

Transcrição da entrevista de Alinne Balduino Pires Fernandes com Marina Carr

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Alinne Fernandes		<p>I am very pleased and honoured to introduce you to Marina Carr today. Carr is currently one of Ireland's most prolific and prestigious writers. She is also the recipient of a number of awards, amongst them the 2017 Windham-Campbell Prize, the 1998 Irish Times Playwright Award, the 19th Susan Smith Blackburn Prize in 1996/1997, the EM Foster Prize from the American Academy of Arts and Letters and the American/Ireland Fund Award, the Macaulay Fellowship and the Hennessy Award. She has authored more than 20 plays, many of which have been translated into several languages. Her works include the short story, 'Grow a Mermaid' (1994); a long list of plays, I'll name a few here: <i>Anna Karenina</i> (2016/2017); <i>Mary Gordon</i> (2016), an oratorio; <i>Indigo</i> and <i>Map of Argentina</i> (2015 – haven't been produced yet); <i>Hecuba</i> (2015); <i>By the Bog of Cats</i> (2015/1998); <i>Rigoletto</i> (2015), an opera libretto; <i>Phaedra Backwards</i> (2011); <i>Marble</i> (2009) [list goes on...]. In addition to her wonderful career as a writer, Carr has also taught at different universities, and is now lecturer and writer-in-residence at Dublin City University. I've been assigned the daunting task of interviewing this powerhouse woman, who has been interviewed by some many journalists and academics from all over the world. Marina, I'm very happy to be with you today, and I would like to thank you for accepting our invitation to be here in the second edition of our Irish Studies Symposium, Jornada do Núcleo de Estudos Irlandeses. Today is the book launch of your play <i>By the Bog of Cats</i>, your first play to be translated and published in Brazil. Thinking about when <i>By the Bog of Cats</i> was staged for the first time in 1998, how do you see this play now after almost twenty years of its premiere on the Abbey stage?</p>
Marina Carr	00:00	<p>[...] except I know I went through four dramas, and I know I delivered it to the theatre, and... the day I delivered my first child. And it was a story about this [inaudible]. Patrick, who is the artistic director of the</p>

		<p>Abbey, who'd also directed the first production of <i>By the Bog of Cats</i>, he loves to tell this story so I get to tell it here. But, because of... because of the nature of the play, and those of you who greatly know, it's based on Medea. And I was expecting my first child – who's travelling with me today, and is here in Brazil; and there's no way, 'cause it has to be known, nobody knows what it's like having a child until you have one. So, I thought, "If I don't get this play finished before I have this child, I'm never gonna finish it again". So, it was a desperate rush to get it finished and just, literally, the same day... and, 'cause I don't think he could write a play like that with a newborn infant, certainly your first newborn infant in the house... it's a bit quite talismanic about things like that. So that's my memory of it. And then what I remember is six months basically... and, as all new mothers, you know, going around with pee in your hair and not washing it, you know. This tiny infant, this little stranger appears, and you're just trying to figure that out. So, the whole thing passed by me. So, I used to go into rehearsals for the first production and then I'd go back home, and my mother-in-law would be sitting in the taxi with the baby, because I was feeding him myself. So, I'd come out of rehearsals and feed him in the back of the rehearsal etcetera etcetera. So, the whole thing was... it was a blur for me. And what's really interesting about receptions and plays, I've always known how it takes a hell of a lot of time for a play to land. So, you very kindly translated my play into Portuguese. So, this is... this is a celebration for Alinne as well as for me today.</p>
FERNANDES	01:54	Definitively.
CARR	01:55	'Cause it's first. I was reading in Portuguese, or Brazilian Portuguese, so it's a big thing for both of us, actually.
FERNANDES	02:02	Definitively.
CARR	02:03	But then, I wouldn't be surprised if it disappeared for about ten years and then will...
FERNANDES	02:09	Came back again.
CARR	02:10	Come back again. Because that has been my experience with plays I've written, not just <i>By the Bog of Cats</i> . Some of them land and some of them slip quietly away. And come back again later. So, it's a very, very long, long game.

FERNANDES	02:24	Yeah. And how... Or where would you place it amongst your most recent works? How do...
CARR	02:31	It's kinda of... Well, I wrote these I was writing things quite suddenly back at as I... as a young woman writer. I discovered in my mind and [inaudible] and went to UCD and I discovered it within three year being programme in UCD we have the time. And I discovered in my final years absolutely fast, that I could never write anything like him. So immediately I started writing absurdist plays. So, my first four plays were so influenced by Beckett. And then I realised I've written myself into a corner. That was, you know... it was Beckett pastiche. It was great fun; it was a great way to cut your teeth. And with the yardstick like that, which I, you know, I failed miserably, but I learned a lot. But, in the learning, I attempted a masters on Samuel Beckett, but I just kept... playwriting kept getting in the way so I never finished it. But I finally realised I've written myself into a corner, so then I startled with what do I know about [inaudible], I don't really have to [inaudible]. And I wrote a play called <i>The Mai</i> , and then I wrote a play called <i>Portia Coughlan</i> and a play called <i>On Raftery's Hill</i> and a play called <i>By the Bog of Cats</i> . So, I suppose I had all of those written by the time I was thirty. No, thirty-two. So that's, I suppose there... I don't know, a phase, whatever, that I was young enough when I wrote them, so yeah. But for the writer, the best play is always the one they are writing, you know. Just like... don't crucify me with <i>By the Bog of Cats</i> [laughter]. I'll take certain responsibility for it, but not completely. And now that it's in Portuguese it's all Alinne's fault [laughter]. If you don't like it, it's not me, it's her.
FERNANDES	04:15	Okay, well... okay. Yeah, if it doesn't go well here it's all my fault [laughter].
CARR	04:19	Yeah, absolutely [laughter].
FERNANDES	04:21	How does it feel to see your works travelling to different countries and being performed in different languages?
CARR	04:29	Well, I love to hear it work in different languages, because by the time it gets around to being translated you have a fair... you have the gist of the plot, you maybe... some of the lines, you know, come back to you, but most of it you won't understand. So, it's kinda... It's very interesting. And recently I saw a production of a play called <i>Marble</i> in Spanish and I loved listening to it 'cause it sounded fabulous. And then I saw the same

		<p>play in Italian three years previously and I loved that as well. It just... those languages are so romantic, and anything sounds beautiful in Italian, and the actors were stunning and it was a beautiful production. Same with the Spanish production. So, I love when I'm asked, in any opportunity, to engage. And it's a strange sort of thing when a play is written it's kind of... it's gone from you, and then you get a little chance to revisit it if it's translated. It's almost like it's the nice bit of playwriting. Because when you're writing a play, you're desperate. And it's always disastrous, until you finish it. And very often when you finish it, it is actually really disastrous, not just you're fretting and you're worrying around it. So, for it to have the validation of translation is really a lovely, lovely thing.</p>
FERNANDES	06:00	<p>I kind of feel the same in relation to the translation, I find the translating process so enjoyable. And seeing the final project it's a bit scary. It's kind of like "I want to be go back to the start and do it all over again".</p>
CARR	06:15	<p>Because now you're going to be judged. Of course, the truth is, we're all judged all the time. Yeah, but you can suspend it a little, in the process.</p>
FERNANDES	06:26	<p>You seem very open to the fact that once your work is out there, it's there to be read and interpreted in ways you haven't foreseen yourself. And that goes towards and it serves to reaffirm the power of your work. What you just said, actually. Any thoughts on the fact that your play will be published in Brazil for the first time, specifically here?</p>
CARR	06:49	<p>Well, you've got a big population so it's quite a lot of royalties [laughs]... if it sells. Well, as I say, engaging with another culture, and I... I'm absolutely new to this place. So, I wouldn't have a clue where to begin to try and unpack what it means to be Brazilian and what my play might possibly mean. But listening to you earlier, and the papers from the students and Ruth's paper on ecogothic and bog gothic, it's like "oh, that's what I've been doing, I just didn't know that how it was called". So, it's always fascinating when you see things that align in different cultures, and then things that are absolutely, will never align. That they're all just cultural phenomena and won't translate... Yeah.</p>
FERNANDES	07:48	<p>You often speak of how language, humour, dark humour, and the imagery created by metaphors are key, perhaps paramount to your own work. As dark as <i>By the</i></p>

		<p><i>Bog of Cats</i> is, it is also wonderfully witty and hilarious, in my opinion, I find it hilarious. Mrs Kilbride is one of my favourite characters in the play and possibly the one whose lines I enjoyed the most translating, as she reminded me of so many obsessive and controlling people in my own family, my grandma, very specially. Could you comment on your creation of her character, more specifically?</p>
CARR	08:31	<p>My grandmother as well [laughter]. Well, the thing is, you take from everyone. And it's always really interesting, you know, I'm always asking other writers about this as well. When you write something, it's like everybody is lining up saying "that's about me, and she stole that from me and that's my life" and blah blah blah. But truth is, when you're writing, you may take a detail from someone's life and, by the time that you're finished, it is so transformed, it doesn't remotely resemble who had may started out as. So, it's very... It's kind of a difficult one to gauge. I suppose, I was reading <i>Swing Time</i>, that wonderful English novel, [inaudible] Zadie Smith, [inaudible]. She's talking about the creative process and she said "look, you just... Find the veil, whatever the veil is, just find the veil", you know, so you're not basically destroying everyone around you, your aunts, your uncles or whoever is in your family. So, you find the veil, but it must be a veil that allows you to tell the truth. And I think that is just such important advice, that finally it is about telling the truth, of course with humour if you can, and with darkness, with light, whatever. And to answer you about the humour thing, I have never actually attempted to write anything funny, because if I did, if I attempted at comedy, I would fall flat on my face. But I think there is such humour inherent in the Irish psyche. It's something that kind of comes very easily to us and I think this is... what you're [inaudible] to play a language, and we find that... and we get great fun out of that. And it's something I think nearly every Irish – it may be in Spanish even – for me, nearly every Irish person will at least have some memory of hearing that, if they are not able to do that themselves. So, I suppose what I'm saying is, that we are still kinda eloquent around a metaphor, and in a culture that is largely about verb and adjective. So, we still... Metaphor still has currency. And if you have metaphor then you have humour. And Patrick Kavanagh who said "tragedies marry underdeveloped comedy", and there's a lot of truth in that. And while he talked about <i>Salome</i> he said "I like my tragedies purple". So, if you look at, you know...</p>

		<p>while it's comedy it isn't that hilarious. And you look at his <i>Salome</i>, it is blacker than black, there is not one ounce of humour. And it's kind of extraordinary for a writer who has such facility with metaphor that <i>Salome</i> is such a dark, dark piece. And I don't know, so many of my arguments may say that there is humour to be found in <i>Salome</i>, I can't find any in my <i>Salome</i>. But these comedies are magnificent. So, it's a... you know, these kinds of genres are breaking down as well, tragedy, comedy. And Shakespeare famously just mixed them all together. And I suppose life is tragedy, and life is a farce. It's both, at the same time.</p>
FERNANDES	11:50	<p>I think that moments, especially in Act Two of <i>By the bog of cats</i>, there are moments that are just so funny, and I think that those moments act as comic relief in the play. I think that they actually heighten the tragedy of it. Would you mind reading an excerpt from, maybe Mrs Kilbride's speech at the wedding?</p>
CARR	12:17	<p>Sure, yeah. Can you remember where that is? It's in Act Two, I figured that.</p>
FERNANDES	12:29	<p>Probably find it... It's here.</p>
CARR	12:32	<p>So... which one particularly, her speech to her son?</p>
FERNANDES	12:36	<p>Yeah.</p>
CARR	12:37	<p>Okay.</p>
FERNANDES	12:38	<p>The one about the cross, the crucifixion.</p>
CARR	12:40	<p>Oh, the crucifixion, actually this is... Well, my poor grandmother is dead... This is actually based... the speech is based on my brother and... my grandma who lived up in the North. And this is something we used to have to do when we were kids, it's called "minding grandma". So there were six of us, so we'd send off to my grandmother's house to mind her for like four months. And those were the days you'd hop on a bus [inaudible] and you'd arrive in the wild [inaudible] bags like at three in the morning, the local parish to please to take pity on bring you up to your grandmother's house, it was that kind of thing. There was no, like, worrying, "would she on the right train, would she get off the wrong train", like "off you go, you're minding grandma" [laughter]. So, my brother was minding and she's a religious maniac, and you don't get them much more religious than Donegal matriarchs, a tiny little woman</p>

	<p>about four feet but, as they say, a [inaudible]. So, my brother, it was my brother's turn to mind her and she had him so demented with mass and polishing tombstones and communion and novenas that he was sad all the time [laughter]. And she'd look after you really well, feed you and all that. She wouldn't let you have a bath, because it destroyed the oils in the [inaudible], she believed. And she'd long grey hair down to here, and she used to like, take the [inaudible] in the middle of the night, but we won't talk about that. But she had my little brother so demented. And she lived on a house on a hill that one day, he actually built a calvary for her on the hill. It's like, he erected, he hammered three crosses together and erected them on the hill. So, that's where this, the inspiration, for this particular speech. So, I won't say any more. So, this is at the, just to give you the context, this is at the wedding of Mrs Kilbride's son Carthage who has left Hester and is going to marry Caroline Cassidy, who is the big farmer's daughter. And they're at the wedding, and Xavier Cassidy, the big farmer, has just made his, you know... his speech as Irish as you can make at weddings, they go on forever, so he made his speech. And everybody doesn't want Mrs Kilbride to speak, the mother or the groom, she's determined to speak so she says:</p> <p>“As the proud mother of the groom, I feel the need to answer Xavier's fine speech with a few words of me own. Never was a mother more blessed than me having Carthage for a son. As a child he was uncommon good, never cried, never disobeyed, never raised his voice once to me, never went about with a grumpy puss on him. Indeed, he went to the greatest pains always to see that me spirits was good and me heart was uplifted. When his father died he used to come into the bed to sleep beside me for fear I would be lonely. Often I woke from a deep slumber and his two arms would be around me, a small leg thrown over me in sleep. He was also always aware of my abiding love for our Lord, unlike some here. And on one occasion, me birthday it was, I looked out the window and there he was up on the slope behind our house and what was he doing? He was building Calvary for me. He'd hammered three wooden crosses and was erecting them on the slope, Calvary style. One for him, one for me, and one for our Lord. And we draped ourselves around them like the two thieves in the holy book. Remember, Carthage? And Carthage says, I do not. Would you ever sit down? Mrs Kilbride: of course you do, the three crosses you</p>
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		<p>made up on the slope, and remember the wind was howling and the pair of us yelling 'Calvary, Calvary' to one another. Of course you remember. I'm only telling you this story as one of the countless examples of Carthage's kind nature and I only want to say that Caroline is very welcome into the Kilbride household. And that if Carthage will be as good a son to Caroline as he's been a husband to me the she'll have no complaints. Cheers!"</p> <p>So that's her wedding speech. [Applause].</p>
FERNANDES	16:45	<p>Thank you so much for that. I just need to let you know that I had to add a footnote to this passage where it says "if Carthage will be as good a son to Caroline as he's been a husband to me", 'cause everyone you'd thought I got this line wrong. I was like no, this is what she means, you know, it is a Freudian slip, it really is!</p>
CARR	17:06	<p>It's Oedipus at the bog.</p>
FERNANDES	17:09	<p>Exactly! So, I had to add a footnote there and explain that this is correct, this is what she is saying, really [laughter]. Moving out to my next question.</p>
CARR	17:22	<p>Sure.</p>
FERNANDES	17:24	<p>Throughout your career, you seem to have always turned to the Ancient Greeks for inspiration. Your most recent plays are reimaginings or adaptations of classical works, such as <i>Hecuba</i> and <i>Phaedra Backwards</i> – do you feel you've distanced yourself from the Irish landscape and folklore? Why? Or how so?</p>
CARR	17:47	<p>No, because this is one of the things, while <i>By the Bog of Cats</i> – and I love saying this – all the reviews, not one of them [inaudible] it was based on <i>Medea</i>, which I think is extraordinary. So, you've all these theatre reviewers who don't know their theatre. So, I say this and they go mad. It's "of course we knew", but you can look at the documentations that they didn't know. So now any play I write they say it's based on the Greeks, so it's just covering all the bases. And the truth is that I write both stuff that is taken from Greek mythology, or [inaudible] some of the plays. But I also just write plays that are not at all influenced, but for some reason everything I write now is Greek. So, I hope that clears that up in Brazil, at least. So, I do, I mean, I'm an Irish writer, I mean, even if you're writing something that's based on a Greek myth, I mean, it's about finding the</p>

		<p>connection, and what it means now and here, wherever “here” is. So, I think I'm very tied to... But even if you don't set it in the landscape, even if your landscape is not the paramount thing, and I do write plays where landscape is not the paramount thing, you're instantly, you're giving away. Hiberno-English is giving away. The way Irish writers write, we use Hiberno-English. So, you read three sentences and anywhere in the world will say “that is an Irish writer”. It's not Indian English, it's not American English, it's not Canadian English, it's not Scottish English, it is Hiberno-English. And I think anything, why it has such attraction to people it's because of what I was saying early, it's still these, the Irish is still pumping underneath the constructions of the sentences, and very often some of the words. So, it makes for very... If you invert things, or if you've a roundabout way of saying things. You know, you're halfway there, towards your lyric. So, it's not like hamburger, it's not like gill, it's not like take, it's like where...? How will I put this...? It's like a slow, backwards lazy way of approaching the sentence, and that is very particular to. And I know all that's changed with social media and globalisation and whatever that means, I don't know what that means [inaudible], but you probably know what that means. But this kind of dumbing down and making everything the same. So, I don't know if I answered you.</p>
FERNANDES	20:40	<p>Yeah, no. I think you did, yes. Still in relation to your latest plays, how was the experience of adapting Tolstoy's monumental novel <i>Anna Karenina</i> to the theatre stage? What motivated you to do so?</p>
CARR	20:57	<p>It's a long story. Royalties, shall we say? There was... Look, I won't go into parts of it. What...</p>
FERNANDES	21:10	<p>Please do.</p>
CARR	21:11	<p>No, because... Look, you were listing out some of the plays, and I just write plays all the time and some of them get put on, some of them don't. So [inaudible] the former artistic director of the Abbey theatre came to me and asked to, like, do something for the Christmas last year. It was gonna be a long, long run on the main stage with the Abbey – which is around five hundred seats, it's gonna be eight weeks long and they had to make money. So, I said “look, I've all these plays written”, he said “no no no, you and your plays will fail the Abbey for eight weeks”, which I disagreed upon [laughter]. So, he said, “would you do an adaptation?”. And fair enough, it</p>

		<p>is Christmas, and I don't know what it's like here, but Christmas at home, people would never go to the theatre the way they go to see a show. It's like, they are going to take the whole family if they can, they are on their holidays, it's just [inaudible] grandmothers and grandparents and they bring their grandkids and everything. So, it needed to be something that would have wide appeal. And it needed something that I wanted to do. So, I've always loved <i>Anna Karenina</i>, I've loved Tolstoy. It took me... I think I was forty-nine when I finally read <i>War and Peace</i>. I literally got into bed and said, I'm not getting out of bed until I finish <i>War and Peace</i>, and I was so ashamed to be that old and not have read it, but I'll always be reading <i>Anna Karenina</i>. So, every decade I read it, so we decided finally on [inaudible] <i>Anna Karenina</i>. And that's nine hundred pages. And my first draft was six and a half hours, and they all said "no, you can't have that because nobody would come, it's a Christmas show", so it has to be maybe three and a half hours with interval. So, we cut, we cut it to [inaudible] and the final version is three hours. But I was working with a wonderful director and it worked, we actually got away with it, and by the skin of our teeth, we got away with it. And I know people who love the book would have 'quigles' because, you know, it's a big dense beautiful book and a very complex book. But we did the best we could and I still have this little idea that I would love to see the six and a half hours version, but I don't know if it will ever see the light of day. And I learned a lot doing it, because the thing is, when you do an adaptation – and a lot of what I do is not adaptation, people mistake it for adaptation but it's not, like for example, <i>Hecuba</i> is not an adaptation of Euripide's <i>Hecuba</i>, it is my response to Euripide's <i>Hecuba</i>, and to the mythology around <i>Hecuba</i>. But in the case of <i>Anna Karenina</i>, I felt I was the craft person here, so it was not about me or my ego, or what I wanted to do, it was about serving Tolstoy's beautiful number and trying to make it work on the stage. So that was a huge learning curve, how to do that. It was quite difficult actually to put prose on stage. So, you have to work around it, exactly what you were talking about earlier, some of it will fly, some it won't, it has to unfold as the audience are watching, otherwise you get something that happened ages ago.</p>
FERNANDES	24:31	And do you test the language with actors before you finalise the version that is used on stage?

CARR	24:40	<p>In that case, because there were so many cuts, it wasn't so much testing as we were trying to get... It was watching the clock and cutting. And I have, I don't know what the agents are like here in Brazil, if you're into the workshops and workshop in plays and all of that. I actually hate all of that, because I came up with the old way, where you wrote your play, you redrafted it, you got it as good as you could, you sent it all, and the theatre wrote back to you saying yes or no. Now, you go in and you have these, I don't know if it's the way here, which you have these literary departments and it's all about theatre making. So, I mean, it's jack of all trades, so sometimes it works, I mean, [inaudible] is completely [inaudible] as the director, the director is usually the writer, the director has the final cut, the director has the final edit on the script, he can rewrite the script, and it's becoming like that in theatre, and I think to its detriment. You see of all the cuts, but where is the writing, where is the voice? And where is the thing we want, where is the thing that we love in writers that we love? Where is that quality? And that's the... that's always the lone voice and in the best of it, it's always the outsider voice. And if you mix and mess with that, you're gonna get something really bland with all the edges off it. You know, like with this thing in identifying forgeries in paintings and it's by the flaws not in masteries, isn't it that is how they identify the real thing from the copy? So, I don't know what your practice is in Brazil, is it like it is in the rest of... with the American model, which is merely adopted by Europe and which Ireland has adopted and is part of what we're working on now. I have huge problems with that. So I don't know, is it like that here?</p>
FERNANDES	26:40	<p>I think we do the jack of all trades in here as well, especially because we don't really have... as many positions in the theatre as there are in Europe, for instance, you have... we never have the dramaturg, theatre director. Very often the translator is the director him or herself, and the dramaturg. So, you know, you kind of, you cover all bases.</p>
CARR	27:05	<p>Well, I can see that actually, out of necessity, I can see that. I think that's fine when you're cutting your teeth. And as a young writer, a young director, young actor, whatever it is you have to make it work, make it however you can. What I've problems with is if the big producer has this, and the last thing that won't have in his play, they want an idea, they want creative investment from themselves, at a very very early stage. It's not a situation where it's "you can go off and write</p>

		<p>the play and then we produce it and then we, like, can get direction, get paid actors and we do it", it's "no, we're gonna make sure", because the money is so much, I suppose. I understand it financially, but creatively it is death for playwriting. So, it has to be absolutely perfect and it has to be their idea of perfection before it would ever make the stage. And the truth is, most new plays now, they're done with these experimental spaces, they're very short rollings, very few people come to see them and they die a death. Or, even worse again, they are workshopped to death. And they never even... Lots of writers from generation below me, because of the whole crash, have never had professional productions of their plays because of the money thing. And maybe it's similar here. So, you've a whole generation of theatre makers and the ways they are a jack of all trades is because nobody supported them when they should have been supported. So now they have lost a decade. And, I don't know... maybe I'm old-fashioned. I think they need to be looked after; they need to be taken in. And I think respect for each person's role within what is a collaborative process, but then people mistake collaboration with doing everyone else's job.</p>
FERNANDES	29:04	<p>In your rewriting of <i>Anna Karenina</i>, did you base your version... your play version of the novel in any specific translation that you can recall? Did you consult different translations?</p>
	29:18	<p>That's six or seven months ago, I can't remember one of them. There was... I kept going back to Constance Garnett's, but she's so, she makes it [inaudible]. But she's the best, and then there's the [inaudible] and there was... oh, I forgot them. There was three or four of them I was working of. I forget the names [inaudible].</p>
FERNANDES	29:37	<p>That's okay.</p>
CARR	29:38	<p>Yeah. But all, I mean, all the recent ones and Constance Garnett's, because... something about, something very stingy about her. And it's near to the time Tolstoy wrote the book than any of the more recent ones, so, yeah. But then I put, you know, who's written in Hiberno-English, [inaudible] wasn't attempting to be. And actually, one of the criticisms, one of the few criticisms, strangely enough, usually I get savaged, but the really big criticism of it was that it was done in Irish accents. So, it's like, what? Are we meant to speak in... are we meant to do everything in Russian? Or are we</p>

		meant to do in English with Russian accents? I was like, what, what is your point here? What is wrong with the Irish accent in the <i>Anna Karenina</i> ? It's like, what is wrong with the Portuguese accent doing Hamlet?
Someone from the audience	30:30	You're not gonna do it in Russian anyway, right?
CARR	30:32	Well, yeah. Yeah. So...
FERNANDES	30:34	This is Brian Friel's criticism to the translation of many of Chekhov's plays as well, they all sound very English. Why not have an Irish version of Chekhov's plays?
CARR	30:45	Absolutely. Yeah, because when you read into Russian literature, and I know a bit about Chekhov and I know a bit about Tolstoy... what you realise is that the whole Russian social setup was so different from the upstairs downstairs of the English world. So, you get these terrible, very English translations of Tolstoy and Chekhov. And a lot of the Russians it was more actually... The way they lived on their States was more like the Irish way. You know, the peasants and the serfs and they're all lumped in together. The nanny slept beside the child who's eight or five, and she's been minding the child since, you know, forever. And, the serfs were part of the family and, that kind of obsession on vodka and loneliness, and suicidal. It's very easy for the Irish [inaudible], we're in a lot of Russian literature.
FERNANDES	31:45	Going to change the subject a bit, but then we'll go back to collaboration and the theatre. Could you tell us a bit about your work as a lecturer at Dublin City University? Which courses do you teach? How do you conciliate your multifaceted professional life as lecturer and writer-in-residence and playwright?
CARR	32:08	With great difficulty [laughter] and I'm very fortunate, they're being very good to me. So, this is my fourth year in the School of Language in Dublin City University and it's a new amalgamation of St Patrick's College. When I started, it was all the DCU and it's a growing school... When I started I kind of jack... they were jack of all trades. They're stuck, saying that "we need a lecturer on <i>Waiting for Godot</i> " and then "can you do that on Tuesday morning", so I'd be fitting in on other people's modules, stuff like that. But my main brief was creative writing. So, for undergraduates, we don't have a nice respondent on creative writing yet, we are currently trying to set up, or we hope it will be up and running by

		<p>September. So, I suppose that's one of the reasons I am there, because I'm not an academic. They don't want me for my academic credentials, they want me because I'm a working writer. And for that reason, they are very good to me around time and the amount of hours I have to do. I think they gave me time off of all they do. And, because of what I said, they have... they fulfilled their brief within the department for each specialism and I'm supposed to be the creative writing person, and have them set up the Master's programme, encouraged by them [inaudible] continue to teach [inaudible] undergraduate [inaudible]. In terms of the students, they are a great bunch, some of them are madly passionate of writing, some are trying for the first time. Because we're just trying to get off the ground, I'm kind of... I suppose I'm a jack of all trades. I'm teaching fiction or, you know, writing. And some of them want to write fiction, some of them want to write poetry, I don't write poetry, I don't write fiction. And this year, strangely enough, my second year, is when I got twenty of them, twenty-one of them actually, and not one of them is interested in writing plays, so we're just floundering along together. I mean, obviously I read a lot of prose, I know a good line in the paragraph when I see one, but in terms of how useful I am to them, it's not what I'm trained in. Whereas I could, if the twenty-one of them wanted to write a play, I'd have a fairly good idea on how to go about, you know, getting them there. I suppose the horror of the irony is, you can't really teach anyone how to write. But you can teach them how to read, and to read like a writer. Which is a very different way of, you know, reading for pleasure or reading, let's say, to write an academic essay. So reading with that kind of savage, voracious, acquisitive, magpie side of one's brain and heart and soul, which is the way writers read – and anybody who tells you otherwise is a liar, cause that's the ways writers read. It's about the whole history of writing is rewriting, it's rewriting, all the way back. Passing down the stories, coming out of the oral tradition, coming out of song, and then beginning to be written down. And then one's engagement, and one's very often rewriting tends to incorporate one's misunderstanding of someone else's text, which is always interesting. So that's where I'm at.</p>
FERNANDES	35:46	Do you feel that teaching has made you more conscious of your own creative process as a writer, or has it affected you in some way, in your career as a writer?

CARR	35:56	I think it is always good to be talking about what you do, and my students are great because it's all new to them, they don't have any status anxiety around being the next greatest novelist yet. I wish actually some of them would, and have that kind of arrogance, and that kind of polish quality you need to get your first book out as a young writer, or your first play or whatever it is. But I love being around them, and the way I look at it is, we can't learn together. Because as a writer you don't really have any answers, you love questions. And each time you sit down and write a play, okay, you learn a few technical things. But the few things you learn from the last won't be necessarily applied for the next thing you're writing. So, there's no "by a road". And the minute it becomes "by a road" it's kind of dead writing and so it won't interest anyone, least of all the writer. So, it's kind of constantly surprising yourself, and that kind of, you know, making it up on the hoof and just taking the risk and the chance, and seeing where the line will take you. So, it takes kind of extraordinary faith actually, in oneself and just in the language and the powers of imagination, enormously helped as well. Of course, the more you read the better writer you will be, there's absolutely no doubt, there's absolutely no doubt, even for the young writer, that doesn't matter, you get your first or two out of... just on sheer [inaudible] and picking up what's from the air. And particularly if you are in an English BA program, you have got a taste for things, so you begin to position your... what's connecting with you. You may not idealistic, or... ideologically or conscious thing, but it's happening, your relationship with language.
FERNANDES	37:56	This is going to get more political. As artists and academics in the arts and the humanities, it is impossible not to turn our attention to the current worldwide sweep of far-right movements and the transnational humanitarian crises. What do you think is the role of the artist in relation to the current political climate?
CARR	38:21	Well, who said all art is useless? I forget. Bruce, who said all art is useless?
Bruce	38:30	W.H. Auden said that a poem makes nothing happen. Is that any use?
CARR	38:34	Yeah, so it's the same kind of thing, isn't it? I don't know, I often think the writer's job is to write the thing and all the people would come along and tell you what it

	<p>means. But then there are all different types of writing, you know, their premises and their... The way I like to describe the poets and the theatre, the prose writers and the theatre, whereas Truman Capote said "there are writers and then there are typewriters". So, I don't know where I would- I'm not a political animal, I tend to avoid all of that. And I spent nine years in Kerry and I used to order three newspapers a day 'cause I was terrified 'cause I was living in the middle of nowhere and I'd miss anything. And after about a year I realised the locations changed but the stories were pretty much the same, the photographs, which is really just another way to say that human nature has not really changed since the old stories were first written down [inaudible], and that's enough for me. If I'm desperately need to know something, I'll ask my husband because he loves politics and all of that, he'd give me the five-minute for idiots version, just enough so I don't- well, I usually do fall flat in my face when mentioning politics, which is one of the reasons why I tend to keep away from it. I'm not exactly sure the writer has a role within that. And I know, the little that I do know about Latin America is that a lot of writers have been quite involved politically, and I don't know enough to comment on that. And again at home, we look at family, [inaudible], you look at Yeats, look at Lady Gregory [inaudible] have a politically active thing where, you know, you look at McDonagh, I love the 1916 guys that were shot and all of them were writers, they were poets and playwrights. So where do I fit in with that? And thanks to them, I live in a republic and not in a colony, you know, in a England [inaudible] sort of way. So, one does owe something, but I think you have to have a gift for it and you also need to know what you are talking about, because I think you can do a lot of damage otherwise. And because not a lot of it's changing, I suppose... People right here wrongly... people look to the bards for advice, for guidance. And I think maybe that's got confused with looking to be the poet or the playwright or the novelist for commentary, should really be looked at the work, because I think the writer is as flawed and as wrongheaded as anyone else. And there, you know, none of us are messiahs. And I think there's a bit of a culture of the man-messiah, which is dying very fast and, the quicker the better, I would say. And, because I think there's been too much pressure for too long on these people to deliver this kind of stuff that's actually not their kin, and deny of them too much of the other half of the population of the world. So, you know, yeah.</p>
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FERNANDES	41:46	In the past... How much time do we have? How much time do we have? Five minutes? [laughs] Oh, my goodness, next question [laughs].
CARR	42:02	It's fine. People get tired, even of me [laughs].
FERNANDES	42:06	It's okay. Okay, let me see here, one second. Okay, well, one final question, then. A few years ago – this is to conclude – you were interviewed by Mária Kurdi, Hungarian professor at University of Pécs. At that time, you spoke of how at the beginning of your career as a playwright, you were “stretching your limbs”, that your first plays were “exercises” that dealt with [an] “understanding of living and dying, all the big things”. As you read more, and felt more “mature”, you turned to the region where you came from, the Irish Midlands, and you also spoke then about how you would feel “humbled” and “afraid to write” in the face of everything that had been done before you. How do you see yourself as a writer now? What are your main concerns? How do you feel in relation to the previous generation of writers/playwrights both in Ireland and abroad, thinking of your great inspirations? Do you feel you've found your own voice if that means anything, especially in theatre, an intrinsically a public form of art?
CARR	43:21	God, there's a lot in that.
FERNANDES	43:23	[Laughs] I'm sorry.
CARR	43:24	Where do I start? Have I found my own voice? That's a big one. I think I might've hit a couple of things. I think I need to do a hell of a lot more. You know, what you're working on, you always hope you're getting better and better, this is not very often the case, this is one step forward and ten back a lot of the time. And it's very interesting from having been the youngest person in the room to suddenly realising you're one of the oldest, if not the oldest person in the room, and that happened very quickly. I don't mean that's actually bad. And that's kind of interesting. And particularly at home because we've got a whole generation of them, big guys, so I would be kind of the second crowd coming along and now I find myself... well, there's nothing between me and eternity now, you know, I am a newcomer to the top of the mountain. And, you know, it's very quick down the other side. So, there's an element of that, and I suppose if I was being completely honest, I would consider myself mid-career, although I hate telling my career in terms of playwriting. But if that's an honest... to answer

		you honestly, I think I've achieved some things, but I think I've a lot more to achieve. I do feel largely that my apprenticeship is over now, but just about. So that's how I view it.
FERNANDES	45:12	Thank you. And I have one final question. Do you like coffee?
CARR	45:16	I love coffee. I love coffee!
FERNANDES	45:17	I have some coffee beans. So, uh, where has it gone? [Laughs] I've got you a packet of roasted coffee beans from the region of Minas Gerais, which is where Maria Rita is from, and that's where our best coffee comes from, so.
CARR	45:44	Oh, thank you so much!
FERNANDES	45:45	That'll keep you going for a while [laughs].
CARR	45:47	Okay, thank you so much! [Applause]
FERNANDES	45:59	Thank you guys for being here.