“BLOWN OFF THE ROAD OF LIFE BY HISTORY’S HUNGRY BREEZES”: SEBASTIAN BARRY AS THERAPIST AND WITNESS

by

Kristi Good

BA, Kutztown University, 2003

MA, Villanova University, 2007

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of

The Dietrich School of Arts and Sciences in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy.

University of Pittsburgh

2014

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH

THE DIETRICH SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

This dissertation was presented

by

Kristi Good

It was defended on

January 31, 23014

and approved by

Anne Brannen, Professor, Department of English, Duquesne University

Kathleen George, Professor, Department of Theatre Arts, University of Pittsburgh

Lisa Jackson-Schebetta, Professor, Department of Theatre Arts, University of Pittsburgh

Dissertation Advisor: Bruce McConachie, Professor, Department of Theatre Arts, University of Pittsburgh

Copyright © by Kristi Good

2014

“BLOWN OFF THE ROAD OF LIFE BY HISTORY’S HUNGRY BREEZES”: SEBASTIAN BARRY AS THERAPIST AND WITNESS

Kristi Good, PhD

University of Pittsburgh, 2014

Sebastian Barry is most notable for creating characters who are based on historical ancestors from his own family tree, particularly individuals who have been selectively silenced for their failure to adhere to political and societal norms deemed appropriate for the historical narrative of Ireland. Five of his plays and five of his novels expressly address this particular issue, but have never before been examined as a cohesive work.

In chapter one, I implement Patrick Colm Hogan’s literary theories on how to categorize multiple discourses as a unified work and Franco Moretti’s method of creating illustrative graphs to visually unlock patterns and similarities across discourses. I propose that the ten discourses be named the *Ancestors Cycle* in order to acknowledge Barry’s thirty-year effort in service of proposing a more inclusive definition of Irish Identity.

In chapter two I examine the relationship model of the therapist/client as a correlate for the writer/character connection that plays out in Barry’s work. Through empathy, therapists are encouraged to relate to their patients in order to facilitate a trusting relationship. Adverse effects can occur in the advent of the therapist’s neurological inability to regulate the distinction between self and other when engaging empathetically with a client. Writers—who must empathize with the characters they themselves have created—run the same risk as therapists. This chapter focuses on neurological findings regarding empathy and psychological studies on the healing power of narrative, as well as various studies on the power of testimony for

understanding the role of fiction writers as secondary witnesses and voices for traumatized victims of the historical past.

Chapter three contains a case study that highlights Barry's relationship to the models described in chapter two. The power of Barry's testimony is at the core of healing the many tears in Ireland's historical fabric. By integrating what was once deemed unseemly back into the historical narrative, today's Irish can better understand in a very complex and real way who they are, where they come from, and how they can situate themselves in a global context for the continued health and growth of Ireland.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE ..... **X**

1.0 INTRODUCTION **1**

1.1 "IRISH TRAUMA" **6**

1.2 CHAPTER OVERVIEW **15**

2.0 IDENTIFYING SEBASTIAN BARRY'S *ANCESTORS CYCLE* **19**

2.1 IDENTIFYING A WORK **22**

2.2 DISTANT READING **26**

2.3 EXAMINING BARRY'S WORK BY DISTANT READING **28**

2.4 CHRONOLOGY AND CHARACTERS **29**

2.4.1 Figure 1: Chronology of Discourses **29**

2.4.2 Figure 2: Family Tree **31**

2.5 THEME **40**

2.5.1 Figure 3: Theme of War **40**

2.5.2 Figure 4: Theme of Exile **43**

2.5.3 Figure 5: Theme of Music **56**

2.6 RECURRENCES **59**

2.6.1 Figure 6: Song Recurrence **59**

2.6.2 Figure 7: Character Recurrence **67**

2.6.3 Figure 8: Causal Sequence Intersections 71
2.7 CONCLUSION 75
3.0 THE WRITER AS THERAPIST AND WITNESS 77
3.1 PART ONE: THERAPIST/CLIENT VS. WRITER/CHARACTER 77
3.1.1 The Therapist/Client Relationship 78
3.1.2 Empathy 83
3.1.3 Vicarious Traumatization 91
3.1.4 The Writer/Character Relationship 97
3.1.5 The Illusion of Independent Agency 101
3.1.6 Drawing Connections 106
3.2 PART TWO: WITNESS AND TESTIMONY 112
3.2.1 Historical Trauma vs. Personal Trauma 112
3.2.2 Secondary Witnessing 116
3.2.3 Psychological Trauma and Recovery 128
3.2.4 Writing Therapy 133
4.0 TOWARD HEALING 140
4.1 BARRY AS THERAPIST 144
4.2 BARRY AS WITNESS 158
4.3 EMOTIONAL TONE 162
4.4 CONNECTING THE EXPERIENCER WITH THE DISCOURSE 164
4.5 PROMOTING EMPATHY THROUGH FAMILY TIES 170
5.0 CONCLUSION 181
APPENDIX A 188

APPENDIX B 197

BIBLIOGRAPHY 198

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Chronology of Discourses 189

Figure 2: Family Tree 190

Figure 3: Theme of War 191

Figure 4: Theme of Exile 192

Figure 5: Theme of Music 193

Figure 6: Song Recurrence 194

Figure 7: Character Recurrence 195

Figure 8: Causal Sequence Intersections 196

PREFACE

I could not have completed this dissertation without the help and support of a great many people. First and foremost I would like to thank my Dissertation Committee, Bruce McConachie, Kathy George, Lisa Jackson-Schebetta, and Anne Brannen, for all their guidance and insight into this process. Equally as important have been my fellow graduate students, particularly those in the Final Seminar Dissertation Support Group: Ariel Nereson, Tommy Costello, Christiana Harkulich, Rohini Chaki, Vivian Appler, Dave Bisaha, Esther Terry, Dave "Sven" Peterson.

In terms of content in the dissertation, I would like to thank John D. Good for his initial thoughts on the various illustrations present in Chapter One and Sarah Heingartner for the final graphic design work on those illustrations. Jerry Kelleher of Kelleher Rare Books in County Kildare, Ireland pointed me in the right direction for an elusive source and provided me with an electronic copy to confirm my suspicions. P.J. Tierney and Marie Young were instrumental in decoding some obscure references related to the Irish language. Extra special thanks to Marie Young, whose *grá* and *bród* for her country of birth and native tongue helped me to appreciate Sebastian Barry's work on an entirely new level. *Go raibh míle maith agat, a stór*.

Finally, my most heartfelt thanks go to Dr. Angela Hartman, who gives insightful dissertation and life guidance; Charles, who gives unconditional love and support every day; Mom and Dad, who taught me to read; and Arashay Borden, who taught me to write.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

My fascination with Sebastian Barry's writing began in 2006, when I worked with him on a production of *Prayers of Sherkin* at Villanova University. During table work, Sebastian would join us to work through some of his more poetic passages and often share stories regarding particular scenes. The impetus for the entire play (or perhaps, the poem—*Fanny Hawke Goes to the Mainland Forever*—which came first) was a trip to a family funeral. While Sebastian did not attend, his sister Siuban immediately sought him out upon her return to tell him a piece of information she had learned: their great-great-grandmother Fanny Hawke had been a member of a remote Protestant sect on Sherkin Island, but had been shunned by the community when she married a Catholic man from Cork. Siuban had been forbidden by her father to speak of the revelation, but naturally she could not keep such a story from her brother. Barry recognized his own existence as one of the wide implications of Fanny's courageous deed.

Among his other anecdotes, Barry suggested that the actor playing Hannah should read Barry's novel *Annie Dunne*. He related that Annie was his aunt, and she was the model for the character of Hannah. Five of his plays and five of his novels deal directly with characters like Fanny and Annie: fictionalized representations of his actual ancestors. These historical people, as well as the characters that represent them, struggle—albeit in very different ways—within society and are, many times, pushed to the margins where they risk being erased from historical memory. In a country such as Ireland, where cultural memory edits itself over the decades in

order to preserve a communal history that is "most appropriate" for the survival of the community, Barry's project to recover these purposely-forgotten lives begs investigation.

Barry, of course, is not the first author to produce a collection of stories that incorporates recurring characters, or even representations of actual family members. What Barry has done—and rather successfully—is navigated the border between the two genres (or three, if we considered Fanny Hawke's poem as the origin of this project) to create a body of work with a particular purpose: to recover the voices of ancestors whom history has silenced. Scholarship on Barry is rather scarce, considering his popularity as both a dramatist and novelist and his copious output in both arenas. The studies that are available are admirable and well-crafted, but I believe that we are missing something crucial by separating particular plays or novels from the larger thematic grouping. That being said, there has not yet been an analysis or theoretical approach to these ten pieces as a whole, though nearly all scholars will mention the fact that whatever piece they have chosen to tackle is related to one or another of Barry's pieces. The grouping does not have a proper title—such as August Wilson's Century Cycle (or, alternately, Pittsburgh Cycle)—and I believe that we are remiss in not recognizing the unique connection between these ten pieces, regardless of their competing genres or Barry's production of other pieces that do not fit within the group. Barry has referred to the plays alone as "family plays" or "ghost plays,"[1] but the novels have never been distinguished as such. These discrepancies have led me to ask the question: what is Barry doing, and to what end?

As I encountered more and more of Barry's writing and began to see the connections between the different characters, I decided to create a makeshift family tree. Barry had already introduced so many characters by the time I began reading his drama and literature, and I found

[1] Sebastian Barry, "Preface," *Sebastian Barry Plays: 1* (London: Methuen Publishing Limited, 1997), xv.

that I could not keep straight in my head who was connected to whom. The result of this paper-and-glue stick construction project was astonishing to me. The physical appearance of the tree spoke so much more to me than the ambiguous connections that floated in my head. This craft project occurred long before I explored the work of Franco Moretti, who would become a major influence on my approach to studying Barry's writing.

It is obvious that through the years I have become rather devoted to Sebastian's writing, firstly for his beautiful poetic style and secondly for the extensive intertextuality that revealed itself as I added more and more characters to the family tree I had constructed. I have no doubt that my fascination with his work was born out of my affection for him as a person and artist with whom I was fortunate enough to work during his residency at Villanova. Feeling passionately about one's area of study and acknowledging an emotional attachment to one's work is, to me, an important aspect of any scholarly pursuit, but it is not without its dangers. An affective connection to a scholarly subject can result in increased subjectivity and decreased rigor where argument and research are concerned. In cases where a human being is the subject of study, it is easier to succumb to feelings of adulation or protectiveness. It is my intention in the forthcoming investigation to approach the material with as rigorous and objective a view as possible. It is not my intention to write an academic love letter to Barry, nor to gloss over the hardships he has faced or the missteps he has taken. I mean to present an argument that Barry himself could read and say, "Fair play."

One of the main reasons that I bring this situation to light is chiefly because Barry *has* undergone hardships and made missteps throughout his career. I am fortunate, as a researcher, that he is generally very forthcoming when interviewed about these difficult moments. It is not my intention to rub salt into the wound, nor to hypothesize about the possible psychological

afflictions from which Barry might be suffering due to the subject matter of his drama and literature. However, some of these difficult moments are worth noting here, so that we understand Barry's potentially dangerous situation as he undertakes the task of giving voice to his silenced ancestors.

One such moment that is worth note is a particular incident that Barry discussed with journalist Nicholas Wroe of the *Guardian* in 2008. Barry was talking about a publication of his from 1983, called *Time Out of Mind and Strappado Square*, which comprised two short novellas. This publication came out early in Barry's career. In 1982 he had written a novel called *Macker's Garden*, and in 1983 he had also published a book of poetry called *The Water-Colourist*. Both of the novellas in the 1983 publication would ultimately prove quite inflammatory for similar, yet different reasons.

The first novella, *Time Out of Mind*, is the story of Barry's maternal grandmother and grandfather. The story spans several decades from their first meeting to the onset of his grandmother's fatal illness. The novella unflinchingly paints a relationship fraught with alcoholism, abuse, and depression. Nicholas Wroe writes in his article what happened when Barry's grandfather looked at the novel.

> "He read them, called me to his flat and he cursed me," Barry recalls. "He said: 'You fucker'. To hear that out of my grandfather's mouth was shocking. I adored him, but we never spoke again. He kept asking me how I knew all these things. And of course the answer was that my mother had told me. It was all from within our own family."[2]

[2] Nicholas Wroe, "'As our ancestors hide in our DNA, so do their stories,'" *Guardian* (England), October 10, 2008, http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2008/oct/11/sebastian-barry-booker-prize.

This was not the end of the misfortunes tied to the novel. Irish poet Richard Murphy recently sold his private library collection, amongst which was a copy of *Time Out of Mind and Strappado Square*. Murphy's inscription in the book explains why the novel is so hard to come by. It reads, "Under threat of libel from my daughter's lawyer, Gore-Grimes, Wolfhound withdrew and pulped this pulp fiction. Sebastian went on to write better books." The catalogue of the London dealer who was responsible for selling the contents of Murphy's library added, "Richard and his daughter Emily were both depicted in the novel; the latter in a particularly unfavourable light. The author's second novel and decidedly scarce due to the book's withdrawal." Murphy would eventually discount this statement, saying that only his daughter was depicted in the novel.[3]

In 1987 and 1988, respectively, Barry wrote the novel *The Engine of Owl-Light* and the play *Boss Grady's Boys*. With these two pieces, Barry had begun loosely integrating bits and pieces of his own life into his fiction again, but these autobiographical moments are heavily veiled. It wasn't until the appearance of his collection of poems *Fanny Hawke Goes to the Mainland Forever* in 1989 and the accompanying play *Prayers of Sherkin* the next year that Barry outrightly set down the story of family members. He would not touch on the relationship of his maternal grandmother and grandfather again until 1998—fifteen years after the *Time Out of Mind and Strappado Square* incidents—when the play *Our Lady of Sligo* and the novel *The Whereabouts of Eneas McNulty* came into public view.

[3]Rosita Boland, "A poet clears his shelves," *Irish Times*, June 20, 2009, 2. Many thanks to Jerry Kelleher of Kelleher Rare Books in Co. Kildare, Ireland for supplying me with a scan of the McCann catalogue page. This led to the discovery of the Boland newspaper article where I found additional information concerning Richard Murphy's copy of the book.

1.1 "IRISH TRAUMA"

As we will see in later chapters, Barry had reservations about depicting other family members besides his maternal grandmother and grandfather. In fact, most of his characters represent historical individuals about whom there is little if any factual information. The main reason Barry attempts to create the stories of these individuals comes from the fact that there is so little information about them. In *The Whereabouts of Eneas McNulty*, Barry's titular character suggests poetically that some individuals were "blown off the road of life by history's hungry breezes."[4] Barry iterates more succinctly what he was trying to do in that novel; his statement speaks to the other nine pieces that will make up the forthcoming study.

> By writing this shadowy great-uncle of mine back into the book of life, I was trying to put something back on the balance. Because if we exclude a part of ourselves, even a disreputable or reprehensible part, we by extension exclude and erase a part of the family, and by further extension a part of the nation. […] A real nation has to acknowledge also the section of itself that is murderous and dangerous and deeply uncivil, for completeness if for nothing else.[5]

The history of Ireland has not been without "dangerous and deeply uncivil" happenings. This is certainly not the place for a full discussion of the traumatic history of Ireland, but it bears mentioning in order to place Barry's writing in the context of the Irish experience. The notion of "Irish trauma" is a commonly accepted but grossly general euphemism for a wide spectrum of violent occurrences that have spanned the whole of Irish history. The earliest time period that

---

[4] Sebastian Barry, *The Whereabouts of Eneas McNulty* (New York: Penguin Books, 1998), 284.
[5] "A Penguin Readers Guide to The Whereabouts of Eneas McNulty," in *The Whereabouts of Eneas McNulty* by Sebastian Barry (New York: Penguin Books, 1998), 6-9.

Barry addresses is the decade of the 1890s, and the latest is the first decade of the 21st century. Ireland has experienced a great deal of change over this span of more than a hundred years, ranging from the political to the domestic, and indeed the turmoil was not only prevalent in this century—this small fraction of the history of Ireland—that Barry describes.

To begin a necessarily brief explication of a few of these events, one must take into account the definition and psychological aftermath of trauma itself. The *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, 4th edition, Text Revision (DSM-IV-TR) defines trauma as

> direct personal experience of an event that involves actual or threatened death or serious injury, or other threat to one's physical integrity; or witnessing an event that involves death, injury, or a threat to the physical integrity of another person; or learning about unexpected or violent death, serious harm, or threat of death or injury experienced by a family member or other close associate (Criterion A1). The person's response to the event must involve intense fear, helplessness, or horror (or in children, the response must involve disorganized or agitated behavior) (Criterion A2).[6]

Trauma, of course, is necessarily subjective, as the definition points out: "The person's response to the event must involve intense fear, helplessness, or horror." There is no guarantee that two people who experience the same event will both be "traumatized." However, this discussion of traumatic events in Irish history aims not to suggest the after-effects of trauma within the historical Irish population, but to illuminate the historical happenings that fall within the criteria of the DSM-IV-TR definition of a traumatic event. These events involve the personal

[6] American Psychological Association, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, 4th edition, text revision (Washington, DC: Author, 2000), 463.

experiencing, witnessing, and/or learning of an actual or threatened death, injury, or violation of physical integrity.

The most obviously traumatic event that occurs throughout Barry's canon is war. We will see in chapter one specifically how each of Barry's novels and plays deal with this theme and the various historical conflicts. Six of Barry's pieces under consideration directly reference the Irish War for Independence, which stretched from January of 1919 to July of 1921, although political and civil unrest had been prevalent since the 1800s. This bloody conflict would eventually lead to the secession of twenty-six of Ireland's thirty-two counties from the United Kingdom, resulting in the official founding of (what would eventually become) the Republic of Ireland as a country separate from Northern Ireland and the control of the United Kingdom.

The Irish War for Independence was fought not on a distant battlefield, but in the streets of local towns. The Easter Rising, the first of a series of violent uprisings that led to the war, occurred in the center of Dublin. Barry recreates the scene of the conflict in his novel *A Long Long Way*, where the main character Willie Dunne is forced to join the fighting because his army unit is assembled to leave for Flanders and the battles of World War I. The Easter Rising claimed the lives of over four hundred people and was only the first of many traumatic incidents that would affect the daily lives of Irish civilians, exposing them to the deaths of loved ones and the threat of survival for themselves for a period of five years.

The Irish War for Independence erupted, like so many other conflicts around the world, due to political and religious differences, the intricacies of which are much better left to the numerous and detailed volumes which have already been published on the subject. Outside the time and space of the War for Independence, however, many Irish citizens waged private wars at the domestic level. Alcoholism, domestic and sexual abuse, and societal and religious

disobedience occurred here as in so many other places. In the earlier part of the 20th century, however, many of these conditions and actions were not comprehended sociologically and psychologically as they are now. Mental illness was still little understood, particularly in rural Ireland, and any actions that did not comply with the norms of society were often mistaken for mental infirmity, which society deemed highly destructive to the community. Michel Foucault wrote in 1965 that insanity was seen as a force of evil and a powerful contagion, so any acknowledgement of this infirmity in public was a cause for scandal in the family: "Beyond the dangers of example, the honor of families and that of religion sufficed to recommend a subject for a house of confinement."[7]

Nancy Scheper-Hughes' study of mental illness in rural Ireland in the mid-1970s reveals the cultural as well as clinical processes for determining an individual's level of mental fitness. While this study was conducted in the 1970s, one can only imagine that the situation decades earlier could not have been any better. Scheper-Hughes notes that an individual may not even go to a clinic for treatment if their behavior is not first designated as "abnormal," and the distinction between normal and abnormal purely depends on societal views. She notes that many mentally ill people may live peaceably in society so long as they conform to social norms. Tolerance for these individuals is also more readily agreed upon if they have a strong family network. Tolerance is denied, however, for people "who violate the strong Irish sanctions against expressions of sexuality, aggression, and insubordination to parental and religious authority."[8]

Actions outside of the norms of society could be grounds for incarceration, regardless of the actual mental fitness of the individual. The main character of Barry's novel *The Secret*

---

[7] Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason* (New York: Random House, 1965), 67.

[8] Nancy Scheper-Hughes, *Saints, Scholars, and Schizophrenics: Mental Illness in Rural Ireland* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), 81.

Scripture is a woman forcibly separated from her husband due to a perceived act of infidelity, cast to the outskirts of town, and eventually incarcerated in a mental asylum. The character of Roseanne is modeled after the first wife of Barry's great uncle, and she is but one example of Barry's ancestors who is nearly erased from historical memory.

> I first heard about her in about 1989 (I was 34). I was driving with my mother through Strandhill, a little seaside place in Sligo. We passed a ruined hut with a stone chimney, and she said "That's where your woman was put." I asked, which woman? My mother didn't know her name, but said that she had been the piano player in the band that used to play there in the Plaza dancehall. 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."[9]

Upon further investigation, Barry found that not even the children of his great-uncle's second marriage knew of the mysterious first wife.[10]

One recalls the Magdalene laundries that were so prevalent in Ireland in the late-19th and 20th centuries. These institutions were run by the church and began as rehabilitation centers for prostitutes, or "fallen women," but became notorious as workhouses rampant with physical, sexual, and mental abuse. Family members could send a young woman to a Magdalene asylum due to mental illness, pregnancy out of wedlock, or—as may have been the case of Barry's great-aunt—simply for being physically attractive. Barry does not mention Magdalene asylums specifically in his work, but mental asylums are the main settings of two of his texts—*The Secret*

---

[9]Sophie Rochester, "Recovering Ireland's hidden history," Author Interview, www.themanbookerprize.com/perspective/articles/1137.
[10] Wroe, "'DNA.'"

Scripture and *The Steward of Christendom*—and several of his characters are employed as seamstresses and/or tailors in various asylums. Like in the historical Magdalene asylums, Barry records instances of physical, sexual, and mental abuse in both of the aforementioned texts.

The potential for trauma seems as high within the asylums as it does within society, where the violation of physical integrity can come from actual domestic violence as well as forced and wrongful imprisonment for perceived infractions of social mores. In more recent decades, even as regulations and standards were put in place for mental asylums, the prevalence of domestic abuse has not diminished. An organization operating out of Dublin called Women's Aid made the following report in 2011:

> In 2011, there were 12,612 incidents of domestic violence disclosed to the Women's Aid National Freephone Helpline. There were 8,399 incidents of emotional abuse, 2,337 incidents of physical abuse and 1,399 incidents of financial abuse disclosed. In the same year, 477 incidents of sexual abuse were disclosed to Helpline support workers including 184 rapes.[11]

Traumatic events, then, are not limited to a particular time and place in Irish history, and they cover a wide range of phenomena, many of which occur within the time span of Barry's ten pieces. The difficulty lies in the silence that surrounds these traumatic events. Like Barry's great-aunt, who is now nearly lost to memory, many survivors of traumatic events have kept silent—or were actively silenced by others—and preserved a more pleasant, if incomplete, version of history. As Mary McNulty says in *The Whereabouts of Eneas McNulty*, "Least said, soonest mended. Telling won't help it. Silence is the job."[12] The notion of letting sleeping dogs lie,

---

[11]Women's Aid, National and International Statistics, 2011, http://www.womensaid.ie/policy/natintstats.html#X-201209171229530.

[12] Barry, *Eneas McNulty*, 197.

which is echoed in Barry's other works,[13] perpetuates the myth that unpleasant things should be forgotten, rather than faced and conquered.

For the past thirty years or so, James W. Pennebaker has been the leading advocate for writing therapy as a means for psychological healing. Concurrently, Judith Lewis Herman maintains that one of the key factors in recovery from traumatic stress is the victim's retelling of his or her "story." In her seminal work—entitled *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence from Domestic Abuse to Political Terror*—she writes, "The conflict between the will to deny horrible events and the will to proclaim them aloud is the central dialectic of psychological trauma."[14]Likewise, in literature, many writers construct fictional discourses based on real-life experiences with the purpose of achieving a sense of closure for themselves or others.

Many of Barry's contemporaries in the Republic of Ireland draw from Irish life in their own plays and novels. Writers such as Edna O'Brien, Martin McDonagh, Marina Carr, and Conor McPherson—a few of whom draw from their own traumatic pasts—all present unflinching descriptions of the realities behind closed doors. Edna O'Brien's *The Country Girls Trilogy* was banned from Ireland in the 1960s for its candid descriptions of female sexuality, but former President of Ireland Mary Robinson recalls secretly reading a borrowed copy of the novels under her bed covers as a young woman. She believes O'Brien to be "one of the great creative writers of her generation."[15] O'Brien continues to write award-winning literature from her home in England, where she has lived since the 1950s. It was only upon her departure from Ireland that she felt the freedom to write about her repressive and strictly religious childhood.

---

[13] In *Annie Dunne* pg. 226 and also in *On Canaan's Side* pg. 251.
[14] Judith Lewis Herman, *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence from Domestic Abuse to Political Terror* (New York: Basic Books, 1992), 1.
[15]Mary Robinson, "A life well lived, well told," *Irish Times*, September 29, 2012, 10.

Barry himself lived in England, moving there as a child and attending school. He returned to Dublin to study at Trinity College, and undoubtedly the majority of his writing has been about Ireland. He finds the phrase "Irish writer" troublesome, however, acknowledging the "sense of home" he felt in London.[16] Nevertheless, he admits,

> Yes, it is important to me to be an Irish writer. But the sort of Irish person I am might not have been considered very Irish years ago; and my wife is a Dublin Presbyterian, whose father's generation was definitively told they weren't really Irish. I was born "between the canals" in Dublin and my parents and grandparents come from all corners of the island. Some of them fought in the World Wars, and some of them were revolutionaries.[17]

Like Barry and O'Brien, Irish playwright Martin McDonagh is an expatriate in London—having lived his entire life in England—yet many still consider him to be the most important living Irish playwright. His plays are part of the in-yer-face theatre tradition that began in the 1990s in England, which boasts violent, aggressive, and provocative subject matter. The majority of his plays concern rural Ireland, but his residency in England prompted Irish playwright Conor McPherson to suggest McDonagh's cultural identity is "more like stage Irish." Upon hearing this McDonagh vowed, on the record, to beat up McPherson the next time he saw him and professed that McPherson's comment was "ludicrous."[18]

Marina Carr, like Conor McPherson, has lived in Ireland all her life. While Carr focuses on writing plays about women, McPherson admits that he writes plays exclusively featuring

---

[16]Nicholas Wroe, "An Irish odyssey: Nicholas Wroe Talks to Writer Sebastian Barry," *Financial Times* (England), March 7, 1998, 4.
[17]Sophie Rochester, "Recovering Ireland's hidden history."
[18]Jason Zinoman, "Is He Mellower? Ask the Guy Missing a Hand," *New York Times*, March 7, 2010, Arts & Entertainment: 6L.

men, because the male gender is what he knows and understands. Carr has attracted much criticism for portrayals of "damaged women, bad mothers and unholy families" in her plays.[19] In McPherson's plays, he blatantly tackles the issues of his own alcoholism and failed relationships as a means of releasing the anxiety within himself.[20] Barry, like Carr and McPherson, creates the stories of women and men from the margins of society, playing on the misfortunes of historical individuals to fill in the gaps that history has glossed over.

Barry is frequently considered to be a historical revisionist, but his agenda has less to do with politics and history and more to do with a recovery of lost lives, though the latter is certainly caught up in the former. Nicholas Grene writes:

> He has sought out the black sheep and the dark horses of his family's legends rather than any one whose life can be charted through definite dates, facts and documentary knowledge. These ancestors had been forgotten but also in some measure suppressed from family memory. To recall them, or rather to re-imagine them was also to re-imagine the larger history of the nation and the parts of that narrative that have tended to be forgotten or suppressed.[21]

To return to my original question—what is Barry doing and to what end?—Grene's statement aptly describes the larger implications of Barry's project. Barry also has a more personal take on what he has been doing. In an interview with Mária Kurdi, he said, "I was actively looking for people in my family who had become enshrouded in silences of various

---

[19] Lyn Gardner, "Death becomes her," *Guardian* (England), November 28, 2004, http://www.guardian.co.uk/stage/2004/nov/29/theatre.

[20] Maddy Costa, "'Human beings are animals,'" *Guardian* (England), September 12, 2006, http://www.guardian.co.uk/stage/2006/sep/13/theatre4.

[21] Nicholas Grene, "Out of History: From *The Steward of Christendom* to *Annie Dunne*," in *Out of History: Essays on the Writings of Sebastian Barry*, edited by Christina Hunt Mahony (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2006), 168.

kinds and for different reasons […] it seemed important to try and supply a version of these figures—imagined of course, made-up in large part—for the purpose of trying to understand why my own family had reached a state of fracture and distance."[22]Based on this quote, Barry's project is best analyzed by placing each narrative discourse in conversation with the other as part of a group, in order to understand the larger story. It is the larger story—not simply an individual discourse in the form of play or novel—that is the key to understanding Barry's motivations.

I suggest that Barry's desire to uncover the stories of his ancestors is not unlike the role of the empathetic therapist who must identify with his or her traumatized patient in order to facilitate trust and, ultimately, recovery. Through constructing the fictional narratives, however, Barry also takes on the role of a secondary witness to his ancestors' historical trauma. In both roles, Barry exposes himself to the possibility of vicarious traumatization. I will demonstrate, however, that despite the risk of vulnerability and victimization inherent in acting as a metaphorical therapist and witness for his historical ancestors, Barry's actions follow the steps of recovery for victims of trauma.

1.2 CHAPTER OVERVIEW

The first chapter will be divided into two sections. The first half will be largely theoretical and focus on the individual writings of Patrick Colm Hogan and Franco Moretti. The purpose of this chapter is to solidify my claim that it is necessary to approach Barry's five plays and five novels as a unified "work," a term proposed by Hogan, rather than ten separate and distinct texts. The

[22] Mária Kurdi, "'Really All Danger': An Interview with Sebastian Barry," *New Hibernia Review* 8, no. 1 (2004), 42.

proof of this claim can be achieved through an analytical method that Moretti calls "distant reading," which makes use of various graphs and models to illustrate significant points of intersection over a large number of texts.

The second portion of this chapter will focus on an analysis of Barry's ten texts, incorporating Moretti's method of distant reading and his suggested models. This study will incorporate the elements set forth by Hogan that are necessary for identifying a group of texts as a work. I will demonstrate that using Moretti's method coupled with Hogan's structural definition affords a better understanding of why we need to recognize Barry's ten pieces as a cohesive, emotionally-cogent endeavor. This chapter will frame Barry's ten pieces as work, for which I propose the formal title, the *Ancestors Cycle*. The analysis will provide greater knowledge about Barry's work as a whole and how it relates to the next chapter of this study.

In chapter two I examine the relationship model of the therapist/client as a correlate for the writer/character connection that I believe plays out in Barry's work. Therapists routinely risk their own mental health when endeavoring to become empathically attuned to their clients. Through empathy, therapists are encouraged to relate to their patients in order to facilitate trust and a safe environment where the patient will feel comfortable in telling his or her story. Adverse effects can occur in the advent of the therapist's neurological inability to regulate the distinction between self and other when engaging empathetically with a client. These adverse emotional effects are known by a plethora of names, such as post-traumatic stress disorder, compassion fatigue, vicarious traumatization, or burnout. Writers—who must empathize with the characters they themselves have created—run the same risk as therapists, particularly if the characters are based in real life and have an affective connection to the writer. The cognitive examination of empathy in this section will begin with Robert Gordon's Simulation Theory—as

a first philosophical foray into understanding others—and focus mainly on the current and ongoing study of the brain's mirror neurons by neuroscientists Vittorio Gallese, Jean Decety, and their colleagues.

In chapter two, I also add to the relationship model by considering James Pennebaker's and Judith Lewis Herman's assertions that the telling of a traumatic story is a step toward recovery for trauma victims. Writers who are not victims of traumatization may act as secondary witnesses for characters that are based on silenced victims of the past. This section has a more theoretical stance when compared with the empirically based evidence regarding empathy. Coupled with Pennebaker's and Herman's psychological examinations of victim recovery is the theoretical scholarship issuing forth from ideas of historical trauma, as well as Holocaust studies. Dominick LaCapra introduces the distinction between personal and historical trauma in his article "Trauma, Absence, Loss" (1999). He continues that discussion in his book *Writing Histories, Writing Trauma* (2001), which combines his first article with the topics of narrative and literature. In addition to LaCapra, works such as Dora Apel's *Memory Effects: The Holocaust and the Art of Secondary Witnessing* (2002) and Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub's *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (1992) are touchstones for understanding the role of fiction writers as secondary witnesses and voices for traumatized victims of the historical past.

Chapter three will contain a case study that highlights Barry's relationship to the models described in chapter two. I will explore some of the traumatic material about which he writes, as well as biographical events in his life that compelled him to bring these traumatic stories to the public eye. This final chapter will serve to round out the study in chapter one, helping to support my assertion that these ten plays and novels should be recognized as a complete work—the

Ancestors Cycle—and given due attention.

2.0 IDENTIFYING SEBASTIAN BARRY'S *ANCESTORS CYCLE*

Throughout his career—to date—Sebastian Barry has published thirteen plays and ten novels, as well as four collections of poetry. This initial portion of my study will encompass five plays and five novels from Barry's canon with the intent of answering the following questions: what aspects of these ten pieces qualify them to gain acknowledgement as a unified project, and how do we present that volume of material in a clear and concise manner? The plays are Prayers of Sherkin (1990), White Woman Street (1992), The Steward of Christendom (1995), The Only True History of Lizzie Finn (1995), and Our Lady of Sligo (1998). The novels are The Whereabouts of Eneas McNulty (1998), Annie Dunne (2002), A Long Long Way (2005), The Secret Scripture (2008), and On Canaan's Side (2011). I determined the selection of these particular pieces based on a single unifying feature: each piece centers on one or more ancestors from Barry's ancestral family tree. The pieces are largely fictional, though founded on kernels of truth that Barry either experienced firsthand or discovered throughout his life.

There are two plays, however, whose absence in this group of ten may be questioned, as they appear to fall within the guidelines I have set for inclusion in this discussion. I have elected not to include Boss Grady's Boys and Hinterland for the following reason. Barry's first anthology of plays, Methuen's Sebastian Barry: Plays 1, contains five pieces that adopt the theme of silenced ancestors as their inspiration: Boss Grady's Boys, Prayers of Sherkin, White Woman Street, The Steward of Christendom, and The Only True History of Lizzie Finn. After

this collection was published, Barry wrote two more plays—Our Lady of Sligo and Hinterland—that, when included with the original five plays, fell under the heading he called "Seven Familiar Plays," using the collective title to suggest "a family of plays about a family," namely his own. In both Boss Grady's Boys and Hinterland, however, Barry superimposed his family relationships on the lives of actual people who are not directly related to him. In Boss Grady's Boys, the sixty- and seventy-something brothers Mick and Josey are based on a pair of neighbors that Barry remembers when he was living in the Wicklow countryside as a young man, but Barry recounts that in the play he detected a version of himself and his brother. In Hinterland, Barry used the backdrop of retired Irish political figure Charles Haughey to create the character of Johnny Silvester in an effort to explore the relationship between Barry's brother and their father. The ten pieces I have selected to study focus directly on Barry's ancestors, and family relationships are not masked by the method of superimposition Barry employs in Boss Grady's Boys and Hinterland. This is why I have chosen not to include the two pieces, even though Barry himself considers them linked to the other five plays via the familial theme.

In addition to the five plays—written from 1990 to 1998—are five novels that were written between 1998 and 2011: The Whereabouts of Eneas McNulty, Annie Dunne, A Long Long Way, The Secret Scripture, and On Canaan's Side. It is easy to state generally that the ten pieces in question are linked by the theme of family—in fact, a particular family—and that this collection is something remarkable. Barry is certainly not the first author to have attempted such an intertextual feat. William Faulkner wrote over twenty novels and short stories from 1929 to 1962 concerning the residents of Yoknapatawpha County, a fictional setting modeled on the territory in Mississippi where Faulkner grew up. Between 1982 and 2005, August Wilson created a cycle of ten plays set in each decade of the twentieth century, which chronicled the African-

American experience in Wilson's native Pittsburgh and featured the frequently recurring and mystical character of Aunt Ester. Thomas Hardy's Wessex (1872-1895), Eugene O'Neill's Tyrone Family (1941-1943), Brian Friel's Ballybeg (1964-2005), Stephen King's characters in the town of Castle Rock (1979-2011), and Tarrell Alvin McCraney's Elegba Eshu (2006). This list is by no means exhaustive, and the publication dates reveal that this convention is not an exclusively old or new tradition. As the various examples show, it is not limited to only geographical locations or characters, drama or literature. In fact, Barry spans the two genres in a manner that those mentioned above do not.

What is a great matter of importance is not simply to declare that the pieces of these collections are related, but to illustrate the relationships among the pieces together as a special project. When I say "illustrate," I do not only mean to clarify via verbal example, but also to depict in a visual manner so that characteristics and intersections are clearly and unequivocally apparent to the viewer. When the collection in question is of a magnitude such as Barry's ten pieces or Faulkner's twenty-plus novels and novellas, it seems a daunting task. What characteristics are essential to proving that these pieces have not only similar features, but also a distinct bond, something that sets the collection apart and raises it to a level beyond merely a collocation of similar items? And how do we visualize these characteristics as part of an exercise of analysis? A combination of the work of two theorists—Patrick Colm Hogan and Franco Moretti—offers an interesting solution to the task at hand and provides the framework for a structural study of Barry's ten plays and novels.

2.1 IDENTIFYING A WORK

Hogan's recent book, *Affective Narratology* (2011), explores the integral part that emotion plays in the cognitive structuring of narrative. Emotion drives the simplest of sentences and exchanges, Hogan suggests, and remains an integral part of cognitive understanding as narrative structures progress in complexity from sentences and paragraphs to plots and genres. Although the remaining chapters of this study will focus heavily on the emotional significance of Barry's plays and novels, this portion does not. However, Hogan's work remains a foundational block for the forthcoming structural argument. His explication of narrative structure and its various hierarchical levels is key to intimating the importance of Barry's ten pieces as a unified project, rather than ten pieces that merely seem to have some things in common.

The section of Hogan's work that is relevant to this discussion revolves around the narrative constructions of story, discourse, and work. Barry's project is best analyzed by placing each narrative discourse in conversation with the other as part of a group, in order to understand the larger story. It is the larger story—not simply an individual discourse in the form of play or novel—that is the key to understanding Barry's motivations. The distinction between story and discourse has come under scrutiny in recent years, Hogan recognizes, and he moves toward a more detailed and specific view of the relationship, beyond the traditional and limited view that "story is 'what happened' and the discourse is 'the presentation of what happened.'"[23] Hogan

[23] Patrick Colm Hogan, *Affective Narratology* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2011), 98.

writes, “The product of a reader’s inference [. . .] is an ‘intentional object,’ a complex mental construction that is, roughly, that reader’s understanding of the discourse. A story, descriptively characterized, is first of all a given reader’s intentional object built up from his or her experience of a particular discourse.”[24] In this model, Hogan eliminates arguments concerning the universal facticity of stories by centering the definition on subjective experience. This definition allows for idiosyncratic interpretations across groups—which inevitably occur—while also promoting our understanding that stories will be interpreted based on any given individual’s cultural understanding.

The next level of structural narrative that Hogan explores is what he calls the “work.” This level occurs between that of the story/discourse distinction and the much larger level of genre. It indicates a pivotal shift from the entertaining and cathartic nature of stories to the broad, generalizing nature of genres. The work retains the emotional nature of stories, but moves toward thematic interpretation. The next level—that of genre—is typically concerned with noting what is common across a group of works, whereas the work itself is concerned with exploring what is unique within its own group. As I wrote previously, and as Hogan carefully states, “A key point about works—one that is crucial for interpretation—is that they are not simply collocations.”[25]

The work, then, is a grouping of discourses, but not a haphazard one. Hogan writes:

> In defining a work, then, we wish to isolate some sort of unity or mutual relevance of the component parts. Moreover, that unity must derive from a causal sequence in which the mutually relevant parts have been brought together intentionally. We have a strong preference that this intentional selection be undertaken by a single “selector” who, in making his or her selection, encodes the

[24] Ibid., 100.
[25] Ibid., 104.

> work as a single interpretive unit. Moreover, in the prototypical case, this is the same person who produced all the parts—thus an author.[26]

So, while a single author is a preferential feature to designate a group of discourses as a work, it is not a defining one. The key element in the above statement is that the "unity must derive from a causal sequence." In this case, the causal sequence is nearly synonymous with Hogan's definition of story. The causal sequence is the plot(s) or storyline(s) within a discourse, or, more specifically, the understanding of those plots and storylines from the presentation of the discourse. From this feature, Hogan outlines three unities—which he classifies as having mutual relevance—that must be present in order to confirm that any given group of discourses have been "brought together intentionally" to form a work: theme, causal sequence intersections, and emotional tone.

The first category, theme, involves interpretation of the discourses. Discourses that share similar themes naturally have a higher level of unity, but thematic mutual relevance between discourses is not limited to similar treatment of those themes. Discourses that present competing perspectives on a single topic can intensify each other and lead to a level of mutual relevance that is equal to that of similar viewpoints. Hogan writes, "In other words, the different stories should explore the same thematic topics, whether or not they point us toward the same conclusions."[27]

The next category concerns causal sequence intersections. The basic human ability to interpret the story—or the causal sequence of events—from the presentation of the discourse is the simplest level of unity. A higher level of unity comes from identifying story frames. The story frame is a causal sequence that includes other causal sequences that may or may not be

[26] Ibid., 105.
[27] Ibid., 124.

related to the primary causal sequence. In simpler terms, a story frame contains a plot and sub-plots. Hogan states:

> Higher degrees of unity are achieved as the author multiplies the number of "intersections" between one causal sequence and another. Specifically the characters and events from one sequence may or may not play a causal role in another sequence. The more of a causal role they play, the more the work is unified—thus the more "worklike" it is.[28]

The loosest of the three categories is that of emotional tone, which Hogan is quick to point out by saying, "It is not really possible to give anything like a rule here."[29] Similar to the category of theme, it is not essential that the emotional tone be the same in each singular discourse in order for the tone to be mutually relevant across a group. Discourses with "different emotional valences," such as those associated with familial reunion and/or familial separation, have a high level of mutual relevance, because the differing emotions intensify each other.[30]

Hogan speaks of both high and low degrees of unity where the three categories are concerned, but he does not offer any means for measuring these levels. In fact, it is hard to believe that a quantitative method would be terribly useful in this situation, since it appears that simply complying with the three unities is enough to verify that a collection of discourses is a work. There does not seem to be much use in being able to say that one collection is better or more "worklike" than another, as long as it contains the aforementioned features. To claim superiority without quantitative proof is, of course, an exercise in subjectivity, which is something I would like to avoid in this discussion; I wish to show that Barry's ten discourses

---

[28] Ibid., 106.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Ibid.

fulfill Hogan's requirements to achieve the status of a work, not to make an argument that Barry's project shows a higher or lower degree of unity than, say, Faulkner's or Wilson's.

Hogan's criteria for analysis of a work answer the first question at the beginning of the chapter: what aspects of these ten pieces qualify them to gain acknowledgement as a unified project? That being said, we must now move on to the second question: how do we present that volume of material in a clear and concise manner? The quantity of discourses in question leads to the prospect of an overwhelming amount of written analysis. This is cumbersome not only for myself as a writer, but also for you as a reader. My study, therefore, cannot be one of close reading, and a different approach is necessary in order to treat all ten discourses fairly and to illustrate the features that unify them as a work. It is at this point that I turn to the work of Franco Moretti to finish laying the groundwork for the following analysis in this chapter.

2.2 DISTANT READING

Franco Moretti approaches world literature in a unique way by the use of graphs, maps, and trees to take what he calls a "distant reading" approach to literary analysis. An analysis of world literature, he argues, cannot benefit from the close reading of a few texts from the canon. Moretti argues for examining the intersections of both small and large details across an extensive selection of texts in order to gain knowledge about world literature, rather than focusing on the entirety of single texts. He writes, "Texts are certainly the *real objects* of literature […]; but they

are not the right *objects of knowledge* for literary history."[31] While my study focuses on ten pieces from one author, rather than a larger cross section of world literature that Moretti is positing, his approach is still valid to the analysis of Barry's larger work, as opposed to singular discourses. Employing this method of structural analysis to Barry's ten pieces illustrates that which is so unique about the work: Barry's continual return to recover the voices of his ancestors. Analyzing these pieces as a work is integral to the larger forthcoming argument and is grounded first and foremost in methodological responsibility.

To simply examine one or two pieces as a representation of an entire interconnected oeuvre would be reductive. The intertextual nature of the plays and novels is undeniable—this study will illustrate that shortly—and most scholars who write about Barry readily acknowledge this feature. To be aware of and to ignore a text's obvious connection to another text is, to me, irresponsible. Moretti's approach facilitates a distant reading of these interrelated texts so as not to be mired in the minutiae of detailed textual analysis. By examining and illustrating these ten pieces in terms of their intersections with each other—Moretti's method integrated with Hogan's theory—we can achieve a more productive analysis than a comprehensive and, frankly, tedious explication of one or two texts. Moretti writes:

> Distant reading: where distance, let me repeat it, *is a condition of knowledge*: it allows you to focus on units that are much smaller or much larger than the text: devices, themes, tropes—or genres and systems. And if, between the very small and the very large, the text itself disappears, well, it is one of those cases when one can justifiably say, Less is more. If we want to understand the system in its

[31] Franco Moretti, *Graphs, Maps, Trees: Abstract Models for Literary History* (London: Verso, 2007), 76. Italics in original.

entirety, we must accept losing something.[32]

In the same way, I propose to examine Barry's discourses in terms of Hogan's three unities: causal sequence intersections falling under Moretti's idea of smaller details and the emotional tone and theme as larger elements across the entire work, rather than focusing on each text individually. In the following pages, I will use Moretti's method of graphs, maps, and trees to augment and clarify the written analysis so that common characteristics and intersections are visually apparent. As Moretti admits, the models themselves are very abstract, but the results are material—"Graphs, maps, and trees place the literary field literally in front of our eyes—and show us how little we still know about it."[33] By approaching Barry's oeuvre in this manner, I hope to illuminate in an unequivocal way the features already present, as well as those not yet apparent.

2.3 EXAMINING BARRY'S WORK BY DISTANT READING

In this section, there will be eight figures of varying styles to visually complement the written analysis of Barry's ten pieces. Some styles have been used more than once in order to highlight similarities. Some are simple and others more complicated, but each model has been carefully chosen to best represent the data that is available while also being able to accommodate the appearance of new data, should Barry continue his project.[34] The following analysis will, firstly,

---

[32] Franco Moretti, "Conjectures on World Literature" (*New Left Review*: January/February, 2000), 57. Italics in original.
[33] Moretti, *Graphs, Maps, Trees*, 2.
[34] Batteresby, Eileen. "'I can no longer decide what is invented and what is real,'" *Irish Times*, July 23, 2011, 7. Barry hinted at the end of the interview that there could be one more book to round out his collection of imagined ancestor histories.

give an overview of the interconnectedness of the ten pieces in terms of story and discourse and, secondly, show—through Hogan's unifying concepts of theme, causal sequence intersections, and emotional tone—how Barry's ten pieces can be considered as a unified work.

2.4 CHRONOLOGY AND CHARACTERS

2.4.1 Figure 1: Chronology of Discourses

The first model for consideration is a graph. The graph in Figure 1 represents the chronological proximity of the ten pieces on two axes. The x-axis shows the novels and plays in the order of when the piece was published, in the case of novels, or performed, in the case of the plays. The y-axis shows the calendrical time that is relevant to the content of the ten pieces. Of course there is a wide range of examples on the y-axis. Some of the plays take place over a few days or a few months, while some of the novels extend for many years. The play *The Steward of Christendom* is unique in its structure, with episodic scenes alternating between January 1922, August 1922, autumn of 1925, and spring of 1932. In this play, we encounter Thomas Dunne, who was the Chief Superintendent of the Dublin Metropolitan Police during the Sackville Street/Dublin Lockout riot and when Michael Collins took control of Dublin Castle. The story evokes the style of the "memory play" and is set mainly in the county home in Baltinglass in 1932, where an aging and mentally volatile Dunne is both tortured and comforted by the memories of his former career and family. The scenes in the play do not take place chronologically, but the y-axis is

more concerned with the historical time in which events took place, or better, concerned with the story rather than the discourse.

On this axis regarding historical/story time duration there are some more interesting features. In the case of the two novels *The Secret Scripture* and *On Canaan's Side*, the narrative is told in the first person in an autobiographical style.

In *The Secret Scripture*, Roseanne Clear chronicles her youth in Sligo and her marriage to Tom McNulty. When the parish priest assumes that he has caught Roseanne in an adulterous tryst with a local rebel, the McNultys banish Roseanne to the outskirts of town and annul the marriage without her consent. She passes many years alone, except for a brief romantic encounter with Tom's brother, Eneas. The resultant pregnancy produces an offspring that mysteriously disappears after birth, either by forces of nature or forces of society. Declared a mentally incompetent recluse by society, Roseanne is shunted from institution to institution until, at the age of 100, she feels it is time to write her version of the events that transpired.

In *On Canaan's Side*, 89-year-old Lilly Bere chronicles her entire life over seventeen days' worth of diary entries after the passing of her grandson Bill. Lilly writes from her bungalow in the Hamptons, recalling the extraordinary events of her life in America since her exile from Ireland in the 1920s and the extraordinary men who appeared and disappeared in her life: her fiancé, Tadg, who was blacklisted and murdered by the IRA; her husband Joe Kinderman, who disappeared under mysterious circumstances and left her as a single mother; her son Ed, whose bright youth was dampened by his service in the Vietnam War; her grandson Bill, who replaced Ed as a second child whom she would raise and love from infancy; her friend Mr. Nolan, who offered help and loyalty where he could, but who ultimately fell from her grace while on his deathbed, just days before Bill's untimely death.

In both novels, the heroine is writing a journal, because she feels that she will soon die and would like to record her story for future generations. The time over which the narrative spans is represented by the pale section of the bar. The time during which each character, Roseanne and Lilly respectively, is telling the story is represented by the darker section of the bar. For both novels, this darker section appears at the far right of the bar, since the character is situated temporally in the present day while recalling events of her life leading up to that point. Roseanne tells the story of her life over a few weeks in late winter and early spring of 2008, but in the journal she recounts the tale of her life, which spans nearly one hundred years. Lilly chronicles the eighty-nine years of her life over a period of seventeen days in June 1991.

Despite the varying duration of narrative time that occurs in the individual plays and novels, as well as the wide stretch of historical time over which the discourses occur, the graph shows a certain unification of the ten pieces. If one concentrates on the historical/story time duration axis, it is clear that each piece is enveloped by at least one other piece, so that no single play or novel is forsaken outside of the group. The next model in Figure 2 enhances this feature.

2.4.2 Figure 2: Family Tree

Figure 2 represents the second model for consideration: a tree. This tree is not employed in quite the abstract way that Moretti intends, but it represents Barry's project in an undoubtedly material way and connects nicely with the graph in Figure 1. Figure 2 is a family tree, an illustration quite familiar to most people. It contains named individuals from Barry's ten pieces that can be incontrovertibly connected to each other in this fashion via details given in the plays and books. Keep in mind that this is not a family tree that connects Barry to his *actual* relatives, but one that connects him to the *fictional representations* of those people. Granted, in many occasions, the

distinction is not so easily made, but for the purposes of this study, the information displayed in the figures comes solely from Barry's fictional writing.

The tree's origin springs from three separate families: the Dunnes, the Hawkes, and the Gibsons. These members at the oldest part of the tree are Barry's great-great-great-grandparents. The Dunnes and the Hawkes represent the paternal side of Barry's family, and the Gibsons represent the maternal. Overall, this model contains fifty-five members, including Barry himself at the opposite extremity. He is represented at the bottom of the tree where we see the monikers "Boy" and "Girl." These two characters, never named outright in the novel *Annie Dunne*, are representations of Barry and his sister Siuban during a summer visit to their great-aunt's home in the Wicklow countryside. The novel takes place in Wicklow in 1959 where Barry's great-aunt Annie Dunne lives with her cousin Sarah Cullen. The two old women quietly manage a small farm in the countryside, but a sudden turn of events bring Annie's great-niece and great-nephew to stay for the summer. The tumult of activity and emotion that occur with their arrival both delights and confuses the aged Annie. Her plight is further complicated when a local man with designs for the farm seeks to court Sarah and therefore threatens the stability of Annie's life.

This fictional tree is remarkably complete, but I must offer a few notes on two particular discrepancies. The first is that it appears there may be a connection between two sets of Kirwin families on the level of Barry's great-grandparents. Here it is very possible that Frank Kirwin on the maternal side could be linked as a brother to Matt and Jesse on the paternal side. However, there is no proof in the books or plays that Frank Kirwin is a descendant of Fanny Hawke and Patrick Kirwin.

These two are the main characters in *Prayers of Sherkin*. Fanny is a young woman who lived on Sherkin Island off the southern coast of Ireland as a member of a religious sect in the

1890s. Many years prior, a religious group had sailed from Manchester, England and settled on the small island in the hopes of living quietly and fulfilling the millenarian visions of their leader, Matt Purdy. Time has taken its toll on the small community, however, and Fanny Hawke, one of the youngest of only five surviving members, is the group's last hope for progeny and a continuance of their traditions. Fanny falls in love with an outsider, a lithographer from Cork, and must ultimately choose between her family on the island or a life with Patrick Kirwin on the mainland.

Fanny and Patrick are distinctly linked to the southern city of Cork, where they settled after Fanny leaves her sect on Sherkin Island. Both Jesse and Matt are described as originating from Cork, but Frank is not. He appears as a character in the play *Our Lady of Sligo*, which mimics the "memory-play" style of *The Steward of Christendom* and features the main character of Mai Kirwin O'Hara, Frank's daughter. The play takes place in 1953 at the Jervis Street Hospital in Dublin, where Mai is suffering from cancer. With no hope of convalescence, she drifts between painful reality and morphine-induced dreams. Though now in her fifties, Mai offers many remembrances of her youth—some lovely and others horrifying—in an attempt to redeem herself for her twenty years of alcoholism. In her stories, we do not explicitly see her and her husband Jack being pushed to the margins by the changing political climate, but we are witness to the effects of it.

Frank's origins are described thusly by Jack in *Our Lady of Sligo*, "Athlone originally. Kirwin though, a Galway name. A fine old Galway name. The tribes."[35] Athlone is in the middle of Ireland and just east of Galway, where Frank would eventually raise his own family. In *A Long Long Way*, Jesse appears as a significant character in the life of Willie Dunne, the main

[35] Sebastian Barry, *Our Lady of Sligo* (London: Methuen Publishing Limited, 1998), 5.

character of the novel. The book follows the brief life of Willie Dunne from his boyhood in the late 1890s in Dublin to his death on the battlefield in Flanders in 1918. Willie joins the Royal Dublin Fusiliers to serve in World War I, but the confusion and senselessness of life on the battlefield is compounded by Willie's inner conflict about the political climate at home in Ireland. Barry's novel painstakingly portrays not only the violence and despair of war, but also the comfort and joy of wartime brotherhood amidst the turbulent emotional depth of Willie's family relationships.

As Willie gets to know his new friend Jesse Kirwan, there is no mention of Jesse's siblings, though his connection to Fanny and Patrick is clear. He identifies his father's profession as a lithographer, and the priest Father Buckley recounts the story of Fanny's renunciation of her sect. Matt is also connected to Patrick in the novel A*nnie Dunne*. The eponymous character describes Matt as "the son of a poor lithographer in Cork City"[36] and reveals that "he has brothers, but some of them are dead."[37] In *Our Lady of Sligo*, Frank's daughter Mai reveals the identity of Frank's brother, saying "For I know now the war was on in Africa and Dada had a brother there, Joseph, that the Dutch killed."[38] This is the only mention of a sibling to Frank Kirwin, and it does not correlate with either of Matt's or Jesse's families. The temptation is to link Frank with Matt and Jesse as one of the anonymous brothers mentioned in *Annie Dunne*, but the narrative evidence that Barry supplies is simply not strong enough to do so.

The second discrepancy in Figure 2 concerns the names of several characters. In certain cases, Barry has used the actual name of the historical individual, such as Fanny Hawke or Joanie O'Hara, but oftentimes he creates a fictional name. Barry's decision to use fictional or

---

[36] Sebastian Barry, *Annie Dunne* (New York: Viking, 2002), 155.
[37] Ibid., 191.
[38] Barry, *Our Lady of Sligo*, 12.

non-fictional names is not of particular consequence to this study, but he creates a modicum of confusion when he uses two different names for the same historical figure and brings family tree connections into question. There are five individuals who fit within this category to differing degrees: Jesse Kirwan, Dolly Dunne/Lilly Dunne Bere, Thomas Dunne/James Dunne, Jack McNulty/Jack O'Hara, and Tom McNulty/Pat O'Hara,

Jesse Kirwan is the simplest of the examples. The last name Kirwan differs only in spelling from that of the other members of the Kirwin family. Barry offers no explanation for this in any of his interviews, but Jesse is clearly the son of Fanny Hawke and Patrick Kirwin and the brother of Matt Kirwin, as illustrated by the evidence mentioned previously.

The character of Dolly Dunne appears in four separate pieces, though in the novel *On Canaan's Side*, she is referred to as Lilly Dunne. Lilly is easily distinguishable as Dolly Dunne based on the narrative information given on her father, sisters, and brother, who all appear in the same four pieces: *The Steward of Christendom*, *A Long Long Way*, *Annie Dunne*, and *On Canaan's Side*. Barry explains the name change in an interview concerning *On Canaan's Side*, his newest novel, which centers on the life of Lilly. He says, "There was a Lilly Dunne, my great aunt […] and she did go to America. […] I wrote about her in a play called *The Steward of Christendom*, she's called Dolly in that, which was her nickname."[39] In the course of the novel, Lilly travels to America with her fiancé, Tadg Bere, who is killed before they can marry. She takes on the surname Bere out of affection for her murdered love, but also as a means of disguise to escape an IRA death sentence.

Dolly's father, Thomas Dunne/James Dunne, is modeled on Barry's great-grandfather who was Chief Superintendent of the Dublin Metropolitan police during the Easter Rising and

[39]"Sebastian Barry Talks About On Canaan's Side." http://www.youtube.com/watch ?v=DgeWzgS8XfE&feature=related, 2:30.

the War of Independence. The character first appears in the play *The Steward of Christendom*, which focuses on Thomas's later madness and incarceration in the county home. In the four pieces in which the character appears, he is referred to as Thomas in *The Steward of Christendom* and *Annie Dunne* and as James in the two later novels *A Long Long Way* and *On Canaan's Side*. Just as with Dolly, the characters of Thomas and James are easily reconciled as the same person by virtue of the identical family relationships, as well as by his position as Chief Superintendent of the Dublin Metropolitan Police. Barry's great-grandfather's real name was James,[40] but Barry has not spoken directly about why he decided to change the character to Thomas for *The Steward of Christendom* nor why he reverted to his great-grandfather's true name for the last two novels. We will return to this character in the following chapters for a more complete historical profile.

The last two characters, Jack McNulty/Jack O'Hara and Tom McNulty/Pat O'Hara are brothers, and the circumstances surrounding the McNulty/O'Hara name change appear to be the same in each case. In the chronology of publication, the first time a member of the O'Hara family appears is in the play *White Woman Street*. This play is the only one set in America, where the character of Trooper O'Hara, based on Barry's maternal great-great-uncle, had fled the aftermath of the famines of Ireland to serve as a soldier in the Union Army during the Indian Wars. Now in his fifties at the time of the play in 1916, Trooper leads his small band of traveling companions to a town in Ohio. The men busy themselves with planning a railroad heist, but Trooper is haunted by his return to White Woman Street and a traumatic event of his youth, when a young Indian woman at the local brothel killed herself with Trooper's knife after he had—unknowingly—taken her virginity. Trooper confronts his ghosts, but does not survive the

[40] Matt Wolf, "It's Ancestor Worship, But of a Dramatic Sort," *New York Times*, January 19, 1997, H20.

railroad robbery, dying of a gunshot wound in the woods of Ohio, surrounded by his comrades.

Trooper's nephew, Jack O'Hara appears in the play *Our Lady of Sligo*. In this play, Barry has maintained the surname of this family branch and also mentions Jack's brother. The main character Mai says, "There were tremendous swathes of sunlight frolicking about outside on the road, all tarry dusty from the midday, a road indeed Jack had designed and built himself as town engineer in brother Pat's heyday, when he was Mayor."[41] The first time the characters of Jack McNulty and Tom McNulty appear is in the novel *The Whereabouts of Eneas McNulty*, as the younger brothers of the titular character. Beginning at his birth in 1900, we follow Eneas through his childhood in Sligo to his death on the Isle of Dogs in England in 1970. As he grows from youth to manhood, Eneas struggles to find his place in society following World War I and joins the Royal Irish Constabulary in order to put food in his mouth and clothes on his back. After being discharged, Eneas is confronted by his boyhood friend, Jonno Lynch, who informs Eneas that his service with the RIC translates to complicity with the British and has earned him a sentence of death from Jonno's superiors in the IRA. The next fifty years see Eneas struggling in his flight across the globe, securing fast friendships but ultimately longing for his home in Ireland. When Jonno finally tracks Eneas to the Isle of Dogs in 1970 to carry out the sentence, Jonno is wounded—but thought dead—in a fight. When Eneas decides to burn Jonno's body in Eneas's hotel room to fake his own death and ensure a clean escape, he hears Jonno's cries and rushes into the burning building, risking his life in an attempt to rescue his boyhood friend.

As Barry was writing the novel, he came across the name of his hero quite by accident. "I happened to be watching television news—you know the best thing to do is not try to find the thing you're looking for […]. There'd been an accident in Meath and an eyewitness came out . . .

---

[41] Barry, *Our Lady of Sligo*, 12.

And his name was Eneas McNulty."[42] Barry camouflaged his great-uncle Charlie O'Hara with the name Eneas McNulty, and therefore needed to alter Jack O'Hara and Pat O'Hara as well.

Of the four pieces in which the two brothers in question appear, they are named as Jack and Pat O'Hara twice—in *Our Lady of Sligo* and *Annie Dunne*—and Jack and Tom McNulty twice—in *The Whereabouts of Eneas McNulty* and *The Secret Scripture*. Interestingly, Barry uses the fictional family surname of McNulty in the two pieces that are the farthest removed from him, ancestrally speaking. His mother, Joan O'Hara, is a character in *Our Lady of Sligo*, and he himself is a character in *Annie Dunne*, while the other two pieces concern his grandfather's generation.

The remainder of the family tree is, as I noted, remarkably complete and free of any other such discrepancies. There are three characters that are never identified by their first names. The first is the wife of Frank Kirwin in *Our Lady of Sligo*, who is known simply as "Mam" in the text. The second is the father of Thomas Dunne/James Dunne, who is notable in all four pieces in which he is mentioned as the steward of the Humewood Estate in Wicklow. He is only referred to by his nickname, White Meg, due to his white, old-fashioned beard.[43]

The third character is the husband of Lucinda Gibson in *The Only True History of Lizzie Finn*. Set in England and Ireland in the early 1900s, this play revolves around the marriage of Lizzie Finn, based on Barry's maternal great-great-grandmother. Lizzie begins the play as a music-hall dancer in Weston-Super-Mare, England, but returns to her native Kerry, Ireland when she meets and marries Robert Gibson. The return to their home country is not a smooth passage.

---

[42] Diana Barth, "The CRAIC: The Whereabouts of Sebastian Barry," *Irish Voice* 13, no. 6 (April 20, 1999), 18.

[43] In Gaeilge, the Irish language, the word for beard is *féasóg*. However, the word for chin is *smig*, and a probable idiom for a white beard would be *smig bán*, or white chin. The name White Meg could therefore be an Anglicized hybrid of "white *smig*." Thanks to Marie Young and P.J. Tierney for this hypothesis.

Lizzie is a music-hall dancer and a Presbyterian, both statuses that raise eyebrows in the well-to-do Gibson family and their social circle. While society is polite and curious at the outset, the façade quickly melts when Robert admits his detestation for war and its fatal effects on his three brothers, which led him to resign his commission in the British Army and fight in the Irish Brigade in the Boer War. Robert's mother commits suicide shortly after, unable to manage the strain of the social implications of her son's actions and marriage. Robert and Lizzie remain steadfast in their love for each other and disgusted with the affected manners of the society around them. Robert and Lizzie cast off the privileged life, and the play ends as they leave for Cork and the promise of a new life in the world of the music hall.[44] The husband of Lucinda Gibson has passed away before the start of the play, and even though he is referenced several times in the text, it is only as "Mr. Gibson."

By examining both the graph in Figure 1 and the family tree in Figure 2, it is possible to get a much clearer view of Barry's ten pieces than could be possible from simply reading alone. As Hogan described, our minds automatically interpret the story as we encounter the discourse. While our minds have done this work internally, these two models allow us to visualize that mental culmination of all ten discourses and how they interact with one another to form the much larger story of Barry's extended family, historically speaking.

[44] An interesting situation to ponder: *Lizzie Finn* and *Prayers of Sherkin* are set within only a few years of each other. At the conclusion of the play, Lizzie responds to Robert's suggestion that they move to Cork, saying, "Cork? (*Laughs.*) Well, they have a new music-hall there in Cork, I was reading" (*Sebastian Barry Plays: 1*, 234). When Patrick Kirwin returns to Sherkin to hear Fanny's answer to his proposal he says, "I've purchased a new premises in Cork City, it is beside the new theatre hall" (*Sebastian Barry Plays: 1*, 110).

2.5 THEME

The first unifying concept that Hogan employs is that of theme. The main theme of Barry's pieces is that of recovering silenced ancestors, but this is not a theme that is evident within each individual discourse. It is, rather, a theme that is apparent when one undertakes an analysis of the ten pieces together as a work. What Hogan is looking for is a theme or themes in an individual discourse that will resonate in each of the other pieces under consideration for inclusion in the work. Three themes that are unmistakable in each of the ten pieces are war, exile, and music. While the themes of war and exile are demonstrated with one model each, the music theme is illustrated in two separate models; the first is an exploration of the larger details of the theme, while the second is an exploration of smaller details within the theme that will segue to Hogan's second unifying concept of causal sequence intersections. The three themes and the additional exploration are represented respectively in Figures 3, 4, 5, and 6.

2.5.1 Figure 3: Theme of War

The first theme of war is represented in a Venn diagram in Figure 3. The theme of war extends across all ten pieces in Barry's collection. While nine of the ten discourses connect directly with the conflict of war, one stands uniquely alone: *Prayers of Sherkin*. This play is the first of the ten pieces that Barry wrote and centers on the figure of Fanny Hawke, who falls in love with a Catholic man from the mainland and must make a difficult choice. Rejecting Patrick Kirwin's marriage proposal will allow her to stay with the family and traditions she loves, but without hope of ever marrying. Accepting the outsider as her husband will fulfill her dream of having

children, but she will be forever shunned from her family on the island. Fanny has a vision of the religious sect's founder, Matt Purdy, who urges her to pursue a life with Patrick.

> MATT PURDY: Listen now, Fanny Hawke, and hear these calls.
>
> *Her name is called distantly by young voices. (Curlews, kittiwakes, gulls.)*
>
> FANNY: Who is this calling me, Matt Purdy?
>
> MATT PURDY: They are the voices of thy children. They wait for you up the years, and you must go. All about them lies a cruel century of disasters and wars that I did not foresee. […] There are lives that are waiting to be made in a black century, and though they will see suffering, yet they will value their lives. Oh, in darkest heart they will cherish them. They can be nothing without Fanny Hawke.[45]

Even as Matt Purdy urges Fanny to go, he warns of the "disasters and wars" that will affect her progeny, alluding to the conflicts that Barry will eventually feature in the next nine works discussed here: the American-Indian Wars, World War I, the Irish War for Independence, World War II, the Vietnam War, and the Persian Gulf War.

As Hogan suggests, themes do not necessarily have to be the same across the separate discourses. Mutual relevance can also occur when differing themes help to intensify one another. In this case, Fanny's life as a pacifist and the impending future of her children serve as the origin of the theme of war that will eventually play out in the remainder of Barry's works. Fanny must leave the pacifism and simplicity of her life and brave the violence of war that will befall her children; without this sacrifice, those children will never be born. Barry, in fact, would never have been born without Fanny's courageous act. It is also significant that this was the first of Barry's pieces about an ancestor. While Fanny Hawke is not the biological ancestor of the entire

[45] Sebastian Barry, *Prayers of Sherkin*, in *Sebastian Barry Plays: 1* (London: Methuen Drama, 1997), 105.

group of characters illustrated in the family tree in Figure 2, this play—one of the three plays about the three founding families of Barry's ancestral tree[46]—serves as an excellent jumping-off point, and perhaps metaphorical parent, for the remainder of the discourses, especially with its contrapuntal theme of pacifism.

A Venn diagram was the most appropriate model in view of this situation. All of the plays and novels are represented in the figure, but the data here includes the major characters of the ten discourses. The diagram illustrates three categories of war that any given character might encounter: 1) serving directly within a conflict, 2) an immediate family member serving directly, or 3) conflict present within the immediate community. Fanny Hawke, of course, does not appear within the context of the Venn diagram, because within the context of the play *Prayers of Sherkin*, she does not experience war in any of the three categories. For this reason, and because *Prayers of Sherkin* acts as a metaphorical parent to the rest of the plays and novels, Fanny's name represents a box which surrounds the Venn diagram. In this way, she is connected to the other characters who experience war directly without being implicated in the three categories of war. The thirteen remaining characters that make up the data in this graph all experience war to a certain degree, though some characters experience more than one of the three categories.

The Venn diagram allows us to see the various combinations of the three categories that any given character could experience. The four characters seen on the far left side of the diagram—Ed Bere, William Bere, Trooper O'Hara, and Jack O'Hara—experience only one of the three categories of war, "Serving Directly." There are four other characters that fall under the "Serving Directly" category, but they have also experienced additional categories of war. Robert

[46] Of Barry's first four plays, three of them concern the oldest families that top the fictional family tree in Figure 2. These three plays are *Prayers of Sherkin, The Steward of Christendom*, and *The Only True History of Lizzie Finn*.

Gibson had three brothers serving with him, so his name is situated to include two categories of war, those of “Serving Directly” and “Immediate Family Member Serving.” In the middle of the graph we see Thomas Dunne, Eneas McNulty, and Willie Dunne. These men have experienced three categories of war. They fall under the “Serving Directly” category, but they also have a family member who serves, as well as experience fighting within their individual communities.

As we see from the diagram, eight out of the thirteen characters who have experienced a category of war served directly, which is the most severe of the three categories. The fact that more than half of people who are represented in the data fought directly in a violent conflict begins to illuminate the importance of the war theme across Barry’s work. These eight men served in the six wars mentioned earlier: the American-Indian Wars, World War I, the Irish War for Independence, World War II, the Vietnam War, and the Persian Gulf War. The breadth of history over which these conflicts occurred is yet another testament to the importance Barry places on the theme of war. In addition, seven of the characters in the diagram—each from a separate discourse—experience more than one category of war, which again strengthens the war theme throughout Barry’s project.

2.5.2 Figure 4: Theme of Exile

The second theme of exile is also presented in a Venn diagram in Figure 4. While the general theme of exile is present in each of the ten discourses, I have categorized three types of exile that continually occur. For this reason, a Venn diagram was again an excellent model to illustrate the presence of this theme throughout the ten pieces. The model incorporates the title of each piece for ease of recognition, but it should be understood that it is generally the main character of each

piece that is experiencing the effects of exile. The three types of exile that this model explores are political, societal, and emotional.

Political exile is generally the most severe type about which Barry writes. Characters who have deliberately—or even accidentally—created political tension are often subject to physical expulsion from their homes and families and may even be threatened with death for their offense. In the diagram, five pieces fall within the political exile category, though none of those are situated solely in that arena.

One of the most potent examples of political exile is that of the titular character of Barry's novel *The Whereabouts of Eneas McNulty*. At the age of sixteen, Eneas struggles to find his place in the small Irish town of Sligo. His best friend, Jonno Lynch, has become a stranger to him after taking a job as a messenger boy for a local businessman, and Eneas' siblings all find their individual niches in school, music, and religion. Eneas longs to escape Sligo—where he feels he does not belong—and represent Ireland on the fields of France during World War I, but ends up in the British Merchant Navy ferrying machine parts and goods between Ireland and Galveston, Texas without ever catching sight of a battlefield. When he returns to Ireland at the end of World War I, Eneas, like many other war veterans, cannot find work in his small hometown, and resorts to joining the Royal Irish Constabulary.

Instead of remaining in Sligo, Eneas takes up his new post in Athlone, for "every recruited man is suspected by both sides of informing, one way or another, and a man is rendered greater innocence by being posted to an unfamiliar town."[47] He soon begins to realize, however, the political implications of what he thought was an economically practical decision to join the RIC. Eneas attempts to visit Sligo during his furlough, but he is soon dissuaded. Stephen

[47] Barry, *Eneas McNulty*, 56.

O'Dowd, the businessman who employed Jonno Lynch as a messenger boy, is also a powerful figure in the Irish Republican Army. The IRA sees Eneas as a traitor for his service with the British Merchant Navy and the Royal Irish Constabulary. He sends his son to Eneas' father with the message, "'Let your son keep out of Sligo, man, if he wants to keep his ability to walk.'"[48] Eneas has no choice but to return home, however, after IRA assassins attack him during a night patrol in Athlone. They kill the sergeant with whom Eneas is patrolling, and the RIC discharge Eneas after recognizing the liability in retaining him. Eneas hides for a time in his parents' home, but finally tells his father he cannot stay.

> 'Maybe I should be just going away. Going away quietly with myself somewhere.'
>
> His father says nothing at all for a long bit.
>
> 'Trouble is,' says his Pappy, 'a man goes away like that and maybe he never comes back to his people.'
>
> 'Better than to be killed here, Pappy.'
>
> 'Trouble is, a man could go away, and the buggers would go after him.' [49]

The IRA gives Eneas a chance to redeem himself by killing an influential man in the RIC, but Eneas refuses. The remainder of the book follows Eneas as he wanders the globe to escape the IRA death sentence and his boyhood friend, Jonno, who is ordered to carry it out. Eneas serves on a fishing boat out of England for nearly twenty years until World War II, when he finally gets his chance to fight in France. He returns to Ireland briefly, only to be chased out once more by the IRA. He joins the East African Engineering Enterprise Company and enjoys

[48] Ibid., 61.
[49] Ibid., 68-69.

anonymity in Nigeria for a time. His fear and paranoia are evident in a brief and seemingly harmless exchange with the chief engineer, Benson.

> 'Yes, yes,' says Benson, 'you know, I worked with a man called McNulty some years back, from Sligo, when we were both employed up there on the Gold Coast. A very nice man he was. Jack McNulty, an engineer like myself. I don't suppose he's any relation of yours?
>
> Eneas is on the cusp naturally of saying my brother, but he doesn't say it. No, he doesn't.
>
> 'I don't think so, sir,' he says, a little army fashion, a soldier speaking to an officer, a hint that Benson catches.
>
> 'You were in the war?' he says.
>
> 'I was.'
>
> 'So was I,' says Benson. 'Bomb disposal. The engineer's lot.'
>
> Eneas is about to say, 'Like Jack,' but catches himself in time. He doesn't know why he has denied his brother, as the saying goes, but he had better stick to the denial.[50]

Eneas leaves the EAEEC when his friend Harcourt is dismissed. The two men move to the port town of Lagos, but quickly fall to drink and end up nearly homeless. After eight years—and at nearly sixty years of age—Eneas decides he must return home to Ireland. In a twist of irony, Eneas encounters none other than Jonno Lynch at the airport in Ireland. Eneas knows he can stay only briefly to see his parents for the first time in twenty or so years, and quickly leaves Ireland for London, where he and Harcourt set up a small inn on the Isle of Dogs. Ten years

[50] Ibid., 219.

later, Jonno finally catches up with Eneas to fulfill the death contract, but the two men ultimately die together in the fire at Eneas' inn.

The entire book centers on the political exile that Eneas faces as a result of his decision to join the British Merchant Navy and the Royal Irish Constabulary. His motives were innocent and based mostly on economic necessity, but the IRA saw his choices as political treason, which must be punished. Even after the War for Independence and the secession of the Republic of Ireland from the United Kingdom, the IRA sought out people from their black lists to seek retribution. Accidental traitors, like Eneas, were forced to leave behind their families and remain disconnected from their homes in order to avoid—sometimes for decades—the consequences of a possibly naïve and unintentionally political action.

Societal exile is less severe than political exile in that it does not involve a death sentence, but it can lead to physical separation or incarceration. While politics and society certainly go hand in hand, this particular category concerns itself more with the domestic sphere. Societal exile can occur within the family unit at home, as well as extend to the larger community. Characters who are the victims of societal exile have often committed—or are thought to have committed—moral crimes. Seven of Barry's pieces deal with this type of exile.

Barry's book *The Secret Scripture*, whose subject matter is closely linked to the story of the McNulty family, concerns the life of Roseanne Clear and her subsequent exile from society in Sligo. Roseanne writes her memoirs from her bed in the Roscommon Regional Mental Hospital, where she has been a resident for upwards of fifty years. She recounts her youth in the late 1930s and early 1940s when she fell in love with and married Tom McNulty, Eneas' younger brother. The two are not married long when the local priest, Father Gaunt, sees Roseanne speaking with a man named John Lavelle. Years prior, John Lavelle saved Roseanne

from an attempted rape and then disappeared from Sligo. His sudden reappearance in town, and his request to meet Roseanne at a local pilgrimage site, Maeve's Cairn, ultimately lead to her societal exile. As a married woman, Roseanne knows she should not be alone with a man other than her husband, but her debt of gratitude to John and strange feelings for him cause her to agree to the meeting.

> We had been there a good while and now I heard other voices, new voices coming up from below. I gathered my self and my wits, and almost bolted for the path. There was no way down the mountain except by that course, though my first thought was to strike out across the heather and scree eastwards, but at the same time I knew there was a great cliff below Knocknarea, and I might be many hours trying to get round it, and onto a road. […] I looked back wildly to see where John Lavelle might be. Oh, he was standing right behind me, like a component of the wind itself.
>
> 'Go back away!' I said, 'Can't you hide yourself? I can't be seen up here with you!'
>
> 'Why not?' he said.
>
> 'Why not? Are you mad? Are you as mad as me? Go and hide yourself in those rocks.'
>
> But it was too late. Of course it was. The gaggle of holy men was upon us, all smiles and good days, and raising of the hats. Except for one face, whipped red by the exertion and the wind, which looked at me with a blank, heart-hurting look. It was Fr Gaunt.[51]

[51] Barry, *The Secret Scripture*, 192-193.

Within days, Father Gaunt notifies Roseanne's husband and his family about her indiscretion. Tom McNulty leaves for work one day and never returns, leaving Roseanne in a state of despair that lasts for days until she rouses herself to confront Tom at the dance hall where he plays in his father's band. Tom's brother, Jack, intercepts Roseanne on the dance floor before she can reach Tom in the back room.

> I tried to surge forward, to go past him by mere force of will, a substance much softer than he was trying to go through him. He was hardened by his sojourns in Africa, it was like hitting a tree, he put his arms around me as I tried to break away down the hall, and I was screaming, screaming for Tom, for mercy, for God. His arms closed around my waist, closed tight tight around, […] he drew me to him, so that my bottom was fastened into his lap, docked there, held tight, fast, impossible to get away, like a weird love embrace.[52]

Roseanne returns home, and Father Gaunt visits soon after to address her situation, ordering that she remain where she is, in the hut by the beach. He says, "When I am able to bring things to a resolution, I will be better able to inform you of your position, and then make arrangements for the future."[53] He returns, albeit years later, to inform Roseanne that Rome has approved an annulment of her marriage with Tom. He says:

> We do not believe your indiscretions are confined to one instance, an instance you will remember I was witness to with my own eyes. It was not thought probable that that instance did not have a history, […] not to mention of course the condition of your mother, which we may assume was hereditary. Madness, Roseanne, has many flowers, rising from the same stem. The blooms of madness,

[52] Ibid., 210.
[53] Ibid., 214.

> from the same root, may be variously displayed. In your mother's case an extreme retreat into herself, in your case, a pernicious and chronic nymphomania.[54]

Stunned by this proclamation, after having no say in the matter, Roseanne wonders if the townspeople will come to the hut to burn her as a witch, and refers to herself as "the fallen woman" and "the mad woman."[55]

She remains in the hut by the beach, living as a hermit and ostracized by the inhabitants of Sligo. She encounters Eneas McNulty during one of his brief returns to Ireland in the early 1940s after the Battle of Dunkirk in France. The two outcasts find comfort in each other and spend one night together before Eneas must flee Ireland once more. The repercussions of this one night of consolation become apparent nine months later when Roseanne, in the throes of labor, makes her way to her former mother-in-law for help. Mr. and Mrs. McNulty turn her away from their door, and Roseanne must deliver the baby herself on the beach in the middle of a storm. When she awakens, the baby is missing, and she is being transported to the hospital by an ambulance. Father Gaunt presumes that she killed the child and has her incarcerated in the Sligo Mental Hospital. When Roseanne writes this testimony of her life, she has spent approximately sixty years—not to mention the near-decade spent in the hut on the beach—sequestered from society for a perceived moral indiscretion.

Not all societal exiles occur within such a consistently negative sphere, however, as we see from the example of the play *Prayers of Sherkin*. As seen earlier, Fanny Hawke receives the blessing of Matt Purdy to leave the sect on Sherkin Island. Fanny chooses the future of a family with Patrick, and her island family bids her a loving farewell with the knowledge that their traditions require that they never see or speak to her again.

---

[54] Ibid., 224.
[55] Ibid., 226.

Barry includes intimate scenes between Fanny and her family members to reinforce that Fanny's departure and consequent shunning is necessary for her ultimate happiness. Hannah, Fanny's aunt, takes on the role of Fanny's deceased mother and assembles a hope chest.

> HANNAH: That is your mother's mirror, Charity's mirror, and it is a plain enough thing for a vademecum. (*Puts her hands over Fanny's holding the mirror.*) We will hold gently.
>
> FANNY. Will you kiss me?
>
> *Hannah kisses her. They refasten the case.*[56]

In parting, her father tells her the story of her birth, and concludes:

> JOHN: I that never could dance could dance that day, and I danced, and shook out my legs. (*After a moment.*) Remember these things, Fanny.
>
> (*He embraces her.*)
>
> FANNY: I will, Father. I will remember everything.
>
> JOHN: Child, I love thee.[57]

Fanny's final encounter is with her Aunt Sarah, who has gradually lost her sight through the course of the play. As Fanny nears the pier where she will leave Sherkin Island forever, Sarah speaks to her:

> SARAH: If I wished it to go with you, would you take me, with even these eyes?
>
> FANNY: Oh yes, come if you wish. I wish it. I will buy you such spectacles.
>
> SARAH: No. That is all that I wished. I can stay here easier if I know you would have taken me. [58]

---

[56] Barry, *Prayers of Sherkin*, 116.
[57] Ibid., 117.
[58] Ibid., 117-118.

For a moment it seems as though Fanny will not go into her new life completely alone, but Sarah exits to leave Fanny alone on her journey to her new husband.

Emotional exile occurs within a much smaller domain than societal exile. It is often imposed by a close family member or by an individual on him- or herself. The intimacy of the relationship between the "exiler" and the "exiled" is the focus of this category, because the impetus for rejection could be virtually anything. Emotional exile can result in affective and/or physical ostracism. This is the most prevalent type of exile that Barry explores, and it occurs in eight of his ten pieces.

Barry's play *Our Lady of Sligo* is an excellent example of affective emotional ostracism, where Jack O'Hara and his wife Mai takes turns sharing the roles of "exiler" and "exiled" throughout their marriage. Mai came from a middle-class Catholic family in Galway, and while Jack's family was not quite so affluent as Mai's, he gained stature in climbing the ranks through the British Army in Africa. After living there for a time, Mai and Jack expected the grand life of the Catholic bourgeoisie once they settled down "back home" in Ireland, but too many things had changed. Sinn Fein and the radical nationalists had shifted the tides with the revolution between 1916 and 1921 and had no tolerance for those who touted both Home Rule and Imperial sympathies. The home and the way of life that Mai and Jack had been prepared for all their young lives no longer existed.

Jack turned to drink and gambling in an attempt to cope with the political and social turmoil of his new life. He gambled away in a drunken stupor the family home, Grattan House, which had been passed down to Mai from her father. Mai was in her early thirties at the time, having just had her first child. She recalls the day the man from the bank came to tell her the bad news, and from her sick bed she remembers, "It was the first drink I ever took and I took it

because I thought if I was to live like that in the world of Jack I had better have some form of anaesthetic, and why not the same one he used."[59] From there the memories of blame and hurt continue to pile up: Jack "drinks away" another house, Mai and Jack lose a baby, they fight violently in front of their daughter, Mai has an illicit encounter with the town doctor which her daughter witnesses. Jack and Mai are caught in a cycle continually enacting emotional warfare on themselves and one other.

On the other hand, the play *White Woman Street* illustrates a physical emotional ostracism. Trooper O'Hara spends the majority of the play leading a group of men to a small town in Ohio in 1916 to enact a train robbery, but Trooper has ulterior motives. He visited this town in his youth while serving in the American-Indian wars and, desperate for a reminder of home after so long on the frontier, he finds himself at a brothel on White Woman Street that touts the "only white woman for five hundred miles of wilderness."[60] She is not a white woman, however, but a beautiful young Indian girl. Trooper confesses to his friend Mo what occurred nearly thirty years ago.

> I didn't kill her like they said she was done, but I killed her just the same, no matter what mighty judge say different. She were an Indian girl pretty as the dawn with emerald eyes like a wolf's and I bedded her. And I looks down after and that woman is bleeding the way a first-time woman does, and she not crying in her face but I see the thing worse than tears, that dry and fearful look. A lost look. Then fast as a wolf she dips down to take my cold English blade from my breeches belt, and dragged it flashing like a kingfisher across her throat. She

[59] Barry, *Our Lady of Sligo*, 32.
[60] Sebastian Barry, *White Woman Street*, in *Sebastian Barry Plays: 1* (London: Methuen Press, 1997), 147.

> dragged it with force. Jesus of the world, I couldn't put her together again, Mo, she had a waterfall coming from her wound, and making a sound of water too. She just choked and died in front of me.[61]

Trooper reveals his true motive for returning to the town. He says, "I thought, if I was in that room again, I could say something to her, I could do something kinder." But Trooper is unable to leave the bar of the brothel to confront his ghost in the back room, and Mo offers him comfort.

> Trooper, this world be darker than a mine for sin and hurt, but I saying to you, Trooper, without a lie, that you still lighting well enough, you still a man deserving life and a measure of happiness, in spite of all. You carried that poor girl a long way and time now you laid her down gentle and let her be buried where maybe she don't belong, but any field of the earth be good for such a sleep. What happen in America is like a rover flood, everything lifted and dragged away from its place. Not just Trooper hurt by this flood and I'm telling you, Trooper, that rain of America i'n't your doing.[62]

After thirty years of physical separation from the site of this traumatic event, Trooper confronts his past and, whether or not he experiences any healing, he dies in the company of his friends just hours after his confession to Mo.

From the Venn diagram it is easy to see that all of the pieces explore the theme of exile. The "data," as it were, is more or less equally distributed over the three categories, showing a unification of theme across the entire project. What the model makes more apparent, however, is the presence of discourses that contain multiple types of exile. A majority of the pieces—seven

[61] Ibid., 163.
[62] Ibid., 163-164.

out of ten—deal with two or more of the three varieties of exile. In these ways, the Venn diagram visually demonstrates the strength of the exile theme throughout Barry's ten pieces. For example, one of the plays that falls within the political and societal sections of the diagram is *The Only True History of Lizzie Finn*.

When the former dance-hall entertainer Lizzie arrives in Kerry with her new husband, she is surprised to find that she is now "Mrs. Gibson" of a very distinguished family and large property. What's more, she is now an object of scrutiny for society, as well as Robert's mother, Lady Gibson.[63] While it appears that the upper crust of society are willing to turn a blind eye to Lizzie's former profession, the tables turn when Robert admits that he is not the war hero they all assumed him to be. His detestation for war and its fatal effects on his three brothers led him to resign his commission and fight for the Boer Army. The well-to-do landlords are incensed, for to be pro-Boer was equivalent to siding with the rebels at home who burned the fields and violently harassed the landlord class in an effort toward societal change. The polite façade melts away, and Lord Castlemaine rebukes Robert and declares, "A man who is pro-Boer can eat his supper somewhere else. And take his dancing woman with him."[64]

The rejection of Robert and Lizzie from society—which is due to a combination of Robert's political sympathies as well as a moral objection to Lizzie's former profession—is too much for Lady Gibson: she commits suicide by walking into the sea. The Castlemaines, who had previously ejected Robert and Lizzie from their home, as well as the Rector, are cordial at the funeral. They primly gloss over the unfortunate circumstances despite Robert's pointed attempts to address their hypocrisy**:**

---

[63] It is interesting to note that the premiere of the play at the Abbey Theatre, Dublin in 1995 featured Alison Deegan (Barry's wife) as Lizzie Finn and Joan O'Hara (Barry's mother) as Lady Gibson.
[64] Sebastian Barry, *The Only True History of Lizzie Finn*, in *Plays: 1* (London: Methuen Publishing Limited, 1997), 222.

ROBERT: She had few enough close friends in these later years. She was content to stay at home since Papa died. But loved to visit when she was able. When she was asked.

LORD CASTLEMAIN: Of course.

ROBERT: I am just glad you let her lie inside the walls of the yard, rector. We must be grateful to the captain of the Dunquin Light and his theory of waves.

RECTOR: A freak wave is not as uncommon as people believe, I think.

LORD CASTLEMAIN: Not at all as uncommon. They're an everyday occurrence, in fact. They really shouldn't be called freak at all.[65]

Robert and Lizzie know that life in Kerry does not hold much promise for them after Lord Castlemain's earlier outburst and the affected manners of the community. They exercise a self-imposed physical exile from their home and strike out for Cork, where they hope to find a community at the new musical hall that will take them for what they are and not ostracize them for their political beliefs or opposition to social norms.

2.5.3 Figure 5: Theme of Music

The third theme of music is initially illustrated by the two classic pie charts in Figure 5. Music has an undeniable presence in the ten plays and novels. The pie charts here provide a serviceable idea of the role that music plays in Barry's pieces. To collect the data for this graph, I noted each time that a particular song was sung or mentioned in each play or novel. While the majority of the songs are named, I have also included songs that can be clearly derived from the surrounding

[65] Ibid., 230-231.

narrative context. For example, in *The Secret Scripture*, Dr. Grene writes in his diary, "I am sixty-five years old. Past the Beatles song."[66] This clearly refers to the song "When I'm Sixty-Four,"[67] and the mention was counted as a proper song title. If one song is mentioned three times, it was noted three times. In total, the ten pieces refer to proper song titles seventy times. This method, again, does not fully illuminate the importance of music in Barry's plays and novels. Instrumentalists, dancing, incidental music for scene changes in the plays, and the metaphorical music of nature—not to mention the musicality of Barry's writing style—flesh out the theme of music throughout the ten pieces. The vocal selections depicted here in the following figures are the most concrete examples of music and provide a clear, if truncated, view of the entire theme.

In Figure 5, one pie chart represents the five plays, and the other pie chart represents the five novels. This division may seem counter-intuitive based on my argument that the ten pieces should be considered as a whole. However, it is necessary to separate the two genres in this instance in order to give a more accurate representation of how music functions within both the play and novel. If we were to examine all ten pieces within one pie chart, it would show that the novels have a higher concentration of song references within them than do the plays. This illustration would be skewed, however, since it is to be expected that the longer novels could contain proportionately more song titles and/or references. By separating the plays from the novels—not exclusively because of genre, but more so due to length—we see a clearer illustration of the importance of music within both the short and long formats.

---

[66] Sebastian Barry, *The Secret Scripture* (London: Penguin Books, 2008), 116.
[67] John Lennon and Paul McCartney, "When I'm Sixty-Four" (The Beatles: *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*), Parlophone, June 1, 1967.

If we were to make a brief comparative observation between the two genres, however, it is interesting to distinguish that within the plays the songs are more often sung by the characters, rather than simply mentioned by name, as is typically the case in the novels. This is natural considering that the plays are meant for performance; the lyrics for the songs are published in the text. In the novels, the majority of the songs are mentioned as song titles, though Barry will occasionally include a smattering of the lyrics where appropriate to denote that a character is singing. Again, the inclusion of lyrics happens with much less frequency in the novels than in the plays.

The moments when Barry does include lyrics in his novels are important to understanding the theme of music on a more complicated level, which will help to segue into a discussion of Hogan's unifying principle of causal sequence intersections. The next graph in Figure 6 pulls some specific data from the music theme that is not evident in the pie charts from Figure 5. As I mentioned before, I calculated the number of song titles for the pie chart based on the number of times particular titles were mentioned. Several songs occur in more than one discourse, oftentimes straddling the two genres. All of those particular songs—excepting "A Long Way to Tipperary"—appear with their lyrics in at least one of the novels. Even though the lyrics are not included for "A Long Way to Tipperary," it is not just mentioned in passing as a title. In the novel *A Long Long Way*—whose title is derived from the song's lyrics—Barry writes, "And it did Willie Dunne more good than food to open his mouth and heart and sing 'Tipperary', the long line of men bawling it out. Every man Jack of them knew 'Tipperary' and sang it as if most of them weren't city-boys but hailed from the verdant fields of that country."[68]

[68] Sebastian Barry, *A Long Long Way* (London: Penguin Books, 2005), 57.

The emotional weight that Barry describes, in addition to the song's close tie to the theme of war warranted its inclusion in this graph, despite the absence of written lyrics.

2.6 RECURRENCES

The next three models, Figures 6 through 8, are wheel graphs, which are similar to pie charts. Figure 6 is the first of the wheel graphs that will be used to illustrate intersections across the ten pieces. The first two models do not particularly correspond with Hogan's unifying principles, but Figures 6 and 7 will help to familiarize the reader with the complex form of the wheel graph. Figure 8 will represent Hogan's second unifying principle of causal sequence intersections in the same form.

2.6.1 Figure 6: Song Recurrence

Like the classic pie chart, the radial sections—or "pie slices"—represent a set of data. In Figure 6, each radial pie section is a particular song found throughout Barry's work. The six songs are Schubert's "Ave Maria"; the Irish folk songs "Kevin Barry," "Weile, Weile, Wáile," and "The Colleen Rue"[69]; and the World War I era songs "Roses of Picardy" and "A Long Way to Tipperary." Beyond this similarity, however, the model becomes more complex than the pie chart.

[69] "Weile, Weile, Wáile" is an English-language song which uses words in Gaeilge as the refrain, whereas "The Colleen Rue" is an English translation of the Gaeilge song "An Cailín Rua," or The Red-Haired Girl. Barry uses the English translation in his work.

The circular shape of the model is due to ten rings that grow exponentially in diameter as they move from the center of the model to the outside perimeter. Each individual diametrical ring represents one of Barry's discourses, so each of the radial pie sections that represents one of the aforementioned songs contains ten segments that represent the ten discourses. For example, when you examine the radial section for the song "Kevin Barry," you would find that the diametrical ring segments for *Annie Dunne* and *On Canaan's Side* are filled with the color gray. This means that "Kevin Barry" occurs in both of those discourses. If, on the other hand, you wanted to know how many other songs appeared in a discourse, you could examine the diametrical ring for that play or novel. For example, if you follow the diametrical ring for *On Canaan's Side*, you can see that three other songs also occur within the text: "Weile, Weile, Wáile," "Roses of Picardy," and "Ave Maria."

As the wheel graph indicates, the majority of the recurring songs occur in the novels, which comprise the inner five diametrical rings. This conclusion matches the data in the pie graph, which shows a concentration of songs in general in the novel camp. Four of the six songs straddle the play/novel divide. Two songs that occur in both plays and novels—as well as occurring the most frequently, at four times each—are of particular note: "Weile, Weile, Wáile" and "Roses of Picardy."

"Weile, Weile, Wáile" appears in the four pieces that deal with members of the Dunne family: *The Steward of Christendom, Annie Dunne, A Long Long Way,* and *On Canaan's Side*. It is featured most prominently in the novel *Annie Dunne*, where the song title was originally meant to be the title of the book, because it was a favorite song of Barry's great-aunt, who was the inspiration for his character of Annie Dunne.[70] The folk song has many variations, but

[70] Christina Hunt Mahony, "Children of the Light amid the 'risky dancers': Barry's Naifs and the Poetry

traditionally tells the story of woman who intentionally kills her baby and the ensuing trial and execution of the condemned woman. The verses that Barry includes in *Annie Dunne* are as follows:

> *There was an old woman and she lived in the woods,*
>
> *Weile, weile, wáile,*
>
> *There was an old woman and she lived in the woods,*
>
> *Down by the river Sáile.*
>
> *She had a baby three months old,*
>
> *Weile, weile, wáile,*
>
> *She had a baby three months old,*
>
> *Down by the river Sáile.*
>
> *She had a penknife long and sharp,*
>
> *Weile, weile, wáile,*
>
> *She had a penknife long and sharp,*
>
> *Down by the river Sáile.*[71]

In the novel, Barry uses the violence of the song as a counterpoint to the childless Annie's anger with her six-year-old nephew when he discovers and destroys a gift she had hidden for him. Annie frantically raises the inhabitants of the township to conduct a late-night search across the countryside when she discovers the boy is missing, only to finally find him

---

of Humanism," in *Out of History: Essays on the Writings of Sebastian Barry*, edited by Christina Hunt Mahony (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2006), 172. Mahony received this information from Barry directly in an interview on August 3, 2004.

[71] Barry, *Annie Dunne*, 94.

hiding in the barn. The episode concludes with the last verse of the song that Barry provides: "*The moral of my story is, / Weile, weile, wáile, / Don't stick your penknife in your baby's back, / Down by the river Sáile*."[72]

Barry uses the song as a connecting thread throughout the four Dunne Family pieces, sometimes as an indication of violence—as in *Annie Dunne*—but also to highlight a sense of the memory and nostalgia of family life. In fact, without prior knowledge of the novel *Annie Dunne*, one might not catch the allusions to the song in the other pieces. The most obvious of the three additional references comes from *A Long Long Way*, as Annie's brother Willie is writing a letter to his father, Thomas, from the trenches of World War I:

> *Do you remember, papa, the time you took us on the Liffey ferry over to the Great South Wall? And how you knew the old captain in the old house and we all went up to his lookout room at the top of the house and looked out over the river? And you showed us the red lighthouse and the green lighthouse? And how sunny it was that day, and we walked along past the sentries on the wall, and you showed us the long buttery stones the seawall was made out of, and when we got to the Pigeon House we all had to sing that old song you had taught us, 'Weile Weile Waile [sic]', you put the four of us up on the steps there, and you said, 'Sing for your mam now.' And the gulls were very surprised. I was lying in bed and wondering why you did that. As a child nothing seems strange. Now that seems very strange and wonderful.*[73]

[72] Ibid., 216.
[73] Barry, *A Long Long Way*, 278-279.

In this excerpt, Willie refers to the song by its proper title, but in the novel *On Canaan's Side*, Lilly recalls only the first line of the song during her recollection of the simple, country life of the Dunne family:

> [T]he hens, the dairy, the butterchurn, the dry sheets harvested from the fuchsia bushes, whatever was needed, and when the tinkers came up the path, to hold down the latch against them if our father was up the land, and not let them in the yard, them with their wild fumes of hair and not caring a damn what they did, and all the sort of turmoil of music everywhere, didn't even the sunlight have a sound?, and the rooks, and the wrens, and the robin singing his desperate song, and my father singing *There was an old woman*, and the infinite, kind, searching mercy of the turf in the evening . . . .[74]

In Barry's play *The Steward of Christendom*, the song achieves the main purpose of any piece of music, much like any piece of drama: it is performed. Thomas Dunne appears at the beginning of the play in his room at the county home, where Annie was forced to admit him after a violent episode at their home. Thomas, clearly in a state of confusion and distress, addresses the audience for the first time with a monologue that allows a glimpse into his fractured mental state.

> The county home in Baltinglass, that's where you're situated. Seventy-five summers on your head and mad as a stone mason. Safe, safe, safety, safe, safe, safety, mad as a barking stone mason. Because you were not civil to your daughter, no, you were not. You were ranting, you were raving, and so they put you where you were safe. Like a dog that won't work without using his teeth, like

[74] Sebastian Barry, *On Canaan's Side* (New York: Viking, 2011), 48.

a dog under sentence. But please do not you talk to Black Jim, Thomas, please do not, there's the manny. Because he is not there. (*Singing*.) There was an old woman that lived in the wood, willa, willa, wallya.

His own silence.

Da Da?[75]

The song appears to comfort Thomas as he admonishes himself for talking to a person who is not there, but then seems to remind him of his father, who, it is later revealed, beat him regularly as a child. This mixture of familial nostalgia and violence—sometimes within the family, sometimes outside of it—is a theme in all four of these pieces that include "Weile, Weile, Wáile" and connect the stories of the Dunne family members.

The second song, "Roses of Picardy" appears in four pieces that span several families. It appears in *A Long Long Way* and *On Canaan's Side*, which concern the Dunne Family, as well as in *Our Lady of Sligo* and *The Secret Scripture*, which concern the McNulty/O'Hara Family. Barry does not use this song in the same way as "Weile, Weile, Wáile," to connect family stories. Instead, it serves to connect a larger theme, which we have encountered previously, across the discourses. "Roses of Picardy" is a ballad from World War I, and it functions as a reminder that all people were affected by the war, not only singular families.

In the McNulty/O'Hara family, we see Mai's father singing the song to her in the play *Our Lady of Sligo* during one of her many morphine-induced recollections. He says, "And when you were little I bathed you in the enamel basin, my big hands holding you, like a tiny creature, like Tom Thumb himself, and I'd clean your face with a finger, dip my finger in the tepid water (*Dipping finger in the hat*.) and wash your tiny cheeks and nose, singing the while. (*Singing*.)

[75] Sebastian Barry, *The Steward of Christendom* in *Sebastian Barry Plays: 1* (London, Methuen Drama, 1997), 240.

Roses are blooming in Picardy."[76] The use of the song in this instance is not as a reminder of war, but as a testament of love. Barry reminds us of its connection with war however, when he has Mai's not-yet husband Jack sing the song in the novel *The Secret Scripture*. Roseanne remembers the musical aptitude of the Jack's father and brother, who played in a band at a dance hall that they owned. She says, "Jack was never on stage but he liked to sing in the early part of his cups, when he was cheerful, very cheerful. Then it would be 'Roses of Picardy', 'Long Way to Tipperary', because he had been in the British Merchant Navy when he was only a boy, but I think I wrote this before."[77] Here, Roseanne draws a parallel between the song and serving in the military, but if we also look at when "Roses of Picardy" appears in the novel *A Long Long Way*, there is also a familial connection. There is a rare evening of music in which Willie Dunne and the members of the regiment—including Pete O'Hara, Jack's uncle—take turns singing and playing the piano. Pete O'Hara performs a "new song" that the men of the regiment don't know, but are told is popular in the English music halls.

> It was called 'Roses of Picardy'. It was a song written by a magician, Willie thought, designed to slay the hearts of simple men:
>
> Roses are flowering in Picardy,
>
> But there's never a rose like you,
>
> And the roses will die with the summertime,
>
> And our roads may be far apart,
>
> But there's one rose that dies not in Picardy,
>
> 'Tis the rose that I keep in my heart!

---

[76] Barry, *Our Lady of Sligo*, 55.
[77] Barry, *The Secret Scipture*, 145-146. The phrase "of his cups" is slang for being intoxicated.

> sang wily Private O'Hara, as plain as he could, so the words would pierce home with proper violence to the composure of his mates. They had never heard the song before. Many at song's end were weeping openly. . . .
>
> There was a long silence then again in the room. Maybe there were sixty men there, all Irishmen of the battalion. The Royal Dublin Fusiliers. And many had seen hundreds killed, and many had killed; Willie himself had killed. Was the song a memory of what they were, or was it still possible they might be ordinary, loving, imperfect fellas again, in some other guise of peace?[78]

The love ballad has a deep effect on the war-torn men. It serves, also, as a connecting thread between the maternal and paternal sides of Barry's family: the McNulty/O'Haras on his maternal side and the Dunnes on his paternal side. Although the song does not appear again in *A Long Long Way*, it resurfaces in the novel *On Canaan's Side*, which chronicles the life of Willie's youngest sister, Lilly. Lilly remembers Willie fondly and finds strong reminders of him in her grandson, Bill, who she is raising.

> His own great-uncle had just such a voice, Willie himself, whose name he carried, who had asked my father once if he could go and try and make a go of it in the music-halls . . . Willie and his *Ave Maria* and his 'Roses of Picardy'. I can hear him now. And as I hear him, I also hear Bill, chiming in. The two singing together in my old head, that never even knew each other in life, killed seventy years apart, in two different wars.[79]

The song, again, illustrates a familial connection, but also a connection between wars, Willie serving in World War I and Bill serving in the Persian Gulf War. With "Roses of Picardy"

---

[78] Barry, *A Long Long Way*, 132.
[79] Barry, *On Canaan's Side*, 222-223.

Barry uses the two themes of music and war in tandem to strengthen the connection between not only multiple discourses, but also the maternal and paternal sides of his family.

2.6.2 Figure 7: Character Recurrence

The second wheel graph in Figure 7 moves us closer to Hogan's second unifying principle of causal sequence intersections, though there are some important distinctions that will become clearer as we move to Figure 8. The wheel graph in Figure 7 functions in the same way as Figure 6 only with different data. The diametrical rings continue to denote the ten separate discourses, while the radial pie sections now represent characters from the ten pieces. By studying a radial pie section for an individual character, the diametrical ring sections that are filled with gray show where a character has appeared in a discourse. There are many and varied characters that occur in both the plays and novels, so there are certain limitations as to which characters could be included in the graph. To be incorporated into this graph, an individual must appear on the family tree in Figure 2 as a related family member. An individual must also be an active participant in the action of at least one narrative, that is, he or she speaks rather than is spoken about. Pursuant of this, the occurrence of a character in an additional discourse may be counted even if they are only mentioned in passing. These specifications resulted in thirty-four characters to use as data in the wheel graph, fifteen from the paternal side, seventeen from the maternal side—plus two special members who will be discussed shortly—of Barry's fictional family tree.

Some very interesting information revealed itself as this graph visually came together. The most important conclusions—those that illustrate the recurrences of characters across discourses—can be found in the radial pie sections for individual characters, where more gray segments indicate more recurrences across discourses. More recurrences across discourses

strengthen the notion that Barry is creating a unified work. An interesting structural matter that also came to light concerns the two pairs of characters: Pete O'Hara and Jesse Kirwan at the top of the graph, and Boy and Girl at the bottom of the graph. Pete and Jesse are characters in the novel *A Long Long Way*, and Boy and Girl are characters in the novel *Annie Dunne*. None of these characters appear in any other discourse, although this is not a factor that makes them unique to the rest of the characters in the wheel graph.

The characters on the graph are not arranged in any particular order, although the characters on the left half of the graph from Jesse to Boy come from the paternal side of the family tree in Figure 2, and the characters on the right half from Pete to Girl hail from the maternal side. However, I chose to position the Pete/Jesse pair and the Boy/Girl pair diametrically opposed to one another to illustrate an interesting intersection. It is only in these two discourses, *A Long Long Way* and *Annie Dunne*, where characters from both the maternal and paternal sides of Barry's family appear and have active roles in the narrative. The case of the Boy/Girl pair is special, which we will see momentarily.

To investigate the Pete/Jesse pair, we return to the family tree in Figure 2. Before going further at this time, it is important to examine the three founding families of Barry's fictional ancestry: the Dunnes, the Kirwins, and the Gibsons. The top group of families and their offspring constitute the three main branches of the ancestral tree. Several of the individuals on the topmost line occur as characters in the three plays concerning this generation, namely John and Hannah Hawke and Sarah Purdy from *Prayers of Sherkin* and Lucinda Gibson from *The Only True History of Lizzie Finn*. These characters are not the focus of the three plays, however. The main characters are Thomas Dunne from *The Steward of Christendom*, Fanny Hawke and Patrick Kirwin from *Prayers of Sherkin*, and Lizzie Finn and Robert Gibson from *The Only True History*

of Lizzie Finn. Since this is a family tree based on fictional literary characters, I have chosen to denote one branch as the Kirwins, rather than the Hawkes, because the marriage of Fanny Hawke and Patrick Kirwin is at the center of the narrative.

If we locate on the family tree Pete O'Hara, Jesse Kirwan, and Willie Dunne—the main characters of A *Long Long Way*—we see another interesting structural component of Barry's project. In addition to the intersection of the maternal and paternal sides of the family by bringing both Pete (maternal) and Jesse (paternal) into the discourse, each of the three main characters hails from one of the three founding families: Pete from the Gibsons, Jesse from the Kirwins, and Willie from the Dunnes. This is a feature that the Recurring Characters wheel graph in Figure 7 does not indicate by itself, but Figure 7 helps to illuminate the connection when brought into conversation with the Character Family Tree in Figure 2. The Dunne and Kirwin lines eventually marry together—Willie's sister marries Jesse's brother—to form the paternal side of the tree, but the meeting of the three characters in *A Long Long Way* occurs chronologically before any of the branches intermarry. Barry, of course, knows his actual family history. The novel *A Long Long Way* is the eighth discourse he has written in the current series of ten, and this clever intersection of characters and family branches highly suggests his interest in connecting multiple works.

The matter of the Boy/Girl pair at the bottom of the wheel graph is quite different. As I mentioned before, there are two individuals who do not fall within either the paternal or maternal categories, and these are they. The two characters are not named in the novel *Annie Dunne,* but Barry has never been secretive about the fact that they represent himself and his older sister, Siuban. *Annie Dunne* represents the only discourse besides *A Long Long Way* to bring together the paternal and maternal sides of the fictional character tree. This discourse is particularly

special in that it integrates Barry and his sister not as individuals from either the paternal or maternal side, but as the result of the final marrying of the two branches. Barry's father is a minor character in the book, but Barry's mother—though mentioned briefly—does not appear in the novel. Her absence as a representative of the maternal side of the family tree strengthens the impact of the Boy and Girl's presence as the unifiers of the two branches.

The Pete/Jesse pair and the Boy/Girl pair represent interesting bookends to Barry's ten pieces, even though the discourses in which they appear are two of the more recently published. *A Long Long Way* represents a solid acknowledgement of the three founding families from the past. *Annie Dunne* represents the culmination of the family tree and the unification of the three branches with the inclusion of the author as character. While the wheel graph yielded these eye-opening details, its major function is to illustrate the recurrence of characters across the ten discourses. More gray segments within a radial section show more occurrences of a single character, and more occurrences across the ten discourses bolsters the argument for an intertextually unified work. Nineteen characters—or fifty-five percent—in this graph appear in two or more discourses, but thirteen out of those nineteen characters appear in three or more discourses. The members of the Dunne Family—Thomas/James, Willie, Maud, Annie, and Dolly/Lilly—appear a maximum of four times. But the number of recurrences is only one feature of this graph. It also demonstrates the intertextuality of characters across the two genres. Out of the nineteen characters that appear two times or more, only two—Eneas McNulty and Roseanne Clear—do not traverse the play/novel boundary.[80]

[80] *The Whereabouts of Eneas McNulty* was the first of the five novels in this study that Barry published. The only play that Eneas and Roseanne could realistically have appeared in was *Our Lady of Sligo*, which was performed only five months before *Whereabouts* was published.

2.6.3 Figure 8: Causal Sequence Intersections

The notion of intertextuality across genres also plays a part in the final wheel graph, Figure 8, which illustrates Hogan's second unifying principle. Due to its complexity, the presence of causal sequence intersections is perhaps the most important of Hogan's three principles. Causal sequences are, again, the story that an individual interprets from an encounter with a discourse. A story frame incorporates other causal sequences, such as subplots, and the presence of a story frame indicates a higher level of unity across the pieces in a work. The family tree in Figure 2 illustrates the idea of a story frame, but we will return to that model after exploring the wheel graph in Figure 8, which will exemplify causal sequence intersections more conclusively.

With the wheel graph in Figure 8, it is important to return to Hogan's definition of story and discourse. Each of the discourses that Barry has written centers on one or two major characters. The plays and novels inspect the life tales of these individuals in such a way that once the discourse is concluded, the reader has a general sense of the story—the causal sequence—of each character's life history. While the wheel graph in Figure 7 points out all the main characters who participate in the action and may be mentioned in other discourses, the wheel graph in Figure 8 moves toward a more specific type of recurrence.

In the graph, there are ten radial pie sections that converge with the standard ten diametrical rings that we have seen in the preceding graphs. While the ten diametrical rings represent the individual discourses that Barry has written, the ten radial sections represent the life stories, or causal sequences, of the main characters that emerge from the ten discourses. So, while there is a diametrical ring that represents the play *White Woman Street*, there is also a radial pie section that represents the causal sequence of the life of Trooper O'Hara, the main character of that discourse. Six of the ten discourses involve one major character, who are as

follows: Trooper O'Hara, Eneas McNulty, Dolly Dunne/Lilly Dunne Bere, Willie Dunne, Thomas Dunne/James Dunne, and Annie Dunne. The remaining four discourses involve couples, whose individual stories are integrated so closely with each other in the narrative that they are difficult to separate. These couples are Roseanne Clear and Tom McNulty/Pat O'Hara, Mai O'Hara and Jack McNulty/Jack O'Hara, Fanny Hawke and Patrick Kirwin, and Lizzie Finn and Robert Gibson.

I noted above that once a discourse has concluded the reader has a general sense of the causal sequence of a character's life. However, when a character recurs in another discourse, the reader sometimes has the opportunity to add to that original understanding of the character's causal sequence based on information from the new discourse. This is why the radial pie sections represent not only the causal sequence we have gleaned from the major discourse in which a character is featured, but also the more complete causal sequence we have discovered after encountering all of the discourses in which they appear. For example, the play *The Only True History of Lizzie Finn* concludes with Lizzie and Robert leaving the ancestral Gibson home in Kerry to start a new life in Cork. In the novel *The Whereabouts of Eneas McNulty*, however, we learn that Lizzie and Robert had a daughter, who would become Eneas' mother. She tells him:

> I was reared up by the Byrnes, by your grandparents as you used call them, and surely he was a good enough sort, an army man formerly like yourself, batman to a gentleman in one of the old regiments. This gentleman, by name of Gibson, married a woman out of the music-halls in England, well, you know, an actress I suppose. But it's said she died after giving birth to her daughter, that is, my own self, and Gibson went back into the army in India and the child, that is, me, was given away for to be reared by his former batman, Mr Byrne. That's why you

> used to see me go down to Athlone every Saturday in the month. I'd be going to the solicitor's office there to draw my stipend that was established for me by the Gibsons.[81]

While the spaces filled with gray in Figure 8 show the discourses that help to flesh out the causal sequences of a particular character's life story, they also indicate the intertexuality of the causal sequences across the discourses. Hogan points out that story frames—which he identifies as a causal sequence that contains other causal sequences—has a higher degree of unity when the "characters and events from one sequence . . . play a causal role in another sequence."[82] In terms of Barry's discourses, the fact that the characters are ancestors supports a highly unified story frame, since marriages and births play a central role in continuing a biological line—in this case, the causal sequence of a life.

A very potent example of this higher degree of story frame unity concerns the characters Roseanne Clear and Eneas McNulty, who are the main characters of *The Secret Scripture* and *The Whereabouts of Eneas McNulty* respectively. Roseanne is shunned by Sligo society and confined to a hut on the beach after Father Gaunt observes what he believes is an act of infidelity. Roseanne's marriage is annulled, and she lives in solitary on the beach at Strandhill for many years. During the historical time period of the narrative of *The Secret Scripture*, the narrative of *The Whereabouts of Eneas McNulty* are also taking place. He is traveling the world to escape an IRA death sentence, but sometimes returns home to Sligo when the solitude

---

[81] Barry, *Eneas McNulty*, 198. Though Barry does not call Lizzie Finn by name in the novel, he alludes to the title of *The Only True History of Lizzie Finn* on the next page when Eneas' mother says, "That's the true story of Mary Byrne, and the devil take the story you can do nothing about."

[82] Hogan, *Affective Narratology*, 106. Hogan uses the example of *King Lear* to illustrate this concept, pointing to the Lear/daughters plot and the Gloucester/sons plot which are separate casual sequences that interact. Hogan uses this single discourse as his example but does not go on to explain the implications of this concept over multiple discourses in a work.

becomes too much to bear. In both of the novels, Eneas happens upon Roseanne's cottage, and though they both realize that Eneas is Tom's brother, who was married to Roseanne, they take comfort in each other's company and spend one night together before Eneas is forced to flee the country.

In the narrative of *The Secret Scripture*, Roseanne becomes pregnant with Eneas' child. As the time for the child's birth draws near Roseanne pleads for help from Eneas' mother and father, but they reject her. On her way back to the hut, Roseanne is overcome with the pains of labor and gives birth to the baby on the beach during a violent storm. When she awakens, the baby is gone and she is being taken to the hospital. Father Gaunt presumes that she killed the child, and Roseanne is incarcerated in a mental hospital for the next sixty years. For the remainder of Eneas' narrative, he consistently reflects on his love for Roseanne. He ventures back to Sligo many years later and finds her in the mental institution, but she speaks to him cryptically. It is unclear whether she is subdued by drugs or by her traumatic experiences, but Eneas leaves the hospital without Roseanne understanding who he is.

In Figure 8, we see that the causal sequence of Eneas' life is only present in two discourses, though the above example shows how integrated his story is with the discourse outside the novel where he is the main character. The other characters' causal sequences represented in radial pie sections of Figure 8 appear in three or more discourses. The discourses with the higher concentrations of character stories tend toward the middle of the graph, where the novels are situated. Since these discourses are much larger than the plays, it makes sense that there would be more room to include characters and their plotlines beyond the major players who are cogent to the main plot. In addition, Barry wrote the novels later and so had more fleshed-out characters on which to draw for the new discourse material. The action of discourses such as

Prayers of Sherkin, *The Only True History of Lizzie Finn*, and *White Woman Street* occurs in a much earlier historical period than any of the others. The graph shows that these discourses do not have a great number of additional character stories, but since the other characters from the radial sections have not been born yet, this is not a narrative failure on Barry's part. These characters of the older generation continue to appear in the lives of their progeny, as the graph indicates, and contribute to the causal sequence intersections in that way.

The graph in Figure 8 shows the causal sequence intersections that Hogan looks for in a unified work, while also illustrating the intertextuality across the play/novel genres. With this final wheel graph in mind, we can return to look at the family tree in Figure 2. Each member of the tree has a story, the causal sequence of his or her life, some of which have been revealed to a greater degree through Barry's discourses. More importantly, the story frame of Barry's ancestry is also unfolding through the appearance of more discourses. The tree acts as a model for the larger story frame of Barry's predecessors, as he reveals the main- and sub-plots of a large, extended family through his discourses.

2.7 CONCLUSION

The culmination of the eight models in this chapter points toward a fulfillment of Hogan's first two principals of theme and causal sequence intersections, but Hogan's final unifying concept of emotional tone is the most subjective of the three principles. It is easy for me to say, as a reader, that I experienced a bittersweet emotion when interacting with each of the ten pieces. Because my affective experience is not guaranteed to be the same as any other person's experience of the

same material, there is no way to objectively measure the emotional tone of Barry's ten pieces via graphs and charts.

The first two unifying principles covered in this chapter indicate that Barry is moving toward a goal, aiming to communicate something to the world through this project, and he has been doing it for nearly thirty years. We can only imagine that this personal journey to uncover the traumatic pasts of his ancestors is not an easy one, emotionally speaking, based on the content of the play and novel summaries we have already encountered. In the next chapter, I will look at the empathic role of the therapist who interacts with clients suffering from traumatic events, as well as the role of the secondary witness who offers testimony regarding traumatic events. This investigation will uncover a relationship model that is comparable to Barry's role as chronicler of the life stories of his family and move us toward an exploration of Hogan's third unifying principle of emotional tone in chapter three, which allows for Barry's ten pieces to be considered as an integrated work—the *Ancestors Cycle*.

3.0 THE WRITER AS THERAPIST AND WITNESS

In chapter one, I began categorizing Barry's five plays and five novels as a work, or a group of discourses sharing similarities in three particular areas that Hogan has designated. The first chapter analyzed Barry's ten discourses in two of those areas, theme and causal sequence intersections. In preparing to address the area of emotional tone in chapter three, I will begin developing in this chapter the idea that Barry's process of giving voice to his ancestors is not unlike the process of a therapist engaging with a client who has experienced a traumatic event, as well as a secondary witness giving testimony for a traumatic event he or she did not experience firsthand.

3.1 PART ONE: THERAPIST/CLIENT VS. WRITER/CHARACTER

I will begin the chapter by outlining the relationship between therapist and client and move into an exploration of how therapists (and people in general) can experience personal distress without actually being survivors of traumatic events. I will then compare this relationship and its possible affective significance with the relationship of writer and character. The second half of the chapter will engage with the act of secondary witnessing and the effect of writing as a form of testimony about traumatic occurrences. These relationship models will shed more light on the risks inherent in Barry's, or any writer's, process when tackling subject matter that is

emotionally charged and illuminate the benefits of writing and giving testimony, even in the fictional form.

When speaking of a therapist and a client, it is necessary to make some important distinctions. Under the large umbrella of "therapy," there are many different types of human-interaction therapy, and under that umbrella are those types of therapeutic counseling in which Person A uses psychological methods to guide Person B toward healing and/or more clarity in thinking. Psychological counseling itself has many branches, such as psychoanalysis, psychology, self-analysis, client-centered analysis, and cognitive behavioral therapy, among others. To avoid confusion, I will use the term therapy in this discussion to encompass the tradition of psychological counseling wherein Person A guides Person B, since my investigation has to do less with the specific tenets of any particular branch of psychological counseling and more with the human interaction between therapist (Person A) and client (Person B).

3.1.1 The Therapist/Client Relationship

This relationship between therapist and client is the basis of therapy, and regardless of the multiple branches of therapy, a common denominator found across the discipline is the necessity of trust between therapist and client. Elliot D. Cohen and Gale Spieler Cohen's book *The Virtuous Therapist: Ethical Practice of Counseling and Psychotherapy* approaches this idea of trust from a purely ethical standpoint, in order to transcend the boundaries of the many different schools of therapy. The Cohens concede that a therapist will bring various counseling theories to bear on his or her practice, such as cognitive, humanistic, or existential approaches. However, they argue:

> Similarly, grounding in different kinds of *ethical theory* can provide useful

> guidance in confronting the diverse ethical problems arising in counseling and psychotherapy. Having a theoretical framework for making ethical decisions that is informed by major ethical traditions may be as important to ethical practice as counseling theory is to the provision of competent therapy. [83]

The Cohens indicate that client welfare is the primary objective of therapy and that it cannot be reached without the pursuit of two other goals, one of which is the establishment of trust between therapist and client, and the other facilitating client autonomy. These two additional goals do not exist independently of one another, but inform one another as the relationship between therapist and client grows. Clients will typically resist sharing intimate details with a therapist who is a stranger to them, and building trust is essential for promoting communication. Clients are far more likely to progress positively in therapy through full disclosure and open discourse, which is more likely to happen if there is a bond of trust between therapist and client. Combined with this is the idea of client autonomy, in which a therapist resists giving directives to a client. Instead, the therapist acts as a supportive resource for the client, facilitating the client's journey toward making his or her own decisions. Trust and client autonomy work together, because, the Cohens reason, "virtues that establish trust will facilitate client autonomy by encouraging clients to work through their problems in therapy […] and, conversely, virtues that facilitate client autonomy will also promote therapist-client trust by stimulating mutual understanding and respect."[84]

The Cohens iterate various virtues that aid a therapist in becoming trustworthy, and they also enumerate three core attitudes that facilitate client autonomy. While trust is a key

---

[83] Elliot D. Cohen and Gale Spieler Cohen, *The Virtuous Therapist: Ethical Practice of Counseling and Psychotherapy* (Pacific Grove: Brooks Cole, 1998), 3. Italics in original.
[84] Ibid., 47.

component of the therapist-client relationship, the attitudes that facilitate client autonomy are more relevant to the investigation I am conducting in this particular study, and I will therefore focus my attention on them. The Cohens promote Carl Rogers's Client-Centered Approach to therapy in this section. They indicate that while they are not endorsing one counseling theory over another, Rogers's approach is humanistic and phenomenological, and therefore congruent with their position on ethics and the idea of self-actualization to promote client autonomy. Rogers was a psychologist renowned for his work in psychotherapy research, and his work regarding Client-Centered therapy in the 1940s led to many distinguished awards and accolades. The three attitudes that he endorsed to facilitate client autonomy, which the Cohens discuss in their book, are congruence, unconditional positive regard, and empathic understanding. These principles not only became the cornerstones of Client-Centered therapy, but also translated to other relationships, such as parent-child, leader-group, and teacher-student, which resulted in the Learner-Centered approach to education.

The first principle of congruence implies that the more genuinely forthcoming a therapist is about his or her thoughts and feelings, the more likely it is that a client will realize the same possibility for himself or herself. The Cohens write, "Such openness or transparency about oneself means that the congruent therapist […] is thus prepared to 'own' her own thoughts and feelings, to take responsibility for them. Consequently, she provides an impetus for clients to take similar responsibility for theirs."[85] Congruence does not imply that a therapist will divulge a wealth of personal information, but indicates that he or she may offer personal examples that are relevant to the client's situation and therefore serve as a model for him or her to emulate.

The second principle of unconditional positive regard refers to a therapist having a deep

[85] Ibid., 57.

regard for his or her client as a person, regardless of his or her actions, thoughts, or feelings. This does not suggest that a therapist must condone those actions, thoughts, or feelings, which may be detrimental to the client's welfare and progress, but that the therapist will continue to care for and support the client regardless of the situation. "Thereby," the Cohens write, "clients encounter a therapeutic environment in which they are free to be whatever they are without thereby jeopardizing their therapists' regard for them as persons. Not only are clients free to be whatever they are; they are also free to be whatever they *can* be."[86]

The third principle of empathic understanding refers to the therapist's ability to accurately sense and understand what the client is experiencing and communicate that understanding back to the client. The Cohens write, "Because empathetic therapists are able to attain a compassionate understanding and perception of the subjective life of clients, these therapists are also morally sensitive, that is, they possess a deep appreciation for clients' welfare, interests, and needs."[87] This act of empathic understanding is enhanced by what Rogers calls reflection, wherein the therapist reiterates the client's feelings without "parroting back" the client's original statement. When the therapist uses new language to restate what the client is trying to communicate, it "allows the client to perceive that the counselor truly understands what he or she is feeling, and may further serve to put a situation into sharper focus for the client."[88]

The definition of empathy is rife with controversy, but before delving into that discussion, I would like to support Rogers' approach as a tried and true method in terms of therapeutic practice, particularly the elements of empathic understanding and reflection. A recent study at York University in Toronto sought to test the effectiveness of what they called

---

[86] Ibid., 58. Italics in original.
[87] Ibid., 61.
[88] Ibid.

"empathic attunement" in therapist-client sessions. Rogers himself amended his ideas on empathy over the years, and the study at York University acknowledges the issues.

> Rogers (1957, 1959) viewed empathy as an attitude or a "state of being" that occurred when the therapist experienced an accurate understanding of the client's private world. He also saw it as an ability to relate this experience to the client, asserting that it is only when the therapist's empathic understanding is communicated clearly and received by the client that positive therapeutic change can occur. This specification, with its dual focus, has proven to be problematic, as the construct has been interpreted variously to refer to a personality trait, a general ability, a cognitive-affective state, or a multi-phased interpersonal process.[89]

The researchers state, however, that Rogers' theories of empathic understanding and reflection correlate directly with what they term "empathic attunement," a principle that, in several other distinct iterations, applies to other therapy theories since Rogers' time. The results of the study supported "the Rogerian hypothesis that the communication of empathic understanding is an important relational factor in facilitating the therapy process."[90] The term "attunement," which was defined in this study as the therapist's reiteration of a client's experiences, is synonymous with Rogers' term "reflection." In the interests of academic progress and brevity, I will hereafter refer to Rogers' principles of empathic understanding and reflection as "empathic attunement." Attunement is now clear, but what of empathy?

---

[89] Helen L. Macauley, Shaké G. Toukmanian, and Kimberley M. Gordon, "Attunement as the Core of Therapist-Expressed Empathy," *Canadian Journal of Counselling* 41, no. 4 (October 2007), 244. See also Changming Duan and Clara E. Hill's "The current state of empathy research," *Journal of Counseling Psychology* 43, no. 3 (1996), 261-274 for this argument.
[90] Ibid., 251.

3.1.2 Empathy

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines "empathy" as "the action of understanding, being aware of, being sensitive to, and vicariously experiencing the feelings, thoughts, and experience of another of either the past or present without having the feelings, thoughts, and experience fully communicated in an objectively explicit manner."[91] The definition here appears to list empathy as one action, but actually it encompasses several separate verbs: understanding, being aware of, being sensitive to, and vicariously experiencing. Herein lies the complexity and difficulty of using the word empathy. C. Daniel Batson's essay, "These Things Called Empathy: Eight Related but Distinct Phenomena," explores eight separate explanations of empathy. While aspects of many of these phenomena that Batson explores can be found within the Merriam-Webster definition, a combination of these eight descriptions would result in an even more complex definition than the dictionary provides. Batson claims that the difficulty in using the term empathy arises from "researchers invoking empathy to provide an answer to two quite different questions: How can one know what another person is thinking and feeling? What leads one person to respond with sensitivity and care to the suffering of another?"[92]

To begin my own investigation of empathy, I turn to concepts set forth in C. Sue Carter, James Harris, and Stephen W. Porges's article, "Neural and Evolutionary Perspectives on Empathy," which also acknowledges that the term empathy has been previously used to describe how individuals are able "to recognize, to perceive, and to respond appropriately to the

---

[91] *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, s.v. "empathy," www.merriamwebster.com/dictionary/empathy.

[92] C. Daniel Batson, "These Things Called Empathy: Eight Related but Distinct Phenomena," in *The Social Neuroscience of Empathy*, edited by Jean Decety and William Ickes (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2009), 3.

emotional state of others."[93] They appropriately ground the act of empathizing in evolutionary tactics for survival. They write:

> Basic to survival is the capacity to react to challenges or stressors and maintain visceral homeostatic states necessary for vital processes such as oxegenation of tissues and supply of nutrients to the body. For these reasons, the neural circuits involved in regulating social interactions overlap with those that regulate visceral homeostasis to support health.[94]

Though Jennifer H. Pfeifer and Mirella Dapretto take a different approach to studying empathy, they agree that defining empathy is fraught with difficulty. Like Carter, Harris, and Porges, they also involve a cognitive aspect in their study. Pfeifer and Dapretto identify what they call the "experiential core" of empathy as a "shared affect between self and other."[95] They posit:

> The least controversial position to take is that empathy involves both affective and cognitive aspects. Affective component(s) may include some kind of shared feeling or emotional resonance, which may or may not be conscious. Importantly, this affective response might result in, result from, or be concurrent with cognitive component(s) of empathy, including explicit reasoning about another individual's emotional state as well as maintaining the distinction between oneself and

---

[93] C. Sue Carter, James Harris, and Stephen W. Porges, "Neural and Evolutionary Perspectives on Empathy," in *The Social Neuroscience of Empathy*, edited by Jean Decety and William Ickes (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2009), 169

[94] Ibid., 170.

[95] Jennifer H. Pfeifer and Mirella Dapretto, "'Mirror, Mirror, in My Mind': Empathy, Interpersonal Competence, and the Mirror Neuron System," in *The Social Neuroscience of Empathy*, edited by Jean Decety and William Ickes (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2009), 184.

others.[96]

What we now come to understand as "reasoning about another individual's emotional state" has its origins in the work of Robert M. Gordon, who responded in the 1980s to the idea of using folk psychology (or common sense) in the prediction of human behavior. Gordon suggested using simulated reasoning to predict the behavior of others, but insisted that the simulation was only useful if we used knowledge of ourselves in that prediction, rather than information we might know or have to assume about the other party. Gordon offered this example:

> To predict another's behavior I may have to pretend that there is an Aryan race, that it is metaphysically the master race, and that I belong to it; finally, that I was born in Germany of German stock between 1900 and 1920. To make a decision within such a pretend-world is not to decide what *I myself* would do, much less to reliably know what *I myself* would do 'in that situation'. First, it is not possible for *me* to be in that situation, if indeed it is a *possible* situation (for anyone); second, it is not possible for me even to *believe* myself to be in that situation—not, at least, without such vast changes in my beliefs and attitudes as to make all prediction unreliable. Hence in such a cast I cannot be making an implicit *comparison to myself*.[97]

In the 1990s, Gordon continued to develop his Simulation Theory to counteract the prevalent idea that as we develop from children to adults, we form theories to support the things and events we encounter and experience. This Theory Theory was improbable, thought Gordon, because of evidence of empathic crying in infants, who, though not possibly old enough to

[96] Ibid., 185.
[97] Robert Gordon, "Folk Psychology as Simulation," *Mind & Language* 1, no. 2 (Summer 1986), 165

develop theories, expressed the emotion of distress when hearing another baby cry. He compared this phenomenon of emotional contagion to that of facial empathy, wherein facial mimicry of an emotion can lead a person to actually feel that emotion. Gordon used facial empathy as one of the tools in the act of simulation and continued to build an argument for simulation over folk psychology theory,[98] but even as far back as 1986, he had hypothesized, "One interesting possibility is that the readiness for practical simulation is a prepackaged 'module' called upon automatically in the perception of other human beings."[99] Ten years later, Vittorio Gallese and his colleagues from Parma, Italy discovered just such a module.

In 1996, Gallese and his colleagues published findings in which they coined the term "mirror neuron." The study with macaque monkeys tracked the firing of neurons in the F5 region of the monkey brain, which is found in the premotor cortex. The study showed that neurons in the F5 region fired not only when a monkey performed a goal-directed action, but also when a monkey observed the experimenter performing a goal-directed action. The pattern of neural-firings in the monkey who observed the action "mirrored" the pattern in the same monkey when it engaged in the action. The experiment went on to distinguish that these neurons were not simply engaged through visual recognition. Gallese et al. write:

> Action observation versus action execution Mirror neurons are characterized by two main properties: responsiveness to the sight of meaningful actions and activation with active movements. These two properties are not easily dissociable because usually, when the monkey interacts with an object, it also sees its own movements. Thus the discharge recorded during the monkey's actions could

---

[98] Robert Gordon, "Sympathy, Simulation, and the Impartial Spectator," *Ethics* 105, no. 4 (July 1995), 729.
[99] Gordon, "Folk Psychology as Simulation," 170.

> reflect the neuron's visual properties, its motor properties, or both. In order to control for this possibility a series of mirror neurons were studied while the monkey executed the most effective motor action in light and dark. The results showed that all tested neurons […] fired in both these conditions. Informal testing of the other neurons was consistent with this result.[100]

With this breakthrough, many neuroscientists began to research and test mirror neurons, which led to studies that could link the monkey F5 brain region with its human counterpart, Broca's region, and thus test for the same type of mirror neurons in humans.[101] In 2003, Gallese published another article citing these correlations between monkeys and humans, and substantiated Gordon's Simulation Theory with neuroscientific proof based on his previous work. Gallese wrote:

> To perceive an action is equivalent to internally simulate it. This implicit, automatic, and unconscious process of embodied simulation enables the observer to use his/her own resources to penetrate the world of the other without the need of explicitly theorizing about it [Gallese and Goldman, 1998; Goldman and Gallese, 2000; Gallese, 2001]. A process of implicit, prereflexive action simulation automatically establishes a direct implicit link between agent and observer. Action is therefore a suitable candidate principle enabling social bonds to be initially established.[102]

---

[100] Vittorio Gallese, Luciano Fadigo, Leonardo Fogassi, and Giacomo Rizzolatti, "Action recognition in the premotor cortex," *Brain* 119, no. 2 (April 1996), 600.
[101] See Gallese's "The Roots of Empathy," pg. 174 for a comprehensive listing of these studies.
[102] Vittorio Gallese, "The Roots of Empathy: The Shared Manifold Hypothesis and the Neural Basis of Intersubjectivity," *Psychopathology* 36, no. 4 (July 2003), 174

The hypothesis Gallese was working toward in this article was that the mirror neuron mechanism for observed action could also reinforce our ability to empathize, or share emotions and feelings, with others.[103] By 2004, he and his colleagues had proven from a neurophysiological standpoint, that mirror neurons were indeed responsible for our unconscious simulation of another person's emotions and feelings. Gallese et al. explain:

> When we witness someone else's action, we activate a network of parietal and premotor areas that is also active while we perform similar actions. When we witness the disgusted facial expressions of someone else, we activate that part of our insula that is also active when we experience disgust. Thus, the understanding of basic aspects of social cognition depends on activation of neural structures normally involved in our own personally experienced actions or emotions. By means of this activation, a bridge is created between others and ourselves. With this mechanism we do not just 'see' or 'hear' an action or an emotion. Side by side with the sensory description of the observed social stimuli, internal representations of the state associated with these actions or emotions are evoked in the observer, 'as if' they were performing a similar action or experiencing a similar emotion.[104]

Gallese is quick to acknowledge in this article that mirror neurons are not the only means of understanding emotions in others. We need not unconsciously emulate facial expressions to cognitively interpret another person's disgust, but the activation of mirror neurons is specifically

---

[103] Ibid., 176.
[104] Vittorio Gallese, Christan Keysers, and Giacomo Rizzolatti, "A Unifying View of the Basis of Social Cognition," *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 8, no. 9 (September 2004), 400.

related to the act of simulation, wherein "experiential knowledge of the observed social stimuli" is the key to understanding another person's emotional state.[105]

Jean Decety and Philip Jackson were also investigating the functional structures of human empathy in 2004 and believed that the complexity of this process called for a multidisciplinary approach. They integrated information from developmental science, cognitive and social psychology, as well as neuroscience in an attempt to understand "the information-processing mechanisms that give rise to this subjective psychological phenomenon." [106] Through this multidisciplinary approach, Decety and Jackson were able to more succinctly define empathy based on similarities between the different schools of thought. While specific terminology tends to differ in any given definition of empathy, Decety and Jackson found:

> Regardless of the particular terminology that is used, there is broad agreement on three primary components: (a) an affective response to another person, which often, but not always, entails sharing that person's emotional state; (b) a cognitive capacity to take the perspective of the other person; and (c) some regulatory mechanisms that keep track of the origins of self and other-feelings.[107]

This definition of empathy incorporated both an affective component (the sharing of an emotional experience with another person), as well as a cognitive component (understanding the other person's experience), which was iterated previously in the article by Pfeifer and Dapretto, though their article would follow five years after Decety and Jackson's.

One of the salient aspects of this broadly inclusive definition that I have not yet explored is the idea of self-other regulation. Decety and Jackson return to a study similar to the one that

---

[105] Ibid., 401.
[106] Jean Decety and Philip Jackson, "The Functional Architecture of Human Empathy," *Behavioral and Cognitive Neuroscience Reviews* 3, no. 2 (June 2004), 71.
[107] Ibid., 73.

Gordon referenced in his 1995 article regarding infant crying. This study by Grace B. Martin and Russell D. Clark studied the reactions of 1-day-old infants when exposed to audiotapes of themselves, other crying newborns, and 11-month-old babies. Among other results, the subjects did not respond to the audiotapes of their own crying, which suggests "some self-other distinction already functioning right from birth."[108] The idea of self-perspective being the default for perception is acceptable, since we experience the world from our own point of view first and foremost, and Decety and Jackson point out the wealth of "social misunderstandings" that can occur due to the failure to understand that another person's experience of a situation may be different than one's own. This is the reason why self-other regulation is essential during the process of empathy, because one must recognize that while another person is like oneself, there is also a clear distinction between the two. While the infant study indicated that human beings are neurotypically able to distinguish between self and other from birth, the fact that some people experience personal distress in relation to another's apparent distress shows that the ability for self-other regulation does not always remain intact. Decety and Jackson point out the dangers in being unable to regulate the self-other distinction:

> Such a regulation is also important to modulate one's own vicarious emotion so that it is not experienced as aversive. Previous research has shown that emotion regulation is positively related to feelings of concern for the other person (Derryberry & Rothbart, 1988; Eisenberg et al., 1994). In contrast, people who experience their emotions intensely, especially negative emotions, are prone to person distress—that is, an aversive emotional reaction, such as anxiety or discomfort based on the recognition of another's emotional state or condition

[108] Ibid., 78 based on Grace B. Martin and Russell D. Clark, "Distress crying in neonates: Species and peer specificity," *Developmental Psychology* 18, no. 1 (January 198), 3-9.

(Davis, 1983; Eisenberg et al., 1991).[109]

While positive vicarious emotion—wherein an individual can sympathize and possibly extend altruistic aid to someone in distress—is an example of functioning self-other regulation, a negative vicarious emotion—wherein an individual feels personal distress when exposed to someone else in distress—is an example of a breakdown in self-other distinction. The event of distress due to negative vicarious emotions experienced through the process of empathy is only one of the many definitions of empathy, but it is the one that will be most relevant to my particular study. I will be exploring the risks that writers take when tackling traumatic material, but the wealth of information on the effects of negative vicarious emotion mainly concerns those in the health professions, such as therapists, emergency medical service workers, and caregivers. However, the occupation of an individual only dictates the frequency and/or intensity of situations in which a negative vicarious emotional experience can occur, and the main factor in experiencing negative vicarious emotions is the lack of self/other regulation during the empathic process, which could occur in any human being.

3.1.3 Vicarious Traumatization

Prolonged exposure to negative vicarious emotions due to personal distress at another's suffering can result in symptoms akin to Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). This disorder has six diagnostic criteria per the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, 4th edition, Text Revision (DSM-IV-TR). In order to diagnose a client with PTSD, a therapist must identify the presence of the first criterion, which is a "stressor," or a traumatic event. As mentioned in the

[109] Ibid., 85-86.

introduction, this event must involve the personal experiencing, witnessing, and/or learning of an actual or threatened death, injury, or violation of physical integrity, wherein a subject's response to the situation is characterized by intense fear, helplessness, or horror. Pursuant of this, the DSM-IV-TR lists the remaining five criteria:

> Criterion B: Intrusive Recollection of the Event
>
> Criterion C: Avoidance of Stimuli/Numbing of Responsiveness
>
> Criterion D: Hyper-Arousal
>
> Criterion E: Duration of Symptoms (lasting more than one month)
>
> Criterion F: Functional Significance (or impact on daily life)[110]

Each criterion, excepting Criterion E, lists possible manifestations of each symptom. While treatment of PTSD today is quite sophisticated, the American Psychiatric Association (APA) did not include this diagnostic information in the DSM until 1980. Doctor Judith Lewis Herman credits the aftermath of the Vietnam War as a catalyst for official recognition of a disorder that had been prevalent for over a century. She writes, "The moral legitimacy of the antiwar movement and the national experience of defeat in a discredited war had made it possible to recognize psychological trauma as a lasting and inevitable legacy of war."[111] After official recognition from the APA, it became more and more apparent that PTSD affected not only combat veterans, but also a wide range of people who had endured traumatic events that fit the criteria listed in the DSM.

Prolonged vicarious emotional responses to people who have experienced a traumatic event or the act of continually empathizing to the point of distress can lead to symptoms that are

---

[110] American Psychological Association, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, 4th edition, text revision (Washington, DC: Author, 2000), 463.
[111] Judith Lewis Herman, M.D., *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence from Domestic Abuse to Political Terror* (New York: Basic Books, 1992), 27-28.

similar to those experienced by a trauma survivor. James M. Badger writes that these emotional responses are not unusual, but—like empathy—can be described in different ways:

> They are known by several names, each taking a slightly different meaning: *acute stress disorder, posttraumatic stress disorder, critical incident stress, vicarious traumatization, compassion fatigue, secondary traumatic stress, indirect traumatization, cumulative stress, burnout,* and *traumatic countertransference*. Despite the variation in terminology, this is a single condition precipitated by exposure to a specific traumatic event or to an ongoing crisis.[112]

Due to the proliferation of names, I will refer to this phenomenon as vicarious traumatization. This phrase points to the presence of trauma, but also makes clear that the subject involved has not experienced that trauma directly. The subject's experience comes through his or her contact with the trauma victim, rather than the event itself.

Lisa McCann and Laurie Ann Pearlman of The Traumatic Stress Institute in Connecticut published in 1990 the findings that came of their experiences at the Institute not with trauma victims who came for treatment, but with the therapists who worked there. The idea of vicarious traumatization at this point in time was not as fully formed as it is today, and there were negative associations with its symptoms: the therapist was getting too involved, was weak or inadequate, or had personal issues to work out. The work of McCann, Pearlman, and Karen W. Saakvitne (also at The Traumatic Stress Institute) would help to debunk these misconceptions. They say, "Simply put, when we open our hearts to hear someone's story of devastation or betrayal, our cherished beliefs are challenged and we are changed."[113]

---

[112] James M. Badger, "Understanding Secondary Traumatic Stress," *American Journal of Nursing* 101, no. 7 (July 2001), 27. Italics in original.

[113] Karen W. Saakvitne and Laurie Anne Pearlman, *Transforming the Pain: A Workbook on Vicarious*

One of the most important things to come from this new study of vicarious traumatization was the illumination that it is a process, not an isolated event. It includes not only the strong feelings that occur as a result of what therapists encounter, but also the reactions that occur to defend oneself against those feelings.[114] Vicarious traumatization manifests itself in both general and specific changes, such as nightmares and intrusive imagery, alterations to sensory experience, increased sensitivity to violence, and disconnection from social life and relationships.[115] These changes and many others correlate to the criteria listed in the DSM-IV-TR for the diagnosis for PTSD.

McCann and Pearlman turned to a theory of constructivist self-development in order to examine vicarious traumatization, which is based on the idea that humans construct their own personal realities via cognitive structures, and these structures, or schemas, help to interpret the everyday experiences of life. McCann and Pearlman used this approach rather than the existing theories of burnout and countertransference that dominated the field of therapy at the time, because they felt these existing theories were inadequate.

> The literature on burnout parallels the focus on characteristics of the stressor in that it suggests that the therapist is distressed because of the nature of the external event […]. On the other hand, the countertransference literature parallels the focus on preexisting personal characteristics to the extent that it attempts to explain the individual's responses as a function of his or her previous unresolved psychological conflicts. Constructivist self-development theory is interactive in that it views the therapists' unique responses to client material as shaped by both

---

Traumatization (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1996), 25.
[114] Ibid., 41.
[115] Ibid., 40.

> characteristics of the situation and the therapist's unique psychological needs and cognitive schemas.[116]

Rather than focusing on countertransference, wherein unresolved issues in a therapist's life resurface, McCann and Pearlman suggest that a therapist's "cognitive world" will change based on the client experiences they hear. For example, a therapist's cognitive schema of "trust" may be altered after hearing about client situations where trust was betrayed. These alterations to a therapist's "cognitive world," or cognitive schema, can have a definite impact on multiple facets of the therapist's personal life, but whether or not these changes are destructive depends on whether or not the therapist is able to engage in his or her own therapeutic process, thereby "integrating and transforming these experiences of horror or violation."[117] McCann and Pearlman warn:

> Therapists may find themselves experiencing PTSD symptoms, including intrusive thoughts or images and painful emotional reactions. The helper must be able to acknowledge, express, and work through these painful experiences in a supportive environment. This process is essential if therapists are to prevent or ameliorate some of the potentially damaging effects of their work.[118]

While McCann and Pearlman discount the idea that countertransference is a necessary component for vicarious traumatization, they do recognize that unresolved issues in a therapist's life could contribute to the likelihood that vicarious traumatization will occur. The need to

---

[116]Lisa McCann and Laurie Ann Pearlman, "Vicarious Traumatization: A Framework for Understanding the Psychological Effects of Working with Victims," *Journal of Traumatic Stress* 3, no. 1 (1990), 135-136. I believe the last sentence in this quote means to point out that therapists have unique psychological needs, but not necessarily unique cognitive schemas, since schemas for "trust" or "safety," for example, would be relatively uniform for the average person.

[117] Ibid., 136.

[118] Ibid., 144.

address these issues can ultimately be helpful for a therapist's development and growth, particularly the recognition of changes to his or her schemas and the ability to manage traumatic material more effectively in the future to avoid further schematic alterations. McCann and Pearlman say, "In essence, the process of working through vicarious traumatization is parallel to the therapeutic process with victims."[119]

The importance of self/other regulation during the process of empathy is crucial to maintaining good mental health and developing concern for others—also known as sympathy—rather than distress in oneself. Continually experiencing personal distress at another person's suffering—due to being unable to distinguish between self and other—can lead to the symptoms concurrent with vicarious traumatization and PTSD. Studies that utilize fMRI technology have discovered that personal distress levels were much higher and concern levels lower when participants were asked to imagine themselves as the subject of a video where pain was inflicted on another individual, rather than focusing on the experience of the individual.[120] This study emphasizes the fact that empathy is not only a bottom-up process—wherein mirror neurons automatically activate and result in an affective response—but also a top-down process, which requires cognitive reasoning, attention, and contextual appraisal.[121]

---

[119] Ibid., 146.
[120] Tania Singer and Claus Lamm, "The Social Neuroscience of Empathy," *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* 1156, no. 1 (2009), 90 references the fMRI study found in Lamm, Batson, and Decety's "The neural substrate of human empathy: Effects of perspective-taking and cognitive appraisal," *Journal of Cognitive Neuroscience* 19, no. 1 (January 2007), 42-58.
[121] Singer and Lamm, "The Social Neuroscience of Empathy," 91.

3.1.4 The Writer/Character Relationship

I have been discussing the relationship between therapists and clients, the research in neuroscience that has allowed us to begin to unlock the cognitive processes of how our brains function during the process of empathy, and the dangers of vicarious traumatization for those who have developed a difficulty in distinguishing between self and other. But what does this have to do with people who write fiction? It is here that I offer my argument that many writers who create stories about fictionalized characters—particularly characters who are involved in traumatic events—are not unlike therapists who must practice empathic attunement with their clients. These writers must engage with characters in ways similar to therapists with their clients, and writers run the same risks of vicarious traumatization. As I stated before, all humans with a neurotypical capacity for empathy[122] have the potential to suffer from vicarious traumatization, but those who work in particular careers have a higher potential. The same could be said for writers, since someone who writes children's books will be subjected to traumatic material less often than someone who writes violent crime novels. As such, the basic therapist/client relationship model is comparable to the basic writer/character relationship model, as I will explicate shortly. However, I will be using the work of Sebastian Barry later on as a case study in order to focus on a writer/character relationship where the possibility of vicarious traumatization is more likely to occur. By first comparing the basic writer/character relationship model to the therapist/client model, it is my intention to then illuminate the writer's process as one that is also helpful in deterring the effects of vicarious traumatization.

[122] Individuals without a "neurotypical capacity for empathy" can include those who suffer from various psychopathies, autism spectrum disorders, etc. where the capacity for or level of empathic engagement is limited.

The process of writing fiction is as psychological as engaging in it as a reader, argues Keith Oatley in his book *Such Stuff as Dreams: The Psychology of Fiction*. He draws from Tom Wolfe's essay "The New Journalism,"[123] which Wolfe wrote in 1973 to expose the elements of fiction writing that were cropping up in a new and exciting style of journalism. Oatley expounds on Wolfe's four devices to point out "what a deeper conception of the essential properties of fiction might be. The view I propose is that narrative enables the reader, hearer, or watcher to construct and maintain a mental simulation, a dream of social happenings."[124] The invocation of the word simulation, of course, harkens back to Gordon's beginning theories on empathy. Additionally, Oatley's distinction that fiction can be read, heard, or watched is crucial (particularly in an investigation such as this, where both novels and plays are under scrutiny). As such, I will herewith use the term "experiencer" to refer to the personage who comes into contact with narrative, so as to encompass all of the possible ways in which a narrative can be encountered. Oatley's exploration of Wolfe's four devices shows how writers create the trappings of narrative, the basic elements that any experiencer will use in his or her simulation.

The first of the four devices is scene-by-scene construction, which allows for the juxtaposition of scenes. This method, like a temporal sequence that could occur in a non-fictional or historical representation, illuminates causation, but, Oatley writes, "it also carries the emotional flow of fulfillments, contrasts, commentaries, echoes. . ."[125] The second device, dialogue, is much different than what we undertake every day with our friends and families. Rather than "realistic" and "cooperative" like our everyday dialogue, fictional dialogue must a) further the plot in order to facilitate the reader's simulation and b) flesh out an understanding of

[123] Found in Tom Wolfe and E.W. Johnson, eds., *The New Journalism* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973).
[124] Keith Oatley, *Such Stuff as Dreams: The Psychology of Fiction* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 137.
[125] Ibid., 138. Elipses in original.

the character who utters it.[126] The third device regards the point-of-view in which the writer chooses to write, whether it is first-person (writer as character/narrator using the pronoun "I"), third-person omniscient (all-knowing viewer using the pronouns "he" and "she"), or third-person proper (a singular viewpoint using the pronouns "he" and "she").[127] The final device regards what Wolfe calls "status life," or the various indicators of how people present themselves in everyday life, whether consciously or unconsciously.[128]

When an experiencer comes to a narrative discourse, the above devices that a writer has employed aid the experiencer in running a simulation, or constructing that "dream of social happenings," as Oatley describes. These happenings inevitably involve characters: people or animals or things that are the focus of the narrative. Many studies—both literary and psychological—describe the process of the experiencer empathizing with a character. The results of these studies generally proclaim that it is as easy for us to empathize with a fictional character as it is with a living human being, and that regular encounters with fiction can help us to become more empathetic in our daily lives. Very few studies, however, look at how writers create and empathize with these characters.

In 1990, Richard Gerrig and David Allbritton wrote that when writers are creating the social happenings that Oatley describes, they are "inventing antecedents and consequences" to "display their personal theories of causality."[129] The formula of the plot, however, is not how authors hook the experiencers and keep their attention. Gerrig and Allbritton focus on Ian

---

[126] Ibid., 139-40.
[127] Ibid., 141.
[128] Ibid., 141-142.
[129] Richard J. Gerrig and David W. Allbritton, "The Construction of Literary Character: A View from Cognitive Psychology," *Style* 24, no. 3, (Fall 1990), under "Characters and Causality," http://web.ebscohost.com.pitt.idm.oclc.org/ehost/detail?sid=b2baac5f-4abe-4dc3-b835 32fe3e1f0940%40sessionmgr11&vid=1&hid=22&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWhvc3QtbGl2ZQ%3d%3d#db=aph&AN=9606211495.

Fleming's James Bond novels[130] as an example, because they are ultimately formulaic, yet somehow entirely engrossing. They posit:

> The puzzle is how the reader is drawn into each successive instantiation of the same basic plot: why doesn't knowledge of the inevitability of the events within the genre undermine any pretense of reality? Our suggestion is that readers are so solidly predisposed to find the causes of events in the characters rather than in the circumstances that reflection upon the 'formula' plays no role in their immediate experience of the novel: when events can be explained satisfactorily with recourse to dispositions, we have no reason to look elsewhere.[131]

What Gerrig and Allbritton are pointing toward here is something called Theory of Mind, which is related to Gordon's Simulation Theory, as well as to the concept of empathy. Like empathy, Theory of Mind involves a simulation of another person's mental state. Beyond the feeling of what another person is feeling, however, Theory of Mind involves predicting another person's behavior based on the feelings, desires, or beliefs that you believe them to experience (based, as with empathy, on a simulation of yourself being "like" that person). Gerrig and Allbritton suggest that a skillfully crafted description of a character will prime a reader to:

> initiate a process that is surely one of the most central activities of reading a novel: they can begin to use the accumulating information to generate expectations about what is to come. If we discover Bond in a situation that falls into the appropriate category, we can predict exactly how he should act (and note

[130] This is example is not meant to suggest that the formulaic nature of the spy-novel genre is comparable to how Barry is constructing his narrative. Rather, it is intended to illustrate how readers are caught up in *any* kind of story, even if the structure is familiar to them.
[131] Ibid., under "Character and Causality".

discrepancies to our prediction).[132]

Careful character construction is an essential skill that allows writers to facilitate an experiencer's causal analysis of the discourse, say Gerrig and Allbritton, and point out that "literary characters are special in this domain because authors have total control over causality."[133] The notion of total control, however, may not be 100% true.

3.1.5 The Illusion of Independent Agency

Marjorie Taylor, Sarah D. Hodges, and Adèle Kohányi conducted a study in 2003 that investigated a phenomenon many writers have experienced: characters with minds of their own. Taylor and her colleagues specifically question in this investigation whether the childhood creation of imaginary friends is analogous to fiction writers creating characters. The major common factor between the two relationships is the phenomenon of what Taylor's team calls the illusion of independent agency. Much like children whose imaginary friends seem to take on a life of their own—misbehaving, refusing to cooperate, among other things—writers as varied as Henry James, Fyodor Dostoevsky, J. K. Rowling, and Quentin Tarantino have reported the same phenomenon with their characters, wherein their writing "seems [to] be dictated to them, or that the characters are the ones who are working out the plot."[134]

---

[132] Ibid., under "Category- and Person-Based Expectations".
[133] Ibid., under "Characters and Causality".
[134] Marjorie Taylor, Sarah D. Hodges, and Adèle Kohányi, "The Illusion of Independent Agency: Do Adult Fiction Writers Experience Their Characters as Having Minds of Their Own?" *Imagination, Cognition and Personality* 22, no. 4 (August 2003), 364.

Within the study that Taylor conducted, the differing accounts given by fifty writers[135] led her and her team to define the illusion of independent agency with the following characteristics:

> • Autonomous characters reflected characters who seemed to have stepped out of the fictional frame and were acting within the writer's—not the character's—world (e.g., "I was out for a walk ... suddenly, I felt the presence of two of the novel's more unusual characters behind me").
>
> • Independent writing was characterized by experiencing writing as passive reporting, as opposed to active creation (not to be confused with "automatic writing," a phenomenon in which both the content and the motor behavior are sensed as being generated without will.) As an example of independent writing, one writer reported that "I see my characters like actors in a movie. I just write down what they say."[136]

While these descriptions seem quite distinct, Taylor's group found that within the various writers' comments, the two concepts were often tied together and couldn't be "reliably separated."[137]

The "independent agency" part of the phenomena is clear, but the full description points out that it is the "illusion" of independent agency that writers experience. Taylor does not come to any conclusions about the conditions that allow for the illusion, and notes that further study is required to distinguish this phenomenon from others like it. Due to the as-yet-unidentified cause of this illusion, we must allow that Gerrig and Allbritton may be correct that writers have

---

[135] For a breakdown of demographics, see Taylor, Hodges, and Kohányi pg. 369.
[136] Taylor, Hodges, and Kohányi, "The Illusion of Independent Agency," 371.
[137] Ibid.

complete control over the writing process, although many continue to believe in the power of independent agency.

J. K. Rowling, the best-selling author of the Harry Potter novels, is one writer who has been quite vocal about the seemingly independent lives of her characters. In a National Public Radio interview, she responded to a question regarding her choice to make the main character of the novels a boy. She said:

> No, I don't know why it was a boy. And, but have I given thought to it? Yes, definitely. I had been writing the book for six months and I did suddenly stop. And I mean it took me six months, because I was enjoying myself so much, to suddenly stop and think, "Hang on, I'm obviously female, and my hero is a boy. How did that happen?" But it was too late, it was too late then to make Harry "Harriet." He was very real to me as a boy. I would have—you know, to put him in a dress would have felt like Harry in drag. I couldn't. I was too fond of him by then to go and turn him into a girl. […] I'm not in the business of putting token characters in there, because I think, "Okay, now today we need, you know, this kind of a character." I never do that. My characters come organically, and they come through this mysterious process no one really understands. They just pop up, or they're sometimes inspired by real people.[138]

Rowling, like other writers, does not always understand the genesis of her characters, but what is also relevant about her remark is her fondness for Harry, which points toward another facet of Taylor's study.

---

[138] J.K. Rowling, "Workshop 7—WHO AM I IN THIS STORY?" in *In Search of the Novel*, http://www.learner.org/workshops/isonovel/eightworkshops/subpage7.html. 13:30.

Taylor had each of the study participants complete an Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI) in order to gauge four characteristics of empathy. This test is commonly used to assess empathy in four different areas: 1) Perspective-taking, or the tendency to take the point of view of another person; 2) Fantasy, or the tendency to empathize with a fictional character; 3) Empathic Concern, or the tendency to feel sympathy or altruistic concern toward another person; and 4) Personal Distress, or the tendency to feel anxiety or negative self-oriented emotions in response to empathizing with another person.[139] The result of the test showed higher scores among female participants, although this result is typical when compared with normal values from a general population. The startling data from the IRI showed that the group of fifty writers scored significantly higher *overall* when compared with typical values.[140]

While the scores on the IRI did not necessarily predict the occurrence of the illusion of independent agency, they did show a marked difference in the empathy capacity of writers compared to the general population. Taylor focused on the subscales of Fantasy and Perspective-taking as related to the research concerning childhood imaginary friends,[141] but more relevant to this discussion is the higher-level capacity of writers for Empathic Concern and Personal Distress. While it may have once seemed silly for a person to cry over the death of a fictional character, the IRI itself shows that empathy for fantasy characters is just as relevant to our understanding of human psychology as our empathic concern for fellow human beings. This particular study shows writers as having a more heightened tendency not only to empathize with fantasy characters, but also to manifest more pronounced empathic concern and/or personal distress in their interactions with others. This combination leads me to suppose that the tendency

---

[139] Pfeifer and Dapretto, "Mirror, Mirror, in My Mind," 188.
[140] Taylor, et al., "The Illusion of Independent Agency," 373, table 2.
[141] Ibid., 377.

toward empathic concern and/or personal distress could occur with fictional characters just as easily as it could with flesh-and-blood human beings.

Writers appear to have a higher capacity for empathy than the average person, and since this chapter is how writers compare to therapists, the next logical question to ask is, "Do therapists have a higher capacity for empathy as well?" Unfortunately, there is not much evidence on the subject to come to a clear conclusion. In 2007 a controlled study of empathy in psychotherapists revealed that IRI levels of Empathic Concern were not significantly different from those in a control group, suggesting that therapists were not more empathetic than the general population.[142] However, the therapists' levels for Personal Distress were significantly lower than those in the control group. One might question if this implies that therapists are less sensitive than the general population, but the findings point more strongly to the conclusion that therapists have a greater ability to maintain self-other regulation during the empathic process, and therefore decrease the propensity for personal distress.[143] There have been no other studies of this specific type, but the apparent discrepancy between writer empathy levels and therapist empathy levels does not necessarily preclude the two professions from being linked.

---

[142] Jason Hassenstab, Isabel Dziobek, Kimberley Rogers, Oliver Wolf, and Antonio Convit, "Knowing What Others Know, Feeling What Others Feel: A Controlled Study of Empathy in Psychotherapists," *The Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease* 195, no. 5 (April 2007), 280. The authors suggested that specific training appeared to have little influence on the Empathic Concern levels of therapists, although a study published in 2012 reported a significant increase in empathy levels in physicians who participated in empathy training modules. This study did not use IRI, and the psychotherapist study did not indicate if "training" meant simply as a therapist or specifically in terms of empathy, so the discrepancy—though intriguing—might be irrelevant. See Helen Riess, et al., "Empathy Training for Resident Physicians: A Randomized Controlled Trial of a Neuroscience-Informed Curriculum," *Journal of General Internal Medicine* 27, no. 10 (May 2012), 1280-1286.

[143] Ibid.

3.1.6 Drawing Connections

With this difference in mind, let us return to the elements of an ethical therapist/client relationship that appeared at the start of this chapter and begin to draw some connections to the writer/character relationship. As the Cohens point out, the primary goal of therapy is client welfare, which cannot be reached without pursuing the objectives of building trust between therapist and client and achieving client autonomy. When thinking in terms of writer/character, it is somewhat abstract to imagine a bond of trust between writer and fictional character (and even the idea of an autonomous character, though perhaps it is not so strange after examining the findings in Taylor's study regarding the illusion of independent agency). Even though the phenomenon of independent agency is currently labeled as an illusion, there remains the evidence that writers experience it in a very real way. Among many other examples, Taylor shared theses example as an indication of high levels of character autonomy:

> Sometimes characters are described as having definite opinions about the narrative in which they live. They argue with the author about the direction the novel is taking and their actions in it. […] Sara Paretsky described making a deal with her recurring character V.I. Warshawski. The story line in her novel *Hard Time* required that Warshawski go to prison where she was beaten up, tortured, and almost killed. V. I. "refused" to go along with this until the author promised to give her true love in exchange. Similarly, Philip Pullman, author of "His Dark Materials Triology," described having to negotiate with a particularly proud and high strung character, Mrs. Coulter, to make her spend some time in a cave at the beginning of "The Amber Spyglass." In some accounts, the fictional characters do not limit their opinions to the world of the novel. They also provide unsolicited

advice about matters concerning the author's real life.[144]

I previously defined client autonomy as a situation in which a therapist resists giving directives to a client, and instead, the therapist acts as a supportive resource, facilitating the client's journey toward making his or her own decisions. These testimonies of independent agency resonate very clearly with this idea of autonomy. This is not to say that this phenomenon is a goal that writers do or should consciously aim to achieve in order to feel successful. However, Taylor's hypothesis that independent agency may occur more frequently based on level of expertise could be an indication that it is a state in which writers will find themselves more often when they have more experience, and with more experience comes more trust in the process by which these writers create and interact with their characters.

In order to facilitate client autonomy, the Cohens enumerate three core principles in which therapists should engage: congruence, unconditional positive regard, and empathic attunement. These three principles are each congruent with situations in which writers have reported finding themselves. This first principle of congruence—which implies that the more genuine a therapist is, the more likely it is that a client will realize the possibility for himself or herself—relates very directly with a situation many writers face: putting themselves in the story. As quoted earlier, the Cohens write, "the congruent therapist […] is thus prepared to 'own' her own thoughts and feelings, to take responsibility for them. Consequently, she provides the impetus for clients to take similar responsibility for theirs."[145] The idea of finding vestiges of a writer in his or her fiction is not uncommon, but this act can occur consciously or subconsciously. J. K. Rowling, again, freely comments on her relationship with characters, this time with Hermione from the Harry Potter books:

---

[144] Taylor, et al., "The Illusion of Independent Agency," 364.
[145] Cohen & Spieler Cohen, *The Virtuous Therapist*, 57.

> Hermione is really the brains of the outfit. Anyone who's read the books will know that, and she is a caricature of me at 11. […] Hermione is very, very dear to my heart because of that. I understand her implicitly. She's not exactly like me, because characters always become something very different on the page. So, I do feel that I have a female character in there into whom I've really put a lot of myself.[146]

In this instance, Rowling was very conscious of the fact that she had drawn largely on herself to create Hermione. However, there was another character in the book that caught her by surprise.

> There's a part of Book One where Harry sees his [deceased parents] in an enchanted mirror. I was quite taken aback when I re-read that chapter to see how much I had directly given Harry my own feelings, because I wasn't aware of that as I was writing. As I was writing, I mean, I'm trying to do the thing properly that needed to happen for plot reasons. If people have read the book, they will know Harry had to find out how that mirror worked. But when I re-read the chapter, it became very clear to me that I had given Harry almost entirely my own feelings about my mother's death.[147]

Here, Rowling is quite open about the unconscious way in which she had written herself into the story, particularly in a way that was very personal. This relates to congruence again, since a therapist will not divulge a wealth of personal information, but he or she may offer personal examples that are relevant to the client's situation and therefore serve as a model for

---

[146] Rowling, "Workshop 7—WHO AM I IN THIS STORY?" 14:40.
[147] Suzanne Keen, *Empathy and the Novel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 129-130.

him or her to emulate. Harry, the character, had to come to grips with the death of his parents, and by Rowling sharing her personal experience with parental death, Harry's response in the novel was an appropriate model of that.

The second principle laid out by the Cohens is unconditional positive regard, wherein a therapist should have a deep regard for the client, regardless of his or her actions, thoughts, or feelings. This principle has very important ties to writers and characters, especially when a writer must convincingly empathize with a character whose actions, thoughts, and feelings they do not condone. Author Leslie Marmon Silko confesses her own experience:

> My second novel has some pretty outrageous villainous characters, and I have to admit, I was right inside them. I have to own up to saying that everything that they imagined and felt, I imagined and felt. I think that if a writer can't put herself inside the skin of all of her characters, if she's not sympathetic with them or doesn't like them enough, it will show, and the readers will feel a distance. And so I just imagine that I'm standing right there. I'm there doing it.[148]

Silko's belief that a writer's lack of sympathy or care will "show" is analogous to the issues that can occur between a therapist and client. If a client does not feel a connection with a therapist—in this example, does feel that the therapist cares about the client's problems—it is unlikely that positive progress toward autonomy will occur. As the Cohens write, "Not only are clients free to be whatever they *are*, they are also free to be whatever they *can* be."[149] Similarly, characters can be villainous, but with the help of a writer who has unconditional positive regard for a character—even when empathizing with one whose behavior is reprehensible—the result can be quite complex. An "evil" character can cease to be simply evil and take on other

[148] Ibid., 129.
[149] Cohen & Spieler Cohen, *The Virtuous Therapist*, 58. Italics in original.

characteristics with which readers can also empathize—in other words, they are free to be more than just evil, and therefore to be a more compelling fictional character.

The third principle for therapists is empathic understanding and reflection, which I refer to as empathic attunement. This principle indicates the therapist's ability to accurately sense and understand what the client is experiencing and communicate that understanding back to the client. Empathic attunement appears to be at the core of what fiction writers set out to accomplish: to communicate an understanding about fictional characters and the worlds in which they live. In all fairness, the writer is not communicating this understanding to the character, but ultimately to the reader, watcher, or listener. However, if we think more in line with Rowling's and Silko's comments about feeling empathy with characters, the analogy becomes clearer. What these women—and probably many other writers—experience empathically with a character results in the writing down of that empathic understanding. In a way, writers exercise empathic attunement by telling the character's story as the writer perceives it. As Taylor's study on independent agency reveals, characters often argue with the writer when he or she does not communicate the story as the character would wish. Based on examples from Taylor's article, this more often occurs with actions, rather than feelings, although the same act of simulation occurs in empathy (reasoning about a mental state) as in Theory of Mind (predicting someone's behavior based on that reasoning). E. M. Forster wrote:

> The characters arrive when evoked, but full of the spirit of mutiny. For they have these numerous parallels with people like ourselves, they try to live their own lives and are consequently often engaged in treason against the main scheme of the book. They "run away," they "get out of hand": they are creations inside of a creation, and often inharmonious towards it; if they are given complete freedom

> they kick the book to pieces, and if they are kept too sternly in check, they revenge themselves by dying, and destroy it by intestinal decay.[150]

Like therapists, writers put themselves at risk of vicarious traumatization when working with sensitive material or characters who are, as Rowling said, inspired by real people. Even without experiencing the illusion of independent agency, a writer can empathize with characters in the same way a reader can, and therefore put himself or herself at the risk of feeling distress over the characters' situations (particularly in light of Taylor's findings on increased Personal Distress in writers). Sebastian Barry's situation illustrates that potential—which I will investigate more closely in the next chapter—given the personal subject matter that he treats in his plays and novels.

With the high risk involved in the relationship of the writer to the character, I question how writers can continue to approach potentially dangerous material without suffering from vicarious traumatization. Barry has returned to this sensitive material ten times to date, and many other writers do the same. It is not for me to say that any given writer has *not* suffered from vicarious traumatization at some point due to the subject matter about which he or she writes. However, due to the nature of vicarious traumatization and the major diagnostic criteria of avoidance of stimuli that may trigger the memory of a trauma, we can assume that any writer who is experiencing negative effects would not be likely to approach traumatically-themed material again. This section will explore the writer's role as a witness to trauma and how the act of testimony in the form of writing and storytelling is essential to alleviating and even potentially staving off the psychological effects of vicarious traumatization.

---

[150] Forster, E. M., *Aspects of the Novel* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1985), 66-67.

3.2 PART TWO: WITNESS AND TESTIMONY

3.2.1 Historical Trauma vs. Personal Trauma

The act of witnessing is rife with complications, as Dominick LaCapra notes in his book *Writing History, Writing Trauma*. LaCapra concerns himself with the distinction between absence and loss, two aspects of the aftereffects of trauma that are not opposites, and therefore easily confused. A major contributing factor to the confusion between absence and loss occurs, LaCapra writes, because "the aftereffects—the hauntingly possessive ghosts—of traumatic events are not fully owned by anyone and, in various ways, affect everyone."[151] This statement is clarified by one of the features LaCapra uses to distinguish absence from loss, which is to situate absence on a transhistorical level and loss on an historical one.

> In this transhistorical sense absence is not an event and does not imply tense (past, present, or future). By contrast, the historical past is the scene of losses that may be narrated as well as of specific possibilities that may conceivably be reactivated, reconfigured, and transformed in the present or future. The past is misperceived in terms of sheer absence or utter annihilation. Something of the past always remains, if only as a haunting presence or symptomatic revenant. Moreover, losses are specific and involve particular events, such as the death of loved ones on a personal level or, on a broader scale, the losses brought about by apartheid or by the Holocaust in its effects on Jews and other victims of the Nazi genocide,

---

[151] Dominick LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), xi.

> including both the lives and the cultures of affected groups. I think it is misleading to situate loss on a transhistorical level, something that happens when it is conflated with absence and conceived as constitutive of existence.[152]

LaCapra's explication of historical loss as implying the past, present, and future tenses ties in with the idea of witnesses who wish to "work through" an historical trauma. This idea of working through implies a wish to recover from the trauma an individual has sustained—and a more detailed exploration of the processes of recovery is forthcoming in this chapter—and that process of recovery is dependent on an individual realizing that an event occurred in the past while still being aware that the individual is living in the present with a future ahead of them. Instead of working through an historical trauma, there is the possibility of "acting out" the trauma which, while not a polar opposite of working through, can lead to a compulsive repetition of the trauma and create a cycle of mourning from which a person cannot recover. LaCapra carefully notes that it is not impossible to achieve recovery through acting out, but the chances of counteracting the repetition compulsion are greater when working through a trauma.[153]

Working through an historical trauma is not a simple process, however, due to the difficulty in separating absence from loss. LaCapra writes, "Loss is often correlated with lack, for as loss is to the past, so lack is to the present and future. A lost object is one that may be felt to be lacking, although a lack need not necessarily involve a loss."[154] When an individual can identify a particular loss within a past historical trauma, he or she has a better chance at being able to work through that trauma. But an individual who feels only a lack or absence of

---

[152] Ibid., 48-49.
[153] Ibid., 22.
[154] Ibid., 53.

something that they believe was once there in the past or should be here in the present, the ability to work through is more difficult, and the process of acting out can occur instead.

The feeling of absence occurs, as LaCapra writes, transhistorically, which implies that the individuals involved are typically not victims of traumatic events, but secondary witnesses who have had an empathetic response to an encounter removed from a trauma. This removal from the historical trauma makes the ability to distinguish between absence and loss all the more difficult, particularly if the empathetic response is strong. This is not to say, of course, that secondary witnesses cannot be traumatized by something they did not themselves encounter. As we saw earlier in this chapter, this is a regular occurrence in the healthcare industry. This removal, however, makes it more difficult to distinguish between absence and loss, which complicates the ability to work through a trauma. Making this distinction between absence and loss, however, is part of the process of working through.[155] The benefit of being able to separate absence and loss is to stop what LaCapra calls "the indiscriminate generalization of historical trauma" that has led to a "wound culture or the notion that everyone is somehow a victim."[156] LaCapra tempers this judgment with what he calls a "framed defense of hyperbole" by admitting that secondary witnesses who undergo empathic unsettlement are experiencing a "discursive symptom of, and perhaps necessary affective response to, the impact of trauma."[157]

Dori Laub is a trauma psychoanalyst and psychiatric educator at Yale who was also responsible for founding the Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies at the university. Laub's work predates LaCapra's, but it is clear that LaCapra's work rests heavily on a psychological base, and each man's work is complementary to the other. Laub writes:

---

[155] Ibid., 47.
[156] Ibid., 77.
[157] Ibid., xi.

> The victim's narrative—the very process of bearing witness to massive trauma—does indeed begin with someone who testifies to an absence, to an event that has not yet come into existence, in spite of the overwhelming and compelling nature of the reality of its occurrence. While historical evidence to the event which constitutes the trauma may be abundant and documents in vast supply, the trauma—as a known event and not simply as an overwhelming shock—has not been truly witnessed yet, not been taken cognizance of. The emergence of the narrative which is being listened to—and heard—is, therefore, the process and the place wherein the cognizance, the 'knowing' of the event is given birth to.[158]

Laub's description situates events that constitute a trauma as an absence until the witness can bring them into cognizance through narrative. This is comparable to LaCapra's concept of working through a historical trauma whose events can be tied to the past, with the recognition that the traumatized individual is experiencing the aftereffects in the present. Distinguishing between absence and loss is part of the process of working through a traumatic event, writes LaCapra, and Laub describes testimony as the "process and place" where that distinction can occur.

---

[158] Dori Laub, "Bearing Witness, or the Vicissitudes of Listening," in *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 57.

3.2.2 Secondary Witnessing

Despite the dictionary definition of "testimony," which is a "firsthand authentication of a fact,"[159] the act of giving testimony to a traumatic event is much more complicated. Roger I. Simon and Claudia Eppert define testimony in this way:

> To convey through multiple expressive forms the historical substance and significance of prior events and experiences. Testimony, thus, compromises representations either by those who have lived through such events or those who have been told or shown such lived realities, either directly or indirectly, and have been moved to convey to others what has been impressed upon them.[160]

But even this very involved definition is not complete. Shoshanna Felman, a professor of literature who collaborates with Laub at Yale, complicates Simon and Epperts's definition.

> As a relation to events, testimony seems to be composed of bits and pieces of a memory that has been overwhelmed by occurrences that have not settled into understanding or remembrance, acts that cannot be constructed as knowledge nor assimilated into full cognition, events in excess of our frames of reference. [. . .] Testimony is, in other words, a discursive practice, as opposed to a pure theory. To testify—to vow to tell, to promise and produce one's own speech as material evidence for truth—is to accomplish a speech act, rather than to simply formulate

---

[159] *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, s.v. "testimony," www.merriamwebster.com/dictionary/testimony.

[160] Roger I. Simon and Claudia Eppert, "Remembering Obligation: Witnessing Testimonies of Historical Trauma," in *The Touch of the Past: Remembrance, Learning, and Ethics* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 50.

a statement.[161]

Felman troubles the dictionary definition of testimony by agreeing with Laub that testimony cannot be fully constructed or understood except through the process of testifying, and the testimony itself is made up of these unassimilated "bits and pieces" of an individual's memory—itself an unreliable player in this process. These ideas are hardly congruous with "authentication of a fact," and Simon and Eppert's definition helps to rule out the necessity of testimony being a "firsthand" account. Felman and Laub both support this concept of the secondary witness giving testimony. Felman identifies testimony not as a simple statement of words, but as a speech act that is imbued with particular power. Laub continues this thought:

> The listener to trauma comes to be a participant and a co-owner of the traumatic event: through his very listening, he comes to partially experience trauma in himself. The relation of the victim to the event of the trauma, therefore, impacts on the relation of the listener to it, and the latter comes to feel the bewilderment, injury, confusion, dreams and conflicts that the trauma victim feels. He has to address all these, if he is to carry out his function as a listener, and if trauma is to emerge, so that its henceforth impossible witnessing can indeed take place. The listener, therefore, by definition partakes of the struggle of the victim with the memories and residues of his or her traumatic past. The listener has to feel the victim's victories, defeats and silences, know them from within, so that they can assume the form of testimony.[162]

In order for testimony to *be* testimony, it must be heard, and in order for it to be heard, the

---

[161] Shoshana Felman, "Education and Crisis, Or the Vicissitudes of Teaching," in *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 5. Italics in original.
[162] Laub, "Bearing Witness," 57-58.

listener must become so engaged that he or she is affected enough to feel the compulsion to testify—as a secondary witness—to what he or she experienced.

LaCapra warned of a "wound culture" where everyone felt themselves to be victims. Part of the distinction between absence and loss occurs in how Laub describes secondary witnesses. He says that a secondary witness must remain faithful to the trauma witness whose testimony he encountered, but must also be a witness to himself, confronting his own personal struggles with the information contained in the testimony. Laub says, "While overlapping, to a degree, with the experience of the victim, he nonetheless does not become the victim—he preserves his own separate place, position and perspective; a battleground for forces raging in himself, to which he has to pay attention and respect if he is to properly carry out his task."[163] This act of recognizing oneself as not a victim, but as a witness for the victim, is an integral part of distinguishing between absence and loss.

LaCapra defended the use of hyperbole to which secondary witnesses are disposed. He also defended the literary work of secondary witnesses, suggesting that narratives of traumatic events, such as those found in fiction, should not necessarily be discredited in favor of historiographic accounts. He writes:

> One might argue that narratives in fiction may also involve truth claims on a structural or general level by providing insight into phenomena such as slavery or the Holocaust, by offering a reading of a process or period, or by giving at least a plausible 'feel' for experience and emotion which may be difficult to arrive at through restricted documentary methods.[164]

---

[163] Ibid., 58.
[164] LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma*, 13.

Secondary witnesses are not the only testifiers who have been marginalized; even primary witnesses and victims have been scrutinized for their historiographic detail. Laub remembered a conference where a group of historians discredited one Holocaust survivor's testimony about the prisoner uprising at Auschwitz. The survivor said, "All of a sudden, we saw four chimneys going up in flames, exploding. The flames shot into the sky, people were running. It was unbelievable."[165] The historians decided that her testimony had to be discredited, because only one chimney had actually exploded during the uprising. Laub staunchly disagreed, saying:

> The woman was testifying not to the number of the chimneys blown up, but to something else, more radical, more crucial: the reality of an unimaginable occurrence. One chimney blown up in Auschwitz was an incredible as four. The number mattered less than the fact of the occurrence. The event itself was almost inconceivable. The woman testified to an event that broke the all compelling frame of Auschwitz, where Jewish armed revolts just did not happen, and had no place. She testified to the breakage of a framework. That was historical truth.[166]

If victims can be discredited, then secondary witnesses can be even more controversial. Dora Apel, an art historian and professor of visual culture, studies the usefulness of secondary witnessing in the visual arts. She questions the purpose of secondary testimony if it can never bridge what she calls the "abyss" between the atrocities of the Holocaust and the factors that caused it, or the "why" of a traumatic experience with which most survivors grapple. Will the testimonies, she asks, ever become more than the repetition compulsions of which LaCapra warned when acting out an historical trauma? She believes that many secondary witnesses are very capable of avoiding these pitfalls.

---

[165] Quoted in Laub, "Bearing Witness," 59.
[166] Ibid., 60.

> The issue is not one of identification with victimhood; rather, it is a question of the continuity of a community of memory, the delay or absence of closure, the questioning of received assumptions, a working through of trauma that leads, if not to a totalized understanding, to a greater incorporation of the holes in understanding, and, to varying degrees, an assertion of resistance, that is, a recognition of and refusal to be subsumed by the abyss.[167]

Apel points out, as Laub does, that there are many who would question the verity of survivor testimonies due to the "tricks of memory," but she believes that recording survivor testimonies not only preserves the memories that remain, but also gathers together "durable evidence against the forgetfulness of history and the resistance to accountability." The testimony of secondary witnesses is also integral to this effort. Apel writes, "As the stewardship of memory passes into the hands of those born later, there is a desire to uncover what has been repressed, hidden, and denied, to establish a greater accounting that may possibly be verified by the last living witnesses, and to vindicate the victims, paying a debt to those who did not survive." [168]

The denial and repression to which Apel refers can often result in what she so eloquently referred to as a passing down of a "stewardship of memory." In the world of psychology, this phenomenon is known as transgenerational trauma. There is still much to be learned about the cognitive processes that result in the transgenerational transmission of trauma. The phenomenon began to draw attention in the 1960s when Israeli psychoanalysts reported significant psychological problems in the children of Holocaust survivors. Through the 1970s and 1980s, these cases were examined and showed that the family dynamic played a substantial role in the

---

[167] Dora Apel, *Memory Effects: The Holocaust and the Art of Secondary Witnessing* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2002), 4.
[168] Ibid., 12.

development of these psychological issues in the second generation. Throughout the years, studies have moved farther afield from Holocaust trauma and included domestic abuse trauma, combat veteran trauma, and torture trauma with similar results.

These studies over the past fifty years have not reached any definitive conclusions on the intricacies of the transgenerational transmission of trauma. McCann and Pearlman (1990) put forth an argument similar to that found earlier in the chapter, wherein a trauma victim's schemas, or cognitive structures that help him or her make sense of the world, are altered when they undergo a trauma. This alteration makes it difficult for the victim to communicate with a child that the world is a safe and secure place.[169] Theo de Graaf (1998) hypothesized that a trauma victim projects a "bad self" onto his or her child as a means of coping with internal conflict. This "bad self" is a manifestation of the guilt that the victim feels in relation to the trauma, for example surviving when "better" people died, fleeing at the cost of someone else's life, and similar experiences.[170] Madeleine Seifter Abrams (1999) asserts that many families cope by denying, repressing, or even consciously omitting information about the trauma. [171] This forced silence about a traumatic experience can be a major factor in transmission, inviting young children to fill in the silence with their own fantasies about what happened to their parents. Peter Fonagy and Mary Target (2005) expand on the work of Arietta Slade, who researches the disorganization of attachment between mothers and children. Fonagy and Target assert that the

---

[169] Atia Daud, Erling Skoglund, and Per-Anders Rydelius, "Children in families of torture victims; transgernational transmission of parents' traumatic experiences to their children," *International Journal of Social Welfare* 14 (2005), 25.
[170] Theo K. de Graaf, "A Family Therapeutic Approach to Transgenerational Traumatization," *Family Process* 37, no. 2 (June 1998), 1.
[171] Madeleine Seifter Abrams, "Intergenerational Transmission of Trauma: Recent Contributions from the Literature of Family Systems Approaches to Treatment," *American Journal of Psycotherapy* 53, no. 2 (Spring 1999), 225-226.

ability to mentalize[172] is disrupted in individuals who have experienced trauma, and therefore the ability to attach with a child is compromised.[173] A 2007 study by Rachel Yehuda and her colleagues based on cortisol levels in children of parents with PTSD opened doors to a discussion that PTSD could actually be heritable.[174]

Secondary witnesses do not have to be on the receiving end of the transgenerational transmission of trauma, however, as Laub has explained. Any person who listens to a testimony can become a secondary witness if the empathetic reaction to a testimony is strong enough to feel his or her own distress and, in turn, feel the need to testify for himself or herself. The implications of secondary witness testimony reach beyond the personal sphere of the witness, Simon explains, and can have a significant impact on larger communities. The act of remembering is a pedagogical one, he writes, and occurs in two dominant modes: history and memorialization. History refers to the detailed documentation and interpretation of available sources, while memorialization seeks to recover what has been lost, or "has previously been known, but now must be told again."[175] By incorporating historical sources and narratives with emotional and symbolic practices of memorialization, a pedagogical structure emerges which can "reinforce the significance of specific memories for the identities and commitments of specific groups, be they families, communities, or nations."[176]

---

[172] This concept is comparable to what I have referred to earlier in the chapter as Theory of Mind, or the ability to predict someone's behavior based on reasoning about his or her mental state.
[173] Peter Fonagy and Mary Target, "Bridging the transmission gap: An end to an important mystery of attachment research?" *Attachment and Human Development* 7, no. 3 (September 2005), 337.
[174] Rachel Yehuda, William Blair, Ellen Labinsky, and Linda M. Bierer, "Effects of Parental PTSD on the Cortisol Response to Dexamethasone Administration in Their Adult Offspring," *The American Journal of Psychiatry* 164, no. 1 (January 2007), 163-166.
[175] Roger I. Simon, Claudia Eppert, Mark Clamen, and Laura Beres, "Witness as Study: The Difficult Inheritance of Testimony," in *The Touch of the Past: Remembrance, Learning, and Ethics* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 105.
[176] Ibid., 106.

But this in itself is not enough, Simon asserts, and the pedagogy of remembrance should cause us not only to learn something about our history, but also to question our understanding of ourselves. He writes:

> Much, then, depends upon the substance of our practices of remembrance, practices that constitute which traces of the past are possible for us to encounter, how these traces are inscribed and reproduced for presentation, and with what interest, epistemological frame, and structure of reflexivity we might engage these inscriptions—remnants in the guise of stories, songs, images, and objects. […] More importantly, practices of remembrance are questions of and for history as a force of inhabitation, as the way we live with images and stories that intertwine with our sense of limits and possibilities, hopes and fears, identities and distinctions.[177]

Memorializations often seek to adhere to historical narratives and uphold social norms that point toward the practices of civility and justice within a society. This legitimation does not serve the true purpose of testimony, and Roger states that we "have to consider a form of public history that opens one to both the demand of, and responsibility to, the alterity of the historical experience of others—an alterity that disrupts the presumption of the 'self-same.'"[178] In order to move forward as a society, to imagine a future that is democratic, we must engage with the historical experience of the other. This concept of "public time," which is made up of the past, present, and future, is the moment wherein the pedagogy of remembrance occurs.

> It is a moment in which learning is not simply the acquisition of new information,

[177] Roger I. Simon, "Remembering Otherwise: Civic Life and the Pedagogical Promise of Historical Memory," in *The Touch of the Past: Remembrance, Learning, and Ethics* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 3.
[178] Ibid., 4.

> but an acceptance of another's testamentary address as a possible inheritance, a difficult "gift" that in its demand for a non-indifference, may open questions, interrupt conventions, and set thought to work through the inadequate character of the terms on which I grasp myself and the world. This is thought that needs the other, thought that lives through the life of another with the implication that we are dependent on an other for what is ours.[179]

An interesting example of the historical experience of an "other" is a 2002 art exhibit at the Jewish Museum of New York. Apel says, "Art illuminates traumatic experience through the sideways glance, allowing the viewer to apprehend what can only be shown indirectly, allusively and in sometimes surprising ways."[180] The exhibit entitled *Mirroring Evil: Nazi Imagery/Recent Art* included the work of 13 European and American artists whose work focused on the role of the perpetrator. Ernst van Alphen wrote in the catalog for the exhibit, "Soliciting partial and temporary identification with the perpetrators makes one aware of the ease with which one can slide into a measure of complicity. To raise the possibility of such identification with the fundamental, cultural other is appealing to heteropathic identification."[181] The testimony of secondary witnesses that takes the form of art and literature allows for this unique exploration of a traumatic experience that also addresses the personal questions arising within the secondary witness, as Laub described.

Dora Apel concentrates on the visual arts, while the combined team of Felman and Laub focuses on literature, but they share comparable views on the role of the artist as secondary witness. Felman and Laub identify literature as a "precocious mode of witnessing—of accessing

---

[179] Ibid., 7-8.
[180] Apel, *Memory Effects*, 3.
[181] Catalog is quoted in Apel, *Memory Effects*, 3.

reality—when all other modes of knowledge are precluded."[182] They examine the idea of perspective and echo Simon's call for recognizing historical alterity in the way we define ourselves.

> We underscore the question of the witness, and of witnessing, as nonhabitual, estranged conceptual prisms through which we attempt to apprehend—and to make tangible to the imagination—the ways in which our cultural frames of reference and our preexisting categories which delimit and determine our perception of reality have failed, essentially, both to contain, and to account for, the scale of what has happened in contemporary history.[183]

Apel's thoughts turn to the mutability of memory and how it complicates the meaning of past events, but she asserts that contemporary views have "established a recognition that the past is continually recreated according to the needs of the present."[184] She, like Felman and Laub, discusses the idea of perspective and the value of the art of secondary witnessing.

> Artists as secondary witnesses, then, are those who confront the horror of the Nazi genocide and the suffering of its victims, and who continue to bear witness through reconfigured forms of contemporary testimony to events they have never seen or experienced. Because of their distance from the events, however, secondary witnesses do not deal with the Holocaust directly but in ways that bring to the surface the tensions and discontinuities between the past and the present, ambiguities, impasses and lacunas that are part of the 'memory effects' of the

---

[182] Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, "Foreword," in *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (New York: Routledge, 1992), xx.
[183] Ibid., xv.
[184] Apel, *Memory Effects*, 20.

Shoah.[185]

Art Speigelman is generally regarded as the first artist to bring an examination of the dual role of artist/witness into public consciousness. Spiegelman's graphic novel *Maus* explores the relationship between Spiegelman and his father through the genre and style of comics. The Spiegelmans—along with any other Jewish characters—are portrayed as mice, Nazis as cats, and non-Jewish Poles as pigs. Through the narrative, Art interviews his father Vladek about living in Poland during World War II, struggling to understand more about his father's silence over the years and his mother's suicide. The father-son relationship is highlighted by non-communication and frustration, and at the end of the graphic novel, Art and Vladek have this exchange:

> VLADEK: These notebooks, and other really nice things of mother…one time I had a very bad day…and all of these things I **DESTROYED**.
>
> ART: You **WHAT**?
>
> VLADEK: After Anja died I had to make an order with everything…these papers had too many *memories*. So I **BURNED** them.
>
> ART: You BURNED them? **CHRIST**! You save TONS of worthless shit, and you…
>
> VLADEK: Yes, it's a shame! For YEARS they were laying there and nobody even looked in.
>
> ART: Did you ever READ any of them?...Can you remember what she wrote?
>
> VLADEK: No. I looked in, but I don't remember…only I know that she said, "I wish my son, when he grows up, he will be interested by this."
>
> ART: GOD **DAMN** YOU! YOU-YOU **MURDERER**! HOW THE **HELL**

[185] Ibid., 21.

COULD YOU DO SUCH A THING!![186]

The Pulitzer Prize-winning graphic novel exhibits many of the qualities of secondary witnessing already discussed above: Laub's description of a secondary witness admitting his own struggles with the victim's testimony, Apel's "stewardship of memory" that compels secondary witnesses to uncover what has been hidden, de Graaf's and Abrams' psychological theories on projection and repression, and Simon's conceptions on the pedagogical use of the other.[187] Most importantly, this is clearly Art Spiegelman's testimony about how the Holocaust affects his life. Rachel Baum asserts that the art of the secondary witness is a legacy that Spiegelman can pass down to his own children, Dashiel and Nadja.

> Although Holocaust education often speaks of passing down the story from generation to generation, the story does not remain the same. Dashiel and Nadja will have their own stories to tell; will Nadja, the first-born, remember Vladek at all? What will it be like for Dashiel to meet his grandfather through the images drawn by his father? The stories of the survivors will not be forgotten, but new stories will be added to them—are already being added, if we listen. Holocaust education must listen to these stories and hear them as Holocaust stories because they, in most poignant and pressing ways, wrestle with what it means to live

---

[186] Art Spiegelman, *Maus: A Survivor's Tale, I: My Father Bleeds History* (New York: Scholastic, 1992), 158-159. Ellipses in original. The bold, italicized, and capitalized portions of this quote reflect the stylistic choices in the graphic novel used for emphasis.

[187] Simon's concept of the "other" is played out, I believe, in Spiegelman's use of animals to represent different ethnicities, although he has received academic criticism for glossing over racial identities (see Walter Benn Michaels "Plots Against America: Neoliberalism and Antiracism," *American Literary History*, Vol. 18, Iss. 2, 288-302). The epigraph Spiegelman chooses reflects my belief: "'The Jews are undoubtedly a race, but they are not human.' Adolph Hitler (*Maus*, 4)."

responsibly in the face of Auschwitz.[188]

Spiegelman's graphic novel is an excellent example of the diverse art forms in which a secondary witness's testimony can take shape. Apel's book *Memory Effects: The Holocaust and the Art of Secondary Witnessing* studies artist testimonies in forms as varied as photography, video and art installations, paintings, and tattoos. While not wanting to diminish the importance of these types of visual testimonies, the focus of my investigation is on the written word. As I quoted Laub earlier, "The emergence of the narrative which is being listened to—and heard—is, therefore, the process and the place wherein the cognizance, the 'knowing' of the event is given birth to."[189] The following section of this chapter will examine the key roles of narrativization and writing in resolving the aftereffects of trauma.

3.2.3 Psychological Trauma and Recovery

Judith Lewis Herman, MD has had a significant impact on the world of traumatic stress studies. In 1996, the International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies honored her with their Lifetime Achievement Award. In 2003 she became a Distinguished Fellow with the American Psychiatric Association, and she is currently a professor of psychiatry at Harvard Medical School. Her 1992 book *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence from Domestic Abuse to Political Terror* received great acclaim and aided in changing the way the medical industry helps and treats victims of traumatic events. In this book, Herman sites specifically the three stages of recovery for trauma victims. The three stages are safety, remembrance & mourning, and reconnection, but,

---

[188] Rachel Baum, "Never to Forget: Pedgogical Memory and Second-Generation Witness," in *Between Hope and Despair: Pedagogy and the Remembrance of Historical Trauma*, eds. Roger I. Simon, Sharon Rosenberg, and Claudia Eppert (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2000), 114-115.
[189] Laub, "Bearing Witness, or the Vicissitudes of Listening," 57.

Herman warns, "they are an attempt to impose simplicity and order upon a process that is inherently turbulent and complex."[190]

Herman begins with what she identifies as the "central dialectic" of psychological trauma, which is the victim's internal conflict between denying the horrible event and asserting openly that it occurred. The conflict occurs, Herman says, because "the ordinary response to atrocities is to banish them from consciousness. Certain violations of the social compact are too terrible to utter aloud: this is the meaning of the word *unspeakable*."[191] Speaking the unspeakable, however, is required to facilitate recovery in survivors of trauma. In many circumstances the events of a trauma are repressed and manifest themselves not as the narrative that will aid in healing, but as the symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Recovery requires testimony, and for those who can and do seek professional treatment, "The therapist plays the role of witness and ally, in whose presence the survivor can speak of the unspeakable."[192]

Herman points out that traumatic events are extraordinary not because they are rare occurrences, but because they overpower how humans adapt to typical life situations. The normal bodily functions that prepare humans for "fight or flight" in a dangerous situation are of no use when confronted with a traumatic event.

> The human system of self-defense becomes overwhelmed and disorganized. Each component of the ordinary response to danger, having lost its utility, tends to persist in an altered and exaggerated state long after the actual danger is over. Traumatic events produce profound and lasting changes in physiological arousal,

---

[190] Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, 155.
[191] Ibid., 1. Italics in original.
[192] Ibid., 173.

> emotion, cognition, and memory. Moreover, traumatic events may sever these normally integrated functions from one another. The traumatized person may experience intense emotion but without clear memory of the event, or may remember everything in detail but without emotion. She may find herself in a constant state of vigilance and irritability without knowing why. Traumatic symptoms have a tendency to become disconnected from their source and to take on a life of their own.[193]

Disconnection occurs not only in the survivor's body/mind systems, but also in his or her relationships. Recovery cannot occur in isolation, Herman asserts, and the renewing of relationships is central to recovering from the feelings of disempowerment and disconnection that are at the core of psychological trauma. It is through these renewed connections that a survivor can begin to repair schemas that were altered by a traumatic event and regain the capacities for trust, autonomy, initiative, competence, identity, and intimacy.[194]

I emphasize here Herman's earlier warning that the three stages of recovery simplify a "turbulent and complex" process. She notes that one therapist described the process as a spiral, "in which earlier issues are continually revisited on a higher level of integration," but despite the complexity of the recovery process, Herman says, "It should be possible to recognize a gradual shift from unpredictable danger to reliable safety, from dissociated trauma to acknowledged memory, and from stigmatized isolation to restored social connection."[195]

The first stage of recovery is to establish safety for the victim. Because trauma deprives the victim of power and control, this is the most important goal of the recovery process, and

---

[193] Ibid., 34.
[194] Ibid., 133.
[195] Ibid., 155.

indeed, healing cannot be successfully attained without it. Establishing safety concerns two key areas: the body and the environment.

> Issues of bodily integrity include attention to basic health needs, regulation of bodily functions such as sleep, eating, and exercise, management of post-traumatic symptoms, and control of self-destructive behaviors. Environmental issues include the establishment of a safe living situation, financial security, mobility, and a plan for self-protection that encompasses the full range of the patient's daily life. Because no one can establish a safe environment alone, the task of developing an adequate safety plan always includes a component of social support.[196]

Once a victim achieves safety and has begun to build trust with his or her therapist, the second stage of remembrance & mourning can begin.

The concept of remembrance entails telling the story of the trauma in complete detail so that the fragmented traumatic memory can be transformed into a coherent narrative. This narrative can then be integrated into the life story of the survivor. The process begins with describing the victim's life before the traumatic event, in order to afford "a context within which the particular meaning of the trauma can be understood."[197] Next, the victim attempts to reconstruct the traumatic event in depth by retelling not only the sequence of events, but also his or her emotional and physiological reactions to the event as it was occurring. Without these descriptive reactions, the narrative is what Herman describes as "barren and incomplete" and "a sterile exercise, without therapeutic effect."[198]

---

[196] Ibid., 160.
[197] Ibid., 175.
[198] Ibid., 177.

Two of the most successful methods for obtaining a narrative of a traumatic event are the flooding method and the testimony method. Flooding was introduced by the Veteran's Association of the United States government, while the testimony method was developed by Chilean psychologists associated with human rights activism organizations. While each method was developed independently, they share remarkable similarities. Herman notes, "Both models require an active collaboration of patient and therapist to construct a fully detailed, written trauma narrative. Both treat this narrative with formality and solemnity. And both use the structure of the narrative to foster an intense reliving experience within the context of a safe relationship."[199] The outcome of both of these methods is also the same, which is the activation of a change in the way a victim processes the memory of a traumatic event. Herman says, "With this transformation of memory comes relief of many of the major symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder. The *physioneurosis* induced by terror can apparently be reversed through the use of words."[200]

Once a survivor has integrated the narrative of the traumatic event into his or her life story, the act of mourning the past-self that was lost can begin. While the process of mourning is not without its pitfalls, as LaCapra has described, the telling of the story is absolutely paramount in allowing a victim to rebuild his or her life in the present and pursue a more positive future by reconnecting, in the third stage of recovery, with the community and the world at large. Herman's statement regarding the power of words in reversing the symptoms of PTSD is supported by the work of James W. Pennebaker, who, for the past few decades, has been the leading advocate of the practice of writing therapy as a means for psychological healing.

---

[199] Ibid., 181-183.
[200] Ibid., 183. Italics in original.

3.2.4 Writing Therapy

Pennebaker's first experiments began in 1986 when he asked a selection of college students to write on various topics, including deep thoughts and feelings surrounding a personal trauma, as well as superficial topics, for a number of consecutive days. The outcome of this first study showed that the students who divulged deep thoughts and feelings about a trauma they had experienced showed fewer visits to the health center over the next six weeks than any of the other study participants.[201] Intrigued by these findings, Pennebaker continued this type of work to understand the link between writing about trauma and physical well-being. In replicated and improved experiments, Pennebaker and his colleagues found that "small but consistent improvements" in grade point averages also appeared to be a benefit of writing therapy, and a later study of high-level executives who had been laid off showed that 55% of those who engaged in writing therapy were able to rejoin the workforce within eight months, whereas only 24% of the control group were able to secure employment.[202]

Pennebaker wondered if writing led to improved health because it promoted healthier behaviors or lifestyle practices, but examining self-reports from experiment subjects did not confirm this. After writing about their traumas, subjects appeared to engage in drinking, smoking, exercise, and sleep at levels that were comparable to members of the control group. Writing was affecting subjects' physical and psychological health, but it was not because their lifestyles were changing. Pennebaker dug deeper into the written essays from his experiments to find the reasons for improved health. When the severity of the topics discussed in subjects'

---

[201] James W. Pennebaker, *Opening Up: The Healing Power of Confiding in Others* (New York: Guilford, 1997) 34-37.
[202] James W. Pennebaker, "Putting Stress into Words: Health, Linguistic, and Therapeutic Implications," *Behaviour Research and Therapy* 31, no. 6 (May 1997), 540.

essays failed to show any correlation to health improvement, Pennebaker and his colleague Martha Francis began to explore the mechanics of the writing in the essays.

> Martha Francis wrote a comprehensive text analysis program, LIWC (Linguistic Inquiry and Word Counts) that allowed us to derive several word count categories (Francis & Pennebaker, 1992b). Unlike many other text analysis programs that rely on content dimensions (e.g. Gottschalk & Gleser, 1969), LIWC counts words related to emotions and cognitive processing. The primary emotion dimensions included percentage of negative emotion words (e.g. sad, hate, hurt, guilty) and positive emotion words (e.g. happy, joy, peaceful). The primary cognitive dimensions were those suggesting insight or self-reflection (e.g. realize, understand, thought, knew) and use of causal reasoning (e.g. because, why, reason). In addition to these dimensions, we also assessed general text dimensions such as number of words, percentage unique words, etc. Because individuals wrote for 3-4 days, we were able to look at their word usage in general (i.e. averaging across the 3-4 days) as well as changes in word use (i.e. difference from the first to last day of writing).[203]

The affective and cognitive results were both interesting. Subjects whose health improved used more negative-emotion words, whereas subjects whose health did not improve used more positive-emotion words. Subjects whose health improved showed a gradual increase in cognitive words from the first day of the experiment to the last, whereas subjects whose health did not improve used cognitive words at a consistent rate over the entire length of the experiment.[204] Pennebaker then had members of his team read over the essays and rate them in terms of

[203] Ibid., 541.
[204] Ibid., 542.

narrative organization and "storiness," as well as acceptance of the traumatic event. In this stage of the experiment, subjects whose health improved showed an increase in organizational skill and acceptance of the event over the duration of the experiment, while subjects whose health did not improve tended to show a gradual deterioration in those same areas. The overall conclusion of the experiment was that "both the disclosure of negative emotion and the building of a clear cognitive story are important components of healthy writing."[205] The consistent usage of positive-emotion and cognitive words pointed toward inhibition and repression, which led to more disorganized narrative and less acceptance of the traumatic event.

In the 1990s, Pennebaker moved toward investigating autonomic, or involuntary, responses, positing that physical effects could be linked to the specific moment when a subject expressed particular words. He began testing skin conductance levels (SCL), which measure the electrical conductance of the skin. Moisture levels of the skin will make the electrical conductance vary, and a higher SCL indicates that the sweat glands are producing more moisture. This was important for Pennebaker's work, because the sympathetic nervous system controls sweat glands, and a higher SCL indicates physiological and psychological arousal. Pennebaker and his colleagues developed the CARMEN (Computerized Autonomic Retrieval of Morphemes and Even Neologisms) machine, which could link the words typed by a subject and the simultaneous autonomic responses (heart rate and SCL). The findings showed that when a subject expressed negative-emotion, SCL increased.[206] When a subject gave only a general disclosure, the SCL dropped to a similar range as when a subject was simply discussing a superficial topic.[207]

---

[205] Ibid., 542-544.
[206] Ibid., 545.
[207] Ibid., 544.

The SCL findings supported Pennebaker's initial hypothesis, which purported that writing in detail about a traumatic event could affect a subject physiologically and act as a release from the stress of repressing a traumatic memory in order to promote better health. Many of his other experiments also supported his theories. In one study Pennebaker tested three groups: the first group expressed a traumatic event through dance and/or bodily movement, the second group did the same thing and then wrote about it, and the third group exercised for a prescribed amount of time.

> Whereas the two movement-expression groups reported that they felt happier and mentally healthier in the months after the study, only the movement plus write group evidenced significant improvements in physical health and grade-point average. The mere expression of a trauma is not sufficient to bring about long-term physiological changes. Health gains appear to require translating experiences into language.[208]

What this statement and the earlier experiments point to is not just a translation of a traumatic event into language, but into an organized narrative. This narrative of a traumatic event is part of the larger life story of the victim. Herman states as much by saying that the victim uses the narrative of his or her life prior to the traumatic event as context before exploring and ultimately integrating the trauma narrative. We can see in these more scientifically oriented studies the basis for LaCapra's investigations into absence and loss. Victims who are able to situate a historical loss within the past and their own life stories are more able to work through the trauma in order to address the conditions of the present and future.

---

[208] James W. Pennbaker and Janel D. Seagal, "Forming a Story: The Health Benefits of Narrative," *Journal of Clinical Psychology* 55, no. 10 (1999), 1247-1248.

Why a narrative specifically? In chapter one, I examined Patrick Colm Hogan's explanation of a causal sequence, which is the plot or storyline that our minds understand from engaging with a discourse. It is the sequence of cause and effect that allows us to follow the sometimes non-linear structures of discourses, but it is far from exclusive to the world of literature, drama, and film. Understanding causal sequences is one of the basic survival tools of the human race. Searching for meaning and causes to life's events is what allows us to survive. When homo erectus gained the ability to control fire, human evolution took a giant leap forward, and it is because we can make sense of the causal sequence of events that we understand that control of fire was the reason for those advances. From a more contemporary view, when a child receives a burn from touching a hot stove, he or she will exercise more caution in the future due to his or her experience.

As I wrote earlier, the meaning or "why" of a traumatic event is not always as easy to discern as the cause of a child's burn from a hot stove, and Apel questions the ability to even find a "why" for the events of the Holocaust. Pennebaker explains why narrative is so important to healing:

> The beauty of a narrative is that it allows us to tie all of the changes in our life into a broad comprehensive story. That is, in the same story we can talk both about the cause of the event and its many implications. Much as in any story there can be overarching themes, plots, and subplots—many of them arranged logically and/or hierarchically. Through this process, the many facets of the presumed single event are organized into a more coherent whole.[209]

[209] Ibid., 1250.

Pennebaker concludes, "Current evidence points to the value of having a coherent, organized format as a way to give meaning to an event and manage the emotions associated with it. In this way, having a narrative is similar to completing a job, allowing one to essentially forget the event."[210] While "forget" may seem like a glib expression, it is not altogether inaccurate for victims who have successfully integrated a traumatic event into their life stories. Herman includes a comment from a rape survivor, Sohaila Abdulali, who was addressing a class on rape awareness.

> Someone asked what's the worst thing about being raped. Suddenly I looked at them all and said, the thing I hate the most about it is that it's boring. And they all looked very shocked and I said, don't get me wrong. It was a terrible thing. I'm not saying it was boring that it happened, it's just that it's been years and I'm not interested in it any more. It's very interesting the first 50 times or the first 500 times when you have the same phobias and fears. Now I can't get so worked up any more.[211]

In their exploration of vicarious traumatization in caregivers, McCann and Pearlman assert, "the process of working through vicarious traumatization is parallel to the therapeutic process with victims."[212] Not every secondary witness must exhibit the features of vicarious traumatization, but any victim of vicarious traumatization must engage in Herman's therapeutic stages—the main feature of which is the narrative or testimony of trauma—in order to facilitate recovery, and therefore becomes a secondary witness. Not all secondary witnesses engage in written narratives either, as Apel investigates in her case studies of visual art, which could

---

[210] Ibid., 1252.
[211] Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, 195. Italics in original.
[212] McCann and Pearlman, "Vicarious Traumatization," 146.

account for LaCapra's suggestion that some secondary witnesses are acting out a trauma in a repetitive cycle of mourning, rather than working through the trauma in order to heal. In the next chapter I will bring an examination of Barry's life and work into conversation with the relationship models I have set forth in this chapter. An examination of the material in his plays and novels, in addition to biographical events in his life, will aid in elucidating the heart of his project and addressing evidence of Hogan's third unifying principle of emotional tone.

4.0 TOWARD HEALING

In this final chapter I will be examining the content of Barry's work and moments from his personal life that identify him as both a therapist and a witness in his role as a writer. This section will also address the as yet unanswered question of Hogan's final unifying principal of emotional tone by returning to the content of the plays and novels and the ways in which Barry creates an empathic connection between character and experiencer.

The subjects of Barry's work frequently encounter war and exile, as seen in chapter one, as well as other traumatic events. Moreover, Barry's characters are based on real people, most of whom are related to Barry by blood in both very distant and very close ways. He has also recounted in interviews some very tangible instances of independent agency regarding characters based on relatives he never met. He says:

> But I could not stress enough the accidental nature of my plays, the lack of choice in the themes, the found or given nature of them. A play for me does not begin with a theme or an idea, but simply a person . . . Many writers have the sense that a play was there in the rock, and needed only to be chiseled out, to be released.[213]

Barry described the impetus for writing *The Whereabouts of Eneas McNulty*, based on his great-uncle Charles O'Hara. "I had this image in my mind of a man standing up on a hill looking

---

[213] Mária Kurdi, "'Really All Danger': An Interview with Sebastian Barry," *New Hibernia Review* 8, no. 1 (2004), 43.

down on his home town. I didn't know who he was, but it was obvious to me that he was an exile, an outcast."[214] Even though Barry says Eneas appeared as an image in his mind, he infers that the image communicated something about itself to him. With reference to even more independent agency, Barry talks about writing A *Long Long Way*:

> I felt sorrow all the way through. At the same time, I felt gratitude. I was just so happy and yet I was in the midst of slaughter. Explain it how you will. It's very thrilling to have that experience again, like writing for the first time, and realising that writing isn't actually writing, it's seeing and hearing. It's the oddest thing that you can feel that you're in their platoon, and they're not asking you anything or telling you anything, but you're being there with them.[215]

He also references a main character who resisted being put into first a screenplay, and then a stage play. Finally, he began to tell her story in the form of a novel.

> You can spend a long time waiting for your own book to speak to you. I waited years, years, for Roseanne in *The Secret Scripture* to talk to me again: she'd just gone silent. Then one day, suddenly, I got the voice again, knew I had her again, because her voice was completely authentic, natural, and so I could pick up and write once more. There's a sense that something is nearby and if you're quiet enough you might hear it.[216]

Barry has been exposed to stories about these often-elusive people from his close relatives or actually encountered many of these characters firsthand in real life. His maternal and

---

[214] Eileen Battersby, "'I can no longer decide what is invented and what is real,'" *Irish Times*, July 23, 2011, 7.
[215] Jasper Rees, "Sebastian Barry: The novelist tells Jasper Rees why he felt compelled to hunker down with Kitchener's Irish volunteers," *Daily Telegraph* (England), March 26, 2005, 12.
[216] Sebastian Barry, "Observer Magazine: Upfront: THIS MUCH I KNOW: Sebastian Barry: Author, 54, Dublin," *Observer* (England), October 4, 2009, 10.

paternal grandfathers were both hugely influential in telling him stories about their relatives, because Barry spent much of his time growing up with them as a result of his actress mother being on tour. Many stories came from her as well.

> I sometimes think of myself as an African writer because I was told all these stories by my mother. She was a little bit bipolar, a wonderful actress and an incredibly energised person. She would pour these stories on top of us, mostly about her 30s and 40s childhood in Sligo, and sometimes they were incredibly dark and slightly traumatising to a child. By contrast there was virtual silence on my father's side, who had a Sartrean darkness about him and who believed history was dead, love was dead and family was dead. Especially family.[217]

In a very particular case, the family had always believed that Charles O'Hara, the uncle who inspired *The Whereabouts of Eneas McNulty*, was long dead. "We thought he'd been killed in the 70s," Barry said, "but just as I was finishing the book, my Aunt Mary received a small bequest from him, he'd just died at a great age in an old people's home in London."[218] He also remembers meeting his great-aunt Lilly, who Barry features as Dolly Dunne in *The Steward of Christendom, A Long Long Way, Annie Dunne*, and gives her own story as Lilly Dunne in *On Canaan's Side*. He said, "I first saw her in about the mid-Sixties; I was a child but I remember her. She had arrived back from America and she was wearing this print dress, an American dress, and she looked so happy. I remember thinking that, exactly that: Here is a member of my family who actually looks happy. It is a powerful moment."[219]

---

[217] Nicholas Wroe, "'As our ancestors hide in our DNA, so do their stories,'" *Guardian* (England), October 10, 2008, http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2008/oct/11/sebastian-barry-booker-prize.
[218] Diana Barth, "The CRAIC: The Whereabouts of Sebastian Barry," *Irish Voice* 13, no. 16 (April 20, 1999),18.
[219] Battersby, "'I can no longer decide what is invented.'"

Barry does not lay claim to being a historical revisionist, because he says his agenda has more to do with a recovery of these lost lives, though the latter is certainly caught up in the former. As I quoted earlier, Nicholas Grene writes:

> He has sought out the black sheep and the dark horses of his family's legends rather than any one whose life can be charted through definite dates, facts and documentary knowledge. These ancestors had been forgotten but also in some measure suppressed from family memory. To recall them, or rather to re-imagine them was also to re-imagine the larger history of the nation and the parts of that narrative that have tended to be forgotten or suppressed.[220]

The connection between Barry's characters and the history of Ireland hearkens to Joseph Roach's *Cities of the Dead*, where he refers to Dion Boucicault's play *The Octoroon* (1859) and the proclamation that "We are on the selvage of civilization."[221] As Roach clarifies, "selvage" is literally "the edge of a fabric," but states that it can figuratively signify "a margin, a boundary, or a perimeter that by opposition defines the center."[222] Barry ancestors and the characters based on them are all, in their ways, pushed to the margin, the selvage, of Irish society and condemned to oblivion by that society.

---

[220] Nicholas Grene, "Out of History: From *The Steward of Christendom* to *Annie Dunne*," in *Out of History: Essays on the Writings of Sebastian Barry*, edited by Christina Hunt Mahony (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2006), 168.
[221] Joseph Roach, *Cities of the Dead* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 179.
[222] Ibid.

4.1 BARRY AS THERAPIST

As the plays and novels show, the stories that Barry has imagined for his ancestors are much more detailed than any historical documentation or verbal account could confirm. A book credits Barry with the quotation, "As our ancestors hide in our DNA, so do their stories." Barry does not recall ever saying this, but admits that over the years he has come to believe it is true. In a statement akin to the phenomenon of independent agency in characters, he says, "It's as if these hidden people sometimes demand that their stories are told."[223] Barry's insistence that these "hidden people" should come to light despite his lack of documentary or historical particulars leads him to engage in empathic attunement: taking what information he does know about an individual, understanding that individual's emotional experiences via empathy, and retelling his version of those experiences in literary form.

The potential for vicarious traumatization is high, not only due to some of the subject matter that Barry explores, but also because of the frequency with which he explores traumatic events over his ten-piece work. Additionally, Barry must face the emotional implications of writing about real people who are tied to him by blood and marriage. I began the introduction of this study with the story Barry imparted to me about the inspiration for the story of the Hawke family. Barry's initial reason for writing the poem *Fanny Hawke Goes to the Mainland Forever*, which he recounted in the preface to his collection of works, *Plays: 1*, is yet another testament to the profound emphasis he places on his ancestry.

> For a long time I thought of her standing on the little pier of Sherkin, just about to make her decision . . . It wasn't long before the thought struck me that if she

[223] Wroe, "'DNA.'"

> hadn't crossed that narrow stretch of water, I wouldn't exist myself, a small matter in itself maybe but of some importance to me. Therefore the play is a sort of calling over that water to her, to come, to come.[224]

Fanny's progeny continue to crop up in Barry's other works, as can be seen in the family tree in chapter one, and lead all the way to Barry, who writes himself into the novel *Annie Dunne*. The implications of writing Fanny's story are emotionally charged, because Barry recognizes his own existence as an outcome of her difficult decision to leave her way of life for the man she loves.

This example is a poignant one, and the emotional implications are strong, yet positive. However, Barry has not only written about ancestors long gone from the world and virtually unknown to him, but also about living people, some of whom were alive to read what he has written. The example from this study's introduction told of Barry's encounter with his grandfather, who was more than displeased by Barry's retelling of the abusive, alcohol-soaked marriage between Barry's maternal grandmother and grandfather. The result of this act of literary empathic attunement was complete estrangement from a grandfather who Barry cared for a great deal. It should be pointed out that Barry did not induce his grandfather's ire by providing an inaccurate retelling of the situation, but rather one that was too accurate and too close for comfort.

Outside of these two examples, Barry has written about family members who encounter a distressing breadth of traumatic events. As I mentioned in the introduction, it is important to distinguish that even though an event may be categorized as traumatic (as per the guidelines in the DSM-IV-TR), the person who experiences it may not suffer from side effects concurrent with

---

[224] Sebastian Barry, "Preface," *Plays: 1* (London: Methuen Drama, 1997), xvi.

PTSD. However, as a secondary witness, Barry has felt compelled to give his own testimony about the following events. Barry's great-uncle Trooper O'Hara witnesses and takes on the guilt of a young girl's suicide; Barry's great-grandfather Thomas is physically and mentally abused in the mental asylum where he resides; Barry's great-great-grandparents Lizzie and Robert are persecuted by their friends for their war-time political sympathies; Barry's mother Joanie grows up in an abusive home and must watch her mother slowly die from the effects of alcoholism; Barry's great-uncle Eneas leaves his family to wander the globe and outrun his best friend and would-be assassin; Barry's great-aunt Annie faces her history of loss and exclusion while trying to prevent her impending homelessness; Barry's great-uncle Willie experiences death and destruction first-hand at the Easter Rising and in the trenches of World War I; Barry's great-aunt Roseanne is falsely accused of infidelity and the murder of her child and is incarcerated in a mental asylum against her will; Barry's great-aunt Lilly flees Ireland to escape an IRA death sentence, witnesses the assassination of her fiancé, endures pregnancy alone after her husband leaves her, and survives the suicides of her best friend and grandson. And these are just some of the traumatic events Barry's characters endure.

Taylor's study regarding the illusion of independent agency showed that the group of writers she and her colleagues tested had a marked propensity for Personal Distress, a predisposition much higher than the average test subject. As such, the risk of vicarious traumatization as a result of literary empathic attunement—particularly in light of Barry's subject matter—is evident. As I said in the introduction, it is not the purpose of this study to suggest that Barry is empathically engaging with his fictional characters to the point of distress, but rather to point out the risk of and potential for this outcome. Indeed, this study reaches beyond Barry to encompass any writer who engages frequently with sensitive subject matter and/or characters

based on real people with whom the writer may have a personal relationship. In the remainder of this chapter it will become clear that Barry most definitely is a secondary witness and that the events about which he is testifying are of a traumatic nature. However, by engaging in narrative descriptions of the traumatic events in his characters' lives, Barry is engaging in therapeutic behavior that can counteract the risk of vicarious traumatization.

Through the creation of the ten plays and novels comprising the *Ancestors Cycle*, Barry is building the exact type of narrative that Herman calls for in the traumatic recovery stage of remembrance. Barry creates a context by introducing his various characters and their worlds, and then integrates the very detailed traumatic events into those characters' life stories. Barry, like any competent writer, uses sensory and emotional detail in his writing, which Herman says is a requirement in order to achieve any therapeutic benefit. The finished product is an organized narrative wherein we see how a character has been changed by traumatic events. These characters that represent historical individuals from Barry's family tree no doubt hold some special significance for Barry (or else why create ten pieces over nearly thirty years). This practice is typical, says Apel, as "many secondary witnesses attempt to work through their relationship to the past by retracing the lives of their parents, grandparents, or unknown ancestors in some way."[225]

Because Barry's work is made up of the stories of many individuals he certainly did not know in his lifetime and about whom there is very little information, one might question the verity of his (mostly) fictional testimony. Just as Laub defended the Holocaust survivor who testified to four chimneys blowing up in Auschwitz when historically only one exploded, there is an argument for Barry's project. LaCapra wrote that fiction itself can be considered a truth claim

[225] Apel, *Memory Effects*, 108.

if it provides insight into major traumatic events "by offering a reading of a process or period, or by giving at least a plausible 'feel' for experience and emotion which may be difficult to arrive at through restricted documentary methods."[226] Due to the fact that many of Barry's ancestors did not fit within the approved civic ideals and were purposely written out of Ireland's historical narrative, documentation of their lives is very scarce. Barry's writing often focuses on the "micro-narrative" of the characters' lives, but history marches on in the background.[227] Because Barry must fabricate so much of the details about these historical individuals, he is testifying about what little remains of these silenced ancestors while pointing toward the "forgetfulness of history and the resistance to accountability," as Apel says.[228] Barry admits, "It's true I feel I can no longer decide what is invented and what is real. I ask myself, Did that happen, or have I made it up? . . . It doesn't really matter."[229] To Barry, it doesn't matter, because he is not able to research most of these people in the annals of history. He says, "I'm looking for these people inside me, wherever they may be; that is my form of research."[230]

Barry's life was not easy. He refers to the "Vietnam of my parents' relationship,"[231] but even though his parents eventually separated, he had a "very difficult childhood that you could be a casualty of, a survivor of, or a writer. My sister ultimately survived, but my younger brother became very ill."[232] In 1974, when Barry was only 18 years old, a loyalist paramilitary group from Northern Ireland set off a series of car bombs in Dublin. The shock was so great for Barry that he left Ireland and spent time living in France and Greece. He said:

---

[226] LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma*, 13.
[227] Nicolas Grene, "Out of History," 170.
[228] Apel, *Memory Effects*, 12.
[229] Battersby, "'I can no longer decide what is invented.'"
[230] Matt Wolf, "It's Ancestor Worship, But of a Different Sort," *New York Times*, January 19, 1997, H20.
[231] Michael Ross, "The anguish that led to Hinterland," *Sunday Times* (England), June 9, 2002, 4.
[232] Wroe, "'DNA.'"

> All over the city, people were suffering terrible wounds. It came home to me that there were people willing to inflict utter physical distress on each other. Our people—we're Irish—and we're doing it to each other. You make an identification with them as if you're doing it yourself. I wanted to get away to a place where I wasn't doing it, which was actually very selfish and small-minded of me. People have slightly forgotten about those bombings now, but I will certainly never forget.[233]

Less than ten years later, Barry was also very affected by the news that his paternal grandfather was dying. He had spent a lot of his childhood with his grandfathers when his mother was touring in theatre productions, and he felt his writing would help "to rescue him, to stop him dying. It was part of a strategy against the darkness. To somehow build a counterweight against nothingness."[234] Barry was already beginning to use writing in order to manage overwhelming emotions.

Things would take a turn for the worse for Barry in 1999 when his friend Donal McCann passed away after a struggle with pancreatic cancer. McCann played the title character of Barry's *The Steward of Christendom* in 1995, and the unbridled success of the production was attributed to McCann's portrayal of Thomas Dunne as much as it was to Barry's writing. Barry and McCann became very close during the rehearsals of the play. Barry said, "We were soulmates. We understood each other. My childhood was his childhood. When he died I had to carry on like a bird with one wing."[235] Barry talked about the difficult time he had dealing with McCann's

---

[233] Lucasta Miller, "Past imperfect," *Guardian* (England), October 7, 2005. http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2005/oct/08/featuresreviews.guardianreview12.
[234] Wroe, "'DNA.'" This poetry would comprise Barry's first collection, *The Water Colourist* (1983).
[235] Battersby, "'I can no longer decide what is invented.'"

illness and death, and at once we see the same impulse that Barry had when he heard his grandfather was dying.

> I realise it's irrational. I thought that by some effort of will I could keep him alive. On diagnosis he was given three months to live and he lasted 18. The longer he lasted, the more I deluded myself into thinking my effort of will was working . . . We had a tiff on the phone, one of those one-sided tiffs that Donal had, where he was being bolshie out of love. I was in New York and I rang him as he was going into the hospice and stupidly asked him what he was going to do there. He said: 'Die, I suppose.' I said I'd come back immediately. He told me not to—because it would seem that something was seriously wrong. 'And you're not the only fucking one who has rung, so don't think you are.' I came back a few days later but he was in a coma by then and we never spoke again.[236]

The power of writing that Barry imagined was keeping his grandfather and Donal alive was as important to his own health as he thought it was to theirs. Within a few months after McCann's death, Barry had a collapse of his own. "The discipline of work had, in a mental sense, always kept me ahead of the metaphorical posse. Then the posse caught up and beat me up at the side of the road."[237] Although he continued to work on writing novels, the pain of McCann's death kept Barry from writing for the stage for five years.[238]

From the time Barry met McCann in 1995 until his friend's death in 1999, Barry had three plays produced, two of which could be considered the greatest psychological risks in his

---

[236] Ross, "The anguish that led to Hinterland."
[237] Ibid.
[238] Gwen Orel, "Sebastian Barry Returns with *The Pride of Parnell Street*," *Village Voice*, August 25, 2009, http://www.villagevoice.com/2009-08-25/theater/sebastian-barry-returns-with-the-pride-of-parnell-street/.

career. The first was the celebrated *The Steward of Christendom* in 1995, and the second was *Our Lady of Sligo* in 1998. Barry feels the two plays are bound in some way, as they deal with what he calls "the two demons, the two crows."[239] *The Steward of Christendom* presents Thomas Dunne, the ruined and mentally unstable figure of a Catholic loyalist who once held the rank of Chief Superintendent in the Dublin Metropolitan Police. Historically, DMP Chief Superintendent John Dunne was responsible for arresting John Larkin and leading the baton-charge into the streets during the 1913 Lockout. This was hardly an ancestry to be proud of, particularly a short time later in a newly-independent Ireland, which spurned anyone loyal to the English crown, especially those so recognizable as members of the DMP. Barry initially considered concealing the facts about his great-grandfather altogether. He said, "What a demon figure to bring you literary ruin. What price my credentials as an Irish writer?"[240] The result, of course, was a resounding success. Mária Kurdi asked Barry how he managed to make a colonialist into such a sympathetic character. Barry responded:

> By accident, really. I thought he was going to be a monster, a play about a monster in my family history and in Irish history. But everything is more various and broader than we imagine. Victory, of course, diminishes everything about the vanquished, and official history continues the task. He surprised me, Thomas Dunne.[241]

Barry's journey with *Our Lady of Sligo* was even more difficult than his decision to bring his great-grandfather's skeleton out of the closet. The main characters are Mai and Jack O'Hara,

---

[239] Kurdi, "'Really All Danger,'"48.

[240] Nicholas Wroe, "An Irish odyssey: Nicholas Wroe Talks to Writer Sebastian Barry," *Financial Times* (England), March 7, 1998, 4.

[241] Kurdi, "'Really All Danger,'" 49.

Barry's maternal grandparents. His earlier treatment of their marriage in the novella *Time Out of Mind* (1983) led to violent recriminations from his grandfather. Barry admitted that he had tried writing *Our Lady of Sligo* before *The Steward of Christendom*, but was unable to manage the difficult subject matter. He said that writing the first play helped him with *Our Lady of Sligo*, likening it to "laboratory conditions, how to handle nuclear material safely."[242] Barry described his motivations for writing about his grandmother.

> There was a deal of suffering in her allotment of days, her own suffering and the suffering she caused others. Alcoholism is a deep, dark and doom-afflicted disease, and roads out of it were rare enough in her day. Not to mention roads out of marriage. For thirty odd years she has loomed there in the shadows of my life, a presence, a warning and a challenge. I have tried to illuminate those shadows because to expunge and censor is in essence to make fragments of possibility and to vandalise the paining of a life.[243]

Sinéad Cusack played the role to great acclaim, although Barry says the subject matter made watching the play uncomfortable for him. He said, "A terrible woman, a part of me of course. But story lances the old wounds."[244]

While there are medical precautions against lancing a wound, the procedure can sometimes promote healing. Barry believes that writing about his silenced ancestors can promote healing on different levels. He worried that the fractured relationships in his family were a product of the many silences and repressed stories, and admits that he has become fearful of "things that cannot be said."

---

[242] Ibid., 48.
[243] Sebastian Barry, "Author's Note," in *Our Lady of Sligo* (London: Methuen Publishing Limited, 1998), iii.
[244] Kurdi, "'Really All Danger,'" 48.

> I'm afraid of the damage that is caused by not speaking of people like [*The Secret Scripture*'s] Roseanne, the unmentioned first wife, like so many families' old uncle Jacks who died in the first world war fighting for England. I'm concerned these silences leave a gap in yourself which then leaves a gap in your children and can ultimately lead to a hole in the country's sense of itself. Ireland's history is so much more rich, exciting, varied and complicated than we had realised. What I'm trying to do is gather in as much as I can. It's not to accuse, it is just to state that it is so.[245]

When Barry first began bringing silenced ancestors back to public consciousness, he promoted writing these testimonies as a way to heal Ireland from the trauma it had been experiencing since the early 1900s. With his first novel about an ancestor, *The Whereabouts of Eneas McNulty*, Barry remarked that he was attempting to "put something back on the balance."[246] He decided that glossing over the disreputable parts of one's history can erase people, parts of families, and even parts of the nation. "A real nation has to acknowledge also the section of itself that is murderous and dangerous and deeply uncivil, for completeness if for nothing else."[247]

Herman supports this impulse by saying that testifying about traumatic events is a prerequisite for not only the healing of the victims, but also for the "restoration of the social order."[248] She writes:

> The response of the community has a powerful influence on the ultimate

---

[245] Wroe, "'DNA.'"
[246] "A Penguin Readers Guide to The Whereabouts of Eneas McNulty," in *The Whereabouts of Eneas McNulty* by Sebastian Barry (New York: Penguin Books, 1998), 6.
[247] Ibid., 9.
[248] Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, 1.

> resolution of the trauma. Restoration of the breach between the traumatized person and the community depends, first, upon public acknowledgment of the traumatic event and, second, upon some form of community action. Once it is publicly recognized that a person has been harmed, the community must take action to assign responsibility for the harm and to repair the injury. These two responses—recognition and restitution—are necessary to rebuild the survivor's sense of order and justice.[249]

With so many life stories silenced in the aftermath of Irish independence, recognition and restitution are in short supply even 100 years later. Apel points out that secondary witnesses can still aid in repairing damage from long ago, because they exist in the conditions of contemporary culture and politics and can create testimonies that speak of the past yet also exist in the present. "Their representations are chronologic, traversing time from then to now, retelling the story while telling the contemporary conditions of the telling of the story and bringing the recognitions of the present to bear not only on our understanding of the past, but also on the effects of the past in the present."[250] Simon says that literature is an excellent testimonial method for raising public consciousness, because "stories are meant to fill in details and provide the human dimension of history through images that mobilize a complex of thought and feeling, making transparent an account's intertwined personal and historical significance."[251]

Simon emphasizes again that testimony—particularly of the other—is essential to moving toward a productive future. He condemns those who would "naively" promote putting the past in

---

[249] Ibid., 70.
[250] Apel, *Memory Effects*, 7.
[251] Roger I. Simon, "The Paradoxical Practice of *Zakhor*: Memories of 'What Has Never Been My Fault or My Deed," in *Between Hope and Despair: Pedagogy and the Remembrance of Historical Trauma*, eds. Roger I. Simon, Sharon Rosenberg, and Claudia Eppert (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2000), 17.

the past in order to achieve harmony in the present, because the solution lies not in forgetting the past, but in "remembering it otherwise."

> Foundational to the notion of remembering otherwise is not only the adjudication of responsibility and the provision of just reparation; it also includes the production of a historical imaginary within which it is possible to rethink as sensible and justifiable those practices that establish one people's exploitation, dominion, or indifference with regard to others. Such a historical imaginary will require forms of remembrance within which it is possible to trace the social grammars that structure confrontations with difference, confrontations in which ontological rather than ethical questions seemed to have taken precedence in the determination of how we should act toward those who are not immediately recognized as approximate versions of ourselves. To realize such a conception of remembrance, one will need practices of memory that are not tied to the consolidation of the corporate entities whether in the guise of state nationalism, ethnocultural hubris, or religious triumphalism. Rather, remembering otherwise will proceed from those practices of remembrance whose overriding consideration is the question of what it might mean to take the memories of others (memories formed in other times and spaces) into our lives and to live as though the lives of others mattered.[252]

There is little doubt of the difficulty in admitting one's culpability in the "othering" of another human being and rendering them unimportant to the narrative of society. But in order for

[252] Simon, "Remembering Otherwise," 9.

healing and a prosperous future, secondary witnesses must, as Apel writes, "bring to the surface the tensions and discontinuities between the past and the present."[253]

Barry's project does not involve exposing perpetrators so much as recovering victims. He is mostly concerned with the health of the nation and the modicum of healing he hopes he can bring by restoring knowledge of his silenced family members.

> The story of Ireland is like a series of incredible tapestries, many of them stitched with a lot of red, and plentiful reels of black thread. But they're damaged pictures. Most of the damage came after independence, when a new narrative had to be established in order to assist the birth of a country. I am only going back to 'rescue' some of my family members, about whom usually I know next to nothing, to retrieve them if I can from the cold hand of history. I go to look for them, and generally find them mired or otherwise in their own times, naturally.[254]

Barry is offering his work as that "inheritance, or difficult 'gift'," as Simon called testimony, to address the damage the relationship with Britain caused. Queen Elizabeth II visited Ireland in May 2011. It was the first time in exactly 100 years that a British monarch had visited Ireland, as well as the first time since the two countries had dissolved ties. Barry said of the complicated relationship, "It created divisions, and I'm glad that these have now come to the surface and been acknowledged. That's what I said to the queen when she was here. […] I thanked her for making this gesture. She must have wondered about me; maybe she didn't. But I felt it was so important, what she did."[255]

---

[253] Apel, *Memory Effects*, 9.
[254] Sophie Rochester, "Recovering Ireland's hidden history," Author Interview, www.themanbookerprize.com/perspective/articles/1137.
[255] Battersby, "'I can no longer decided what is invented.'"

Healing the nation of Ireland is not Barry's only concern. He actively sought out scraps of information on members of his family who had been forgotten, saying, "It was important to try and supply a version of these figures . . . for the purpose of trying to understand why my own family had reached a state of fracture and distance."[256] Barry's impulse to uncover the past and create a testimony was not always appreciated, as evidenced by his grandfather's reaction to Barry's early novella. He consulted a psychiatrist friend in the wake of McCann's death to also explore his complicated family situation.

> The psychiatrist told me we are all symbiotically connected to our families and that if there is somebody in one's family who is unwell, one can take on the person's distress. It was quite frightening. But even in the wasteland feeling of depression, the understanding I had gained about that gave me a sense of purpose. I went away and thought about it, and realised the symbiosis can work both ways: that if you can achieve great calm, you can effect a positive change in somebody else. That may, ultimately, be the purpose of all literature, that healing.[257]

Barry's first intentional exploration of writing to promote healing was *Hinterland*, which was an unqualified disaster when it opened at the Abbey Theatre in Dublin in 2002. Barry's attempt at investigating the troubled relationship between his brother and his father was hidden by an overarching story that too closely resembled the life of former-Taoiseach Charles Haughey, and the Irish public vehemently chastised Barry for his lack of taste and manners. Utterly dismayed by the reception of the play, Barry turned to the novel form to write something less veiled and more personal. He placed himself as a character in the novel *Annie Dunne*, as a four-year-old boy who is left to his great-aunt's keeping while his parents attempt to sort out

[256] Kurdi, "'Really All Danger,'" 42.
[257] Ross, "The anguish that led to Hinterland."

their marriage. Barry says, “It was a place of safety for me,” and he still travels to the farm in Kelsha when he is distressed in order to feel closer to the people he loved and who cared for him as a child.[258]

The writing therapy was successful, and Barry said that after writing *Annie Dunne* he has had “times of contentment and ease” that he hasn’t felt since the days he spent on the Kelsha farm in his youth. “For that, I’m wildly grateful,” he says. “I don’t feel so much anymore that I killed Donal. There are lots of things that I don’t feel anymore. And, happily, there are things I feel anew.”[259] Writing was obviously a part of Barry’s own treatment to overcome feelings of anxiety and depression in his life, but the writing—at least the writing that has been published—does not deal with any traumatic events that occurred specifically to him. Nonetheless, the discourses he has published that are part of this study have aided him in some way, and I would suggest that this has to do with one of the important aspects of secondary witnessing that Laub addressed.

4.2 BARRY AS WITNESS

Laub says of the witness, “While overlapping, to a degree, with the experience of the victim, he nonetheless does not become the victim—he preserves his own separate place, position and perspective; a battleground for forces raging in himself, to which he has to pay attention and respect if he is to properly carry out his task.”[260] Barry is not the victim in the various discourses

[258] Ibid.
[259] Ibid.
[260] Laub, “Bearing Witness,” 58.

that he has written, but his experience certainly overlaps with the experiences of the characters as he empathically engages in creating them. The impetus for creating these discourses was to break the silence and give a form of life to family members who are dead and mostly forgotten, and Barry acknowledges this project and the fact that the majority of the details come from his own perspective and imagination. For Barry, there appears to be a kind of healing in the act of fleshing out a nearly forgotten memory; it is not the traumatic event that occurred to an ancestor that causes him to want to testify, but the lack of historical information about an individual that compels him to produce something that states, *This has occurred. This person lived.*

I quoted Laub earlier in regard to the responsibility of the secondary witness, or the listener to a primary testimony. "The listener has to feel the victim's victories, defeats and silences, know them from within, so that they can assume the form of testimony."[261] As a writer, Barry must engage in this way when creating his characters so that readers will, in turn, be engaged by the discourse. And the readers undoubtedly are engaged. Eileen Battersby, journalist and critic at *The Irish Times*, commented on Barry's serious manner, saying, "Sebastian Barry is easy to speak with but not all that easy to interview, as he feels deeply and does not toss off responses. He imposes a moral responsibility on his listener, more or less as he does on the reader, because he chooses to write about real grief, actual suffering, the multiple hurts that don't recede."[262] Barry himself feels a moral responsibility in his career as a writer. He asserts, "Storytellers are necessary in the dark, around the fire—someone needs to take responsibility to drive away the terrors of the darkness. Or sometimes to help explain the darkness, and even help you embrace it; realise that it's not all black, that there's always a seam of beauty."[263]

---

[261] Ibid.
[262] Battersby, "'I can no longer decide what is invented.'"
[263] Sebastian Barry, "Observer Magazine: Upfront: THIS MUCH I KNOW: Sebastian Barry: Author, 54,

When Barry conducts public readings, which he does frequently, people have compared the events to revivalist meetings, where attendees feel compelled to offer their own testimonies about forgotten family members. Barry says, "I was down in Kilkenny and this woman in her 70s stood up and said in a trembling voice how her grandfather was the chaplain in the Royal Dublin Fusiliers. It was probably the first room she had ever been in where she could stand up and say that."[264]

The Steward of Christendom was the first of Barry's plays to affect people in obvious ways with its subject matter, perhaps because of the political dissonance that, while not the central theme of the play, was overtly apparent. Director Max Stafford-Clark wrote extensively about his experience directing and touring the production. After opening in London and taking the production to Ireland, Luxembourg, and Australia, the company returned to Dublin and the Gate Theatre for a ten-week run, and Stafford-Clark says, "The Gate became a place of pilgrimage."[265] He recalls when then-President Mary Robinson came to see the performance.

> She asked to meet the company after the performance, so the cast assembled backstage in the Gate's hospitality suite: Donal in his shabby, dark-blue dressing gown. We waited for some time before the President arrived. It was evident at once why she has not appeared straight away: her mascara was all over the place and she was visibly overwhelmed by the play. She was gracious and talked of the play's achievement in restoring a piece of Irish history, which indeed it had.[266]

Dublin," *Observer* (England), October 4, 2009, 10.
[264] Wroe, "'DNA.'"
[265] Philip Roberts and Max Stafford-Clark, *Taking Stock: The Theatre of Max Stafford-Clark* (London: Nick Hern Books, 2007), 194.
[266] Ibid., 193-194.

Perhaps even more compelling than the emotional response of a leader of the country is an anecdote Stafford-Clark tells about a common Dubliner who attended the show.

> One night after the play the barman at the Gate held out a phone to me. "He wants to speak to someone involved in the play," he said. It was an elderly member of that night's audience who had surfaced at a bar down the road. He was in tears, and wanted to tell someone what the play had meant to him. His mother and his aunts had always listened to the Queen's speech on Christmas Day, but he had had to keep this a secret from his friends and indeed the rest of his family.[267]

The play catapulted Barry into the spotlight and won the Best New Play award from the London Critics' Circle. Additionally, Barry received the prestigious Christopher Ewart-Biggs Memorial Prize, which is awarded biennially to "work promoting and encouraging peace and reconciliation in Ireland, a greater understanding between the peoples of Britain and Ireland, or closer co-operation between the partners of the European Community."[268] Barry and his play garnered other prizes and awards, such as the Writers' Guild Award for Best New Play, the Ireland/America Literary Prize, and the Lloyds Private Banding Playwright of the Year Award, but excepting the much milder success of his later play *Our Lady of Sligo*, the majority of Barry's accolades have focused on his novels.

Barry's three most successful novels are *A Long Long Way*, *The Secret Scripture*, and *On Canaan's Side*. The first two books were shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize, while the third book was longlisted. *On Canaan's Side* was awarded the Walter Scott Prize for Historical Fiction in 2012, and *The Secret Scripture* was even more successful. It won the James Tait Black Memorial Prize, the Independent Booksellers Prize, as well as the Bord Gáis Enegy Irish Book

---

[267] Ibid., 193.
[268] Christopher Ewart-Biggs Memorial Prize, http://www.ewartbiggsprize.org.uk.

Awards Novel of the Year (in addition to being shortlisted for the group's Novel of the Decade Award). Most impressively, the book won the prestigious Costa Book of the Year, which entails a prize of £55,000. Matthew Parris, the Chair of Judges for the award, commented on Barry's win.

> There was an awful lot of agreement about the strength of Sebastian Barry's book. *Everybody* thought that Roseanne, the 100-year-old, Irish inmate of a mental institution in Roscommon, was such a transcendent voice that it burst through; it was one of the great narrative voices that any of us can remember, and that was what won it, I think, for *The Secret Scripture*.[269]

Barry seems bemused whenever his work garners public appreciation, and appears more satisfied that his work is helping others to come to grips with silences in their own families. Despite the vitriolic response from his grandfather about *Time Out of Mind*, his family does not fault him. Barry says, "Although it is true that we are not a close-knit family in any shape or form, family members have been deeply supportive, sometimes much to my surprise, and gratitude."[270]

4.3 EMOTIONAL TONE

In chapter one I explored the first two principles enumerated by Hogan that signal a unification of multiple discourses into a single work. While data concerning theme and causal sequence intersections were easier to map out visually via Moretti's method of using graphs and trees, the

[269] "Sebastian Barry Wins Costa Book Award," http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=siF4ys2944c, 00:45.
[270] Rochester, "Recovering Ireland's Forgotten History."

third principle—emotional tone—is not as easily managed. Hogan observes that mutual relevance need not occur due to similar emotional tones across the discourses, but can transpire when differing emotional tones serve to amplify each other. In Hogan's example, the emotional valence of a discourse that relates to familial separation can be intensified by a discourse that concerns familial reunion, which would have an altogether different emotional tone. Emotional tone is the most difficult of the three principles to identify for two primary reasons, which are bound up in each other. The first is that Hogan specifically points out, "It is not really possible to give anything like a rule here."[271] A possible reason that Hogan is apprehensive about qualifying this principle is because of the second reason: any given reader's emotional response to a narrative is purely subjective.

Imagine that Reader A and Reader B are both engaging in a narrative about a dog. Imagine also that Reader A has trained guide dogs for the visually impaired for most of her life and that Reader B was attacked by a stray dog at a young age. Readers A and B are going to have very different emotional responses to the same narrative based on each one's personal experience with the subject matter of the book, which can skew each one's perception of the emotional tone of the book. Reader A might find the book uplifting, while Reader B might find it disquieting. To be a best-selling novelist or an award-winning playwright, a writer must find a way to ensure a broad appeal for his or her discourses. How can writers increase the chances that readers will respond emotionally in a similar way?

In chapter two I cited an article by Gerrig and Allbritton, who pondered why we continue to be fascinated by James Bond novels when they are ultimately formulaic. The answer to their query lay in the fact that readers find the impetus for causality in the plot through the

[271] Patrick Colm Hogan, *Affective Narratology* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2011), 106.

examination of the character. In other words, we, as readers, are not bored by the standard plot of Bond going after The Villain, wooing the requisite Bond Girl, being captured, then escaping and saving the day, because we are more interested in how Bond has found himself in the situation and what actions he will take to move forward through the plot. This concept of Theory of Mind, or predicting another person's behavior based on feelings, desires, and beliefs that you believe them to experience, is essential to our evolution as a species and is also at the core of experiencing a narrative.[272]

4.4 CONNECTING THE EXPERIENCER WITH THE DISCOURSE

Keith Oatley, like Gerrig and Allbritton, places the character at the center of the experiencer's interest, but he specifically names Theory of Mind as the driving force behind this impulse.

> With theory-of-mind we make mental models of ourselves and others, of what we and others know in the moment, and of our own and others' characteristics over longer periods. But this can go further. We can make models of other people's models, and this kind of embedded structure of what people think, feel, and believe often occurs in literature so that part of the interest in a story can be to work out who knows what, and what each one is up to.[273]

This type of behavior is natural to human beings, because it is a mental process that was necessary for us to evolve as a species, to figure out who was an enemy and who was a friend

[272] The following discussion is from Keith Oatley's *Such Stuff as Dreams: The Psychology of Fiction*, but he relies heavily on Lisa Zunshine's *Why We Read Fiction: Theory of Mind and the Novel* (OSU Press, 2006).
[273] Keith Oatley, *Such Stuff as Dreams: The Psychology of Fiction* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 43.

based on the actions we perceived. Oatley points out that we, as humans and the most social of the mammals, derive much of our pleasure through interaction with other humans whom we consider friends. For this reason, Oatley contends that the most apt metaphor for the relationship between an experiencer and a discourse (or parts of that discourse, ie. the author, narrator, or character) is that of friendship. Fiction offers a "remarkable intimacy" that allows us to explore the mind of another in ways that are more complex than everyday life.[274]

Writers can strengthen a reader's tie to a character through the use of techniques that elicit emotion. Oatley identifies four ways in which emotions can occur in a narrative and how each—both separately and combined—affects the experiencer. The first two are what Oatley refers to as "fresh emotions," or immediate experiences of new emotions brought on by the discourse. The second two are "emotional memories," or experiences of emotions already felt in the past, which are brought to the surface by correlating events in the discourse.

The Emotion of Identification is comparable to the everyday experience of empathy (simplified here to define the understanding of another person's emotions), but with an important distinction. In the normative process of empathy, we come to an understanding of another person's emotional state by simulating their experience based on our own desires and goals. The "planning processor," as Oatley describes it, is "the process by which we arrange our lives, and undertake actions."

> In reading a piece of fiction we withdraw from the immediate world, but after we have suspended our own goals, plans, and actions, we make the processor available to the goals, plans, and actions, of a protagonist in the story. The author tells the reader what plans and what actions to enter into the processor.

[274] Ibid., 39-40.

> Empathetic identification occurs when we insert the character's goals, plans, or actions, into our own planning processor, and we come to feel in ourselves the emotions that occur with the results of actions that we perform mentally as if in the place of character. [275]

We are, in effect, suspending the simulation and experiencing the beliefs, goals, desires, plans, actions, etc. of another person—or character, in this case—as ourselves, because we have suspended our own planning processor to adopt that of the character. In this way, a discourse can alter a person's idea of self, because it is allowing him or her to experience emotions "in contexts that we would not ordinarily encounter, and to think of ourselves in ways that usually we do not."[276] We can find ourselves feeling the emotions of and identifying with a character who may at first seemed very far-removed from our day-to-day experiences and who we may have previously thought was unlike us. Oatley suggests that this can be a difficult experience, because we might be "understating in ourselves certain potentialities that we might not normally admit to ourselves, which we might think belong only to others." Through fiction, he says, "We discover that we too, as members of the family of human beings, are at least mentally capable of emotions that are not very creditable."[277]

If an experiencer is feeling Emotions of Identification, it seems likely that he or she could be at risk for Personal Distress, since the distinction between self and other has been mostly suspended when giving up one's own planning processor to adopt that of the character. This is not a danger when the character is experiencing the joy of a wedding or the deliciousness of an

---

[275] Ibid., 116.
[276] Ibid., 118.
[277] Ibid., 117.

ice cream cone, but as a general rule, narrative requires conflict to retain the interest of its audience.

The second technique that Oatley describes, Emotions of Sympathy, concerns an experiencer's ability to feel positive emotions of altruistic concern when characters are under duress. We are removed from the closeness of Emotions of Identification, because we remain aware that we are coming in contact with something that has been fabricated for us. Instead, we feel Emotions of Sympathy, such as pity or compassion.

> We feel them because the film-makers first clothe us in invisibility and then take us, as if by magic, to witness a scene with emotional implications, then another, then another. We are like those time travelers transported to another era: we can see what is going on but we can't affect it in any way . . . According to this idea the process has two parts. One is the construction by writers or film-makers of events (predicaments) liable to cause emotions in the characters. The second is that we readers and audience-members appraise these events, and recognize what emotions they would cause.[278]

When we can experience Emotions of Sympathy for a character, it shows that we have concern for the events that are occurring in that character's life and will continue to engage with the narrative until we learn his or her fate.

While the first two types of emotion concern new affective responses to the discourse, the second two types depend on memory of past emotions. Literary Emotion has its foundation the *rasas* of Indian drama. Oatley explains:

---

[278] Ibid., 18-19.

> In the *rasa* theory of literary emotions, our enjoyment of a fictional story derives first from recognizing patterns of emotions that we have experienced ourselves (in life or literature) in a new context. We project ourselves imaginatively into this context, and experience the emotions in a way that enables us to understand them more deeply, and in the process perhaps to make some changes in ourselves.[279]

Imagine, for example, that we encounter a discourse where a character enacts or describes the indications of fear when encountering a parent who physically abuses him or her. If an experiencer can remember a time when he or she felt those same indicators of fear—but from the point of view of almost being hit by a car—the experiencer can gain insight into the feelings of the character. If the experiencer has had a good relationship with his or her parents, it could be difficult to understand the fear of the character, but the experiencer's personal memory of the same emotion can bridge that gap and develop a deeper understanding. In this way, Oatley says, "A remembered emotion is now experienced in a new context, so the range of our experience of it is increased."[280]

The final type of emotion is Relived Emotion, which is based on the idea of aesthetic distance. If art is to prompt emotions, it should do so from a safe aesthetic distance, one that is neither so distant as to not affect us, nor so close as to overwhelm us. Because the conditions of a discourse are more controlled than our everyday lives, we can relive our emotions at an optimal aesthetic distance, evaluate them, and assimilate them into our lives.

> In the theory of relived emotion, a fictional story is enjoyable because it is therapeutic. Therapy derives from a moving forward in our sense of ourselves, and of being able properly to experience emotions that have been problematic for

[279] Ibid., 124.
[280] Ibid., 122.

> us . . . Perhaps, at the play, our experience of sadness allows us to make a small further step in assimilating our loss.[281]

It is possible for an experiencer to move in and out of these four different states, encountering fresh emotions and remembering emotions of the past. In a study conducted by Oatley and his colleagues Gerald Cupchik and Peter Vorderer, the instructed subjects read passages of James Joyce's short stories and either feel what it was like to be the protagonist (as in Identification) or feel concern for the protagonist (as in Sympathy).

> In response to the emotional passages, we found that fresh emotions and emotional memories occurred about equally often, but with the descriptively dense passages, identification prompted readers to experience more fresh emotions, and sympathy prompted them toward emotional memories. Fresh emotions and emotional memories do not therefore occur because of alternative theories, but as different processes during reading.[282]

In this movement between emotional states, we are able to make our own juxtapositions and expand our experience of emotions beyond what we encounter in our everyday lives. Engaging with characters can be risky, however, because of the competing beliefs and emotions they may bring to an experiencer's consciousness. As some people may choose the wrong friends, it is possible to choose the wrong discourses. Oatley says, "Friends affect us. They change us. And just as we are careful whom we choose as friends, […] so we are careful what we read and what literary characters, or what narrators, we become mentally involved with."[283]

---

[281] Ibid., 125-126.
[282] Ibid., 126.
[283] Ibid., 101.

4.5 PROMOTING EMPATHY THROUGH FAMILY TIES

Barry decided to shed light upon just those sorts of questionable people, individuals who his family and society deemed inappropriate and wished to remove from public awareness. When society "others" these individuals, there is a dehumanizing that occurs which reduces individuals to mere categories: the Traitor, the Fallen Woman, the Thief. Yet the popularity of Barry's plays and novels and the acclaim with which he is generally regarded indicates that his writing allows us to look past the difficult subject matter and empathize with the characters, to become involved and invested in lives that others have deemed unseemly. Barry accomplishes this by emphasizing the bonds of family and friendship, which elicits from the experiencer an affective response that helps to re-humanize the categorized other.

Gerrig and Allbritton assert that we look toward character behavior in order to understand causation and plot, and therefore, by Oatley's reasoning, engage in Theory of Mind in order to predict that behavior. Gerrig and Allbritton suggest that in this process, we utilize either category-based or person-based representations to make sense of the character's actions. They write, "The major distinction is whether we conceptualize some individual as a member of some well-defined category—and generate expectations based on the norms of that category—or if we take the individual to be a unique instance—and generate expectations based on our history of observation of the individual."[284] In the case of James Bond, they begin with the larger categories of "good guys" and "bad guys," and identify Bond's category as first "good guy," then become more specific with "secret agent." The process of freeing a character from a generalized category is difficult, because our first impression (in which a category is established)

[284] Gerrig and Allbritton, "The Construction of Literary Character," under "Category- and Person-Based Expectations".

can cause us to overlook details that are inconsistent with the category we have assigned to the character. More attentive reading can help to shift our representations of the character from category-based to person-based.

> For readers who become more deeply involved, the shift to a person-based representation requires a reorganization of memory. Rather than seeing James Bond as a member of a small number of categories, category memberships become only a small part of the information associated with him. In this memory organization, we start to have specific recollections of the properties of specific individuals—and these dictate our generation of expectations. We may, for example, examine the situation in which we currently find our hero and try to locate a similar past experience. In our memory for that past experience, we should find fuel for our expectations.[285]

When writers employ the affective techniques that Oatley outlined, they are creating more opportunities for experiencers to engage in person-based Theory of Mind processes, because feelings of empathy derive from a simulation in which we are "like" the other person.

Barry uses these affective techniques effectively in order to reverse the "othering," or "categorization," of his ancestors as undesirables. He accomplishes this chiefly by anchoring them solidly within ties of family and strong friendships. In our experience as human beings, one thing we all have in common is that we were created by another human being. Those who do not grow up within a traditional family structure can still lay claim to being someone's daughter or son, and even in the case of orphans, they are defined as such by the loss of a family. Individuals without family will often develop strong bonds with friends to replace the lack of family

---

[285] Ibid.

connection. Barry strengthens our empathetic bond with the characters by reminding us of our own familial bonds. Many of his characters draw upon the power of familial and platonic love to offset negative emotions associated with the traumatic events in which they find themselves. In this way, Barry is not only humanizing his character for the experiencer—by strengthening our empathetic bond by allowing us to recall our own familial bonds—but also helping the experiencer forge through traumatic material that could potentially be overwhelming.

When discussing the theme of exile in chapter one, I pointed out that in *The Prayers of Sherkin*, the tone of Fanny's departure—and subsequent shunning—from her family is full of love and tenderness, rather than spite and bitterness. During this emotional time for Fanny, who is departing for a strange new life and leaving her family forever, she and her family recall her deceased mother, Charity; Fanny's Aunt Hannah helps her to assemble a hope chest with Charity's things and Fanny's father John regales her with the moving story of her birth. By focusing on fonder memories of her mother, Fanny can manage the possible fear of leaving.

In *White Woman Street*, Trooper O'Hara also focuses on his mother during an emotionally tumultuous time. He and his band of friends are nearing the town where they will rob a train, but Trooper is more concerned with facing the ghosts of his past than the gold they will pilfer. He intends to visit the brothel where a young Indian woman killed herself—an event for which Trooper has taken responsibility over the past thirty years—and as they draw nearer to the town, Trooper stands apart and remembers his mother.

> Berry-gathering. One day she comes in with red gloves, as she might say, the next blue. Maybe purple, maybe the strange stain of the elderberry. All them things would turn up later in bottles—local wine. I don't know if she lives. People in Sligo who knew her said she could make a good wine out of haws—a thing rarely

> done. Or better, yewberries, the killer of cows. Maybe the ma done that. Maybe her arms smelled so good because she was forever scrubbing them—scrubbing off the juices—in that white tin basin with burning soap. Sometimes her arms were just rainbows. She smelled of the fires of soap. A young woman making wine for her husband's friends. Making all them wines. And scrubbing. I don't know if she lives.[286]

Trooper's mother's talent lay in making berry wine, while the father of the eponymous hero of *The Only True History of Lizzie Finn* was known for his singing. As he, his wife, and little Lizzie wandered the countryside of Kerry, he would sing in wealthy homes to earn money for their poor family. When Lizzie arrives in Kerry as Robert Gibson's wife, she is alarmed to find that he is from a very distinguished family and higher class than herself.

> I didn't know he was a king, I didn't know. (*She sits ill at ease on a chair, looks at the fireplace*.) He'd be set there on a hearth like that, singing. My father. Lovely Neapolitan songs to break your heart. He'd be given a pair of hard shoes to stand in, so as not to cause offence. Then they'd take them off him at the door. And off into the night with us with our sixpence. Oh, Lord.[287]

Lizzie invokes the memory of her father to comfort herself and perhaps remind herself of her true identity, so that she is not fundamentally changed by her new title of "Lady Gibson."

In Barry's *The Steward of Christendom* and *Our Lady of Sligo*, the emergence of the family trope is much less subtle than in his other discourses, since these two pieces are memory

---

[286] Sebastian Barry, *White Woman Street*, in *Sebastian Barry Plays: 1* (London: Methuen Drama, 1997), 132-133.
[287] Sebastian Barry, *The Only True History of Lizzie Finn*, in *Sebastian Barry Plays: 1* (London: Methuen Drama, 1997), 199.

plays, and the structure moves seamlessly from scenes in present day to scenes of the past. The remembrance of family serves in much the same way as it does for Lizzie, as Thomas in *The Steward of Christendom* struggles to maintain a sense of self during his incarceration in a mental hospital, and Mai in *Our Lady of Sligo* desperately seeks respite from the pain of terminal cancer. Both characters are grappling with fundamental changes in their lives: Thomas with acute mental infirmity and Mai with alarmingly imminent death. Thomas consoles himself with memory scenes that involve his role as a father to his four children, while Mai finds comfort in memories of being the much beloved young daughter of her father.

In *Annie Dunne*, the title character is also comforted by the memory of her father. Annie is tortured by the thought that she will soon be homeless if her cousin Sarah decides to marry the scheming farmhand, Billy. As Annie visits her brother-in-law in the hospital, she worries that she has been so distracted by her own situation that she neglected to tell Matt about the blackthorn she placed in his butter—a country tradition to keep it fresh—which stuck in his throat. Overwhelmed by the memory of her unrequited love for Matt and the memory of the events that led to her incarcerating her mentally unsound father in this same hospital, she spends the night at the hospital instead of returning to the farm.

> They put me that night in my father's old room. It is a strange coincidence. No other room can take me, and otherwise I would be sitting on a hard chair in the corridor . . .
>
> And I sleep a clear and restful night, I wonder at the accident that has brought me there. For what purpose? Such peace, such rest. No dreams, no frighting thoughts. It is very strange. Though I fear the room greatly as I enter, they have painted the old yellow walls with a fresh, buttery colour, there are a few

> coals burning in the once famished grate, and the iron bed that was his raft of dreams is gone, replaced by a spanking new thing of shining chrome. The sheets, which in his day were speckled by mildews and filth, are Belfast quality and well starched. The atmosphere of the room has been allayed, removed. It is just a place, a new place. His ghost is gone.
>
> And yet in another way I feel his ghost, benign and loving, fatherly and kind. I have lain on the bed and looked at the ceiling that he looked at, in the watches of his last days. And there is no terror. I think it is that he has wrapped me round all that night. His released soul watches over me, his ageing daughter . . . For his ghost, if ghost it is that lets me sleep, sleep finer than for many a year, is benign and calm.[288]

Barry moves away from blood ties and focuses on the connection between man and woman in *On Canaan's Side*. Lilly learns of the IRA death sentence that has been set upon her fiancé and herself and travels to Dublin with her father to orchestrate their escape. She is overwhelmed by the enormity of the situation as they travel north by bus.

> "I am very frightened, Papa. What is going to happen? What will Tadg do with the death sentence against him?"
>
> I don't fully know what I thought about Tadg up to that point. There's no point talking about love, what's sure as sure is no human person knows what that is. A youngster uses the word as if it has no mystery, like it is a factual matter, like a nun says the word "God". That clean look to him, a sort of scrubbed appearance, and the lovely liquorice-looking eyes he had, with pupils the size of

[288] Sebastian Barry, *Annie Dunne* (New York: Viking, 2002), 193-194.

> farthings, and the feeling I had about that, could hardly be deemed love. It wasn't till I sat in that bus, now weeping with terror, my bare leg banging against my father's, I do remember that so vividly, and him thinking thinking at my side, that I realized that if I didn't *love* Tadg, I was certainly not willing to be torn away from him, by his death or my death. I had had a secret plan, unknown even to myself, to attach myself to him, and those black eyes. And this huge emergency did bring it home to me that I set a great value on him.[289]

Lilly's situation brings into sharp focus her tender feelings for Tadg, while this poignant description allows Lilly—and the experiencer—some distance from the terror of the impending death sentence and covert escape.

In *The Secret Scripture*, Roseanne's connection with family distances her not from sudden terror, but from a long and enduring loneliness. Roseanne and Eneas find each other in the midst of war and exile. Roseanne has been banished to a hut at the edge of town for nearly eight years, ostracized by a family and society who believe she committed adultery. She receives a visit from the local priest, who informs her that—without her knowledge—he has finally obtained an annulment of her marriage. Eneas has just narrowly escaped the German air raid on Belfast and knows that he has a limited amount of time before the IRA discovers his presence and assassinates him. When Roseanne meets him on the road, she is astonished and grateful for his friendliness, something she has not experienced from anyone in the town for years. Likewise, Eneas is taken aback when she invites him inside and offers him food, aware that his death-sentence renders him a pariah.

---

[289] Sebastian Barry, *On Canaan's Side* (New York: Viking, 2011), 51. Italics in original.

> I handed him the thick slice of bread and cheese, and he wolfed it down gently where he stood.
>
> "Well," he said then, smiling, "it's nice to have family."
>
> And I laughed.
>
> "I know what you mean," I said. . . .
>
> "I thank you," he said, with complete simplicity and sincerity. I was so affected to be thanked by another human being. I was so affected by hearing another human speak to me with grace and respect. I was standing still also now, staring at him, almost astonished.[290]

In Eneas's own story, *The Whereabouts of Eneas McNulty*, Barry points toward the intense bond of love between friends. Eneas was exiled from Ireland in 1922, and returned home in the 1940s (when he met Roseanne), only to be chased off again. When he is separated from his friend Harcourt while trying to leave Nigeria, he finds himself heading back home to Ireland in 1958 at nearly sixty years of age. In the most unfortunate of coincidences, he encounters his boyhood friend and would-be assassin, Jonno Lynch, when he arrives at the airport. Eneas knows that he only has a matter of days to see his family before he will be hunted down again. In a moment of joy, however, he receives a letter from Harcourt, saying that he has been searching for Eneas since their separation in Nigeria.

> But I've sought you ever since, in Nairobi and secondly along the coast, with no reward. And I doubt in my heart you could be in Sligo, it being your dark Lagos after all, full of wretched killers. But Sligo's the only name I have after the Isle of

---

[290] Sebastian Barry, *The Secret Scripture* (New York: Penguin Books, 2008), 240.

> Dogs, and God send this letter to you in the upshot. You see I sorely miss you, my brother. And hope this letter finds you and finds you well.[291]

Eneas is moved by the letter and rescued by the thought that he has someone with whom to connect when he is forced out of his home country once again.

> In any court in the land he would count it a remarkable letter. Not just because it has reached him but also the bird of friendship flying about among the words. Yes, sir, it is a mighty thing to enjoy the fact of a friend in the world. A mighty thing. He is affected to his boots by it. The old tone of Harcourt carried in a perilous letter. The living force of it.[292]

Barry's novel *A Long Long Way* is rife with examples like that in *The Whereabouts of Eneas McNulty*, since it follows a group of young men through the trenches of World War I. The main character, Willie, must return to the front in Flanders after being hospitalized in England for shell shock.

> He didn't understand the war in the upshot, and he had thought to himself a dozen times and more that no one on earth understood it rightly. And he certainly didn't desire it and he feared it like the hunted animal fears the hunter and the hounds—but all the same he grew happier the closer he drew to his friends . . . But still he hurried back along the ways of the war, and with a curious pride he came into the place where his new platoon was set, and gave Christy Moran a glad hello, and received one back, and an embrace. . . .

---

[291] Sebastian Barry, *The Whereabouts of Eneas McNulty* (New York: Penguin Books, 1998), 277.
[292] Ibid.

> "I sent all of Timmy Weekes' things back, like you do, and I hoped his father and mother wouldn't' mind it, but I kept this back. I was going to send it on to you in a while. But you're here now, Willie, and can take charge of it."
>
> It was the Dostoevsky that had made that winter near Ypres well-nigh bearable. Willie didn't cry then. He felt proud, somehow, and loving towards Timmy Weekes. The King of England was a gentleman and his soldier Timmy Weekes was, too. The war was a fucking folly and it had ruined the lot of them and even the living were ruined, and it would never be any different, but Timmy Weekes was a gentleman.
>
> "Thanks a lot, Sarge," said Willie Dunne.
>
> "I just thought you might like to have it," said Christy Moran, in elegant tones not entirely characteristic of him.[293]

This novel in particular is difficult in terms of subject matter, as depictions of battle and the ensuing emotional and psychological effect on the characters are realistically graphic. Within this novel, Barry uses the bond of love between family, man and woman, as well as the strong bond of friendship between the enlisted men to offset the horror of the conditions in which Willie finds himself.

Through the ten discourses, this remembrance of family and friends creates a bittersweet emotional tone, one that is full of love, yet dampened by the traumatic circumstances in which those memories occur. This emotional tone is highlighted by the humanity experiencers can find through empathizing with the characters because of these familial connections, and the knowledge that the historical people on whom the characters are based were once forced to the

[293] Sebastian Barry, *A Long Long Way* (New York: Penguin Books, 2005), 282-283.

margins of civilization and treated as unworthy of the regard of other people. Through this testimony, Barry is offering a narrative for Ireland to integrate into its history, one that brings humanity and dignity back to Ireland's forgotten people and a more complete sense of what it means to be Irish today. Perhaps if enough people see Barry's plays and read his fiction, they too will be affected and offer their own testimonies in an effort to heal the gaps in the families and communities that are at the foundation of Ireland.

5.0 CONCLUSION

Bear Ithaca always in your thoughts.
Arriving there is the goal of your journey;
but take care not to travel too hastily.
Better to linger for years on your way;
better to reach the island's shores in old age,
enriched by all you've obtained along the way.
Do not expect that Ithaca will reward you with wealth.

Ithaca bestowed upon you the marvelous journey:
if not for her you would never have set out.
But she has nothing left to impart to you.

If you find Ithaca wanting, it's not that she's deceived you.
That you have gained so much wisdom and experience
will have told you everything of what such Ithacas mean.[294]

-C.P. Cavafy, "Ithaca" (1911)

The excerpt above from C.P. Cavafy's poem "Ithaca" strikes a chord for any individual who has undertaken a long journey toward a goal that, at its end, somehow lacked in the promise it radiated at the journey's beginning. The secret, as Cafavy says, is not to blame Ithaca for being less than what you expected, but to focus on the growth and learning you acquired trying to reach it. Barry has quoted this poem in interviews when asked about his views on "Irishness."

> Cavafy wisely said Ithaca might be a disappointment, unreachable even, but it was Ithaca gave you the journey. Fear not the Lestrygonians! Most [of] the adjectives that traditionally make up a definition of Irishness I can lay scant claim

[294] Constantine P. Cavafy, "Ithaca" in *The Canon: The Original One Hundred and Fifty-Four Poems*, translated by Stratis Haviaras (Washington, D.C.: Center for Hellenic Studies, 2007), 91-92.

> to. So I have been trying to rearrange those adjectives to give me some chance in the lottery of citizenship. It's a hopeless task, but the hopelessness gave me the journey.[295]

It is remarkable that a writer like Barry, who has earned many awards from Ireland for his fiction about exclusively Irish people, does not see himself as "traditionally" Irish. He has stated that it is important to him to be considered an Irish writer, but hearkening back to a quote from the Introduction, "The sort of Irish person I am might not have been considered very Irish years ago; and my wife is a Dublin Presbyterian, whose father's generation was definitively told they weren't really Irish."[296] The fact that he spent many years of his childhood living in England does not help his case, as is evidenced by the altercation between Martin McDonagh and Conor McPherson, when McPherson identified McDonagh insultingly as "stage Irish."

Barry is acutely aware that shifting definitions of Irishness are the source of much of the turmoil in his country, in both the past and the present.

> It's difficult to say what an Irish person is. That's what we've spent the century since independence doing—looking for shared tradition, then corrupting it, then fighting about the corrupting of it. Dev's [Eamon de Valera's] idea was that we were all rural, Catholic, poor: he tried to shoehorn a country together, but it was a country of very different people, and if you were Protestant, wealthy or middle class you somehow weren't "Irish", and that's what a good deal of the fighting's

---

[295] Mária Kurdi, "'Really All Danger': An Interview with Sebastian Barry," *New Hibernia Review* 8, no. 1 (2004), 46.

[296] Sophie Rochester, "Recovering Ireland's hidden history," Author Interview, www.themanbookerprize.com/perspective/articles/1137.

been about. Why did we do that to ourselves? Why did anyone let us do that to ourselves?[297]

In his ten plays and novels, Barry addresses this issue of Irishness through the creation of characters who are based on historical ancestors from his own family tree, particularly individuals who have been selectively silenced for their failure to adhere to political and societal norms deemed appropriate for the historical narrative of Ireland and, thus, a traditional definition of Irishness.

This study began with a textual analysis designed to illustrate—both figuratively and literally—the mutual relevance of ten discourses that span two different genres of fictional writing. The outcome of this analysis indicates a singular project rich with intertextuality and multiple, interwoven themes. It is no longer adequate for scholars to nod vaguely at connections between these ten discourses. By imparting the title of *Ancestors Cycle* on the ten plays and novels, we can acknowledge Barry's thirty-year effort in service of the healing of Ireland and of proposing a more inclusive definition of Irish Identity, one that speaks to the diverse cultural and historical richness of the country.

This reference to the "healing of Ireland" speaks to the notion that the Irish have for years lived through traumatic events so numerous and varied that they warrant a fictional condition: "Irish trauma." Barry's treatment of these horrific events across the *Ancestors Cycle* comes with it a risk of being psychologically affected by such personal and negative material. The second chapter of this study examines the role of the writer who puts him or herself at risk by engaging with this type of subject matter. Far from being confined to only Barry's situation, this

---

[297] Sebastian Barry, "Observer Magazine: Upfront: THIS MUCH I KNOW: Sebastian Barry: Author, 54, Dublin," *Observer* (England), October 4, 2009, 10.

investigation is based in the biological and neurological functioning of human beings and can be applied broadly to any writer who approaches writing about traumatic events.

The sub-title of this dissertation references the dual role of the writer as both therapist and witness, which I also explicate in chapter two of this study, but the two titles are far more intertwined than a common understanding of the terms would suggest. Any experienced therapist who engages in counseling with a victim of trauma must become a witness in order for the victim to break the silence and speak the unspeakable in the form of testimony. I quoted Dori Laub in chapter two:

> The listener to trauma comes to be a participant and a co-owner of the traumatic event: through his very listening, he comes to partially experience trauma in himself. . . .The listener has to feel the victim's victories, defeats and silences, know them from within, so that they can assume the form of testimony.[298]

This openness from the therapist leaves him or her vulnerable to the powerful effects that empathy can have. By partially experiencing the trauma of the victim and feeling the "victories, defeats and silences" from within, the propensity for losing the ability to distinguish self from other is apparent. Therapists can and do suffer from vicarious traumatization, but by engaging in the same testimonial practices as their clients, they can achieve healing as well.

As therapists must empathize with their clients, so too must writers empathize with their characters in order to make them engaging for an audience. By partially experiencing the trauma of their characters and feeling the "victories, defeats and silences" from within, writers can also suffer from vicarious traumatization. The practice of healing, however, comes directly from the storytelling in which the writers engage, as they offer their own testimony on the experiences of

---

[298] Dori Laub, "Bearing Witness, or the Vicissitudes of Listening," in *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 57-58.

the characters. The healing power of narrative for victims of trauma is evident from the psychological work of Judith Lewis Herman and James W. Pennebaker. But when historical trauma is the topic of a writer's discourse, the ability to distinguish between the actual loss of the historical individuals and a writer's own feeling of an unresolved absence does not make healing easy. Many secondary witnesses are caught in a neverending cycle of mourning because they attempt to engage with a loss that never happened specifically to them.

Secondary witnessing in the form of art can help to fill in the gaps that the silences of trauma have created and to serve as a testimony to the loss of historical specificity regarding a trauma. This, Dora Apel writes, is one of the major benefits of the art of secondary witnessing regarding the Holocaust and Dominick La Capra agrees that fiction serves traumatic memory "by giving at least a plausible 'feel' for experience and emotion which may be difficult to arrive at through restricted documentary methods."[299] But Apel also points toward another benefit that speaks toward Barry's particular project, saying that the art of secondary witnessing "serves as a site of resistance . . . to the historical homogenization of Jewish identity."[300] If we substitute "Irish" for "Jewish," we immediately see the connection between Barry's concerns for ancestors who were written out of the Irish historical narrative and their ability to problematize a reductively homogenous definition of Irish Identity.

This element of testimony is at the core of Roger I. Simon's pedagogy of remembrance. Testimony has the potential to create a significant impact on the larger community by not only educating the masses about lacunae in their collective historical narrative, but also causing them to question a fundamental understanding of the varying elements that identify them. Rogers says

---

[299] Dominick LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 13.
[300] Dora Apel, *Memory Effects: The Holocaust and the Art of Secondary Witnessing* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2002), 7.

that we "have to consider a form of public history that opens one to both the demand of, and responsibility to, the alterity of the historical experience of others—an alterity that disrupts the presumption of the 'self-same.'"[301] In order to move forward as a society, to imagine a future that is democratic, we must engage with the historical experience of the other.

In chapter two I suggested that a writer's testimony as a secondary witness in the form of a narrative was the particular practice that helped him or her move beyond the traumatizing effects of empathizing with a character to the point of distress. Beyond that, Barry's secondary witness testimony is a pedagogical tool that seeks to not necessarily change the definition of what it means to be Irish, but rather to allow for multiple definitions of that identity by uncovering the alterity of Ireland's forgotten people. This is a moment in which the pedagogy of remembrance occurs. Simon writes:

> It is a moment in which learning is not simply the acquisition of new information, but an acceptance of another's testamentary address as a possible inheritance, a difficult "gift" that in its demand for a non-indifference, may open questions, interrupt conventions, and set thought to work through the inadequate character of the terms on which I grasp myself and the world. This is thought that needs the other, thought that lives through the life of another with the implication that we are dependent on an other for what is ours.[302]

The power of Barry's and other individuals' testimonies is at the core of healing the many tears in Ireland's historical fabric. By accepting Barry's "difficult gift" of the *Ancestors Cycle* and integrating what was once deemed unseemly back into the historical narrative, today's

---

[301] Roger I. Simon, "Remembering Otherwise: Civic Life and the Pedagogical Promise of Historical Memory," in *The Touch of the Past: Remembrance, Learning, and Ethics* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 4.
[302] Ibid., 7-8.

Irish can better understand in a very complex and real way who they are, where they come from, and how they can situate themselves in a global context for the continued health and growth of Ireland.

APPENDIX A

FIGURES

Figure 1 | Chronology of Discourses

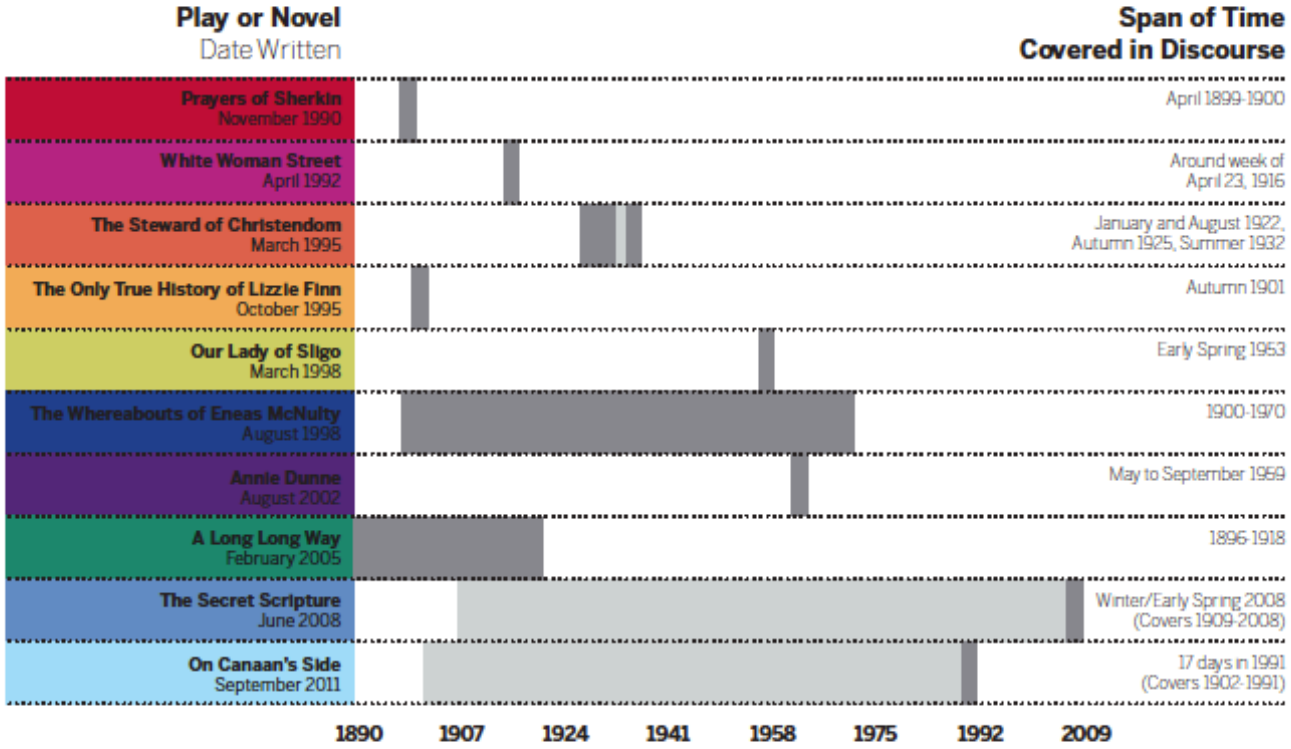

Figure 1: Chronology of Discourses

Figure 2 | Family Tree

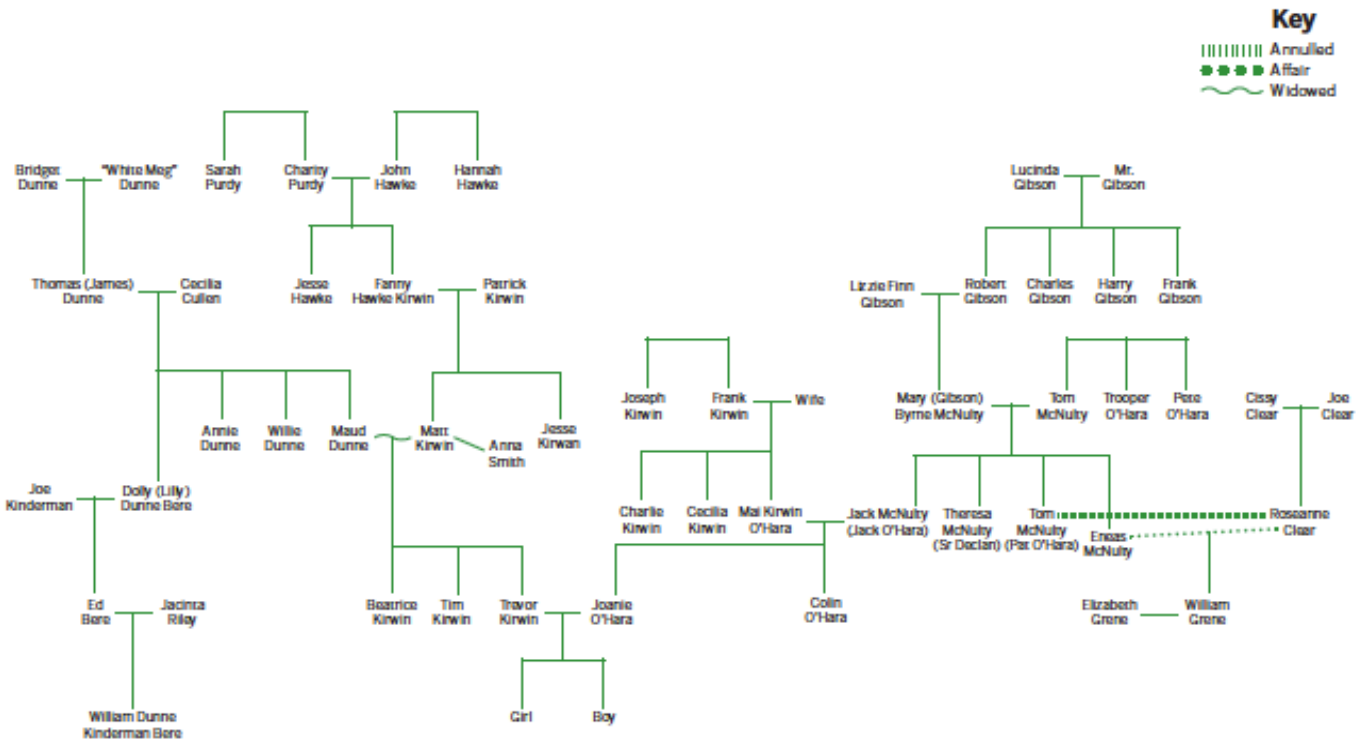

Figure 2: Family Tree

Figure 3 | Theme of War

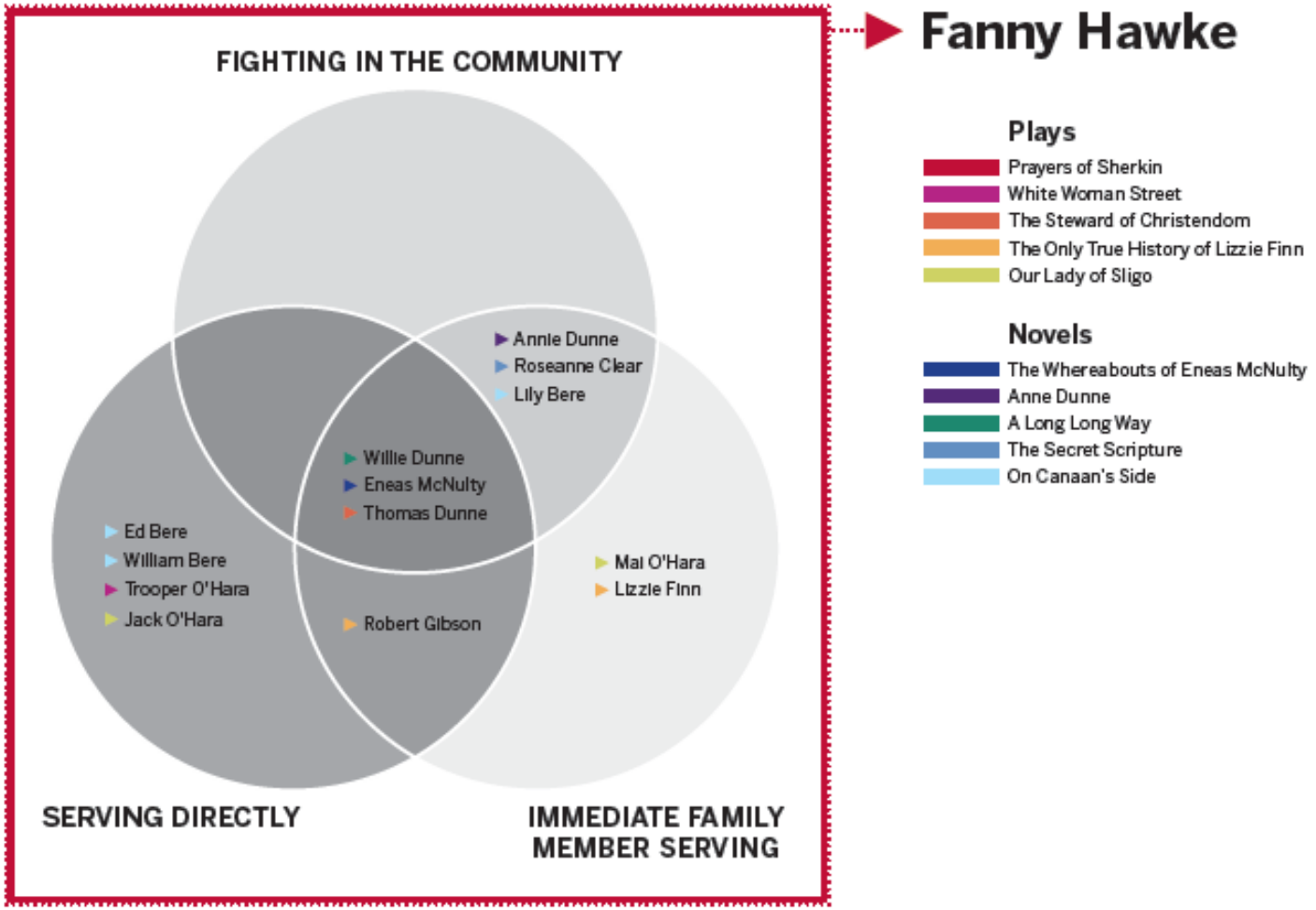

Figure 3: Theme of War

Figure 4 | Theme of Exile

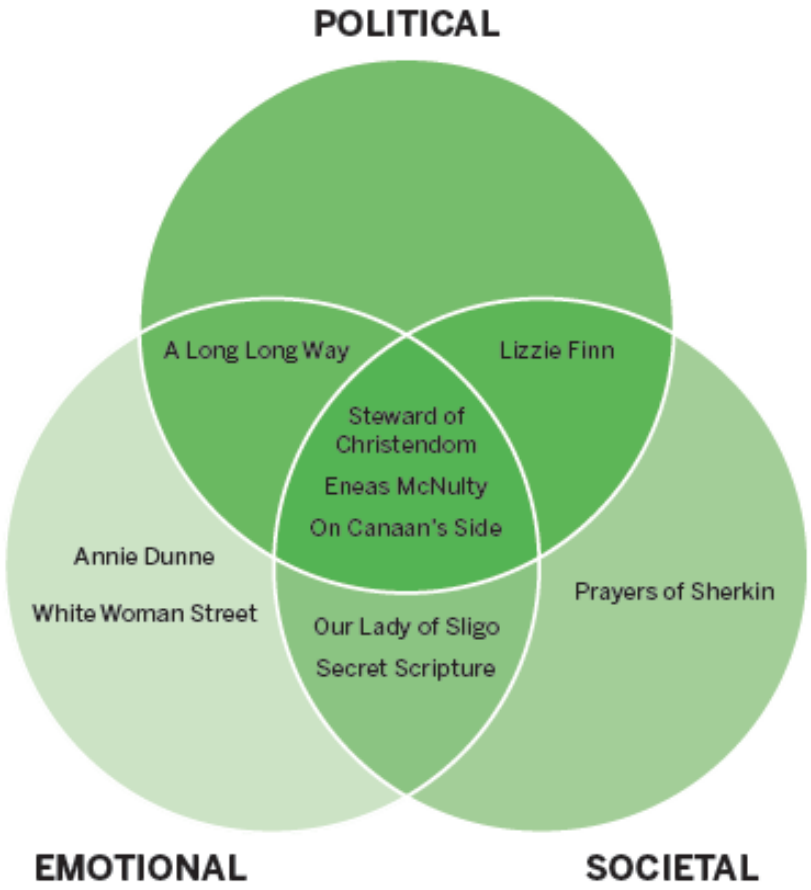

Figure 4: Theme of Exile

Figure 5 | Theme of Music

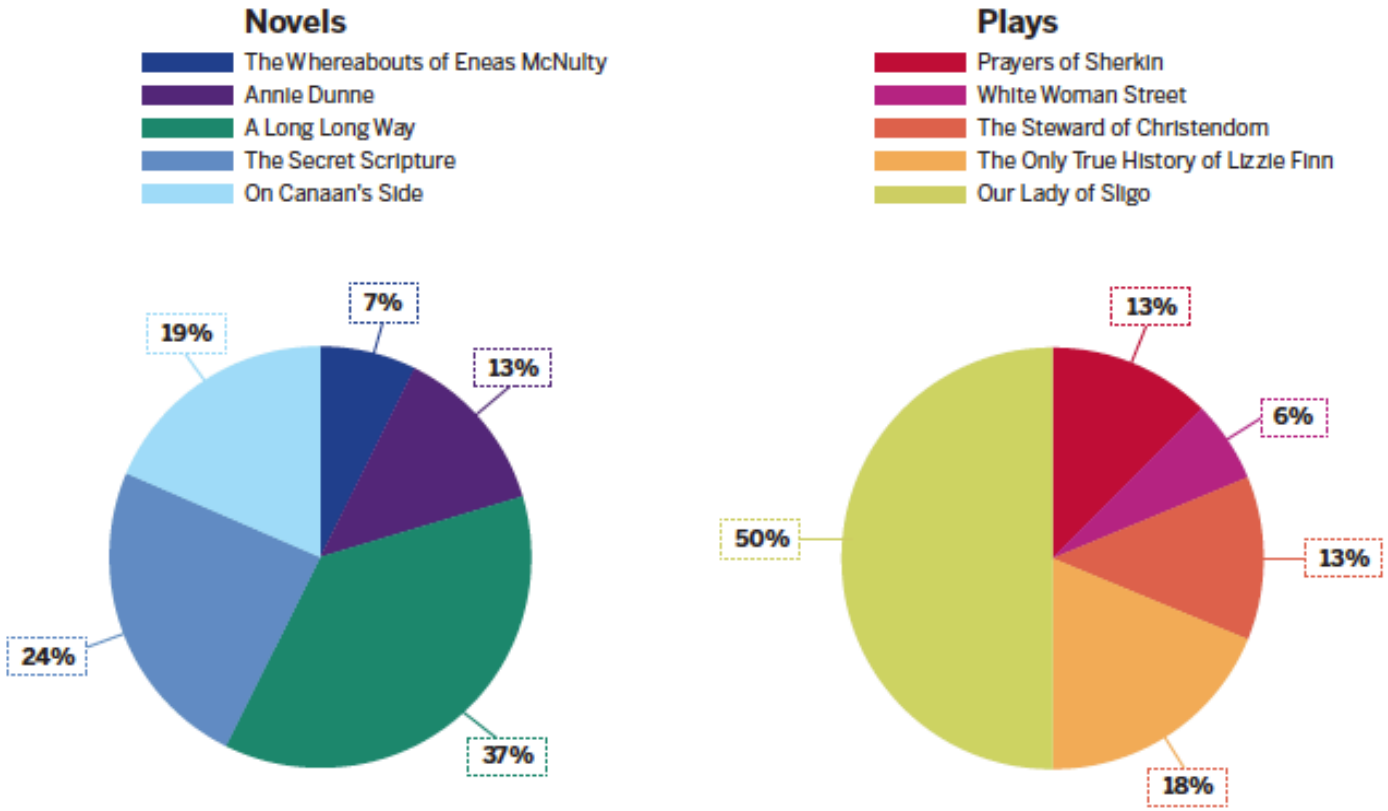

Figure 5: Theme of Music

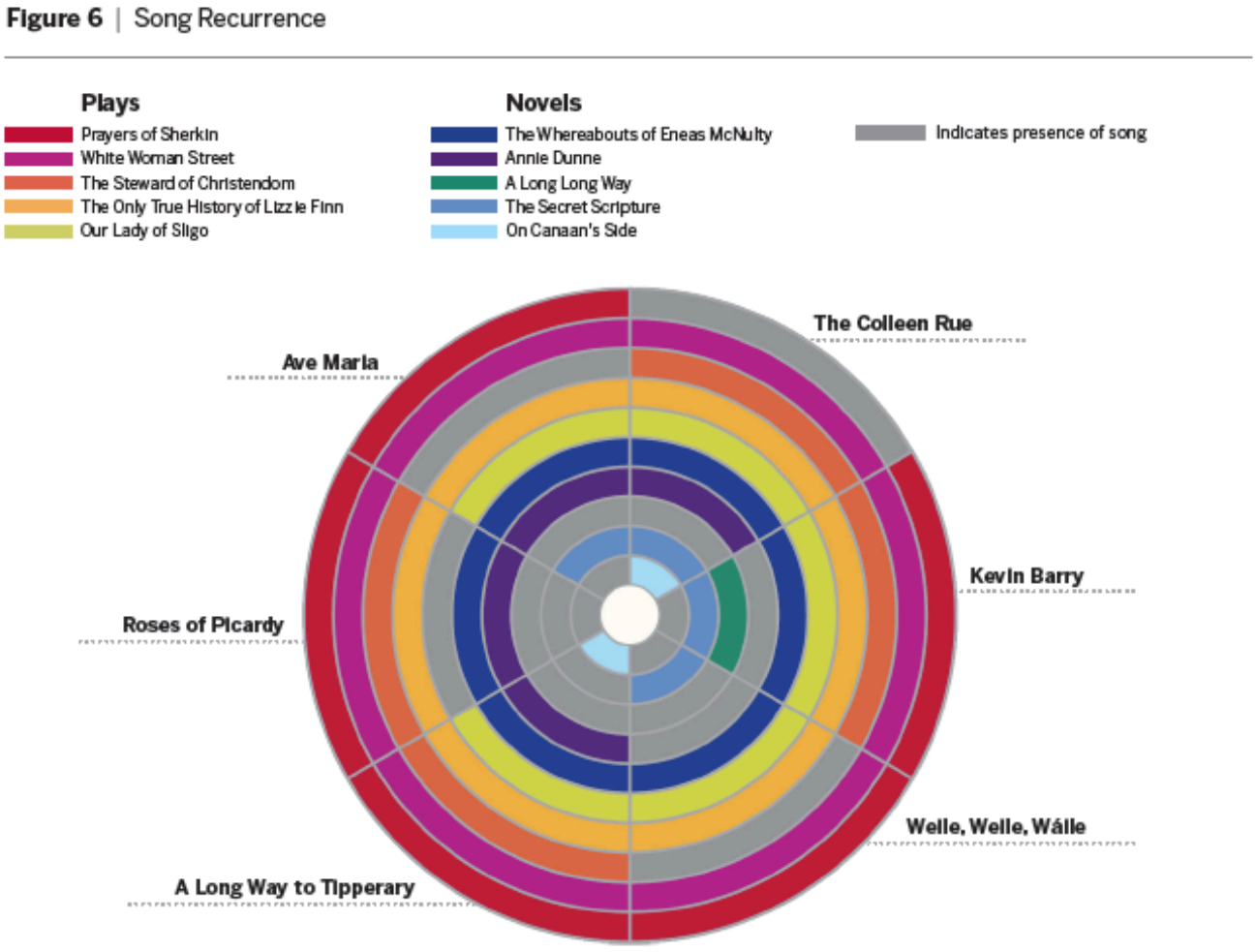

Figure 6: Song Recurrence

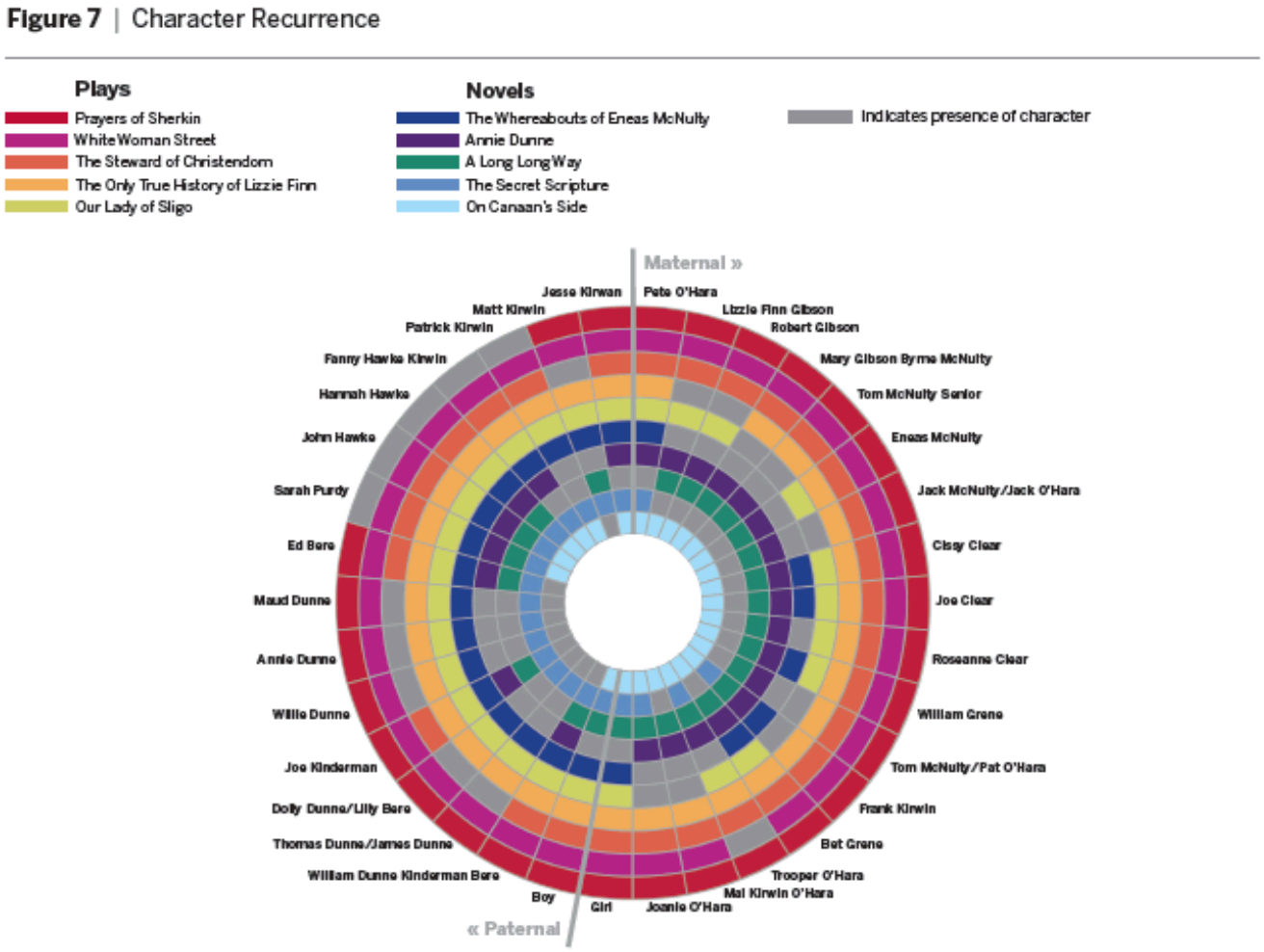

Figure 7: Character Recurrence

Figure 8 | Causal Sequence Intersections

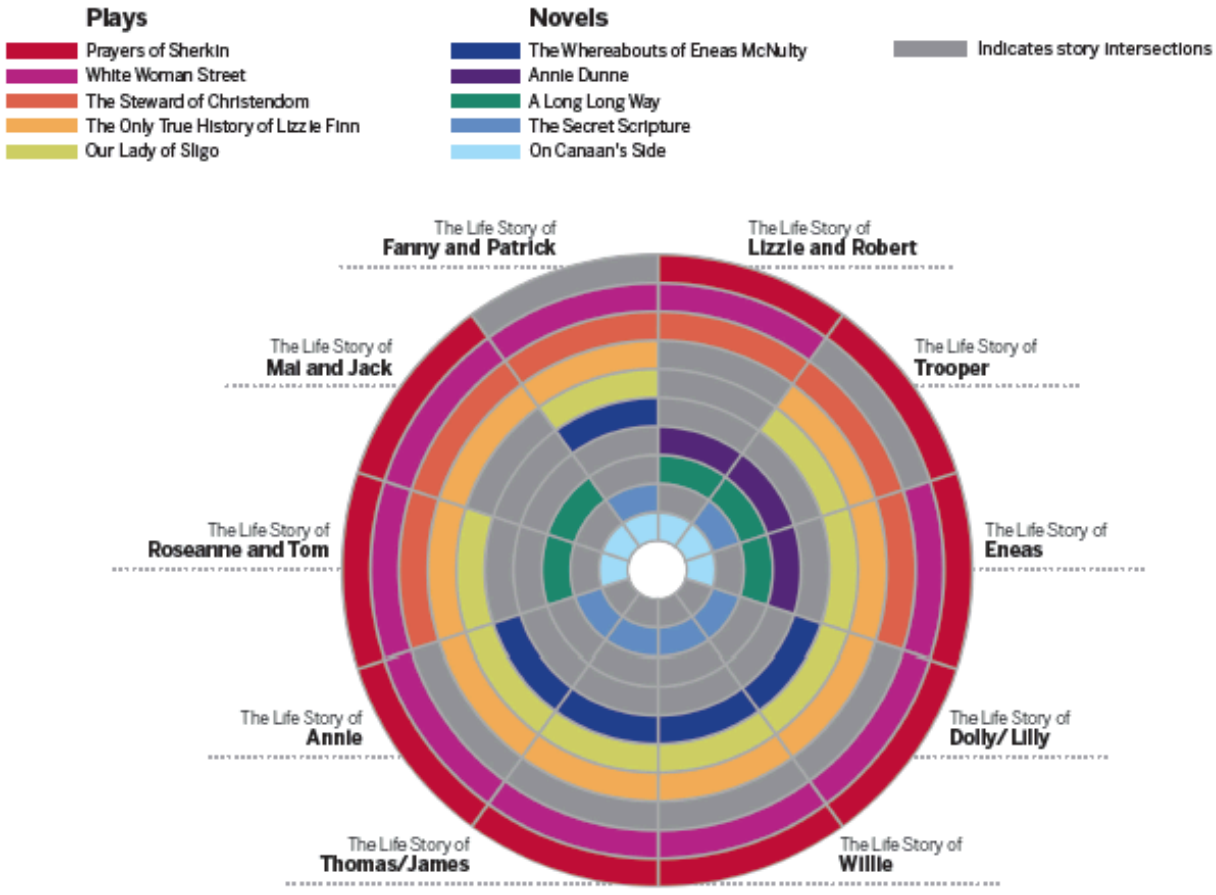

Figure 8: Causal Sequence Intersections

APPENDIX B

SEBASTIAN BARRY BIBLIOGRAPHY

DRAMA
1989 *Boss Grady's Boys*
1990 *Prayers of Sherkin*
1992 *White Woman Street*
1995 *The Steward of Christendom*
1995 *The Only True History of Lizzie Finn*
1998 *Our Lady of Sligo*
2002 *Hinterland*
2004 *Whistling Psyche & Fred and Jane*
2007 *The Pride of Parnell Street*
2008 *Dallas Sweetman*
2009 *Tales of Ballycumber*
2010 *Andersen's English*

FICTION
1984 *Macker's Garden*
1984 *Time Out of Mind & Strappado Square*
1985 *Elsewhere: The Adventures of Belemus*
1988 *The Engine of Owl-Light*
1998 *The Whereabouts of Eneas McNulty*
2003 *Annie Dunne*
2005 *A Long Long Way*
2008 *The Secret Scripture*
2011 *On Canaan's Side*

POETRY
1983 *The Water-Colourist*
1985 *The Rhetorical Town*
1987 *Fanny Hawke Goes to the Mainland Forever*
2004 *The Pinkening Boy*

BIBLIOGRAPHY

"A Penguin Readers Guide to The Whereabouts of Eneas McNulty." In *The Whereabouts of Eneas McNulty* by Sebastian Barry. New York: Penguin Books, 1998.

Abrams, Madeleine Seifter. "Intergenerational Transmission of Trauma: Recent Contributions from the Literature of Family Systems Approaches to Treatment." *American Journal of Psycotherapy* 53, no. 2 (Spring 1999). 225-231.

American Psychiatric Association. *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*. Fourth edition, text revision. Washington, DC: Author, 2000.

Apel, Dora. *Memory Effects: The Holocaust and the Art of Secondary Witnessing*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2002.

Badger, James M. "Understanding Secondary Traumatic Stress." *American Journal of Nursing* 101, no. 7 (July 2001). 26-32.

Barry, Sebastian. *A Long Long Way*. New York: Penguin Books, 2005.

———. *Annie Dunne*. New York: Viking, 2002.

———"Observer Magazine: Upfront: THIS MUCH I KNOW: Sebastian Barry: Author, 54, Dublin." *Observer* (England). October 4, 2009. 10.

———. *On Canaan's Side*. New York: Viking, 2011.

———. *The Only True History of Lizzie Finn*. In *Sebastian Barry Plays: 1*. London: Methuen Drama, 1997.

———. *Our Lady of Sligo*. London: Methuen Publishing Limited, 1998.

———. *Prayers of Sherkin*. In *Sebastian Barry Plays: 1*. London: Methuen Drama, 1997.

———. "Preface." In *Sebastian Barry Plays: 1*. London: Methuen Drama, 1997.

———. *The Secret Scripture*. New York: Penguin Books, 2008.

———. *The Steward of Christendom*. In *Sebastian Barry Plays: 1*. London: Methuen Drama,

1997.

———. *The Whereabouts of Eneas McNulty*. New York: Penguin Books, 1998.

———. *White Woman Street.* In *Sebastian Barry Plays: 1*. London: Methuen Drama, 1997.

Barth, Diana. "The CRAIC: The Whereabouts of Sebastian Barry." *Irish Voice* 13, no. 16 (April 20, 1999). 18.

Batson, C. Daniel. "These Things Called Empathy: Eight Related but Distinct Phenomena." In *The Social Neuroscience of Empathy*. Edited by Jean Decety and William Ickes. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2009.

Battersby, Eileen. "'I can no longer decide what is invented and what is real.'" *Irish Times*. July 23, 2011. 7.

Baum, Rachel. "Never to Forget: Pedagogical Memory and Second-Generation Witness." In *Between Hope and Despair: Pedagogy and the Remembrance of Historical Trauma*, edited by Roger I. Simon, Sharon Rosenberg, and Claudia Eppert. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2000. 91-115.

Boland, Rosita. "A poet clears his shelves." *Irish Times*. June 20, 2009. 2.

Carter, C. Sue, James Harris, and Stephen W. Porges. "Neural and Evolutionary Perspectives on Empathy." In *The Social Neuroscience of Empathy*. Edited by Jean Decety and William Ickes. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2009.

Christopher Ewart-Biggs Memorial Prize. http://www.ewartbiggsprize.org.uk.

Cohen, Elliot D. and Gale Spieler Cohen. *The Virtuous Therapist: Ethical Practice of Counseling and Psychotherapy.* Pacific Grove: Brooks Cole, 1998.

Costa, Maddy. "'Human beings are animals.'" *Guardian* (England). September 12, 2006. http://www.guardian.co.uk/stage/2006/sep/13/theatre4. Accessed December 29, 2012.

Daud, Atia, Erling Skoglund, and Per-Anders Rydelius. "Children in families of torture victims; transgernational transmission of parents' traumatic experiences to their children." *International Journal of Social Welfare* 14 (2005). 23-32.

Decety, Jean and Philip Jackson. "The Functional Architecture of Human Empathy." *Behavioral and Cognitive Neuroscience Reviews* 3, no. 2 (June 2004). 71-100.

De Graaf, Theo K. "A Family Therapeutic Approach to Transgenerational Traumatization." *Family Process* 37, no. 2 (June 1998). 233-243.

Felman, Shoshana. "Education and Crisis, Or the Vicissitudes of Teaching." In *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*. New York: Routledge,

1992.

Felman, Shoshana and Dori Laub. “Foreword.” In *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*. New York: Routledge, 1992.

Fonagy, Peter and Mary Target. “Bridging the transmission gap: An end to an important mystery of attachment research?” *Attachment and Human Development* 7, no. 3 (September 2005). 333-343.

Forster, E. M. *Aspects of the Novel*. New York: Harcourt Brace, 1985.

Foucault, Michel. *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*. New York: Random House, 1965.

Gallese, Vittorio. “The Roots of Empathy: The Shared Manifold Hypothesis and the Neural Basis of Intersubjectivity.” *Psychopathology* 36, no. 4 (July 2003). 171-180.

Gallese, Vittorio, Luciano Fadigo, Leonardo Fogassi, and Giacomo Rizzolatti. “Action recognition in the premotor cortex.” *Brain* 119, no. 2 (April 1996). 593-609.

Gallese, Vittorio, Christan Keysers, and Giacomo Rizzolatti. “A Unifying View of the Basis of Social Cognition.” *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 8, no. 9 (September 2004). 396-403.

Gardner, Lyn. “Death becomes her.” *Guardian* (England). November 28, 2004. http://www.guardian.co.uk/stage/2004/nov/29/theatre. Accessed December 29, 2012.

Gerrig, Richard J. and David W. Albritton. “The Construction of Literary Character: A View from Cognitive Psychology.” *Style* 24, no. 3 (Fall 1990). 380-391.

Gordon, Robert. “Folk Psychology as Simulation.” *Mind & Language* 1, no. 2 (Summer 1986), 158-171.

———. “Sympathy, Simulation, and the Impartial Spectator.” *Ethics* 105, no. 4 (July 1995). 727-743.

Grene, Nicolas. "Out of History: From *the Steward of Christendom* to *Annie Dunne*." In *Out of History: Essays on the Writings of Sebastian Barry*, edited by Christina Hunt Mahony. Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2006.

Hassenstab, Jason, Isabel Dziobek, Kimberley Rogers, Oliver Wolf, and Antonio Convit. “Knowing What Others Know, Feeling What Others Feel: A Controlled Study of Empathy in Psychotherapists.” *The Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease* 195, no. 5 (April 2007). 277-281.

Herman, Judith Lewis. *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence from Domestic Abuse to Political Terror*. New York: Basic Books, 1992.

Hogan, Patrick Colm. *Affective Narratology*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2011.

Keen, Suzanne. *Empathy and the Novel*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.

Kurdi, Mária. "'Really All Danger': An Interview with Sebastian Barry." *New Hibernia Review* 8, no. 1 (2004). 41-54.

LaCapra, Dominick. *Writing History, Writing Trauma*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001.

Laub, Dori. "Bearing Witness, or the Vicissitudes of Listening." In *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*. New York: Routledge, 1992.

Lennon, John and Paul McCartney. "When I'm Sixty-Four." The Beatles. *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*. Produced by George Martin. Parlophone, June 1, 1967.

Macauley, Helen L., Shaké G. Toukmanian, and Kimberley M. Gordon. "Attunement as the Core of Therapist-Expressed Empathy." *Canadian Journal of Counselling* 41, no. 4 (October 2007). 244-254.

Mahony, Christina Hunt. "Children of the Light amid the 'risky dancers': Barry's Naifs and the Poetry of Humanism." In *Out of History: Essays on the Writings of Sebastian Barry*, edited by Christina Hunt Mahony. Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2006.

McCann, Lisa and Laurie Ann Pearlman. "Vicarious Traumatization: A Framework for Understanding the Psychological Effects of Working with Victims." *Journal of Traumatic Stress* 3, no. 1 (1990). 131-149.

Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary. 11th ed. Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, 2003. Also available at www.merriam-webster.com.

Miller, Lucasta. "Past imperfect." *Guardian* (England). October 7, 2005. http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2005/oct/08/featuresreviews.guardianreview12. Accessed January 25, 2012.

Moretti, Franco. "Conjectures on World Literature." *New Left Review*. January/February 2000. 54-68.

———. *Graphs, Maps, Trees: Abstract Model for a Literary Theory*. London: Verso, 2005.

Oatley, Keith. *Such Stuff as Dreams: The Psychology of Fiction*. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011.

Orel, Gwen. "Sebastian Barry Returns with *The Pride of Parnell Street.*" *Village Voice*. August 25, 2009. http://www.villagevoice.com/2009-08-25/theater/sebastian-barry-returns-with-the-pride-of-parnell-street/. Accessed April 12, 2013.

Pennebaker, James W. *Opening Up: The Healing Power of Confiding in Others*. New York: Guilford, 1997.

———. "Putting Stress into Words: Health, Linguistic, and Therapeutic Implications." *Behaviour Research and Therapy* 31, no. 6 (May 1997). 539-548.

Pennebaker, James. W. and Janel D. Seagal. "Forming a Story: The Health Benefits of Narrative." *Journal of Clinical Psychology* 55, no. 10 (1999). 1243-1254.

Pfeifer, Jennifer H. and Mirella Dapretto. "'Mirror, Mirror, in My Mind': Empathy, Interpersonal Competence, and the Mirror Neuron System." In *The Social Neuroscience of Empathy*. Edited by Jean Decety and William Ickes. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2009.

Rees, Jasper. "Sebastian Barry: The novelist tells Jasper Rees why he felt compelled to hunker down with Kitchener's Irish volunteers." *Daily Telegraph* (England). March 26, 2005. 12.

Roach, Joseph. *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1996.

Roberts, Philip and Max Stafford-Clark. *Taking Stock: The Theatre of Max Stafford-Clark*. London: Nick Hern Books, 2007.

Robinson, Mary. "A life well lived, well told." *Irish Times*. September 29, 2012. 10.

Rochester, Sophie. "Recovering Ireland's hidden history." Author Interview. www.themanbookerprize.com/perspective/articles/1137. Accessed January 25, 2012.

Ross, Michael. "The anguish that led to Hinterland." *Sunday Times* (England). June 9, 2002. 4.

Rowling, J.K. "Workshop 7—WHO AM I IN THIS STORY?" *In Search of the Novel*. http://www.learner.org/workshops/isonovel/eightworkshops/subpage7.html. Accessed April 5, 2013.

Saakvitne, Karen W. and Laurie Anne Pearlman. *Transforming the Pain: A Workbook on Vicarious Traumatization*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1996.

Scheper-Hughes, Nancy. *Saints, Scholars, and Schizophrenics: Mental Illness in Rural Ireland*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979.

"Sebastian Barry Talks About On Canaan's Side." http://www.youtube.com/ watch?v=DgeWzgS8XfE&feature=related. Accessed January 25, 2012.

"Sebastian Barry Wins Costa Book Award." http://www.youtube.com/watch ?v=siF4ys2944c. Accessed January 25, 2012.

Simon, Roger I. "Remembering Otherwise: Civic Life and the Pedagogical Promise of Historical

Memory." In *The Touch of the Past: Remembrance, Learning, and Ethics*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005. 1-13.

———. "The Paradoxical Practice of *Zakhor*: Memories of 'What Has Never Been My Fault or My Deed." In *Between Hope and Despair: Pedagogy and the Remembrance of Historical Trauma*, edited by Roger I. Simon, Sharon Rosenberg, and Claudia Eppert. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2000. 9-26.

Simon, Roger I. and Claudia Eppert. "Remembering Obligation: Witnessing Testimonies of Historical Trauma." In *The Touch of the Past: Remembrance, Learning, and Ethics*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005. 50-64.

Simon, Roger I., Claudia Eppert, Mark Clamen, and Laura Beres. "Witness as Study: The Difficult Inheritance of Testimony." In *The Touch of the Past: Remembrance, Learning, and Ethics*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005. 104-131.

Singer, Tania and Claus Lamm. "The Social Neuroscience of Empathy." *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* 1156, no. 1 (2009). 81-96.

Spiegelman, Art. *Maus: A Survivor's Tale, I: My Father Bleeds History*. New York: Scholastic, 1992.

Taylor, Marjorie, Sarah D. Hodges, and Adèle Kohányi. "The Illusion of Independent Agency: Do Adult Fiction Writers Experience Their Characters as Having Minds of Their Own?" *Imagination, Cognition and Personality* 22, no. 4 (August 2003). 361-380.

Wolf, Matt. "It's Ancestor Worship, But of a Different Sort." *New York Times*. January 19, 1997. H20.

Wolfe, Tom and E.W. Johnson, eds. *The New Journalism.* New York: Harper & Row, 1973.

Women's Aid. "National and International Statistics: 2011." http://www.womensaid.ie/policy/natintstats.html#X-201209171229530.

Wroe, Nicholas. "An Irish odyssey: Nicholas Wroe Talks to Writer Sebastian Barry." *Financial Times* (England). March 7, 1998. 4.

———. "'As our ancestors hide in our DNA, so do their stories.'" *Guardian* (England). October 10, 2008. http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2008/oct/11/sebastian-barry-booker-prize. Accessed January 25, 2012.

Yehuda, Rachel, William Blair, Ellen Labinsky, and Linda M. Bierer. "Effects of Parental PTSD on the Cortisol Response to Dexamethasone Administration in Their Adult Offspring." *The American Journal of Psychiatry* 164, no. 1 (January 2007). 163-166.

Zinoman, Jason. "Is He Mellower? Ask the Guy Missing a Hand." *New York Times*. March 7, 2010. Arts & Entertainment: 6L.