

Anne Enright's Fiction:

Border Crossings and Alienation in *The Gathering* and *The Green Road*

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Meaghan Sapulette

6527345

Supervisor: Prof. Dr. David Pascoe

Second reader: Dr. Johanna Hoorenman

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Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to show in what ways Anne Enright in *The Gathering* (2007) and *The Green Road* (2015) employs different forms of border crossings and alienation, in order to uncover the intricate dynamics of family and how it is affected by movement. This analysis will be done by means of close reading the primary texts, as well as engaging with reviews from other critics. Furthermore, it specifically explores the physical boundaries crossed between nations, the breaking of society's rules per automobile and moving past the limits in relationships. After a detailed study, this thesis concludes that any sort of border crossing leads to a dynamic change, which paired with struggles and setbacks, is necessary to live a prosperous life.

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Introduction

I look at the people queuing at the till, and I wonder are they going home, or are they going far away from the people they love. There are no other journeys. And I think we make for peculiar refugees, running from our own blood, or towards our own blood; pulsing back and forth along ghostly veins that wrap the world in a skein of blood.

(The Gathering 258)

This quotation is taken from Anne Enright's *The Gathering* (2007), where near the end, Veronica Hegarty, the protagonist, is at Gatwick, in front of a duty-free shop. Having spend the last hours in an airport hotel, Veronica is now contemplating whether to return home to her children in Ireland, or to take a flight to an unfamiliar place. While looking at the people in line for the shop, the force of blood relations is continuously on her mind. She considers that what people do in the end, is always going to, or away from their family, as the connections remain forever.

For this novel, Enright has won the 2007 Man Booker Prize (Harte 181), and it is one of the works that makes up her varied bibliography, consistent of multiple novels, collections of short stories and non-fiction. She is one of the most prominent female Irish authors of the last few decades (Aktari-Sevgi 159). Although Ana-Karina Schneider argues that writers like Enright "are often regarded as representatives of fiction in English rather than of a national Irish literature" (401), Enright is also argued to be "prepared to engage the stereotypes of Irishness" (Ryan 26). The most recent recognition for her works came in 2015, when she was announced the inaugural Laureate for Irish Fiction, which lasted three years. Based on her works and achievements, this honour meant that she was considered the best at that time for "promoting and encouraging greater engagement with Irish literature" ("Laureate"). Enright brings her reader stories, but with such detail and honesty to them, that "[t]here is very little

glamour in Enright's short fiction or novels" (Mazek 1), which makes them feel very lifelike (1), and thus relatable to anyone, from any place.

In *The Gathering* and *The Green Road* (2015), Enright depicts the dynamics of the Hegarty and Madigan family, respectively. *The Gathering*, which is set near the west coast of Ireland, focusses around Veronica Hegarty, who has to cope with the death of her eleven months older brother Liam. Besides taking care of the funeral and getting his body back home from England, she also has to deal with emerging memories regarding an incident in 1968, where her brother was sexually abused by a friend of her grandmother. Veronica believes that in this incident "[t]he seeds of [her] brother's death were sown" (*The Gathering* 13).

Eight years later, now at the east coast of Ireland, the reader is introduced to the Madigans in *The Green Road*. The siblings in this novel are all grown up and have moved out of their childhood home, only to return to it when their mother decides to sell the house. Both stories involve a lot of movement and passing borders, through which "[s]ocial constructions of belonging, such as family and home, are challenged" (Barros-del Río 39). A similar point is made by Michael O'Sullivan who claims that both novels focus on "the experience of living, or struggling, in Ireland with family life" (207). The story surpasses the boundaries of countries, time, and relationships, which cumulates in (un)intentional created distance and alienation. This does not necessarily lead to dysfunctional dynamics, but a change either way, which brings rise to the question of this thesis: how do different types of border crossings and created alienation affect the family dynamics in Enright's *The Gathering* and *The Green Road*?

Chapter 1: Crossing Borders Outside of Ireland

While Veronica is the protagonist of *The Gathering*, Liam Hegarty is the central character of her story within the novel. Before his death, he had become the “emigrant brother” (*The Gathering* 191) of the family, which at the time of his death consisted of his mother and nine other siblings. His emigration was not only out of Ireland, but out and from any place at all. Starting when he was little, he was told that he “must stick to the path, because that is what it is for” (115). It appears that from that moment he did anything but stick to the path, or remained in between the lines, as “[t]here was a path [...] and Liam wandered off it” (123). According to Veronica’s descriptions, “Liam turned up and left again” (93), she often “didn’t even know he was home” (53), and he acted like “he was beyond the rules” (163). It made him unreliable and she never had a sense of what was going on with him. One explanation for Liam’s lifestyle and choices is given by Marissa Mazek, who claims that all that has happened to him “adds up to form a broken man” (3). Shaped by the trauma experienced in his childhood, a need has risen in him to escape anything and anyone, and most of all not settling anywhere. Liam’s death is one of the examples of Enright’s honesty in her works, where happy endings are not a given. Despite that, she ensured that his ‘border crossing’ character was immortalized in his death. His body has been found in Brighton, which is located on the south coast of England. When going to collect her brother’s body, Veronica notes that it is “[s]uch a miracle, at the end of the Brighton line, with the town stacked behind me, and behind that all the weight of England, in her smoke and light, jammed to a halt here, just here, by the wide smell of the sea” (*The Gathering* 76-77). By looking over the railing, which physically separates land and sea, Enright emphasizes the division by border. Following this quote, Liam died across a double boundary, not only that of Ireland, but of England as well, physically alienated from country and family.

In *The Green Road*, Dan travels the most between countries. Like Liam, he passed the brinks of Ireland, only this time to America and Canada. By travelling through and past these countries, Dan ultimately crosses the limits of his family's expectations, and the expectations of society. As he gradually moves from country to country, Dan is looking for a place to settle where he can be himself in every way, no matter if it fits the norms of a specific place, time, or people.

Before moving to the United States, Dan had already passed the first limit that relates to his sexual orientation. He has mentioned that he will become a priest (*The Green Road* 7), and after realizing that he will not change his mind, his mother Rosaleen took her "horizontal solution" (13), which this time meant one of the longest periods where she stayed in bed. A boundary is hidden here by Enright. Horizontal, by its noun 'horizon', can be seen as a line, a division. Rosaleen makes herself a border here, and states her limits of the acceptability of Dan's behaviour and decisions. But he has already made his choice and therefore has already moved across the line. And he continues to do so, for he eventually goes to his mother and "[a]fter a long time [...] came down – sorted. Pleased with himself" (26). If this "horizontal solution" of Rosaleen represented a fight, it was Dan who had won, but simultaneously also created a distance between himself and his mother.

During the conversation prior to Rosaleen's solution, Dan asks his family for their "forgiveness, for the life you had hoped for me, and the grandchildren you will not have" (10). In the context of the conversation, these thoughts are linked to Dan's revelation of his priesthood choice, meaning that because of celibacy, he will not have children. However, with the knowledge of Dan's own first chapter, these thoughts can be interpreted as the revelation of his sexual orientation, where the chances of grandchildren are not impossible, but smaller. During his residence in New York, the city passed its first anti-discrimination bill against injustice on the basis of sexual orientation ("Homosexual"). This happened in 1986, when

Dan first arrived in New York (59). Five years later, there is a growing threat in the form of HIV, which eventually takes the life of Billy, one of his partners. The first physical crossed border out of Ireland is the first step for Dan towards a more accepting community, but also shows that loss and isolation are possible effects of his move.

After New York, Dan is not yet settled. Just before he returns back home for Christmas in 2005, it is revealed that he is now in Toronto, Canada, and has a new partner Ludo (169). Upon Ludo's urging, Dan decides to go home to his mother, but not before a spontaneous marriage proposal arises (180). Dan passes another boundary, but one that has only been legalized in Canada in July 2005, a mere few months before this proposal took place. Same sex marriage in the United States has only been fully legalized in all states in 2013, in his case eight years too late.

Dan's travel scheme moves him across and to countries that are gradually more open and accepting towards his sexual orientation. This immediately explains his concerns about going back to his childhood house. He fears "he might get stuck in Ireland, somehow, he would get trapped in 1983" (177). This fear of going home does not only underline the strained relationship he has with his family, but also the difficulty Ireland can bring him. In 1983, homosexuality was officially still considered a crime in Ireland, and was not decriminalized until 1997. Furthermore, same sex marriage was not legalized until 2015, almost a decade later ("Here's a Short History"). As Dan states, despite his family knowing of it, he was still "maddened by the shame of it" (172), and he realizes that he would, or could not be himself with them (172).

By returning to Ireland again, there is a temporary fear of loss, of freedom, and of not going to a more progressive society than his current one. There is a reasonable chance that this time he will be set back. By linking Dan's movement to the countries and specific years,

Enright describes the search of a young man, and the positive and negative outcomes this might bring.

In order for the story to pass these physical limits, and especially on an island like Ireland, they must pass through the airport, which is the embodiment of a getaway from the island. This place can be seen as a cumulation of border crossings, as it allows a person to be past, before and in between the limits of a country. Arguably, this place is a no man's land, a place of not belonging anywhere, that "break[s] the boundaries between home and away" (Huang et al. 2). There is most often the intent to leave the place where the airport is geographically located, though the arrival to the destination has not yet taken place (2). Borders are here simultaneously crossed and not crossed. Such a building is like a "flying city" (*The Gathering* 255), unsettled from the ground. At the same time, this place is a 'passing through' and a 'stop', indicating movement and stagnation. It is also rather disorientating, as travelling or moving can be for a person, like Veronica says: "I felt very level when I drove to Dublin airport. I felt very sane and full of purpose" (256). However, when she eventually has travelled from Dublin to Gatwick, she does not follow her plans and purpose, she does not even leave the building. This all goes by in a blur, as she, only after quite some time, realises "that, actually, I am in Gatwick airport" (257), which can be explained by the confusing "wide range of emotions" (Huang et al. 1) people can experience in that place. With the excessive amount of facilities that are embedded in airports, such as shops, grocery stores, restaurants, and hotels, it is theoretically possible to live there "for the rest of your life" (254). And when passing the thresholds of the place, people are "ambushed and claimed" (*The Green Road* 196), by family, but also by the country and culture residing. It is as though the traveller is asked whether they are sure they actually want to leave. By its disorientating layout, it tries to keep people in, and can "easily let passengers forget where they are" (Huang et al. 1), while at the same time reflecting all the possibilities in life they can

dream of. An airport gives “extra time” (*The Gathering* 255), which is ultimately what every character, story, and reader needs. It is often not perceived as a “destination” (Huang et al. 10), but more “as a means to an end” (10), which gives that fraction of extra time to settle in the moment, and realize and contemplate what is going on, before moving further.

Chapter 2: Resisting Society's Borders

In contrast to the airport as the embodiment of a getaway, the car symbolizes transportation on the island itself. For Constance and Rosaleen Madigan, “[j]ourneying by car is the chief activity which renders [them]” (136) as argued by Anne Fogarty, since it is the only big form of physical movement they can employ within the national borders.

By Christmas 2005, the three Madigan women have all become mothers, and upon entering motherhood, they have all been subjected to the ideals and norms of society ascribed to this role. By driving their cars, they gain control and power, and escape the boundaries given to them. This is one of the instances where Enright “interrogates Irish cultural stereotypes around motherhood and gender” (Ingman 83). Laura Sydora further argues that “[w]ithin motherhood and female corporeality, there lies the potential for resistance” (261). The ability to resist, or the possibility to stand up against the standard type is given by Enright through the cars. The force of the vehicle is hidden in its synonym, ‘automobile’, which literally translates to ‘self-mobile’ and gives a person control over their movement. Although Hanna Madigan, the youngest of the Madigan siblings, does not drive often, she still notices its effect on her. Before going home for Christmas, she recalls a trip which perfectly captures the car’s symbolism. “I left myself, really slowly. It happens, sometimes. I do that. But this time it was really slow. It was so slow, it was like I caught myself leaving” (*The Green Road* 195). Paying more attention to this quote, the feeling of leaving is controlled by Hanna. Argued a “disorientated character” (Barros-del Río 40), her presence in the car helps her orientate and take control. Hanna herself is the operator in that space and moment. The presence and silence experienced are as “a dream” (195), where she is confined to the vehicle, and for a short time does not even belong to Ireland, or its rules and expectations.

The execution of resistance is embodied in Constance, who in contrast to her younger sister Hanna, spends a great amount of time in the car. “[She] loved to drive. It was the perfect

excuse. For what, she did not know. But there was such simplicity to it: crossing great distances to stop an inch away from the kerb, opening the door” (228). The affection and relief felt when driving supports the double role of the car. On one hand, the vehicle functions as an escape from the role of a mother, into a moment of pause where everything is more simple and the only thing important is going from one place to the next. On the other hand, this form of transportation symbolizes the limitations given by their residence on an island, as these women cannot leave it by car.

In *The Gathering* two automobiles play an important role, namely a Bullnose Morris and a Saab 9.3. The story of Ada, Charlie and Mr Nugent starts with the former and is further employed by Enright to mirror the love triangle that takes place between these three characters. The car is at first a means of Nugent to impress Ada (*The Gathering* 33), but it ultimately is this that makes him lose her, and realize she was never actually his to begin with.

In the first half of the novel the Bullnose Morris is significantly present. A strong contrast can be found in its description, when it is mentioned by Veronica in the present, or part of the history described through memories. In 1925, the car was a showpiece of the narrative of Ada, Charlie and Nugent. It was “thick grey” (30), the “hood is down, the brasses gleam” (30). In short, the Bullnose was “still a beautiful thing” (30). Veronica’s own memories give away that the automobile has decayed over the years and in her mind. She notes that “[b]y the time I saw it, there wasn’t much of it left, even the doors were missing” (30). Beautiful is now not the appropriate word anymore to describe the vehicle.

By knitting the beginning of the triangularity to the vehicle, and by letting it be present throughout the early forming years of said relationship, Enright uses the car to mirror the state of her characters. In the early 1920’s the Bullnose Morris was beautiful and glorious, and a means to win the girl. Simultaneously, the relationship between Ada, Charlie and Nugent was still being formed and growing. The car’s later expired version mirrors the expired

relationship between the three people, as both the Bullnose and the alliances had not been taken care of, and the best years had passed.

The Saab 9.3 is the car Veronica moves in. It is described “nice” (26) and as a “posh tin box” (27). For her, the Saab is also a means to escape and there is a strong connection between her and the vehicle. She describes: “[w]e stay locked like this for a while, me and the car, then I sit back up and open the door” (29). The automobile enables her to temporarily step out of her life and close the entries to it by shutting the door, only to open them when she wants to. In extension to the escape this vehicle offers, it also again mirrors the state of being:

I was opening the car door for the girls one day before Liam died and, as it swung past, I saw my reflection in the window. It disappeared, and I looked into the dark cave of the car as the kids came out, or went back in to pick some piece of pink plastic junk off the floor. Then the reflection swung back again, swiftly, as I shut the door.

(The Gathering 68)

The car and her reflection show Veronica that she is happy, which is “nice to know” (68), indicating a positive connection this time. And thus it will aid her when she needs it. At the end of the novel, she “drives back up on the main road, but the car does not turn for home. I go to the airport instead and, after a little while, I get on a plane” (239). Having remarked earlier that she “wanted out of there, that was all” (87) and that she “wanted a larger life” (87), she now finally has the time and ability to go out and she can use the car to its full extent.

In *The Green Road*, three cars are specified. The first is an orange Cortina (*The Green Road* 15). The Ford Cortina is a classic older model. Either two or four doors, it is fitting for older films and times, and therefore represents the earliest years in the book, the 1980’s. It is

only mentioned twice, when Hanna goes to her paternal grandmother (15), and in the memory of Constance, who reminisces about the time she and her siblings would all fit in the back (73). This Cortina represents their family time. It is described to give “a great crack when you opened it” (15), so it was not perfect but it still held dear memories.

When shifting to the next car, there is also a shift in time. Rosaleen’s blue Citroën is introduced, which means a new phase where she has left the family times behind. This Citroën is solely Rosaleen’s, her mode of transportation, and most importantly her automobile, the embodiment of her independence. She is said multiple times to take it out for a drive, or to go walk somewhere (151), enabling her to leave the familiar and go into the unfamiliar. In comparison to the Fort Cortina, which could fit the whole family, this Citroën is smaller. The adjective ‘little’ is used five times, which emphasizes the fact that this car only has to fit Rosaleen, and therefore does not diminish its usefulness, but it clarifies her individuality. Enright further uses the Citroën to reflect Rosaleen’s state, as she did similarly in *The Gathering*. Constance mentions that Rosaleen only goes “forty miles per hour. Twenty” (204), and that she switches the tail lights on and off without good reason (204). Rosaleen is further described as someone who would be “switching on the windscreen wiper every time she wanted to turn left” (95), indicating that she might be losing her touch on driving, despite doing it almost every day. When she leaves for the green road, the siblings hear her “little car coughing into life outside and the wheels chewing the gravel” (254). Enright gives the machine human qualities, which supports the idea of the vehicle as a mirror to Rosaleen, who has grown old and needs to start up slowly. As time passed, represented through the Cortina and Citroën, so did it pass for Rosaleen.

The car as an embodiment of Rosaleen lastly arises when she has disappeared on the green road and the children find her little Citroën. Emmet here “switched on the headlights and the hazard lights, and they stayed in the blinking urgency of all that, willing their mother

to appear” (283). They use the lights, as a sort of beacon signalling to their mother. With this, Emmet expects his mother to know where she has to go. This action shows that the children feel the Citroën and Rosaleen are connected to such an extent that it will guide her back.

Constance’s car is next introduced and revealed to be a Lexus (199), more expensive and modern than Rosaleen’s Citroën. The luxuriousness of it is always present in its description. The Lexus has an engine that makes “a purring, expensive sound” (159), and it even has a “video of the rear view” (199) in the dash. The car also brings up a certain judgement in people, and, as a mirror to her life, also on Constance herself. When moving out of the car park, Dan says “[w]hat is this thing you’re driving? You’re like the doctor’s wife these days” (200). Here a subtle nod to the societal expectations is given in the description. She must be ‘the doctor’s wife’, and cannot just be a woman who owns a car. And the Lexus is hers, as it is later revealed that her husband Desmond has his own BMW (254). Through her car, by her independence, and luxurious life, she is judged and told off for not fitting in the ordinary picture of a woman second to her husband. It ultimately challenges her, as she “did not know if she was ashamed of this factor or proud of it” (199), but also has to hold her temper after her daughter leaves a mark on the cushioning (228). Constance does not necessarily want to brag about it, but still wants Dan to notice it (199).

With her luxurious Lexus and ‘Dessie’s’ BMW, these cars represent the wealth this family has, and it is a stark contrast to the old Cortina or little Citroën. Looking at the role of Constance, albeit a role that is ascribed to her by society, the car does represent that role. As the person who has to bring her children everywhere (228), pick up siblings (196), and do grocery shopping for herself and her mother (156-57), her car has to be functional.

In Enright’s novels, cars are thus not mere objects, but means of assistance that extend her storytelling. These vehicles reflect states of beings, the resistance within the story, and overall extend the personality of the story and its characters.

Chapter 3: Border Crossings and Relationships

Apart from the physical borders, psychological limits are crossed. These passes affect the relationships of the characters and alter the dynamics that compose them. The Bullnose Morris, in combination with the intertwined relationships in the car, also serves as an important example of crossing the lines in a relation. When going to the horseraces (*The Gathering* 105), the car and the love triangle move past an irreversible boundary. Initially, Charlie is described as “the transport” (106), and Nugent “the lover” (106). On their way to the races, “Nugent and Ada sit in the back” (106). The reader is teased here with the idea and possibility of Ada choosing Nugent, but she does not. After her horse has won the race, “the choice has been made” (109), and Ada chooses Charlie, “who is pleased for her” (109), and not Nugent, “who is insulted by her good luck” (109). And “they understand each other completely, each person in this car” (109), meaning they realize the border that was just crossed, the shift that had taken place. Something as simple as the seating arrangement was now not important anymore, as opposed to when they went to the races. Ada’s decision shifted the arrangement of the three, which would last the remaining of their lives.

Another example arises when Dan is contemplating his trip home for Christmas, and all the consequences that will bring. Apart from the strained relationships with his family, it is his sexual orientation that heavily weighs in on his return. He states that he “could not go home. Or if he did go, it was not Dan who walked in the door to them all” (*The Green Road* 172). A border is suggested here by Enright’s use of prepositions. Instead of walking through the door, as is usually the case, she lets Dan walk in the door. This implies his position, instead of the movement created by ‘through’. In this, he is positioned on the threshold between two versions of himself. Before the door, there is the Dan who lives in Toronto with his partner Ludo, out and engaged. Walking through, and to everything this represents – Ireland, his childhood home and his family – will be “someone else. A terrible version of

himself. One he did not really admire” (172). Dan is thus positioned between two situations, one good and one bad, and between two versions of himself. Of course Dan goes to Ireland, if only because Ludo insists. But by choosing this change in preposition, Enright creates a tension that will make the reader question which ‘Dan’ eventually steps through the door into the room. This is an example where the passing of the line has not yet occurred, but the effects it will have on the dynamics of the family are made completely clear.

For Veronica, the urge to create distance is played out in her mind, which alienates her, or protects her from trauma experienced in her youth. This distance is embedded through her, as she is presented as unreliable when telling the story and recalling her own memories (Dell’Amico 63), and thus “the readers never truly know whether they can trust the narrator” (Oddenino 363). Almost every time she tries to recall a thought or tell part of her story, she either says she does not remember exactly, or uses ‘would’ or ‘must have happened’ to mask her uncertainty. Consequently, with Veronica’s storytelling “some details will continue to change throughout the book, and [...] her recollection will never be crystal-clear” (Oddenino 364).

When describing her children, Veronica notes that “Emily needs to dismantle the world, before she can put it together again. Rebecca’s mind is a vaguer sort of machine, anxiety sets her adrift” (*The Gathering* 174). Although Enright gives these words to Veronica as descriptions of her daughters, these words actually describe the mother herself best. Before she can put together and tell the whole story of what had happened to her brother, she needs to dismantle it piece by piece, only to come to new or hidden information. For example, now grown up, she realises that the incident did not take place in a room in her grandmother’s house, but in the garage (*The Gathering* 223), and that her maternal uncle had actually cared for Liam very much (202-203). Furthermore, by using the word ‘dismantle’, the story and incident are like a bomb, where recklessness or any sudden movement can make it explode.

For Veronica, the story needs to be handled with care. Like her daughter, the mother's mind is presented vague, and with missing pieces of information. These are caused by the trauma she has witnessed, and it is the anxiety that is leading her away from the actual reality of what had happened.

Her attitude towards the incident, and her lack of accurate memories show that she, at least until Liam had passed, had alienated herself from it and the memories she held. She, or her consciousness, had created a distance, and blocked the incident. She put it behind a door that is not easy to open, and covered it up with inaccurate thoughts. A similar argument is given by Liam Harte, who argues that "Veronica is unable to situate herself properly in relation to the past. This is because the traumatized mind has no direct access to traumatic memory" (92). That door blocks her consciousness from accessing the memory. And thus, the border discussed here is an actual obstacle that prevents her from regulating her emotions properly.

This blockage affected her relationship with her brother. Being born only eleven months apart, she sometimes felt that "we overlapped in there, he just left early, to wait outside" (11). This closeness had faded over the years, an effect of what they had both witnessed and endured. The unspoken truth between them essentially drove them apart.

After Liam's death, Veronica herself is not completely unaware of the barrier in her mind. She recognizes that in a way she is distanced from the actual world, as she "end up sitting still while the loud world passes by" (83), rather watching from a distance than living in it. She also describes her life as living in "inverted commas" (181), but that she "didn't seem to mind the inverted commas, or even notice that [she] was living in them, until [her] brother died" (181). Through this awareness "Veronica is able to better understand the world she has both been trapped in and entrapped herself in" (Sydora 246). But despite this knowledge, she says "I can not even get the door open in my head, now, to look inside" (102).

By initially not crossing this border, she distanced herself from her family, who is unaware of what happened. As she deals with her brother's death, she is somewhat trapped in her mind and thoughts. Sydora translates this distance and alienation into terms of invisibility and argues that with Liam's passing, Veronica herself realised that there was a possibility of becoming hidden because of her alienation (242). Thus, towards the end she feels that "even though it is too late for the truth, I will tell the truth" (259), and decides that she will tell her family what had taken place all those years ago. By telling them, the dynamics between the siblings will irrevocably change. Despite the decision to tell the truth, she specifies that she will reveal the story to her brother, and not to her mother (259), which "corroborates the general silence of the time" (Ferreira 115). This quotation can be applied to the novel as a whole, because as Veronica, who will speak the unspeakable, Enright with this novel speaks of sexual abuse in a time where actual cases of sexual abuse had just come to light (Ferreira 111; Dell'Amico 63). Here, Veronica, and Enright with her novel, break society's rules by speaking of something that is not (yet) spoken enough about, affecting the dynamics of the nation in relation to its responsibility.

Conclusion

It seems that in both novels, the story, characters, and relationships trail on and around edges, questioning whether to skip over or not. Although both great and strong independent stories, similarities can be found, even in their differences, showing the presence of Enright's unique writing style. About *The Green Road*, Clark argued that "the novel explores the tensions between separation and connection" (qtd. in Barros-del Río 41), yet this can easily be applied to *The Gathering* as well. In both novels, Enright divulges in these tensions, detailing and analysing what they are, what effect they have and where they arise. In extend to her, that is what this thesis has aimed to offer; an analysis of what happens on the road past borders and back again, and most importantly how this eventually shapes and alters the dynamics between people and life.

Short after Veronica's thoughts in this thesis' opening quote, she notes: "I am thinking about the world wrapped in blood, as a ball of string that is wrapped in its own string. That if I just follow the line I will find out what it is I want to know. Towards or away" (*The Gathering* 258). This shows the core to Enright's prose. Strings that are independent, but intertwined in the ball, like her novels in a collection of her works. Although with her, there is no 'just follow the line' and simply finding out. Enright ultimately pushes her reader towards her story and away at the same time. She makes her audience think, wonder and ponder over what her sentences mean and why specific words were chosen. Going towards is simultaneously going away, about losing and gaining something. It is about affecting and being affected, and therefore most importantly, about the movement of life.

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BA IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE & CULTURE AT UTRECHT UNIVERSITY

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Name & student number	Meaghan Sapulette – 6527345
Thesis title	Anne Enright's Fiction: Border Crossings and Alienation in <i>The Gathering</i> and <i>The Green Road</i>
Word count	5733 words (excl. abstract) 5857 words (incl. abstract)
Course	BA Thesis English Language and Culture
Supervisors	Prof. Dr. David Pascoe and Dr. Onno Kusters
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