing and chasing each other.

The missing boy runs with them. The colour has drained from his skin, and his limbs are distended and clumsy. Rivulets of water drain from his clothes, leaving puddles of green water. His laughter sounds like coughing, bubbling up from water-logged lungs.

He was so heavy when you pulled him from the river.

Nothing can die here. You know this from experience. But there are some things worse than death.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Over the next few days, Cassie's eyesight returned gradually. At first, everything was hazy, shades of blurred colour like an abstract painting. Róisín stayed by her side, applying poultices and telling her long stories that followed her into her dreams, a stream of words flowing between English and a language that hovered on the edge of her understanding.

She spent much of those days sleeping, waking only to drink cups of something hot and sweet, or for swallows of broth. Cassie wondered whether she was being drugged, but was too disconnected and tired to care. Sometimes she heard Brea's voice, and once what sounded like children playing.

When Cassie woke again, she felt different. The lassitude had faded, and, as she sat up blinking hard, the corners of the fireplace were coming into focus. Her arms had been wrapped in white cloth, and she could still hardly bend them. Her fingers were stiff and brittle as sticks, and clicked when she tried to move them. Cassie bent forward and tore at the bandages with her teeth, peeling it away from her hot skin. She stared in horror at the flesh revealed beneath.

She was still sitting in front of the fire, staring numbly at her arms, when Róisín entered the room. At once, the woman dropped what she was holding and fell on her knees beside Cassie.

"No, these must be covered! No air must be allowed to reach the skin, Cassie, didn't I explain this to you? Now I'll have to – Cassie?"

It was difficult to speak.

"I'll never be able to play again."

She could hear her own awful monotone from what seemed like miles away.

“Oh, Cassie! Of course you will, love.”

“How?”

“You are not the first to be struck with the blast. They healed, and so will you.”

Róisín changed the cloths on her arms. Cassie turned her head away so that she wouldn’t have to see the angry red boils covering her skin. When she was finished, Róisín gave her a cup of water and kissed her forehead tenderly.

“Let me show you something.”

Cassie wanted to curl up and go back to sleep, drink more of Róisín’s tea, anything to forget what she had seen under the bandages. But Róisín was too strong, and guided her out of the house, Cassie leaning heavily on her arm.

They walked a little way through the forest. White butterflies flitted through the bushes, and a trickle of birdsong followed them down the path.

“Róisín, I don’t want –”

“Just a little further, I promise.”

They left the path and began to push through the undergrowth. Cassie worked on keeping her footing, watching the ground, and missed the moment that they stepped into the clearing.

She looked up in astonishment. The clearing was full of people - men, women, and children. Brightly coloured patchwork tents covered the open space. There were cooking fires burning, and everyone was dressed in normal clothing, nothing like the dancers from the hall.

As they stood there, someone whistled a warning, and all activity stopped. Everyone turned to look at Cassie and Róisín.

A man stepped forward. He was wearing faded jeans, and a ripped shirt that had been mended with black thread.

“What do you want?”

His tone was threatening, and several people from the crowd moved to flank him, crossing their arms.

“Peace, *duine*,” Róisín said, an edge in her voice that reminded Cassie of Brea.

“I bring you one of your own.”

He studied her carefully, trying to read something in her face.

“You’re not planning on throwing up again, are you?”

Hazel made a face at him, grabbing at her middle with mock horror.

“No, Uncle Pat. I promise I won’t vomit all over your precious telescope.”

“Good. Then get over here. We’ve got a good clear sky tonight.”

Hazel levered herself up from the chair with difficulty, and walked over to the railing where Pat was adjusting the lens.

“How’s Junior?” Pat asked offhandedly, looking through the eyepiece of the telescope.

“Quiet tonight,” Hazel said, running a hand over her stomach. None of her clothes fit her anymore, so she was wearing one of Pat’s flannelette shirts. The cuffs of the sleeves flopped over her hands.

“Okay, here we go.” He guided Hazel over to the telescope. She didn’t throw off his hand on her upper back, testament to the trust he had built with her, slow and steady, over the past few months.

“Just there, over the mountain. That line of stars like a crooked W. That’s Cassiopeia.”

Hazel swivelled the telescope a little. “I can’t – oh! Yeah, I see it.”

She pulled back from the eyepiece and grinned at Pat.

“It’s pretty.”

She looked so much like his little sister that Pat couldn’t speak for a minute. Hazel was nearly identical to Gwen back when they were young, before the loss of Ivy

tapped some vital fault line right in the heart of his sister, and shattered her from the inside out.

“Yeah, kiddo. I guess it is pretty. Now, if you just turn it a little bit to the left –”

“Last night I had another vision.”

The hairs rose on the back of Pat’s neck. Hazel was swaying, her back to him, looking out over the trees.

Pat cleared his throat. He still wasn’t used to talking to Bridget.

“What did you see?”

“A great pillar of fire, and a cloud of smoke that smothered the whole world. Blood, and death, and a red moon rising to signal the coming.”

“The coming of what?”

The girl turned her head a little. Pat could see the whites of her eyes glittering in the darkness.

“I heard the *beansídhe* crying for you, Pádraig Flannery.”

“Bridget, what do you mean about something coming?”

The girl gave a gasp and shook her head, and when she turned to face him she was Hazel again.

“Dammit, Uncle Pat! You should have stuck me with a pin or something.”

“I told you before that I wouldn’t hurt you, and I still won’t.”

He walked inside to get himself a drink. Talking to Bridget always rattled him.

He heard Hazel follow him inside.

“What did she say this time?”

“The same. Blood and trees and the moon turning red.”

Pat didn't mention what she had said about the banshee. He remembered enough from the old stories to know that it wasn't a good thing, that the cry of the banshee was a harbinger of death.

Hazel sighed and dropped into a chair.

"She's been saying that for years. She used to tell Rowan that as well."

Pat grimaced at the mention of her old boyfriend, pouring himself some whisky. Bridget shared his opinion of Rowan, at least, calling him names in Irish that Pat understood the sentiment behind, if not the words themselves. Hazel, on the other hand, didn't seem to hold a grudge against the bastard who had beaten her senseless and burned her with cigarettes for over two years.

"There was something missing in him," Hazel had told him once. "I felt sorry for him, mostly, what he could have been if he wasn't missing what he was. He was charming and funny, and he could be sweet as well, sometimes."

"What do you think it means?"

Hazel was watching him, arms crossed on the kitchen counter. Pat put his glass down on the table, feeling the burn of the alcohol in his throat. He thought that it was a stretch to assume that the words meant anything. Bridget may have made the leap from Hazel's imaginary friend to another person in her head, as a way to deal with the loss of Ivy, but that didn't mean he should encourage her to listen to what it said.

"Nothing, probably. Just another dream."

The wind picked up, shaking the birches and whipping away stray leaves.

Muirne was teaching Áine about the medicinal properties of nettles when the child took off down the forest path. She was not surprised; the girl had been wilder than ever after the incident with Lochlan Delaney. In a stroke of ill luck, Sinead Delaney was the boy's grandmother, and wasted no time in telling whoever would listen that her darling grandson had been led astray by Muirne's *sídh* foster daughter.

The boy had come to no harm, but now Áine could barely take a step in the village without being criticised or scolded, and never spoke more than two words to Muirne if she could help it.

She could hear Áine talking animatedly out of sight around the bend, and stiffly raised herself from her kneeling position on the verge. Her knees creaked, and Muirne reflected wryly on how quickly time caught up with the old. When she was young, she had thought that she would be youthful forever. The young live for each flashing, vibrant moment, paying no attention to the future or the past, while the old can only dwell on the days they have seen, and the ones that they will never see.

Picking some nettles for her basket, Muirne turned to catch up with Áine.

But she was not prepared for the sight of the man who was talking to Áine. It had been nearly twenty years, but the pain she felt when she saw Finian was as fresh as on the day she had been forced to watch her husband die.

Finian saw her then, and recognised her a moment later, which bruised her pride.

“Have I changed so much, Finian Deoradhán?” She asked.

His mouth twitched with amusement, a gesture so familiar that Muirne wanted to weep.

“No, Muirne,” he replied. “Still as beautiful as ever.”

They stared at each other, Áine looking curiously between them. Finian regarded her warily, as well he might. But her rage had burned out long ago, and all Muirne felt as she looked at him was a faint disgust at how lightly the years had marked him. He might have been the young man she met in her twenties, when she was happy, and in love with a good man.

“Come along then, the both of you,” Muirne said wearily, and listened to their footsteps trail hers all the way back to the house.

After supper, Finian leaned in the doorway and lit his pipe, watching Áine play in the field across the way.

Muirne came to stand beside him, her familiar scent making him shift uncomfortably.

“Pretty, isn’t she?”

“Is geal leis an bhfiach dubh a ghearrcach féin.”

Muirne chuckled in her throat, and Finian felt like he had been stabbed. He had always been able to make her laugh.

“Truly though Finian, you see it, don’t you? Áine is like you.”

Finian had noticed. He had only met a handful of people on his travels with eyes like Áine’s.

“Her mother?”

“She was kept at Cnoc Meadha. She walked all the way here, heavy with child. I never had the chance to ask how she managed to escape Finnbheara’s snare. She was in the ground three days later.”

Finian grunted, not trusting himself to speak. It was a familiar tale. As far as he knew, his own mother had suffered a similar fate.

“Promise me something, Finian. For Seán’s sake. I know your sort, how you wreck lives and walk away without a scratch. I’ve watched it happen.”

He was accustomed to the weight of his guilt, but his shoulders trembled under the strain as he faced the woman whose life he had destroyed.

“I pray to God every day that Áine never knows the life that you lead. I want her to grow up kind and happy. I want her to marry a good man and live out her life fat and content, with children underfoot who never know hunger. I pray that I live to see that day.”

“What do you want of me?”

Muirne looked ancient in the harsh afternoon sun, old before her time.

“When you hear word of my death, I want you to stop your wandering and return here. I want you to find Áine, and if she is as you were when we were young ... I want you to take her away.”

“For her sake?”

“No.”

Muirne shook her head slowly, eyes drifting to a small group of children playing on the road.

“For them.”

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

The air was loud with waterfalls.

Ferns waved languidly. The boardwalk was wet beneath my boots with the spray. The glen fell away sharply, too deep to see the bottom. I was alone on the walkway, running my fingers along green moss clinging to the rock face. Glenariff is the prettiest of the Nine Glens of Antrim, a secret pocket of rainforest in stark contrast to the bare open plain of Glenann, or the gorse-covered hills of Glentaisie.

I crossed the wooden bridge over the water, following the line of the glen. Water trickled down the golden rocks. I cupped some in my hand to drink. It tasted fresh and cold. Something glinted in the sun, catching my eye. There was a tiny alcove at eye level, a natural break in the rocks where some of the spilling water had gathered into a small pool. A glittering necklace of water droplets fell unceasingly down, rippling the water. At the bottom of the pool were a handful of gold euro coins.

Who had left them, and why? Was it a case of whimsy, one spontaneous coin flipped into the water, and continued by whoever happened to walk by? Or was it deliberate, a shrine to something older and wiser that had lived here before the boardwalks had been built? If I left a coin, what would it mean, and who was I leaving it for? I decided to live dangerously. I took a coin from my pocket. It winked gold and silver as it fell into the pool, and I let it lie with the others.

I reached the bottom of the glen, and began to walk back towards the top. Sheep drifted in fleecy bundles through the field by the road. A maple cast toffee apple shades onto the path, dipping my outstretched hands in green and red. Two women and a baby in a pram were descending the hill. As we passed, the baby screwed up its face and began to wail, purple as a beetroot.

I could hear a creek on my left, hidden behind a row of thick trees. It occurred to me idly as I walked, that the fairies reputed to live in the park would be better off here, rather than near the waterfalls, with their constant stream of visitors. A child's laughter erupted from behind me, high pitched and quickly trailing off. I glanced over my shoulder at the women with the pram as they disappeared around the bend at the bottom of the trail, and kept walking.

That evening, I sat on the beach at Cushendun, tossing chips to the seagulls. They were a nobler breed than the ones I had grown up with, valiantly ignoring my efforts while some cheeky jackdaws had a chicken-salt flavoured feast. Carved on the bench at the edge of the beach was a woman, her hair unbound around her shoulders. She was reaching out helplessly towards the waves, doubled over with grief. A tribute, perhaps, to those fishermen who never returned from the sea.

I finished my dinner and strolled along the beach, tracing the line where the tide meets the sand with my bare toes. As I looked out over the ocean towards Scotland, I could see a white shape bobbing in the water. It came closer, and split into two, one waiting out in the bay, and the other continuing to approach. The swan rode the waves in to shore and stopped right in front of me, flapping its strong white wings. We stood and regarded each other, two creatures of air and sea and water, as the light died from the sky.

The moonlight made a silver path across the water.

Cassie was walking back to the little house she shared with Róisín beside the river. The *duine* always offered her a place to stay, but every night she refused. The children loved to hear her stories about Alberta and the mountains, although she often had to stop and explain things like streetlights and cinemas. The first time a little boy had asked her, quite innocently, what a car was, she had thought he was joking.

But a woman had taken her aside afterwards, smiling through her tears, and explained that for many of the children, this world was all they had ever known. The younger ones had never walked down a street, or eaten popcorn, or ridden a bike, and the older ones found it harder to remember.

“You don’t age here,” the woman had told her. “But that doesn’t mean that time stops. We’re all starting to forget.”

Cassie went to see them every day. She told the children stories and played with them, and in return the adults taught her what they knew. Never thank Them, or join the dancing, no matter how harmless it may seem. Don’t go into the forest alone at night, or tell Them your true name. Never drink the wine, or eat any piece of fruit that is offered to you.

Several people had scars from being caught in the *sídhe gaoithe*, and every night Róisín heated a needle in the light of the fire and lanced the boils on her arms. Cassie had been prepared for pus or blood to come oozing out, but within the swollen flesh were splinters of wood and cotton thread, skeleton leaves and pieces of straw. Her arms itched afterwards, but she was beginning to regain dexterity in her hands.

A lump on the inside of her wrist was tingling. Róisín usually soaked her arms before probing the boils, but Cassie couldn’t wait. She washed her hands in the stream and pierced the lump with her fingernail. It split under the pressure like the skin of a peach, and she kneaded out the object within. It was soft and round, and when she examined it by moonlight, Cassie realised it was a berry. She rinsed in the water and studied it as it rested on her palm. It was warm from being under her skin, and she imagined how sweet it would taste on her tongue.

She hadn’t eaten fruit in so long, and all at once longing rocked her with concussive force. She had to have it. She would die if she didn’t get to eat it. She was sweating and shaking, unable to look away from the little blue orb. Something rustled in the bushes, and Cassie met the eyes of a girl, gaunt and clad in rags.

The girl watched as she put the berry into her mouth, silent.

The forest was full of secrets.

Pat walked silently along the trail, Val at his side. They both had rifles over their shoulders. He was hoping to get a rabbit, or maybe a small deer, for dinner, and take Val’s mind off his missing sister. They had left Hazel, white-faced, on the sofa with a stiff drink at her elbow.

“Don’t worry about Cassie, Val. We’ll find her.”

Val brushed the sweat from his face with his sleeve, and didn't reply. It was humid beneath the trees, and the air was sticky in their lungs.

"Did you hear me?"

"Yeah, I just ... you know. I've never seen Mom like that before."

Pat understood. He and Val had never really needed to talk. They shared the silent language of the hunt, the tracks pressed into the earth, the patience needed to stalk prey, the weight of the gun as you waited for the moment when breath and eye and trigger aligned. And he knew, better than anyone, the grief of those left behind.

"It won't be like it was with your ma's sister, Val. I promise."

"Wait," Val murmured. His eyes had clouded over. He always knew what trail the deer would take, or the berry patches that the bears would favour, and Pat waited, resting the stock of his gun in the crook of his arm.

"This way," he said, and they kept walking.

"Cassie's a tough customer," Pat offered eventually.

"Wherever she is, she's bending it to her will, mark my words."

Val quirked his lips, and then crouched, sighting along the barrel.

"There," he hissed.

They returned up the trail with a brace of rabbits to find every light in the cabin blazing. Dropping the kill, Pat and Val raced up the steps and burst into the house. Hazel was standing facing the door with Pat's old baseball bat swinging from her fist.

Pat approached cautiously, trying to see what Hazel was looking at.

"What the hell?" Val exclaimed, lowering his gun.

Cassie was standing in the doorway.

Hawthorn

When winter sleep is abroad my hair grows thin,

My feet unsteady. When the leaves awaken

My mother carries me in her golden arms;

I'll soon put on my womanhood and marry

The spirits of wood and water, but who can tell

When I was born for the first time?

-W. B. Yeats, *'The land of heart's desire'*

Burnished silver wings. A tilting church spire. The shadow of Ben Bulbin, gliding like a vast sailing ship behind sheets of rain. I had come to Yeats's grave in Drumcliff, and the memory of the sunny coast of Ballycastle dissipated like wisps of fog. I could see my breath. The busload of tourists that had poured across the cemetery, leaning against headstones and kicking carefully arranged flowers to get a closer look, swarmed away in a cloud of bright umbrellas and rain jackets to the safety of the café. Alone, I studied the epithet Yeats had asked to be inscribed on the black marble, and passed by, as per instruction, wandering towards the road. Drumcliff Church had a pair of swans emblazoned on its door, wings grimly spread as though to ward off insufficiently penitent sinners. I slipped past the avian guardians to peruse the church, circumnavigating the nave through streaks of ghostly rainbow light from the stained glass windows. I returned to the rain and the empty churchyard. I have never felt particularly at ease in churches. Graveyards, however, I had come to regard as places of calm. Only a few days ago I had spent a relaxing afternoon in a tiny cemetery in Cushendall, back against a tree as tombstones leaned drunkenly this way and that, with the sea in one ear and the complaining of sheep in the other.

Walking in the seven woods of Coole, on Lady Gregory's estate in County Galway, Yeats wrote about the wild swans as they whirled overhead, disturbed from the dark surface of the lakes into the open air. Those long walks through the woods stirred

Yeats' imagination; his mind churning with folk songs and old tales, with no interest in conversation unrelated to Faery and its inhabitants. His final resting place in the shadow of Ben Bulbin was no accident, with its history of encounters with tall, comely strangers who prophesied the deaths of the people living in the mountain's shade, and issued dire warnings about the consequences of hunting game on its slopes.

My own journey thus far had also been oddly punctuated with swan encounters. In Ballycastle, a white sculpture of four swans stands near the shoreline. The lines of the swans meld with each other, their straining necks and beating wings mirror images against the blinding blue sky. This is the land of the Children of Lir, those four ill-fated innocents of Irish mythology, cursed by their jealous stepmother to spend nine hundred years in the shape of birds. Aodh, Fionnuala, Fiachra, and Conn spent three hundred of those years in the Sea of Moyle, the same waters that lap against the coastline of Ballycastle. Add to this the swans on the sunlit grass on St Stephen's Green in Dublin, the strange encounter I had at twilight on the beach at Cushendun, and the two engraved on the church door in Drumcliff, and I seemed entangled in a string of coincidences. I paused by the High Cross, carved by monks in the eleventh century, to admire the lines of saints and beasts marching across its surface. Out of the corner of my eye I caught a flicker of movement at the top of the cross. A raven, hunched against the rain, cocked its bright eye at me and my raven-head amulet. In Norse mythology, ravens are the messengers of the gods, the eyes and ears of Odin. Its feathers gleamed purple-black against the silver sky.

A frigid wind rattled the trees.

Pat watched his niece pace back and forth in the kitchen. She was smoking in a distracted, half-hearted way, filter inches from her lips as her eyes jumped left and right with her thoughts.

He ran a hand over his eyes, attempting to rub away the headache threatening to take root there.

"I'm not following you."

“There’s something wrong,” she insisted, increasing her strides. “I can tell that there is. Something that’s she done, or something that’s happened to her, and she won’t say.”

“Hazel ...”

“I *know* something’s happened, Pat. I may never have been a great mother, but I know my own daughter.”

“Then just go to her, and ask. What are you waiting for?”

“Val’s with her,” Hazel replied restlessly, swiping hair from her eyes and turning sharply on her heel. “They’ve never had any secrets.”

She drew hard on the cigarette, and sent a cloud of blue smoke swirling across the room. Pat was torn between snapping at her for lighting up in a house made entirely from wood, and taking a drag himself.

“For a second there, I didn’t even recognise her, did you know that? I didn’t recognise my own damn daughter. What kind of person-”

She cut herself off savagely. Hazel had always been too hard on herself when it came to the twins. She stopped and faced him, arms crossed tightly across her stomach. He could see the white scars on her arms under the kitchen lights.

“I wish I could talk to her.”

Her eyes were on his, apprehensive at the confession, and Pat realised that she didn’t mean Cassie. Hazel hadn’t mentioned Bridget in years. He had thought that once she had come to trust him and see the cabin as her home, Bridget was no longer needed. She had been discarded in favour of the mountains and the stars and the gurgle of the twins’ laughter, as they kicked their legs in the pinewood crib he had carved for them.

“She would have known how to deal with this.”

“You can deal with it just fine, kiddo. Trust me.”

Pat could feel his back beginning to ache, stiffening up like it did whenever he stood still too long.

Hazel lifted the cigarette to her lips again, eyes skittering away. She didn't believe him. It hurt to think that she trusted Bridget's advice over his, after everything.

"You know who she reminds me of?"

Pat leaned against the counter next to her, stealing the cigarette from between her lax fingers and drawing the burning smoke into his lungs.

"Who?"

Pat nudged her shoulder.

"You. When you first came here. Skinny and tired and terrified that I would kick you out over any little thing. Maybe you're right, and Cassie has been through something. Maybe something that she doesn't think you will understand. But we're going to prove her wrong."

Hazel watched him solemnly.

"Are we?"

"Sure. Just like I proved you wrong. She'll come and talk to you eventually. It might take a week. It might take a year. But you're her mother, and you love her. And she knows that."

Hazel looked out the window. Pat knew what she was doing, and waited her out, watching the threads of grey in her hair glinting in the yellow light. When she turned back, the only evidence was the over-brightness of her eyes.

"Thanks, Uncle Pat," she said, and kissed his cheek, switching out the kitchen light and padding barefoot down the hall towards her room.

He stood for a while smoking and thinking in the darkness, trying not to remember the smell of spirits and the dry rasping voice of Bridget, in those awful moments when Hazel forgot who she was, digging bruises into his arms with manic strength as she fought him.

She hadn't recognised him at all, even when he called her name.

The girl looked at him warily with her mismatched eyes, basket held between them like a shield. Finian's disarming smile only made her eyes narrow further.

"Can I help you?" She asked, a little bite in her voice left over from the fight with her beau.

"I am almost afraid to ask," Finian teased, strolling leisurely down the path towards her, "after bearing witness to that scene in the road."

Áine huffed and turned her back, continuing down the track.

"Cuir síoda ar ghabhar agus is gabhar i gcónaí é", she said tartly over her shoulder.

Finian laughed openly, the strong sunshine warming him through, and pleased, despite himself, that Muirne's daughter still had her fire.

"Do you not remember me, little Áine?"

The girl stopped again, subjecting him to a searching stare, eyes flickering all over him with an intensity that made Finian appreciate anew just how unnerving their kind could be. Brilliant, of course, and beautiful, but possessed of short, sharp tempers and eyes that could slash a man to ribbons.

"Yes," she said slowly. "Now that you mention it, you do seem familiar. Weren't you Mother's friend?"

"Now that is a change. The first time we met, you told me was that she was not your true mother at all."

Áine bristled, squaring her shoulders to him.

"Can a woman be a mother when you never knew her?"

"That depends."

"On what?"

Finian brushed past her, knowing with amusement that she would have to follow him to hear the answer. He waited until she caught up, growling under her breath with temper, before he replied.

“On whether she left, or was taken from you.”

Áine was silent, pacing shoulder to shoulder with him. She would be nearly as tall as him when she came of age, an altogether formidable woman.

“She died,” she said finally, swinging the basket under her arm.

“Then she is your mother,” Finian said, “although that does not make Muirne of any less importance.”

They had reached the cottage, and Áine stood watching him closely.

“Who were you to Muirne?”

Finian did not intend to lie. Not about this, in any case.

“I was her friend. And her enemy.”

The girl seemed to come to a decision, shaking her gold hair impatiently from her eyes.

“I know your people. Mother was always kind to them, and in her memory, I will give you meat and drink, and a place to sleep. But that is all I will offer, Finian Deoradhán.”

Finian chuckled exultantly. Oh, she was dangerous and delightful in equal measure, and she knew it. Removing his cap, he sketched a bow, and she preceded him into the house, back straight and proud at the knowledge of his eyes on her.

She was everything that Muirne had feared she would become.

He already knew how he would entice her away, with tales of the road stretching out under the sky, and adventures sewn together from his years of travel. But with none of the monotony of sleeping in ditches in the bitter rain, of being hounded from village after village for fighting, or being too familiar with a girl, or just for his odd looks, or of the endless weary search year after year reflected in the eyes of fellow travellers, knowing their despair as your own, but with no choice than to keep moving.

Finian had a clever tongue, and he was confident that he would move the girl to accompany him. He would keep his promise, and by the time Áine realised the truth, it would be too late.



She was playing the piano again.

Val threw back the covers, bare feet resting on the cold floor, listening hard. There it was, a ripple of chords as she drew a fingertip over the keys. Soon, she would select a random note and play it over and over, a torturous rhythm like the ticking of a clock. At first, Val had thought that it was Cassie's way of dealing with what had happened, slicing her thoughts into neat piles with each clear plink of the key, late at night when no one would bother her with questions.

But it had been nearly two weeks, and Val was beginning to suspect that Cassie was waiting for something. Burying his hands in his armpits for warmth, Val walked silently from his room, following the piano notes that hung in the air. His sister was slumped over the piano, hair hiding her face. The moon shone through the windows, turning everything black and white; the lines of the piano, the pictures on the walls, and Cassie's finger as it descended mechanically, again and again, onto the same ivory key.

"Cass?" Val whispered, reaching out to touch her shoulder.

Something white and flapping burst into Val's face, blasting his ears with a maddened shriek. He fell backwards, arm flung up to protect his face as three blazing lines of pain scored his cheek. When he managed to look up, Cassie was sitting quietly on the piano seat facing him, winding her hair around her finger.

"What the hell was that?" Val gasped, trying to get his legs beneath him.

"What was what?" She replied innocently, and smiled at him.

Val began to shake, deep in his core. He remained crouched on the carpet, ready to fight or run, his hands twitching with nerves. Cassie didn't smile that way. Val had

seen her in a thousand different moods, furious, depressed, gleeful, focused, and he knew the exact shape of her smile, from the embarrassed twitch of her lips when he teased her, to her hysterical bouts of silent laughter. He had never seen her like this, teeth bared in a triumphant snarl.

“Cass?” He asked again, and heard the waver in his voice.

“Guess again,” she said, and swung herself one-handed onto the piano lid with feline grace. Her eyes glinted yellow in the black and white room, animalistic as the glowing eyes he saw through the scope of his hunting rifle at night.

“Who are you? Or what are you?” Val asked, rising carefully to his feet. He stepped sideways, keeping eye contact all the time, and put the sofa between them, as he would a boulder or a stand of trees in the presence of a cougar. There was a shotgun hanging on the wall, and he knew that Uncle Pat kept it loaded, with extra cartridges in the chest of drawers underneath in case a bear got in. All he had to do was get close enough to grab the weapon before it attacked.

The thing on the piano guessed his intentions, and gave a rusty cackle.

“Are you going to shoot me, brother?”

Val took another step closer to the gun.

“You’re not my sister.”

The creature shifted on the piano, watching his every move with unblinking eyes.

“*Up the airy mountain, down the rushy glen ...*” it chanted in an eerie sing-song, the empty grin still on its face.

“Don’t you dare,” Val hissed, one hand outstretched into empty air, grasping for the gun.

“*We daren’t go a-hunting ... for fear of little men.*”

The thing wearing his sister’s face unhinged its jaw and gave another rustling, dry chuckle.

His fingers brushed cold metal as it launched itself towards him, hands outstretched like claws.

The bang shattered the stillness of the room.

It sounded like a gunshot, and I reeled upright in bed, a yell sticking in my dry throat.

Fumbling for the light switch, I discovered that my suitcase had tipped from the low table I had deposited it on, spilling clothes and phone chargers over the patterned carpet. The primitive burst of terror faded, and I crawled wearily across the covers to retrieve my things. The room creaked and the floor shifted as someone walked down the hall outside. I squinted at the alarm on the bedside table. 3:00 AM. Late for a midnight stroll. But this hotel didn't lend itself to sleep. Before my sudden awakening, I had been dreaming about Ben Bulben, the long crest of rock visible from every window of the hotel wing in which I was staying. The mountain was grinding inexorably across the landscape in my nightmare, crushing picturesque villages and fields alike in its path, and I had the uneasy feeling that beneath the surface lurked more rippling shards of limestone, like an earthbound iceberg cutting its merciless path to the sea.

I spent two days encased inside the Clarion Hotel, perched on the hill above the town of Sligo like a gargoyle, drifting along its endless straight corridors. The façade of the hotel was grim grey stone, with a small Gothic church, and two severe watchtowers thrusting up into the pale sky. The staff at the Clarion all had shimmering plastic smiles. My enquiry about a table for dinner in the hotel's restaurant on my first night was rebuffed by one of these identical, suited automatons, and accordingly I allowed my diet to dwindle entirely to potato chips, soft drink, and bars of chocolate scrounged from the vending machines at the end of the hall. I avoided my fellow guests during these anti-social dashes for sustenance. On one occasion, a small girl threw open the door to her room and giggled at me in an encounter uncomfortably reminiscent of *The Shining*.

Locked inside my hotel room, I passed the time watching television or scrolling through social media sites. I felt very remote as I read about the exploits of my friends and family, only able to summon a vague interest in their lives. It felt as

though I had left them years ago, rather than a few short weeks. I had meant to drive to Ben Bulbin, its outline constantly catching at my eye as I walked the corridors, to explore its lower slopes. But I could not seem to muster the energy even to plan the short trip. At one point, while trying to find the keys to my hire car, I became aware of a completely involuntary series of ‘No’ streaming from my mouth. If someone had been with me, and asked why I couldn’t seem to leave the hotel, I doubt that I could have given them a logical reason. Only that the idea of leaving seemed so ridiculous, so outside my ability to achieve, that I would have laughed in their face if they had suggested it. The second night, I kept the lights on and sat up watching an endless series of documentaries. Sleep was impossible, and in the morning I checked out early, red-eyed, with hands that shook almost imperceptibly when I handed over my credit card.

Later, I did some research on the Clarion Hotel, and discovered that it used to be St Columba’s, a psychiatric hospital opened in 1848. To the locals, however, it was known as the Sligo and Leitrim District Lunatic Asylum. The hotel had, remarkably enough, failed to mention that in its advertising. I had a suspicion that the melancholy and paranoia of the past two days could be explained by this revelation. I am not sure that I believe in ghosts, but hauntings are a different story. The grief and horror and anger of the past boiling under a thin veneer of paint and polite silence. The more you try to suppress something, the more it bursts through a thousand other seams, like water seeping through a cracked dam wall.

Something has to give in the end.

It was Áine’s curiosity that broke under Finian’s silence, to his surprise. He had begun a personal wager with himself that it would be her temper. Instead, as they walked across the high mountain pass, Áine, breathless but seemingly in good spirits, asked about how he and Muirne had met.

Finian settled into his usual pace, which suited his long legs and ate up the lonely miles, modulating his voice to the rhythm of his feet. Áine, with her shorter stride, struggled to keep up, but his tale would keep her mind off the growing distance between them and the village in which she had been born.

“I was young, and hot-blooded, and I was drifting through Munster looking for a girl or a fight, whichever presented itself first. So I went into the nearest public house, and fell right into a secret meeting for the young men of the area. They were riled up with drink, and looking to make mischief with the landlords for their tithes and poor wages. At first, they thought I was a spy, and would have put a knife through my ribs, but their leader, a rangy lad named Seán, asked if I would join them. I was keen to do something foolish, especially if it meant angering the blue bloods, so I fell in with them.”

He paused to collect his thoughts, aware of Áine rapt with attention at his shoulder.

“I stayed with them for nearly two years, taking shelter where we could in the houses of those sympathetic to our cause. We hid our firearms in the straw with the animals when the soldiers came. We went where we were needed, swelling our ranks in every town, and Seán became the closest friend I ever had. We fought like cats and dogs over the smallest things, and then the next day we were drinking and fighting side by side like nothing had happened. He thought I was vain and hot-tempered, and I thought he was a solemn fool. In truth, he was the most decent man I had ever met.”

Áine’s face was shining with delight.

“Which gang were you with, Finian? The Whiteboys? Carders? Ribbonmen?”

Finian winked at her.

“I took an oath, *cailín*. I have never broken it, and never will.”

“Then, when did you meet Muirne? Or is that a secret as well?”

“We were in Limerick, staying at the house of a local man known to be allied with our cause. He had one daughter, a dark-eyed beauty with the sharpest tongue I had ever known in a woman. Seán, of course, fell for her at once, and she drew blood with her words more than once on the besotted fool. But she must have loved him, because they were married within a month of courting.”

Áine was grinning at the thought of dour, one-eyed Muirne as a laughing, teasing girl with her handsome rebel lover.

“What happened then?” She prompted him when he fell silent.

Finian didn’t like to remember what had happened after that. *Just give me a little more time*, he pleaded silently with the grass and the wind and girl beside him, *just a little time to remember us three as we were, young and proud and in love*.

“Finian?”

“What always happens, when one of us achieves even a small piece of happiness. Everything went wrong.”

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Val stood with his back to the wall, the barrel of the shotgun pressed against his sister’s chest. The creature had stopped inches from him, and now stood regarding him with its head tipped to one side, ignoring the weapon entirely.

“What now, *ceannródaí*?” it asked. This close, Val could see that its skin was not like human skin at all, but weathered and lined like wood grain.

His hands were steady, but he couldn’t keep the fear out of his voice.

“Where’s Cassie?”

“Right here,” the creature said, indicating itself, yellow eyes rolling back into its skull.

When they snapped forward again to look at him, they were filled with tears.

“Please Val, don’t hurt me. Put down the gun, Val please, I’m your sister, *please*-”

It sounded just like Cassie did when she was scared.

“*Stop it*,” Val growled.

“You wouldn’t hurt me, would you Val? Remember the bear, when we were little? You were the one that the bear went after, but I was the one who had nightmares for

months and months. I used to hide in your bed and you would stroke my hair, and tell me that it was all going to be okay.”

“How – how the hell do you know that?”

The creature grinned savagely at him.

“Why did you leave her, Val? Why did you leave her alone? She was *scared*. She *needed* you Val, why did you let her be taken?”

“I didn’t – stop it! How do you know this? You’re not her!”

It held out a long pale arm, crossed with purple and red veins.

“I have her memories, and her fears, her desires and her thoughts. A little bit of her is in me.”

“You can’t play the piano like her though,” Val pointed out, hoping to wound it.

But it only shuttered its bright eyes momentarily.

“That is not my purpose.”

Val could barely believe that any of this was happening. It felt like a vivid, technicolour nightmare. He could feel the trigger under his finger, the boards under his feet. He could *smell* the creature, a mouldy bitter smell like decaying wood.

“So ...” he said, trying to clear his head, “So, you feel what she feels.”

It watched him impassively, flexing its grotesquely long, white fingers. The longer they stood there, the less human the creature seemed.

“Can she feel what you feel?”

The creature’s mouth cracked into another wide grin. Slowly, deliberately, it grasped the barrel of the shotgun and raised it to rest between its mad yellow eyes.

“Why don’t you find out?”

Val was tempted. It might be lying. But what if it wasn’t, and the impact of the bullet raced back along whatever cord bound them together, and killed Cassie as well? He

couldn't risk it. It saw his decision even as he made it, and with horrible strength knocked the barrel aside with a single blow.

Before he could react, it had snapped cold fingers around his throat and knocked him back against the wall.

"What would you give to see her again?" It asked him.

Anything, he wanted to say. But his throat closed around the word. Promising anything to this creature seemed like a very bad idea.

"What do you want?" He asked instead.

In answer, Val felt blinding pain down his forearm.

"*More*," it whispered into his ear.

Blood splattered across the ground.

Finian ran into the barn in time to see the man slump to the ground, and the knife in Áine's white-knuckled fist. She was looking down at her attacker with disgust, and Finian gave a brief prayer of thanks that he had taught her how to defend herself.

He reached her side in three strides, pulling Áine to his chest.

"You didn't kill the bastard, did you, love?" He asked, tilting her chin up with his hand. Her eyes were glassy with shock, but met his at once with disdain.

"Of course not. He'll live, but he'll be walking a little more slowly the rest of his days, by God," she snarled, glaring down at the farmer as he clutched his wounded thigh and cursed them both.

"Get out of here, you *meascach* bastard! And take that *síofra* whore with you!"

Finian paid the man no attention, skimming his thumbs lightly over Áine's cheekbones. But Áine could never take an insult lightly, and colour blazed into her pale cheeks. She looked at the man lying on the filthy straw, and opened her eyes wide, knowing full well the effect of her uncanny gaze.

"*Go ndeine an diabhal dréimire de cnámh do dhroma ag piocadh úll i ngairdín Ifrinn*," she intoned in a weird, wavering tone, never blinking.

The man blanched.

“Witch!” He accused, voice high with fear, and began to drag himself towards the entrance.

Finian watched him go, amused despite himself at Áine’s antics, while she wiped her knife clean on the straw and replaced it in the concealed pouch at her waist.

She turned to smile at him.

“Time to move on, perhaps?”

The bastard must have hit her. The corner of her eye was swelling, and Finian leaned in to kiss it gently.

“The weather is mild enough to walk through the night, I think.”

“Good,” she said decisively, and they left through the back of the barn, taking the few personal belongings they had accumulated in the three years since Áine had joined Finian on his travels.

They fell quickly into their accustomed strides, leaving the village, where they had sheltered for most of the winter, behind in the dark. Finian watched Áine out of the corner of his eye as they walked. She had matured into a tall and beautiful woman, with a proud carriage and an athletic grace in her movements. The years of travel had not worn her down yet, as it had other women Finian had seen on the road, and she still eagerly looked ahead for what might await them around the bend. He could not recall exactly when he began to love her, only that it had happened in small increments as she moved from pupil to companion to partner. He admired everything about her, from her lightning-quick temper to her eyes to her undaunted courage. Even when they argued bitterly, there was a part of him that stood back and loved every minute of her sharp tongue and flashing gaze. She was more like Muirne than she realised.

Áine saw him looking at her, and gifted him with a gentle smile. In answer, he caught up one of her hands and kissed her smooth skin. In silent companionship, they walked until dawn, and then lay down to rest near the strand, all shades of pearl and rose in the sunrise. Áine slept like the dead, pressed against Finian’s side, and

dreamed that someone was singing a lament. It was one of the saddest songs that she had ever heard, and in the dream she wept, and sought to comfort those who sang, but all around was thick white fog, and she could not find them.

To her surprise, when Áine opened her eyes, the singing continued.

“Ochón is ochón ó!”

Finian stirred as she sat up, the better to hear the mournful lament. A single voice rang out over the others, and tears sprang to Áine’s eyes as she listened.

“Na laetha geal m’óige

Bhí siad lán de dhóchas,

An bealach mór a bhí romham anonn

Bhí sé i ndán domh go mbeinn, slán, slán.

Anois, táim buartha,

’S fad ar shiúl an lá,

Ochón is ochón ó!”

“Who is that singing?” She whispered, wiping her eyes with the back of her hand.

Finian grunted and turned over on the hard ground.

“It is the *roane*,” he answered, voice blurred by sleep, “the seal-folk.”

When he woke again, she was standing over him.

“Hazel?” Pat muttered, still mostly asleep.

“What’s wrong?”

She didn’t respond, only swayed a little, and the familiarity of the motion sent a warning chill right through him.

“Bridget,” he said, and she looked down at him, her face in shadow.

“Pádraig Flannery, I have need of you.”

“What is it?”

“Join me downstairs in two minutes,” she said and left.

Shivering and stiff, Pat pulled on his clothes, hardly daring to think what could have set Hazel off like this.

Coming downstairs, he found her standing by one of the windows, looking out into the woods. Snow had fallen during the night, enough to cover the ground and turn the trees into glittering icicles.

Pat approached in silence, not quite sure of how to handle the situation.

“Hazel, wake up,” he tried as he stopped beside her.

“What’s happened? Is it the twins?”

She didn’t move, and when she spoke, it was still Bridget’s voice that rasped from her vocal chords.

“We have not spoken much together, you and I, Pádraig, although I have known you all your life. I used to watch you when you and Gwen played in my house as children. I did not know then what all this would come to, in the end. But now I find myself in need of your help.”

Pat crossed his arms over his chest and glared at her.

“Get to the point. I want my sister’s little girl back.”

Bridget looked at him then, and it was hard to believe that she and Hazel were the same person. She looked old, and sad, and tired beyond her years. She looked like a complete stranger.

“*Bíonn an fhírinne searbh,*” she said, and Pat waited impatiently for her to start making sense, shifting from foot to foot.

“Cassie is lost,” she said suddenly, “and even as we speak Val is being drawn away.”

“What the hell are you talking about?” Pat growled.

“Your family is in danger, Pádraig, and it grows more perilous every second.”

“Why would you say that? Why would – why don’t you just go away? Hazel doesn’t need you anymore. Why don’t you just leave us in *peace*?”

Pat was nearly shouting, and made an effort to lower his voice to prevent waking the twins. The same twins that he knew for a fact were sleeping soundly in their beds, and not in any kind of danger, and who he would check on just as soon as he had made Bridget loosen her grip on Hazel’s mind.

“I wish that I could, Pádraig Flannery. You do not comprehend how I wish that I could have these last twenty years undone. How much I despise myself for not being able to save Ivy as well.”

Speechless and shaking head to foot in rage, Pat stared at the woman in disbelief as tears slid down her cheeks.

“But we do not have time to rake over the past. Val is being led astray, and I fear that far worse has already befallen Cassie.”

In exasperation, Pat turned away, stomping up the stairs with no regard for his aching back towards the twins’ bedrooms. Maybe if he got them out of bed, and showed Hazel that they were safe, it would be enough to snap her out of it.

But Cassie’s room was empty. The bed looked as though it hadn’t been slept in for days. Dread clutched at Pat’s chest, and he lurched towards Val’s room, already knowing what he would find. The covers of Val’s bed were twisted on the floor, and his closet doors were open, showing that he had dressed in a hurry. Pat knew without looking that his boots would be gone from the door. Both the twins were out in the woods in the middle of the night, and he had to find them.

Moving with purpose now, all traces of tiredness fading, Pat strode back to his bedroom and dressed in layers for the cold, topping it with his well-worn hunting jacket. He grabbed a torch and his boots and returned downstairs, ignoring Bridget as he moved towards the door.

“Pádraig, wait. You must listen to me.”

Pat cut her off with a wave of his hand, sitting on the bench by the door to pull on his boots.

“If Cassie is lost, like you say, then who’s been living in our house for the past couple of weeks?”

Bridget hesitated, uncertainty crossing her features.

“A *síofra*. A changeling.”

Pat scoffed and stood, turning his back on her as he opened the gun cabinet.

“Don’t take a rifle,” she said from behind him, sounding resigned.

“Take a pistol, if you must. Something that can be easily concealed. It will do you no good, but perhaps the iron will protect you.”

Pat wanted nothing more than to ignore her advice, but it never hurt to be prepared. He chose a Glock, checking that it was loaded, and tucked it into his waistband. He also took his hunting rifle, along with a knife, and turned to leave.

“Good luck,” Bridget said, “and God keep you.”

He couldn’t look at her. Instead, he slapped the torch against his palm until it flickered on, and stepped out into the winter night without a backwards glance.



The moon is being carved away, slice by thin slice. Each night, you can think a little more clearly.

The first thing you become aware of is the pinching emptiness of your stomach. You go to the hall and feast to your heart’s content, avoiding the wine. The fruit is a torment, as it always is; plump bunches of grapes, smooth peaches, and shiny red apples on golden plates. But you know the damage even a single berry can do, and force your attention elsewhere.

The next thing you do is move from the woods into Róisín’s ramshackle cottage. You can’t remember why you don’t sleep here all the time. Róisín tells you that she has never minded you staying here. In fact, she enjoys the company. But neither does

she explain to you why you find it necessary to sleep in the forest amongst the dirt and the *púca*, only smiles a little sadly, and goes about her business.

The third thing that happens is the dreams. You do not usually have dreams, but as soon as the moon begins to shrink, you have dreams every single night. You do not always remember what happens during them, only that sometimes you wake laughing and other times weeping. You are looking forward to when the moon disappears completely, because every strip of light that vanishes from the sky seems to be filling a hole inside you that you weren't even aware existed. It is not as though the night is empty without the moon, after all.

The sky was dripping with stars.

It was a beautiful night, perfect for tracking. The moon was bright and full, and clearly lit the newly fallen snow. As Pat set out, he could see the light paw prints of a fox, and the muddled tracks of a herd of elk, along with stripped and crushed leaves from their feeding. It did not take him long to find Val's tracks. They were confident and evenly spaced, which eased Pat's mind a little, although he was confused to not find a second pair of tracks which should belong to Cassie. Val seemed to know where he was going, and Pat followed through the silent forest, hoping to catch up with him quickly.

But he went on and on through the trees, and Val did not appear. His footprints continued steadily, and Pat began to wonder where the hell he was going. There was nothing in this direction but wilderness. Then he came upon a trampled patch of snow, and knelt quickly down to study it. It looked as though Val had stopped and stood indecisively for a while, shifting his weight to keep his blood circulating in the frosty air, before striking off at an angle to his original path.

"Where are you going, kiddo?" Pat murmured under his breath. This time the tracks led into thick brush, and he had a harder time following where Val had gone. Worry began to trickle into the back of his mind, and he found himself checking his weapons repeatedly to make sure he was ready for whatever might happen.

The undergrowth began to clear, and to his relief Pat could see Val's tracks clearly again, marching along the same as ever. They went to the base of a huge fir, large enough for Pat to hug without his hands being able to touch. Then all sign of Val

disappeared. Systematically, Pat combed the area, looking for any evidence of where he might have gone. But there was nothing, and puzzled, he circled back around to the tree where the footprints abruptly stopped.

Then his breath caught in his throat, and his blood ran cold. In the silence of the woods, Pat could hear someone *laughing* at him. He turned in a wary circle, rifle in his hands. Nothing stirred in the moonlight, and Pat wondered, over the pounding of his heart, whether he was hearing things. He turned back to the tree, and nearly had a heart attack.

Cassie was standing in front of him. Or rather, something that looked enough like his grand-niece to set his teeth on edge.

“Hello, Uncle Pat,” it said with a nasty little grin, and Pat levelled his rifle at it.

“Don’t talk to me like that,” he ordered.

“Like what?”

“Like you’re human.”

Because it clearly wasn’t human. Pat was seeing that more clearly every second, as though his vision was clearing. It didn’t look like Cassie at all anymore, but something cold and pale and tall, with skin that reflected the moonlight. It leaned forward, as though offering a secret.

“I am more *human* than I was, thanks to Val.”

“What have you done with him?”

Pat released the safety, so that the creature would know he was serious. But it only blinked its yellow eyes at him.

“I can smell the *cailleach* on you,” it remarked, sniffing the air.

“But,” it went on, grinning unpleasantly, “you are not a *siceach* like the woman, are you? That won’t help you one bit in there, by the way. Best leave it behind, and just take the knife.”

It was pointing at his rifle. It certainly didn't seem scared of it. Maybe it couldn't be hurt by bullets. Maybe it was lying.

"Leave it and go where?" Pat asked.

"The way is open," the creature said, and contorted its body. A flurry of snow hid its struggling figure, and something feathered and white flew up into the tree a minute later, leaving bare snow behind.

Pat looked up, tracking its flight, but was distracted when the fir groaned and shook down to its roots. He felt the ground move under his boots. Then the trunk of the enormous tree cracked, right down the middle. The fissure widened, and a warm golden light poured through the gap. Pat raised an arm to shield his eyes.

It smelled like summer.

The dreams always begin the same way. You are playing with someone in the forest. You know that it is not the same forest as the one you are in now, because the air tastes different on your tongue, lighter, fizzing with sunlight. You run along the path, and the sun darts at you between the trees, trailing warm fingers over your neck and arms. Dizzy with joy, you run much faster than the person with you, and end up at the house before them.

It is an abandoned old cottage covered with ivy. But inside is a treasure trove of things, bright ribbons and little statues, toys and scarves and things tied together with scraps of twine and grass. You don't know what this place is, but it's pretty and you spin in mad circles with your arms outstretched because it is secret and hidden and you have discovered it.

The other person reaches the house at last, and comes in to look at all the lovely things. They take too long, and you grow bored, and go outside to pick dandelions from the grass. If you face into the wind and blow as hard as you can, then the little seeds blow back to tickle your nose. You are busy doing this when a shadow falls across you, and you look up to see an angel.

It was too bright to look at directly.

I shielded my eyes with my free hand, clutching the map as a rogue breeze threatened to tear it from my hand. Gillighan's World was spread out before me on the paper, a network of paths and illustrations of fairies. The map was more colourful and cheerful than the reality around me. I had just watched a young couple enter the gardens with their child, take one look at the ragged ribbons flapping on the fairy tree, and the faded, cracked ceramic statues and toadstools that spread across every surface, and do an abrupt about-face towards the carpark. So it was in complete solitude that I walked through the site. Bored donkeys hung their long muzzles over the fences. Stagnant green ponds were encircled by cement surrounds. Gnomes and other whimsical creatures lurked under palm fronds and behind tree trunks with empty plaster smiles.

I reached the faerie ring at the back of the property, a raised horseshoe of turf with a bare patch of earth covered with gold coins at its centre. The lady at the gate told me that if I left a coin and turned counter-clockwise in circles in the middle of the ring, eyes tightly closed, and opened them looking in the direction of Knocknashee, then the fairies would grant me a wish. The hill of Knocknashee rose to the right of the ring, bisected with fences. Sheep grazed placidly on its high curving slopes. Once, Knocknashee was known as Mullinabreena, the 'fairy palace', for the cairns and ruins on the crest of the hill. I turned on my heel and returned to my car without entering the ring. I did not need the fairies to grant my wish. I would climb Knocknashee and see it for myself.

Leaving my car on the road, I hiked up the unpaved path, through the knee-high mud of a cow pasture, towards Knocknashee. The ticket collector at Gillighan's World, seeming glad of something to do, had informed me about how to approach the hill, spinning a tale of a gently rising road, used by the archaeologists when they were excavating the hillfort. Perhaps I am not much of a path-finder, because I failed to find this fabled road just as I had failed to locate the mountain gate on Slieve Foye. But this time I would not content myself with the view from its heathery flanks, but was determined to find a way to the top. A ditch ran up the side of Knocknashee, lined with stunted trees and shrubs, and the fence of the neighbouring property. The ditch was choked with thistles as tall as I was, so I walked, doubled over, up the low avenue of trees instead, branches scraping my neck and sweat dripping off me in the humid air.

Reaching the end of the ditch, I crossed the open hillside diagonally, clutching at tufts of grass to compensate for the extreme slope, aiming for a lone whitethorn bush clinging to the side of the hill. Bracing myself against its twisted trunk, I turned towards the summit. A sagging wire fence lay ahead, and rocks shifted under my feet as I used a low makeshift wall of stones to cross it. I was trespassing now, and walked briskly over the rise to be hidden from view from below. An ocean of grass waved before me. The hilltop was wider than I had imagined, and I walked for several minutes before coming to the first of the cairns; a tumbled circle of bare white stone studded with broken glass from smashed beer bottles. I circled the cairn before climbing it. While standing on top of the burial chamber, I spied another distant cairn to the right. Yellow flowers rippled in the silver-green grass as I walked to the second cairn and repeated my actions, circling the ruin anti-clockwise before ascending the pale rocks.

As I stood on the second cairn, looking out over Connaught, everything fell silent. Not all at once, but like the sound being turned down on a radio. First the rumble of the tractor in the fields below. Then the blatting of the sheep grazing over the rise. Then the grass rustling in the wind. No birds sang. There, alone under the sky, with the sun glaring down like a malevolent eye, fear worked its fingers down my spine. I felt like a mouse crouching in the open as the shadow of the hawk floats nearer and nearer over the grass. I was dangerously exposed, the silence pressing into my ears like I was deep underwater. I had to get off the hilltop.

I reached the edge of the hill, expecting to look down to see my car and the white-washed cottage at the foot of Knocknashee, the fields beyond and the red tractor and the tall spire of the old church, just as I had seen on my ascent. Instead, I looked out on a vast unbroken forest. Apprehension forming a hard knot in my chest, I began to walk along the side of the hill, eyes on the plain below, hoping to see something familiar. I stumbled, and looked down to find myself in a square of black earth where the turf had been peeled away. It was the remains of an ancient hut site, marked out with stones by the researchers who had uncovered it. In the middle of the square, something red glistened. The remains of a spine, scraps of red flesh still clinging to the wet white vertebrae. Unnerved, I backed away, turning my ankle on the uneven ground. Finding the wire fence, I clung to it with one hand, following it until the whitethorn bush came into view. I had no idea how I had become so turned

around on the hilltop, and why it had taken me so long to get back to where I had ascended.

Using a flat rock as a springboard, I vaulted the fence and slithered down the slope to brace myself against the friendly bulk of the hawthorn. As I waited there, palms flat against the bark, my hearing returned. Bees and other insects buzzed in the wildflowers growing unchecked over the slope. I could hear the tractor chugging along, sparrows chirping busily in the trees, the noise of the wind in the grass. I stayed there for a long time, ankle throbbing, as hares zigzagged through the weeds and butterflies crawled over the red and blue and yellow flowers, wondering from what, exactly, I had so narrowly escaped.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

You are sitting on the riverbank in the cool of evening, watching the water purling over the stones. Under the surface, discarded things of steel and iron lie streaked with orange rust. You know that you could slip into the water and dive to the bottom, and emerge dripping with your fists full of treasures. Anyone who might be listening would think it was a fish, just a harmless little trout, with a knife wrapped carefully in a fold of your dress. You know this, because you have done it before. You remember the silken touch of the water on your legs, and the little shock of pain when the blade cut your palm.

What you can't remember, as you sit drumming your bare heels against the grass-covered bank, is *why*.

You have half an eye on the moon, just a fingernail-paring hanging in the sky, no more threatening than the wisps of cloud that obscure it.

Last night, you dreamt of the angel again and woke yelling and thrashing, covered in a fine sheen of fear-sweat. In the dream, it took you by the hand and led you away from the little cottage, and someone inside was screaming. You want to go with the angel, but the cries are digging a red wire of panic under your skin, and you want to

stop for a minute, just for a minute, but the angel won't listen, and its hand in yours is burning.

You beg, with tears dribbling down your chin and your nose running, but the white lady smiles a wide red smile at you, and pulls you along faster. The screams are untangling from each other, beginning to sound like a word. Your eyes hurt from trying to look at the lady, so you look back over your shoulder instead, but the house is gone and everything is dark.

Grabbing handfuls of weeds, you squeeze as hard as you can, the stinging in your palms helping you to focus. The moon gutters and winks out, and in the darkness, you hear it clearly at last – the sound of your little sister, mad with terror, screaming your name.

The noise was overwhelming.

Val stood at the entrance to the hall, waiting for his eyes to adjust. The floor was crowded with people, jostling and laughing, drinking and dancing, and after the shift from familiar snow-covered woods to the warm twilight glade, Val couldn't bring himself to step inside at once. The heat was stifling in his winter layers, and Val took off his jacket and pulled the sweater off over his head, tossing them aside. His gloves soon joined the pile, and as he flexed his thawing fingers, Val regretted not bringing the shotgun with him. But the creature had refused to take him anywhere until he put it back, and there were enough candlesticks and carved wooden chairs in the hall if he needed to get creative.

The dancers looked like normal people, but after his encounter with the creature, Val wasn't taking any chances. He imagined the dancers tearing off their expensive clothes, peeling away unblemished skin along with their elbow-length gloves to reveal greyish hard flesh and yellow eyes, and shuddered involuntarily. But even if everyone in there was a monster, Val was still going into the hall. Cassie might be in there, and if she was, he was getting her out no matter what.

Taking a deep breath, Val edged his way inside, weaving around twirling couples and knots of conversing people. Some of them looked at him over the rims of their glasses, and one or two tipped him a sly smile, but nobody raised the alarm, or seemed to notice how underdressed he was for the party. Val scanned face after face,

but couldn't see his sister anywhere. The bright colours and blur of movement hurt his eyes, and he found himself pushed to the edges of the eddying current of people, washed up against a row of tables buckling under the weight of the mountains of food piled on top of them. Nobody seemed to be eating, and Val was weighing up the consequences of grabbing the nearest chicken leg when somebody spoke to him.

"Won't you have a drink?"

It was a woman, dressed in a magnificent flowing purple dress. She was carrying two glasses of red wine, the ruby liquid the exact shade of her curving lips. She held out one of the glasses in silent invitation, quirking a brow as though daring him to try it. Val reached out to take it, and as their fingers brushed a jolt went through his chest, and everything went soft and dreamy except the woman's face.

"Drink boy," she commanded softly, leaning towards him, her green eyes the only detail left in the hazy swirl of the ballroom, "and then we shall join the dancing."

Hardly knowing what he was doing, Val raised the wine glass. The liquid had just touched his lips when he was jostled. Wine slopped over the rim of the glass, staining his shirt, and the sweet fumes that rose from it stung his nose and eyes.

"How clumsy of me! Please excuse my rudeness, kind sir. Fuamnach, won't you introduce me to your friend?"

The speaker was a young woman in green. Her red hair brushed her shoulders, and a tattoo of twining roses curled up and over her exposed collarbone and shoulder. Fumanach, the woman in the purple dress, said something and tossed her dark hair in annoyance, drifting back into the crowd without sparing Val another glance.

The red-headed girl waited until she was gone before stepping closer and snapping her fingers in his face.

"Hey! Snap out of it. Who are you?"

"What?" Val asked, blinking hard. It felt like he had been drinking for hours, although he hadn't even gotten to taste the wine.

"*Who are you?* What are you doing here? I haven't seen you before."

“My sister, Cassie. I’m here to find her.”

The girl blanched, falling a step back from him. Her hand went up to touch her hair, in an unconscious gesture of uncertainty or surprise, Val couldn’t tell which.

“You’re Cassie’s brother?”

“Yeah ... wait, you’ve seen her? She’s here? Where? Tell me where she is!”

It was Val’s turn to step into the girl’s space, expecting her to back away. Instead she stood firm, and snagged his chin in firm cold fingers. She looked hard into his eyes, and Val glared back at her, willing her to tell him the truth. At last, she glanced away, satisfied with whatever she had seen in his eyes, and pointed into the crowd.

“She’s over there.”

Val turned, and in a break in the press of people, he saw her clearly; Cassie, in a long blue dress, smiling and laughing as she danced with a tall, dark-haired man.

“Cassie!” Val shouted over the music, and had started towards her when strong fingers clamped shut over his wrist and pulled him backwards.

“Shut up!” The girl hissed at him.

He tried to pull his arm away, looking for Cassie, but the crowd had closed over her again and he couldn’t see. But Val would find her, now that he knew she was there. He would search through every damn person in this place, and take her home –

The girl punched him hard in the arm.

“Ow! What the hell?”

Her face was contorted with anger, but her eyes were tracking the dancers nervously.

“Stop shouting, you idiot, before something bad happens. Now follow me.”

The evening is aglow with fireflies.

You are still reeling from the memory when you hear somebody walking through the trees. Whoever they are, they are trying very hard not to be heard, which is odd enough to make you want to investigate. You tiptoe along, slipping from oak to ash to elm to yew without brushing a leaf or snapping a twig underfoot. Your quarry is

bigger, or less careful, and you can hear them clearly as they try to breathe quietly, their clothes rustling and boots scraping on the loam.

They pause, and you do as well, holding your breath safe in your chest, waiting for them to move again. You are very good at pretending that you are not there, and it works this time as well, because they start walking again. On impulse, you climb onto the limb of a crooked oak, and get your first look of who you are tracking. It is an old man, his hair almost entirely white, wearing dark clothes that blend with the night. You know the shape of every single one of the *duine*, and this man is a stranger to you. Even more curious is how he walks, low to the ground, stopping to watch and listen, running his hands over the earth. You want to know what he is doing, but you also don't want to reveal yourself to him.

You crouch on the tree limb, waiting and watching as he moves carefully on. He is approaching Brea's whispering glade. You see a flash of red fur amongst a row of silver birches, and smile to yourself. Whatever this man wants is of no consequence once Brea finds him spying and sneaking. You jump down from your perch, no longer bothering to be quiet, and the thump of your landing brings the old man fully to his feet. He whirls towards you, something metal glinting in his hand. Your eyes meet his, as the rusty bark of a fox carves through the night, and dread clenches your guts into a knot.

You recognise him.

Bone

They stole little Bridget
For seven years long;
When she came down again
Her friends were all gone.
They took her lightly back,
Between the night and morrow,
They thought that she was fast asleep,
But she was dead with sorrow.
-William Allingham, *'The fairies'*

Pat heard the fox bark again as he stared into the shadows. He was fairly sure that he had just seen a little girl standing in the trees, but there was no moon here to light his way, and no snow on the ground for tracks. He could be imagining things, the golden light and the tree splitting apart. He could be dying of hypothermia somewhere in the mountains he had grown to love, hallucinating all this. In that case, the girl would be the least of his worries.

He caught a flash of movement to his left, and realised that it was the fox he had been hearing. The animal walked out into the clearing in front of Pat, as though it had never feared a hunter's bullet. It was larger than any fox he had ever seen, with rich red fur and black-tipped ears, and a wary, intelligent gaze. It looked Pat straight in the eye, completely fearless, and then convulsed. Pat didn't know what had happened; it was as though the fox had become distorted for an instant, blurring at the edges. Before his brain caught up with his body, Pat had swung the Glock up from where it hung at his side, pointing it at the fox. He had seen that tormented shape before, and if that creature could become a bird, then why couldn't this animal become something just as bad, or even worse?

Even though Pat never took his eyes off the fox, something happened to his vision. Black dots swarmed at the edges of his eyes, a prickly static as though he were about to faint. When it had cleared, there was a man standing in the clearing where the fox had been. There was still something of the fox about him; the way he held his head, his hair, the challenging look in his predatory eyes. The man smiled, showing pointed white canines.

“Now where did you come from?” He asked softly, as though talking to himself.

“The Rockies,” Pat answered brusquely, his aim never wavering.

The man raised his eyebrows, and his lips twitched, as though stifling a laugh. He paced a little closer, looking Pat up and down with quick darting glances.

“Indeed? And how did you get here? This is a long way from Canada, old man.”

Pat had the uncomfortable notion that he was talking to a man who viewed conversations as chess matches, if not outright duels.

“I had help,” he answered, and then shut his mouth and waited.

The man’s eyes flashed with interest as he walked closer. Like the creature, he ignored the Glock completely, even as he stopped inches from the barrel levelled at his heart. If these things even had hearts, which Pat was beginning to doubt.

“You intrigue me, sir. May I ask your name?”

“Pat. You?”

“Brea,” the man said, with a smirk that suggested he was lying. “Well, *Pat*, can I inquire then as to your purpose here? You do not appear to be a man who indulges in ... idle curiosity.”

He indicated the gun.

“No, I can’t say that I am. I came here to find somebody.”

“Well,” Brea said, with a charming smile, “by all means, tell me their name. I may be able to assist you.”

Pat severely doubted it. But if he refused Brea's help, how much longer would he have to wander through this infernal wood? It already felt like he had been walking for hours.

"Your caution does you credit," Brea said unexpectedly, startling Pat from his thoughts, "but I can assure you, if you are truly here to find someone as you claim, you will not succeed without my help."

As they stood there, Brea waiting patiently with half-lidded eyes, and Pat thinking furiously with his gun still ready, a low throbbing moan drifted into the clearing on the breeze. As Pat listened, the moan rose to unmistakable sobbing, a primal and inconsolable grief that chilled him to the bone. As the wind swirled around them, it was impossible to know where the weeping was coming from, and it rose higher and higher into wails of anguish.

"Well, well," Brea said, who had looked off into the trees when the crying started, and was now studying Pat with fresh interest, "it seems that your time is running out, old man. That was-"

"The banshee. I know," Pat said numbly. Just like Bridget had said. His shoulder was aching, and he lowered the gun in defeat. Brea flashed him a white grin.

"Time to decide."

Áine was shaking, torn between fury and fear.

"Between what? Speak plainly, Finian Deoradhán, or say nothing!"

"Tomorrow I am leaving," Finian said, and she hated him for sounding so calm, "and either you can join me, or stay here with your *roane* friends."

"We have been here not even three weeks!"

"Yes. And now it is time to move on."

She could see the restlessness in the lines of his lean body, the tension simmering behind the casual way he propped one shoulder against the doorframe.

"But we can help these women! God knows we understand their suffering as no one else."

“Áine,” Finian said tiredly, passing a hand over his eyes, “we can do no good here. Let us move on, and forget this place.”

“Move on to what? I love you, Finian, and for your sake I have learned to love the road. But I do not feel the pull of it as you do.”

Finian turned abruptly from the door, and Áine followed him outside.

“Do you never want to just ... stop? Do you never wish, even for a minute, that you did not have to keep walking, that you could stay?”

Finian stopped at her words, but kept his back to her. Áine approached him quietly.

“What are you looking for?”

“I seek what all of the people cursed to live as we do seek. A road that leads us away from this wretched place, and to where we were meant to be.”

“Finian ... we have searched together for three years. You must have walked the length of this country fifty times before I knew you, and all this time we have found nothing. All the ways are shut.”

Finian rounded on her. “Then why do we hear of Them wherever we go? Could They pass so freely amongst us, if there were no roads left?”

Áine stood firm. “Perhaps they are not roads that we can travel, but only for those of full blood. Perhaps the roads appear only when They have need of them. I do not pretend to know how it works.”

“Then stop speaking of matters of which you have no understanding!”

“We must face the truth. This world is the only one that we have, Finian. We do not belong with Them.”

“We do not belong here either.” His tone was bitter.

“Then we belong nowhere,” Áine said desperately, unshed tears pricking her eyes, “but we have each other, which is more than most can say. So let us make the most of it.”

He was shaking his head at her words. “I will not give up.”

“Why? Are you afraid?”

Finian looked at her, a flicker of anger in his eyes.

“I fear nothing.”

Anger flooded her, sweeping reason aside with its force.

“You *are* afraid! So you want to run again, like you always do! Just like you did when the soldiers came, when you left Seán to die in your stead on the gallows!”

His eyes were black with rage as he advanced on her, mouth twisted into a snarl.

“You little fool! Do not pretend that you are any better than the rest of us. Do not think that you can make those people love you! I have seen you watching them, learning how best to twist each to your purpose. I have seen you thinking, clear as day, how can I turn this to my advantage? What can I take from them?”

“Coward,” she hissed through scalding tears, so furious that she could barely see.

“*Meascach*,” he said relentlessly, gripping her by the shoulders to force her to look him in the face, “that is all you will ever be to them. We make wrecks of their lives, and they know it. We take, and then we walk away. It is in our nature. That is why we can never stop moving. Muirne knew all this. Why do you think I came when she was not a week buried?”

Áine turned her head away, looking blindly towards the ocean. She didn’t want to watch as they tore each other’s hearts to bloody pieces.

“She told me to come and take you away. Muirne knew you best of all, little Áine. She knew what you were capable of, and she wanted to spare that town your wreckage.”

“Liar,” she tried to say, but her lips formed empty air, because she knew that he spoke the truth.

He released her then abruptly, leaving her arms aching from his grip.

“Stay, if you wish,” he said inexorably. “But do not look for me. I will not return here again.”

Then he walked away, and Áine squeezed her nails into her palms until blood dripped from them to stop herself from falling to her knees and begging him to come back.

Instead, she watched until he was swallowed up in the distance.

A falcon hung in the air above, every feather straining to catch the wind.

Knockma, for all its reputation as the seat of Finnbheara, the King of the Connacht *sídh*e, fell short of my admittedly lofty expectations. It lacked the presence of Knocknashee, being heavily wooded and frequented by energetic mothers pushing prams along the steep paths. It was a clear pleasant morning, and I did not hurry as I walked the circular path around the hill. After my experience with the cairns on Knocknashee, I was in no hurry to examine the ruins on the summit of Knockma, revered in local legend as the final resting place of Medb, the legendary warrior queen of Connacht. I came across the remains of a small house just off the path, little more than a foundation of brown and grey flecked stone, its former purpose unclear.

Opposite the hill, earth movers and other machinery crawled like yellow insects over the land, gulping it down with greedy jaws. The gouges in the earth reminded me of the tale of Ethna the Bride, and the depression that runs through the middle of the hill known as the ‘Fairy Glen’. Ethna was stolen by the amorous Finnbheara on her wedding day, and spirited away back to his palace in Knockma. Her furious husband, desperate to retrieve his wife, gathered his men and began to dig into the side of the hill. Eventually, Finnbheara’s court became concerned that the men would break through into their subterranean country, and Finnbheara reluctantly returned Ethna to her husband. I wondered whether she had been happy inside Finnbheara’s palace, if she realised the lengths her husband had gone to in order to get her back. If she felt every blow, unable to scream, buried alive in the shallow earth, or was oblivious, dancing in the arms of the king.

I was on the downward loop, heading back towards my car. I had an appreciative eye on the picturesque ruin of Castle Hackett, a manor house from the thirteenth century, which stands at the bottom of Knockma. The Hackett family, who traditionally owned the house, were reputed to be descended from a fairy, and their descendants were said to possess the sight, able to see fairies and other phantoms. Before me the

path curved under overhanging trees, becoming shadowed and hard to perceive. There was a man with red hair walking along the path, several meters in front of me. I kicked a stone accidentally, but he didn't look back at the noise, continuing his unhurried descent. Momentarily distracted by the scenery, I turned back to find that the man was gone. The path descended straight to the bottom of the hill, but I never saw him again, as though Knockma had swallowed him whole.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

"Cassie. I came here to find my grand-niece, Cassie. And her brother, Val. They've gone missing."

Brea looked at him, triumph lurking in his gaze.

"So, there are two people missing? I regret that I do not recognise either of those names, but rest assured that I will make inquiries. Do they resemble each other?"

"Yes," Pat said, "they're twins. Dark hair, blue eyes, about my height."

"Cassie and Val," Brea said, rolling their names on his tongue as though savouring them, and Pat realised something.

"You're lying. You do know who they are. You've seen them, haven't you?"

Brea tilted his head, pupils shrinking to feline slits.

"Are you calling me a liar, old man?"

Pat had been stalked by a cougar once, maddened with hunger. It had given him the same sort of look as the man opposite him, considering how and where to strike, and his trigger finger itched to defend himself.

He made to raise the Glock again, but Brea was on him faster than anything he had ever seen, knocking the gun from his hand and wrapping both hands round his throat.

The other man's thumbs pressed into his windpipe, and the coiled strength that Pat could feel in his arms left no doubt in his mind that Brea could snap his neck in an instant, if he wanted to. But instead, Brea stared into his eyes, and smiled.

"Well now, old man, here is something I did not expect. As they say, *briseann an dúchas trí shúile an chait*."

"Meaning what?" Pat growled, trying fruitlessly to dislodge Brea's hands.

"You can always tell a cat by his eyes. That little streak of blue there in your right eye. I have seen it before."

Pat tried not to cough as Brea's grip loosened, distracted by his discovery.

"There was a *bean feasa* in Galway who carried that same mark, long ago, as did her son, and his son after that."

Pat stared at him.

"Bridget," he breathed.

Brea smiled wryly.

"This is fortunate indeed. I had not counted on finding a descendent of Biddy Early wandering in my forest. Nor was I aware that the same blood flowed through the veins of little Cassie, she of the talented fingers."

"Then you do know her!"

"It was I who tempted her away. She played so beautifully. What happened to her afterwards was a pity, but not of my doing."

"What happened to her? Tell me, you bastard, or I'll--"

Brea said a word, and the curses froze in Pat's throat. He couldn't move, or blink, or to his mounting horror, *breathe*. He could only watch, nerves shrieking in agony, as Brea paced in a circle indecisively. He remembered the hunting knife, useless at his belt.

"A kinsman of mine was convinced that the blood of a *bean feasa* would restore us to our home. I thought him mad, and told him so, that the prophecies of a *meascach*

witch could not be trusted. In truth, I simply did not want to hope, because hope is a cruel thing to place your trust in, wouldn't you agree, Pat?"

Brea paced in another circle. Dawn was breaking at long last, and behind Brea, Pat could clearly see the little girl from the forest watching him.

"And now, tumbled into my lap, is the blood of Bridget Early, and twins, one of which is an *áit-amhránaí*. It is too much to hope that the other is a *ceannródaí*, of course. Is he, Pat?"

Brea walked up to him, agitation jumping in the planes of his face.

"Does Val know where the deer will winter? Can he track a bear through a blizzard, flush a bird at blackest midnight?"

Pat couldn't answer, his ears ringing. But Brea evidently read the truth in his face.

"He is, then. The three of them, together, here, and I the only one who knows. Oh yes, Pat, the only one. Óinsín knows where her loyalties lie, and you will not have a tongue for much longer."

The girl came a little closer. In the dawn light, Pat could clearly see the little streak of blue in her right eye.

Pat's throat worked, trying to speak. Brea glanced over his shoulder at the girl, and turned back to Pat.

"Sleep," he said, and Pat looked down, the tendons in his neck cramping with the strain, to see the roots climbing up his legs. His thoughts began to fly apart, his heart burning in his chest. His skin was hardening. Brea and the girl were shrinking, getting further away.

His thoughts turned to sleep and green and sunlight, and Pat slipped away.

A stream of whispers went sweeping around the little grove.

You stand and watch the bark ripple over the old man's face, not sure of how to feel. Brea is pleased, you can see it in his quick movements as he paces back and forth, planning. He has dealt with the intruder just like you thought he would. But part of you feels sick, that you stood there and watched it happen without trying to stop it,

that you were complicit in adding another voice to Brea's whispering grove. That old man was your –

“Come, Óinsín,” Brea calls cheerfully, striding out of the glade. “There is much to do.”

You follow, because you do not even want to imagine what it will be like, in the heavy silence, when the grove is empty again. You run to catch up with Brea's quick strides.

“The moon is dark, and Úna is distracted. Go and find Róisín, and tell her to come to me at once. We will have only one chance at this.”

“At what?” You ask, confused and a little afraid. You have never seen Brea so wild before.

“Home, little *amadán*,” Brea said, longing ringing in his face and voice.

“A chance to go home.”

You stop in your tracks, Brea continuing for several paces down the path before he realises you are no longer beside him.

“Home?” The word is thick and foreign on your tongue.

“Yes, Óinsín,” Brea said, his voice hypnotic and soothing, “home for us all.”

“Now run and fetch my granddaughter, and when you return, you will tell me exactly what you did to make our beloved queen turn you *craiceáilte*.”

You blanch at the thought.

“I don't-”

“Now,” Brea says, silk shot through with steel. You know a command when you hear one, and turn on your heel, racing away along the path.

The light dimmed as the sun passed behind a cloud.

I surveyed Lough Gur from my vantage point on the hill above the heritage centre. The lake dominated the scene, flanked by Knockfennel Hill on one side, and the

tower house of Bouchier's Castle and the hill of Knockadoon on the other. The remains of a *crannog*, overgrown with greenery, jutted out into the lake beside the ruin of the manor house. The weather was warm enough that I had stripped down to a grey t-shirt for the first time in three weeks. The amulet still hung around my neck, a tiny but comforting weight.

Beneath Lough Gur a drowned city is said to reside, an Irish Atlantis. The tolling of a distant church bell can be heard from the depths. Flickering lights are seen moving beneath the water on clear nights. Lough Gur is considered one of the gateways to Tír na n-Óg, in which those who are abducted are transmuted to a fairy state, so as to cross over to the Otherworld. On the edge of the lake is a rock formation known as Suideachan Bean-tige, or the 'Housekeeper's Chair'. Opinion is divided as to the identity of the housekeeper; to some, she is a manifestation of the Irish goddess Áine, whose sacred mountain Cnoc Áine, or Knockaine, stands nearby. To others, she is the housekeeper of the castle under the waters of Lough Gur, ruled over by Geároid Iarla. Geároid emerges from Lough Gur every seven years on a white horse to gallop around the lake, a task he is cursed to perform until the silver shoes of his mount wear away, and it was thought that seeing a white horse near Lough Gur was a premonition that someone would drown. The lake lapped quietly at the shore, pearl-coloured light playing over its surface.

I was waiting to meet someone, a local I had spoken to over breakfast at my B&B, in the village of Bruff. We had talked a little about my research, and he had offered to meet me at Lough Gur later in the morning and tell me some of the local folklore attached to the site. When he arrived, I was sitting on one of the park benches on the lawn next to the lake, watching a swan admire its reflection in the silver water. Fergus was a short, wiry Irishman in his late fifties, who insisted on shaking my hand. Apart from the necessities of arranging food and accommodation, I hadn't held a sustained conversation with anyone since the conference in Dublin, and maintained an awkward silence as we meandered past the *crannog*, climbing over the gate to explore Knockadoon.

Fergus was a believer in the old gods, and he told me anecdotes about Áine as we climbed. He believed that he had discovered a hawthorn which was the centre of her power, surrounded by rows of ancient stones. We sat on the top of Knockadoon,

looking out over Limerick. I was relaxing in the warm sunlight, half-listening to Fergus' ramblings, and surreptitiously eating my way through the bunch of grapes he had brought with him.

"I see her surrounded by children, and her face is weary and lined, but still sweet. She has mousy hair, a bit like yours. I feel her when I climb this hill, and when I go to Knockainey."

In the stories I had read of Áine, she was a powerful queen who bit the ear off Ailill Aulom, the King of Munster, when he attempted to rape her. Only those who were unblemished could rule, and by maiming the king, Áine stripped him of his right to rule, thus getting her vengeance and reinforcing her power as a sovereignty goddess in one stroke. I closed my eyes and turned my face up to the sun.

"Isn't that row of hills beautiful?" Fergus continued. "I love this country, there's something so ... arousing about all those peaks and hollows."

Outwardly I remained calm, even as his hand brushed my shoulder and ran lightly over my back. But a bitter rage was welling up inside me. No matter how much I resembled his precious goddess, if he kept touching me I was going to throw him off the edge and tell the Gardai he'd taken an unfortunate tumble onto the rocks. Making up some excuse, I left the old man and his grapes on the ledge and stalked back towards the glittering horseshoe of the lake, taking the quickest route over the tumbled rocks and hillocks. Deliberately, I never looked back, and I reached the heritage centre without seeing him again.

Putting the situation with Fergus behind me, I decided to walk over to Knockfennel. Insects buzzed. The air was honey-sweet and golden. Brindled cows swung their heads towards me, suspicious of my presence. Knockfennel is the abode of Fer Fí, the dwarf of the *Tuatha de Danann*. On the night known as 'All-Heal', people would bring their sick relatives to the lake to be healed in the moonlight, listening for the music of Fer Fí, an accomplished harpist. He could play *gentraighe*, melodies that could make the listener burst into laughter, as well as *suantraighe*, which would send anyone who listened into an enchanted sleep. Fer Fí is also Áine's brother, whose realm may be reached through a cavern known as the Red Cellar Cave in the side of the hill.

On my way back from Knockfennel, I was stopped by an older man with a shovel under his arm, who introduced himself as Tom. He inquired about my amulet, and we spoke for a few moments about symbols of protection and those who seek them. He also told me about the Viking silver hoard that had been discovered near Lough Gur at Carraig Aille, containing drinking horns and brooches, knives and carved jewellery. I, in my turn, inquired about the shovel, and Tom explained that the location of the Red Cellar Cave was lost, hidden behind brush. The last time Tom had found the cave had been nearly twenty five years ago, and he had returned today compelled to find it again. He asked if I wanted to join him in his quest, but the sky was turning burnt-orange, and I did not relish the thought of standing on the side of a hill with a stranger in the dark. He seemed a well-spoken and friendly gentleman, and perhaps if I had not met Fergus first, I might have stayed with Tom and helped him. I like to imagine that he found the cave, and stood victorious in the starlight, with the cool wind of the Otherworld on his face.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

You find Brea near the glade.

“You spoke to Róisín?”

“Yes. She is waiting for you.”

“Good.”

Brea turns his head restlessly, eyes searching through the gloom.

“But before we leave, you were going to tell me a story.”

You hesitate, fear rooting you to the earth. You would run, but you know full well that Brea would catch you. He sees the urge in your eyes, and allows you a glimpse of his fangs.

“Do not test my patience, child. Not on this night.”

“There is much that I do not remember,” you warn, and let your legs give way, sitting gracelessly in the grass.

Brea crouches beside you, simmering with tension.

“I have met enough of those unfortunates touched by the Amadan Dubh to know that you speak the truth. What I cannot understand is why she sent you into exile, moon-touched, you who were always her pet and delight.”

“It was when we came here,” you recall. It hurts to remember, flashes of red agony like fireworks in your skull.

“A change came over her?” Brea brushes his fingers against your temple, and a little of the pain dissolves.

“Yes ...”

You have not seen another duine for a very long time. They are stranger to you now than the daoine sídhe, who crowd around Úna, and laugh along with her at the spectacle.

“Please,” the woman begs, and falls to her knees.

“Please, give me back my baby.”

She reaches out, but the child with the yellow ringlets is laughing, sitting in the lap of a woman of Úna’s court, and playing with the jewels woven into her hair. It doesn’t even notice its mother, who is rocking back and forth and moaning, as if from a mortal wound.

“Please ...”

The mother appeals to the queen, shimmering in her spotless white robe, her hair combed with moonbeams.

“I’ll do anything, your Highness. Please, not my child. Take me instead, please-”

“Enough!” Úna announces, and moves her silver train out of reach of the woman’s clutching hands.

“If you wish your child to be returned, it is simple enough. All you must do is partake also of our food.”

“Is that all?” The woman is looking up at Úna, wretched hope on her face.

“Oh, yes,” the queen says kindly, running her white fingers over the mother’s hair.

“Could I have some food then? Anything, I just ... Does anyone ...?”

She looks around at the ring of merry faces. No one moves to help her.

“I am sure that you will find something to suit your needs,” the queen says gaily, and the woman, face falling, looks around her at the fallen leaves. At the foot of a nearby chestnut tree is a ring of pale mushrooms, and the woman rises and goes to them.

Úna begins to laugh again as the woman, her face screwed up in disgust, plucks one of the mushrooms and places it into her mouth.

“Oh, much more than that,” the queen says.

The woman looks over, her pleading gaze travelling over each face, including yours.

“But ...” she begins.

“Do you wish the return of your child, or not?” Úna asks, sounding supremely bored.

“Yes, yes, I’ll do it.” The mother crams more mushrooms into her mouth.

The queen gestures, and the woman retches, hand to her mouth. You watch uncomfortably as she coughs and chokes, falling to her knees amongst the orange leaves, mushrooms spilling shiny and wet from her mouth.

Úna tires of the diversion, and moves away, and you follow in her wake. She takes your hand as you walk amongst the trees.

“Will the lady be all right?” You ask, shivering at the memory of her racking coughs.

“What does it matter?” The queen says carelessly, swinging your linked hands. “She is only one of the duine, after all. There are thousands more.”

You fall silent, and keep walking, your heart fluttering like a trapped bird. It takes a moment for you to recognise the sensation for what it is: fear.

“This was after Finnbheara’s voyage?” Brea asks.

You nod, feeling nausea in the pit of your stomach.

“Tell me more.”

“I don’t have time for this.” Róisín was pacing back and forth, fingers raking through her tangled hair in agitation.

“Well, bad luck. I’m going to keep asking until you explain what the hell is going on here.”

Val stayed stubbornly put, arms folded across his chest, watching her progress across the floor of the tiny cabin.

“You really could not have come at a worse time. My grandfather is up to something, and I have to figure out what it is.”

“I don’t care about that. I only care about Cassie, and getting her out of here.”

“Impossible,” Róisín said. “No one leaves here unless the queen lets them.”

“Then I’ll go to the queen and ask her. And if she says no, I’m going to-”

“You’ll what?” She said with bitter sarcasm. “Kill her?”

Val shifted his weight to the other foot.

“If I have to.”

Róisín gave a sardonic huff of laughter, and walked over to him.

“You have no idea what she’s capable of. You met the changeling, didn’t you? The one that was sent to replace Cassie? That’s nothing. I’ve seen her do things you wouldn’t dream of in your worst nightmares.”

Val stared at her. “Where are we? Who were those people?”

Róisín sighed. “It’s not that simple.”

“Yeah, actually I’m pretty sure it is that simple. Answer the question.”

She threw herself into a chair, throwing him an exasperated look.

“No, I mean that it’s hard to explain. We are ... well, I guess technically we’re in Dublin.”

“Dublin as in Ireland?”

“Yes. Why, where did you come through?”

Val sat down in the chair across from her, head spinning.

“Canada. Came through what? You mean the tree?”

“Right. I suppose I’ve forgotten how weird this all must be if you haven’t grown up around it.”

“And you have?”

Róisín smiled, a far-away look in her eyes.

“Yes. I was raised by my grandmother after my mother died. I only came out a few years ago, looking for my father’s family. I went to New York, and then returned here when I didn’t find anything.”

“Wait a minute. Came out from where?”

The girl looked at him, the fire in the grate casting flickering shadows over her tattooed shoulder.

“Between. When my grandmother passed away, I came here to find Brea. He’s the only family I have left.”

Val was completely lost now. “Between where?”

Róisín met his eyes, completely serious. “Between this world, and the other.”

A branch scraped against the window.

Áine sat up in bed with a cry, torn violently into wakefulness. Someone was sitting on the end of her bed, shaking her by the shoulder.

“Áine! Come, it is time. The inn is closing.”

“Yes, yes,” she said wildly, smoothing back her hair and untangling her feet from the covers.

Caoimhe regarded her with concern.

“You have not changed your mind about helping us?”

“Of course not,” Áine reassured her, touching the other woman’s sleeve as she passed in search of her cloak.

“I will be there in a moment.”

Out in the darkness, the white foam of the waves gleamed against the coal-black water. Áine waited, listening to the merrymaking over the sound of the ocean. One by one, men began to trickle out of the door of the public house, legs unsteady, some still singing ribald songs. Patiently, she remained still, anticipating the figure of the man she sought. His house lay along the lane behind her; he had no choice but to pass by her hiding place.

“God keep you, Micháel,” came the slurred shout of one of the townsfolk, and one of the stumbling figures turned to wave his arm.

“*Sláinte chuig na fir agus go maire na mná go deo!*” He yelled back, lifting an imaginary glass in salute.

Áine watched him stagger closer, and took a deep breath to calm her nerves. Then she stepped out to meet him with a roguish smirk.

“Good eve to you, Micháel McKeague.”

The man stopped to see who addressed him, and leered at her dishevelled state of dress and her loose hair.

“Áine my beauty, imagine seeing you out at this hour.”

She fixed the alluring smile on her lips as he approached, his hungry gaze on her face.

“I thought we might go for a walk,” she said, with a coy glance under her lashes at him.

She could hear the unstable tread of the fool as he followed, down away from the houses and out onto the cold sand, where the sound of any struggle would be muffled by the waves.

Micháel kept lowering his head, trying to kiss her, and it took all of Áine's willpower not to strike him across the face, but to keep retreating coquettishly with a wink and a laugh, drawing him closer and closer to the water. His hands were tangled in her skirts, and she was trying to tug them free when he looked blearily over her shoulder.

"What the--"

As though linked by one mind, the *roane* emerged out of the night, their bare feet washed by the sea. Caoimhe was at their head, and the look on her face was enough to warn Micháel of their intentions, even in his drunken stupor.

He took a swing at Áine, which she dodged, darting beyond his reach as the *roane* closed in.

"Micháel McKeague," Caoimhe said, disgust in her eyes as she stood in front of him.

"You know what it is that we want."

The man laughed uproariously, blind to the cold rage that burned through the watchers. He struggled against the women that held his arms, but could not break free.

"Oh, I know. But I won't be telling you anything, you *mínádúrtha* whores!"

"Then we shall persuade you," Caoimhe said, her eyes blazing, and before he could cry an alarm, one of the *roane* kicked his legs from under him and forced him into the waist-deep water.

"Tell me where they are," Caoimhe said.

"To the Devil with you!" Micháel jeered, and with cries of fury and excitement, the *roane* pushed his head beneath the water and held it there. To Áine, it seemed minutes, and when Caoimhe nodded, she thought that the man would surely be

drowned. But he was not, and to her surprise, came up sputtering and roaring with laughter.

“You ... you stupid whore ...” He gasped.

“Again!” Caoimhe ordered, and once more Micháel was held beneath the waves.

When he broke the surface the second time, he did not laugh, too busy coughing up the water in his lungs.

“Tell me, or the next breath you take will be your last.”

“All right,” he growled, looking at each of them with an ugly expression, “I’ll tell you, and may you choke on it.”

The *roane* waited, every eye fixed on the bedraggled man as he struggled to his knees.

“They were burnt,” he said, watching their faces with unrestrained glee in his features, “all of them. You remember when we had the bonfire, when the catch was spoiled?”

No one spoke, and Áine felt a spike of dread.

“They were your coats, you stupid fools! We piled them on, and burnt them to ash and cinder, covered with rotten fish to hide the smell! And you watched us do it!”

Micháel began to laugh savagely. There was an awful silence. Áine glanced at Caoimhe and then looked away, unnerved by the unnatural calm of her expression. Someone began to sob quietly. Micháel took advantage of the shock to push away the women that restrained him, and rose to his feet.

“There you have it,” he sneered in Caoimhe’s face. “You may as well go back to your houses, all of you! You won’t ever get back to the sea again.”

Caoimhe screamed, a high wordless wail of despair and rage, and flung herself upon him. The shrieks and howls of the *roane* split the night, and Áine watched in horror as Caoimhe grabbed Micháel’s head with her hands. She saw the white flash of her teeth and the spurt of blood as they met in his throat, and backed away. There were

shouts, and lights began to blaze in the houses. The townsfolk were emerging, carrying lanterns and torches.

One of the *roane*, hands held stiffly in fists at her side and her face wet with tears, walked blindly past Áine and into the sea. She did not stop walking, and disappeared into the black water without a trace.

“What has happened here?” A voice asked from behind Aine, and she turned slowly, still dazed by the savage turn of events.

It was Yseult, eldest of the *roane*, who had not been included in Caoimhe’s plot. The old woman watched her sisters, some weeping wretchedly on the sand, or mindlessly beating at their own flesh, and brushed past Áine without a second glance.

“You had better leave girl, before the men realise the role that you played in this.”

A young man ran onto the beach, shouting for Aislinn. With a shudder, Áine realised that was the name of the *roane* who had chosen to drown in the sea. He held a bundle in his arms, which kicked and wriggled like a rabbit. Áine put a hand to her mouth. It was a *leanbh*, not more than a few weeks old.

“I’m so sorry,” Áine whispered, knowing that it would never be enough.

“It is the way of your kind, is it not?” Yseult said as she walked towards the grieving *roane*.

Áine rocked back on her heels as though the other woman had struck her.

We make wrecks of their lives, and they know it.

He had been right all along.

“Finian,” Áine said in agony, and fled along the strand into the night.

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“She was not always so, then? I had little occasion to visit Cnoc Sídhé Úna in my travels.”

“No,” you say truthfully, “she was kind, and beautiful. She always seemed a little sad and distant, but she hid it from everyone, including the king.”

“But not from you,” Brea says, with a knowing look in his eyes, “who loved her as a mother.”

“She begged Finnbheara not to leave. I heard them arguing, and found her weeping when he was gone. Since then, a sickness has grown in her that has no cure.”

“A certain callousness I can excuse, in the face of grief. But I cannot think that she would exact such a punishment upon you, simply because you reminded her of happier times.”

You begin to tremble.

“I did something ... terrible. The worst thing that you can ever do.”

“Tell me,” Brea entreated, and at his gentle tone your eyes blur with tears.

“We were sitting on the strand. She pointed out to me the seam of Finnbheara’s *pishogue*, the seam where he had woven together our world, where it runs from the horizon up across the sky. It reminded her of him, and she would sit there when she was feeling sad. Sometimes in human shape, and she would let me play with her hair. Other times as a doe, and she would lay her head in my lap, and I would stroke her fur-”

You break off, and hug your knees tightly to your thin chest. Brea waits patiently.

“Something was wrong, on that night. When the moon came up, it was the wrong colour.”

“What do you mean?”

“It was red. Blood red. And she was acting strangely. I asked her a question, and she did not hear me. I called her Mother, and she struck me across the mouth, and told me that I was not her daughter.”

It hurts to remember that night, and part of you is glad that you do not have to live with that memory all the time. Except for the moon, that always rages like a fever under your skin.

“What did you do then?”

You stand, wavering on your feet, and wipe the blood from your lip. Úna ignores you, and you walk away across the dunes towards the forest. You are not paying attention to where you are walking, and when you return to yourself and look around, you realise that you are lost.

You are standing outside a little circular glade of trees. You can hear someone whispering. When you enter the grove, the whispers swirl around you, breathing half-heard words into your ears. In sudden exhaustion, you sit with your back against one of the trees, and close your eyes.

When you wake, you know what to do. You feel like a passenger in your own body as you leave the glade. Your limbs are cold and stiff, and blackness swims across your vision. You can see your own breath despite the warmth of the night, the white cloud of steam shot through with black tendrils. You should be afraid, but feel nothing at all.

You go to the river, where all the iron and steel that the daoine sídhe hate so much is thrown to rust. From the water, you take a rusting knife, and place it carefully up the sleeve of your dress, the tip stinging your wrist.

You blink, and find yourself back at the strand. The moon is low over the water, and Úna is still sitting where you left her. You sit down next to her, and she begins speaking as though continuing a conversation you had been having.

“Have you read Lebor Gabála Éirenn? It concerns the coming of the Tuatha de Danann to these shores, and the war that followed. It is a foolish work, for the most part, very little of it the truth. Even so ...”

Looking out over the water, she began to recite.

*“They landed with horror, with lofty deed,
in their cloud of mighty combat of spectres,
upon a mountain of Conmaicne of Connacht.*

Without distinction to discerning Ireland,

Without ships, a ruthless course

the truth was not known beneath the sky of stars,

whether they were of heaven or of earth.”

Úna smiles without humour.

“I always wondered why they burnt their ships. I never thought to ask my parents. I suppose I must have considered it a courageous act; to not give themselves a chance of retreat. Now, I wonder if it was because there was nothing to go back to. And now look what we have become. The duine revere us as dead things, and raise halls to house our ghosts. It seemed a fine jest to Finnbheara that we should reside within the walls of their foolish museum that they should walk though each day without knowing, save for those we led astray for our pleasure.”

You say nothing, and soon, drained with sorrow, she returns to her deer-form and lays down to sleep under the scarlet moon. She does not stir when you stand over her, your bare feet deep in the silent sand. Someone is whispering inside your head, telling you what to do. The veins in the hand that hold the knife are a writhing black. You have joined the court on their hunts, and you have seen the slain deer or boar spring back to their feet, none the worse for wear, once the dogs have been called away.

Taking a breath, you leap onto her, all your weight thumping onto her back, with the throat of the doe in the crook of your elbow. Unable to rise, and her head pulled back to the uncaring sky, she is taken by surprise. Moving quickly, you press the blade against the warm fur of her neck. The spray of blood soaks your arm and throat, splattering hot against your tightly closed lips, and the doe throws back its head and shrieks. You do not let go until she ceases to struggle, kicking her delicate legs, and lowers her head to the stained ground.

You get up, drenched head to toe in blood, and let the knife fall from your fist.

The deer lies dead at your feet, and from beneath the deadened calm of your exterior, the horror of it threatens to tear you apart.

Then the corpse twitches, and Úna reels upright, her white dress stained with gore, the death-shriek of the doe rending her throat.

She looks at you in disbelief, and then shakes her head and lets out a gurgling laugh from the ragged ruin of her throat.

“Náocht d’fhiaccla go bhféadair an greim do bhreith, Óinsín,” she gasps.

Something is behind you, and the stench of rotting flesh rolls over you in a wave as a hand digs into your shoulder, and you open your mouth to scream, but nothing comes out. The moon is swelling, dragging its bloated shape towards you, until you can’t see anything else.

The moon is in your eyes, your head, your lungs, hollow and alien and agonising. You are consumed by it.

You jerk back to the present to find yourself screaming, clawing the ground in an effort to get to your feet and escape.

But the past cannot be outrun, only forgotten.

Áine woke to late morning sunshine and leaf-shadows playing over the packed earth floor of the little house. Brea had departed, leaving no traces of his passing save a few strands of copper hair. She rose and dressed, contemplating the journey ahead without enthusiasm.

She left the slopes of Cnoc Meadha following the same path that her mother must have taken, all those years ago. She did not try to search for him. She had needed the warmth of his body last night, but felt no love for him on this fair morning. She did not expect to feel love for anything again, after leaving Finian’s lonely grave at the edge of the sea. A local woman had told her that it was a fight, one of those foolish drunken brawls. The murderer would not even be charged for his crime, as it was claimed that he drove six inches of cold steel into Finian’s chest in self-defence. Seeing her expression, the woman asked if she had known the dead man. Áine turned her back on the pity in the woman’s face and left town, lest she wreak the same violence on the murderer as he had on Finian. She would have swung for it, but it had seemed, on the face of it, not an unattractive prospect. What, after all, did she have left to live for?

The days were growing shorter.

Liam was out berry picking. It was late in the season, but there were only four days until Samhain, and Liam had no intention leaving the pick of the crop for the *púca* to piss on. Pushing through the bushes to get to a good patch of berries, Liam stumbled into a little clearing. There was a campfire burning, and a woman was sitting on the ground on her cloak. She turned to look at him, and Liam took a step back as he saw her eyes. One was bright blue, but the other was brown, and Liam wondered, with a thrill that was half-excitement, half-fear, whether she was a *sídh* that had come out of the hill.

“Hello lad,” the woman said, moving awkwardly onto her knees.

“Hello,” Liam replied, realising that the woman was pregnant, and with rising dismay, clearly not well. Sweat ran off her forehead, though the weather was cool, and she could not seem to stand up.

“Let me help you,” Liam said impulsively. Mother would be angry that he was speaking with a stranger, but she smiled and thanked him so prettily that he could not think her a bad person, even if she was one of Them. With him supporting her, and she carrying his basket of berries, they made it back to town, and Liam led her to his door.

“Mother,” he called, and took Áine, for that was the woman’s name, inside. He was right that Mother was angry, but she did not send Áine away. When Liam lay down to sleep in the corner of the room, his mother and Áine were still talking quietly in the light of the fire.

When he woke a little later, they were still deep in conversation, and Liam, mostly covered by his blanket, listened without really understanding. His mother was speaking in a flat dead tone, holding onto the table as though she were about to fall.

“Once, They took me from the place where I was kept, and we went through a door into a broad courtyard, full of people. They were oddly dressed, and I was sure that we would be noticed, but no one ever glanced at us. There was a raised wooden platform, and soon a woman was led up onto it, dressed in a grey robe and a red kirtle. She spoke, but she was far away and I could not hear what she said over the

wind. Then she knelt, and a man came onto the platform with a sword, and cut off her head in one stroke. I did not realise the importance of what had happened until one of Them came over, laughing merrily at my confusion, and told me that the poor woman I had watched die was called Anne, and that she was one of my descendants.”

Áine was watching Liam’s mother intently, and a look of sorrow passed over her features as she sat upright in the bed, one hand resting on her stomach.

“After this, I hated Them even more. Not just for taking me, but for their cruelty, and for reminding me that I would never see my children again, nor the grandchildren that I should have known. They take pleasure in our pain, and I curse Them for it.”

“When did you escape?”

His mother sat wearily on a stool, moving carefully as though she feared her bones would break.

“Nigh on ten years ago. The worst part, other than being sundered from all who I had ever loved, was hearing that my sad tale had passed into legend. Ethna, they called me, and I wept the first time that I heard it, for I was so jealous that this woman, who had never existed, had a happy ending, while I was forced to live in a land that had forgotten me.”

“Why then did you take her name?”

Liam’s mother chuckled bitterly.

“Because I preferred to be Ethna the Bride, with a husband who fought for her return and triumphed over her captors, than Egidia de Lacy, who has been dead and gone for five hundred years.”

There was silence then, broken only by the crackling of the fire. Liam peeked over his blanket, curious to see what was happening, but all was the same; his mother on the stool, and Áine on the bed, each busy with their own thoughts.

“You will keep the child then?” His mother suddenly asked, indicating Áine’s belly.

“Yes, I intend to do so.”

“Despite its parentage? It will be almost all like Them.”

Áine looked down at her own stomach as though it were strange to her. Liam supposed it would be strange to have another person growing inside you.

“A child cannot help who its parents are.”

“You could love it, then?” His mother’s tone was cold, with a faint tone of curiosity.

“Yes, of course I will love it.” Áine was watching his mother again, and Liam could not tell whether she was angry.

“I cannot feel it myself,” his mother said, as easily as though she were telling Liam to go and fetch the milk.

“I have lived too long, perhaps. All my love died with my children.”

Áine looked over at Liam, and he froze, not knowing if she could see that he was awake.

“You have a fine son, Ethna.”

“No doubt, although he favours his father, Callan. It has nothing to do with him, anyway. It is a fault within myself. If he were the best child that ever walked this earth, or if he died tomorrow, it would be all the same to me.”

Áine was watching Liam steadily. He couldn’t understand her expression, but she winked at him with her bright blue eye, and he felt a little better.

When Liam came home from playing up in the hills a few weeks later, he was met at the door of his house by the village priest, solemn as a crow in his black robe.

“I am sorry to have to tell you this, young Liam, but your mother has passed on. She is now resting in peace, in the arms of our Lord.”

“Oh,” Liam said, and stood awkwardly aside as the priest talked to Áine for a while. When he finally left, Áine came over and sat on the step next to him.

“I am so sorry for you, Liam.”

Liam shrugged his thin shoulders.

“Mother’s back with her children. They were dead, and she’s dead, so I guess that she’s happy now. She was never very happy.”

Áine put her arm around him, and they sat together watching the sun go down in silence for a while. Liam’s mother had never sat with him like that, and he felt a little guilty for enjoying it so much when she was dead. A thin wail rose from the room behind them, and Liam jumped to his feet.

“I’ll go see to her,” he offered, and Áine smiled at him gratefully.

Liam, glad of something to do, crossed over to the low cradle and looked down at the fretting baby inside.

“Hello Sorchá,” he said, and grinned as she caught his finger in one of her chubby fists.

The door closed with a dull thud.

Róisín was on her feet in an instant, and Val turned to see a thin girl in a torn dress standing in the entrance of the room, eyes darting between them.

“Óinsín,” Róisín said, crossing to the little girl and falling to one knee to look her in the eye, “he is coming then?”

The girl nodded. “He sent me ahead, but he will be here soon.”

Róisín looked at Val, urgency sharpening her tone. “There’s no time. We’ll have to go with him.”

“Where?” Val asked. “What does he want with us?”

“With you,” the little girl corrected, her eyes on his face.

“Why? Because he is a *ceannródaí*?” Róisín asked.

“A what?”

“Yes,” the girl interrupted, “and because his sister is an *áit-amhránaí*.”

Róisín sat back on her heels, her face ashen.

“A path-finder and a place-singer in the same family. You mean he’s going to try to break through to Tír na n-Óg? It’s never worked before.”

“He thinks it will this time.”

The girl turned to leave, and Róisín grabbed at her skinny arm.

“Wait! What’s different this time, Óinsín? Tell me what it is!”

The girl didn’t reply. She pulled her arm out of Róisín’s grasp with surprising strength, and lifted the latch. She slipped around the door, disappearing into the night.

“Should we run for it?” Val asked, balancing on the balls of his feet. Adrenaline buzzed through his veins, like the moment when he lined up the killing shot on a hunt.

Róisín opened her mouth to reply, but then the door swung open again, and a tall red-headed man walked in. His eyes went straight to Val.

“It’s time,” he said.

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Hazel couldn’t wait in the silent house any longer. She had tried, at Bridget’s insistence, disabling the clocks so that she wouldn’t have to listen to them tick, and drinking endless cups of strong black coffee to stay awake. But as she stood there, nursing her coffee mug, and staring out over the black reaches of the forest, something snapped. Hazel threw off the blanket wrapped around her shoulders, and made for the stairs.

Ignoring Bridget’s increasingly frantic demands, Hazel changed into her winter gear. If her family would not come back, then she would go out and find them. It was that simple, and that hopeless, all at once. She was going downstairs with her boots in one hand when she heard the piano.

The room was dark, but Hazel could just make out the dark silhouette seated at the instrument, fingers gliding over its keys.

It is the síofra, Bridget whispered.

Hazel switched on the light, and the changeling turned to look at her. It reminded her of a spider, with its jerking, long limbs and spare frame. Disconcertingly, it still resembled Cassie from the neck up.

“*Síceach*,” the creature hissed in greeting, blinking its large yellow eyes.

“Take me to them,” Hazel ordered.

“Are you sure?” The changeling asked, splaying its white hand on top of the piano lid. When it stood, its head nearly touched the ceiling beams.

“Yes,” Hazel said firmly.

Do not trust it, Bridget warned.

Deep in the silence of the winter wood, Hazel followed the creature to the clearing. A giant fir dominated the clearing, and it was there that the changeling stopped and waited for her.

“Here it is,” it said, waving an arm at a spot just in front of the tree. “Do you feel it?”

Hazel stepped forward, arm outstretched, and for a moment it felt like she was bathing in summer sunshine. The smell of spruce and sun-warmed grass sprang into her nostrils, and she blinked in surprise, soaking up the warmth as she stepped into it.

“Yes! What is it?”

“One of the ways,” the changeling said cryptically. “It is closed for now, but will soon open. It is better that you are not here when it does.”

“Why do you say that?” Hazel asked at Bridget’s urging.

The changeling looked at Hazel, past her, to where Bridget lurked behind her eyes.

“The Amadan Dubh waits on the other side.”

“What?” Bridget gasped, wresting control from Hazel with an agonising wrench.

“You are certain that it is he?”

“Who else?” The creature said with a dry chuckle. “He slipped into the breach that Finnbheara left, and works to corrupt the queen with words of honeyed poison.”

“To what end?”

The changeling cocked its head and blinked at Bridget.

“The *Tuatha de Danann* wish to return to the land of their ancestors. But what would a god of madness do in such a place?”

“He wishes for war,” Bridget said in dawning horror. “Another war.”

“But this time between the *sídh*e and mankind. He has only one purpose in mind.”

“Chaos,” Bridget whispered, and the changeling’s head snapped back, dark blood splattering across the clean snow.

Hazel stepped forward, the bat she had concealed under her coat gleaming silver in the moonlight, and hit the changeling again where it now lay on the ground. She lowered the bat, breathing hard.

“Is it dead?” Hazel asked.

Something white flew up from the pile of angular limbs on unsteady wings, circling in the empty sky above.

The fir groaned and shook, and a golden light began to stream from a crack in its trunk.

The way is opening, Bridget cried, and Hazel had to cover her eyes as the light grew brighter and brighter.

Hearing voices, Hazel squinted past the glare, and saw stumbling figures.

“Here!” She shouted, waving her arms, and they came towards her, sinking deep into the snow and shivering with the cold.

“Someone has to close it!” One of them shouted. “It has to be closed or they’ll come after us!”

“Not everyone is here yet,” someone else responded. “I saw them behind me when I came through.”

More voices were raised, drowning each other out, and then over it all Hazel heard Cassie’s voice ring out.

“The way must be closed! He’s coming!”

Screams and shouts broke the quiet. Hazel fought her way through the crowd to her daughter’s side through the deep snow.

“Cassie!” She called over the uproar, and pulled her daughter to her chest in a tight embrace. They swayed together for a moment before Cassie pulled away.

“Where’s Val?” Hazel asked, smoothing her thumb over an angry red scar on Cassie’s wrist.

“I don’t know. He and Róisín were trapped, and I heard Róisín scream over the noise that they would have to break through somewhere else.”

The golden light emanating from the fir began to flicker, angry tendrils of black corrupting its pure glow.

“He’s coming!” Cassie screamed, and her terror infected Hazel, freezing her in her tracks.

Bridget took over, striding towards the tree and placing her hands on the trunk.

“*Adeochosa inna tine do chongnam frim!*” She cried, and fire leapt from her hands, streaking up the trunk of the tree into the branches. The entire fir caught with a sudden concussive blast, throwing Bridget backwards with singed palms.

By the light of the burning tree, the ones who got out regarded each other, breathing hard, scarcely able to believe that they had escaped. Scraps of fluttering ash began to fall, sticking to clothing and hair, smelling of charred wood and sap.

Unnoticed at first, it began to snow.

Liam remembered the first winter that he and Sorchá had shared after they were married. Sorchá had stood at the window, shawl about her shoulders, looking out at the snowstorm. The fire was banked high, and their little house was glowing with heat.

She turned and smiled at him, and Liam was struck, as he always was, by her beauty. He went to her side, and she tilted her head up with a slow warm smile to meet his lips.

“Liam.”

The gentle voice shook him from his reverie, and he turned to see Áine smiling at him, the same tender, brave smile as her daughter. His breath caught as he thought of his beloved Sorchá, buried alone in a shallow grave, and he broke down.

“I can’t do it, *máthair*. How can I leave you? How can I leave Ireland?”

“You must,” she said simply. “Or you will starve.”

“Then come with me,” he begged. “There is room on the ship. We could all go together.”

But she was already shaking her head.

“I am bound to this country by more than just blood, Liam. So was Sorchá, and it was the death of her. Your daughter is as well. But you can make a new life, far from this wretched place. And so you shall. Have no fear. I shall go to Cnoc Meadhá, or another of the old places, and wait out the famine. It will not touch us.”

Liam knew that there was nothing he could say to convince her. They had argued about it before the fire on many nights as the weather grew worse and the skin shrunk over their bones. There had only ever been one way.

“Now,” Áine said, her eyes shining with tears, “give me a kiss, as you did when you were a little boy, and say goodbye to the *leanbh*.”

Weeping now, Liam pressed his lips to the cheek of the woman who had been both friend and mother to him, and then lifted the warm little body into his arms.

“Goodbye, *cailín*.” He said, kissing her round cheeks and the spiral of red hair on the crown of her head.

“Farewell and God keep you, my little Róisín, until we meet again.”

Dawn crept down the path, turning everything to gold.

I stood crammed shoulder to shoulder with the people from my tour group, entombed in the peculiar atmosphere of Newgrange. We were all hardly breathing, transfixed as the beam of light travelled down the stone corridor towards us. It was an artificial dawn, the true solstice still months away, but there was still an air of magic to the experience. The light transmuted dust motes to scintillating diamonds. The ancient dry wind blew into our faces, as it had for thousands of years. Spiral patterns curled across the walls, artwork for the eyes of the dead and the holy.

By the time we reached the Hill of Tara, the clouds had closed in and it was beginning to rain. I walked with the group past Dumha na nGiall, the Mound of the Hostages, and the ring barrow of Teach Cormaich. The weather was taking a turn for the worse, so we did not linger, but climbed directly to the Forradh, and clustered around Lia Fáil, the Stone of Destiny, where the kings of ancient Ireland were crowned. Some prankster had covered the stone with red paint that had dried in long dark stains reminiscent of blood. A fairy tree stood to the right of the central hill. Multi-coloured strips of rag and ribbon hung from its lower branches, offerings to appease the old gods. The fairies that are seen here have a certain warlike aspect, in red and blue coats, marching around Newgrange and Tara; though who they are fighting, and why, is a mystery. From the top of the hill, I could see for a long way across the plains of Meath. It is not a coincidence that these sacred places are lofty places, mountains and hills and other such elevated sites. From the top of one of Ireland’s sacred hills, you are sure to see others, stretching in an unbroken chain across the country. Thrusting up from the earth, a reminder that such places are not meant to lie apart, dissected and discussed as solitary phenomena. You are meant to stand on them, with your feet in the grass and the free air around you, and look outwards.

That evening, I returned to Dublin. I checked back into my old hotel for my final night in Ireland. I would be flying to London tomorrow, and then back home. Sliding

my keycard into my pocket, I went out for a stroll in the lingering summer twilight. My feet turned towards St Stephen's Green, and entering through one of its arched gates, I trod its paths, twisting and turning as I headed towards the centre. Everything was tinged rose and faint blue in the sunset. The swans were spectral shapes on the dark waters of the pond.

As I walked, I came across a couple sleeping under one of the cherry blossom trees. The girl had her back to the tree's narrow trunk, stray petals caught in her hair, while the boy was stretched across her legs, his head in her lap. Roses curved over the young woman's collarbone, and with a jolt, I dimly recalled seeing her on my first day in Ireland. I stood, irresolute, wondering if I should wake the sleepers and ask the girl about her adventures. But then a shaft of stray sunlight broke through the cloud cover, and I forgot the couple completely at the sight of the swans, emblazoned in ivory, necks delicately arched as though waiting for the first note of the orchestra, the mirrored floor of the water ready to reflect their graceful dance. I walked onwards without disturbing the young woman or her companion, running my fingers over the amulet at my throat. Shadows were lengthening over the park, and parts of the grounds were already drowned in blue dimness. The cold would wake them soon enough.

The first pale stars were appearing overhead.

You sit outside on the porch, looking up at the sky. Inside, you can hear the low murmurs of voices, a crying child, and the clink of ceramic mugs. You could not stand the bitter smell of the coffee, and slipped outside when no one was watching.

You wonder if your uncle dreams of you where he lies encased in the heart of the tree, and if his voice has joined the ghostly whispers of the sleeping grove. You do not really know why you decided to come through with the others. You caught a glimpse of Brea bleeding, and recognised the foul odour hanging in the air. The next thing you knew you were running for your life from the shape in the boiling darkness, straight through the open way and into the winter night, where the dark-haired woman stood waiting in the snow.

You are waiting for the moon to rise. You have seen flickers of it behind the mountains and the clouds. Part of you is afraid that you will forget everything. The

rest of you is restless, and aimless, and merciless, and refuses to run from what will be.

You can hear laughter and snatches of singing from the woods. Notes of odd music rise out of the trees, and fade away just as quickly. Smoke from the fire still billows over the forest, and the air tastes of smoke and death.

You feel a change, a shockwave of something shuddering through your chest. Everything becomes sharper, more vibrant. You look up, and begin to laugh.

On the horizon, a red moon is rising.

Translations from Irish

Adeochosa inna tine do chongnam frim! - I call upon the fire to help me!

áit-amhránaí – place-singer

áiteanna uaisle – the ‘noble places’, fairy abodes

amadán – fool

amaideach – stupid

A Mhaighdean Bheannaithe – ‘Holy Virgin’, ‘Mother of God’, an oath

an bheann bhán – the ‘white woman’, name given to women who prepared the dead for burial

bean feasa – wise woman, versed in the healing arts

beansídhe – the ‘woman of the hills’, also known as the banshee, of the *sídhe*

Bé Néit fort – damn you

Bíonn an fhírinne searbh – The truth is bitter

Briseann an dúchas trí shúile an chait – Heredity breaks out in the eyes of the cat

buachailleen – the ‘herding boys’, *sídhe* who take the form of black-eyed children

cailín - girl

cailleach – witch, hag, old woman

ceannródaí – path-finder

céol-sídhe – music of the fairies

craiceáilte – moonstruck, insane

crannog – an artificial island created in the Neolithic era

Cuir síoda ar ghabhar agus is gabhar i gcónaí é – Put silk on a goat and it is still a goat

daoine sídhe – formal way of referring to the fairies, the ‘spirits (or people) of the mounds’

deoradhán – exile, wanderer

duine – humans, mortals

gean cánach – love-talker, referring to the *sídhe* also known as the ganconer

gentraighe – ‘laughter music’, a melody played by Fer Fí

Go ndeine an diabhal dréimire de cnámh do dhroma ag piocadh úll i ngairdín Ifrinn
- May the devil make a ladder of your backbone and pluck apples in the garden of hell

Is geal leis an bhfiach dubh a ghearrcach féin – The raven thinks its own nestling fair

leanbh – baby, young child

máthair – mother

meascach – half-breed

Meatachán scéiniúil thú – you cringing coward

mínádúrtha – unnatural

mná cabharta – handywoman, midwife

Na laetha geal m'óige/Bhí siad lán de dhóchas/An bealach mór a bhí romham
anon/Bhí sé i ndán domh go mbeinn, slán, slán/Anois, táim buartha/"S fad ar shiúl an
lá/Ochón is ochón ó - The bright days of my youth/They were full of hope/The great
journey that was before me then/Happiness was in store for me/Farewell,
farewell/Now, I am sorrowful, the day is long past/Sadness and loss (lament)

Ná nocht d'fhiacra go bhféadair an greim do bhreith – Don't bare your teeth until
you can bite

pishogue – spell, charm

poitín – a traditional Irish spirit distilled from barley or potatoes

púca – a shapeshifter of the *sídhe*

roane – selkies, the seal-folk of the *sídhe*

síceach – psychic

sídhe – referring to fairies in general

sídhe gaoithe – the supernatural wind that precedes the fairy host

sídheog – referring to a singular fairy

síofra – changeling

sionnach – fox

Sláinte chuig na fir agus go maire na mná go deo! - Health to the men and may the women live forever!

suantraighe – ‘sleep music’, a melody played by Fer Fí

Tuatha de Danann – ‘the people of the goddess Danu’, referring to the ruling class of the fairies

Tú máthair olc í – you are a bad mother

Character List

Áine – one of the half-*sídhe*, named for Áine of the *Tuatha de Danann*, daughter of Daimhin and Finnbheara

Aislinn – one of the *roane*, resides in Co. Antrim

Amadan Dubh – the ‘dark fool’ of the *Tuatha de Danann*

Brea – trickster and shapeshifter of the *Tuatha de Danann*, father of Sorcha

Bridget ‘Biddy’ Early – a *bean feasa* from Co. Clare

Callan – husband of Egidia, father of Liam, resides in Co. Tipperary

Caoimhe – one of the *roane*, resides in Co. Antrim

Cassie – an *áit-amhránaí*, daughter of Hazel and Rowan, twin to Val

Daimhin – a woman from Co. Antrim, abducted by Finnbheara, mother of Áine

Eibhlin – a woman from Dort, Co. Galway, mother of Neala and Granuaile

Egidia de Lacy/Ethna – an Irish noblewoman, abducted by Finnbheara, wife of Callan, mother of Liam, resides in Co. Tipperary

Fidelma – an *bheann bhán*, a local woman from Dort, Co. Galway

Finian – one of the half-*sídhe*, of mysterious origin

Finnbheara – King of the Connacht *sídhe*, of the *Tuatha de Danann*, holds court in Cnoc Meadha (Knockma), Co. Galway, father of Áine

Fumanach – an enchantress of the *Tuatha de Danann*

Granuaile – a girl from Dort, Co. Galway, younger sister of Neala

Gwen – a descendent of Biddy Early, sister of Pádraig, wife of Murphy, mother of Ivy and Hazel, deceased

Hazel – a descendent of Biddy Early, daughter of Gwen and Murphy, niece of Pádraig, younger sister of Ivy, mother of Cassie and Val

Ivy – a descendent of Biddy Early, daughter of Gwen and Murphy, niece of Pádraig, elder sister of Hazel, missing

Lachlan – a boy from Dort, Co. Galway, Sinead’s grandson

Liam – son of Egidia and Callan, husband of Sorchá, father of Róisín

Micháel – a man from Co. Antrim

Muirne – a *bean feasa* from Co. Galway, foster mother of Áine

Murphy – husband of Gwen, father of Ivy and Hazel, deceased

Neala – a young woman from Dort, Co. Galway, elder sister of Granuaile

Óinsín – *craiceáilte*, adopted daughter of Úna

Pádraig - a descendent of Biddy Early, brother of Gwen, uncle of Ivy and Hazel, great-uncle of Cassie and Val, also known as ‘Pat’

Róisín – a *ceannródaí*, daughter of Sorchá and Liam, grand-daughter of Áine and Brea

Rowan – a *gean cánach* of the *Tuatha de Danann*, father of Cassie and Val

Seán – a ringleader of Irish rebel group the ‘Whiteboys’, husband of Muirne, executed

Sinead – an old woman and gossip from Dort, Co. Galway

Sorchá – daughter of Áine and Brea, wife of Liam, mother of Róisín

Tadhg – a man from Gort, Co. Galway

Úna – Queen of the Connacht *sídhe*, of the *Tuatha de Danann*, holds court in Cnoc Sídh Úna (Knockshegowna), Co. Tipperary, mother figure of Óinsín

Val – a *ceannródaí*, son of Hazel and Rowan, twin to Cassie

Yseult – eldest of the *roane*, resides in Co. Antrim

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