

***The Whereabouts of Eneas McNulty*  
(1998)**

By

**Sebastian Barry**

(b. July 5, 1955)

**Laureate for Irish Fiction 2018-2021**

**Book Discussion  
Irish Cultural Center**

**Saturday, February 23, 2019**

**10:30 AM – 12:30 PM**

**Norton Room**

**Discussion Guide:**

- Character analysis is essential to this novel in light of the narrative point of view. What do you discern about Eneas McNulty (e.g., intelligence, values, personality)? Does the reader have superior knowledge or awareness at times? Is there significance to his name and references to ancient Greece and Rome? What about Cuchulain and Ferdia?
- “Home,” “friend,” and “family” resonate in the novel. What do these terms mean to Eneas? To others in the novel? His one friend is Harcourt. How would you characterize this relationship?
- What do you think about Sebastian Barry as a storyteller? How would you characterize this particular narrative (the “shape,” the high and low points, the recurring events and images)? Were you prepared for the ending of the novel? Does it seem appropriate?
- Paul Muldoon, a poet and a member of the Laureate panel, characterized Barry’s prose as “soul-searching, heart-stopping.” What did you think of Barry as a “wordsmith”? (You might want to note some examples to share.)
- This novel is set against the backdrop of WWI, the Easter Rising, Civil War, and WWII. How does Eneas react to events? What political and philosophical positions does he voice? Are these his own views, or is he simply the spokesman for Barry’s views?

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**Additional Reading Options:** Sebastian Barry, a very talented writer, has distinguished himself both as a playwright and a novelist. He has won several major prizes and has been shortlisted twice for the Man Booker Prize. He has won the Costa Book of the Year twice (*The Secret Scripture*, 2008, and *Days Without End*, 2017). Below is a partial list of his works:

**Plays:** *The Steward of Christendom* (1995), *Our Lady of Sligo* (1998), *Hinterland* (2002), *Andersen’s English* (2010)

**Novels:** *Annie Dunn* (2002), *A Long Long Way* (2005), *The Secret Scripture* (2008), *On Canaan’s Side* (2011), *The Temporary Gentleman* (2014), *Days Without End* (2016)

►►► Looking Ahead: Alice McDermott, *The Ninth Hour*, on March 30, 2019.