

QUEERING THE CELTIC TIGER: REIMAGINING THE NATION STATE IN TWO  
DUBLIN BILDUNGSROMAN

By

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To my parents, who have always supported my research.

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This study analyzes the relationship between re-imagining urban space from a queer perspective and re-imagining the national state in late capitalism in two recent queer bildungsroman set in contemporary Dublin. In the last decade of the twentieth century, Dublin underwent a rapid transformation from one of the poorest countries in Europe to a self-consciously bustling hub within the networks of global capital. Historically, authentic Irishness was grounded in the rural West Country, creating a space of ambivalent national identification in Dublin. This ambivalence has become more complicated as Dublin, but not the rest of the Republic, has undergone significant economic transformation and has, in mainstream discourse, been conscripted to standing in metonymically for a trans-Irish narrative of economic and cultural transformation. As Dublin has developed in the last two decades, it has become a site of simultaneous chronologies through its architectural hodgepodge.

Through its education and perfection of a metonymic youth, the bildungsroman genre formally depicts a national longing development. The queer bildungsroman, however, complicates the genre's typical narrative of development and merging into heteronormative capitalist society. In contrast, the queer bildungsroman focuses on negotiating networks outside

of the sanction of the society and the state: as such, it offers a unique vantage point for charting the influence of capital on the continued viability of the construct of nation-state.

Ultimately, I demonstrated the opportunities for imagining new forms of kinship and identity found in the negotiations between sexual desire and urban space. I focused on two recent narratives, *Hood*, by Emma Donoghue, and *The First Verse*, by Barry McCrae. This study explores the connection between sexual desire and urban space, which, I propose, destabilize narratives of the nation. Urban space functions as a “flashpoint of memory” where the competing pressures and artifacts of nation and social memory collide with amnesiac flows of capital. Irish history, from English colonization, the Great Famine, to the Troubles, is characterized by a collection of narratives that constitute a discourse of identity as cultural trauma. Constitutive of these hegemonic discourses of trauma, however, are silences regarding the presence, experiences, and relationships through which queer desires circulate.

## CHAPTER 1 AN ALMOST GLOBAL CITY

In *Space, Time, Perversion*, Elizabeth Grosz contrasts the state's self-constructed image of the monolithic yet transparent (and knowable) entity with the unmappable disorder of the city:

The state functions to grid and organize, to hierarchize and coordinate the activities of and for the city and its state-produced correlate, the country(side). These are the site(s) for chaotic, deregulated, and unregulateable flows....the city is formed as a point of transit while the state aims to function as a solidity, a mode of stasis or systematicity. (107)

The city frustrates attempts to map its entirety: the flow of material goods, people, information and desires throughout defies "regulation" or discipline in any complete way: cities are eternally changing, physically, ideologically, and in terms of population. Moreover, she writes: "The city provides the order and organization that automatically links otherwise unrelated bodies: it is the condition and milieu in which corporeality is socially, sexually, and discursively produced" (104). Although the bodies that inhabit cities are subject to ideological constructions propagated through a nation-states, they also inhabit cities spaces that, because they contain dense populations and myriad of spaces, can be infinitely repurposed and re-imagined against the dominant stream of ideology even as these bodies/subjects are constructed by the very limitations, which these spaces within the nation state represent.

Grosz's arguments, however, take on larger meaning when brought explicitly to bear on cities in the age of globalization: although the nation-state may attempt to force the city into a subordinate relationship in the service propagating the fictional coherence of the nation through its regulation, the city contains spaces of concealment and subversion. Saskia Sassen writes in *Global Cities* that a class of cities exists that are more enmeshed economically and culturally to each other than to their respective nations or even national regions: this connection is forged by the investment of multinationals in cities. This investment, Sassen argues, tends to produce



areas in which firms that service Global companies congregate, despite the assertion that the new information economy would obviate the importance of a firm's location. Sassen writes further in "Whose City is it Anyway?" that, in the wake of globalization, global cities fit neither economically nor culturally within a hierarchy beneath or within the nation or their surrounding areas: they are instead linked economically and socially to other similar cities. Sassen hypothesizes that it is the very proximity of bodies through which the city exists that contains the global city's greatest opportunities for political transformation: as the site of large, concentrated populations of migrant and minority workers, and women—all of whom have tended to be marginalized by globalization—the global city holds the potential of a productive flashpoint, even as agents within the city simultaneously attempts to cater to the needs of the elite of firm management.

Grosz's above-quoted vision of the city is compatible with Sassen's critical mass politics although she refocuses attention to the political potential for individuals in the city as a heterogeneous space that frustrates attempts to predict, map out, or regulate its flows, economic or, significantly, erotic. Grosz's cityscape, despite attempts to rationally map or discursively construct it as a series of discrete mutually exclusive spaces like public, private, domestic, commercial, productive and nonproductive, permits flows of materials and desires to circulate in concealed, disguised or subversive manners not sanctioned by any legitimating and imbricated narratives that the nation-state might marshal in the regulation or imagining of city space. For example, capitalism's emphasis in rational(ized) production and reification can be read in the ideologies of heteronormative domesticity, through which it posits the "correct" location of desire and 'appropriate' divisions between outside, inside, public and private. The global city cannot be contained within the discursively imagined community of the nation anymore than a

nation's government can any longer "guarantee the domestic and global rights of capital" (Sassen, xxviii). The city exists in tension with the narrative of nation-state and capital on the one hand, and exists in a network of similar cities tied together by common sets of exchange on the other. Grosz adds to Sassen's account the focus on the question of the subject's bodily experience of urban space within globalization. This thesis explores the relationship of desire and urbanities by analyzing the accounts of two novels that are set in a city that is moving towards inclusion among the ranks of 'global cities' (Irish Urban System Report). These two novels each feature a queer narrator attempting to negotiate urban as well as national space, relative to their marginalized desires.

Urban spaces are increasingly a focus of sociological, geographic, and even literary research. This paper focuses on one city, Dublin, because it became the site of a rapid shift from the major urban center in a country described by Colin Coulter as being a "European backwater" experiencing "third world conditions"-- a crumbling, strife torn, economically depressed assemblage of buildings—to, within the course of a decade, a hodgepodge of simultaneous pockets of time and aesthetics—some crumbling, some self-consciously bohemian, some glittering centers of global financial investment. Andrew Kincaid describes the recent fervor in Irish fiction for the Dublin-centered memoir in terms of its narrative of progress from backwater youth to Urban renewal adulthood (20). The two texts I have chosen, *Hood* (1995), by Emma Donoghue, and *The First Verse* (2005), by Barry McCrae, fit roughly within the memoir genre, although each is a hybrid of the memoir and the bildungsroman. The first is a memoir of grief, experienced within spaces of varying levels of confinement within Dublin in 1992. As Pen, its protagonist, moves through the first week of grieving her partner, however, she also moves throughout formative scenes in her life as a lesbian in Dublin with her partner Cara. The second,

while also told in retrospect about a specific period of time, can also be read as a “queer bildungsroman” (Jeffers): in it, the education of its protagonist in the challenges of being gay and growing up Irish, is interlaced with the giddy adolescence unleashed in parts of Dublin at the Celtic Tiger’s zenith. This thesis explores the connection between sexual desire and urban space, which, I propose, destabilize narratives of the nation. Ultimately, I demonstrate the opportunities for imagining new forms of kinship and identity found in the negotiations between sexual desire and urban space.

Dublin’s role as an irregular space, historically, within and apart from the nation, has been long noted, although its place within the Irish discursive imagination has taken on added dimensions of with the advent of the “Celtic Tiger.” In his article, “Memory and the City: Urban Renewal and Literary Memoirs in Contemporary Dublin”, Kincaid writes that the urban renewal in Ireland’s capital city and epicenter of its self-proclaimed social, cultural, and economic revolution has transformed the city into a fragmented collage of aged, sometimes decrepit structures and glossy new centers of capital—a place that desperately wants to be inhabited and used by what Sassen termed the elite of global cities. Development in the city indicates the extent to which “the lifestyle of this internationally oriented crowd also inscribes the urban environment, creating spaces in its own image” (Kincaid 26). Connected with renewal, Kiberd argues, is a spate of literary memoirs set in Dublin in decades past, marking a desire of some in Ireland to attest, as “just how much they have grown up since the days detailed in *Angela’s Ashes*” (Kiberd in Kincaid). In all of the mentioned narratives, Dublin acts as a character with which one struggles, against which (or with which) one defines oneself, and which shapes in a very literal way one’s experience of self and nation through its convoluted, sometimes crumbling streets and nationalist monuments.

As an example of the emotional engagement with the city the memoirs typically evince, Peter Sheridan writes in his memoir, “If Dublin had been a girl I would have married her” (qtd. in Kincaid 31). Although the above quote is perhaps charming in its hyperbolic affection for Dublin, this statement does articulate a presumed pattern for relating to a city: heteronormative conquest and maybe even an attempt to “make an honest woman” out of what was then an economically depressed, strife-torn assemblage of buildings. In her dissertation on twentieth century Irish lesbian fiction, Moira Casey details the extent to which heteronormativity is enshrined in the juridical discourse of the country: in the Irish Free State constitution, women are described as personages to be protected, to be guarded within an explicitly domestic space, one that would be, if Eamon de Valera’s emphasis on Irish economic self-sufficiency were any indication, a space that was not dependent on international capital and exchange for its productivity (7). In other words, females should, as wives and mothers of the Irish nation state, be enshrined in rural domestic space, not in urban spaces. As an Irish city, Dublin exists within this heteronormative narrative of nationhood, clearly, but it also presented from the Free States inception a space that would not, even as a historic hotbed of revolutionary sentiment, easily be subsumed within nationalist discourses of home, place, and gender.

In this thesis, I pursue other memoirs of other memories that form the analysis of how urban space in Irish fiction represents the mutating imbrications of sexuality and nation in the global economy. Urban space functions as a “flashpoint of memory” where the competing pressures and artifacts of nation and social memory collide with amnesiac flows of capital that, “erase the traces, the exploitative and alienating work” from its end products (Kincaid 20): “On the one hand, we desire to be free of the past, to create our world anew. On the other, we struggle ceaselessly with our obligations to previous generations, with fulfilling some of those ambitions

that we have inherited from our national, our class, our family” (Kincaid 21). Irish history, from English colonization, the Great Famine, to the Troubles, is characterized by a collection of narratives that constitute a discourse of identity as cultural trauma. Constitutive of these hegemonic discourses of trauma, however, are silences regarding the presence, experiences, and relationships through which queer desires circulate: silences which the texts that I analyze in this essay will speak to and use as a launching point to interrogate the tension between sexuality and nation within the urban milieu of Celtic Tiger era Dublin.

## CHAPTER 2 DIASPORA, GLOBALIZATION AND THE CELTIC TIGER

Before beginning my discussion of Dublin in two Celtic tiger era fictional memoirs that detail the homosexual desire imagined through spatial representation, it is important to briefly sketch the connections between the Irish diaspora of the last century and a half, globalization, and anxieties surrounding the permeability of Irish, particularly urban, spaces. Although it joined the EC in 1973, Ireland was not, until the onset of the Celtic Tiger, invested in a European identity, or for that matter a global identity or trade. Prior to 1954, Ireland had pursued cultural and economic isolationism as hoped for (but ultimately futile) antidote to entanglements with its former colonial master Britain. Its poverty, unemployment, and political violence, relative to the rest of Western Europe, caused many Europeans and Irish alike to view the country as an “impoverished European backwater” (Coulter 9). Beginning, at least, in the eighteenth century, and escalating in the early nineteenth century during the Great Famine, large numbers of Irish nationals emigrated (or were forced to emigrate). Irish land has been the site of trauma—the British took over, the land failed through potato blights, Unionist and Republicans continued to fight over the borders until the end of the twentieth century, through which the Irish claimed an identity. This is true even despite the fact that, during mid-twentieth century, many Irish viewed their nation, at best, as the home base for a population that, because of a history of social and economic hardship, was in Diaspora: at one point during the 1990’s, it was claimed that more Irish and people of Irish descent lived in abroad than in Ireland itself (Coulter 7).

The Celtic Tiger, a term coined by a Morgan Stanley market analyst in 1994 refers to the rapid development of the Republic of Ireland’s economy. Although lionized in domestic media as a “home-grown” phenomenon, it was actually American investment in a few, high tech firms in Dublin and other urban centers that instigated the economic boom that would rapidly

modernize Ireland during the last years of the millennium (Coulter 3). Dublin cannot be said to be a “global city” in the sense that Sassen means it, although Dublin described by Peter J. Taylor, et al, in *Global Networks, Linked Cities* as a city that has, as of 2000, demonstrated significant trends in becoming one. Dublin is much smaller than other European global cities, most notably London and Paris, although it has made every possible attempt to cater to and welcome the international management elite. As noted above by Kincaid, Dublin has seen significant renewal and cultural shifts as a result of the economic development. Large populations of young people have left rural agriculture in favor of Ireland’s relatively few urban centers that have seen the majority of economic development from American owned high-tech companies. According to Coulter, these youth have embraced commodity culture enthusiastically as an “ontological quest”. Although employment has increased, much of it has been the result of immigrants and women crowding into lower paying service jobs.

Another significant change in Dublin culture that Coulter argues may be a consequence of the economic boom is the “liberalization of sexual attitudes” (7) towards out of wedlock sex, be it heterosexual and homosexual. During the first three quarters of the twentieth century, the Catholic church maintained a very strong influence over public policy and public sentiment regarding all areas of life in the Republic, resulting in positions that sought to reinforce the placement of women within the home, the restriction of access to family planning of all kinds, and the marginalization of homosexuality. However, during the mid seventies, public debate erupted concerning women’s rights and access to family planning. These, combined with the

eruption of the Troubles<sup>1</sup>, resulted in what Fintan O'Toole describes as a marked shift in national discourse surrounding the body:

[during this time this] country which had hysterically guarded its intimate secrets turned these secrets into a public show...[Excrement became a protest tool and reproductive rights were fiercely debated] On the streets and country lanes of Northern Ireland, intimate human blood flowed and was seen in living colour on the TV screens...*At no time and in no country can there ever have been so much body in the body politic.*  
[emphasis added]

In other words, the body, be it of desexualized political prisoners or heterosexual women, became the site of political spectacle during this period. What remained more covert in Ireland during this time of political unrest, however, was the political visibility of homosexuals. Mary Robison's, Ireland's first female president, invitation to leaders of Gay and Lesbian Equality Network (GLEN) to her official residence in the early nineties marked the beginning of a thaw in Irish attitudes towards homosexuality (Coulter, *passim*). Moreover, the timeline from the decriminalization of homosexuality in Ireland (1993) to its "relative tolerance in Dublin and other urban spaces in Ireland" has been a relatively quick process. As the Celtic Tiger has continued, urban Dublin has become the site on an increasingly visible Gay and Lesbian rights movement (Coulter, *passim*). However, as alleged by one of the novels, *The First Verse*, that I discuss in this essay, this "liberalization" in attitudes towards homosexuality does not obviate anxieties surrounding possible discrimination and violence faced by the community as it negotiates globalized Dublin: McCrae implies this ostensible liberalization may be a performance self-consciously cosmopolitan status rather than actual acceptance.

Moreover, I do want to suggest that the advancement of capitalism necessarily results in the uncomplicated advancement of gay and lesbian rights. Rather, I will, especially in my

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<sup>1</sup> A popular term for the thirty year's conflict between Republican and Loyalist paramilitary organizations, the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC), the British Army and others in Northern Ireland from the late 1960s until the late 1990s with the signing of the Good Friday Peace Accords in 1998.



analysis of *The First Verse*, explore how the ostensible liberalization which capitalism's advance brings to the Irish nation state is a more ambivalent process than one might hope for: visibility in the urban space and the national imaginary still results in violence, discrimination, and exile, even as heteronormative Irish hegemonic discourse heralds the country's economic development as an opportunity for homecoming for Irish youth and Irish-descended people to the now successful island republic.

Gay and lesbian bildungsromans useful make the ideological baggage of capitalism and its enshrinement of the heteronormative nuclear family as the sight of emotional and personal fulfillment visible. John D'Emilio writes in "Capitalism and Gay Identity" that capitalism's spread enabled individuals to survive outside of the material production unit of the nuclear family (6): concomitantly, wage labor's spread also made large families unnecessary, thus unyoking sex from reproduction (8). "Ideologically, capitalism drives people into heterosexual families...Materially, capitalism weakens the bonds that once kept families together so that their members experiences a growing instability in the place they have come to expect happiness and emotional security" (12). Moreover, both gays and lesbians "have had to create, for our survival, networks of support that do not depend on the bonds of blood or the license of the state, but that are freely chosen and nurture". The heteronormative bildungsroman can be read as a genre whose form aims at producing of an ideal capitalist, bourgeoisie subject, the queer bildungsroman can be seen as the potential site of an alternative narrative of self-discovery, self-actualization, and less confined conception of what counts as community or 'home'. Tracking how queer subjects register the increasing pressures of capitalism upon the urban spaces in which they, as well as straight people, exist may offer useful tools for imagining a more expansive form of urban community and the nation state.

As globalization progresses, the binaries of queer and straight, public and private, domestic and international spaces have become increasingly untenable. The cultural texts discussed in this paper represent these problems spatially, as well as temporally, making reference to discourses of geography and urban sociology as well as queer globalization theory, productive. First, I will discuss Emma Donoghue's *Hood* as a re-imagining of heteronormative domesticity. The novel's protagonist, Pen, creates a "home", already a contentious space for homosexuals according to Pat Califia (qtd. in Bell 106), that subverts many of the expectations implicit in "domesticity": heteronormative masculine and feminine roles that are performed by biological males and females, rooms or spaces that have as rationalized a purpose as possible (e.g. eating in the dining room, slumber in the bedroom, leisure in the living room), and living arrangements based on biological kinship, often limited to the nuclear family (Bell 106). The domestic space in this novel is situated in Dublin 4, a largely middle class district, in the early nineties just as globalization and homosexual visibility were on the rise in Ireland. In this text, domestic/private spaces exists in dialectical tension with public/urban space: the destabilization of the construct of the former in this novel reframes anxieties surrounding homosexual visibility and Irish culture in terms of an increasingly globalized economic reality in which borders and boundaries between spaces are increasingly untenable. Next, I discuss Barry McCrea's *The First Verse* (2005) as an attempt to allegorize the destabilization of Irish national space via analogy to the mutable, but still tangible presence of queer spaces in which desires are exchanged.

These texts provide a trajectory tracing out the re-imaginings of domesticity into increasingly open flows of queer desire throughout time and urban space, pointing ultimately towards a more permeable Irish, even possibly transnational queerness. One obvious challenge to this approach is the appearance (even reality) of erasing the very wide range of differences

between lesbian and gay desires, in general, and in particular in Ireland (which both texts could be said to be clearly engaging with) under the banner of “queer.” What I hope to account for via my references to geography and sociology are the very real material differences between these two communities (i.e., gay and lesbian), as they are represented in the novels. Although many spaces within the urban may be said to be “queer,” a commonplace of sexual geography that I interrogate through Ingram and colleagues’ account is that gay desire, and not lesbian desire, colonizes public space for erotic expression and that, because of their relative affluence to other marginal sexual communities, gay men are better able to claim contiguous spaces for their own. By accounting for these material realities in the readings, I point to the destabilizing effects queer desires, bodies, and spaces, variegated as they are, as articulated by Grosz, have on the monolith of the state.

### CHAPTER 3 HOOD

*Hood* recounts in Pen's (Penelope) O'Grady's first-person narration the week following the death of her on-again, off again partner, Cara Wall. Pen's narrative shifts between flashbacks, speculations, and forward moving linear narrative. Pen and Cara started dating as "sort of girlfriends" during their junior year of high school. Pen had previously had a crush on Kate, Cara's older sister. However, Pen's crush met a fatal blow when Kate moved with her mother to America when the sisters' parents got a divorce. Pen fails her exams that year and is forced to repeat junior year again, this time with Cara as a classmate. Pen ultimately graduates, goes to college, and returns to the same high school she loathed as an elementary school teacher. Cara, on the other hand, spends her twenties involved in a range of sincere, if dilettantish volunteer political activism and frequent travel within Europe. Despite her commitment to Pen, Cara also sleeps around with a number of men and women. Earlier in their relationship, she sometimes attempted to build relationships with these other people, but she always returns to Pen. Cara later promises to always return, even though she does occasionally stray. Pen speculates that Cara sleeps around because she has a practically unlimited capacity to "fall" for other people, physically and romantically, while at the same time not attaching a great deal of emotional importance to casual sex. Pen, on the other hand, is ever faithful, although often resentful of Cara's freedom from work and idiosyncratic definition of fidelity. Pen moves in with Cara in Cara's father's house in a middle-class area of Dublin. They pretend to occupy separate rooms for the sake of appearances, and, although Pen pays no rent, she assumes Mr. Wall's father is ignorant of her romantic involvement with his daughter.

Cara dies in a car accident on her way back to Pen after a trip to Greece with friends from the Amazon Attic, a lesbian collective whom Cara is a part of but whom Pen avoids interacting

with until Cara's death. Pen experiences conflicting emotions about her desire for her mourning to be legitimated in the eyes of the heterosexual mainstream and her resistance to coming out of the closet to her family, her co-workers, Mr. Wall, and her employer who only gives her half a week off for her "housemate's" death. Kate, now a successful and polished executive expatriate, arrives from America for her sister's funeral. However, her mother does not because of what her ex-husband describes as her tendency to "run away from difficult situations" (Hood 181). Pen is a little standoffish towards Kate at first, but gradually the two warm towards each other. Pen later confesses to Kate that she and Pen were partners, which Kate says she suspected. Kate leaves after the funeral and Pen is left to mourn Cara with Mr. Wall and the Amazon Attic. Mr. Wall asks Pen to stay in the house because she is both like a daughter to him and because she was "Cara's 'friend,'" denoting his awareness of their partnership. By the week's end, Pen visits the Amazon Attic for a memorial for Cara and begins to find a sense of community among other lesbians that she had previously shunned, moving beyond the domestic isolation that she had clung to so jealously for the duration of her relationship with Cara.

Published in 1995, the novel describes events that took place in 1992, prior to what, for the purposes of this paper, are two major shifts in Irish culture: the 1994 decriminalization of homosexuality and the christening of Ireland's relatively sudden economic growth by American investors as the "Celtic Tiger". The novel registers the tensions, which these two shifts brought into sharp focus and suggests that they are in fact imbricated with each other: constructions of sexual space, both historical and contemporary national space, and the contemporary physical space (Dublin). I argue that Pen's narrative re-imagines Dublin as a node within the flows of history and myth, urban and domestic spaces, and desire and kinship. Kate and Cara serve as figures of increasingly more porous Irish national and cultural boundaries through their

respective emigration and travel. This is mirrored by the destabilization of Irish space from “within” via Pen’s re-imagining of the urban and domestic.

The domestic is, for all its supposed privacy, a central space within constructions of the nation-state. Gayatri Gopinath writes that the discursive construction of “home” is a crucial for diasporic populations as well as their nations of origin in attempting to maintain a coherent construct of “nation” within an “imagined community” that spans vast reaches of geopolitical space (Anderson). Nationalist discourse, along with the imbricated ideologies of capitalism, inform how the urban and public interacts with and structures the possibilities of the domestic and private. Rural West Country agriculture and domesticity, especially near Galway, peopled by families who adhered to heteronormative social divisions of labor were what Eamon de Valera, the first president of Ireland hoped would resist industrialization and, consequentially, cultural influences from abroad. As Ireland’s population shifted more towards the urban towards the end of the century its discourse surrounding what spaces count as truly Irish and how they are (or are not) enmeshed within other cultural spaces has shifted. The proximity of the private and the public in urban spaces (as opposed to the rural) may be seen as resulting in a significant frisson in the novels as Ireland attempts to construct itself within the flows of global capital.

The novel represents anxieties surrounding the possibilities of love, affiliation, and kinship in spatial terms. The literal movements deployed in this articulation serve as tropes: trans-European travel; emigration to the United States; confining domestic spaces, in both senses of the term, like the attic in which Pen lives; the voluntary domestic labor that Pen performs to the exclusion of socializing with people besides Mr. Wall and Cara; the Amazon Attic women’s collective of which Cara is a member; the proverbial closet and Cara’s surname Wall, and, finally, Dublin urban space itself.

In *Hood*, Kate and Mrs. Wall's emigration and Cara's frequent trans-European travel serve as counterpoints to Pen's staid and at times resentful domesticity in middle class Dublin. During most of the twentieth century, Irish citizens emigrated in order to find employment in Great Britain and, to a lesser extent, the United States, Canada, and Australia. Although perhaps not on the scale of "global cities" (Sassen), Dublin serves as a hub in a network of transnational Irish diasporic communities whose members contributed to Ireland's economy via regular remittances and often sailed and, later, flew back and forth between "home" and "away" (Delaney). However, as Delaney notes, these journeys were sometimes emotionally fraught experiences between the formerly Irish and the currently Irish.

Although Kate and Mrs. Wall's diaspora was precipitated by a paucity of personal rather than economic possibilities, Kate still serves as a figure of the emigrant returned from across the water who feels and provokes anxieties regarding stereotypical Irishness. Kate Wall herself is a formidable characterization of the jetsetting Irish-American femme fatale businesswoman, a figure that is ruthless, efficient as a figure of the Irish diaspora: despite Irish nativity, she has adopted a "typically Yankee" (Donoghue, *passim*) work-ethic, and, through it, material wealth and glamour. Kate's coming unnerves Pen, even as she mourns Cara. Significantly, her nervousness expresses itself in anxieties over Kate's expected American-ness. Pen imagines smiling smugly when Kate slips into Americanisms and warns herself that she is, "on no account" to attempt to "impress Kate Wall" (45). This determination reads as a defense against an Irish inferiority complex that is the residue of several decades as a European backwater. Kate later admits to Pen that she "always impatient with Ireland" as child before leaving with her mother. Pen, on the other hand, is both figurative and literally a "home body". While once a "skinnymalinks" youth, she has become a "ridiculously voluptuous" thirty-something. The

repetition of her bodily transformation throughout the text, often in conjunction to anxieties surrounding the slender figures and greater mobility of either Wall sister, marks Pen's self-perceived bodily excess as an expression of fear surrounding national unruliness or excess.

Pen attempts to imagine the Wall women returned from their self-imposed, because of the Irish stigma against divorce, exile:

Walking into the kitchen, with my finger skimming the woodchip wallpaper, I wondered whether they would look American. Winona [Cara's mother] would, of course; according to Mr Wall, she looked American when she was Winnie Mulhuddart fresh from County Limerick. But Kate I was not sure about. Vigorous dark hair, I remembered, curlier than mine; the curls were cropped by now no doubt...She'd say 'Pehn'—no, more like 'Pain, ahl cahl yah'. No, you eejit, that was Deep South. What was a Boston accent? 'Pen al cawl yew'. Why would she be calling you anyway, you daft egg, when she'd be staying at your house. Her house, I meant. Or was it a little of each now? (45-46)

American-ness seems to signify sophistication, or at the very least difference from self-proclaimed (or self-loathed) Irish-ness. In what functions as an apt (even prescient) figure of Ireland's anxieties in both Diaspora and globalization, Pen<sup>2</sup> cannot fix ownership or belonging within the house with any certainty: it's unclear, at this point, whether heteronormative ties and nativity in a country constitute immutable ownership of a place as "home." Is the house that her father, Mr. Wall, lives in that she has not seen for over twenty years still Kate's home? Is the house that Pen's partner no longer lives in and where she has paid no rent to its owner, her partner's father, for over six years no longer her home? Moreover, the return of the émigré highlights the failure of "home" as a construct to satisfactorily organize and ensure the continuance of the heteronormative family bound by supposedly immutable (i.e. biological and thus, somehow, affective) ties. However, "home" proves to be a useful construct in so far as it

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<sup>2</sup> Additionally, given this anxiety over accents, it is worth noting that among Pen's duties as an instructor of young girls is teaching the Irish language. Pen, albeit without any enthusiasm or commitment beyond what is necessary to fulfill her job competently, propagates "Irishness" through the church/state apparatus of education at Immaculate Conception Girls' School.



can be readapted to connote a space of safety and comfort or a way station in porous, networked global capitalist space.

As Pen remembers her in this chronicle of grief, Cara's body, desires, and actions refuse to be fixed or confined, be it spatially or ideologically. Cara's lack of fixity serves as a foil to Pen's at times masochistically adhered to domesticity and highlights the possibilities of travel, and a wide affective network created by what Pen terms her "practically unlimited ability to fall for other people" (Donoghue, *passim*). Cara's slender, tall lanky body only seems to find enough room in space when "she moves at high speeds" "playing football at college" (cite). She goes through a phase where she denies claiming that she and Pen are partners: they are "sort of girlfriends" and, while not a lesbian, is a person who is "in love with a person who is female," and, prior to finally committing in her idiosyncratic way to Pen, sleeps with several men. This dynamic, as Jennifer Jeffers notes, on one level reproduces stereotyped role of butch/femme, with Cara as the more mobile, promiscuous and therefore butch partner: the Odysseus to Pen's Penelope. Ultimately, however, as will be explained further, this butch/femme dynamic breaks down and consequently disrupts the spatial binary through which one might read their relationship. Cara lacks fixity but she also dies returning home to Pen from one of her many travels with a casual lover, and Pen, while in some sense trapped, ultimately repurposes domestic space and through it forms a more fluid notion of space, kinship, and safety.

However, Cara's death after "a cheap holiday in the Greek isles" (Donoghue 125) implies that her lack of fixity is too extreme to be tenable. Although the novel acknowledges the parallels between the partnership at its center and *The Odyssey*, the figure of the traveling queer is an important one to acknowledge in its own right. According to David Bell, traveling is an integral part of transnational queer culture: queer travelers "know travel as a second skin." The

experience of a chosen “dislocation” spatially “fits” like the experience being unable or unwilling to be fit within heteronormative, domestic fixed enclosures and their implied congealed power-relations within patriarchy. This contrasts sharply to Pen’s staid double domesticity. Pen resents enclosure and even lies to Cara about having had a secret lover once, but she cannot be unfaithful, cannot accept the visibility of her own body and desires outside of her relationship with Cara and their attic: her attempts to flirt after being hit on by woman in a feminist bookshop result in her flushed mortification.

The novel acknowledges that Cara verges on a parody of desire (in all senses of the word) freed from constraints like nationality, space, and the self-regulation which successful participation capital demands Cara attempts to live outside of --- at least, outside of its demands on her as an individual. Her father funds her travels and Pen supports her with a steady job teaching at the secondary school she once loathed so she can undertake a number of volunteer positions with rape crisis hotlines, and letter-writing to Amnesty International. Pen, on the other hand is from the lower class and both enjoys the sense of moral privilege that it gives her in resenting Cara’s lack of fixity and envies it a little. Towards the end of the novel Pen is astounded to discover that, despite her own commitment to Cara’s “utterly captivating” qualities, Jo, another lesbian, thought Cara was “absolutely nuts.” Although she sometimes verged on exploitative, Cara is a node in a transnational queer network of desires and space. Cara complicates what is registered in the novel as appealing, utopian, but ultimately too divorced from material reality to be tenable.

Casey and Jeffers each note that Donoghue consciously “rewrites the narrative of the Odyssey from Penelope’s perspective” (234), the first of Donoghue’s forays into rewriting received narratives from a marginalized female, queer perspective. Pen directly addresses the

limitations of this role that her parents have dealt her: she is often “impatient with her namesake” (224). This reference is a deterritorialization of space and desire in which the *Odyssey*, Penelope stays at home and stalls her suitors by dismantling her weaving project, Odysseus’s funeral shroud, every night. She was defined by the domestic space as the consummate Greek hostess and wife. Pen is by her own admission, more committed to “gag-mongamy”<sup>3</sup> [monogamy] (Donoghue, *passim*) than Cara and, by implication in the novel’s logic, domesticity as a construct. Pen manages the quotidian in the Wall household: she dusts, she cleans, shops for groceries, and feeds Grace the cat. Fittingly, Kate interpolates Pen as a cleaning woman because of the headscarf Pen wears while cleaning the house when Kate arrives. Pen risks being subsumed entirely by domesticity, but, by voicing Penelope’s frustrations from her own perspective, the domestic, as well as the domestic space, is re-imagined. Although she is mired in the domestic space itself, Pen takes it as her quest, her *raison d’aitre* in the relationship is to recapture her lover’s body as if it were territory (Donoghue, *passim*) and to prove her prowess each time Cara returns. “Pen” is a phallicized version of the supremely feminine name “Penelope” both because it is gender neutral and its reference to a writing instrument often cast as phallic.

Kate’s interpolation ostensibly captures Pen’s ‘imprisonment’ as the domestic partner in a space which isn’t even hers to legitimately and visibly claim as partially her own, even during her partner’s life. Pat Califia describes the domestic (especially the suburban) as a “battle zone” of queer spaces between the architecture of male/female separation, implicit assumptions of family hierarchy, and domestic utility (qtd. in Bell 106). Pen complicates the binary between

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<sup>3</sup>In Pen’s narrative, one is led to believe that this is Cara’s ironic term for sexually exclusive partnerships, although Pen uses it herself in a self-deprecating fashion to acknowledge both her desire for and the impossibility of a monogamous relationship with Cara.

public and private spaces—the remains of her domestic life and her journeys throughout urban Dublin allow her to acknowledge how these environs have shaped her current subject position, even as she reconstructs these spaces via the process what Casey describes as “mythologizing” in her discussions about lesbian narrative conventions: she re-imagines and explores different configurations of Dublin urban, domestic, and cultural space.

Pen’s mythologizing can be read as an attempt to reassert a lesbian and feminist presence back into the historical narratives that Dublin’s landmarks and spaces contain. This is a more subtle form of claiming territory than public demonstrations, but it is crucial in understanding the spatial politics at work in the novel. “Lesbian, bisexual and transsexual history, placemaking, and territorialization are currently undertheorized and underdocumented” (Ingram, et al. 7). The binary that was drawn in theorization (done mostly by and about queer white males) was that women choose ties that are affective and do not venture to “territorialize” and utilize public spaces as “erotic” (Ingram, et al. 8). Implicit in these categories, as well, is the ability to make the flows of capital and material exchange that often accompany these processes: e.g. domestic partnership, collective living, squatting, prostitution, etc, legible. Tamar Rothenberg argues in her essay about lesbian communities in Park Slope, Brooklyn that lesbians have historically tended towards less “public” displays of territory due mostly to their relatively more limited means relative to gay men: women are more often enmeshed with caring for families and make less than men do, on average (Rothenberg 172). In the context of Irish culture, one of the (albeit mixed) benefits of the economic expansion is that more women joined the workforce, although their earnings still lagged behind that of men (Coulter 5).

Pen’s narration of private attachment and grief incorporates Dublin into its structure as a silent witness to the relationship’s history as well as other histories that Pen indicates. Her

backward glance framed by the cityscape does seem to anticipate what Declan Kiberd notes about *Angela's Ashes's* account of Limerick, published first in 1996. *Angela's Ashes* generically and thematically attempts to demonstrate the distance between the past and the present moment as an attempt to contain the traumas wrought by fairly recent history. Donoghue, however, reclaims Dublin as a site of then unacknowledged and still illicit passions, making them legible within a larger Irish narrative of history by projecting them onto the cityspace. Pen's description of the first time she and Cara "made love" reflects this. She writes that they are on the top of their girls' school, Immac(ulate Conception) on their own "island of concrete and iron" "floating above Dublin" (Donoghue 28). Casey points out that this intimacy is enabled by "separation from the rest of the school and from the rest of the city" (232). Moreover, "The roof is both attached to the school as well as a liminal space that allows the girls some privacy and some freedom from the strictures of Catholicism" (Casey 232). The space both structures their relations and yet, as Elizabeth Grosz argues in "Bodies/Cities" about subjects in urban space, responds to their attempts to repurpose it. Space is substantially altered, even if only in Pen's memory. An otherwise public space can serve a private, double function, as it the case with many zones of queer urban pleasure (*Pleasure Zones* 104). Casey mentions this "disconnect" in terms of its references to "flying carpets" and other fairy tales which Donoghue has demonstrated interest in retelling. The novel depicts the erotic space as a possible model of the complications of the public and private spaces. Pen and Cara are above the city, but they are still bound in the city's orbit. A further example of Pen responding to and reimagining Irish Urban geography is the statue of Constance Markievicz, a female revolutionary who was fired on with her men during the Easter Rebellion: instead of a leader forced by her superiors to surrender, Pen imagines Constance as leading her men in digging trenching in order to occupy them, like

children, until the inevitable snipers' fire rained down on them. Female martyrdom to the Irish national state is given a wry rereading through the acknowledgement of female agency.

Catholicism, a presence that often violently structured space in Dublin, is open to revision through the re-imagining of its relics. While at mass, as Casey and Jeffers point out, Pen reimagines the Virgin Mary proclaiming her “technical virginity” whilst wearing a crown of “ten white stars, which looks remarkably like the EC logo” (Donoghue). While this re-imagining of Catholic and public space is remarkable in one light because Pen reclaims the Virgin Mary—the figure of female perfection in Roman Catholic Ireland being both fertile and still a virgin—for lesbian desire. However, what goes unnoted in both Casey and Jeffers is the satiric reading that Pen offers of the Blessed Virgin as not Catholic but EC kitsch. The totalizing narrative of Catholicism has been amalgamated with, even supplanted ironically by another, that of the European Community. Catholicism, a narrative which structures the Irish experience of the body, sexuality, metaphysics, and teleology has become another object that global capitalism subsumes, penetrating Catholic, Irish with transnational and capitalist space.

Casey points out that Donoghue portrays Dublin as a “pastiche of modern, liberal images” like the “abortion hotline numbers” and Constance, together, in St. Stephen's Green, thus indicating an urban space in a process of regeneration (227). However “pastiche” fails to give full credit to the sort of textual transformation Donoghue attempts. Pastiche, as defined by Fredric Jameson, is symptomatic of late-capitalism's subsumption of all culture into commodity in which “Modernist style... becomes postmodern codes” (17). Instead, what Donoghue conveys is a politically and historically aware dialogue between Dublin urban space and lesbian domestic space in the novel closer to Linda Hutcheon's definition of parody, which assumes an ironic

stance towards the object in question. The result is a “dedoxification” (Hutcheon, *passim*) in which the doxology of nationalist state is rewritten and proven as political.

The line between public and private/domestic is renegotiated through Pen’s two attics in the novel: the semi-private space she shares with Cara and the Amazon attic, a lesbian collective, and semi-private in a difference sense, she had avoided until Cara’s death because of its presumed affiliations with Cara’s infidelities. The term “attic,” in both the Amazon and in Pen’s reference to her own space, is significant because it alludes to the “madwomen” that, according to Gilbert and Gubar, can be found there as well as to the “closet”, the private space which homosexuals occupy when they do not publicly espouse their sexuality. In reconsidering “public” and “privacy” in terms of Pen’s space, it is important to refine the definition of what counts as “public”. Typically, in queer urban geographies, public can be thought of as whatever isn’t contained in a family dwelling space. However, this definition of “family” is often presumed to be “heteronormative” and based on blood kinship. If one structures affiliation in different ways, so that exchanges of desire and goods occur that are not structured by heteronormative or capitalist dictates, occur, then the binary between public and private is complicated somewhat. The process of “outing” or “being out” in a domestic space where one presumed oneself to be closeted complicates notions of “privacy” or “domesticity”.

Pen lived, she assumed, in the closet with Cara and her father in middle-class Dublin rent-free for over six years. The brief misunderstanding Mr. Wall and Pen share when he asks her if she has any place she is going to go to after Cara’s funeral is telling. Mr. Wall, the spirit of discretion, assumed that the only thing that tied Pen to his house was his daughter and that her lover, because of pain or a wider set of social networks (like Pen, Mr. Wall is a bit of a shut in), would naturally want to go elsewhere. He had hoped, when he asked her, that she would infer

that, all other things being equal, she was welcome to stay. Pen, however, had read Mr. Wall's previous inquiry as an attempt to make it clear that she would soon be homeless. After they clear up the misunderstanding two days later, Mr. Wall's tacit acknowledgement of Pen's relationship with his daughter ("You were my daughter's friend") changes, ontologically, the space she occupies in his home. He has come to think of her as a daughter and she relates to him better than to her own biological family. He requests that she live in his house, for free, because they like each other's company. Pen demurs and he allows her, at a later date of her choosing, to determine what kind of exchange she would prefer to take place. Pen wants to pay him rent, but he points out to her that she already pays him, in a sense through her otherwise uncompensated domestic labor. This constitutes an exchange outside of the realm of both capitalism and heteronormative kinship: only after Pen demurs does Mr. Wall articulate the exchange in terms of money or labor.

The Amazon Attic is another semi-private space in which Pen embraces the possibility of community. While ostensibly domestic the Attic also troubles the construction of domestic space because of its collective quality. The term "amazon", however, even as it denotes "woman warrior" seems to suggest some skepticism at the idea of a utopian women's collective based on the idea that women are inherently morally superior agents within corrupting, abusive patriarchy: in the absence of men, the women fight, belch, cheat on each other and are otherwise convincing human beings. Territories still exist, however, even within collective networks. While it is a separate female space, one gets the sense that their affiliation derives from a not unalloyed fondness as much as a shared political commitment or sexual identity. Although the space does read as Donghue's attempt to skewer utopian or self-righteous tendencies of lesbian separatists, it is within the community that Pen gains perspective on her relationship with Cara. Pen is



prevailed upon by Jo to join the collective in a separate memorial service for Cara and finds emotional support and a potential romantic interest: Jo tells Pen that Cara was a little crazed but also deeply devoted in her particular way to Pen. At Cara's memorial at the Amazon attic, Pen joins in an emotional and material exchange that exists outside of heteronormative and capitalistic space, but complicates the domesticity and privacy she had so zealously guarded.

At the novel's final page, Pen begins to make her private, lesbian space much more public by beginning to out herself to her family at her mother's kitchen table. Though this gesture, she is out within the domestic space and has repurposed domesticity for lesbian and queer usage. While it is her care that keeps her chosen family together, first Cara and then Mr. Wall, her care was predicated on a certain inability to communicate and realize her emotional needs through others. She makes progress towards reconciling the two at the novel's end through reclaiming a semi-public queer domestic space situated within a network of other domestic spaces.

Pen's narrative of grief can, in spatial terms, be read as a secret history of both her attic and the Wall's domestic space. She collates stories from her girlhood with Cara, scenes from Cara's childhood in the same Dublin house and juxtaposes them along side the domestic labor she performs that she assumes no one notices and the desires and intimacy she shared with Cara in what she assumed was secrecy of their attic. Pen's narrative of domestic space witnesses the failure of the heteronormative family unit and the forging of new ties of kinship that exist outside of blood and economics. Mr. Wall, invites Pen to live with him both in honor of his daughter's memory, because he's fond of her. He only accepts the prospect of rent after Pen insists. In an attempt to avoid reifying their relationship via the exchange of money, he encourages Pen wait and, if she must, state the terms of their exchange. The house that Pen believed secretly housed

the intimacy and desires between Cara and herself was in fact a tacitly accepting space and a space in which exchanges can be made visible and mutual, as well. Mr. Wall acknowledges, as best as he's able, that his daughter and Pen were "friends" and, while language, another patriarchal construct, fails him, emotions do not. Instead of a space which is a part of the naturalization of feminized domestic labor (e.g. the separation of the sexes into spaces of the house in which certain tasks are performed like weaving), the space Pen in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century opens us is one that can be repurposed, even used to channel simultaneous and parallel desires. This channeling is not entirely dissimilar to the use of public spaces within public urban space in that it frustrates the tendency in heteronormative domesticity to Taylorize space according to what is most "productive", biologically or economically.

## CHAPTER 4 THE FIRST VERSE

In the intervening decade between the publication of *Hood* and *The First Verse*, Dublin moved from the first intimations to the aftermath of relatively explosive economic growth. Another kind of explosions, however, had been silenced: the Good Friday peace accords were signed in 1998 signifying the beginnings of actual progress in the peace process that culminated in a power sharing agreement between Catholics and protestants in Northern Ireland in May 2007. One of the traumatic narratives that had constituted Irish discourse, representations of Ireland by both the Irish and others in films, books, and other media had apparently come to an end. A new narrative of Ireland's cultural adolescence as it attempted to morph both in tastes and consumption into a nation, metonymically focused in Dublin, which would 'properly' take its place as an economic leader in the EU. Like Niall in *The First Verse* Dublin in the early 2000's went through an awkward, stammering, journey towards new narratives, swinging between self-loathing, as Paula McVeigh evidences in the novel, and manic self-confidence.

During this time, according to Coulter, certain members of the Irish press lionized the development as "home-grown" and the result of canny tax-breaks, deregulation: the payoff hoped for when the urban renewal that Andrew Kincaid describes in the piecemeal glittering renewal, self-conscious bohemian shabbiness, and decay that is the Temple Bar district in Dublin. Although Morgan Stanley coined the term Celtic Tiger in 1994, a year prior to *Hood's* publication, discussion of the phenomenon's implications and effects did not reach its zenith until around the turn of the century (Coulter, *passim*). In that time, as critics of the phenomenon's hagiography note, the economic success was relatively limited in the sectors of the economy it touched: mostly high-tech and bio-tech companies either invested in or franchised from American firms. Moreover, the segments of the economy that saw this lift were

mostly concentrated within Ireland's well-educated young professional class who sought conspicuous consumption as a new "ontological pursuit" (Coulter).

The urban spaces that *The First Verse* "navigates" (McCrae, *passim ad nauseam*) feel more manic, more fluid, and phantasmagoric than Pen's. Donoghue emphasizes Pen's *construction* her narrative through spaces of varying confinement, proceeding through a dialectic between private/closet/attic to public/urban to the semi-private, semi-domestic closing of the Amazon attic and her mother's kitchen table. This dialectic demonstrates the mutually constituting and imbricated qualities of public and private spaces. McCrae, however, chooses to utilize the figures of addiction and hallucination in depicting the experience of urban Dublin. Pen is deep within the closet prior to Cara's death and, despite her grief, remains more or less psychologically intact. Niall, as I shall demonstrate, is both in the closet and out: his friends know he's gay, he knows his friends know, but he refuses to attempt to ontological shift of "coming out of the closet." Furthermore, Niall experiences the simultaneity of urban life in a semi-global city as overwhelming: the psychological damage wrought by his involvement in the bibliomantic cult leaves his psyche and body destroyed, emptied of their habits and perceptions, and, because of this void (the psychological is narrative in this novel), he exists what Deleuze would call a full body without organs (Bonta and Protevi). This potential, however, is rejected as untenable by Niall. As this section argues, however, Niall's contemporary urban Dublin of 2005 is a series of spaces interconnected through either the networks of desire made legible by his narration and, later, his involvement in bibliomancy which turns interconnectedness back on itself with scenes from Dublin, earlier Paris, home to Irish modernist émigrés Beckett and Joyce, renaissance masses, and walking and then plunging into the frigid muddy waters of the Grand Canal. This interconnectedness functions as an allegory for the simultaneous chronologies of late

capitalism, a reality of urban development. I complicate this proposition by showing how the overarching metaphors of navigation that McCrae uses to frame queer desires and bibliomancy reveal a significant and always already failed attempt to cognitively map Dublin urban space within the flows of global capital.

The novel follows Niall's "lost" first year at Trinity College. This year, in his words, is consumed first by the "manly exile" of frequent, anonymous hookups in the city's gay bar scene and then later by membership in a three-member cult, *Pour Mieux Vivre*, whose members hope to gain access to a better life via bibliomancy-induced hallucinations which allow them, among other sensory experiences, to hear the *Misere Dei* sung in Rome during the Renaissance, or see fin de siècle Paris interlaced with twenty-first century Dublin. Niall stops going to class and attempts to drop out of the lives of his Trinity friends. His physical and mental health both suffer: friends who do attempt to talk to him about his sudden change in behavior speculate that he has become addicted to drugs because of his pale, sunken cheeks and glassy eyes with a greenish glow.

He leaves the cult twice. He first leaves after he walks on the Grand Canal while under the influence his fellow cult members John and Sarah and, upon hearing, "the thing, shouting voice of a young working-class Dublin boy, scratchy and flat on the high notes, singing phonetically without understanding them, the words of an Irish song he had learned in school" (McCrae 212), he collapses into the frigid water. He gives up the cult, enters therapy which he sees as creative rather than confessional narrative therapy, works as a teller in a bank, and attempts to reintegrate himself into the segmented, rationalized, and generally comfortable life of a young man from an upper-class suburb who shares an apartment with a childhood friend attending medical school at UCD. He gives up his days of promiscuity and begins to date Chris,

a man from a lower-class community in Dublin who has a predilection for French cinema. However, his cravings for masochistic transcendence persist, and he falls back into performing “sorties”, in order, he tells himself, to track down his fellow cult members to Paris so as to find out the truth about what ultimately proves to be a fictional parent organization. Niall’s competing hallucinations may be read as articulating anxieties and possibilities for Dublin urban space: cultural space is permeable—a medium through which a myriad exchanges pass. While the “authentically” Irish intervenes in the boy’s song, it is only as a temporary palliative, and self-consciously maudlin.

Through Niall’s often sardonic narration, McCrae depicts Dublin as a city in denial about an identity crisis spurred by attempts to integrate competing reified stories into its own narrative of self-renewal and nascent fabulousness. This urban identity crisis parallels his own frustrated attempts to balance what for him are the competing demands of friendship and sexual satisfaction. The novel devotes many pages to delineating different kinds of spaces within a newly prosperous Dublin: Trinity College, Temple Bar, the Irish Film Institute, the working class neighborhood which Chris, Niall’s occasional boyfriend, is from, and the affluent suburb of Sandycove, where Niall attended an all-male prep school only to collapse them all again after he begins to have bibliomancy-induced hallucinations. He falls into a group of friends who constitute a microcosm of the newly successful Irish state. Self-consciously clever and a trifle awkward, the new friends pick their way through the refurbished playground of the Celtic Tiger bar scene during the first few weeks of the quarter. Niall describes the contrived pan-Ireland setting on his first night out with other Trinity students:

The last time I had mixed with the national pool had been years before, in Irish language college with Patrick, when for three weeks we breakfasted, dined, played sport, dance at

ceilithe<sup>4</sup>, and spoke pidgin Irish with other fourteen-year-olds from Limerick, Thurles, Arklow and Bunclody. Just as I had clung to Patrick in the language classes...now, among this small group of departing pilgrims meeting for the first time in O'Neill's of Suffolk Street, I gravitated towards the only other traveler from my world, an expensively dressed and rather self-centered girl from Foxrock called Andrea. (McCrae 17)

McCrae constructs Niall's initial experiences at Trinity in terms of an artificially constructed "pan-Ireland" experience, analogous to the ideological state apparatus of Irish language summer school mentioned in the above passage. The journey that Niall archly alludes to as beginning ("pilgrims," "traveler from my world") refers most literally to a pub crawl in the Temple Bar district or perhaps their education at Trinity. However, it could also refer to a journey through this new, artificial and always already failed space of national coherence ("national pool") that the national press has constructed in its reports of the unalloyed good that the Celtic Tiger bestowed upon Ireland. While discursively constructed as an event that binds Ireland together in the swell of economic prosperity, the passage acknowledges many persistent divisions in Irish culture: geography, gender, and sexuality. Rural regions, women, minorities, and the working class are excluded from the narrative of triumph as their employment and earning numbers stagnate (Coulter). Despite attempts to place the Irish within a narrative of uniform good fortune—where the success concentrated in urban Dublin is forced to stand in metonymically for the imagined success of the entire country, Niall, at least, still alludes to the city, county, and provincial identifications that have historically trumped an "Irish" identity. Dublin, like the other regions, are still their own "worlds". The gap between the diction of the pilgrimage and world-travelers and the quotidian bacchanalia of a pub-crawl consisting of Ireland's most accomplished

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<sup>4</sup> Dancing time during Irish language college. Irish language college is undertaken by most Irish teenagers the summer between the equivalent of sophomore and junior year in high school. Part of the Leaving Cert, the national high school exit exam, is on Irish.

students is significant: the narratives that once framed the likes of the *Canterbury Tales* or Dante's *Divine Comedy* no longer have any purchase on this brave, drunk new world.

Paula McVeigh, mother of Niall's friend Patrick, gives voice to the prevailing middle-class sense of Ireland's provincialism within the EU. Through her, McCrae satirizes the desire for a cosmopolitan-ness and urbanity that "look" a certain way and may be acquired, an urban space cultivated like a bonsai. Early in the novel, Niall bumps into Paula on St. Stephen's Green. She buys him dinner in a posh Sandybrook bar and bemoans the state of Ireland:

Where are the light-rail systems... the gays out in their finery like peacocks, the Chinese wholesale outlets with the old fellas playing checkers outside on a little table, the lesbians running a center ... where are the Arabs playing dice or whatever it is... where are all the beautiful people? (115)

Dublin fails as a cosmopolitan urban space because it is not, by McVeigh's standards, cosmopolitan or picturesque enough. A population of "beautiful people", racial, ethnic and sexual others would only serve, in a bourgeois universe, to adorn space rather than inhabit it as subjects. She wants both to guide Niall's steps, telling him that it is "absolutely essential to leave Ireland" (114) and to abandon what she construes as a typically Irish parochial world view and to vicariously enjoy the pleasures and possibilities of Dublin's economic success. She is skeptical of the media reports and yet fails to perceive the logic of commodification underlying both the propagation of the Celtic Tiger story in the Irish media and her own fetishizing of Others.

Ironically, Paula delivers her peroration on Dublin's lack of fabulous spectacle to a closeted gay man. Niall reveals a network of erotic pleasures and exchanges that Paula, a bearer of the heteronormative bourgeois gaze, does not detect. The novel catalogues ostensibly discrete spaces within Dublin before linking them together through the discreet communication desires through images with a markedly occult register. Paula McVeigh dismisses Ireland from the tony suburb of Sandycove. Niall meets his first boyfriend, Chris, at the George, an actual and visibly



queer-friendly bar in the Temple Bar district of Dublin and across the River Liffey from the Irish Film Institute, where Chris and Niall have their first date. Niall's on-again off-again relationship is also spatially significant: Chris is working-class and from the rough part of Dublin. As alluded to previously, Niall is from Sandycove, an upper-middle to upper-class suburb of Dublin which he views as a boring and artificially idyllic bourgeois enclave (McCrae 5). Chris is very aware of the difference in their education levels which makes Niall somewhat uncomfortable. Niall's relationship with Chris forces him into a kind of spatial trespass (class-wise) which reveals the heterogeneous quality of Ireland's economic upswing. Other important spaces such as Phoenix Park, St. Stephen's Green, and Trinity College are all depicted, but as a constellation of spaces through which first erotic desire is channeled and later as a constellation which Niall attempts to map and experience as a totality. Niall describes his immersion into the city:

I learned the weekly timetable of gay nights in mainstream nightclubs, an *internalized sextant regulating the movement of constellations, an arcane system of seasonal rotation*. During the day I would catch the eye of young men in suits who would give me a *surreptitious* look in the sandwich queue, or at the bus stops along the Green after their working day was over, and imagine in advance their transfiguration according to this enigmatic calendar into sweaty dancers to Madonna on a stage, throwers of louche looks and surreptitious caresses hungry heaving bodies in my bed. My nights were spent in a *shadowy erotic haze*, a swirl of discosmoke, aftershave, and beery kissing. [emphasis added] (McCrae 33)

Any place can be repurposed as a surreptitious channel of erotic exchange (Bell, *passim*), whether in plain sight or through the channels established for the conveyance of people and goods, and by extension capital. Bus routes carry people and sandwich queues are for selling food. Moreover, the young men he exchanges glances from are suited, which I read as members of the young professional class which Dublin's technology-fueled boom created. The "internal constellations" present alternatives to heteronormative and capitalistic conceptions of space that Bell describes as the Taylorization of space into discrete, isolating but materially productive

units (*Pleasure Zones*, 106). Moreover, Niall describes a Dublin which eludes any gaze which attempts to ossify its glancing flows and exchanges into a outwardly visible or complete representation: the sextant and the “erotic haze” to which it leads him are apprehensions whose occult register prefigures his experiences in the cult.

In his discussion of the erotic possibilities of the city, David Bell writes that “flux,” flows between fixed points, has become crucial in recent research into the erotic architecture and structures of cities and that this “increasing emphasis...not on fixed locations such as the home, but on tropes of movement and flow” which, in the representations of Jarman and Bech, reveal “yearnings and chronic transit: displacement, maybe, or restlessness or dispossession” that speaks to an experience of queer erotic spaces within the city (Bell, et al. 97). Bell describes queer desire in this context as a subversive presence within the cityscape, unpinning the ideologies of family and productivity through which embattled but imbricated narratives of capital and nation propagate themselves. The flux which Jarman and Bech refer to is borne out in Niall’s description of moving through flows of gay desire in Dublin. Niall is “chronically” displaced from one way-station to the next and one encounter to the next. This displacement and dispossession results in a self-imposed “exile” from his straight friends and in himself. His metaphors gesture towards the desire for navigable but unmappable flows. Niall’s desire to have it both ways—navigation and concealment— expresses itself in his reluctance to reconcile the emotional difficulties that his sexual identity and his unrequited crush on a rugby player caused him to his desire to remain in the closet, despite everyone knowing that he’s gay.

However infallible it appears in the above description, Niall acquires his quasi-mystical internal erotic compass by which networks of desire are rendered visible and somewhat navigable: the gap between the desire for what one could imagine to be an innate and reflexive

navigation system and what it is actually possible and what is at risk is striking. Prior to this passage in his narrative, a drunken homophobic lout decks Niall and calls him an “arsebandit” after Niall allows his glance to linger a moment too long and what he had perceived to be a receptive male (McCrae 70) Indeed, Niall’s story can be read as a queer bildungsroman, although one that writes against several conventions of the genre, most notably coming out (Jeffers), furthering the depiction of personal identity in terms of geopolitical context in tension with the urban setting in which he finds himself. Niall dispenses with the closet metaphor and describes his sexuality as a kind of exile:

[describing running into a friend on the way to a school event at the end of his first semester]...I..regretted the manly exile I had chosen over the previous weeks, the flashing lights and smell of aftershave, ballsweat, and Smirnoff ice. I was pleased to be here with a woman, for a change, with a friend. (McCrae 34)

As fond as he was of his friends, his sexuality and sexual practices have resulted in “exile” although his friends and family tacitly acknowledge what they presume orientation to be repeatedly throughout the text. His first friend at Trinity, Fionanuala and his friend Patrick each tacitly acknowledge the possibility of Niall’s sexuality. Fionanuala make a point of using one of her questions during a bibliomancy session, while Niall is pretending to be asleep, to ask “Who does Niall fancy?” (McCrae 112). Patrick opens up a space in the narrative for him to come out while they speak, in very vague terms, about Niall’s boyfriend, Chris. Niall claims that whatever illness he may appear to suffer is the result of lovesickness. Patrick responds, circumspect: “I look forward to hearing about it” (McCrae 271). In that quote, Patrick responds to Niall’s paleness, which Niall explains to the reader, is caused by his urge to relapse into sorties again. He “switches” “focus to [his] other secret in order to deflect his attention form this one” (McCrae 271). The secrets and the space they occupy are, thus, roughly exchangeable.

He resists acknowledging the relationship between the two spaces and their significance until he pieces together his personal narrative with Keith, the American in Paris studying Modernist American expatriates called “The Lost Generation.” Niall’s trajectory through space during the novel parallels the movements of both the American lost generation as well as the movements of Irish writers like Joyce and Beckett, the writer for whom Niall’s fellowship in French at Trinity is named for. For these authors, the only possibilities for “forging in the smithy of my soul” (Joyce ) existed outside of the confines of the island’s then very parochial culture: in order to attempt to see something whole, one needs to be in exile. Exile offered the chance to pursue what was then deemed more authentically artistic, bohemian lives. Significantly, however, when Niall attempts to explain what can be read as his great artistic, exile-justifying truth (the *sorties* and the culture), Keith listens politely, but refocuses Niall’s confessions on his friends and family.

Niall’s exile is really into at least two incarnations of Paris. During his *sorties*-fueled walks through Dublin, he is convinced that he has slipped into turn of the century Paris, with all its connotations of technological and cultural renaissance and intellectual sophistication. When he actually makes it over there, however, the reader is reminded of how Irish went before him: in his first evening in town, he manages to run into a fictional character, Wan the Clon, an Irish expatriate vaguely reminiscent of Tammany Hall politicians in nineteenth century United States who functions as an unexpected link in the transnational Irish community between “home” and Parisian employment possibilities. Losing oneself, shedding home and its psychological baggage is, even in a global city, impossible. The surprising link illustrates, fortuitously, a transnational Irish community in existence, even as the Tiger allegedly (Kincaid) beckons its members back to Dublin.

Niall leaves Ireland for France led by sorties, but ultimately, it seems, in order to narrate himself back into some semblance of wholeness with the help of Keith's tape recorder. Jeffer's argues that, in the queer bildungsroman, making oneself visible as a homosexual and claiming a coherent homosexual identity are politically as well as ontologically significant moves. To remain closeted is to remain complicit with heterosexist oppression. However, this ontological shift does not appear to be what Niall's story is exclusively or even inexorably moving towards. The novel's final scene is ambiguous: he's returned from Paris and heads off into the night towards his old boys' preparatory school. This can be read as a redemptive move to reclaim the divided psyche forged in his high school closet as easily as it can be read as a temporary regression into the safety of youth before once again doing into the city. For isolation articulated in geopolitical language, the only cure appears to be actual movement through national space towards the rediscovery of personal connections and not the attempt to locate his own and Dublin's place within a network of desires and exchanges, that offers salvation.

McCrae parallels Niall's efforts to integrate his sexual desire, first characterized by Niall as the objectifying "beery erotic haze," into his relationships with his boyfriend and straight friends to the navigation of urban and transnational urban spaces. Their shared articulation through registers of (or literal participation in) the occult may be read as an attempt at cognitively mapping Ireland's own coming of age within global capital. At the semester's end while with his friend Fionuala, he meets Sarah, a prickly linguistics graduate student at Trinity, and John, a young businessman, at a party while they are performing a "sortie" using what they called "tolle lege" or "take (up) and read", a divination method comprised of asking a question out loud, flipping through the books' pages and randomly selecting a spot to being reading as an answer. Niall is intrigued when, under John and Sarah's guidance, Fionanuala asks the books

“who Niall fancies” and the selected passage contains a reference to Sodom and Gomorrah. Niall demands to know more, but John and Sarah refuse to explain why they are drawn to the “sorties” or how they work. Niall forces his way into John and Sarah’s confidence, however, later bumping into John on Trinity’s campus during a Christmas party while John is on a sortie. Pursuing “truth” and an “all encompassing knowledge” with Sarah and John quickly replaces pursuing sex at the George. Niall is seduced by the promise of an infinitely ordered universe, one in which all of human thought and emotion, including his own, are revealed.

Niall, John, and Sarah function as a cell of a cult called “Pour Mieux Vivre”, a group which, according to Sarah, is dedicated to a “better life” through charting the synchronicities, or metaphysically significant coincidences, found through the dialogue between sorties and surroundings: the sorties function as a hermeneutic for negotiating simultaneous spaces (past, present, literary, cultural, sexual, material) within Celtic Tiger Dublin: in an average sortie, a passage in a book may refer to a statue which may illuminate a reference to an 18th century Catholic hymn which may, in turn, demand a further consultation with a random book which may lead to a bar. All possible spaces are connected, navigable, and, most importantly, mappable via this augury. Repeatedly, and perhaps most significantly, however, Niall hallucinates streets in Paris as he moves through Dublin on his quests for synchronicities: “Twice, when I turned a corner I found myself in Paris” (89). National borders and time have, through their practices, been disrupted.

It is important to note the possible cultural inheritance that McCrae may be alluding to with constant references to Paris and Niall’s ultimate fate of “finding himself” and narrating himself into sanity. The intellectual lineage of modernist and post-WWII Irish novelists (e.g. James Joyce, Samuel Beckett, Iris Murdoch) is complex and transnational: French novelists,

British novelists, French and German philosophers (especially in Murdoch's case) and Irish novelists were inspired by and inspired each other (Kershner). The repetition of Paris, as an implied locus of "true cosmopolitanism" far removed from whichever incarnation of Ireland's self-perception as a cultural backwater is an important reference to this always already muddled literary/cultural heritage that the Irish claim. Moreover, exile, especially in the case of Beckett and Joyce, was a crucial part of "forging the soul of [their] race in the smithy of [their] [souls]" to brutalize Joyce a bit. Since the Irish diaspora's start in the mid-eighteenth century, writing about Ireland and claiming Irish lineage is to negotiate feelings and realities of exile.

The quest for this complete vision ultimately disrupts his sanity, but it also disrupts space and time: although the reader may debate Niall's credibility as a narrator, he offers in all sincerity an account of him floating above the Grand Canal, hallucinating the *Misere deum* being sung, and then, as noted above, crashing into the water when he hears, "the thing, shouting voice of a young working-class Dublin boy, scratchy and flat on the high notes, singing phonetically without understanding them, the words of an Irish song he had learned in school" (McCrae 212). The Dublin boy in question might refer to something 'essentially Irish': a ghost of the recent economic past. Collapsing the forward moving narrative of time that Benedict Anderson argues was an essential shift that permitted nationalism as a discursive formation to take root, into a simultaneous experience of prosperity and adversity frustrates the temporality upon which the nation as it is currently conceived depends. The experience both acknowledges the attempt to experience and conceptualize a total picture of the self, the city, and the nation even as frustrates said attempt.

In *Postmodernism: the Logic of Late Capitalism* Fredric Jameson adapts Kevin Lynch's term, "cognitive mapping", which describes the process whereby city-dwellers mentally

represent to themselves and thereby navigate urban space, to describe a process where by the nation state, or the totality of late capitalism are represented. In his introduction to Jameson's theories, Michael Hardt writes: "A cognitive map is necessarily partial and incomplete rendering of the multi-dimensional and constantly changing totality that serves as a kind of navigational aid" (Hardt 20). The auguries that Niall is compelled to pursue can be read as an attempt at mapping the necessarily incomplete processes of charting a sexual identity and a national identity. The necessarily aleatory and incomplete quality of the auguries mirrors the fraught process of mapping out, encountering, or articulating both sexual and national identities. Moreover, the form of the auguries—unmappable, random, infinitely interconnected, and overwhelming, can be read as allegorizing the mode of production under which Ireland finds itself today.



## CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSION

Franco Moretti writes in his study of the Bildungsroman, *The Way of the World*, that the genre is the “symbolic form that more than any other has portrayed the promoted modern socialization—is also itself consists first of all in the interiorization of contradiction. (10) The genre marked in early modernity (e.g. mid-18<sup>th</sup> century) a formal means of managing and directing the increased mobility of (typically male) youth: although he passes through a variety of professions, spaces, and social networks, the protagonist ultimately ends his journeying as a more refined if not always ideal modern subject and finds his “place” in his society—one that is typically defined in terms of immediate location as well as nation. The youth’s movement beyond the more staid social and economic ties that characterizes pre-industrialization cultures comes to serve as a “specific material sign” of the social and economic upheaval that capitalism’s expansion induced (10).

However, bildungsromans themselves, at least in the continental tradition during the period that Moretti examined them, do not focus on attempt to represent capital itself, not that a satisfying representation for the movements of capital has or can exist (Jameson). The genre, according to Moretti, is incompatible in its traditional iterations with the representation of capital itself despite being a genre that emerged in response to capitalism’s demands on the literary and social imagination. Capital, unlike the subject and plot of the bildungsroman, must grow, change form, and never stop doing so: “as Adam Smith observed in *The Wealth of Nations*, the merchant is a citizen of no country in particular. Quite true, and that is precisely the point: the merchant’s journey can never come to a conclusion in those ideal places..”(Moretti 26). Unlike capital, the subject’s education ends, and, despite the number of spaces he may have mapped throughout his journeys, he does eventually reach a “final form”. Additionally, in the case of ladies’ education

novels, a more ossified and more explicitly pedagogical sub-genre within the bildungsroman (Jeffers) the subject's education ends in the literal cease of movement in domestic sphere. She need never again "move", at least of the logic of the subgenre, beyond her matrimonial bower.

Kincaid, as mentioned in the introduction, argues that the commercial flourishing in the first half of this decade of memoirs set in urban Dublin prior to the economic expansion reveals a social impulse to manage the related demands of memory and progress: to acknowledge the past and therefore contain it, demonstrating a progression beyond its terror and privations. Unlike the memoir, however, the bildungsroman is as Moretti notes, a forward looking genre, one that became a pervasive genre of the novel because of its adaptability and pliancy (Moretti 26) in the face of shifting social, political, and economic demands. Throughout this thesis, I have focused on queer movements throughout urban Dublin as depicted in two examples of the relatively new sub-genre of queer bildungsroman (Jeffers). In these two texts, I have argued that one can read a new "specific material sign" of globalization through their attempts at representing a myriad of spaces whose uses and connections are subject to re-conceiving, adaptation, and repurposing through the imaginations of the urban protagonists Pen, from *Hood*, and Niall, from *The First Verse*. Although Jameson notes that it no longer makes sense to write bildungsroman, since the genre is focused on depicting the education of a subject and, in turn, educating subjects that can no longer be said to exist in late capitalism (Postmodernism), I hope to emphasize that these two texts use and subvert the conventions of the sub-genre in an attempt to articulate new urban, transnational subject-positions in ways that queer texts are especially suited to accommodating. In this conclusion, I will discuss the very real differences between the lesbian and gay urban spaces, national/transnational spaces, and sexualities that these texts represent. However,

ultimately, I will conclude that these texts, especially *The First Verse*, can be seen as moving towards iterations of uniquely queer transnational consciousness.

Jeffers writes that queer bildungsromans share several formal features: movement from home to college, discovery of sexual orientation, integration within the local homosexual community, and coming out (128). “Coming out” may be read as structurally equivalent to either marriage or final integration into the local society in the queer bildungsroman: the final step in which marks the ontological and political from closeted and complicit homosexual to being “out”. Although this is a politically and personally vital step in many homosexual lives, formally, Jeffers notes that it has produced a rather rigid, over determined genre with a pedagogical bent more similar to a “ladies’s education novel” than a subversive text (129).

Both novels complicate the typical forward chronological movement of the bildungsroman. Pen is both moving forward in time as she grieves her partner and reflecting on her development as a socially isolated lesbian through reflecting on long, tumultuous relationship from high school onward with her dead partner. She narrates her story an adult, but in many ways Cara’s death constitutes a coming of age for her, in terms of hitting key developmental milestones as a fictional lesbian: only after Cara’s death does she visit the Amazon Attic collective, come out to her trusted co-worker, and begin to move towards coming out to her mother. Formally, Donoghue implies that Faulkner is correct: “The past is not dead: is it not even passed.” Through Hood’s chronological movement Donoghue preserves and mourns Dublin lesbianism’s formerly illicit and concealed past prior to the legalization of homosexuality, reincorporating it into an ultimately forward looking trajectory. Niall’s narrative is told in retrospect although it ultimately proves to be circular rather than forward-moving: his text moves in a circle from Sandycove to urban Dublin to France and back to the fields of his childhood

school in Sandycove. Instead of attempting to formally represent the attempt to map homosexuality within the memory of urban space as Pen does, Niall implicitly parallels networks of gay desire in urban Dublin through his hallucinatory quest for totalizing knowledge. Instead of producing an exclusively forward looking narrative, the effect of linking these two arcane systems of sense-making is profoundly disorienting, forcing the reader to question, along with Niall, the hegemony of linear movement through space and time. When Niall participates in sorties everything is infinitely linked in a way that brings to mind Jameson's concept of cognitive mapping: an allegory of the impossible attempt to understand the movements of capital and, in Niall's case, how these movements have and continue to restructure his life and his city.

A further deviation from the genre is that both novels withhold direct depiction of what Jeffers argues is one of the key moments of a queer bildungsroman: coming out. visibility is possibility fraught with anxiety in both texts, neither Pen nor Niall "come out" in the texts. If more didactic examples of the genre can be said to be aimed at producing an "out" visible queer as their final end, both novels refuse this final development. Pen does begin to make herself more visible as a lesbian throughout the novel: she comes out to her sympathetic co-worker at the girls' school where she works, her lover's father and sister, and consents to hang-out with the Amazon Attic. Her final move towards living as an "out" lesbian is the implied, but not present, visit to her mother's kitchen table during which a reader of the genre would infer that she finally comes out. However, the novel does not directly represent it. Niall also refuses to come out to anyone except his therapist, the American in Paris, and the audience, to whom he confides his narrative. As mark of at least the ostensible liberalization of urban Dublin's attitudes towards homosexuality, Niall's friends continue to attempt to encourage him to come out to them, but he refuses to integrate both aspects of his life. Although this schizoid

approach is not exactly laudable, Niall does refuse “completion” as a homosexual subject by “coming out”. The text “knows” he’s gay, as do his friends and everyone who knows him. The return to the grounds of his childhood school in the novel’s final scene indicate a semblance of psychic integration or wholeness, a beginning again, but the audience is never given the formal satisfaction of the completed queer subject. By refusing this convention, each novels formally communicates that its protagonist is not completed but in a continual process of becoming.

Beyond the bildungsroman, *Hood* and *The First Verse* depict urban and national spaces differently in ways that can be traced to both their protagonist’s sexual orientation and their proximity to the Celtic Tiger; however, despite their differences, both novels emphasize the importance of re-imagining and re-mapping the city from a queer perspective. Pen’s narrative concentrates on writing against the truism in urban sociology (Rothberg) that lesbians do not focus on spatial territories: throughout the story, Pen forms a chain of re-imagined spaces through which she can confidently pass: non-heteronormative domestic with Mr. Wall, semi-public with the Amazons, urban via her reimaginings of Phoenix Park, transnational, via her interactions with Cara’s sister, and finally, the implicit coming to terms with the heteronormative domestic space with her mother. Only Phoenix Park is public and, although Pen’s reclamation is a concealed process, she does reclaim several women in them for a specifically lesbian sensibility: female martyrs are re-imagined as impatient warriors (Constance) and “technical virgins” (The Virgin Mary). Notably, all of the spaces, except, again, Phoenix Park, involve the renegotiation of relationships as well as spaces. For Pen, the two are intimately related; for example, transnational space is rendered navigable and more real through the interaction with Cara’s émigré sister. That the foreign, émigré sister mistakes her for domestic help reveals to what extent the pun on “domestic” structures Donoghue’s meditations on space: at the novel’s

start Pen is trapped in the domestic, as well as domestic urban Dublin. As her network of spaces enlarges through her re-imagining and re-purposing, so to does her experience of Dublin and the Irish nation-state.

Niall, on the other hand, perceives space as a literal map of arcane sexual exchanges interchangeable with his pursuit of totalizing knowledge via sorties that constitute allegorical mapping of Dublin's place within the flows of global capital: urban and transnational spaces are infinitely connected and attempts to perceive their wholeness can be both addicting and personally destructive, leading to a more abstracted form of the schizophrenia that results when Niall attempts to keep his sexuality divorced from his social and creative lives. He struggles to relate to other people as human beings rather than objects of desire. By the same token, he also desperately seeks self-annihilation, albeit subconsciously, through his pursuit of totalizing knowledge. His body becomes emaciated and he seems emptied of all previous habits, like studying and sex. As unappealing on a literal level as his behavior may be, he does embody the two key tensions in existing as a transnational subject: being local and particular (bodily) and integrating the bodily self-perception within a network or community whose exchanges defy mapping. Dublin in Niall's reckoning is a hub in a network of flows of capital and ideas.

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## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

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