

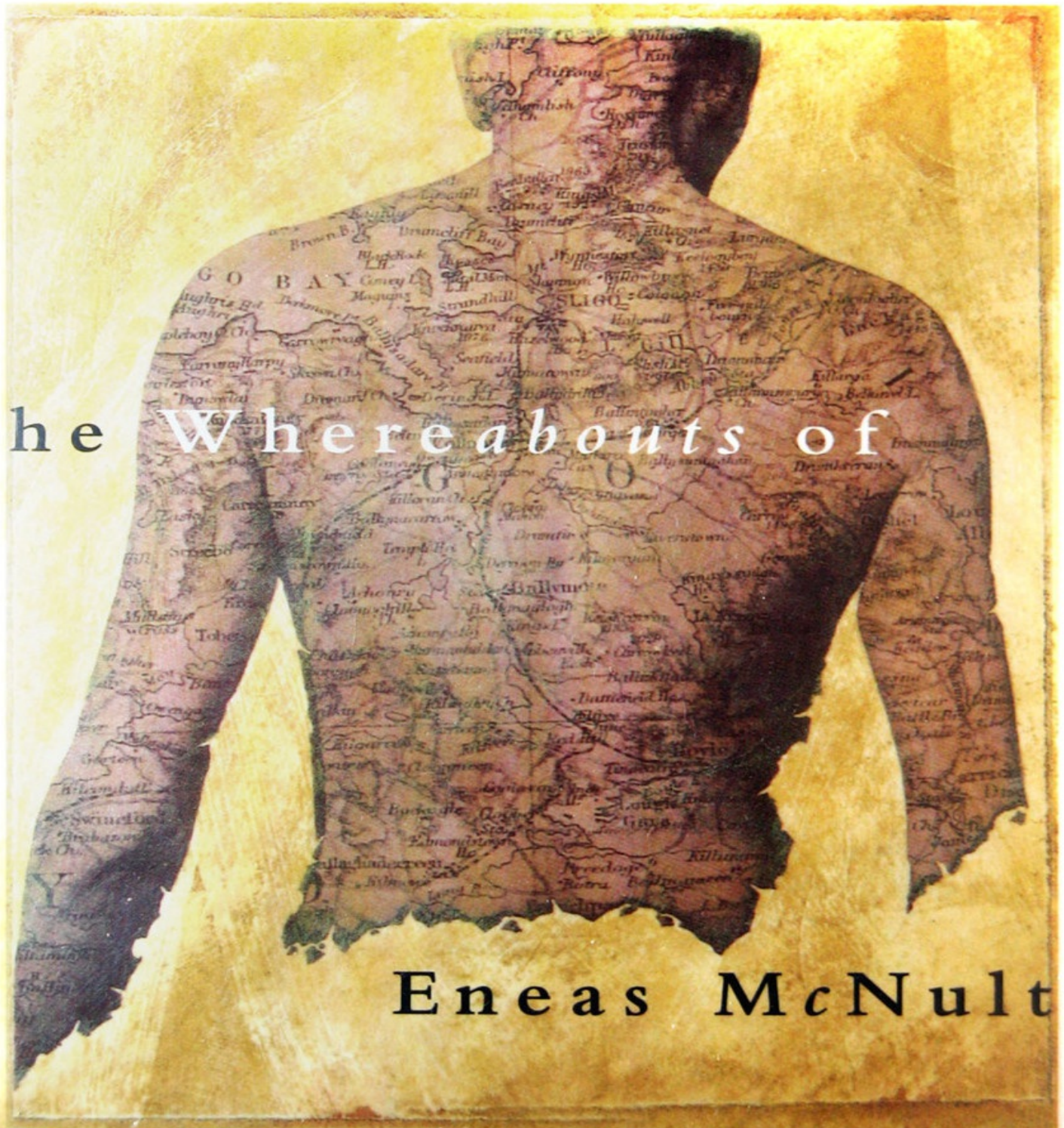
SEBASTIAN BARRY

'A masterpiece' Jennifer Johnston



The Whereabouts of

Eneas McNulty

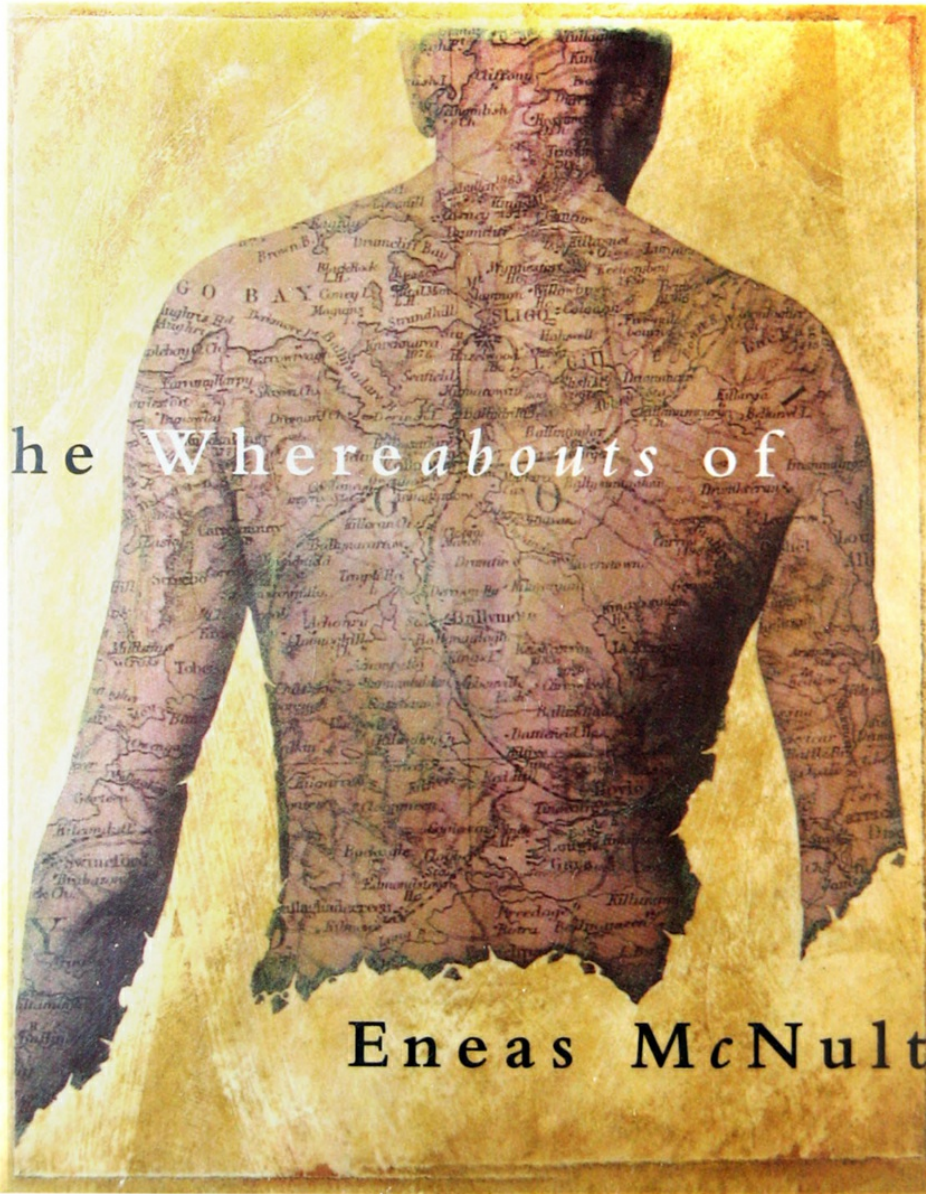


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*The
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*The
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Eneas McNulty*

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To Rita Connolly

'And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire'

Revelation, Ch. 20: v. 15

PART ONE

IN THE MIDDLE of the lonesome town, at the back of John Street, in the third house from the end, there is a little room. For this small bracket in the long paragraph of the street's history, it belongs to Eneas McNulty. All about him the century has just begun, a century some of which he will endure, but none of which will belong to him. There are all the broken continents of the earth, there is the town park named after Father Moran, with its forlorn roses — all equal to Eneas at five, and nothing his own, but that temporary little room. The dark linoleum curls at the edge where it meets the dark wall. There is a pewter jug on the bedside table that likes to hoard the sun and moon on its curve. There is a tall skinny wardrobe with an ancient hatbox on top, dusty, with or without a hat, he does not know. A room perfectly attuned to him, perfectly tempered, with the long spinning of time perfect and patterned in the bright windowframe, the sleeping of sunlight on the dirty leaves of the maple, the wars of the sparrows and the blue tits for the net of suet his mother ties in the tree, the angry rain that puts its narrow fingers in through the putty, the powerful sudden seaside snow that never sits, the lurch of the dark and the utter merriment of mornings.

At twilight his father stands beside him at the window, a low man in his black clothes and his white skin pale and damp like a dandelion under a stone. He is showing Eneas the ruins of the Lungy House at the end of the yard, an old jumble of walls and gaps, with brickwork about the empty windows, the rest granite and bluer shale.

‘Never forget the people that went in and out of that place in their time,’ says Tom his father, ‘because, Eneas, they were your own people, and wore the better clothes and were respected. They had plentiful carriages and were respected. People with your own face’ —