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# Who Says You Can't Go Home?

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## ABSTRACT

Sebastian Barry is most notable for using his ancestors as the main characters in his novel. He takes small wisps of their life and tells a hauntingly, beautiful story. In *The Whereabouts of Eneas McNulty*, *On Canaan's Side*, and *The Secret Scripture*, he explores the themes of exile and the importance and difficulty of home. The problem with home for all of these characters is the fact that none of them can fully return. In the first chapter, I focus on Eneas' thought of home, which is the physical land of Ireland. The next chapter is Lilly whose home is the community that surrounds her, but she latches onto these people as her only survival, her only chance to succeed in life. The last chapter, Roseanne, explores how she deals with only having the home of her embodied memories. Living in an insane asylum she has a different experience than the other two characters, since she is the only one who physically stays in Ireland. However, all three never succeed in returning home and are left with a disillusioned idea of Ireland.

Who Says You Can't Go Home?

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Graduate School

Abilene Christian University

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

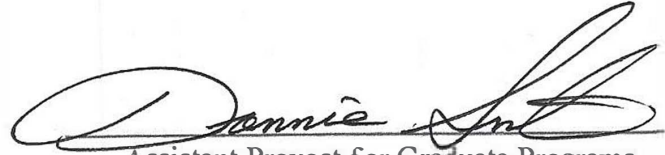
By

Holly Noel Dameron

May 2018

This thesis, directed and approved by the candidate's committee, has been accepted by the Graduate Council of Abilene Christian University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

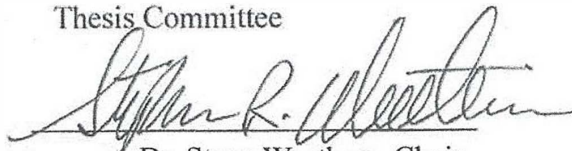
Master of Arts


  
Assistant Provost for Graduate Programs

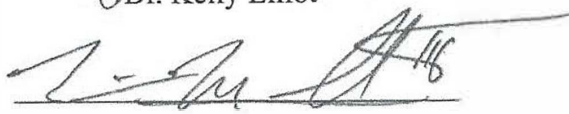
Date

5, 10, 2018

Thesis Committee

  
Dr. Steve Weathers, Chair

  
Dr. Kelly Elliot

  
Dr. William Carroll

To my great-grandmother, Jocelyn “Joy” Osborn, who lived the story

To my grandmother, Elizabeth Dameron, who told it to me

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my committee, in particular Dr. Steve Weathers, who guided me throughout this project. I have come leaps and bounds in my writing under the guidance of Dr. Weathers and the rest of the English Department at ACU. I also want to thank my family who understood when I needed time to work on my thesis and was okay when I went off on tangents. I could not have made it through this past year without all of my family and friends helping, guiding, and cheering me on.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER II: ENEAS' LAND AS HOME.....	12
CHAPTER III: LILLY'S COMMUNITY AS HOME.....	32
CHAPTER IV: ROSEANNE'S EMBODIED MEMORIES AS HOME.....	54
CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION: NO, YOU CANNOT GO HOME.....	74
WORKS CITED.....	82

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The place for Ireland is easy to pinpoint on a map, a small island next to Great Britain. The landscape of Europe, both physically and metaphorically, changed in the twentieth century when two World Wars broke out, which caused massive amounts of physical damage. Immigration became part and parcel of the two wars for people all over Europe. For Ireland, the two World Wars did not affect them as much as the rest of the continent, as they were too far away from the main continent. During World War I, Ireland was going through their own systematic change. Throughout all of this change, the concept and idea of a home have evolved, instead of being comfort and safety, the domestic place has changed to mean sorrow and fear. There are over six million people who live on the island of Ireland, yet there are over seventy million who claim to be Irish (Coogan ix). These people who claim Ireland as the original home do so because of ancestors who are forced to leave for various reasons. Home is a word packed with meaning. Typically, someone would consider a house with family members, people who love them and all around them, as home. Yet sometimes home is taken from a person even though they have not committed any actual crimes, as is the case for Sebastian Barry's characters: Eneas McNulty, Lilly Bere<sup>1</sup>, and Roseanne McNulty. In times of war and violence, like the Irish Rising in the early twentieth century, home is no longer the safe and secure environment it once was but is now a place where people can attack at

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<sup>1</sup> Bere is pronounced "Beer"



any moment. For this project, I want to not only explain the ideas of home of these separate characters, but also, justify why home is important for a person's identity and to build a healthy home later in life.

The conflict between Ireland and Great Britain is long and contentious. One particular British view of the Irish is expressed by Giraldus Cambrensis who traveled to Ireland in the late 1100s, and he remarks they are a "barbarous people," "a rude people," with "primitive habits," and "as living themselves like beasts," while the British saw themselves as "protectors and promoters of English interest against Irish degenerative" (Ohlmeyer, 24). However, this line of thinking was not isolated. Even before the end of British rule in Ireland, most English MPs considered Irish people as "a sort of Serbonian bog" of "unintelligible squeaks and groans" and "no one seriously tried to follow what was going on or to understand what is all about," as is reported by the London correspondent of the *New York Times* (Bew, 98-99). In 1801, both the Irish and British Parliaments passed the Act of Union, which created the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. The Union between Great Britain and Ireland lasted for a little more than one hundred years. The division in Ireland began years before the Easter Rising, as Catholicism became an underground religion and Catholics were second-class citizens. Before the 1920s, the only time Catholics managed to worship freely in Ireland was in the 1640s (Ohlmeyer, 35). The British Rule left many Irish people upset by the fact that British interests were considered more important than Irish interests. Also, the social and economic power had transferred hands from Catholics to Protestants. Two acts gave Catholics some of their rights back: The Treaty of Limerick 1691, which gave Catholics some religious freedom they previously held and they were free from persecution, and the

Relief Act of 1778, which allowed Catholics to hold land on similar terms as Protestants. After the British came over, the division of the Irish people began across religious lines, which paved the way for many of them to emigrate to other countries.

The Irish have been fleeing Ireland since the British came to the island. Since the 1600s, millions of people have left Ireland for a myriad of reasons, among them the assessment of future life chances, economic and social opportunities, and whether life would be better elsewhere. Unfortunately, some were left behind in Ireland, unable to leave due to economic issues or the fact that Ireland was home. World War I changed and paused everything in Ireland, and the Easter Rising of 1916 was not considered a separate event but enfolded into World War I.

The Easter Rising of 1916 led to the separation of The Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. The Irish rebels launched the Easter Rising, as a way to fight back against British Rule. The Rising began Monday, 24 April, 1916, when the Irish Volunteers and the Irish Citizen Army organized and seized key locations in Dublin city center where they managed to hold off the British forces for six days. The British Army suppressed the uprising, and in the end, over four hundred people were killed and many more were wounded. The Irish people thought the leaders would become prisoners of war, but instead, they were executed, enraging the public. The Volunteer Army became the Irish Republican Army, and they slowly moved underground. Yet, this started the Civil War in Ireland, which leads to the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921, giving Ireland complete independence with their own affairs. Of course, the Ireland that achieved independence was not a complete Ireland. The Republic of Ireland was independent of Great Britain; this was the original twenty-six counties. Northern Ireland was the

remaining six counties, which remained under the rule of Great Britain. Years later, Northern Ireland went through another period of civil war known as the Troubles that lasted from 1968 and continued for thirty years. Even though the Troubles are “over,” it still dominates the discourse in Northern Ireland, along with the peace process.

Sebastian Barry was born in Dublin, Ireland, in 1955. He is an award-winning novelist, poet, and playwright. Barry is a writer who explores the people who are forgotten or displaced by history and historians, and he focuses on marginalized people that are based, sometimes loosely, on his own ancestors. A small town close to the border of Northern Ireland is where many of Barry’s novels and plays either are set or at least begin. After the 1998 publication of *The Whereabouts of Eneas McNulty*, Barry stated that he writes stories about “scraps of people, blown off by the road of life by history’s hungry breezes” (qtd. in Jeffries). The concept of *The Secret Scripture*, published in 2008, came to him after his mother and he passed a mental hospital, and she commented that his great-aunt had been a patient there. From that one and only thread, the story of Roseanne McNulty was formed. Barry began his career by focusing on the Dunne side of the family, his mother’s side, and in *On Canaan’s Side*, published in 2011, he returns with Lilly Dunne Bere, “a political asylum seeker modeled on Barry’s great-aunt, who was forced to flee Ireland for America in 1921” (Cullingford 68). All of three of them are living through Ireland’s independence and the Troubles and into the 21st century. Sebastian Barry does this continuously in his work. He brings to the front the history people would rather hide. In a sense, Barry is attempting to bring these family members back home to their imagined Ireland.

For this project, I first want to define how I will be using ‘home’ and ‘house,’ along with some refining of ‘space’ and ‘place.’ While typically these terms could be interchangeable, for the purpose of this paper I do not think that is the case. A house is the physical structure that includes walls, floors, and a ceiling, for all purposes it is something simple that at its base provides shelter. In the house, experiences and familiarity that are created, along with answering social needs and a repository of memories and dreams. The people that are around during those experiences are what shapes a community. Therefore, the two terms are not synonymous, as is the same for ‘space’ and ‘place.’ I will be using something similar to Yi-Fu Tuan’s use of ‘space’ and ‘place.’ Space is being open and roomy, somewhere we do not know, and only becomes a place when we are familiar with it. The routine of life soon creates a place in a home.

Eneas McNulty has the common idea that home equals country, and even more specifically, Sligo. The beginning of Eneas’ story does not reveal the foreboding danger that will impact most of his life. He has a happy childhood in Sligo, enlists in the British forces in World War I, and then enters the Royal Irish Constabulary, the English-led police force. Barry comments on Eneas joining the R.I.C.: “It was an act of foolishness and short sightedness on Eneas’ part to join the police when he did, but at the same time the police had provided a refuge and a living for many an Irish family” (9). He soon winds up on the Irish Republican Army’s blacklist. For the rest of Eneas’ days, he is forced to live not only outside of Sligo but outside of Ireland. Eneas never returns home and aches with “chest heaves [of] love, [of] peace, [of] pure need. It’s the tobacco, the opium, of returning home” (Barry 163). He eventually ends up on the Isle of Dogs. His dies when he goes to save his childhood friend, Jonno, in a fire, who happens to be the

same man who has been trying to kill him since he was in his twenties. Throughout the novel, Eneas' focus is always on getting back to Sligo, to his hometown. There is a moment in the middle of the novel when he achieves it, but it is not the place he remembers. When he returns, not only the place, but the people have changed. They moved forward, while he stood still. In the end, he attempts to save his last tether to Sligo but in actuality never returns there. However, home is never what someone remembers, and Eneas is forced to reconcile his idea of Sligo with what actually exists. Eneas' focus on land as where a person is from is the common thought among people of Ireland. Even when he is unable to return to his home of Sligo, he still tries to live in places that remind him of it. While Eneas wants to return home, he is able to understand, in the end, and unlike Lilly, that home is not what he remembers. The main reason Eneas and Lilly leave Ireland is because of the choices made by their families, to enlist in the Royal Irish Constabulary, which supported the British Home Rule. Lilly's family is loyal to the British, but she does not outright approve of them. She does not enlist nor does she show any defend either the Loyalists or Nationalists side.

Lilly's story of forced exile focuses on the fact that the people she loves are no longer there for her, and the rest of her life only brings more tragedies. From the moment Lilly is introduced, she is a woman in her eighties who has lost a grandson and decides to look back on her life to write this memoir before she commits suicide, to achieve what is the ultimate spiritual home. As a child, Lilly Bere lives a simplistic life, but as she grows up she begins to understand the tensions between the Irish Nationalists and the Loyalists. After the first World War, she meets and falls in love with Tadg, who joined the Black and Tans. They are both condemned by the IRA and flee to America. Unfortunately, the

IRA kills Tadg in Chicago and afterwards Lilly flees. The majority of her life becomes a series of misfortunes. Most of the people she comes into contact with end up leaving her by death or choice. Lilly's focus of home is on the people she surrounds herself with, but she latches onto them in an unhealthy way. Every time someone leaves her, she is bereaved for a time. She is also unable to grasp this new place in America, especially after her grandson's, Bill's, death, and continually longs for what she left behind. However, what she left behind was terror and chaos. Lilly never returns home once, and she longs for the place she came from but in a fairytale way, unable to reconcile the home she left with what it has become. The difference between Lilly and Eneas is that he realizes that home is not what he remembers but only a fairytale in a dream. She commits suicide because she cannot find home, the people, while Eneas' death is due to trying to save home, or at least, his last connection to Ireland.

Roseanne is the only character who is not physically exiled from Ireland. Confined to an insane asylum, Roseanne is, surprisingly, the only one of the three protagonists who is relatively stable. For her, home is in the mind and body. Mistakenly imprisoned in her late twenties by the priest and her in-laws, Roseanne is nearing her 100th birthday and decides to write about her life. This mistaken imprisonment is the last action that begins to form this home in her mind. Due to the exile from the Sligo community and her ostracism from the family, Roseanne became dependent upon herself, on her own mind, for a sense of home. Of course, early on it is clear that Roseanne is an unreliable narrator in that she has spent years in an asylum and her mind is frayed, however, she does not realize that her memories do betray her. Nevertheless, she is able to weave her tragic story into something beautiful. Roseanne does die in the end, but her

death is strangely satisfying, both for Roseanne and the audience, as she is able to come to terms with her life. Roseanne has been hospitalized for a good forty to fifty years close to the town she grew up in but is still unable to return to it. She is forced to rely on only herself, and the home she created in her mind and memories despite the physical home of the hospital, with its strict rules and regulations. Therefore, Roseanne must form her body into her home — a metaphor for Ireland herself.

In total, there are four Irelands that are referenced throughout this project. The Ireland that “belongs” to each of the three characters and the Ireland that actually exists. The Ireland that exists in each of the character’s minds is the Ireland from their childhood or the Ireland that they wish still existed. Part of the problem is their inability to move to another place that they did not choose, but it is also the fact that they are unable to conjoin the two images they know of Ireland: the one in their mind and the one that actually exists. Actual Ireland has been overturned by turmoil and civil war that they are not included in. Eneas is the only character who I focus on who is given the chance to return home on two separate visits. Lilly stays in America her entire life, and Roseanne is confined to the asylum until her death. The fact that only the man has the ability to return home is reinserting the traditional views on women. Catherine Nash has examined paintings and photographs in Ireland, and in the early nineteenth century, the young women in photographs were replaced with the “old peasant women who could represent the successful outcome of a life lived in accordance with the demands of motherhood, as well as being emblematic of the traditions, folklore, language and way of life extolled in the state” (47). The two women, Lilly and Roseanne, are not allowed to go home because for various reasons they were not successful wives and mothers. Lilly's husband left her

and her son went off to the woods after the war; while these events are not her fault, the masculine culture of Ireland could argue that these are bad examples of a woman's life. The same goes for Roseanne who was married, but the priest wrongly accused her of having an affair, and she was then locked up in the asylum with her marriage annulled. Racial pride and fear were projected on the body of the woman because the ones leaving Ireland could be the best wives and mothers and that would leave only the timid, stupid, and dull in Ireland (Nash 49). In this case, the ones who leave are the “unsuccessful” women, and they, unlike Eneas, do not go back to Ireland.

The issues with leaving home are not as horrible when the choice belongs to the person. Exile is another issue entirely, as home is taken from them. The experiences, people, and the town as they know it all disappear for those who are not allowed to stay. Yi-Fu Tuan has explored the complexity of home and attachment to place. He begins with explaining how the town people are born in changes as people grow and gain more information. There are also the issues when an area is crowded or roomy, along with mythical places of space. Basically, “facts require contexts in order to have meaning, and contexts invariably grow fuzzy and mythical around the edges” (Tuan 88). Due to the characters’ inability to return home, or only return for a few days, inevitably they are creating a mythical Ireland in their own mind because they do not have all the facts available by living there. He describes how exile affects this attachment, since “it deprive[s] a man not only of his physical means of support but also of his religion and the protection of laws guaranteed by the local gods” (154). The place a person is from is important from the beginning, not only because of the physical land but because of the people and experiences surrounding that town.



The people and town surrounding a person matter, but the physical structure affects the person as well, especially at the beginning of Lilly's life. Gaston Bachelard has explored how are homes and everything inside hold our dreams and memories. He goes from the cellar of the house to the ceiling, explaining how the perception of the house shapes people, their thoughts and dreams. The house, according to Bachelard, is "our corner of the world," the first cosmos (4). The chief benefit of the house is that it allows for daydreaming, and in doing so protects the dreamers and dreams. Yet many times people in life may have bad experiences in a house that distorts that protection, as in some type of violence. Or other times the house is forced out from under someone because of politics or war. Of course, sometimes people do not realize how much a place means to them until it is gone, as it is "theorized that associations and commitments that people have to their homes may only become apparent in times of loss and hardship" (Anton and Lawrence 453). The home is precious because of the memories it contains, even if those memories are distorted by time and age.

*On Canaan's Side* and *The Secret Scripture* are novels that are told in memoir format. Each of the women is looking back on her life and writing down what happened in it, and therefore, sometimes the chapters will weave in and out of the past and the present time. In *Home Bodies: Tactile Experience in Domestic Space*, James Krasner offers an investigation into the sense of touch and the experience of home and identity. He explores the tangible grief by "focusing on the painful and disorienting bodily postures that grief compels us to enact in domestic space" (Krasner 21). He continues with the memory of domestic space, and ultimately he wants to explain the physical behavior through which memory and identity cling to the home. Lilly and Roseanne are

writing their “memoirs” in the last home they will have and want to leave behind an explanation for what happened in their lives. For each of them, their focus on their true home is in the abstract, as they have never been back to Ireland. Yet they do manage to find some peace where they end up, Lilly in America and Roseanne in the asylum. While these places impacted them, they will only ever be a house and never a home.

Home is supposed to be safety, peace, and comfort. We lay our heads down at night safe with that ideal. Ireland has dealt with people emigrating to other countries since England first crossed the sea. There is great terror and fear in leaving one's own country but even more so when the choice is not your own. These three novels by Barry deal with the difficult topic of exile in three distinct ways: Eneas is a wanderer, Lilly mainly settles in America, and Roseanne is left near home but locked away. Chapter two will delve into Eneas' exile and want to return to Ireland. While he is successful a few times, in the end he dies trying to save the last vestige of his hometown. Chapter three will explore Lilly's difficulty in leaving Ireland against her will, but she never actually fully settles anywhere due to the fear of someone coming after her to kill her. Lilly does not return home and in the end, she commits suicide as to truly leave a world that she was never wanted in. In chapter four, I will examine how Roseanne deals with a home that is never going to be a home and how she learns that she should have relied only on herself, but more than that she takes back her own story by writing it down. I argue that Barry is attempting to explain the difficulty of finding a place and how complex the feelings surrounding it are, especially in twentieth century Ireland. These characters are forced to reconcile the home they have left with the one that actually exists, a doomed venture.

## CHAPTER II

### ENEAS' LAND AS HOME

Eneas McNulty is identified as someone lost to history and it being lost to him, as he is someone who would not typically be remembered in the history books. The 20th century has begun and is described as “a century some of which [Eneas] will endure, but none of which will belong to him” (Barry, *Whereabouts* 3). Automatically, the audience is informed that Eneas is not only lost to history, but he is not permanent nor does he have a home. The place he lives in as a child is called a “temporary little room” (Barry, *Whereabouts* 3). While home for Eneas is easily identifiable as this house on John Street in Sligo, Ireland, the feelings surrounding his home are challenged in his life. As a child, his home is comfort and innocence, but he believes there could be a great life for him. As a child, he wants to be considered a great Irish man, an idea which is never achieved. Yet these early years of peace come to an end, not only with the addition of siblings, but with the beginning of World War I, which he enlists in to help in the war effort. This first decision to serve in the British military is the catalyst for his exile years. Once Eneas is exiled, his view of home changes from wanting to escape to wanting to return. The physical landscape of home changes with people coming and going, along with acts of violence - bombs and guns. Eventually, Eneas has to reconcile the Ireland he left with the one that is still there but has change, as he continually comes home and does not recognize his hometown.

Eneas' childhood connection to Sligo, as stated, is one of comfort and innocence. His experience growing up in Sligo is nothing unusual. He has two parents who love him and are able to provide well for him. The description of Eneas' childhood with siblings is a psychological exile: "But it's not long before Eneas is driven from his little kingdom, an exiled being, shorn of his mighty privileges" (Barry, *Whereabouts* 14). Already, home is changing for Eneas as he grows up and learns more about his place, when he can attach names and classifications to things (Tuan 29). His connection to the physical house of his family and childhood is starting to change with the addition of siblings, which is a domestic disruption that drives him to befriend Jonno Lynch, the man who will later be sent to kill Eneas in the future. The disruption is normal to the growing of a child as their first inclination of space is usually the home and "expands as he grows, but not necessarily step by step toward the larger scale" (Tuan 31). Sometimes a child will start at the local neighborhood then his interest jumps temporarily to a foreign place. Accordingly, the situations that are out of Eneas' control change the landscape of home and have him look towards the community in Sligo for acceptance and identity. Soon Sligo was not exciting enough, and Eneas starts to look at other nations, specifically America and Great Britain when World War I begins, which gives him the opportunity to enlist in the British Army. Before Eneas is officially forced to leave Ireland by the I.R.A. through Jonno, he is already not bound in by Sligo, as he creates this fantasyland of the imagined Great War in his mind. With the addition of siblings and the typical problems of growing up, Eneas considers himself an exile before he is blacklisted. Eneas' reaction to these new siblings in the house colors the rest of his childhood, as "there are times he thinks that if a *pleasant* accident were to befall his siblings, if they were instantly crushed

by rocks, or quickly drowned by a biblical sort of flood, he might regain his true happiness” (Barry, *Whereabouts* 18). Because his throne was usurped by his siblings his only thoughts are to leave the place of his childhood.

Eneas’ wish to find a place for himself is natural, and he decides that signing up to fight for the British in World War I will be the only way to achieve this goal. However, when Eneas leaves his home and is stationed in Galveston, Texas, he does for a time find a new home here: “He will be at home among docks and shipping” (Barry, *Whereabouts* 34). He has the ability to feel this way about home due to the fact that he can still return. The ability to return to home colors how a person views it because homeland is considered a person’s center of the world (Tuan 149). A person is able to change their “center” as they adjust to new circumstances. Although it is important to note that “center is not a particular point on the earth’s surface; it is a concept in mythic thought rather than a deeply felt value bound to unique events and locality” (Tuan 150). Because Eneas knows that “he may freely in the next breath choose to return home. And this is his liberty, his home reachable behind him, and all the different versions of home in the ports of the world,” he is able to view Galveston as a familiar place and have it as his center while there, but still consider Sligo and Ireland as home. (Barry, *Whereabouts* 36). While Galveston was able to provide for him while in the military, in the end, it never truly becomes a home, since he did not grow up there or continue living there. As a child, he believed he could be this great man and that the world was open for him to take on, and here he is experiencing some of what life truly has to offer him. Since he can decide when and if he returns home, it is nothing to long for and nothing to fear that it will be gone. Even though there is a war going on, for Eneas it is an adventure. He longs to

remain, as he would like to become American, but he still recognizes the pull Sligo has on him, as “he harbours no ties to anything above the ties of his childhood place” (Barry, *Whereabouts* 39). He aspires to be a great man, yet is thwarted more often than not. The aspiration for home changes as one grows up but once Eneas does grow up he only longs for the place he wanted to escape from. Overall, Eneas’ time as a British sailor in America has him compare this strange land to his own of country of Ireland, and while the two are different, “there is a deal in America that reminds him . . . of the dreams and the stories of home” (Barry, *Whereabouts* 43). He is able to find a home here out in America, in Galveston, a place that comes with time and not having something permanent. The attachment to Galveston and America could be through “familiarity and ease, with the assurance of nurture and security, with the memory of sounds and smells, of communal activities and homely pleasures accumulated over time” (Tuan 159). For Eneas, his want to stay in America due to the fact that it becomes a familiar place to him, along with the camaraderie that forms between sailors, and it is no wonder that he begins to have a sense of attachment and home to the United States. The pull of Ireland is present, nevertheless he does return since he “has earned his own brass for a year and more now and the war is over and he feels the inclination of a pigeon to go home, to his proper home” (Barry, *Whereabouts* 45). The pigeon is an apt description for Eneas, not only in this instance, but throughout his lifetime, as a pigeon is a bird that can be released hundreds of miles from home and still knows how to return there. Eneas is a pigeon flung far away but now returning to a place that is home but not the one he remembers.

Whether Eneas’ life is a series of choices or is all an accident, as he believes it is, the situation he returns home to is one that is unwelcoming and isolated. He posits right

away that “maybe he is wrong to have come back, he doesn’t know” (Barry, *Whereabouts* 50). Part of the danger of coming back is the usual difficulty of adapting to the idleness of civilian life. Here the idea that place is a static concept comes into play. If people see the world as a process that is constantly changing, especially after World War I, then no one should develop a sense of place (Tuan 179). Ireland further changes after the War due to their own revolution that separates the country into the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. Eneas’ view of Ireland is what he remembers from childhood before World War I and the Easter Rising of 1916, and it is this imagined view of Ireland that Eneas remembers when he is in Galveston that Eneas was hoping to return to, his childhood home still intact which turns out to not be the case. Instead he has lost his sense of direction, as there is no longer a superior officer giving him orders and he does not have the sense of community among his fellow soldiers. However, Eneas still strives to find a place to call home, since the people who have been around him have not provided him with a community to be a part of in Ireland. As a veteran of war, he cannot find a place or time to live, yet he has no inclination to join up in the rebellion, due to his experiences of war, even though his old friend, Jonno Lynch, has joined. At the insistence of his father, Eneas ends up joining the Royal Irish Constabulary (R.I.C.)<sup>2</sup>, sealing his fate of exile even more since during the period after rebellion the police were not friends of the Irish. Eneas enlisted with the British and is now fighting in the British police forces, and to all who focus on these two aspects he does not support Ireland. Eneas’ character is a contradiction, as he has this innate sense to see the world, but once he is forced to leave Sligo he longs for his hometown. The tragedy of Eneas’ life is that he

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<sup>2</sup> The police in Ireland from early 19th century until 1922

decides what to do by what is morally right and still ends up exiled for most of his life. He wants to try to find his place in this seemingly violent world, a goal which continually evades him, partly because of poor choices and a lack of awareness. World War I has ended and all of the soldiers have returned, but they are haunted by “the blood and torn matter of those lost, bewildering days,” and they are more marked by “atrocities than honoured by medals” (Barry, *Whereabouts* 57, 58). Eneas is haunted by the images he witnessed while serving, as a person cannot serve and not be affected by the atrocities of war. These events become important, as Eneas is the witness to the slaying of his comrade Sergeant Doyle, another ruthless and senseless act of violence that drives Eneas further away:

And [the killer] takes a snug gun from his coat of darkness and places it up against the bullocky face of Doyle no doubt just as the Reprisal Man<sup>3</sup> did with Stephen Jackson, Doyle’s childhood companion in the roistering schoolyard, and he prints the O of the little barrel against the right cheekbone and fires into the suddenly flashing face. And places the gun a second time into the left cheekbone, or where it might well be if the blood and splinters and scraps of flesh were cleaned off, and fires again and Eneas looks into the face of the killer and it has the set effort in it of a person struggling for precision in a world of vagueness and doubt, struggling with a physical task in a world of Godless souls and wormy hearts. (Barry, *Whereabouts* 65).

The choices Eneas makes lead him to this moment where he watches as one of his comrades is killed in front of him for the good of Ireland. Eneas’ time in World War I has

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<sup>3</sup> Key member of the Black and Tans



not only hardened him to the atrocities but has made him more aware of them, which has forced him to come to terms with this Ireland and create his own place to live and his own Ireland.

There is the realization that when a man sees death it changes him, but this death is different than the ones he saw during World War I, as this is murder and is the beginning of the end of his time in Ireland. Eneas has already been on the Nationalist's list of people to go after, but this is the moment the death warrant is delivered. He is not oblivious to the situation either, as he goes back to Sligo and tells his father, "[m]aybe I should be just going away. Going away quietly with myself somewhere" (Barry, *Whereabouts* 68). His father believes that a man who is forced to leave his homeland "[may] . . . never [come] back to his people" (Barry, *Whereabouts* 69). But are the Irish still his people? The situation that Eneas finds himself in is one that has him siding with the British, at least in the eyes of the Irish. He was not welcomed back to Sligo from the beginning, lost to the war and time and place, and now he is even more lost to his own place, as he will not go against his people. Yi-Fu Tuan states that "exile was the worst of fates, since it deprived a man not only of his physical means of support but also of his religion and the protection of laws guaranteed by the local gods" (154). However, Eneas is deprived of support before he is exiled, and it does not matter if he does not have the protection of God, since the violence in Ireland is due to religion.

The Nationalists are convinced Eneas is a traitor and does not want Ireland to succeed. He can end it, by giving the I.R.A. information about the R.I.C. and by killing the Reprisal Man. But Eneas tells Jonno, "I couldn't do that," because he just "sees Doyle as Jonno speaks. He sees Doyle saying those last words, and the little snubby gun against

his cheek, and then the other cheek, and the blood and uselessness of it” (Barry, *Whereabouts* 83). Eneas’ refusal to kill the Reprisal Man, to cooperate with the tribe, is why his name stays on the blacklist, but they do not come for him right away. He is lost in a haze for the rest of his time in Sligo. He recognizes that it is home, but, at the same time, that it is not his home. Even though he does not belong to this world, he still mourns the loss of Sligo and Ireland when he has to leave. Eneas is officially an exile of his own country, forced to wander, as a “displaced man and wandering and never coming back and always maybe be telling strangers of his love for Sligo and never seeing Sligo again or taking her in his arms again” (Barry, *Whereabouts* 97). The choice to leave, as he had left to go fight in the war, makes it easy to again leave home, knowing it will be there whenever he returns. The forced leaving he has to take, the wandering he will do from now until his death, has changed how he views home. Eneas is no longer able to return on pain of death, and home now is more cherished and wonderful than what he remembers it to be.

Eneas’ wandering years depict him as trying to find a place for himself in this world that does not want him. He is still referred to as a “ghost,” once in England, and his wanderings are not to any particular place nor for any particular reason. Eneas is a ghost since, he is not allowed to be in Sligo, Ireland, his home, and in turn, he is not included in the history of Ireland. Without a home he has become a ghost. In these years, Eneas reacts similarly to the tourist who “can grasp only the superficialities of a landscape, whereas a resident reacts to what has occurred” (Evernden 99). He eventually ends up in places that remind him of Sligo because he has a “hankering for the sea, as any Sligoman might. Because a Sligoman misses the garnish of sea salt on his skin” (Barry,

*Whereabouts* 126). Yet this hankering for Sligo can also be translated to a want for any form of homeland. Eneas longs for acceptance from any country, for any form of community. During this time he lives in Grimsby, England, and Eneas sees a ship that is returning Jews to Germany, and feels a strange connection to them because they had anchored “not far from Galveston in the Gulf of Mexico, the very heartland of emigrants and lonesomeness” (Barry, *Whereabouts* 132). He understands the journey of the Jews, due to the hatred he experienced. He expected the land of America, built by those who are immigrants themselves, would help this group, but the Jews are still turned away and forced to face imprisonment or death. Eneas remarks that the Jews are a “cargo of hated people. . . . [A]s a hated man Eneas feels the force of their useless journey” (Barry, *Whereabouts* 132). If they did not help Jews then what hope is there for Eneas to be helped in this lifetime? With the difficulty of finding a place of his own, Eneas decides to re-enlist in the British Military to fight in World War II.

The loss of land for Eneas has created a loss of identity and purpose. The novel starts with a Bible verse and it appears again after he re-enlists: “*And whosoever was not found written in the book of life. He is thinking these thoughts. Was cast into the lake of fire*” (Barry, *Whereabouts* 137). The verse preceding the one Eneas thinks of concerns the defeat of Satan and the last judgment. Basically, Eneas believes that he is condemned by God. The abandonment of his country and now God has led him to fight in World War II. Another war has begun and he sees not just people dying but people who are ruined by injuries, and all of them are brought back home. For World War II, Eneas is stationed in France, which has “a frightful, some would say a peculiar love among the men of Sligo for the land of France, it is an old feeling that has survived” (Barry, *Whereabouts* 21).

Historically, France has been a place for refugees, the displaced, and expatriots. Now he is in France and unable to fully appreciate it because he does not know where he is, as “the landscape is merely a facade” (Evernden 99). He does not have any experience with France unlike in Ireland where he sees a place that has rejected him, but he understands the rejection and why it has occurred. In France, “He is forty, no, he is forty-two or three, he can’t say any more. . . . No sense saying he knows where he is because he does not, damn well he does not. Even the name of the beach eludes him and when he heard the name first it had a Scottish sound to it but he has forgotten it now. Even if he could remember the name what help would it be?” (Barry, *Whereabouts* 138). The importance of the name is because it holds power. It is an identifier for people and place, and a way for people to acknowledge someone or something exists. Eneas cannot remember his own age or the place he is in, not uncommon in war, but there is an underlying fear that he is disappearing even more from the world and history.

With World War II over, Eneas goes back to wandering, except it is interrupted by his return to a imagined Sligo by the urging of his mother. His decision to return home is because of a letter from his mother, and she writes, “When you are better please come home. . . . You are twenty years gone next Thursday! Surely your old trouble is long put to rest” (Barry, *Whereabouts* 157). This is the problem with not having land, or a country, to belong to. However, after years away, Eneas does feel a love for England: “He feels a depth of affection for this queer England of flinty furnaces and ruined soldiers” (Barry, *Whereabouts* 158). When a person spends enough time in a place and with a group of people, that person does, in time, come to care and love the country and people. A particular place affects a person’s identity and view of the world, and for Eneas, his

viewpoints have run counter to Irish life and culture. Yet in England, surrounded by soldiers like himself, he begins to form an attachment. An attachment to place is the center of the world to a specific person, and while this center can change throughout a person's life, "it is a concept in mythic thought rather than a deeply felt value bound to unique events and locality" (Tuan 150). The myth of the "center" includes the culture and politics that run the town or country. For Sligo, the politics are that of the separation of Ireland from England. Eneas cares for England, but he does wonder if he can return to Ireland, let alone Sligo. His mother is the only person to ever initiate contact with Eneas or tell him to come back home. His father is happy to see him, but he never reaches out to his son. The fact that it is the mother that compels Eneas to come home reflects the idea that land equals woman: "[mother] nourishes; place is an archive of fond memories and splendid achievements that inspire the present; place is permanent and hence reassuring to man, who sees frailty in himself and chance and flux everywhere" (Tuan 154). The war was nothing but uncertainty, but Ireland is also a dangerous place for Eneas, as he still has a death sentence if he steps foot on Irish land. Yet Eneas' mother asks him to return and so he does. The pull of the childhood town is strong enough because it is where a person's foundation for identity was formed, and the home where a person lives and works as an adult is important because it has been woven into who they are and what they do in their life. The fact that the childhood memories at the beginning of the novel are of him and his mother, and naturally she is the one able to convince him to return. Eneas left Ireland to fight in World War I at sixteen and was exiled in his twenties from Ireland. He longs for the Sligo of his childhood, the myth of the motherland that he has carried with him all these years.

While Eneas' concept of home is the land, specifically Sligo, how he views it does hinge on the other people in his life. However much people want home to stay the same when they leave, this does not happen, as the place changes over time. Once in Sligo, "the joke is he's twenty years away and he can't recognize a soul, let alone prepare against attack" (Barry, *Whereabouts* 167). Since a big fear of his return is the inability to prepare for anyone who will remember he is on the blacklist and should be killed if he steps back on Irish soil, as more people would have joined the I.R.A. Not only has the physical structure of the town changed from the years he was away, but no one in the town remembers him or his self-perceived crimes. Eneas has changed from resident to tourist in his own home. Even though this is true, he sees Sligo as "an old friend" (Barry, *Whereabouts* 167). It still has the ability to comfort him, as he remembers past memories from his childhood. Yet, the fear of returning is present, as he "may be an outcast, he may be taking his life in his own hands or putting it into the hands of others by being there in Sligo," but "he is heartened again by that sense of not caring or not being as afraid as he had feared" (Barry, *Whereabouts* 168). The fear of being killed is what has kept him from home, which would keep most people from returning there. Eneas sees the town as friend and enemy, which is a similar relationship he has with Jonno Lynch, his childhood friend who becomes an enemy. It is difficult for Eneas to find permanence due to Jonno's threat of death, and home is "an important element in the idea of place" (Tuan 140). While permanence is imperative to place, the relationship between Eneas and Jonno seems to be the lynch pin for the loss of home. Tuan references Tennessee Williams' play, where home may be another person, and states that "in the absence of the right people, things and places are quickly drained of meaning" (Tuan 140). The place changes because of

Eneas' and Jonno's decisions, but it is still Jonno as the last connection to Sligo and Ireland that assists in Eneas' death in the end.

Home is only comforting when a person can return with no repercussions. At the beginning of his visit, Eneas visits with his family, catches up, and there are no life-threatening problems. The only difficulties is Eneas' realization of how much has changed since he has been gone. Yet the happy feelings of home are interrupted when he receives a notice: "Sentence of death now invoked. You will be hunted down wherever you are and slain" (Barry, *Whereabouts* 189). Eneas is not even allowed the title of "tourist" in Sligo anymore. He has been cast out of the place by a small group of the town. He is not free to go wherever he wants, similar to an infant or prisoner, "[t]hey cannot, or have lost their ability to, move freely; they live in constricted spaces" (Tuan 52). This is the unfortunate aspect: Eneas is enabled to go anywhere, to occupy any space, but he wants Ireland. Eneas does have a "genuine, and all too human attachment to Sligo as home, [and] there is no denying that Eneas is a true Irishman. . . . Yet his lack of patriotic commitment and even his treason, are a matter of chance and ignorance, but they are strongly counterbalanced by his devotion to Sligo that represents his sole dreamland" (Sere-Chaussinand 57). While thinking about his life in the forest that is both a "sense of danger and a sense of safety. Refuge and place of ambush," he is ambushed by the I.R.A.. (Barry, *Whereabouts* 190). During the chase, he ends up trying to gain access to his parents' house through a window, but he sees his brother reading a bedtime story to his daughter. Eneas is now forced to reconcile the fact of his life and the place in it:

He is distressed at the empty rooms of his own progress in the world. No children, no wife, no picture house where human actions unfold and are warmly enacted.

He can barely remember why his life is so bare, he is that used to it, the bloody life of a lone seal out in the unknowable sea, dipping down for mackerel and feckin around generally in a lonesome fashion. Here before him is the achievement of Jack, despite whatever trouble was upon him, here is the child and the father and the book, here is the living scene more holy and sacred than any official ceremony, for which all wars are declared and every peace manufactured. (Barry, *Whereabouts* 195).

This moment confirms for Eneas that he has not done anything with his life, and therefore, does not belong in it, a reference back to the beginning of his struggles “a century some of which [Eneas] will endure, but none of which will belong to him” (Barry, *Whereabouts* 3). Homeland is landmarks and attachment is familiarity, but Eneas does not have either, as he is once again forced to leave Sligo.

Eneas’ realization in Ireland has resulted in him not wandering but drifting through time and place. In Africa, he works for the East African Engineering Enterprise Company, where he hacks at the earth. He has escaped Ireland and the death sentence only at the cost of home. As Eneas does everywhere, he find similarities this time, between Nigeria and Ireland: “Moonlight brings Nigeria closer to Ireland. It might be Ireland because the night is still and quiet as a stone” (Barry, *Whereabouts* 213). Eneas manages to find some semblance of home in this place and among these people. The “[a]ttachment of a deep though subconscious sort may come simply with familiarity and ease, with the assurance of nurture and security, with the memory of sounds and smells, of communal activities and homely pleasures accumulated over time,” which is what happens with Eneas. As he stays in Africa long enough, gains a friend, and finds the



similarities between here and Ireland, he comes to terms with this place. One day he is talking with an Irishman, and he is hesitant in his answers to the man's questions. Eneas becomes protective of the place that he is from and he does want to talk about "Sligo to any man who could share an understanding of its beauties and dangers, but somehow something has changed" (Barry, *Whereabouts* 221). Eneas wants to keep Sligo private, not only because he has not lived in Ireland in years but also, the death threats that still hang over his head. Eneas as an adult, and after his visit to Sligo, is able to distinguish his childhood memories from what Ireland actually is, as "[t]he child knows the world more sensuously than does the adult. This is one reason why the adult cannot go home again" (Tuan 185). He understands the danger of Sligo yet can still appreciate his homeland from afar. Eneas realizes that what has changed is him, as the fear of death has become like an animal companion. The fear has transformed to a "strength, a privacy anyhow" (Barry, *Whereabouts* 221). Eneas is not fully healed from what transpired in his life, but at this place, Africa, and in this moment he finds peace, with the friend he has made whose life is similar to his, a kindred spirit in this world that he does not feel belongs to him.

For the first time in Eneas' life since his siblings were born, Eneas has found a form of contentment. While in Africa, Eneas experiences a complete cut off from Ireland, as letters between him and his mother are gone. Yet he understands that things in Ireland and Sligo will not stay the same: "names of the shops will change again, and someone's premises here and another's there will suffer the great iron ball, and he knows that in that sense he is already dead, that time has already taken care of him" (Barry, *Whereabouts* 224). Eneas strangely finds happiness in recognizing that he is a dead man, not in the

literal aspect, but metaphorically, as he has not left his mark on the world. He is a temporary person, which means home does not matter to someone who will not live there. Tuan states that people do try to recreate their past with brief visits, but when a person is in charge of his actions in life than he has no need for nostalgia (187, 188). Of course, Eneas is still a man, and the fears and regrets of his choices bog him down, as “[s]ometimes he yearns for the refuge of an English madhouse, for the refuge of youth even, of a fresh start. He is morally exhausted sometimes by being this Eneas McNulty,” especially since some of the action in his life has not come through his own decisions. (Barry, *Whereabouts* 228). That is the trouble for Eneas: he made certain choices that led him here an outcast, a man who can never return to his own country. His time in Africa while rewarding has begun to unravel as his friend Harcourt has an epileptic fit and the company will not keep Harcourt on the payroll. Eneas leaves with him, and again he realizes that he is a lost man, that maybe he should have stayed in Ireland to be killed since “[a] bird without its bush wasn’t much” (Barry, *Whereabouts* 249). Realizations and hindsight only help after a person experiences the events of their life like Eneas. Unfortunately, Eneas realizes that a person needs a home, a community to live and that the choice to have been murdered back in Ireland may have been better than wandering about the world, lost.

While the sentence of death is still in place, Eneas visits Sligo, Ireland, one last time in his life. The reason for the visit is to pick up his pension check from his time in the war. On the plane ride in, he is overcome with emotions, as “[h]e sits in his chains of memory and weeps mightily” (Barry, *Whereabouts* 265). The memories of childhood come, of the peace he had growing up, but soon those memories change to something

dark and mysterious, as he remembers what happened to that island. Once in Ireland, Eneas runs into Jonno Lynch, who informs him that the sentence of death still stands, but this does not force him to leave yet. The sentence of death stands, but it is not enforced at the moment, offering Eneas a few days of peace at home. When he arrives at his parents' house "he finds his Mam and Pappy have turned the tables, have disappeared on him. For they are not there" (Barry, *Whereabouts* 270). He does find them and also finds how much his parents' lives have changed since he left, yet that is the theme of the work it reinforces "the value of the things he has lost: home, family, friendship" (Cullingford 23). The town and his family have moved on with their life, while Eneas has struggled to find a place for himself, never staying anywhere for too long. Eneas receives a letter from his friend Harcourt, who is living on the Isle of Dogs, a haven for weary sailors, and is waiting for Eneas. He leaves Ireland again and goes to the Isle of Dogs to meet up with Harcourt. Eneas realizes that he is a "smidgen of a fella, a shadow, a half-thought at the back of his brothers' minds maybe, a sort of warning to them, a kind of bogeyman to fright the children and put manners on to them" (Barry, *Whereabouts* 278). That is the issue with Eneas' life: he thought he was going to be this great man of Sligo, go off to World War I and fight off the enemy, yet all he received from his time in the service was more trouble. Eneas is not a great man of Sligo or of Ireland. He is a man lost to the those who hold the book of Irish life in their hands.

Harcourt and Eneas both become lost to their respective countries, and the hotel they manage on the Isle of Dogs becomes, for them, homeland and home. Sligo was once important to Eneas but has now become no more than memory, something that will eternally be the same because he never sees it change. Sligo becomes practically a myth

for Eneas it “flourishes is the absence of precise knowledge” (Tuan 85). The town is pristine in his mind; therefore, it “is a fuzzy area of defective knowledge surrounding the empirically known” and is “the spatial component of a worldview” (Tuan 86). Sligo is a worldview for Eneas, since he grew up there, but is constricted by his years of exile. It is not only Sligo that does not change for Eneas but also his family. He does not receive any more letters from his mother nor does he send any in return. He admits that throughout his life he did not receive many letters anyway, and that the “documents of his existence are scant and few” (Barry, *Whereabouts* 284). Eneas is now consciously aware that he is officially lost to history. His hometown does not remember him, his family moved on without him, and he is not this great man of Ireland. Eneas is so abandoned by his place of existence that even the sentence of death does not bring him any terror or despair. Eneas lives his life with Harcourt on the island helping people similar to him. The past has a way of catching up to Eneas.

Jonno Lynch does come after him, and the sentence of death which has loomed over Eneas most of his life, is fulfilled. Eneas in these last few moments of his life is not scared of it, though, as he’s “too old for that old life of fear at the back of the head and nowhere to call home” (Barry, *Whereabouts* 294). The I.R.A. calls in the sentence of death on Eneas because they are starting up again and need to clear off the people on the old blacklists to make room for more. Unfortunately, Eneas is not killed by the I.R.A. directly. Jonno comes with a young man who is just starting out and there is an altercation between Harcourt and this young man, the gun goes off, and Jonno is the one lying dead upon the floor. Eneas’ last connection to Sligo, Ireland is gone. The fact that Eneas tried to save Jonno is telling of Eneas’ good character, but also it lends to the idea

that a hero is nothing without a villain because “the value of place was borrowed from the intimacy of a particular human relationship; place itself offered little outside the human bond” (qtd. Tuan 140). Eneas needed Jonno to have a place in Ireland. He has not had contact with his family in years, nor has he been back to Ireland since he left in 1959, therefore the only human relationship tied to place now is Jonno. While Harcourt is a friend and has had a similar life to Eneas, it is Jonna who represents everything that he has lost. Not only because Jonno is the one who informed him of his place on the blacklist and has hunted him down, but also, Eneas has those childhood memories of Jonno, when they were friends. Eneas decides the best course of action is to pretend that Jonno is him and set fire to the hotel, to truly disappear. Yet once the fire is set Eneas hears Jonno make a noise and, realizing his childhood friend is not dead, Eneas tries to save him: “The figure from that Sligo childhood from which he has never managed to detach himself has drawn him back” (Phillips “Marginalized People” 250). His last vestige of Ireland, of Sligo, is alive for a moment and Eneas had to save him, to continue to have a place. In the end, he tries to save the person who forced him away from his home and “is therefore personal, not political” (Phillips 250). The method of death for Eneas was foreshadowed but more than that is that fire redeems people and has redeemed Eneas. He grew up in this idyllic home, with parents who loved him, and then became disillusioned thinking he could be this great man of Ireland, but his choices led him instead to exile. He became a man without a home and in the end gave a home to men who were as lost as he was, as Eneas consistently did not make his choices out of allegiance or grandeur but out of respect for the humanity of every man. He refused the

idea that the ends justifies the means. He lived a life that forced him to find home for himself.

The place for Eneas ends up being no place. To be a part of the world, a person needs more than just themselves, they also need a body and community to survive. At the beginning of his struggles, he was cast into this ghost-like figure and throughout the novel he never became more than this. The search for a home became the only goal for his life, and yet he never found it. The exile he served cost him Ireland, and in his mind nothing would ever replace Ireland as home; therefore, he was forced to wander for his life. Home remained elusive and in so doing made it this mythicized land that he could never return to, but one that he recognized both beauty and the danger.

## CHAPTER III

### LILLY'S COMMUNITY AS HOME

Exile is difficult for a person. For political reasons, they are forced from their home, usually the only country they know, to find a new place in a foreign country. People who live in a stable country are able to move past it and accept the life they have made in a new city. However, those whose homeland is war torn struggle for the rest of their life to find a place of comfort and acceptance they had back home. Lilly Dunne Bere, in *On Canaan's Side*, is forced from her home because of choices made to not fully side with the British Loyalists or the Irish Nationalists. However, Lilly has a concept of home that is different from Eneas. In the previous chapter, home for Eneas was a focus on the physical land of Ireland. Lilly, while she misses Ireland, views home as people, those who love and surround her. The community is what matters to her, which is needed to form a home, but cannot be solely relied on in concerning a healthy place. Mainly, she wants to return to what she had in childhood with her parents and siblings around her, which is an imagined Ireland that does not and cannot exist anymore, not only because once she leaves Ireland becomes the Republic of Ireland but also, not living there will have the place change due to time. Unfortunately, tragedy follows Lilly wherever she goes, and she is never able to escape it. Nor does she actually find a home in a place or a person that truly lasts because they are taken by either force or choice. Lilly is left completely alone, which adds another layer to the complexity of home, as the area one grows up in and the people are as needed as the physical land and structures.

Even if people think of home as something different than a physical house or country there is still a physical touchstone, a way to remember people in their lives. For Lilly, her way to remember is by writing down the story of her life on the formica table in her kitchen. Not only does she write on this specific table but throughout the novel she references tables, like the table her husband, Joe, sits at after they are married or the table that Mrs. Wolohan owns “sitting in her smart suit, at her elegant table” (Barry, *Canaan* 183). The use of connecting people to objects is not uncommon, as it reconnects people to memories they have of loved ones. As Lilly writes her story, she is linking the people more to this formica table, which stands in for all the homes she has been in and lost. Since Lilly is eighty-nine years old when she decides to write her memoir, it is not uncommon that her house has narrowed down to this kitchen table, as it is the center of her environment, the focus of her life (Krasner 47). The table as a focus allows her to go back in her memories to write about what has happened to her. The center of her world as an old woman is the kitchen table, but when she was a child the center of her world was Ireland.

While Lilly does focus more on the people that does not mean that the physical country of Ireland is left behind. Throughout the novel she compares America to Ireland and remembers the family that she left behind there. At the beginning she describes America as a place that does not “stay still. Like the people themselves” (Barry, *Canaan* 10). She talks about the language and words in Ireland, but in America they keep changing the words and never stop adjusting or moving forward. This type of world does not help Lilly find her home, since she needs something more stable. For Lilly, Ireland is this constant in her life because she is not allowed to go back, never does go back. With



her emigration to America, she is once again a child, since “[a] child’s spatial frame of reference is restricted” (Tuan 26). Lilly now has to learn America and its place along with its culture, along with a new center of the world. While she is learning this new terrain, she still thinks that Ireland has not changed. A misguided mind-set, as no country stays still for any period of time, but she needs to believe that it did not change to explain how her life has turned out, especially in light of her grandson, Bill’s, suicide. Before Lilly experiences this last tragedy as an eighty-nine year old woman, she goes through one as a young girl. Her brother, Willie, goes off to fight in World War I but never returns home: “Willie not coming back . . . There were thousands, millions, of boys in that war, that didn’t come back to their households,” which gives the impression that her life is not special nor is it hers to control. (Barry, *Canaan* 30). World War I changes the landscape of Ireland and the home for the Dunne family. Throughout the rest of Lilly’s time in Ireland the loss of Willie permeated the air of the house, the walls, and furniture that it was almost impossible to escape from the grief.

The atmosphere of the house is changed so much that to connect it to comfort or peace transforms it from a home into a house. After her brother’s death, is the first instance of Lilly associating home with a person, as his death has disconnected her from her childhood house: “The grief at first sat in us, and then leaked out into the chairs, and at last into the very walls and sat in the mortar” (Barry, *Canaan* 32). Gaston Bachelard comments on the psychological memories that are attached to home. The memories that become “associated with the nooks and corners of solitude are the bedroom and the living room in which the leading characters held sway” (Bachelard 14). Willies changes the family way of life drastically, as it does for most families who loses someone in war, that

all they are doing is trying to get on with life. The home does not include him, and there will now be an empty seat at the table. Willie impacts the Dunne family home, especially Lilly, as soon she is exiled from Ireland. The atmosphere of a home changes because of a devastating event that a place will never be what it once was.

Lilly in an attempt to move on with her life, tries to connect with someone that knew Willie, to stave off the loneliness. During this dark time in her life, one of many, she finds friendship from Tadg Bere who fought with Willie. Soon that friendship grew into something more but the relationship is completely built off their loss of Willie. Lilly builds her home on people because the “[f]ear of space often goes with fear of solitude,” even though “spaciousness is closely associated with the sense of being free. Freedom implies space; it means having the power and enough room in which to act” (Tuan 59, 53). Lilly has freedom but does not feel she can act on that freedom, not in Ireland or in America. As in Ireland, she is limited by the I.R.A. and soon her exile. In America, she does not yet truly know the place, and she continually loses the people around her. Her fear is heightened when Lilly’s father tells her a “death sentence [has been] put on Tadg<sup>4</sup>, and he’s to be hunted and killed straight away. That’s just for certain” (Barry, *Canaan* 49). Lilly and Tadg’s relationship was built on fear and tragedy, while they may love each other in their own way the love they have is not a strong enough foundation to last. They do end up fleeing Ireland for America, where “[a]lthough we intended to be married correctly in America, we were really married in that moment, when my heart was so heavy that without his presence, without his arms, I would have perished of fear and loss” (Barry, *Canaan* 53). Lilly’s sentiment that she would be lost without Tadg there is

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<sup>4</sup> Tadg is pronounced like tiger without the “er” sound at the end

repeated often throughout the novel, as he is her connection or touchstone in America. However, that soon changes, as she creates a connection with everyone she meets in America, but Lilly is unable to form healthy, meaningful relationships with any of those people, as she latches on to them for protection. They are strong men who will take care of her, which is not an unusual thought during the early 20th century. The reliance Lilly has on people will eventually lead to devastation, as none of them can become what she needs, as they all end up leaving her and not fulfilling the ideal male quality of protecting her.

The connection Lilly forms with people began when she was in Ireland, with her family. Yet her insistence on people as home is not a rejection of the physical as home, but a reaching out to the community to help form the physical place, as both the land and community is needed to form a place. Ireland is severed by her exile yet the loss began, not when the house was nothing more than a memory of Willie. She remembers Ireland and dreams of it, but it will never be what it once was for her. Her exile is reinforced with fake papers where Tadg and Lilly are “Timothy and Grainne Cullen, brother and sister” a literal erasing of their old identities (Barry, *Canaan* 59). They did this to help move the I.R.A. off their tail, until they could find a place to lay low and officially marry. The fact that they have to remove their identities is another loss for Lilly. Since, “when someone can’t be located ‘here’ or ‘there,’ he can still be envisioned in a scene - in imaginary space partaking of none of the material specificity of the object world” (Krasner 26). The loss of her name means that even if her family wanted to find her, years down the road, they would not be able to because the name they travel under is not her own. The loss of her name is one more removal of her home and her identity, but she also cannot imagine

herself partaking in any scene. The final heartbreak of their situation is Lilly admits how she may not love Tadge, as she writes “[p]erhaps in Ireland, right up to the moment we had to go, he had been Tadge” and it was “[a]s if the love I had for Willie was strangely transferable, and while maybe even a real love, was a blind one, an unhearing one, an unseeing one” (Barry, *Canaan* 60). The transferable love, the love that went from Willie to Tadge, proves that she needs people to protect her, but cannot love them for who they are because she should love Tadge differently than she loves Willie. After the loss of her brother, Lilly was looking for someone else to offer her safety, first in her father than with Tadge. Yet now she has no choice but to attach herself to Tadge, as they are alone in America.

Lilly is not only exiled from her physical home, but her actual identity is technically erased from the history of Ireland. In writing down her life, Lilly begins to understand the problems that are happening back in her country of birth. Both Eneas and Lilly are victims of the feud between Protestants and Catholics, the Loyalists and Nationalists. Eneas enlisted in the British Army and the Black and Tans, while Lilly only associates with them by the people in her life. Lilly is in a relationship with Tadge, who fights in the British Army and serves in the Black and Tans, but before that her whole family was on the British loyalists side of the war:

My father was chief superintendent of police under the old dispensation. He was the enemy of the new Ireland, or whatever Ireland is now, even if I do not know what that country might be. He is not to be included in the book of life, but cast into the lake of fire, his name should not be mentioned because it is a useless name with a useless story” (Barry, *Canaan* 42).

Eneas, Lilly's father, and to an extent Lilly herself, are not given a voice or identity in this "new" independent Ireland, as they are part of the history that Ireland wants to erase. They are the ones who support, whether outright or through inaction, Ireland remaining a part of Great Britain. Yet she strangely does not include herself, as a "useless name with a useless story," so she does not yet admit her own part in the making of Ireland. As for Lilly, it was not until after her brother's death, once her relationship with Tadhg began and he enlisted in the Black and Tans, that she was placed on the list of people to be killed. Tadhg and Lilly arrive in New York but are immediately assaulted by the crowds and this "angry street in New York," and another realization for her that they do not know each other and are stuck in this strange place (Barry, *Canaan* 64). Lilly's perceived crimes leads her down this path of a loss of home and identity.

Since the exile from Ireland means that Lilly cannot rely on her family anymore, it reinforces her ideal to view home as other people. Lilly's only person she can rely on once in America is Tadhg. Yes, she does have distant family there but she does not know them like she knows Tadhg, nor does she want or take the time to know them. Even though Lilly and Tadhg immediately have problems when they settle in Chicago, not including the fact that they are hunted, it is that "they were no longer united as [they] had been, but bizarrely sundered by the very threat of intimacy" (Barry, *Canaan* 69). They are threatened by the fact that their relationship was based on violence and continues on due to the threat of death, and the threat of intimacy is that they only people they can rely on is each other in this strange world. Yet they are also the only ones who understand how the other one feels. Both of them are exiled beings and are from the same community and country. As people who are forced to leave Ireland, America may feel

welcoming and vast at first, but transforms to something they do not recognize since they did not choose this, as the “world feels spacious and friendly when it accommodates our desires, and cramped when it frustrates them” (Tuan 65). The desire of Lilly and Tadg is to not be in this relationship anymore and to have the chance to go back to Ireland because they formed their relationship on flimsy foundations. Yet now they are in this foreign land together and have to rely on each other when they barely know one another.

Due to the religious and political conflict, they are not allowed to return to their homeland, and even if a place soon becomes comforting, it will be ripped from Lilly. Slowly, Tadg does start to refer to Chicago as home and sees America as a “place of safety, maybe infinite safety. . . like a glittering Canaan” (Barry, *Canaan* 73). In particular, Tadg is becoming more familiar with the American space and has turned it into a place, in that a space is something strange and unknowable, while a place is familiar (Tuan 73). Unfortunately, this does not last, as Tadg is killed a few days later. He was lulled into a sense of complacency, as neither of them expected the I.R.A. to come after them. This is another heartbreak for Lilly to suffer through and this time she does not have the ability to rely on Tadg, Willie, nor her family. She is truly alone for the first time, as she “[seems] to cross over into another country. That Tadg-less country was not that first America, which his presence had made safe, a sanctuary, in an uncertain one” (Barry, *Canaan* 79). The loss of someone close to you changes how you look at a city or country, it no longer was the same as when they first saw it because now all they see is the person they do not have. Tadg was able to make the place safe due to the fact that she knew him and he was comfortable with him, even if their relationship was not the most stable, he still knew her. With this murder, the place reverts back to foreign territory for

Lilly. Even more cruel is that they had left Ireland. Unlike Eneas who is exiled and cannot return to Ireland's soil, Lilly and Tadg are not offered this amendment to their exile, so there is the possibility that they could be hunted down and killed. They are followed to America, and he is killed in cold blood. The task of moving on from this is difficult for anyone, yet for Lilly, she is still not given the option to return home, as her name is also on the blacklist. She moves on to a different city where the memories of Tadg will not plague her, and but she reverts back the child who is restricted in their freedom.

Lilly's unhealthy relationship with place is that each time she finds a space and something tragic happens she imposes those events on the city she is in and so, she leaves. After Tadg's murder, she flees in the night from Chicago and goes to Cleveland. She does admit to herself that she is "already a prisoner in the open asylum of the world. My solitariness was nearly absolute" (Barry, *Canaan* 98). She is not oblivious to her situation in life. The violence in Lilly's life has affected her mental health, yet she continues this cycle and does not break it. Since, "losing a loved one means losing not just that one body but also one's own bodily engagements with it" (Krasner 27). The interactions she has with people means she cannot fully let them go or forget them, and in not fully handling her grief she is letting this affect her own life. She is only a spectator in her life because she fears being hurt or abandoned, and "by avoiding her identity and delegating responsibility for it to others, Lilly partakes in an act of disavowal" (O'Brien 44). She does not admit that anything that happens in her life is her fault but rather the fault of others: the war that killed Willie, the I.R.A., the gunman who shot Tadg. In Cleveland, Lilly finds employment as a maid in a wealthy woman's household, and there

she meets Cassie Blake, who soon becomes her next safety net. As Barry did in *Whereabouts* with Eneas forming a connection with the Jews on the ship returning to Germany, he does again with Lilly and Cassie. In Cassie, a black woman who escaped the south, Lilly finds “a depth of safety” and believes “[l]oving Cassie was where in truth I started to love America (Barry, *Canaan* 103). The one person where she begins loving America who is not a male. Lilly loves America through Cassie because of Cassie’s knowledge of America and experiences in her life, along with the fact that Lilly feels shared life experiences with Cassie due to their shared minority experiences. Cassie also foreshadows the eventual disappearance of Joe, a man who passes as white. As Elizabeth Cullingford concludes “if black and white can achieve reconciliation, then so can Catholic and Protestant, republican and unionist” and they can return home (78). Unfortunately, Lilly is never afforded the opportunity to return home, so the reconciliation of Protestants and Catholics in Ireland will never happen. People are important to place, right after land, but only relying on people to give you a sense of place is detrimental, especially when Lilly only relies on one person at a time. This is not uncommon for people, as when a person is a child their “parent is [their] primary place,” but a “mature person depends less on other people” (Tuan 138). Lilly’s continual reliance on another person as parent means that she never grows up and matures from a child’s point of view of place, as she depends more on people and not less. She cannot find a safe place in the world, specifically America, because when tragedy happens in her life that places is transformed into despair and memory.

Lilly’s exile has her create an Ireland in her mind, where she is still a member of the community. After she has left Ireland, she had little to no contact with her family, but



once in Cleveland, she decides to send a letter to a family member and finds out her father is dead. Lilly is reminded of her “wretched exile. Letter-writing. Names, postmarks, locations. Unfriendly eyes. And I had cause then, not so long after, to wonder if I had been so wise to write after all” (Barry, *Canaan* 106). To cut off communication with loved ones back in our hometown is difficult, but the heartbreak of missing out on town and family events is problematic to reconcile in her own mind. Since Lilly is forced out of Ireland, she misses her father’s funeral and cannot be a comfort for her family. As with Eneas, Lilly wants Ireland to stay the same. People expect where they are from to remain frozen in time, which means that “myths flourish in the absence of precise knowledge” (Tuan 85). Similar to Eneas’ coming home and seeing how much his family has changed, Lilly is told how much has changed since she has left, yet her knowledge will always be limited and selective by where she is and what she is told by family. The unfortunate situation for both is that they each need to come to terms with the fact that Ireland is not what they remembered, it has changed since they have left, not necessarily bad but can become a hindrance when they cannot find a new home.

Not only has the place changed, but Lilly is no longer allowed to claim it as her own. One morning, she sees a man with a gun who she assumes is an I.R.A. agent sent to kill her (she finds out years later that he was sent to kill her). When Lilly is telling the police officer about the man with a gun she thinks, “I wanted to tell him my father was in the same profession, but of course I could not. And Tadg of course, a policeman of sorts. I didn’t think this man in front of me was Irish, but still I couldn’t chance it. Maybe he knew nothing of Ireland and her politics” (Barry, *Canaan* 110). Again, the fear of intimacy forms in her unwillingness to make a connection with this police officer, who

she could relate to because of her father's job but chooses not to because of the fear of them knowing about her, and her willingness to be known. The loneliness of exile is something that Lilly expresses throughout her recollections. The fear of being caught by the I.R.A. results in her not claiming her own family, the people she loves. She is allowed to be Irish only in novelty not in actuality, since "[p]eople love Ireland because they can never know it, like a partner in a successful marriage. I am a bit the same way myself. Ireland nearly devoured me, but she has my devotion, at least in the foggy present, when the past is less distinct and threatening. When the terrors associated with being Irish have been endured and outlived" (Barry, *Canaan* 127). For Lilly, she knows to an extent that the Ireland she grew up with and loves is not the one that exists now, it is a myth of her own making. The myth of Lilly's Ireland is partially true, since "facts require contexts in order to have meaning and contexts invariably grow fuzzy and mythical around the edges" (Tuan 88). Her Ireland is one that she remembers from childhood, the one that was still battling it out for independence, but with her years away those facts she knows of Ireland have become fuzzy. Even though Lilly has the potential to have a healthier time transitioning from foreigner to resident than Eneas because she acknowledges how distance and time away from Ireland have made the tragedies not feel as painful, yet she never fully accomplishes this out of fear. Eneas continued to write to his mother, traveled back to Ireland, and needs to find a place similar to Ireland to feel at home. Lilly only needs to have people, who will protect her, surround her to feel like home, which does become difficult when the people around her keep leaving her. Whether their leaving her is by choice or force does not matter, as the heartbreak is still the same.

The removal of Willie and Tadg from her life was by force, but the removal of the other people in her life was by choice, one she did not have a say in and one that haunts her and is a main point of contention in her life. Lilly lives her life as if it is acted upon her and not as an active participant. After the incident with the gunman in Cleveland, Lilly starts going out with Joe Kinderman, the policeman who wrote down her statement. Joe is a nice man to Lilly, and she is grateful that she knew his love in her life. Strangely, she does not need him to be from anywhere or “have a story or a history. He just needed to be Joe, what he was, neither from here or from there. . . . American Joe,” again a loving of America through another person (Barry, *Canaan* 138). The fact that Lilly does not need Joe to know where he was born not only causes problems in their life later on but goes against the aspect and importance of home and place. The space for Lilly is that she cannot find a permanent home, and she continually refers back to Ireland and her family in terms of mourning, understandable given how she left. In terms of a house, she rejects or restrains herself in a corner, hiding from life, before she meets Joe (Bachelard 136-137). The lack of concern for Joe’s background is unsurprising for Lilly’s views on a person’s residence because people create a home, not physical land even though it should be a combination of both. Joe is a kind man, which is all that matters to her. The people who encompass her life are the important elements, not their hometown. They marry soon after and move to the Irish part of town. Lilly remarks that “most of those families were second-and third-generation in America. They didn’t know much about my Ireland. Not that I did myself, or do now. I cannot imagine it. It is like a huge graveyard, with my father and my sisters buried in it” (Barry, *Canaan* 140). Lilly admits she does not comprehend the history and politics of Ireland anymore, and she acknowledges she is not

positive she ever knew Ireland as a child, as she was unwilling to commit to a side. As far as she knows, her family in Ireland have all moved on, since she never kept up with their lives and they never kept up with her, she is lost to and in America and this life of tragedy.

The pull of homesickness could be a problem for anyone who leaves home, whether by force or choice which is expressed by Lilly through the eyes of soldiers. In Lilly's life, she experienced the feeling of sending off multiple loved ones to war: her brother, Willie, her son, Ed, and her grandson, Bill. At the beginning of World War II, Lilly thinks back to when her brother went off to war, which sealed his fate of death and starts her on this journey of exile in her life. Lilly connects the soldier's homesickness to her own: "[t]he pull of home, [Bill] said, is what crucified him and his buddies in the desert. They tried desperately to break that cord. . . . Homesickness, he said, was like the energy surging into the electric chair. A soldier was a sitting duck for it" (Barry, *Canaan* 150). Even though Lilly is not a soldier, she does live a soldier's fear and life. Homesickness arises because a "place is an archive of fond memories and splendid achievements that inspire the present; place is permanent and hence reassuring" (Tuan 154). For Lilly, she cannot find a permanent home because she focuses too much on the pleasantness of Ireland from her childhood and the family she left behind, even though the Ireland she remembers no longer exists. She is away from home, trying consistently to break away from Ireland, and is always a victim of the world around her. The only way she kept herself safe was by not staying in one place and by not intimately connecting with any person. A person at home, is not in the idea that it is one singular person, but with the community in the place someone lives. A person lives in a place they call home

and there will be nothing wrong with that, however, if they do not leave that physical structure of home and learn about the politics, culture, and people of their home then they have lived in a vacuum, which does not satisfy the idea of home. Similar to Eneas' finding parallels with his situation in Africa and Harcourt, Lilly finds connection with the soldiers and the wars that surround and mark her life.

Eventually, the only "person" Lilly can hold onto is her unborn child whose own space is restricted, again a connection to Lilly's own childlike attachment to a place. The problem that Lilly's life poses is that she either leaves or is abandoned. To actually set down roots in any one place a person needs to have a sense of community, connecting them to others. Lilly either does not establish this, or it is taken away from her by a force out of her control. The lack of control Lilly has has her identify "space and freedom as a threat," as "people rather than things are likely to restrict our freedom and deprive us of space," as the I.R.A. does to her, which leads to much of her fear of hurt and abandonment (Tuan 54, 59). The main problem with Lilly's life is that she is not actually in control of it, she is deprived of her space by others around her and living her life out of fear of the past coming back to haunt, or kill, her. As O'Brien states, Lilly "still views her world as something which is created for rather than by her" (44-45). Which is why every time someone leaves her life, she goes through a terrible period of grief.

Lilly's fears are what drive her to never find a permanent place because losing someone could become a threat to her identity and home. As there is a "great emphasis on the fact that identity's limits are visible limits. Threats to identity attack the visible surface of the body" (Krasner 119). As with Willie, she believes she will be bound to the walls of the house and with Tadg his blood stains her clothes. The threats to her identity

are not physically on the surface of her body but on her mind. With Joe leaving her out of his own volition, which leads her to mourn his loss, as the “absence of the beloved’s body changes their habitual motions through space” (Krasner 23). Lilly is attempting to reorient herself to a place and home that no longer has Joe in it. One way she does this is by trying to find peace and comfort in her child, but it does not last long: “[h]ow is it that we do not feel less lonely for the presence of our children? I think I thought that the little life gathering force and purpose inside me would assuage all of my troubles” (Barry, *Canaan* 163). Eventually, she knows that her child cannot rid her of all pain, as no child can do that for their parents. An attachment to a person is not necessarily negative, as attachment theory according to John Bowlby “regards the propensity to make intimate emotional bonds to particular individuals as a basic component of human nature” (qtd. Giuliani 140). While relationships with people are an important aspect of a city or place, it cannot be the only way to form a healthy space, as Lilly assigns each person in her life to that of a parent to a child. Not to mention the fact that the bonds Lilly has with others are abruptly cut short leaving her to rely only on her son, a baby who is dependent on his mother to define space for him.

The relationship Lilly attempts to cultivate with her son leaves her in limbo, split between America and Ireland. The loneliness is not a main concern but that fact that this is not her actual place, nor does she want it to be, as she longs “to be home, out of this American chaos, and back in an Irish chaos [she] understood better, and would not be so alone in. And yet [she] sensed in [her] sisters a huge loneliness, each in her own way” (Barry, *Canaan* 164). The fact remains that it is not the exile that facilitates her loneliness, but how she handles this new life and place. Along with the fact that when she

remembers or writes about a person, she usually goes back to wanting out of the United States and back in Ireland. Lilly's connection to a person always comes with her going back to what she is familiar with, as she is split between the two places. She still views America as this distant Canaan and not the place she has been living in for years, and Ireland is home, even though she has not been there in years. She does acknowledge Ireland's own chaos, but it is a chaos that she would understand, as someone who grew up there and knows the politics, and "since memory is an inherently socially constructed act, then memory in isolation is all but impossible" (Phillips 252). However, she has not lived there for years and would not be as informed on the culture and politics of this new and independent Ireland, which means that America can never be a home because some of her memories she creates are in isolation. At this point, one would not consider Lilly to be a "resident" of a remembered Ireland, but she still considers herself to be a "resident" instead of a "tourist," and gives the mindset that she will one day return to Ireland (Evernden 99). Instead of being either a resident or a tourist, in a sense, Lilly creates for herself a third space, one that is reminiscent of the migrant experience. Catherine O'Brien comments that "[h]er entire life appears to encapsulate the essence of Bhabha's 'uncanny moment.' The rejugation and permutation of her identity which continually occurs throughout her life opens up a third space of enunciation and significance" (43). It is not until she is writing down her memories of Ireland and her life that she realizes that what she thinks of Ireland and what is actually Ireland are not, in fact, the same. Unfortunately, she never achieves community or home in either place. America is only a pause in her life, never a permanent location, no matter how much she tries for it to be. She is

perpetually trapped in this third space, between Ireland and America and neither one belongs to her, as neither Republican or Loyalist belongs to her.

For Lilly, the American space does not belong, as she is split between Ireland and America. Lilly's connection to Ireland cannot be fully severed, as it is where she is from and the tragedies she experienced in her childhood will stay with her. Her son and grandson have no love for Ireland, as she writes, "I loved Ireland, in spite of all, and I was so grateful to America, for finally offering me sanctuary. But Ed, flesh of my flesh, was of America. America made him and America unstitched the gansey of him" (Barry, *Canaan* 191). However, America only becomes a sanctuary after Lilly has a child. Lilly did not have this feeling with Tadhg, Cassie, or Joe, they were her protectors for a time but never had America become a sanctuary, since "Lilly's 'American self,' however, is haunted by her Irish political identity" (Cullingford 74). She is continually reminded of Ireland because of the cataclysmic events in her life, and the fact that the fear of being killed by the I.R.A. is always there in the back of her mind. She only has a "secure base to rely on, [and] is free to move away from it and explore the environment" once she has a son (Giuliani 141). Except this kind of "secure base" system is used for a child who has just been born. The child is the one who is born but so is Lilly, since her son was born on American soil, she now feels a sense of safety.

The safety Lilly now experiences in America after the birth of her son reinforces the societal expectations that are now imposed on her. She is a mother now and when she is writing this memoir she is almost a representation of the "successful outcome of the life lived in accordance with the demands of motherhood" (Nash 47). Unfortunately, America still takes another loved one from Lilly, and it seems this is not the sanctuary or



home she expected. Nor does it grant her the ability to go back to Ireland. Eneas returned to Ireland twice, but here while Lilly is a wife and mother she continually “loses” those titles by the choices the men in her life make, and it could mean that she is not allowed back to Ireland because she was technically unsuccessful in her roles of mother and wife. After Ed returns from the Vietnam War, he leaves and goes to live in the Appalachian Mountains. Lilly hopes that Ed is still out there in the mountains, as “[she] would so love to see him before I go, but I don’t think that will ever be. Last time I saw him, I think I saw a man that could never come home, because the compass, that most people have, had been ripped out of his memory, out of his very heart” (Barry, *Canaan* 207). Before Ed even is born Joe leaves and then years down the road, Bill commits suicide. Lilly relates to this feeling of the compass ripped from memory and heart due to her own life, her inability to not only find a place but to not be granted a place in Ireland or America because of her perceived failures as wife and mother.

Lilly’s inability to find a place connects with her attempt to find a community, as the continual loss of people in her life leads her to want someone to protect her and keep her safe. Along with the fact that the community would regard Lilly as the old woman who has lost a husband and a child. Throughout her life she finds someone, but only for a time before they leave her, which is the why she is writing her memoir. As the outer frame of Lilly’s story is focused on the days after Bill’s death. In her writings, Lilly has decided that she will commit suicide after she finished writing this, as she already believes she is dead, practically homeless and not afforded a place in the book of life. The losses that Lilly experiences throughout her life have reached the summit of what she can handle. She begins to move, not to a physical place of existence, but a place that only

dwells outside of life, that of heaven, which is a “response of [the] feeling and imagination to fundamental needs” (Tuan 99). Lilly is someone who is not attached to any person or place and therefore, she is creating a place for herself in the afterlife.

As this is obvious throughout the novel, Lilly decides that she will kill herself. According to Tuan “[r]eligion could either bind a people to place or free them from it,” as it does for both Eneas and Lilly when they are forced to leave Ireland and continues for Lilly in her own mind’s expectations (Tuan 152). In this instance, religion binds her by the fact that she will commit suicide and still believes she will go to heaven. By the end of the novel, she is engrossed in her agonies: “[t]o remember sometimes is a great sorrow, but when the remembering has been done, there comes afterwards a very curious peacefulness. Because you have planted your flag on the summit of the sorrow. You have climbed it” (Barry, *Canaan* 217). Everything she writes is a remembrance, a memoir, of her own life. Another point to consider is that death is something no one else can undergo or confront, as “Derrida contends that it is only when confronted with death than an individual can be fully cognizant of his or her own self-hood” (49). For Lilly, her life has been nothing but one death after another, but it is only when her grandson dies that she decides to commit suicide and is confronted with her own life and experiences once she choose this path. This decision of ending her life has granted her the access to embark on this memoir of her life, to recognize her lack of a home. With Lilly, the decision to commit suicide is different than an accidental death from arson. She decides on her own terms to remove herself from the world like Eneas did when he went and rescued Jonno Lynch from the fire, as there are bonds with the people from our community. The bond between Bill and Lilly, even if it is one-sided, was something that she clung to after the

loss of her husband and son, the grandson was all that was left of her life she created in America.

Lilly, unlike Eneas, did not have the opportunity to return home at any point in her life. She admits at the end that “my own country [Ireland] is foreign to me” (Barry, *Canaan* 245). Eneas had a chance to go back to Sligo to see his family, everything he missed out on, unlike Lilly who was not allowed to return to Ireland, yet she manages to have a life. Since she was not as focused on the physical place of Sligo, she had a better attempt at forging a place for herself in America, although never fully accomplished it. Nor was Ireland truly gone from her life, since “Maud and Annie and Willie and my father never left me anyhow. There is never a day goes by that we don’t drink a strange cup of tea together, in some peculiar parlour-room at the back of my mind” (Barry, *Canaan* 251). She is unwilling to find a place that does not have a community for her, which creates many of the problems in her life, as she never settles in one place for long. With the death of Bill, that means that her place is no longer with the living. If she is only able to have a place if there are people and the people she loves are all dead, then she has to join them, and “ultimately, it is the reader who, it may be argued, retrieves and re-appropriates Lilly’s lost identity from the mire of history” (O’Brien 51). There is a logic in committing suicide for Lilly, even if it is tragic. Also, it again crosses that divide between Protestantism and Catholicism, as Catholics believe that suicide is the worst sin to commit. The person who commits suicide cannot atone for their sins. Yet Lilly does atone for her sins by writing her memoirs down in this book. The hope Lilly has that she will be allowed into God’s heaven is enough to move her forward: “I fancy just up the track inside the gates will be a figure waiting, and that by the agency of God’s mercy I

will be let through. I wish, I wish to walk forward hurriedly to that figure, to embrace him again, just as, standing that first day in my house, he once to my astonishment embraced me” (Barry, *Canaan* 252). The ability to move forward from such tragedy is a feat of courage. She does decide out of grief to end her life, but if the only way she will have peace and find a home is with people surrounding her, then the only option is to go to a spiritual home, as all of her people are no longer living.

## CHAPTER IV

### ROSEANNE'S EMBODIED MEMORIES AS HOME

As I begin this chapter, I find that the changing back and forth timelines in Roseanne's life is becomes complicated to convey and the fact that her mind is not fully intact to give what some want as a more accurate account of what happened. There are claims I make at the beginning of the chapter, yet the textual evidence arrives later, as I want to keep the timeline with the novel but need to make the claims early to understand more fully why Roseanne is feeling the way she does as she herself is writing her "memoir."

Roseanne McNulty is the only one of the three characters who does not physically leave Ireland. Instead, her exile is one of community, as she is sent to an insane asylum by the local priest, Father Gaunt, in conjunction with her future in-laws because of a perceived social crime, adultery. Roseanne, like Lilly, is writing a memoir of her life as she nears her one hundredth birthday because she dearly "would love now to leave an account, some kind of brittle and honest minded history of myself, and if God gives me strength, I will tell this story, and imprison it under the floor-board" (Barry, *Scripture* 5). The main difference of Roseanne's exile, besides the fact that she stays in Ireland, is that her life is not actually in her control, unlike Eneas and Lilly, who act like their lives are not their own. Roseanne's life actually does not belong to her. Lilly and Eneas were forced to leave Ireland because of the political and religious strife between the Loyalists

and Nationalists. On the other hand, Roseanne is placed in Roscommon asylum, about forty miles away from Sligo, due to society and religion. Her testimony is not only haunting, but also, she is the only one of the characters who realizes how she should not have relied on others or the town, as “Sligo made me and Sligo undid me, but then I should have given up much sooner than I did being made or undone by human towns, and looked to myself alone” (Barry, *Scripture* 3). Eneas’ home is the physical land of Ireland, while Lilly’s view is that the community is as important although her attachment to people is unhealthy and does not foster relationships. Roseanne, as someone who is in a mental hospital, has the perspective that home is the individual body of a person.

The beginnings of Roseanne’s life is in the small town of Sligo where she does not have the community she needs. She knows now, looking back on this time in her life, “that place where I was born was a cold town,” and that she should have relied on herself instead of others (Barry, *Scripture* 3). Roseanne does not mention home much; mostly it is in conjunction with her father, Joe Clear, who works in a graveyard, and at one point, he is a member of the R.I.C. The Sligo cemetery is at the back of the Clears’ house and is “Roseanne’s playground,” as a young child, according to Dr. Grene, the psychiatrist who works at Roscommon (Barry, *Scripture* 152). A place for the dead was the only comfort she found as a child. Yet it was also violated by the revolution in Ireland, as is the whole town, where guns and plans were buried in a grave, which Roseanne witnesses. Soon after she tells her father about the people who buried the items they are arrested, and of course, they start looking at every possible act of revenge against the police. Roseanne, though, thinks they are grave robbers, not fully comprehending the events in Ireland’s Civil War years. Even though Roseanne is not an infant at the time this happens, she is

still restricted in her freedom by the edicts placed on females during this time, and because of this she has “lost [her] ability to, move freely” and she “live[s] in constricted spaces” (Tuan 52). This becomes even more accurate when she is placed in Roscommon. Although Roscommon may be an upgrade, as Sligo is described as a cold and harsh place, this is especially the case for Roseanne: Roscommon is still not the perfect place to live. In her writings, she spends little time recollecting the actual town and more on the people who run it. Not only does the independence of Ireland create political upheaval but also religious upheaval. Before the separation of Ireland and Northern Ireland happened, the Christian denominations of Protestants and Catholics were constantly fighting, and while Roseanne and her family are Presbyterians Roseanne does not set herself on either side of the fight. Some specifics of Sligo may be warped by time and mental disease; however, the town is not a place of comfort and security that is needed to create a home.

The community in Sligo is usually against Roseanne, except her father who regularly influences her own views on home, especially the one of Ireland. Joseph Clear is a typical Irish man, whatever that is, and she describes him as “a passionate, I might almost say celestial-minded Presbyterian man” who enjoyed John Donne's Sermons and Sir Thomas Browne's *Religio Medici* (Barry, *Scripture* 6). He works as a superintendent in the graveyard where Roseanne herself spends time in as a child. The graveyard is almost another extension of the home for Roseanne, since her father “was the keeper of the graves” and “alone in his graveyard house, which was a little temple made of concrete, he would be heard singing” (Barry, *Scripture* 9). However, his time working at the cemetery does not last due to conflicts between the Nationalists and Loyalists. When

Joseph is let go from his job, Roseanne describes it as “a living man exiled from the dead. That was a little murder also” (Barry, *Scripture* 61). Roseanne’s connecting home to her father is common in most people, as a “parent is [their] primary place,” but a “mature person depends less on other people” (Tuan 138). This view changes after his death, when home becomes more of a space than something to be fondly remembered.

Roseanne has this strong connection to her father because he is not a typical Irishman, he has a clear cut image in his mind in how people should act to and with one another, and he believes that everything created by God must be good. The tragic aspect of this thought process is that he has this mindset during a time when religion mattered more often than anything else and is not sufficiently committed to any religion. The importance of religion lies in the fact that it “could either bind a people to place or free them from it” (Tuan 152). In Joe’s case, and later with Roseanne, religion binds them to their specific places. Even though Sligo is not in Northern Ireland, many of the disagreements between Catholics and Protestants happen in the town, or at least they do in Barry’s novels. Roseanne writes “[t]he truth was, my father loved his country, he loved whatever in his mind he thought Ireland to be” (Barry, *Scripture* 61). Sadly, Joseph Clear dies, and Roseanne does not know how and is completely devastated by the loss of her father, the one person who created a home for her.

While many scholars, such as Elizabeth Cullingford and Sarah Herbe, remark upon Roseanne’s unreliability as a narrator, she does recognize the situation of her life and where her place is. Herbe comments “in her attempt to tell the truth, however, Roseanne emerges as an unreliable narrator” (28). Part of this problem is the fact that the place she while she may have been wrongly imprisoned, over the years, her mind has



become frail and memories warped. The fact that Roscommon is falling apart, as it is in “a terrible condition, how terrible we were not completely aware until the surveyor’s report” and is on the “verge of collapse, as if the very head and crown of the institution were mirroring the condition of many of the poor inmates beneath” does not help her mind stay intact (Barry, *Scripture* 14). This is the “safe” place that people with mental illnesses are sent to be “better.” The problem that comes up with Roseanne is trying to figure out if she still belongs here or not. Dr. Grene is assessing all the patients to decide if they should remain in an institution or “if they manifest wellness, then, they must be sent into exile in that blessed ‘community’” (Barry, *Scripture* 45). Community is not thought of as a positive in this book, not even by Dr. Grene, although he is looking at it from a medical profession standpoint. The community, spearheaded by the Priest and her in-laws, are the one who places Roseanne here without a choice. The people are the ones who restrict Roseanne’s freedom and deprive her of a space (Tuan 59). Even though Roseanne does not consider this place home, it is the only place she truly knows and has spent the most time in.

Sometimes a home is created not out of comfort and warmth but out of routine and protection, like Roscommon. An attachment to a place “may come simply with familiarity and ease, with the assurance of nurture and security” (Tuan 159). There is no evidence to suggest that Roseanne is not well taken care of at the hospital. On the contrary, Dr. Grene spends more time with her than any of his other patients. While Roscommon is planned to be demolished, there can be no denying that it impacts Roseanne’s life, as “[t]he rooms are worn and soiled by the life that she has lived in them, and she cannot reject their squalor without rejecting herself” (Krasner 52). This is not a

home but more of a place that has become a part of her identity. She does not know herself without recognizing the part Roscommon plays. The home of her childhood, which plays an important role in her formative years, does not impact her as much as Roscommon. The childhood home is a “little house, . . . of narrow dimensions,” and they share the main living space “with two large objects viz. the aforementioned motorbike which had to be kept out of the rain. . . . The other object which [she] want[s] to mention is the little cottage upright piano.” (Barry, *Scripture* 12). The small house with her mother and father is what she recalls when she thinks of a place of love and warmth. However, Roscommon becomes a home through her continually being there, even though it is derelict and not the place of her choice. The main problem in rejecting her identity that is created at Roscommon is that no one has known her before that time, as she is a part of the building now.

The rejection of the institution is a rejection of Roseanne, as she has been there for God only knows how long, and even though it is a restricted place, it is hers. She knows nothing else other than isolation from the world. Through her isolation she “depends on an understanding of our bodies as ‘the pivot of the world’” (Krasner 37). Similar to Tuan’s concept of the city as the center of the world, here the body is the main part of the world, which makes sense for Roseanne who does not have a city or a community and only has herself to rely on. While Dr. Grene is someone who is a friend to her, it is a gradual friendship through these last few days of her life. He is more obsessed with the mystery of her at times, than actually knowing her as a person. Roseanne’s life is not just becoming narrow, but it has always been narrow. She writes that the house she lived in growing up was little and that in a few days they will bury her

in “a smallsize coffin . . . and a narrow hole” (Barry, *Scripture* 4). Roseanne is not expecting much because she does not mean much to the world. However, there is more here, as the only places she has lived in have been small and narrow. According to Temple Grandin “to be buried . . . is to be happy and comfortable” (qtd. in Krasner 152). The restrictions on her freedom have led her to not want it anymore. Freedom for Roseanne is fear because all she has known is this small room in the institution where everything is mandated for her, like infants and prisoner who are all in confined spaces (Tuan 52). Eneas and Lilly were granted leave to go anywhere, and for the most part they did, yet they still wanted Ireland. Roseanne, however, fears the outside world since she has not been there for so long, she does not know what to expect.

The fear that runs Roseanne is different than the anxiety that was in Lilly. While Lilly feared becoming isolated, Roseanne is scared of freedom, which is something she has never been afforded. The idea of freedom is brought up again and again between Roseanne and Dr. Grene, as he tries to figure out if Roseanne belongs in this mental hospital or not. While Roseanne does fear the outside world that she has not been a part of for most of her life, she also does not know if she wants out in the world or to stay here in Roscommon. Dr. Grene asks her, “Do you want to consider leaving here? Do you want me to make a consideration of it?” and Roseanne does not answer the question, only ponders it: “Do I want freedom of that kind? Do I know what that is any more? Is this queer room my home?” (Barry, *Scripture* 78). The answer to this question is not one that she knows how to answer, as she is not been a member of the community. Roscommon over the years has become her center of the world, something reassuring and permanent, while the outside world is a game of chance and everything is in flux (Tuan 154). The

almost condemned building of Roscommon, the place for the leftovers of society, is all Roseanne knows due to the past interference in her life by the people she trusts. According to Yi-Fu Tuan, “to be open and free is to be exposed and vulnerable,” and “there is no fixed pattern of established human meaning” (54). Since Roseanne does not know anything about the world, let alone Ireland, she has a fear of being exposed and vulnerable. Part of the problem with the years she has spent in Roscommon is no one knows how long she has been here. When Roseanne is introduced to Barry’s audience, and even to Dr. Grene, there is not an exact age attached to her. She is assumed to be turning one hundred, which is why she is writing this memoir, and surmises “I may be as much as a hundred, though I do not know, and no one knows. I am only a thing left over, a remnant woman, and I do not even look like a human being no more, but a scraggy stretch of skin and bone” (Barry, *Scripture* 4). Further into the story, it is revealed that Roseanne has been in the institution since she was in her twenties or thirties, and the exact age is unknown, as is most of her life. Dr. Grene in writing down his own story of his life states that “she was old when I got here thirty years ago, although at that time with the energy of, I don’t know what, a force of nature. . . She has been a fixture” (Barry, *Scripture* 16). Due to her fixture in the hospital, she now fears the outside world, as she has not stepped a foot out there since before she can remember. At this point, Roseanne is almost animal-like in her personality. She is confined to this condemned building and does not want to leave, a caged animal that does not know better.

The caged animal theme runs throughout the novel, in reference not only to Roseanne but the other patients as well. In Dr. Grene’s own writings, he expresses worry about the problem of releasing the patients too soon, as “creatures so long kennelled and

confined find freedom and release very problematic attainments” (Barry, *Scripture* 16). There is no way to account for the problems entailed when someone is released, even if they should not have been institutionalised to begin with, into the community. They will have a difficult time moving back into society as a whole. However, she is also described as an animal before she is institutionalized. When she is meeting Mrs. McNulty, “[she] felt like a farm animal in there, [she] felt like a cow and the calf and the pig must have felt in times past” (Barry, *Scripture* 159). There is a continuous montage of women, specifically Roseanne, being compared to animals or creatures, as something not human. This comparison goes back to the fact that her history is not her own, and helps Barry’s readers and Dr. Grene in understanding why she is writing this memoir. Roseanne’s description of the animal conveys her “alienation from the dominant discourses of gender, enablement, and neurotypicality” (Krasner 140). The alienation and lack of a sound mind lead to Roseanne questioning whether she should be let out into the world. Once Dr. Grene asks questions about it, she thinks: “So that I might go out into the world? Where is that world?” (Barry, *Scripture* 34). The point is that the world does not exist, had not existed since she was placed into the asylum. The problem with institutions like this is that they “are in a continual state of identity loss and reclamation, due to dementia and to the nature of institutional life” (Krasner 130). Institutions do not lend themselves to comfort and warmth like homes do, and they are not supposed to, as nobody would willingly choose to live there. No domestic life can be sustained in an institution, and it “becomes the home to a sequence of nobodies . . . a world of social marginalization and indeterminate identity” (Krasner 130). The people who live here are safe and secure and that is about it. For Roseanne, she is isolated from the world and

unfortunately, the world does not know her either, as she has been erased from the Book of Life.

Similar to Lilly's losing her name, Roseanne is someone with no "real name" either. She continues to go by her married last name, "McNulty," even after the nullification of her marriage. Roseanne wonders why she did not change back to her maiden name of Clear, and she writes "why did I give my name ever since as McNulty, when those great efforts were made by everybody to take the name away? I do not know" (Barry, *Scripture* 28). As with Lilly, the name is an identifier, a way for family to find someone if they are lost. Yet both women have names that legally do not belong to them anymore. With a name that by law does not exist anymore the chances of anyone wanting to find them are slim: "When someone can't be located 'here' or 'there,' he can still be envisioned in a scene — in imaginary space partaking of none of the material specificity of the object world" (Krasner 26). Roseanne, unlike Lilly, can still be found. They know where she is, and they know that she is Roscommon mental hospital. However, the fact that they know is not important, but the fact that the family and the town did not want her to have that name and do not care where she is. They erase her from the marriage and act like she does not exist. In *The Whereabouts of Eneas McNulty*, when Eneas visited, they go out of their way to make sure they do not mention her or only refer to her as a crazy woman. Roseanne is slowly erased from the memory of the town, and according to her, it means that she will be lost if no one remembers her, so she has to create her own memorial through her writing.

Not only is Roseanne's ability to place herself in jeopardy, but her name and story are slowly being erased by the ones in charge. Since Roseanne's family is on the "wrong"

side of Ireland's history. They are Protestants who want Ireland to remain with Great Britain, and therefore, they were left out of the "Book of Life." Roseanne's own story "is always told against me, even what I myself am writing here, because I have no heroic history to offer. There is no difficulty not of my own making" (Barry, *Scripture* 55). There becomes a problem when someone is trying to find a home in a toxic and unwelcoming environment and community. The events in Roseanne's life are similar to the "bestial hostility of the storm and the hurricane," and then "the house's virtues of protection and resistance are transported into human virtues. The house acquires the physical and moral energy of a human body" (Bachelard 46). She manages to transform her own body into a home for herself, since she is not granted a home by the priest in Sligo. Roseanne may not realize this is what is happening while she is going through it, but she does when she is writing her story. Unfortunately, Roseanne is not only left out due to her social crimes, perceived adultery, but also because of the religious values of the day. She is considered to be an adulterous woman. There is no evidence, but Sligo is "like a wretched family, everyone [knows] everyone and if they [don't] know everything about everyone, they [want] to" (Barry, *Scripture* 157). The only way for Roseanne to offer her side of the story is by "writing this here in this darkened room, scratching it all out in blue biro ink" (Barry, *Scripture* 19). This is her taking back some of her identity, and her own home, placing herself there against the wishes of the community.

Not only do those who hold the power in Sligo slowly erase her history, but they are also directly involved in creating her life at Roscommon. After Joe Clear's death, Roseanne is left with an ailing mother and no prospects, and in Ireland, it is dangerous for a woman to have no place in the world, no husband. Father Gaunt, in his infinite wisdom,

believes a marriage between Roseanne, sixteen at the time, and Joe Brady, fifty, is a great match, as she will have to convert to the Catholic faith. Of course, Roseanne refuses, and she ends up marrying Thomas “Tom” McNulty. Even now as an old woman looking back on her life, Roseanne does not know how to categorize her father-in-law, Old Tom McNulty. Whereas, Tom’s mother, Mrs. McNulty, is openly hostile to her, along with Father Gaunt and Jack, Tom’s brother, who both act as friends but are enemies. The people Roseanne unwittingly surrounds herself with never have the best interests for her in their mind. The home as body begins years before she is locked in the asylum, as the only person she can rely on is herself. Now, in the asylum, since her freedom is restricted and no one from Sligo cares what happens to her, she is left with the only thing she knows — her memories, which she fiercely protects. After the meeting of the parents, Roseanne realizes she does not want to marry Tom nor does she want to marry any man. Apparently, during this time there are far more girls than men and women went to America or England to find a husband (Nash 49). Racial pride and fear were projected on the body of the woman because the ones leaving Ireland could be the best wives and mothers and that would leave only the timid, stupid, and dull in Ireland (Nash 49). Subsequently, Roseanne stays in Ireland and becomes one of these unsuccessful women. Roseanne supposes it was freedom they were after, as “they’d rather be maids in America than old maids in bloody Ireland. I almost had a strong, a fervent, almost a violent wish to join them” (Barry, *Scripture* 162). Unfortunately, she does not leave Ireland rather, she is exiled to the house of her marriage, before going to the Sligo asylum, and finally, ending up in Roscommon.



Tom and Roseanne do marry yet the marriage is not a happy one nor does it last long, another lost home for Roseanne. Tom and Roseanne “set up house in a small corrugated place out in Strandhill. It was a shack really, but it was close to the dancehall and kept me out of Sligo” (Barry, *Scripture* 172). Part of this “exile” from Sligo is due to Tom’s family not wanting Roseanne around them, particularly Mrs. McNulty. Even before her time at the Sligo asylum and at Roscommon, Roseanne is to remain in Strandhill. One of the many times a person “restricts [her] freedom” and “deprives [her] of space” by keeping her confined in this house that is practically a shack (Tuan 59). Tom kept her “quarantine[d] in Strandhill, till he could get his mother to relent her hostility to me” (Barry, *Scripture* 173). While she does not seem to truly mind this, since Sligo is not a comfort to her, it does lay the foundation for what will happen to her later on. Due to misunderstandings and perceived crimes, Father Gaunt involves himself in Roseanne’s life and is the arbiter of her institutionalization. While Roseanne has been raised Protestant, she does not have much involvement in a spiritual life, yet imagines a spiritual space after death.

Roseanne shares many commonalities with Lilly, one of them being a focus on a spiritual home, a life after death. For Lilly, this is understandable, as she was exiled from her place and has to learn a new place while relying on someone who was essentially a stranger. With all the upheavals in her life, the idea of a heaven with all of her loved ones was comforting. Roseanne, on the other hand, is forced from her community by a priest, Father Gaunt. Yet she writes “maybe there is another place where everything matters eternally, the courts of heaven as may be. It would be a useful court for the living but the living will never see it” (Barry, *Scripture* 49). However, this is more of an attack on

religion by Barry, as she wants them to recognize what they did to her was wrong, as Father Gaunt is the primary one responsible for placing Roseanne in an institution and the others follow his lead.

There are many people who need to be taken care of in a more on-the-clock manner, and the proper place for them could be a mental hospital. However, the only crime Roseanne supposedly commits is that she was talking to a man who was not her husband and Father Gaunt saw her, along with the fact that she does not convert to Catholicism when he suggests it after her father's death. She is to stay in the marital house on the outskirts of town while Father Gaunt "handles" the problem, as "Tom has put the matter in Father Gaunt's hands" (Barry, *Scripture* 214). When Father Gaunt does come back, it is not to tell Roseanne good news, although he thinks it is good news. His Catholic ideology allows Roseanne and Tom's marriage to be nullified, and she is labeled as a nymphomaniac. She loses her place in the community, her husband, and any reputation in one fell swoop, and she must stay where she is, in a hut, with no company and no place. Roseanne is a victim of the religious power of the time, as "[s]pace is a resource that yields wealth and power when properly exploited. It is worldwide a symbol of prestige. The 'big man' occupies and has access to more space than lesser beings" (Tuan 58). In the Sligo community, Father Gaunt wields more power than most other people, especially when he wields it periodically over Roseanne. She has now lost both her parents, has nowhere to go, and has no one to rely on, unlike Eneas and Lilly, after this instance with John Lavelle, "other man." Years earlier John Lavelle has saved Roseanne from an attempted rape and is never heard from again. No family, no history, and basically no nation, as this one continually pushes her aside. Gaunt, as his name

suggests, is not a pleasant man, who longs for the “banishment of women behind the front doors of their homes, and the elevation of manhood into a condition of sublime chastity and sporting prowess” (Barry, *Scripture* 136). Since a woman during this time period did not have a voice, Gaunt’s position on women would have been common. Roseanne could be perceived by many as an unsuccessful woman of Ireland, since her marriage is nullified, she has a child outside of marriage, and never marries again. While the account for this is given by Dr. Grene, not Roseanne, it does ring true, for all the times he intervenes in Roseanne’s life. However, Roseanne knows that there is nothing left in her to fight against Father Gaunt, and she is alone in the world in a dreaded house and labeled a fallen woman, a mad woman.

Roseanne’s time in her formal marital home drives her completely to isolation. This exile is not a complete exile from Ireland, only from Sligo and surrounding areas, but the loneliness and confines of the small hut do not make these years easy on her. She soon has “no desire to be seen by anyone, or talk to anyone. Sometimes out walking I would be in such a peculiar state of mind that I would rush home at the merest hint of another person” (Barry, *Scripture* 233). There is nothing left of her. Yes, she has a house, the basic structure to live, but that does not constitute a home, a place of comfort and warmth. Roseanne is left so alone that she fears people and freedom well into her old age. Yet “it is a self that is embodied in the home. And this appears to be especially the case for those who live alone” (Krasner 42). Eventually, the blending of the person and the house happens, where she cannot separate from the house, the one her and Tom McNulty bought (Krasner 43). Roseanne’s continuance of isolation, due to the hostility of the community, allows her to only function when no one is around and to suffer in these

narrow confines. After a couple of years living there, she runs into Eneas, who she thinks “is like me, a little. He has been cast out from his world, this world of Sligo,” and they sleep together, and subsequently a baby is conceived, who turns out to be Dr. Grene (Barry, *Scripture* 239). When Roseanne goes into labour, she attempts to get help from her former in-laws, who turn her away. She ends up at the beach near her house, where she has the baby and then passes out. When she comes to, the baby is gone and she is on the way to the hospital in an ambulance. At the hospital, Father Gaunt says she will be taken care of, by being taken to Sligo Asylum, partly out of infidelity and the other part is they think she murdered her child: “Soon I saw the two towers of the asylum looming above me and I was given forth to hell” (Barry, *Scripture* 266). The world of Sligo is quick to exile and erase those that do not fit into the standards of community. Whether that exile is one of only community or of the whole country does not matter, and the fact remains that these two people, along with Lilly, are left with no home and no community to rely on.

The fact remains that Roscommon is the closest type of “home” for Roseanne. The place is old and going to be demolished, but it is still the place she spent the most time in and knows the most about. Dr. Grene, in reference to what Roscommon means to Roseanne, remarks, “This may be a terrible place in a terrible condition, but she is a human creature like the rest of us, and this is her home” (Barry, *Scripture* 246). Dr. Grene points out the fact that all humans want a home, a place where they are loved and that is comfort and security. Even though it is not a place anyone willingly wants to be, Roscommon is a house in a sense that “it provides shelter; its hierarchy of spaces answers social needs; it is a field of care, a repository of memories and dreams” (Tuan 164).

Literally, Roscommon is a repository of memories, as Roseanne hides her story in the floorboards of her room. She is also well taken care of by the people who work there. The mental hospital is a horrendous place, but there she is able to tell her story, she finds a friend in Dr. Grene, and she is protected. In the end, that is the bare minimum we can ask a home to do. However, this does not lighten up the truth of her life, the atrocities she experiences, and the exile she is sent into.

The importance of memory cannot be overstated in the Roseanne's storytelling. She weaves together accounts of her life that sometimes have us pause to wonder if this truly happened the way she remembers. She even describes herself as a "cailleach," an "old crone of stories, the wise woman and sometimes a kind of witch" (Barry, *Scripture* 97). The memory and body are intertwined by the fact that identity is formed by the memories created and cherished. For Roseanne, the story may not be as accurate as some would want, but it is her story. Dr. Grene, himself, wonders about the nature of history and memory:

Therefore most truth and fact offered by these syntactic means is treacherous and unreliable. And yet I recognize that we live our lives, and even keep our sanity, by the lights of this treachery and this unreliability, just as we build our love of country on these paper worlds of misapprehension and untruth. Perhaps this is our nature, and perhaps unaccountability it is part of our glory as a creature, that we can build our best and most permanent buildings on foundations of dust. (Barry, *Scripture* 293)

As Roseanne learns to not rely on others for good fortune in her life, she does depend upon her memories for a depiction of her life and home in Ireland. She finds it "funny but

it strikes me that a person without anecdotes that they nurse while they live, and that survive them, are more likely to be utterly lost not only to history but the family following them” (Barry, *Scripture* 11). The lack of attachment to a physical home leaves Roseanne to attach to what she knows, which is her own memories. The theme of memory is important in uncovering the secrets of Roseanne’s life, through her own memoir and Dr. Grene’s journal, which may contain more accurate information. The last page of Roseanne’s writings contain the lines “I once lived among humankind, and found them in their generality to be cruel and cold, and yet could mention the names of three or four that were like angels” (Barry, *Scripture* 268). Sadly, the finding of a true home, one better than the simplicity of Roscommon, never happens for Roseanne. Yet it does not seem to matter, as she finds a home with her own self, mind, and body. After Dr. Green knows he is her son, he releases her from the hospital and sets her up in a state-of-the-art building, as at this point, she does still need professional care. He recognizes that “all the time I might have helped her, all those years she was here, I had more or less left her alone. I wanted to tell him<sup>5</sup>, she helped herself, she has spoken to, listened to, herself. It is a victory” (Barry, *Scripture* 298). Roseanne lived on the edges of the world in Ireland, never being allowed to participate, but in that isolation and subsequent exiles in the hospitals she finds a home in herself. As is stated in Jacques Derrida’s words, the person is “no longer here, no longer there, but the places he was still are, as is our habitual physical relation to him — our bodily memories of the spaces through which he moved” (qtd. in Krasner 28). Roseanne is physically no longer part of the Sligo community but is still remembered by those who did know here, whether in a good way or not, and she is

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<sup>5</sup> The “Him” here is a reference to a minor character, Perry Quinn, who works at Sligo Mental Hospital and helps Dr. Grene on his journey to find out about Roseanne’s life, subsequently Grene’s own life.

able to convey her story before she dies. Yes, Roseanne's memory is not as reliable as most others' memories, but neither is Father's Gaunt's memory or the McNulty family's memory. As Terry Phillips states "History's impulse to turn events into story and into founding heroic myth too easily becomes an impulse to oversimplification" (253). Through Roseanne's story, which is not a heroic myth, there is more accuracy in what actually happened in comparison to her own writings of her memories. People are all subjected to twist the events in their life to create what they want for their place. Home is created by the memory of those who live in it, who are in the very foundations of a place, like Roseanne is at Roscommon.

At the end of the day, Roseanne is almost an accurate depiction of the physical Ireland. Much of the literature, mostly poetry, surrounding the invasion of Ireland is depicted as England raping Ireland. This is typically found in the poems of W.B. Yeats and Seamus Heaney, "Leda and the Swan" and "Act of Union," respectively. While Roseanne is not physically raped by any man, there could be the argument that she is violated the priest and the community as a whole. She is forced out of a marriage, and her husband does not even talk to her about it, because of an accusation of the priest. This accusation is nowhere close to what actually happened, as she was only talking to the man, along with the removal of her child from her care by the same priest. Roseanne truly did not have a say in these two major events of her life, and once in Roscommon mental hospital, she definitely does not have a say in how she lives her life. Roseanne actually comments on the civil war which left Ireland "without a head, a body lopped off at the shoulders" (Barry, *Scripture* 34). Not only is Ireland a head without a body, but in a sense so is Roseanne, as her story and memories are not recognized as something to hold onto

in this community. The Irish writers of the twentieth century have women represented as Ireland, but an Ireland that is more asexual and spiritual (Innes 5). However, even though the author is Barry, in the story it is Roseanne who writes her own story. She is not actually raped nor does she remain a victim of her life. The uncovering of her story in the floorboards by Dr. Grene, along with his own investigations, yield for her own memories and testimony to be realized. In the end, her own story while tragic is not one of a victim, as she recognizes her own part in it and it is passed down to her son.

Roseanne's exile is not the type of banishment we typically think of, as she still technically lives in Ireland. She is only a town away from Sligo when she is sent to Roscommon, where she lives out the rest of her days. The importance of Roseanne's life is that she creates her own home in herself and her memories, a place for herself through her writing her own story. Her life is not in her control while she is growing up and through her young adult years, and it is only when she has lost her home, her community, and her freedom that she begins to write herself back into the "Book of Life." Roseanne accomplishes a major victory in choosing her body as her home and her memories as the foundation. While she falters sometimes in the truth of her mind, it is still the only reliable basis of her life. She never physically returns to Sligo, but she is granted freedom from her exile and manages to find peace and safety in the end.



## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION: NO, YOU CAN'T GO HOME

The critical lens of home and place attachment I have focused on in this project is driven in part by place and space theory. There has been many studies of the landscape and environment of Ireland. It focuses on the that people relate to home, specifically when violence is so entwined in the country. Home attachment plays a compelling role in shaping human identity, especially when that place is violated by violence and people are forced to leave. I decided to focus on the attachment to home, as I myself have struggled with this very idea for years and a news article that caught my eye one day: “Two Tribes: a Divided Northern Ireland.” The article delves into how new mapping illustrates the geographical split between Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland, a still deeply divided society in 2017. In Sebastian Barry’s novels, specifically *The Whereabouts of Eneas McNulty*, *On Canaan’s Side*, and *The Secret Scripture* the characters have a difficult time finding a home. The revolution of Ireland has changed not only the landscape of Ireland but how people react and engage with it. Eneas and Lilly are the ones who are physically exiled from Ireland, while Roseanne is only exiled from Sligo, itself. The home becomes difficult to find when violence occurs.

While the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921 did give Ireland independence, it did not do away with the fighting between the Catholics (Nationalists) and Protestants (Unionists). For a long time, all seemed well, however, there were still many issues that did not actually go away. In the beginning of the 1960s, what was known as The Troubles began.

The conflicts centered on the fight to end discrimination against Catholics, who were still a minority there. Most of the conflicts involved the I.R.A. and the Ulster Volunteer Force. There were numerous riots, mass protests, and acts of civil disobedience, along with a creation of a no-gas area. The problem of the Troubles is that everybody thinks they are in the right, and once someone is attacked or killed, the other side has to retaliate. In essence, it is all a circle of violence with no end in site. Unfortunately, most of the violence that occurred in Northern Ireland at this time ended up killing many civilians. One of the most important events that happened during these conflicts was “Bloody Sunday.” The reason it matters so much is that it is the largest number of people killed in a single incident during this period. Along with the deaths of Bloody Sunday, the I.R.A. gained more support from the public.

There were two ceasefires that happened in Ireland before the official Peace Agreement. In 1994, the first ceasefire happened, which lasted for a while before the conflicts started again. The second ceasefire occurred in 1997 and lasted only a year this time. The talks between Irish and British forces began in the late 1990s and in 1998 The Good Friday Agreement was signed, which became effective in 1999. The agreement had three provisions: a status and system of government of Northern Ireland in the United Kingdom, a relationship between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, and a relationship between the Republic of Ireland and the United Kingdom. The agreement also included sovereignty, civil and cultural rights, among other issues that would keep the peace. For many, this would spell the end of the conflicts. However, the modern day cities in Northern Ireland have not changed much in the almost twenty years since the agreement.

My guiding research question when I began was “can someone truly go home? Specifically, is this possible for someone whose home has been involved in unspeakable violence?” This question is not only present in Irish literature but also African American and Australian literature. For Irish literature, not only was there home conquered by the British, but there literature is subsumed into the broad overview of “British.” The clear-cut answer of if people can return home after being gone for years, is no. The home that was there, that is remembered by those who left, does not exist anymore. It has been changed and warped by violence that it would not be recognizable when they return. Eneas experiences this when he comes back the first time in twenty years and does not recognize Sligo, let alone anyone from the I.R.A. who would attempt to kill him. However, the healthy person should be able to leave home and find a new “center of the world.” Yet this is difficult when the people leave against their will.

The second aspect of this project was exile and the effects of it psychologically on a person. Overall, the only one who would somewhat pass a mental health test would be Roseanne. Yes, she lives mostly in isolation, but it is almost confirmed at the end that her memory is as sufficient as anyone else’s memory. We can take her story with as much fact as we take Father Gaunt’s. The main point of exile in affecting a person psychologically is that it is an interruption of a person’s sense of continuity. Most of the time a person is attached to a place if there is a sense of community and a commitment to the neighborhood and neighbors. When these are present a person has a difficult time leaving a place. This is present in most of the character’s in Barry’s novels. While maybe their home life was nowhere in the realm of perfect, they still had loving parents, a roof over their heads, and somewhat of a sense of belonging to the Irish culture.

Eneas is part of Ireland that does not accept the people who are perceived to be against it, specifically in Sligo. While He enlists in the British military at a young age, he comes back to an Ireland that he does not recognize. The issues that are present in Northern Ireland are happening in Sligo too, which is different than most of Ireland. Sligo is in the Republic of Ireland, so it is already independent. Yet Eneas seems to side with the British, enlist in the military and join the R.I.C. Once Eneas is exiled from stepping foot in Ireland, he leaves and goes to England. Soon Eneas is traveling to parts of Europe and even Africa. He also fights in another war, World War II. Through all of this Eneas attempts to find his place in the world but not any particular place, as he wants to go home to Sligo. He does end up going home for visits twice in his lifetime. On his visit, he is reminded that the sentence of death is enacted. In the end, Eneas loses his life by going to save his best friend Jonno from a fire Eneas set to the hotel he ran, ironically, Jonno came to the hotel to kill Eneas. Home is never found for Eneas, as he is trying to replace Sligo when it is impossible. The problem for Eneas is that he does not know how to get back to Ireland without going to Ireland, which would mean death for him. Ireland is home and comfort for Eneas, yet that is removed when violence occurs. The research that could be explored more in depth is how much the war goes into Eneas' view of home.

Lilly, like Eneas, is also exiled from Ireland. She is from a family who supported the British Rule, her father was in the R.I.C. Her brother, Willie, who is the main character in Barry's *A Long, Long Way*, fights in the British army in World War I. However, he is killed in action. After the war, Willie's fellow soldier, Tadg, comes to offer condolences to the Dunne family. Tadg after the war joins the R.I.C. and soon he and Lilly start dating. However, this blissful time ends when they are blacklisted and

must leave Ireland or they will be killed. They go to America, Chicago specifically, which is where Tadg is killed by a member of the I.R.A and Lilly flees. She fears being pursued, as technically, she is also on the list to be killed. However, she never is killed by anyone from the I.R.A. but instead commits suicide. She ends up falling in love with a police officer, Joe Kinderman, who leaves her before their baby is born. He leaves out of fear that his baby will reveal his true colors, that he is African American and passing for white. This is not the end of someone leaving Lilly, as her son ends up leaving once he arrives back from the Vietnam war and her grandson commits suicide after coming back from the war in the Middle East. Lilly fears isolation, as her concept of home is not only the physical structure but the community that surrounds it. The reason she never truly finds home, why she commits suicide, is that everyone she loves leaves her. It does not matter if this leaving is done by choice or by force, it is only that is happened to her. The suicide of her grandson is the last one she can take, the reason she commits suicide. In the end, she attempts to find her home in heaven, where hopefully all her loved ones are, although the reader does not know.

Roseanne is the only one of the three who does not physically leave Ireland, she is only exiled from the Sligo community. Barry's mother is the one who tells him about her, as they are one day driving through Strandhill, which is where Roseanne and Tom McNulty move to once they are married. Barry states "she had married my mother's uncle, and then been considered 'no good' in some fashion, and was eventually committed to Sligo Mental Hospital, where indeed her father-in-law was the tailor, My mother thought her real crime had been 'beauty'" (qtd. in Good 21). Roseanne in *The Secret Scripture* is described as the most beautiful woman in the town. Her memory is

peaced together through her own recollections. She is writing this down as her testimony, to tell her side of the story of what happened. Roseanne grew up well with both her parents, although her father dies when she is sixteen. It is never known by anyone if he committed suicide or was murdered. After his death, Roseanne marries Tom McNulty who is the brother of Eneas McNulty. Unfortunately, this marriage does not last due to the interference of the local Catholic priest, Father Gaunt. The marriage is nullified, she lives for years in the marital home in isolation, so much time alone drives her to be fearful at the mere sight of a person. A few years later, she meets Eneas and ends up becoming pregnant with his child. When she is ready to give birth, no one will help her. The second instance of Father Gaunt inserting himself in Roseanne's life is when he takes her baby to an orphanage to be adopted and Roseanne is sent to Sligo Asylum before she eventually moves to Roscommon. Most of this is pieced together by her writings and Dr. Grene's journal, the man who works and cares for the patients at Roscommon and who happens to be her child who was sent to an orphanage. Roseanne's idea of home is vastly different from Eneas' and Lilly's concept of home, as she does not have a home that has the happy memories that Eneas and Lilly did when they were growing up. Roseanne's home becomes her own self and her own mind. She ends up building her true home through her writing where she listened and spoke to herself. Both Roseanne and Lilly are writing memoirs of their life and looking at the way these memoirs function is another avenue of research.

Most important to note is that Sebastian Barry is writing about people who are forgotten by history, their stories are not told. As they have no home, which means no identity, there is no way to have their story live on. Barry himself commented on the lack

of knowledge in Irish history: “The civil war was a time of exceptional savagery, and our history books at school didn’t dwell on this less admirable period. To erase the memory of the civil war was also an erasure of part of oneself, and again of nation. A real nation has to acknowledge also the section of itself that is murderous and dangerous and deeply uncivil” (Barry 2013). The point of home is that sometimes there is monstrous acts that are done in the name of justice but hiding that away does not have it disappear. The fact remains that erasing certain people because they do not agree with the supposedly right side creates one sided stories and histories. They are only heroic myths that end up containing little truth.

The conclusion I arrive at is that it becomes extremely difficult for someone to return home, even if their home is not ravaged by war and violence. There is a spectrum of difficulty when it comes to leaving and returning home, and for Eneas, Lilly, and Roseanne their difficulty in returning home comes from their exiles. However, even if someone is not forced to move away from their home country, there remains a hindrance when they return to the home of their childhood or young adult years. The place and town have changed, and it did not remain what they remembered. This project adds to the scholarly research that has only just begun on Barry’s writing. Since his novels are relatively new, in the overall timeline of literature, there is not much scholarship on his works. There is also the fact that most of the scholarship focuses on the memoir like novels of Roseanne and Lilly’s life, and Eneas’ time serving in the military. There are few articles that discuss the exile nature in some of Barry’s works, but not the ones I have explored.

Home is a complicated concept, much more complicated than I first anticipated. A house is a solid structure with walls and floors, but a home is so much more than that. A home is what is created when there is love, laughter, and family gathered in a place. The town of Sligo was home to all of these characters and even though it was cruel to them, it was the place they knew the best and wanted the most. While their concepts of home and place differ widely, the importance of it cannot be overstated. Humans, like animals, feel at home on the earth, and we find ease in the places that are most familiar. There does not seem to be a possibility for any of these characters to go home to Sligo, the town of their birth. Yet maybe that is not the point of home. Home changes, as the center of our world changes, and we try to find a new place, a new routine wherever we end up. While this may take time and effort, there is the hope that we will manage to find comfort and safety and love.



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