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Transcending Genre: 'Out-Of-History' Characters in Sebastian Barry's Dramaturgy and Narratives

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Abstract. The literary project of Sebastian Barry presents a remarkable degree of cohesion insofar as Barry is committed to conjuring up the lives of characters that were omitted out of the official history of the Irish Republic or at least relegated to positions of disgrace in that history. Giving voice to these characters is an act of redemption whose main goal is understanding and reconciliation rather than judgement or assigning blame. The paper studies two of Barry's works with inevitable cross-references to other works by the same author. The first is Barry's 2008 novel *The Secret Scripture,* his most recent novel up-to-date, shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize of the same year. The second is Barry's acknowledged masterpiece of drama – *The Steward of Christendom* – first performed at The Royal Court Theatre, London, on 30 March 1995. The study adopts a narratologicalapproach in addition to an application of theories of dramatic technique. It engages with the work of a number of literary and cultural critics and historians, whose main domain is Irish history and literature in general, and the work of Barry in particular.

Preface: 'Friend or enemy, no one has the monopoly on truth. Not even myself, and that is also a vexing and worrying thought' (Barry, 2008,127 – 8).

'I am beginning to wonder strongly what is the nature of history. Is it only memory in decent sentences, and if so, how reliable is it? I would suggest, not very. And that therefore most truth and fact offered by these syntactical means is treacherous and unreliable. And yet, I recognize that we live our lives, and even keep our sanity, by the lights of this treachery and this unreliability, just as we build our love of country on these paper worlds of misapprehension and untruth. Perhaps, this is our nature, and perhaps unaccountably it is part of our glory as a creature, that we can build our best and most permanent buildings on foundations of utter dust. (Barry, 2008, 293)

Introduction

The literary project of the Irish poet, dramatist, and novelist Sebastian Barry (1955 -) up-to-date presents a remarkable degree of cohesion insofar as Barry's drama and novels in particular are committed to conjuring up the lives of characters that were omitted out of the official history of the Irish Republic, or at least relegated to positions of disgrace in that history. Giving voice to these characters and writing their version of the story is an act of redemption and absolution whose main goal is understanding and reconciliation rather than judgement or assigning blame. Barry has a personal stake in the matter – a number of his family ancestors having played roles that were at one time blameless but later became culpable due to the changing definitions of allegiance and loyalty in the upheavals of Irish history. The present paper aims to show that Barry's engagement with history is at a very far remove from any attempt to monopolize

the truth or replace one narrative by another. As illustrated in the quotations cited in the preface section, Barry is obsessed with the ironical situation faced by humanity vis-à-vis the treachery and unreliability of the "syntactic truth" offered by historiography on the one hand, and the necessity, for human life, sanity and civilization, of adopting that "truth" on the other. According to Barry, the ironical coexistence of contradictions in the human mind seems to be part of our "nature" or even our "glory as a creature". Thus, the same act may encode loyalty and betrayal or love and hate simultaneously; and rather than offering his narratives of the silenced/marginalized/demonized as an alternative to official historiography, the present study argues that Barry opts for what we may call "lyrical truth" as well as "bodily truth" that coexist with and fill up the gaps left by syntactic truth.

The present paper provides a study of two works out of the rich oeuvre of Sebastian Barry, with inevitable cross-references to other works by the same author, given the cohesive nature of his literary project as mentioned above. The two selected works belong to the literary genres of novel and drama: The first work to be studied is Barry's 2008 novel ***The Secret Scripture,*** which was shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize of the same year, and which is Barry's most recent novel up-to-date. The second work is Barry's acknowledged masterpiece of drama – ***The Steward of Christendom***, co-produced by The Royal Court Theatre and Out of Joint, and first presented at The Royal Court Theatre, London, on the 30th of March 1995. The two works fulfill the generic requirements presupposed by the different genres they are affiliated to. However, the present study argues that Barry transcends the frontiers of generic territory – while simultaneously invoking the various dramaturgical and narratological tools prerequisite for literary composition – to give expression to his stated commitment to inclusion, forgiveness, balance and reconciliation. The study illustrates that Barry uses novelistic and dramaturgic tools such as his choice of central figures who live in "an extended aftermath of heartbreak", his preference for dramatic monologue or soliloquy as the main discursive tool in both novel and play, an elegiac lyrical style, recurrent father images, flashback, and visions that produce a kind of lyrical, almost religious or metaphysical, truth transcending any syntactic truth offered by the discourse of history.

Methodology

The theoretical frame of reference of the present study includes selected theories of narratology and theories of dramatic performance. The study basically adopts Mieke Bal's narratological model for analysis of narrative texts, with its three-layered division of narrative into text, story, and fabula. Whenever relevant, the study also engages with narratological concepts coined by Roland Barthes, Gerard Genette, A.J.Greimas, William Hendricks and Claude Bremond. According to Bal, "a *narrative text* is a text in which an agent relates ('tells') a story in a particular medium, such as language, imagery, sound, building, or a combination thereof" (1997, 5). This definition arguably includes the narratives presented by novel and drama, as well as those presented through other media including cinematic works, photographs, music compositions, and painting, among others. Bal divides narrative texts into three layers: the text layer, the story layer, and the fabula layer. "Only the text layer," argues Bal, "embodied in the sign system of language, visual images, or any other [medium], is directly accessible" (1997, 6). This means the text layer is the most superficial layer; the fabula, on the other hand, is the deepest of the three layers, and is defined by Bal as, "a series of logically and chronologically related events that are caused or experienced by actors" (1997, 5). The "story" is the fabula "presented in a certain manner" (1997, 5); thus one fabula can give rise to any number of stories depending on how the elements are arranged. Each arrangement results in, "a specific story which is distinct from other stories" (Bal, 1997, 8). The same methodology of "ripping apart a tight web of connections" for the purpose of study is explained by Gerard Genette in his analysis of "narrating situations" in *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*; Genette claims that, "A narrating situation is, like any other, a complex whole within which analysis, or simply description, cannot *differentiate* except by ripping apart a tight web of connections among the narrating act, its protagonists, its spatio-temporal determinations, its relationship to the other narrating situations involved in the same narrative" (Genette, 1999, 174). The work of both Bal and Genette is built upon Roland Barthes's seminal

work, "Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narratives", in which he argues that,

The narratives of the world are numberless. … Faced with the infinity of narratives, the multiplicity of standpoints – historical, psychological, sociological, ethnological, aesthetic, etc. from which they can be studied, … [one] recognize[s] the following dilemma: either a narrative is merely a rambling collection of events, … or else it shares with other narratives a common structure which is open to analysis. (Barthes, 1977, 79 - 80)

It is noteworthy that while the present paper undertakes a narratological analysis of the selected novel and play in a following section of this paper, it simultaneously implements Bal's argument that narratological analysis is not an end in itself but a means to an end – the aim of Bal's narratological approach being, "an instrument for making descriptions, and hence interpretations, discussable" (Bal, 1997, 11). Thus, the narratological analysis is relevant to the purpose of this paper in as much as it serves to provide evidence that supports the paper's argument about Barry's literary project of historical inclusion and reconciliation. In addition, the present study makes a contribution by means of the application of narratological analysis, (usually applied to the domain of novels and short stories, and recently to cinematic works as well), to works of drama. It also contributes through the application of dramaturgical theory (to be discussed in the following pages) to novelistic as well as dramatic works, thus foregrounding the common ground between both genres, and proving one of the main research points concerning the transcendence of genres in Barry's literary project.

Moreover, the present analysis foregrounds the theories of dramatic performance of Jerzy Grotowski, Victor Hunt, David Cregan and Margaret Llewellyn-Jones, with their emphasis on the jural and ritual aspects involved in the "secular sacrum" of modern non-naturalistic theatre, as well as on the contribution of stage directions and body mapping to the overall interpretation of drama. One of the points of departure of the present study is that Barry's theatre definitely conforms to the concept of non-naturalistic theatre as defined by Bert O. States: "a closed circuit of metaphysical feeling induced by the interplay of visual and aural images" (States, 1987, 103).

Equally relevant to this study are the concepts of ritual and "secular sacrum" are endorsed by the twentieth-century Polish director and theatre theorist Jerzy Grotowski as he identifies a link between the crisis of the theatre and that of contemporary culture, namely, the decline of religion, which inevitably leads to "the disappearance of the sacred and its ritual function in the theatre" (Grotowski, 1976, 195). Grotowski goes on to explain his usage of the term "sacred": "What we are talking about here is the possibility of creating secular *sacrum* in the theatre" (1976, 195). Foregrounding the need of modern drama to renew its root affiliations to sacred rituals and spirituality, not in any sense of orthodox religious observance but in the sense of reaching above the squalor of mundane everyday reality, whether in themes, language, or stage performance, Grotowski calls for revitalizing the theatre as an instrument for social transformation during this age of secularization.

Similarly, Victor Turner indicates that drama has both ritual and judicial aspects:

Theatre is, indeed, a hypertrophy, an exaggeration, of jural and ritual processes; it is not simply a replication of the 'natural' total processual pattern of the social drama. There is … in theatre something of the investigative, judgemental and even punitive character of the law-in-action, and something of the sacred, mythic numinous, even 'supernatural' character of religious action. (Turner, 1982, 12).

Significantly, Barry himself mentions the spiritual dimension of his drama in an email addressed to David Cregan and quoted in Cregan's article on the dramaturgy of Barry:

The spiritual dimension of the plays is obviously there, … aris[ing] out of the usual confusion and mess of the modern mind … When the actor Donal McCann said once to me that one of the reasons he took on ***The Steward*** was because I obviously believed in an afterlife (a thing that became hugely pertinent to him as he was dying of [cancer]) I did register … a sort of inner disquiet about it … I am not no [sic] proper believer, but I am certainly appalled enough at the provisionality of the self … to wish for some possible state of completeness … Hence in part the plays, I look in at the bright room from outside in the dark yard. (Barry, 2005; Cregan 2006, 79)

Another dramaturgic technique that has the added benefit of being amenable to both stage

directions as well as to the potentials of novelistic genre is the deployment of bodily truth/mapping, or the signs written over bodies so that these marked bodies are signifiers that refer to an extra-bodily signified. This is of special significance in postcolonial narratives, a category that envelopes modern Irish literature in general and Barry's oeuvre in particular. In *Contemporary Irish Drama and Cultural Identity*, Margaret Llewellyn-Jones argues that:

In the case of Irish cultural identity any body-mapping inevitably relates to the scars of colonial and postcolonial ideology. Geographical violence cited as intrinsic to imperialism … has in effect been writ large on the bodies of the colonized – as in the Great Famine – and it is through body mechanisms such as Hunger Strikes or Dirty Protests that twentieth-century prisoners have attempted to subvert the colonizer's power. The body is perhaps even more significantly a bearer of meaning where the verbal language of the colonizer is still being used as the medium of drama. (2002, 22)

The paper also engages with the work of literary and cultural critics and historians, such as Roy Foster, Declan Kiberd, and Antony Roche, whose main domain is Irish history and literature in general, and the work of Sebastian Barry in particular. These critics fall roughly – with regards to their stance from Barry's work – into two main categories. The first category share the argument of Roy Foster in his introduction to Barry's play ***Our Lady of Sligo*** (1998a) claiming that Barry's project is " one of recovery – stitching back into the torn fabric of Irish history the anomalous figures from an extended Irish family" (vi). Along the same lines, Nicholas Grene argues persuasively in his article, "Out of History" that, "Barry, in retrieving these lost souls of his own family, is also writing back into the story of Ireland those parts of it which our nationalist master-narrative has most signally left out, the pieces of our past that do not fit with the way we want to imagine our history" (2006, 169). The second category is represented by critics who accuse Barry of "Raj revisionism" – an expression coined by Luke Strongman in *The Booker Prize and the Legacy of Empire* to describe a kind of "nostalgia" that emerged as "a literary response to the rise of conservative ideologies in 1980s Britain", a form of "cultural psychosis" that infected the British culture in the eighties leading it to "posture like the great power it no longer was"(2002, 24). Topmost among those who belong to the second category is Declan Kiberd, whose review of Barry's 2002 novel ***Annie Dunne*** accuses Barry of imposing a revisionist political agenda on his readers/audience by authorizing a one-sided absolute narrative in place of the equally one-sided dominant official narrative that demonizes his characters. Kiberd writes: "Like that play [***Steward***], this book [***Annie Dunne***] will be praised by many critics whose criteria are less artistic than political, … that herd of independent minds which believes that it is a holy and wholesome thing to dismantle the narrative of nationalism" (2002, 10). However, Kiberd's praise of the parts of ***Steward*** and ***Annie Dunne*** in which "the rituals of country living are narrated with a sort of delicate, inquiring reverence which is the closest thing that fine writing can ever come to prayer" (2002, 10) sounds highly reminiscent of Grotowski's "secular sacrum" mentioned above.

In her article "Colonial Policing", Elizabeth Butler Cullingford reiterates the accusation of Raj revisionism while discussing Barry's ***The Steward of Christendom*** and ***The Whereabouts of Eneas McNulty***. According to Cullingford, Barry's portraits of his central figures are "so sanitized" (2006, 133) in order to serve his counterargument to the official narrative of Irish history, and the didactic message of both [***Steward*** **and** ***Eneas***] is to demonize the chapter of the patriotic struggle for freedom and decolonization in the history of Ireland in the twentieth century. Both texts, claims Cullingford, are "schematic political allegories" that would have been "more powerful had they been less driven by their anti-Republican thesis, less concerned to refute a one-sided version of history by offering an equally one-sided and sometimes factually misleading rebuttal"(2006, 144). These revisionist accusations are disproved by the analysis conducted within the present study whose argument is more in line with that of the first category cited above.

In the following pages the study undertakes a detailed analysis of the two selected works, discussing the various structural elements and relating them to the thematic, and technical elements with the purpose of drawing conclusions concerning the main question of the research, namely, how Barry's literary project transcends generic boundaries to represent lyrical and bodily

truth as viable co-existants with historical/syntactic truth. The above-mentioned concepts of narrative, narrating situations, common narrative structure, ritual, and lyricism will be implemented to both novel and drama under study. Applying the above-mentioned theoretical approaches to the selected novel and play, the study attempts to prove that far from engaging in a contest for monopolizing the truth, Barry's oeuvre is a critique and a subversion of all authoritative narratives, opting for the essential need for the co-existence of conflicting "syntactic" stories, (as well as traces mapped over bodies) – enmeshed in the network of history and in the hearts of humanity.

Biographical and Fictional Contact Zones:

The central fictional characters of the two works under study refer to Barry's real-life ancestors, with Barry's great-grandfather, John Dunne, who was the Chief Superintendent of the Dublin Metropolitan Police DMP being the origin of ***Steward's*** Thomas Dunne, and Barry's great-uncle Eneas spawning two characters in ***Scripture***: Eneas McNulty the British army WWII volunteer, and Joe Clear, a police officer in the Royal Irish Constabulary RIC. The common ground between the members of this array of historical and fictional characters is that they are all manifestations of the father figure motif that recurs in all Barry's works, connoting familial and national ancestry at the same time. Moreover, these "ancestors", highlight the blurred lines of demarcation between the seemingly contrasting qualities of loyalty and betrayal in revolutionary and post-revolutionary times.

It is noteworthy that loyalty to the British crown has not always been synonymous with high treason as it becomes during the reign of De Valera. Indeed, the hostile feelings towards monarchy up till 1922 were far from universal among Irish nationalists as we read in James H. Murphy's *Abject Loyalty*: "Most Irish nationalists [up till 1922] were monarchists of either the enthusiastic or the grudging but realistic varieties … Monarchy seemed the natural form of government and it had the blessing of the Catholic Church" (Murphy, 2001, xix); Murphy adds that, "Republicanism was the preference of only a minority in Ireland" (2001, xxi). Thus, to be the Chief Superintendent of DMP – the highest job that a Catholic could rise to in imperial police service – would per force mean to take part in such milestone events of modern Irish history as the Dublin Lockout of 1913, the Easter Rising of 1916, and the handing over of Dublin Castle to Michael Collins in 1922. However, the policing acts committed would be part of the sworn duty of maintaining the peace and keeping law and order, necessarily defying any simplistic judgemental reductions to good or bad. Thus, Thomas Dunne and his son Willie are representatives of the Catholic loyalists who have been written out of the official history of the Republic, as well as upholders of the complex virtue of loyalty, placed centre-stage throughout the play. The monologue in which Thomas expresses his love for Queen Victoria, for all its seemingly exaggerated sentimentality that may partly be excused on the man's state of senility and confinement in the lunatic asylum, is a manifesto of "patriotic" feelings that were far from being considered high treason before the troubles of the first decades of the twentieth century in Ireland. Thomas believes in the value of stewardship, and whether the audience agree with him or not, the lyric words are a plea for understanding the man and his values:

I loved her for as long as she lived, I loved her as much as I loved Cissy my wife, and maybe more, or differently … The great world that she owned was shipshape as a ship. All the harbours of the earth were trim with their granite piers, the ships were shining and strong … And men like me were there to make everything peaceable, to keep order in her kingdoms. She was our pride. Among her emblems was the gold harp, the same harp we wore on our helmets. (Barry, 1997,250)

In ***Scripture*** the biographical-fictional connection is more complicated, not only because one real-life ancestor undergoes binary fission in the world of the novel to spawn two characters as mentioned above, but also, and more importantly, because one of these fictional characters is Catholic, like Barry himself, and the other belongs to another religious denomination, Presbyterianism, that has long been persecuted and persecutor, alternatively, during the different periods of the complicated religious history of Ireland. The Catholic Eneas McNulty, based on Barry's great-uncle who "did something … terrible by joining the RIC, [and thus belongs] to a censored past … and a country whose history is erased" (Barry, 1998b, 16), appears fleetingly in the world of the novel as he returns secretly to his native Sligo on the night of the Belfast Blitz, wearing the uniform of a

British officer in World War Two, and spends the night with Roseanne McNulty, impregnating her with her only child. The shadowiness of the character of Eneas and the lack of clues concerning his inner consciousness despite the pivotal, albeit secret, role he plays in the plot, reflects the aura of mystery that Barry feels to be surrounding the life of this great uncle as he mentions in ***Papers***. This enigma has presumably intrigued Barry to attempt to flesh up the skeleton of scant facts known about the uncle's sad story in the novel entitled ***The Whereabouts of Eneas McNulty*** (1998c).

The second manifestation of Barry's uncle in ***Scripture*** is Roseanne's father, Joe Clear, the Presbyterian RIC Superintendent whose religious and political affiliations play a central role in his personal tragedy as well as in the tragedy of his daughter Roseanne –the protagonist and co-narrator of ***Scripture.*** Although the high visibility and voluminous loudness of the presence of Joe Clear in the text of the novel – a presence maintained primarily through the medium of his daughter's remembrance of her past – is the exact opposite of the dark, fleeting and shadowy passage of Eneas McNulty through Roseanne's testimony – the two men are equally enigmatic in terms of what we read explicitly of their inner turmoil.

On the other hand, while we do not get a direct insight of the conflicting loyalties warring within the disturbed mind of Joe Clear, one can surmise from a multitude of textual evidence that Joe Clear's vicissitudes in life have been great, from a sailor in the British Merchant Navy to a policeman in the RIC during extremely turbulent times. Being a Presbyterian must have complicated things for him, especially as he was the devout son of a Presbyterian minister and the first to acknowledge the religious abuse perpetrated by the various churches across the canvas of Irish history:

he thought of the Protestant religion as an instrument as soft as a feather transformed into a hammer by the old dispensation, and used to batter the heads of those that labored to live in Ireland, the most of them Catholic by nature. His own father loved Presbyterianism, and he did himself, but he was mortally sorry, no, he was mortally angry at the uses it had been put to, along with the religions of the Anglicans, Baptists et cetera, in Ireland. (Barry, 2008, 62)

The subtextual hints indicative of Joe Clear's estrangement from his wife, of his living under constant fear of reprisal from the IRA, of his suffering from poverty and ignominy as a "rat-catcher" – slang for despicable informers who report against the revolutionaries, diagnose a stressful and traumatized mental state that can lead to major behavioural perversion symptomatized by bouts of heavy drinking and sexual abuse of his own daughter. Similar to ***Steward***, the novel makes a gesture of reconciliation between parents and offspring, past and present, Catholic and Protestant, achieved through attempting to comprehend people's weaknesses, sufferings, disgrace, and greatness. Barry's "disgraced" men and (women) are enmeshed by their feelings of loyalty, their professionalism, their commitment to the call of duty, and their love for offspring, at a time when the concepts of virtue and vice were being redefined. Before his engagement with the stories of his disgraced relation, Barry himself had to undergo a resolution of conflicting interests. He must have travelled a long way indeed to change from the Barry who wrote: "I was in fear of it being discovered that I had such a relative, hiding you might say in my very blood, I was eager to conceal him, indeed to keep him concealed, to seal him in, where he lay unnamed and unmentioned in official history" (Barry, 1997, xii), to become the author of such lyrical and bodily truths that will be discussed in the following sections of the paper.

Narratological Considerations

The Text Layer: Unreliable Narrators and Multiple Narrative Levels

The text layer of ***The Secret Scripture*** underlines its textuality by the multiplicity of references to the act of writing and to the dialogic nature of language, and the emphasis on how the scribe is highly aware of the addressee of his message. Applying Bal's narratological approach, one can make a case for the number of "narrative levels" and "narrators" that exist at the level of the novel's text: the first level has an external narrator, (EN1) according to Bal's terminology or "heterodeigetic third-person narrator" according to Genette's terminology. Interestingly, this narrator makes minimal utterances throughout the text, in opposition to the two 'character-bound narrators", (CN2) according to Bal or "homodeigetic narrators" according to Genette, who exist in the second narrative level of the text and make most of the utterances of the novel. By definition, the external

narrator "never refers to itself explicitly as a character, … [and] does not figure in the fabula as an actor, … [whereas when we have] a speaking agent [who narrates an event and its perception] and is to be identified as a character in the fabula it itself narrates we speak of a character-bound narrator" (Bal, 1997, 22).

The minimal utterance of EN1 in ***Scripture*****,** exemplified only in the title, the two epigraphs, the division of the text into three parts and its chapterization, and the juxtaposition of the two embedded texts ("Roseanne's Testimony of Herself" and "Dr. Grene's Commonplace Book"), highlights the priority given to the embedded texts that practically constitute the text layer. Such a strategy, argues Bal, entails an underlining of "the narrative rhetoric of truth" since a CN "usually proclaims that it recounts true facts about her- or himself. 'It' pretends to be writing 'her' [or 'his'] autobiography, even if the fabula is blatantly implausible" (Bal, 1997, 22). The hand of EN1 can be felt throughout the text mainly by the alternating arrangement of "Roseanne's Testimony of Herself," in which the hundred-year-old mental hospital inmate is dreaming back snatches from her past life, with "Dr. Grene's Commonplace Book" in which the about-to-retire head of hospital is jotting down his memories of private and professional life. The two narratives are in effect two long monologues that intersect and overlap through the secret machinations of the heterodeigetic narrator.

It is noteworthy that ***Scripture*** has a third narrative level which includes the plethora of oral and written narratives/documents embedded in the narratives of Roseanne and Dr. Grene. These third-level narratives form the matrix from which Roseanne and Dr. Grene search for the truth, although ultimately the novel foregrounds the illusive nature of the so-called truth.

In ***Steward*****,** the heterodeigetic narrator is absent from the stage, his presence only indicated through the medium of stage directions, and the sequence/arrangement of scenes. On the other hand, the play offers a multitude of homodeigetic narrators who are given the chance to voice different, sometimes diametrically contradicting, narratives simultaneously as if talking at cross purpose. For instance, the story told by the orderly Smith while he scrubs the body of Thomas Dunne, about the events of 1913 in Sackville Road, goes as follows: "Chief Superintendent this big gobshite was, … that killed four men and two in O'Connell Street in the days of the Lock-out. Larkin. Ha? His men it was that struck down the strikers (a gentle hit with the drying cloth). Baton-charging. A big loyal Catholic gobshite killing poor hungry Irishmen. If you weren't an old madman we'd flay you" (Barry, 1997, 243). Thomas is given the chance to tell the story from his viewpoint: "We did our best and followed our orders" (Barry, 1997, 245); "I had three hundred men in B division, and kept all the great streets and squares of Dublin orderly and safe, and was proud, proud to do it well" (Barry, 1997, 245). There is a certain dignity in the pride with which the old man, despite his vulnerable condition, upholds his professionalism. He insists that, "We were part of a vanished world … But I know my own story of what happened and am content with it" (Barry, 1997, 246). Barry's technique of giving full force to opposite sides of the same story reaches its height in the scene that takes place shortly afterwards: Smith describes the violent execution of the revolutionary Robert Emmet by the authorities of Dublin Castle, citing in gruesome details the hanging and quartering of the man; at the same time Thomas is sitting in bed eating the lamb stew just brought to him by Smith, and cannot help listening to the horrors cited by his orderly, horrors for which he presumably bears partial responsibility by being part of the system. Interestingly, Emmet's execution for "high treason" takes place in 1803, i.e. well before the time of Dunne's service in the Castle. However, the horrifying mutilation of Emmet's body by hanging, drawing, and quartering, is put into cruel analogy with the meat stew eaten by Thomas. Ironically, Thomas improvises a strategy of escape from the implied accusation of cannibalism by deploying the register of cooking recipes, and responds to Smith's words by elaborating on how to make an Irish stew with lamb, rosemary, and clover – herbs whose scent makes a large part of his childhood memories.

Thus, at the level of text, not only does Barry deploy a plethora of narrators, but he also questions the reliability of any narrative, underlining his critique of the absolute authenticity of any one narrative by the basically unreliable status of his central figures. Although they might be well-intentioned, these narrators are hampered by lifelong traumas, senility, and mental confusion, from providing a complete and authenticated account of their period on this earth. The state of

the text as juxtaposition of extended monologues that belong by definition to what Bal refers to as "narrative rhetoric of truth", emphasizes the coexistence of multiple "true" versions of the same narrative. The memory lapses, gaps, silences, multiple versions of the same narrative provided sometimes by many narrators and sometimes even by one narrator who keeps contradicting himself / herself, as well as the confusion between past and present, and the empty pages at the end of the text in reference to the narrative gaps that still need to be filled, are among Barry's strategies to deal with the problematic history of his country.

The Story Layer: Flashback, Soliloquy, and Reconciliation

At the level of story, the main storyline of ***Steward*** and ***Scripture*** **s**hows many similarities: the story begins at a certain point in the present (1932 and 2007 respectively); the place is a mental hospital in rural Ireland; from there the story proceeds backwards as the central characters, who are currently engaged in the network of relationships between patients and hospital staff, begin remembering their life stories embedded in Irish history. A common narrative strategy deployed by Barry in both novel and play is the strategy of "dreaming back" discussed by Antony Roche in relation to Irish drama in general, and applied in the context of the present study to both novel and play equally. "The double import of the 'dreaming back' for drama emerges as a way of dramatizing history and its consequences, of foreshortening chronological time the better to disclose cause and effect, of framing and representing some historical primal act as a means of submitting it to questioning and revision" (Roche, 1994, 32).

The task of remembering is far from easy, as Roseanne writes: "a feeling of sweeping dread spread through me, like I imagine the poison of broken and afflicted atoms spread through people on the far margins of Hiroshima, killing them just as surely as the explosion. Dread like a sickness, a memory of a sickness" (Barry, 2008, 27 – 8). The flashback trajectory of the story in both works mixes past with present, and the end takes the form of reconciliation between father/mother and son/daughter, evoking an extratextual reconciliation between Barry and his ancestors on the one hand, and Ireland and its marginalized sons and daughters on the other. In ***Steward*****,** the play ends with reconciliation between Thomas and his father as well as Thomas and his son. The ghost of Thomas's son, Willie, "comes, his uniform flecked with gold" (Barry, 1997, 299). Thomas tells him the story of the sheepdog and how his own father forgave both him and the errant dog, and utters his moving words about "the mercy of a father's life". Later, Willie helps Thomas into bed and, the final line is a stage direction that reads: "Willie lies in close to him" (Barry, 1997, 301).

Scripture also ends in reconciliation. Roseanne's testimony shows that she has forgiven her father a long time ago. The extent of her devastation when he dies is reflected in the words she writes more than eighty years after his death:

He was just as anyone else, and anything, clock or heart, he had a breaking point. … Oh, oh, oh, oh, oh, oh, oh, oh, oh, oh. Do you know the grief of it? I hope not. The grief that does not age, that does not go away with time, like most griefs and human matters. That is the grief that is always there, swinging a little in a derelict house, my father, my father. I cry out for him. (Barry, 2008, 86)

Another instance of reconciliation takes place between Roseanne as she lies on her deathbed in hospital and her long-lost son, Dr. Grene. The words bring to mind Victor Turner's argument about the judicial nature of theatre, applied here to novel discourse, thus providing further evidence of Barry's transcending of genres:

'So, Doctor,' she said. 'Have you assessed me?'

'What?'

'Have you made your assessment?'

'Oh, yes. I think so.'

'And what is the verdict?'

'You are blameless.'

'Blameless? I hardly think that is given to any mortal being.'

'Blameless. Wrongly committed. I apologise. I apologise on behalf of my profession. I apologise on behalf of myself, as someone who did not bestir himself, and look into everything earlier. That it took the demolition of the hospital to do it. …

…

'I wonder will you allow me to forgive you?' she said.

'My God, yes,' I said …

'Well, I do,' she said. (Barry, 2008, 291 – 2)

The above dialogue underlines themes of mutual acceptance and mutual forgiveness. Neither character has the monopoly of victimhood, not the

son who was abandoned as a child and brought up in orphanhood and emotional, though not material, deprivation, nor the mother who was wrongly committed for two thirds of her extended life to the worst type of prison – a mental hospital. Above all, they recognize that achieving closure does not necessarily require delving into details of past actions that can very easily cause the opening up of old wounds.

The Fabula Layer

The fabula is, according to Bal's model, divided into four "elements": "events, actors, time, and location" (1997, 7). For the purpose of the present analysis, the fabula elements of location and time are important in ways that far exceed their being a setting for the events and actors. Moreover, the functional events of the fabula and the actors involved in them provide supportive argument to this paper's thesis as will be discussed.

The Fabula Elements of Location and Time

In ***Steward,*** the fabula elements of location and time amalgamate a number of divergent worlds in a single disorienting experience. There is the childhood world of Thomas in Wicklow, with its woods, pasture lands, and Big House; its presiding image of the crab apple tree and its scents of clover and rosemary, as well as its sounds of milking cows and crazed hens – in other words an idyllic pastoral world if it were not for the episodes where fear and love intermingle in such a disturbing way reminiscent of the serpent in the edenic garden of Humewood and Lathaleer – the Big House and farm respectively. A harsher, bloodier, and more violent world is that of Dublin in the second decade of the twentieth century, with its riots, strikes, risings, murders, rebels, and executions. A third world is the bare hospital room of Thomas in the county home at Wicklow. That the play maps these opposed though closely related locations simultaneously both on stage and in Thomas's memory, foregrounds the causal relationship between history, empire, geography, and tragedy. The priority of location in interpreting Irish historical reality is foregrounded by Nicholas Grene: "Ireland continues to be matter for interpretation, a space, a place, a people needing explanation" (Grene, 2000, 48).

Thomas Dunne's childhood memories evoke a number of situations that perform a double thematic function: they allegorize Thomas's crisis of allegiance, and they vividly echo childhood feelings of love and fear, feelings that have regained all their force for the raving seventy-five-year-old ex-policeman who might well be living his second childhood. Some of these situations are cross-referenced in Barry's ***Annie Dunne,*** featuring the life of Thomas's daughter. Spectacular among these is the episode of the sheepdog, which, while repeated in detail in Annie's novel, rises to allegorical heights in the play as it refers to Thomas's feelings that he betrayed his trust when he led the riot police during the 1913 Dublin Lockout – an action that caused death and casualties among people whom he was supposed to protect. Thomas's action here is like that of the old sheepdog that slaughtered a sheep on the farm long ago, terrifying the child Thomas who knew that his father would kill the erring dog, only to be happily surprised in the end by his father's forgiveness of both of them. The resolution of the terrorizing rift between father and child is given vent towards the end of the play, as a plea for resolution of his life's loyalty conflict.

In ***Scripture***, the emotionally charged element of location is intertwined with an architectural metaphor in which images of construction and demolition are definitive, not only of the places where the events of the fabula unfold – such as Roscommon's Psychiatric Hospital, the Round Tower of Sligo's Catholic Cemetery, the McNulty Dancing Plaza, but of all other fabula elements. For example, individual lives are constructed or erased out of existence as if by the dynamite that erases Dr. Grene's hospital; walls are constructed to compartmentalize certain sections out of individual consciousness thus empowering an "object actant" like Roseanne to adopt a "subject actant" role; walls can be threatening as well as protective as evidenced by the homes and asylums, schools and orphanages abounding in the text; walls can also erect a communication barrier between life partners thus leading to escalating estrangement that can be as damaging to life itself as the Shannon Dam built across the Garravoge was damaging to the salmon population of the river. This architectural metaphor can be linked to one of the main events of the fabula, the demolition of Roscommon Mental Hospital. It is also linked to Barry's sustained literary project of demolition of the paperwork edifice of official historiography, exposing it for what it is, a "paperworld of misapprehension and untruth" (Barry, 2008, 293).

It is not surprising that in literary works as immersed in both public and private history as the current works under investigation are, the fabula element of time emerges not just as the temporal dimension to the acts of narration and to the narrated lives and events, but also as the main "power actant", in the narratological sense of the term that will be discussed in the following pages. The constant to-and-fro movement across the different life periods of the central figures in both works, from senility back to childhood then onto adulthood and senility again, and the foregrounding of the trans-generational theme acts as a temporal fabula metonymy of history. In ***Steward***, there is a constant steam of direct references to historical events. Another case in point is the geological metaphor in ***Scripture,*** in which subsequent geological ages since the beginning of life on earth (or rather in the sea as the novel frequently demonstrates), with their remaining fossils, are buried in layer upon layer of rocks and limestone, in the same manner that individual human memories and imaginings exist in "unfathomable fathoms" (Barry, 2008, 219). To emphasize the principal role played by history in the lives of his character, Barry repeatedly refers us to various instances of the impact of geological ages on planet Earth.

The Fabula Elements of Events and Actors:

The present study adopts Bal's definition of the event as, "the transition from one state to another state, caused or experienced by actors" (1997, 182). The events selected for analysis in the following pages conform to the three criteria of "change", "choice", and "confrontation" proposed by Bal, Barthes, and Hendricks successively. Bal stresses that an event, by definition, should induce a change from one state to another, (1997, 182 – 184). Roland Barthes, claims Bal, "distinguishes between functional and non-functional events. Functional events open a choice between two possibilities, realize this choice, or reveal the results of such a choice. Once a choice is made, it determines the subsequent course of events of the fabula" (Bal, 1997, 184). Taking Barthes' classification as his point of departure, Hendricks argues that the structure of the fabula is based on confrontation. Every phase of the fabula, or every functional event according to Hendricks, consists of three components: "two arguments and one predicate"(Bal, 1997, 186). Translating Hendricks terms from the domain of logic to that of linguistics, Bal states that, "it should be possible to formulate this unit as: two nominal and one verbal component. The structure of the basic sentence [of a functional event] would then be: **subject – predicate – (direct) object**, in which both the subject and the (direct) object must be actors, agents of action" (Bal, 1997, 186). The fourth element of fabula, that of the actors, is studied in accordance with Greimas' actantial model with its actant classes of subjects versus objects, powers versus receivers, and helpers versus opponents. (Greimas, 1983, 197-213, 303).

The first major event of the fabula of ***Scripture*** may be written as follows: **1)Medical authorities (subject) want to demolish (function) Roscommon Regional Mental Hospital (object)**.

Bal's criterion of a functional event allows Roscommon Mental Hospital to be considered as an actor, given that the demolition of the building involves confrontation with the hospital staff, inmates, and public opinion, all of whom have the power to facilitate or hinder the event. As decision-makers, the power of the medical department seems to be supreme in relation to the above-mentioned event. In other words, Bremond's narrative cycle of "possibility – realization – conclusion" (Bremond, 1996, 61 -75), is likely to be fulfilled. The realization of the possibility takes place through a number of parallel channels that involve an architectural examination followed by a surveyor's report, the construction of a new building to which some of the patients will be moved, and assessment of current patients to decide who to release and who to move to the new hospital. The event reaches its successful conclusion as we read the account given by Dr. Grene, the hospital's senior psychiatrist, of the event: "At the appointed hour the engineer pushed down on the box, and after an eternal second we heard a massive noise and saw the underside of the old building dissolve in a fiery cloud of mortar and ancient stone. The huge edifice immediately headed earthward, leaving only a hanging memory of its old positions against the sky line" (Barry, 2008, 296 – 7).

However, applying Greimas's actantial model, the medical department is a subject that has "competence" to do the action but lacks "truth value" as there seems to be a discrepancy between its overt and covert motivation for acting. For whereas the age and condition of the building that,

"was constructed in the late eighteenth century as a charitable institution for the 'healthful asylum and superior correction of wounded seats of thought'" (Barry, 2008, 14) as Dr. Grene writes in his Commonplace Book, seem to warrant such a decision, reasons other than the welfare and safety of the inmates lurk behind it. Being part of a modern democratic government in the twenty-first century, the medical department cannot afford to ignore public opinion as mirrored by the newspapers, opinion that has been angrily calling for the "freedom" and "release" of patients, many of whom have in the first place been tragically "sectioned for social rather than medical reasons" (Barry, 2008, 16). The surveyor's report – one of a string of written documents including birth certificates, adoption papers, depositions for patient admission to mental hospitals, diaries, letters, marriage annulment certificates, Royal Irish Constabulary records, and cemetery registers whose truth value is ultimately undermined by the text, provides the necessary legitimacy for the demolition decision. According to the report, the condition of the building poses a threat to the inmates, many of whom have been there for half a century or more, so that their DNA has, according to Dr. Grene, "probably melded with the mortar of the building … that to move them would be a sort of violation" (Barry, 2008, 15).

Thus, time with both its detrimental effect on the walls and roofs of the hospital building, and its invigorating effect on public opinion in modern democracies, as well as on the flourishing condition of Irish economy at the turn of the new century, is the "power", in Greimas' sense of the term, that determines the ability (or inability) of the Roscommon medical authorities to undertake and become the subject of the initial event of the fabula according to the present model. The second event of the novel's fabula can be expressed as:

2)Dr. Grene (subject) wants to evaluate (function) Roseanne (object).

As a preliminary procedure to the demolition of the hospital building, Dr. Grene is required to carry on a full assessment of patients' state of mental health, to decide "whatever of the patients can be put back into the community…, and exactly what category of patient each other patient is" (Barry, 2008, 15). This act of evaluation can be considered as event number two in the narrative cycle, as well as part of the "realization stage" of event number one discussed above. The third event of the novel's fabula may be expressed as:

3)Roseanne (subject) wants to be the author (function) of herself (object).

At the beginning of the novel, Roseanne uses the same words of the above formula under the heading of "Roseanne's Testimony of Herself". She writes: "The terror and hurt in my story happened because when I was young I thought others were the authors of my fortunes or misfortunes; I did not know that a person could hold up a wall made of imaginary bricks and mortar against the horrors and cruel, dark tricks of time that assail us, and be the author therefore of themselves" (Barry, 2008, 3-4).

Roseanne's act of narration is the literal realization of event 3 of the fabula. She is empowered by the biro pen that she gets from Dr. Grene and the unwanted sheaf of hospital paper that may have been given to her by John Kane/Sean Keane, the hospital orderly who has spent most of his life trying to protect Roseanne, (not always successfully).Significantly, Roseanne intuitively understands that one cannot be the author of oneself (and by analogy a nation cannot be the author of its own written history)unless one is ready and capable of building a barrier between one's narrative and the painful/disgraceful/traumatic chapters of one's history. Thus, the very concept of a comprehensive narrative that is all-inclusive and that leaves nothing and nobody out of its boundaries is undermined at the beginning of the novel, leading to a rejection of self-proclaimed authoritative encompassing narratives, including national historiography. Roseanne's various reasons for writing her "testimony" comprise a desire to leave a trace in life since people without anecdotes like Roseanne's mother – "a person singularly without stories" (Barry, 2008, 8) – disappear completely from the memories of those they love, in opposition to Roseanne's father whose presence in her testimony is overwhelming by virtue of his being an incurable storyteller. Presenting her testimony to God at the doors of heaven in order to be redeemed and get past Saint Peter's gates is another motive for writing; in fact, this is the motive stressed the most by Roseanne, hence adding to the truth value of her testimony, so that it is arguable there are no intentional untruths in Roseanne's account of herself, only sins of omission and composite memories in which a number of events are integrated and presented as one event in the same

manner that geological fossils belonging to different ages are pressurized into one rock structure. Roseanne seems to be aware of this as she writes, in an image that combines the immensity of geological time with the unfathomable space down an abyss: "Unfathomable. Fathoms. I wonder is that the difficulty, that my memories and my imaginings are lying deeply in the same *place*? Or one on top of the other like layers of shells and sand in a piece of limestone, so that they have both become the same element, and I cannot distinguish one from the other with any ease, unless it is from close, close looking?" (Barry, 2008, 219).

In a similar manner the main events of ***Steward*** can be expressed as follows:

1)Thomas Dunne (subject) wants to resolve the rift (function) with his father (object).

2)Thomas Dunne (subject) wants to resolve the rift (function) with his son (object).

3)Smith, the hospital orderly, (subject) wants to punish (function) Thomas (object).

4)Mrs. O'Dea (subject) wants to dress (function) Thomas (object) in hospital uniform.

The first two events of ***Steward***'s fabula are related to the father image and to the theme of reconciliation – two major motifs at both familial and national levels in all Barry's works. Thomas Dunne, the senile DMP officer disgraced after the rise of the Irish Republic, spends most of his death-in-life incarceration in the mental hospital reminiscing about past memories. Chief among these is his troubled relation with his father and his son – both already dead when the play begins. In narratological terms, the play empowers/facilitates Thomas's quest of reconciliation by giving voice to his fragmented memories in such a manner that enables a coherent life story to emerge. Scattered memories that hint at paternal acts of physical punishment of the child Thomas leave the senile Thomas with no bitterness. Rather, the final impression one gets is a feeling of overwhelming love, respect, gratitude, and identification between Thomas and his father, who, incidentally, is another steward – a steward of the Big House of Humewood, with all the connotations of loyalty to the Protestant Anglo-Irish ascendancy who owned the Big Houses of Ireland. The most significant memory is one (that was summarily touched upon in a previous section of this paper), in which a favourite sheepdog kills and devours a ewe and is thus candidate for killing by the father. After spending a whole night with the errant dog (with whom the senile Thomas obviously identifies as a police officer who has killed his compatriots during the troubled times of strikes and riots), both dog and child return home to be welcomed and forgiven by a loving and extremely worried father. This reconciliation is celebrated by the reminiscing Thomas in the lyric language of Barry: 'And I would call that the mercy of fathers, when the love that lies in them deeply like the glittering face of a well, is betrayed by an emergency, and the child sees at last that he is loved, loved and needed and not to be lived without, and greatly.'(Barry, 1997, 301)

The second event involves the reconciliation between Thomas and his son Willie who died in the First World War. Haunted by guilt feelings for his unexpressed but obvious disappointment in his son's lack of the necessary physique to join the DMP, (Willie's height is not the required six-feet tall), and by his sending his son (as a second-best career) as a soldier in the British army during the Great War, Thomas Dunne is able to achieve final reconciliation with the ghost of his dead son. Talking to his second daughter, Annie, when they are terrorized in their country home by revolutionaries, and feel the need for the dead son, Willie, as protector, Thomas says: "I blame myself. There was no need for him to go off, except he hadn't the height to be a policeman. The army were glad to take him. I blame myself…. It was the death of him. You cannot lose a son without blaming yourself" (254). An act of narration represented by a letter sent from Willie to his father immediately before his death, and treasured by the senile man as a most valuable possession to be read and shown to others constantly, is the means of achieving reconciliation. It is highly relevant that the audience get to listen to the full text of this two-page letter at the end of the play through the voice of the hospital orderly, Smith, otherwise feared by Thomas as a satanic figure designated "Black Jim". The fact that even Smith who has been acting constantly as Thomas's worst nightmare, cannot help himself from commenting at the end of the letter: "That's a beautiful letter, Mr. Dunne. A memento. A keepsake" (293), folding the letter and handing it back reverently to Thomas, indicates the double role of this piece of epistolary narration. For whereas both Thomas and Smith have been mutually demonizing each other throughout the

play, occupying the polar positions of the dutiful policeman who was in charge of clearing the streets during the workers' strike of 1913 and the brother of one of those killed by police force on that occasion, the reading of the letter brings to light the common bonds of humanity between them, allowing implicitly for some sort of reconciliation. The second role is reconciliation between Thomas, who has neglected his son's singing talents and forced upon him a military career that finally kills him, and the deeply-missed and grieved-over son. The final lines of Willie's letter offer not just absolution for the father's sins, but boundless love and respect for his father: "I wish to be a more dutiful son because, Papa, in the mire of this wasteland, you stand before my eyes as the finest man I know, and in my dreams you comfort me, and keep my spirits lifted" (293).

Events number three and four in the above fabula analysis of ***Steward*** have the senile body of Thomas Dunne, standing alone on stage, discarded of its resplendent DMP uniform – which has been significantly bestowed on a fellow inmate who imagines he is a dog, in reference to the great fall in status endured by Castle Catholics – as their "object actant". Significantly, the "subject actants" of events three and four are the orderly and the seamstress of the mental hospital, who have become empowered by their post-independent status in the Republic of Ireland. These events exemplify Llewellyn-Jones's argument about the complementary role of stage directions, i.e. the movement provoked by deixis (adverbs of place and manner which call for the intervention of the actor's body to complete meaning) with other signifying systems such as the stage properties of lighting and setting for the production of the totality of the theatrical experience. According to Llewellyn-Jones, these elements, "contribute, not only to the play's atmosphere or the practical needs of the action, but also encode social and economic symbolic qualities and cultural-specific elements" (2002, 22). In this sense, the movements undertaken by Smith involve stripping the clothes off the body of Thomas, overtly in order to wash him and implicitly to indicate his full power over the senile body of the once-all powerful imperial policeman who represents the murderer of Smith's brother. Another act taken by Smith is to feed Thomas/Thomas's body, again apparently an act of nurture but in the context of the horrific narrative told by Smith about the murder – hanging and quartering – of the revolutionary Robert Emmet while Thomas is eating his lamb stew, it transforms into a parody for the cannibalism of DMP. A third and more openly violent act occurs when Smith assaults Thomas to put down a sudden fit of boisterous raving and ranting experienced by the senile patient, an assault that causes multiple cuts and bruises to Thomas's vulnerable body. Even the later medical ministering to these injuries by the angry orderly seems suspiciously brutal rather than therapeutic. And whereas Mrs. O'Dea, the seamstress of the asylum, is on the whole more patient and caring in her attitude towards Thomas, ,her repeated reference to his "broad chest" and "big frame", qualities that have procured his job in DMP in the first instance, and her insistence on taking his body measurements for a new suit almost against his will, with all the involuntary marionette-like movements he has to perform for her in the meantime, shows how political and religious divisions are acted mainly through humiliation of the conquered body.

The above-mentioned acts of violation of imperial/colonial bodies in the Republic of Ireland, deployed by Barry to express bodily truth as more authentic than syntactic truth, are paradigmatic of ***Scripture*** as well. The body of Joe Clear, the Presbyterian Superintendent of the RIC in ***Scripture***, as well as that of his daughter Roseanne the protagonist co-narrator of the novel, are abused and, in the case of Joe, simultaneously abusive, in relation to historical context. Remembering her father's daily cleansing ritual, indicative of a subconscious desire to cleanse himself of his betrayal of public and private morality, Roseanne writes about how he uses "carbolic soap" that "would have cleaned a greasy floor"; "My father was the cleanest man in all the Christian world, all Sligo anyhow. He seemed to me all strapped about in his uniform … He had a barrel in the yard that gathered the rain and with that he rinsed himself every day of the year, … stripped entirely, and laved himself mercilessly in all kinds of weather, in the deeps of winter groaning like a bull"(Barry, 2008, 5). This large body that defies the attempts of its owner to scrub off its many sins will later be abducted by IRA men as part of the mass reprisals conducted by revolutionaries against RIC in the post-Independence Ireland of the twenties. His executioners take him to the top of the round tower

overlooking the graveyard where they used to hide their weapons, stuff his mouth with feathers to stigmatize his cowardice for informing against them, and try to throw him out of the window. His heavy frame and large belly (from years of heavy drinking) cause him to get stuck in the small window. There is a change of strategy and he is "beaten with hammers"(Barry, 2008, 180) till death. In a final theatrical touch they decide "to hang him in a derelict house nearby" (Barry, 2008, 180). Joe Clear's dead body is subjected to mutilation "when he was no more than a big pudding of blood and past events" (Barry, 2008, 87 -8).

As an extremely beautiful woman and the daughter of a "traitor" according to the Ireland of De Valera, Roseanne is doubly vulnerable and her body bears the marks of numerous violations. The multitude of phallic symbols that abound in Roseanne's narrative, including the round tower in the cemetery, the Metal Man – that lighthouse figure near the beach of Strandhill, the towers of Sligo lunatic asylum, and the cigar of Father Gaunt, stand for all the violations that have assaulted her across the years. She has lived till the age of thirty-five in Sligo before being consigned to the asylum. Her beauty is such a mixed blessing to the extent that the ugly deformity of Annie Dunne of the eponymous novel can be seen as a godsend that protects her from unwanted male attention. And whereas Annie's utmost distress is that of being a spinster and having to depend on the charity of relatives in old age, Roseanne's extraordinary beauty has added greatly to her vulnerability, especially as the lonely daughter of a Presbyterian RIC officer in the Ireland of the 1920s and 30s. Dr. Grene describes Roseanne at one point in her life as: "looking like a queen, and though she was seventy then, very striking in the face. Really quite beautiful still, and God knows what she must have looked like when she was young. Extraordinary, a sort of manifestation of something unusual and may be alien in this provincial world" (Barry, 2008, 17).

Interestingly, Roseanne's "Testimony of Herself" outwardly extols the greatness of her father's character, his religiosity, professionalism, physical cleanliness, musical talents and storytelling abilities, while all the time there lurks deep in her memory the terrible shame of her father's abuse of her. Describing Joe Clear's exotic opera-singing voice and his professional piano playing and endless treasure of anecdotes, Roseanne declares: "And a man who can make himself merry in the face of those coming disasters that assailed him, as disasters do so many, without grace or favour, is a true hero"(Barry, 2008, 13). Roseanne's forgiving attitude towards her father's major transgression against her, and her plea for mercy for the hardship *he* has endured through his position in the network of Irish history, is a replica of the redemptive literary project of her author.

Joe Clear is just the first of a long chain of male assailants that have taken advantage of Roseanne's body, changing her into the remains of a human being: "I am only a thing left over, a remnant woman, and I do not even look like a human being no more, but a scraggy stretch of skin and bone in a bleak skirt and blouse, and a canvas jacket, and I sit here in my niche like a songless robin – no, like a mouse that died under the hearthstone where it was warm, and lies now like a mummy in the pyramids" (Barry, 2008, 4). Her second rapist is a man of absolute power in the Ireland of de Valera, and ironically he is another father-figure, someone who should have offered protection but who has betrayed his trust – the Catholic priest "Father Gaunt". After Joe Clear's murder, Father Gaunt offers Roseanne his protection and suggests that she considers him "in loco parentis" (Barry, 2008, 96), a position that he fills in more than one sense. Gaunt repeatedly attempts to convert Roseanne and rescue her of her "godless" state; his youthfulness makes him especially prone to her beauty: "Roseanne, you are a very lovely young girl, and as such I am afraid, going about the town, a mournful temptation, not only to the boys of Sligo but also, the men" (Barry, 2008, 94). In a highly evocative passage, Roseanne sees herself standing at the doorstep with Father Gaunt going away from a visit to her house, and after a few steps, he stops and takes his shoes off to remove a pebble; later, she has a memory of Gaunt's clothes: "He ordered his clothes from the clerical outfitters in Marlborough Street in Dublin – how I knew that I do not know now" (Barry, 2008, 221). The unmistakable hint of his having taken off his clothes and shoes at her place are all the more poignant as she is obviously unable at the time of writing her testimony, and after all the years in the purgatory of the asylum, where her abuse by male orderlies is documented in hospital records – to understand the implications of her memory of Gaunt's clothes.

Gaunt's disruptive effect on Roseanne's life is not limited to his abuse of her body, rather, the man uses his "absolute power" to blight her very existence. Dr. Grene describes Gaunt as, "the man who became auxiliary bishop of Dublin in the fifties and sixties, taking from the hemming and hawing of the Irish constitution a clear statement of his powers of moral domination over the city"(Barry, 2008, 136). Gaunt announces a living-death sentence against Roseanne, not once, but twice. He strives for years to procure the annulment of her marriage to Tom McNulty from the labyrinthine courts of Papal Rome, on grounds of the *Ne Temere* law that stated that any marriage between a Catholic and a non-Catholic can be decreed void unless it is performed by the parish priest, in this case Father Gaunt himself. And since the couple have been married in Dublin not in Sligo, the marriage is simply erased from the official records as if it has never existed. Roseanne is ordered by Gaunt to stay in a corrugated tin hut on the outskirts of Sligo, within walking distance of the beach in Strandhill, of the dancing hall owned by Tom's father, and of the hill where the ancient Queen Maeve is buried. Placing her literally on the margins of the Sligo community, with an absolute ban on any socializing with the town-dwellers, and with a weekly allowance of groceries so she will not starve, is equivalent to giving a free hand to every male in the area to take advantage of her. Mercifully, Roseanne's memory spares her the details of these years; in a rare conversation with Dr. Grene Roseanne says: "I do remember terrible dark things, and loss, and noise, but it is like one of those terrible dark pictures that hang in churches, God knows why, because you cannot see a thing in them"; the doctor replies: "Mrs. McNulty, that is a beautiful description of traumatic memory" (Barry, 2008, 101).

Another, more serious, violation of Roseanne's body occurs when Gaunt snatches the body of her newborn son and takes possession of it, raising that son as a Catholic in an orphanage in South England, and claiming that Roseanne has killed the infant. Roseanne is sectioned in the Sligo lunatic asylum on grounds of Gaunt's authoritative accusation of her suffering from "hereditary nymphomania". Gaunt uses the medical register to explain his terrible verdict that will sentence Roseanne to the madhouse for the rest of her life: "Nymphomania is of course by definition a madness. An affliction possibly, but primarily a madness, with its roots possibly in a physical cause" (Barry, 2008, 223). Thus, Roseanne's body is confined in mental hospitals for the rest of her unfortunately long life, where it is subjected to, "the horrors of the Irish asylums in the first part of the [twentieth century], with its clitoridectomies, immersions, and injections" (Barry, 2008, 14). The traces on Roseanne's abused body bear a far greater truth value than the words of Gaunt's letter or her own secretly-written testimony.

Thus, the narratological investigation conducted in the previous pages shows that the narratives of both ***The Steward of Christendom*** and ***The Secret Scripture*** have common features regarding the layers of text, story, and fabula. Moreover, these common features support the present argument that Barry transcends the boundaries of literary genres and makes use of both drama and novel to give voice to his long-suffering central figures. For example, the text layer of both works has heterodeigetic narrators who, despite their minimal utterance, control the presentation of the narratives of the homodeigetic narrators in such a manner as to ensure the dialogic potential even of such monologic discourse as the soliloquy or private memoir. The multiplicity of levels inside the text layer corresponds to a multiplicity of embedded narratives that emphasize the many versions of Irish histories.

Similarly, the story layer of both works emphasizes the technique of flashback, the elegiac mode, the juxtaposed secretive narratives, and the reconciliation theme. The time and space elements of the fabula layer are foregrounded in the play as well as the novel – which is only logical, given the close engagement of the two works with imperial/territorial and historical concerns. Highly relevant to the purpose of this study is the result of the analysis of the functional events and actants in the fabulas of ***Steward*** and ***Scripture***. Arguably, one of the main "functional events" of both fabulas involves the act of remembering the past and narrating its tales orally or in writing. This event which, by definition of the term "functional" involves "change, choice and confrontation", is performed by the protagonist, thus changing his/her long-term status of "object actant" into "subject actant".

The Lyrical Truth of *Steward* and *Scripture* as "Secular Sacrum"

The previous sections of the paper have illustrated how Barry chose "disgraced" characters from the archive of his family history for his central figures in novel and drama, depicting their downfall from grace as a function of their nature as fallible human beings and examining their being caught in critical moments of re-definition and questioning of concepts thought to be beyond change. Characterization, plot, time, place, image, multiple narrators, multiple versions of the same narrative, and, above all, bodies and the truth that bodies uphold, have been shown to help achieve redemption and grace for these disgraced-cum-glorious people and to bring them back into the fold of humanity/history. The following pages offer a discussion of some additional techniques that open up pathways of reconciliation, and that have been deployed by Barry's literary project to transcend the ambivalence of syntactic truth – a form of truth notorious for causing people to be divided into sects or factions, mainly, though not exclusively, along religious and political divides. The lyrical truth evoked by the "gravid lyricism", to use John Wilson Foster's term, and the spirituality of Barry's language in both texts under study provide a common ground that breaks through generic boundaries and is equally effective in drama and novel. Despite the fact that particular genres may be more apt for a particular narratives, for instance the "silence and confusion at the heart" of Eneas McNulty is more suited to "the interior world of the novel, the psychological and descriptive world"(Barry, 1998b, 5) than the theatricality that sets off the emotional monologues of Thomas Dunne, it is arguable that lyricism of language is a definitive feature transcending genre. It is noteworthy that this feature of lyricism is complemented by Barry's "most characteristic discourse – the monologue or soliloquy; his most characteristic note – the elegiac; and his most characteristic device and dimension – the flashback, recollection or vision" (John Wilson Foster,2006, 99) to fulfill the ritualistic and judicial aspects of the two texts.

Although Grotowski's demand for spirituality in terms of "themes, language, and stage performance", and Turner's emphasis on the "judgemental" and "ritual" are usually applied to theatrical works, the present study argues that these aspects – with the exception of stage performance which is exclusive to drama – are well satisfied by both the play and the novel under study. For instance, the titles of both works have definite religious connotations. Moreover, the language of both texts is an affective evocative language with unmistakable elements of religious register. The hallmark of this linguistic register is a total lack of bitterness, an innocent acceptance of the blessing of having lived. This sentiment is best exemplified by the words of Roseanne McNulty in ***Scripture***, towards the end of a life that has extended a hundred years, more than sixty-five of which have been spent in mental hospitals: "I once lived among humankind, and found them in their generality to be cruel and cold, and yet could mention the names of three or four that were like angels. …If our suffering is great on account of that, *yet at close of day the gift of life is something immense*" (2008, 268).

A major reason for the spiritual undertones of the language relegated by Barry to his central characters is the influence of the flowery rhetoric of John Donne and Sir Thomas Browne. ***Scripture*** openly acknowledges such influence as attested by the following quotation from "Roseanne's Testimony of Herself" where we read:

My father … loved to read the sermons of preachers long gone … His own father had been a preacher. My father was a passionate, I might almost say celestial-minded Presbyterian man … The *Sermons* of John Donne he prized above all, but his veritable gospel was *Religio Medici* by Sir Thomas Browne, a book I still possess in all the flotsam and ruckus of my life, (Barry, 2008, 6)

This passionately religious register appears to a varying extent in all Barry's works, extending from the epigraph of his early novel ***The Engine of Owl-Light,*** to the epigraph and the whole text of ***The Secret Scripture***. The epigraph of ***Engine*** refers to the connection between our world and the after-life, stressing the comparative length of the latter as it reads: "To palliate the shortness of our Lives, and somewhat to compensate for our brief term in this World, it's good to know as much as we can of it, and also so far as possibly in us lieth to hold a Theory of times past as though we had seen the same" (Browne, 1716, Part III, Section xxix). The first of the two epigraphs of ***Scripture*** is another extract from the same source, emphasizing the "inward" examination of the conscience rather than an outward look at the outside world; it reads: "The greatest imperfection is in our inward sight, that is, to be ghosts unto our own eyes" (Browne, 1716,

Part III, Section xv). Such introspective self-examination is in concordance with the confessional mode of the narrators of both novel and play. The frequent appeals of Roseanne and Dr. Grene to the mercy of Heaven and the fervent prayers of "Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee, blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb" that are scattered among the fragments of Thomas Dunne's memories highlight the scene of helpless and sinning humanity in face of a forgiving deity. Another fall from grace, namely, the fall of the class of the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy, is referred to by the second epigraph of ***Scripture*** – an extract from Maria Edgeworth's ***Castle Rackrent***, considered by most scholars to be the "first" Irish novel. Barry's novel thus simultaneously flaunts its literary genealogy to the established tradition of the Irish novel, and highlights the spiritual concerns that have always been a hallmark of this tradition. In addition to religious language and themes, the spaces of "liminality" – a feature of the ritual in both Grotowski and Turner – occupied by Thomas, Roseanne, and Dr. Grene as they exist in a sort of purgatory between sanity and madness, innocence and guilt, present and past, as well as life and death, depict a purgatorial existence comparable to Dante's ***Divine Comedy***. Above all, this emphasis on the spiritual themes of Sin, Fall, Purgatory, Reconciliation, Redemption, and Grace possesses a universal appeal to the religious instinct of mankind in general – an effect of profound importance in a country as deeply ravaged by denominational and sectarian divides throughout its history as Ireland.

The lyricism of the stage directions in ***Steward*** underlines the ritualized/sacred atmosphere of Barry's oeuvre. It is highly relevant that the language of Barry's stage directions, though written in prose, is no less poetic and evocative in its effect than the language of the texts of the novel and play discussed above. In his article "Sacred and Secular in Barry's Dramaturgy", David Cregan claims that the emotive language of Barry's stage directions paints a theatrical landscape that is both familiar and imaginative, and that defies, "the rationalist project of dramatic realism or naturalism … [aiming at] set[ting] the tone for a dramaturgic technique that favours beauty over function" (2006, 61). The language of Barry's stage directions suggests, "a type of poetry which artistically defies the rational expectation of literary drama and offers, alternatively, a heightened composition rich in theatrical imagination" (Cregan, 2006, 61-2). For example, the stage directions of Act One of ***Steward*** highlight the contrast between Dunne's present fallen circumstances and the music that belongs to an earlier more glamorous past that forms the bulk of this memory play. The directions read: "circa 1932. Thomas's bare room in the county home of Baltinglass. A toiling music-hall distantly. A poor table, an iron bed with a thin mattress and yellowing sheets. A grey blanket, a three-legged stool. A poor patch of morning light across Thomas, a solitary man of seventy-five, in the bed. His accent is south-west Wicklow, with his words clear" (Barry, 1997, 239). The great downfall suffered by Dunne is also reflected in the stage directions at the beginning of Act Two; the place is still Dunne's county home room, but we see a different Dunne, a Dunne of the past, resplendent in his DMP uniform, and waited upon by his attentive daughters: "Thomas's room as before. Maud holding his sword in readiness. Annie near. Dolly looking at Thomas with the polished shoes just on. He wears his dress uniform, the helmet as yet on the table" (Barry, 1997, 279). Thus the stage directions of the two acts mirror the downfall of the play's tragic hero and fulfill Cregan's claim of "a heightened composition rich in theatrical imagination".

Complementary to the lyricism and spirituality achieved by Barry's chosen themes, characters, and language is the confessional discourse in which his central figures are immersed. Confession is deployed as both "punitive" and "purifying", thus helping the characters (and the author) to achieve closure and reach what can only be called a state of grace.

Conclusion

Barry's oeuvre is a critique of the reliability/truth value of "syntactic truth" in general, and of the master-narrative of twentieth-century Irish history in particular. Indeed Barry's sustained literary project up-to-date offers a refutation of self-proclaimed all-encompassing authoritative narratives including national historiography. The concept of a nation's attempt to become "the author of itself/of its own written history" necessarily involves an exclusion of the painful/disgraceful/traumatic chapters of this history. This exclusion is of particular significance during revolutionary and post-revolutionary times,

when the lines of demarcation between such seemingly contrasting values as loyalty and treason become blurred. These values are shown to have a shifting definitional status, so that traditional historiography will depend on who is writing history rather than on any fixed external reality. Instead of that "treacherous" and "unreliable" syntactic truth, Barry suggests a bodily truth, a truth that is attainable by decoding the tell-tale signs/traces mapped on the bodies of those unfortunate men and women whose private lives got entangled in the messy struggles of the final decades of the rule of British Empire in Ireland. Moreover, as part of a cohesive literary project of reconciliation, Barry's play and novel studied in this paper highlight the necessity of incorporating the various, and often conflicting, micro-narratives belonging to diverse men and women who come from different religious, political, and social denominations of Irish society, in order to get a comprehensive, and as-near-to-truth-as is-humanly-possible story of the history of Ireland.

Barry's plays and novels have in effect answered the call of Grotowski to revitalize the theatre as an instrument of social transformation in "this age of secularization". They bring closure to historical wounds that have long caused mutual recrimination and periodic eruption of violence in Irish society by reminding the different factions of this society of their shared foundational values of filial and parental love as well as love for Ireland. Above all, the works have done what great works of literature always do, namely, they have highlighted "Eternal Verities" instead of provisional ones. The strategies adopted by Barry's work have a special aptitude for addressing social transformation issues in the case of societies that have a violent history of recurrent sectarian strife along religious, political, or racial divides. If the different denominations of the people of Ireland have been ear-marked and blacklisted at different periods of their history, then what better strategy than replacing these mundane divides in the worlds depicted by Barry's novels and drama by an overreaching metaphysical unity that emphasizes the identical nature of human ties to Country and Creator?

Barry employs a number of dramaturgic and narrative devices to give voice to his characters, to reclaim for his psychologically traumatized and physically abused men and women a niche in the history of Ireland. Evocative language with affinities to spiritual register, poetic stage directions that serve an aesthetic as well as functional role, and, above all, the foregrounding of physical violence mapped on the bodies of his male and female protagonists, are examples of the techniques employed by Barry in fulfillment of the ritual and juristic dimensions prescribed by theoreticians of the modern non-naturalistic theatre. Interestingly, Barry's application of these techniques transcends the genre of drama to include that of the novel as well.

Finally, Barry's works aspire *not* to take sides with or against any of the complicated and shifting allegiances of modern Irish history; rather, the works aspire to be a memorial and an absolution to marginalized characters that have loved and suffered and erred, but more importantly, that have kept living in the face of unspeakable odds. The words of Jack at the end of Barry's play ***Our Lady of Sligo*** serve to highlight the motive behind Barry's sustained literary project: "Our children's children might look at our photographs and have some pride in us simply as people that had lived a life on this earth and were to be honoured at least for that" (Barry, 1998a, 63). Similarly, the anguished cry of Annie Dunne in the eponymous novel gives credence to the valorization of the truth of the body and its traces far above the syntactic truth of the written or the spoken word. "Like the spider," Annie says, although we will decay, something of us will ever after remain" (Barry, 2002, 228).

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