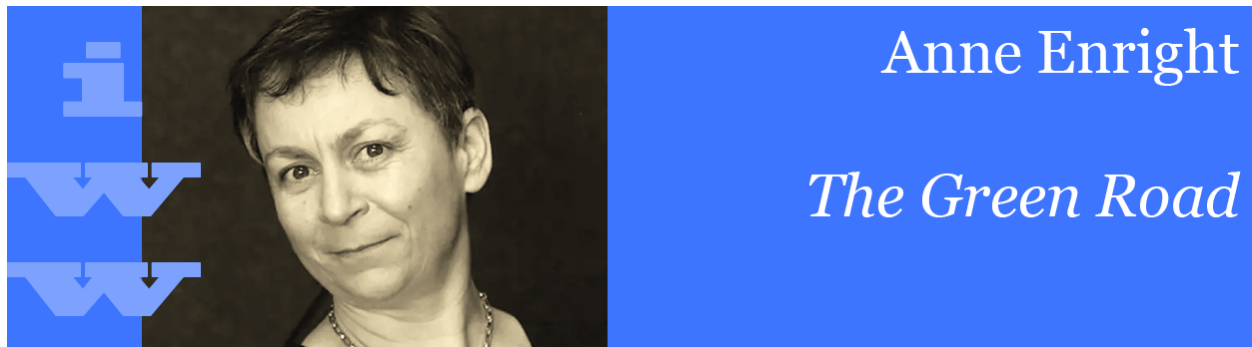


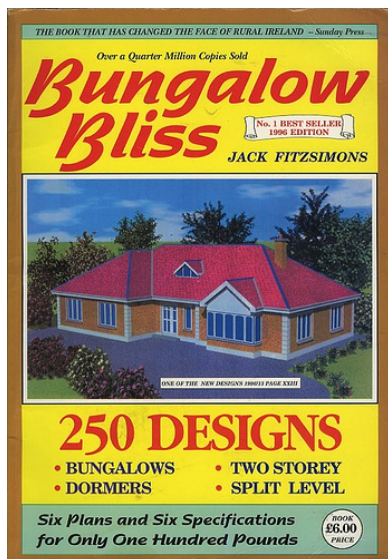
Anne Enright, *The Green Road* (2015)

Lecture 2 of 4



Some Approaches to the Assigned Content for Lecture 2: Pages 72-166

From *Bungalow Bliss* to Celtic Tiger Super-homes • The Constance-focused (third) unit or chapter of the novel's "Leaving" section interrogates several Irish perceptions of Americans: (1) as tourists in the West of Ireland "in their broad plaid pants," experiencing "medieval banquets in Bunratty" (p. 73), a castle-folk park complex near Limerick City; (2) as wellness-obsessed New Yorkers, "jogging ... living on wheatgrass ... hav[ing] a yoga 'practice'" and wearing "Eileen Fisher cardigans" (p. 87). A longtime consciousness of American affluence, conveyed back home by Irish emigrants to the US — as well as by American television shows and movies screened in Ireland — helped inform the conspicuous spending on house-building, home décor, cars, designer clothing, and more that characterized Ireland during the economic-boom period (roughly 1995-early 2008) known as the Celtic Tiger. In late 2006, unaware that the debt-fueled upswing would collapse, not least because of a housing bubble, Ireland's then-Taoiseach Bertie Ahearn declared, "The boom is getting boomier." At the hospital in Limerick, awaiting her oncological test, Constance hears another patient, Margaret Dolan, complain about the cost of living in Celtic Tiger Ireland; specifically, she highlights the "[o]ne fifty" (p. 77) — one-and-a-half euro — she has had to pay for a bottle of water. The reader encounters Constance, aged 37 in 1997, living "in bungalow bliss" (p. 90) near Rosaleen's home, Ardeevin. In Ireland, a 1971 book of building plans for one-off bungalows, *Bungalow Bliss* by Jack Fitzsimons (see image to the left), precipitated a largescale swerve away from vernacular cottages, such as Granny Madigan's four-room residence at Boolavaun, to more modern homes. For its part, the Celtic Tiger period privileged new homes on a grander scale: Constance's husband, Desmond ("Dessie") McGrath, is constructing such an edifice, "vulgarity rampant," for his family "out in Aughavanna [*augh* = field] with more space than Constance wanted or could fill" (p. 93) — "4,000 square feet" (p. 87). Rosaleen has coined the term "[p]opcorn houses" for residences that "[go] — pop, pop, pop — to twice the size they had been the week before" (p. 154). A kind of domestic competition has emerged within the greater McGrath family: "[I]f Constance got her chairs reupholstered, some other Mrs. McGrath [i.e. a sister-in-law] would discover minimalism [as an interior-decorating aesthetic], and a third would be into shabby chic and, somehow, she [Constance] would have to start all over again" (p. 91).



Constance's Four-Person Family and Three Best Female Friends • Despite (or perhaps because of) her affluence, Constance, who “want[s] ... to make people happy,” finds herself isolated, significantly ignored even by her immediate family. On the day of her test for possible breast cancer, she must acknowledge that “[t]here **wasn't a sinner** to remember that she had a mammogram [scheduled] ... or inquire how it had gone” (p. 96). Her spouse, the “[b]alding, blunt-spoken Dessie McGrath,” has largely reconfigured their relationship for selfish purposes; he connects with Constance primarily by means of morning sex to “**set him up for the day**” (p. 88). The couple has three children, now “coming up to teenagers” (p. 90). In birth order, they are: the boys **Donal**, “the spit of his father,” and curly haired **Rory**, Rosaleen's favorite; and the redheaded girl **Shauna**, described by Rosaleen as having “**orange, tinker's hair**” (p. 155). (Note several instances of “orange” throughout the novel.) Although both boys play the traditional **Irish team field sport of “hurling** on a Saturday” (p. 101), they call Rosaleen “Gran,” a word that “ma[kes] her skin crawl” because of its “being British” (p. 157). Constance twice failed the Irish high-school-exit exam, the **Leaving Certificate**, but managed (thanks to her mother's brother, Uncle Bart) to secure a pharmacy-retail job in Dublin, “[going] up” (p. 83) there with three of her childhood girlfriends, with whom she shared a “**kip**” or fleabag of a “flat [apartment] in Baggot Street” (p. 84) in the city center. The post-Dublin lives of the three other women encompass major centers of Irish emigration. **Martha Hingerty settles in London**, reflecting how, historically, British cities absorbed the largest number of Irish exiles. **Eileen Foley relocates to New York**, an outcome of the fact that, during the nineteenth century, the United States became a major destination for the Irish. After Ireland joined the **European Economic Community** — now the **European Union** — in 1973, the accessibility of continental Europe increased. **Lauren O'Dea builds a life in Strasbourg**, a small city in the Alsace region of France, which was designated the official seat of the **European Parliament** and the **European Court of Human Rights**.

Sex in Ireland before 1985 • Constance is the oldest of the four Madigan siblings, and the text's third unit explores her sexual initiation during her late-teenage years in Dublin. The dating scene described includes a real-life, now-defunct nightclub, **Coconut Grove**, in Parkes Hotel in **Stillorgan, a middle-class suburb** on Dublin's Southside (i.e. south of the River Liffey, which bisects the city center). A kind of wolf in sheep's clothing — a “guy in [a] **sheepskin jacket**” (p. 86), who is a married “suburban rugby [type]” (p. 85) — takes Constance's virginity in a car, having met her at Coconut Grove. Irish women's social powerlessness and Ireland's lack of sex education at the time receive acknowledgement in the 37-year-old Constance's reflection: “**It was rape**, she thought now, or would have been, **if she had known how to say no**” (p. 86). Composing *The Green Road* for publication in 2015, Anne Enright was aware of the “**me too**” movement, founded in 2006 as an “**empowerment through empathy**” initiative by the New York civil-rights activist **Tarana Burke** to draw attention to women's chronic experiences, in workplaces and elsewhere, of sexual harassment and assault. The phrase “me too” as a viral hashtag only emerged in 2017, reflecting such facts as that **one in every five American women will be raped** during her lifetime. The danger of **out-of-wedlock pregnancy** was real in the Ireland of Constance's coming of age. The **year she turned 25, 1985**, was the first in which condoms (“contraceptive sheaths”) and spermicides were permitted to be sold without a prescription — and then only in specific locations (such as pharmacies) to people over 18. The legacy of Ireland's **no-birth-control regime, legally enforced since 1935**, included numerous adoptions of “**illegitimate**” children. In adulthood, some of those children sought their birth mothers, despite difficulties in accessing nativity records and adoption papers. At the hospital, Constance discovers that her fellow patient, Margaret Dolan, is to attend the wedding, in Birmingham, England, of her biological daughter: “She was adopted and **she found me last year**” (p. 99).

Humanitarian and Political Challenges in Mali • On p. 106, *The Green Road* begins its fourth unit or chapter, which highlights the sun-darkened Emmet Madigan, aged 38 in 2002, living with his British girlfriend, Alice, a “talented lover” — plus an adopted white dog, **Mitch**, and a **house servant, Ibrahim** (whose Muslim faith considers dogs “unclean” [p. 122]) — in “an old **[French]**



colonial house” (p. 111) near the **central marketplace** (as opposed to the suburbs) of Ségou, a small city on the **River Niger** in the large, landlocked West African nation of **Mali**. (The image on the bottom right of the prior page shows traditional mud-based architecture in Ségou.) Not only did some Malians supply slaves to the transatlantic slave trade, coteries within that country also **practiced slavery**, even after the French colonial authorities banned the custom in 1905. (French rule lasted from 1892 until independence in 1960.) The “dry season” (p. 106) in Mali brings “[m]ozzies” (p. 109) or malaria-carrying mosquitos: a complication on top of the usual, potentially fatal diarrhea — “**the squitters**” (p. 112), often a symptom of the parasitic disease “**giardiasis**” (p. 126) — against which Emmet must guard. Although (like Anne Enright’s parents) he began his working life “in the [Irish] **civil service**” (p. 151), he has become a **humanitarian-aid worker**, “earning good money” (p. 110) while “[l]iterally saving lives” (p. 109). Alice pursues a similar career, “working on **child mortality**” (p. 113) and “**micro finance**” (p. 130). Still today,



Mali has one of earth’s highest infant-death rates; and Emmet witnesses so many ailments among residents of Ségou that he deems a particular “street [there] ... a **medical textbook**” (p. 118). Mentally, he contrasts Third World poverty with the “[retail] excesses of **Geneva airport**” (p. 126) in Switzerland. At approximately 36.5% of the population, the **Bambara** people are the largest among Mali’s multiple ethnic groups, the vast majority of which practice **Sunni Islam**. Early in the Emmet-focused unit, a “couple of **Tuaregs**” (p. 108), appear, wearing white turbans. Constituting around 10% of Malians, the Tuaregs — sometimes called the **Blue People** due to their traditional “**indigo blue**” (p. 143) tunics (see image on the left) — regard themselves as **ethnically Berber**, a **nomadic** culture marginalized by both the French colonial regime and its successor, the Malian government. While the Emmet-focused chapter is set in 2002, when writing *The Green Road* Anne Enright was conscious of the **Tuareg Rebellion of early 2012**, during which Tuareg rebels, often with a commitment to radical Islam, fought the government in an unsuccessful attempt to create an independent state (**Azawad**) in northern Mali.

Crises over Mitch • Emmet temporarily leaves behind his beer-filled fridge in Ségou for meetings in **Bamako**, Mali’s capital city, with other humanitarian specialists, such as employees of “the **FAO**” (p. 129): that is, the Rome-based Food and Agriculture Organization, a United Nations agency, whose Latin motto, *fiat panis* (“let there be bread”), underscores its mission to eradicate global hunger through food-security and nutrition programs. Upon returning to Ségou, Emmet finds the household bread “full of moving black dots,” **weevils**, because Ibrahim is temporarily “off sick” (p. 132) with malaria. One positive outcome of the trip is his getting advice from an **American vet, Carol** (at a Bamako hotel bar) about curing Mitch’s “cherry eye” by “**massag[ing]**” it “back into place” (p. 130). (Note several instances of “cherry” throughout the novel.) Yet, the saga of Emmet, Alice, and Ibrahim cannot in the end successfully navigate questions of “**wrongdoing and rightdoing**” (p. 143; a quotation from the **Persian poet Rumi**) either caused or brought into focus by Mitch’s presence under their shared roof. Although a Muslim, Ibrahim grows to tolerate the dog, loved by Alice but not Emmet; however, more conservative and activist Muslims, members of the Tuareg community, find the idea of a domestic canine morally unendurable, so one of them kills Mitch, using **rat poison**. Alice cannot accept the turn of events, so she leaves, although not without placing “money on the desk, for **rent**” (p. 142). The act of violence committed by the unidentified Tuareg cannot be entirely alien to Emmet, who grew up when Northern Ireland was convulsed by The Troubles, features of which included the so-called **Dirty Protest**: male and female Irish republican inmates’ practice of smearing their excrement on the walls of their jail cells in protest at being **incarcerated as criminals instead of political prisoners**. The reader first encounters Mitch with “[e]very piece of shit in town ... stuck to [his] undercarriage” (p. 117), and in girlhood Hanna’s side of the Ardeevin bedroom she shared with Constance “was like a dirty protest” (p. 155).

Rosaleen Madigan and Emily Lawless • The final unit or chapter of the “Leaving” section of *The Green Road* opens in November 2005 with the matriarch, 76-year-old Rosaleen Considine Madigan, writing Christmas cards, the sale of which benefits a “charity ... Emmet did not like” because it “fed the starving [of Africa] in the wrong way” (p. 149). Running through the narrative are references to a two-part, eight-stanza lyric titled “Fontenoy, 1747,” composed by the Irish poet and novelist Emily Lawless (1845-1913), a Protestant sympathetic to the condition of Irish Catholics. It featured in her 1901 collection *With the Wild Geese*, whose title refers to the Irish soldiers who exiled themselves from Ireland, becoming fighters in the French, Spanish, and Austrian armies, once the 1691 Treaty of Limerick confirmed an English-Protestant victory in the Williamite War in Ireland, whose most famous engagements were the July 1690 Battle of the Boyne and the July 1691 Battle of Aughrim, the bloodiest single battle ever fought on Irish soil. While the Treaty of Limerick guaranteed religious rights for Ireland’s Catholics, the victorious King William III (better known perhaps as William of Orange) largely disregarded its provisions and introduced into Ireland anti-Catholic Penal Laws. Lawless’s “Fontenoy, 1747” concerns the Irish Brigade in the French Army at the May 1745 Battle of Fontenoy (in Belgium), a decisive French victory but at a price of around 15,000 dead and wounded out of the approximately 102,000 total participating soldiers. The French Army took on a coalition force that included Great Britain, and the Irish Brigade, which famously captured a British flag, played a critical role. Its officers included the County Clare native, Captain Antony MacDonagh. The Brigade’s members were angry over the Penal Laws, as well as the 1741 Irish Famine, in which around a half-million people perished. In introducing the original edition of *With the Wild Geese*, Stopford Brooke,

Oh little Corca Bascinn, the wild, the bleak, the fair!
 Oh little stony pastures, whose flowers are sweet,
 if rare!
 Oh rough and rude Atlantic, the thunderous, the wide,
 Whose kiss is like a soldier's kiss which will
 not be denied!
 The whole night long we dream of you, and
 waking think we're there,—
 Vain dream, and foolish waking, we never shall
 see Clare.

an Irish-born, English-based churchman, writer, and literary activist (responsible for saving William Wordsworth’s Dove Cottage in England’s Lake District), wrote, “Miss Lawless paints with her suggestive pencil the hunger of the men of [County] Clare [serving in the Irish Brigade at Fontenoy] for battle with their ancient [British] enemy, and for the rocks and fields of Clare [poeticized as Corca Bascinn] unseen since boyhood; and, then, with a fine imagination, tells how the dead rose from the field of Fontenoy and sailed all the night through to their beloved country.” In a 2015 piece in *The Guardian*, a British newspaper, Anne Enright describes her father’s recalling the Lawless poem (a portion of which appears to the left) in association with his growing up in a “farmhouse” on Loop Head, a peninsula in County

Clare. She continues, I realized it *[The Green Road]* would have to be about this, a poem my father ... retained.” Enright underscores Lawless’s difference from her contemporaries — such Irish Cultural Revivalists as Yeats, Lady Gregory, and Synge — who advanced a Noble Gaelic Peasant ideal of West-of-Ireland life and culture: “Lawless was disliked by Yeats ... for being on the wrong side. She was a unionist [i.e. in favor of Ireland’s remaining part of the United Kingdom, instead of striving to become an independent republic]. She was also rumored to be a lesbian. She had an ear for melodrama and for the sentimental, but her accounts of peasant living conditions are tough and realistic. In her 1886 novel *Hurrish*, she describes the Burren as a place no one would ever want to visit: ‘Truly a grim scene!’”

Rosaleen’s Psycho-Emotional Condition • The Rosaleen-focused final unit of the “Leaving” section interrogates aging, especially the isolation often experienced by widows. Sitting beneath a stopped clock in Ardeevin, a house in need of repair, the matriarch is conscious of “people [who have] died off” (p. 143), both recently and in the more distant past. She revisits the class difference between her late spouse, Pat Madigan, and herself, “a thoroughbred” (p. 152). “Rosaleen had married beneath her,” attracted to the economically lowly Pat by “animal” (p. 162) sexual desire. Her father, John Considine — “Dada” (p. 151), symbolized by a South American “monkey puzzle” tree (p. 145) — had been a “Fellow of the Pharmaceutical Society” and a “Knight of Columbanus” (p. 164). Named after a medieval Irish missionary saint, the organization (founded in 1915) is a Catholic lay fraternity that has become especially associated with lobbying to incorporate Catholic moral teaching, such as opposition to abortion and same-sex marriage, into Irish law. Originally, its focus had been wage justice. Rosaleen determines to address her

existential anxiety by putting up for sale both Ardeevin, which had belonged to her father, and her husband's home place at Boolavaun. (She assumes she can then move in with Constance and her family.) A reference to the downstairs quarters, to which Rosaleen confines herself at Ardeevin, may suggest that she is becoming psycho-emotionally unbalanced: the "hall was painted autumn yellow, and under the yellow was wallpaper" (p. 156). One recalls "The Yellow Wallpaper," the American writer Charlotte Gilman's 1892 feminist short story of a woman's mental distress — even perhaps insanity — as a result of patriarchal pressures and constraints, especially as manifest in the domestic space.

Read the Text

It is critical that each student reads the assigned text, not just the instructor's lecture notes about it. To help ensure that that work gets done, please establish the correct answers to the following eight questions, presented in chronological order. The highlighted material in the lecture notes (above) will form the basis of several questions on your multiple-choice Final Exam. However, some of the following questions may also appear on that Exam, in addition.

Reading Question 1

In young womanhood, Constance Madigan intended to emigrate to New York; however, lack of funds apparently prevented the move. Visiting the city (the so-called Big Apple) as a married woman, she finds many aspects of it underwhelming, not least the food. The text reveals this fact via an anecdote about-flavored ice cream.

(A) orange • (B) lavender • (C) bubblegum • (D) cherry

Reading Question 2

Emmet's humanitarian labors in the country of Mali take him far from his home base, the city of Ségou. On a trip "beyond Mopti" (where the Niger and Bani rivers meet; around 250 road-miles from Ségou), he witnesses widespread crop devastation due to

(A) drought • (B) pollution related to large-scale petroleum extraction and processing • (C) locusts • (D) flash-flooding

Reading Question 3

We learn that Emmet has done aid work in a number of countries, as well as Mali. Those nations do not include

(A) Bangladesh (in South Asia) • (B) Namibia (in Southwest Africa) • (C) Mozambique (in Southeast Africa) • (D) Cambodia (in Southeast Asia)

Reading Question 4

The muezzin — that is, — is a feature of Emmet and Alice's experience of life in Ségou, Mali.

(A) the man making the Muslim call to prayer from the mosque • (B) the community's weekly goat-slaughter • (C) the tradition of taking an afternoon swim • (D) the act of displaying market vegetables on decorative cloths

Reading Question 5

In Ségou, Alice and Emmet keep up with international news by

(A) listening to Voice of America, a US Government broadcaster, on the radio • (B) reading *Time* magazine, mailed weekly from Ireland by Emmet's mother, Rosaleen • (C) listening to the British Broadcasting Corporation's World Service on the radio • (D) reading slightly out-of-date copies of the *International Herald Tribune* newspaper (now known as the *New York Times International Edition*)

Reading Question 6 (use a reliable outside source to discover the correct answer)

Emmet contemplates an upcoming trip “beyond the Bandiagara escarpment,” which is a United Nations World Heritage Site in Mali that includes villages of cliff-dwellings associated with the ●●●●● people. Unfortunately, both chronic ethnic strife and excessive cultural tourism have endangered the place, “[s]ometimes” regarded by Emmet as “the landscape he loved.”

(A) Fula • (B) Marka • (C) Dogon • (D) Kurtey

Reading Question 7

The Emmet-focused fourth unit of *The Green Road* uses ●●●●●, an English-language word derived from Gaeilge (the Irish language), to identify the market-side bar to which Emmet repairs after Alice leaves him over the fatal poisoning of the dog, Mitch.

(A) corrie • (B) tilly • (C) griskin • (D) shebeen

Reading Question 8

When writing Christmas cards in Ardeevin in 2005, Rosaleen Madigan mentally compares herself to a version of the Virgin Mary famous for her airborne domicile, which purportedly landed — and remained — in the Italian town of ●●●●●. Celebrated on December 10 each year, she is the patron saint of airline pilots, cabin crews, and passengers, as well as auspicious travel.

(A) Palestrina • (B) Loreto • (C) Tivoli • (D) Capua

... ..