



“Selkies, kelpies and fairies: Kirsty Logan’s contemporary sea creatures”

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L'EAU EN ÉCOSSE – WATER IN SCOTLAND

**ACTES DU COLLOQUE 2018
DE LA SOCIÉTÉ FRANÇAISE D'ÉTUDES ÉCOSSAISES**

Sous la direction de Tri TRAN

SELKIES, KELPIES AND FAIRIES: KIRSTY LOGAN'S CONTEMPORARY SEA CREATURES

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When angels fell, some fell on the land, some on the sea.
The former are the faeries and the latter were often said to be the seals.
Anonymous Orcadian

Kirsty Logan's latest novel, *The Gloaming* (2017), involves sea creatures and a rewriting of traditional fairy tales which recasts them in a feminist, lesbian context. The selkie in particular, like the mermaid and sea witch, is linked to Logan's acknowledged fascination with the sea and with islands. The mermaid, as a symbol of patriarchal imposition of gender roles, and the selkie, as a hyper-sexualised creature and a locus where questions of gender intersect, work together to interrogate gender distributions and gender roles. They do so in a way that, superficially at least, conforms to the pattern set by feminist rewriters of fairy tales such as Angela Carter, or proponents of lesbian rewrites of folktale and fairy tales, such as Irish writer Emma Donoghue. In her two full length novels in particular, Logan sets up a dialectic of sea and land, or sea and island, putting her characters on a ship that roams a flooded world in *The Gracekeepers*, and on an unnamed island, surrounded by an animated and omnipresent sea in *The Gloaming*. The latter novel follows a family on an unnamed island. The parents, Signe and Peter Ross, a ballerina and a boxer, are trying to keep the house, a large fairy-tale-like castle with pink walls and white turrets,¹ from falling apart, hoping to turn it into a guest house. They have three children, two named after Scottish islands (Islay and Barra, or "little Bee") and one for "the sea between" (24), Mara. The narrative is also a magic-realist tale, in which people turn to stone when they die, and remain on the island as statues, at the top of a cliff overlooking the sea. It simultaneously develops two interconnected strands, the tragic drowning of little Bee in the very first chapters and the family's subsequent attempt to come to terms with this loss, and the equally

1. See the description on the house on p. 68.

sea-ridden story of Mara's love-affair with an ambiguous and amphibian character who goes by the name of Pearl. In this novel, the particular emphasis on the sea which "takes everything" (52), which comes and goes, runs under the island and threatens to overflow, is mixed with a concern with other elemental forces such as the earth and the wind which, between them, manage in the end to erase all human attempts at "civilisation".² The sea is an all-encompassing symbol, an entity which is connected with the magic of folktale and fairy tales that the narrative not only captures, but also uses as an organising principle.

MYTH, FOLKLORE, FAIRY TALE: REWRITING PATRIARCHY

The novel opens on a description of the island as an enchanted dreamworld:

The world was so full of magic that Mara didn't always know when she was awake and when she was asleep and dreaming. At night she'd lean out of the window to see the sleeping island lit by stars. She'd watch the silvery flicker of midges catching the moon on their wings. She'd smell the coppery, sweet-rot scent of the enchantment she knew lurked under the earth. She'd hear the steady breathing of the sea, slow and deep as a giant's. She knew that if she could stretch up over the treetops, she'd see dozens of jellyfish glistening on the stones. She knew that behind her and beneath her was home, this rambling storybook mansion of fifty rooms, some shut up for years, a sanctuary for tiny creeping things – four walls enclosing a land of mysteries, each of them belonging to her. (7)

The mother, whose name, Signe, is a homophone of the French word for "swan" – "*cygne*" – is a former ballerina whose favourite part was Swan Lake and who, throughout, is compared with a bird, thus slipping from the category of mortal to that of magic character borrowed from tale. But the persistent motif in that tale of mourning and sensual awakening is that of the selkie, or seal wife. Peter Le Couteur, writing on gender and kinship in selkie folktale, describes its locus as "the categorical intersection of gender, race, species and sexuality" (Le Couteur, 63) in a way that borrows some of its features from fairy stories:

The Seal Wife is, of course, an explicitly gendered and sexualized tale; the male captures the female against her will, coercing her into sexual, domestic and childbearing roles. He steals and withholds a vital, magical part of his seal wife, without which she cannot return to the sea or to her people. In several accounts, the man is warned that destruction of the skin would cause her death. (Le Couteur, 68)

In a conclusion that could also apply to fairy tale, Le Couteur suggests, quoting Amy Hoff, that the sea-wife story reads like "an allegory for abuse and possession." (Le Couteur, 68). In Scottish folklore – in stories by Orkneyan writer George Mackay Brown or Eric Linklater's "Sealskin trousers" for example – the abuse is generalised to humanfolk:

2. At the end of *The Gloaming*, the house goes back to its original wild state, effectively cancelling all attempts the family has made to turn it into an inhabitable space for humans.

'Our teachers had told us,' he said, 'that men endured the burden of human toil to create a surplus of wealth that would give them leisure from the daily task of breadwinning. And in their hard-won leisure, our teachers said, men cultivated wisdom and charity and the fine arts; and became aware of God. But that's not a true description of the world, is it?'

'No,' she said, 'that's not the truth.'

'No,' he repeated, 'our teachers were wrong, and we've been deceived.'

'Men are always being deceived, but they get accustomed to learning the facts too late. They grow accustomed to deceive itself

You are braver than we.' (Linklater, 277)

The story has a heavily moralising purpose that comes through in this quotation, but no specific focus on the violence done to women. *The Gloaming* makes use of folktale as well as fairy tale to both emphasise and deviate from those narratives and their allegorical dimension and thus change the context in which they occur. Not only does this rewriting reflect the fact that tales are "embedded in social and material conditions" (Warner: 1995, xviii-xix), it also signals the capacity to reflect on those conditions. Signe, the "*cygne*", is a figure of the seal wife as well as of the swan maiden, of oppressed womanhood as she stands by the sea, asking it to give her back, not her seal skin or swan feathers, but her baby. But she is a complicated model, as she's also a mouthpiece for the narrative of oppression that is conveyed by fairy tales: she brings her own life to a fairy-tale conclusion which is made possible by magic realism – she jumps into her husband's upraised stone arms as she herself is turning into a statue, an iconic literalisation of the "happily ever after" convention. Signe changes the ending of her bedtime selkie stories to a happily-ever-after one, foreclosing the possibility for her daughters to imagine any other possibility. In the strand of the narrative which covers Mara's lesbian love story, she is also the one who insists on adherence to the fairy tale model and conventional gender roles, however hurtful that adherence can be to the female, as she knows from her bleeding feet when she was a dancer. She asks Mara, whose face is scarred by a deep wound and who refuses to apply ointments, "Don't you want to be pretty for [your boyfriend]?" (93), thus leaving it to Mara to counter gender expectations as she answers, "I don't want to be pretty for anyone" (93), a freeing statement that enables her to make love with another woman. And Pearl, Mara's lover, is also a figure of freedom, and one who paradoxically shows herself to be unattached to particular stereotypes from folklore or fairy tale by possibly being related to all of them.³ This freeing is symbolised by the fact that Pearl's behaviour does not conform to the pre-written story:

Every night that she fell asleep beside Pearl, Mara woke convinced that she wouldn't be there. That she was wrong about the ending of the selkie story: that her love would have found her true

3. Pearl fits many descriptions: the selkie (she can breathe under water (albeit with a trick), and has selkie-paws – "at the join between each finger it was silver with scar tissue." (78) –, the mermaid (which is what her job is, and how she is described – Signe speaks of her as her daughter's "mermaid lover" [227]), or even, in a way that crosses the gender divide, another figure from island folklore, the Finman (her skin and hair are dark, and she has a penchant for stealing away mortals, here Mara, whom she takes to her hidden island house).

skin and slipped back into the sea. But every night she reached out her hand and Pearl's hands were there, waiting. (146)

So between folktale and fairy tale and the confused attribution of stereotypical parts, what is being rewritten is a story that bears other possibilities, a story not cast in stone. That attempt coincides with what Paul Ricoeur describes as the purpose of myth:

The original potential of any genuine myth will always transcend the confines of a particular community or nation. The *mythos* of any community is the bearer of something which exceeds its own frontiers; it is the bearer of other *possible* worlds. And I think that it is in this horizon of the 'possible' that we discover the *universal* dimension of symbolic and poetic language. (Ricoeur: 1995, 243)

A new possibility is presented in *The Gloaming*, one which, if we follow Ricoeur, uses the potential of fictional discourse to extend the particular to the universal, and which enables the story to resist the pressure of heteronormative closure.

ÉCRITURE QUEER AND THE OTHERWORLD TOPOS

Heteronormative behaviours are presented in the story, both by the characters who voice fairly conventional homophobic feelings, and by the mother's insistence on borrowing from the fairy tale, even when telling a folk story. When Islay dismisses her sister's relationship with her lover:

Islay knew that Pearl came over for more than dinner, but Mara made a big fuss about walking Pearl to the end of the path and saying goodbye in a big loud voice. Mara thought she was being ever so clever, but if she was actually clever she wouldn't give Pearl massive big lesbian kisses right on the front path where anyone could see. Luckily, Islay wasn't quite as dense as Mara. She kept it to herself, though, no need to break their poor mother's heart. (190)

She's voicing ordinary homophobia, a rejection matched by her desire to turn Pearl into the monstrous figure in the narrative, by comparing her with a witch on account of the black clothes she wears.⁴ Denial also enters the narrative when Islay tells Pearl that Mara is not like her, and that, in a manner consistent with the main intertextual reference, that of the selkie story, Pearl cannot "take" her (193). It is left to the narrative to contradict the heteronormative clichés, first by making it difficult to decide which of the two lesbian characters conforms to the image of the monster and which to that of the poor abducted human: the text emphasises Mara's physical appearance after Bee's drowning, the scar that disfigures her and that she thinks disqualifies her from playing the part of the mermaid in Pearl's show (180). The resolution of this conflict however eschews binaries, and thus escapes the neat closure of heterosexist fairy tale, as Mara comes to realise towards the end of the narrative:

4. "She was chubby and her teeth weren't straight and she always wore black like a witch. Didn't that use to be one of the signs of a witch, having your eyes two different colours?" (191)

She'd wanted to be the Selkie, not the fisherman – and yet here she was with her sea-love. Still, perhaps it didn't matter. There didn't have to be a fisherman at all; two selkies could love one another just fine. (239)

The realisation that “it didn't matter” who was the selkie and who the human prompts Mara to take up folklore again, to turn away from fairy-tale closure with its destruction of the monster, and to resist its atemporality, which forecloses all possibility for evolution of the story. This act of resistance matches Pearl's own act of self-affirmation and resistance in the plot. It is an act which, in her examination of what she calls “monstrous fairy tales”, Dallas J. Baker describes as pertaining to *Écriture Queer*. Baker bases this concept on Kristeva's notion of abjection – what causes abjection is the ambiguous, the composite – and on Cixous's concept of *écriture féminine* – “a discourse that is not limited to a repetition of binary terms but, rather, a discourse which is open to terms that sit outside of binaries and refuse solidification.” (Baker, 106). Crucially, in *The Gloaming* – this very title incidentally referring to a moment situated in an interval, between night and day – Mara is precisely a representation of transition, of inbetweenness, so potentially of the abject Other. The middle child, she wasn't named after some land but, as her mother puts it, as “the calm one, the sea between” (24), or “the sea between two islands” (171).

The identification of Mara with the sea, its ebb and flow, symbolises the refusal of solidification, in a way that can be contrasted with the main thrust of the magic-realist part of the story, the solidification of people, in particular of Peter and Signe, into statues forever locked in an acrobatic embrace. Signe realises that when she can only witness Mara's elusive nature, or rather, her resistance to being frozen in one narrative, one fate. Her reaction is one that invites magic, albeit black magic, as “[s]he watched this Mara who was not that Mara. Her misnamed girl, her changeling.” (172) The strategy adopted by the narrative is to give voice to both “this Mara” and “that Mara” to exploit the felicitousness of her naming, maybe to take her and, yes, supply the happily-ever-after-turning-into-stone narrative with a changeling, another magic version of the child. For Baker, *écriture Queer* relies on a very simple and effective strategy, that of simply integrating the monstrous queer, in order to revalue it, while Paulina Palmer similarly claims that lesbian writing's incorporation of heteronormative and homophobic representations actively works towards marginalising those depictions:

By parodically reworking in their [...] stories the grotesquely misogynistic representations of femininity such as the witch, the mermaid and the giantess that fairy tales inscribe, they likewise engage in an attempt to renegotiate and resignify the boundaries of the abject, thus helping to redeem the lesbian from the image of the “monstrous feminine” which homophobic culture projects upon her. (Palmer, 143).

Dallas Baker sees instances of that recovery in the construction of a story from the perspective of the Monstrous Queer or, in the words used in *The Gloaming*, the changeling. And the reader gets a good share of the changeling's perspective, when Mara

shows for example how simple it is to be who she is, phrasing it in term of the kind of narrative one belongs to:

Finally, Pearl appeared, swaying up the path like she was moving underwater. Mara felt her heart stutter. She'd wanted to stay there as Pearl approached. She'd wanted to make Pearl wait downstairs for her, to make a grand entrance, to be the heroine of the story. To be someone else. But with Pearl, she didn't need to be someone else. (165-6)

The point made here is not only that Mara can embrace who she is; it is that the narrative can show this through her point of view and use the natural world simile involving sea and land to emphatically negate binaries. Both Palmer and Baker make this point of the necessary annihilation of the dichotomous model of the universe:

The binaries embedded in our culture are infamous: man/woman, human/animal, activity/passivity, life/death, natural/unnatural, normal/abnormal. If the normal threatens to become abnormal, or the unnatural natural, the other equal rather than subordinate, the binaries cease to operate in any powerful way and (heteropatriarchal) subjectivity destabilises, or at least seems less "real" than it did before. (Baker, 17)

And yet, the pressure of conventional stories, their binaries and their endings, is strong. When Mara discovers that Signe has changed the ending of the Seal Wife story to give it a fairy-tale resolution, and that she has made her renounce the sea and stay with her family for ever therefore choosing binary stasis over fluidity and movement, she encounters both the symbolical meaning of stories, and the fact that, contrary to the way Mara herself keeps reading the beginning of books again so as to be able to conjure up a succession of deaths and undeaths, the conventional tale is not prone to be undone. As we are reminded by Palmer, representations of the Monstrous Queer endure; that's why the conventional tale is a myth – this time in the sense that Angela Carter saw, of "extraordinary lies designed to make people unfree" (Carter, *Notes* 38):

'it's a story, Mara. It's about women as other. Men's fear of giving away power.'

But Mara wasn't listening. 'she always left,' she said. 'That's the end of the story. She'll always leave.' (240)

And the other strand of the narrative, Little Bee's impossible return from the world of the dead in spite of Mara's frantic readings of undeaths and of Signe's relentless entreaties to the sea to give him back to her, shows that some stories have fairly stubborn conclusions. Hence, according to Baker, the necessity for the appropriation of the fairy tale, which "sits within a wider movement in queer literature to rewrite the history – and more importantly – the folklore, the myth – of the queer." (Baker, 21). Because, as Angela Carter notes, folklore in particular is "much easier to infiltrate with other kinds of consciousness" (Carter, *Notes*, 38). Jack Zipes sees the power – and threat – of fairy tale in its capacity to create another world:

We all know that fairy tales are tied to real life experiences more than we pretend they are not. We ward off fairy tales and pretend that they are intended mainly for children because they tell

more truth than we want to know, and we absorb fairy tales because they tell us more truth than we want to know. They are filled with desire and optimism. They drip with brutality, bluntness, violence and perversity. They expose untruth, and the best are bare, brusque and concise. They stamp our minds and perhaps our souls. They form another world, a counter world, in which social justice is more readily attainable than in our actual world, where hypocrisy, corruption, hyping, exploitation and competition determine the outcome of social and political interactions and the degraded state of social relations. (Zipes: 2012, 96)

What *The Gloaming* does is precisely to *form* another world, making it possible for the main focalisers to derail canonical stories in order to become their own storytellers, in the way that little Barra/Little Bee hijacks the narrative at the end of the novel, taking it over in the first person, in effect vindicating Mara's stubborn readings and re-readings by becoming, in the textual space, undead. And the other world, which capitalises on the elemental opposition between sea and land sustained throughout the narrative, is the depository of all the characters' secrets, of all their narratives, even the most shameful ones, such as when Signe confesses that she would have given any of her other children to get Barra back, and still would (10). It is a world that can be recognised by its fluidity, by its being associated with both death (the drowning) and life (Bee's birth and his final undeath). Bee's return:

and then, too soon, he would be back in it. That other place, the barrier between the worlds membrane-thin and yet a thousand miles away. The land of dreams and magic and terrible, awful beauty. What that were Bee lived now? Was that where all the lost children lived? (171)

When Bee takes over the narrative, he metaphorically punctures the membrane separating him from the other characters, and is therefore able to puncture another barrier, that between the narrator and the reader, whom he addresses freely, therefore linking the real world where we sit, reading about the magic realist world of people turning into stone statues, to the world where a bundle of bones speaks to us, illustrating Zipes's claim in the quotation above that fairy tales are telling us truths in the real world that we share not with characters, but with books, and narratives.

THE MAGIC REALIST POWER OF STORIES, REAL OR OTHERWISE

So the question is finally one of perspective, of looking at the interaction between magic and the real, the nature of this interaction, and its possible interpretation(s). *The Gloaming* insists on the crucial role of stories, storybooks and on the people who retell these stories and how they can potentially meddle with them. What the main story needs is a narrative that can accommodate the monstrous, and integrate it into the norm, a narrative that, like the sea, "takes everything." In his theory which he calls that of the "aesthetic of failure," Samuel Beckett claimed that "since most forms of narrative are fibs to ward off the pain of the real, we should pare our stories down until they become 'residua' or 'no texts'" (Kearney, 22). In *The Gloaming*, Logan chooses another method; she chooses the motifs of water and wind. She chooses the elements

which simply are, while also reflecting on the – magic – power of narratives to ward off the pain:

Mara slid the first book off the first shelf and read the first page. Everything disappeared. The island, the loch, her placid father, her frantic mother, her absent sister, her scars, her sadness. Gone. She sank into the familiar invisibility of stories. (62)

To match this capacity of narrative to make things appear and disappear, to make one invisible, Logan chose the genre that can best accommodate the exuberance, the painful and liberating potential of the real: magic realism: “If fairy tales were real,” Pearl says about the house on the island “this is where they would happen.” (167) Magic realism makes them happen, by incorporating magic into the real, or maybe reality into the magic. This interpenetration is made clear when Pearl acknowledges that “no one can be a mermaid all the time”. (248) It emphasises the fluidity with which competing narratives relentlessly take over one another:

But the thing was, no one can be a mermaid all the time. Eventually, the show ends, the performers go backstage, the costumes are discarded. In daylight, everyone gets blackheads. Everyone wakes up grumpy. Everyone has to pay their taxes and keep receipts to chronological order to send to the accountant. Everyone is just like everyone else. (248)

So the novel as a whole reflects on the way that the stories we live by are born, where they get their inspiration from, by showing that the easy shortcut – Peter was “the beast to [Signe’s] beauty” (34) – is in fact a superficially magical answer to this question. But, as is indicated by the fact that Signe’s story of how she met Peter has a story inside it that explains it, which itself has a story inside it to explain it,⁵ the point is not to take stories at face value. Richard Kearney, in *On Stories*, distinguishes between three major types of stories. For him the first type corresponds to the “stories which we inherit from our family, culture or religion. These are the narratives of fatherlands and motherlands: ancestral stories which often function as myths” (Kearney, 29) which, in *The Gloaming*, turn out to be problematic in the sense that, as Angela Carter puts it, myths are static and don’t account for new paradigms.⁶ The second type of stories according to Kearney are stories which are purely creative, that emerge from nowhere and which show that “we are in the business of self-invention” (Kearney, 30), while the third category of stories, stories “as creative solutions for actual problems” add the function of “cathartic survival” (Kearney, 30). What magic realism does is to conflate the real and the magic in just one story, making it difficult to distinguish between the business of self-invention and that of mythical inspiration. *The Gloaming* in addition draws our attention to the part played in all stories by intertextuality, drawing once again on the land/sea dialectic:

5. See p. 34 where the narrative shows how a dancer met a boxer, and how, inside that story, there is a story of how the dancer had seen the boxer before and, inside that story, how the boxer had seen the dancer before she saw him.

6. See Carter on myths being “extraordinary lies designed to make people unfree” (Carter, Notes 38) above.

There are many legends of mythical islands. [...]

There is plenty of wonder in the real world too. Every place has its own small magic. Perhaps you've heard stories of rental hearts, of girls with giraffe horns, or smoke-ghosts, or mushroom houses. Perhaps you've heard of an island where the inhabitants slowly turn to stone. They're always stories from distant lands – but everywhere is home to someone, and no land is distant from itself.

So what happens if you make a trip to an island, whether mythical or real? Well. Whatever it is, it's rarely what you expect – and it's never what you want. (221-2)

This quote is an invitation to travel through not just old folktales, but also, intertextually, through other books, including Kirsty Logan's own short stories and the very novel we are reading. Just as in the episode with Bee breaking the membrane between this world/this island and another world/another island, *The Gloaming* uses organic metaphors to animate nature and break the distinction between the real and the magic: the sea and the island are depicted as living bodies though whose arteries the characters/the book course like lifeblood (263); this goes both ways, with the characters in turn being invaded by books which are metaphorically described as organisms (Mara realising that fairy tale books are "throbbing inside her" like a "tiny beating heart." [261]).

So what the novel advocates is a circulation between stories, and their "vessels". As Pearl tells Mara, "this might come as a surprise, but there are these marvellous new things called books. They've got stories inside them – hundreds, thousands of stories." (237) And once this circulation, this ebbing and flowing, has taken place, then there's the suggestion that "new books" can appear, rather than replaying mythical or canonical ones, be they with a view to re-evaluating their contents. So Logan, with this allusion to "new books" is suggesting a way out of the feminist/lesbian retelling of fairy tales that has been going on since the 1970s. She is suggesting a way to go beyond *écriture Queer*, and the revaluing of the queer, by stating that the stories are out there, and that, like the sea, they just are, and that they can generate their own intertextual network, made up of rental hearts and people turning to stone. They are books to conflate Kearney's three senses of storytelling. As Mara puts it, "perhaps it was time to spit old words out to make room for new ones" (103). The "new books" can generate their own intertextual networks, and therefore their own stories, their own "signs/signes" or semes. The process, or magic-realist power of stories, is therefore a power of integration. *The Gloaming* can make room for new words and integrate old ones. But it is not alone with this ambition. A striking example of that process of integration can be found in the recent work of artist Laura Watts. Her story "the Draukie", published in the anthology *Energy Humanities* (2017), is a selkie story adapted to the technologized contemporary context. It imagines the offspring of a selkie and a *draugr*, who embodies wave power and therefore the vital power of producing energy. The Draukie remains deaf to a team of scientists' entreaties to help ensure our future, maybe our survival as a species, until one scientist finds the solution by befriending him. In this story, Watts, whose website shows an interest in modern technology and in the kind of narrative of nature and the elements technology tells, depicts the island as a recipient of energy,

and mixes modern, technical words (“hydrophone”, “oscilloscope”, “perspex”) with the timeless vocabulary of the sea to create a new tale from ancient folklore.⁷

In *The Gloaming*, the book Pearl gives to Mara, which enables her to undo death, is entitled *Mine*, and the reader is given no access to it other than the final lines which qualify and therefore cancel the happy-ever-after formula. This may be because, in an ultimate magic-realist move which involves metalepsis, the book we are reading is the “new book.” Logan’s use of the possessive pronoun “mine” as the enigmatic title to the book might be a way to claim that *Mine* is *The Gloaming*, or rather, that *The Gloaming* is *Mine*, in a way that any other title could not have done. But the use of a generic pronoun (in the sense that “mine” can apply to anyone) also makes it possible for us readers to make it ours. As both Watts and Logan suggest, there’s a *mise en abyme* construction to all stories, and a mixing of tradition, folklore and something else, something that, as the author of the book given to Mara would say, is “mine”. In the final chapter simply entitled “after”, Bee who has taken over the narrative reminds us that the real is more unpredictable, more magic even than magic, or maybe that they cannot be separated as neatly as we think:

What happened to Mara and Pearl and to Islay? I’m sorry to tell you that I don’t know, because when the storm left, I did too.

When people are just stories, they’re easy to predict. [...] But in real life, people can always surprise you. There’s no telling what they’ll do next. (302)

What matters more is contained in the paragraph that follows those lines, which makes multiple hypotheses about what might have happened in the story because, by effectively breaking with the magic formula, it allows for multiple new books, new words to be born. Kearney makes it clear that the potential of stories is realised in the new interaction between author, reader and character:

Every story is a play of at least three persons (author/actor/addressee) whose outcome is never final. That is why narrative is an open-ended invitation to ethical and poetic responsiveness. Storytelling invites us to become not just agents of our own lives, but narrators and readers as well. It shows us that the untold life is not worth living. (Kearney, 156)

The Gloaming is certainly in the business of telling lives that are worth living, but also worth retrieving, re-living and transforming. So the conclusion from Logan could be that if the sea takes all, it also gives back after all.

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