Landscapes of Encounter:  
The Portrayal of Catholicism in the Novels of  
Brian Moore

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Abstract  

The novels of the late Brian Moore (1921-1999) - from *Judith Hearne* (1955) until his final work *The Magician’s Wife* (1997) - are characterised by an enormously varied portrayal of pre- and post-Vatican II Catholicism. As the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) radically changed the public persona of Roman Catholicism, so Brian Moore is one of the few novelists whose literary portrayal of Catholicism effectively spans the period prior to and following this Church Council. The writer’s lifelong, personal ambivalence towards the religion of his Ulster upbringing is reflected in his literary work: particularly in the manner in which Moore’s fictions portray Catholicism’s historical encounter with the cultural and specifically religious other. Yet, arguing that biocritical considerations unnecessarily detract from an understanding of these thematic complexities in the novels themselves as texts, the case is presented for making explicit the literary, ideological and theological intertextuality within Moore’s fiction.  

This intertextuality, it is argued, is most clearly demonstrated in terms of an historical theology in which Moore’s portrayal of Catholicism reflects developments in pre- and post-Vatican II Catholicism. Moore’s literary treatment of such developments is accentuated through the particularities of culture and place, just as the latter become increasingly important in post-Vatican II Catholicism itself. In the novels of Moore, then, geography as much as theological history is crucial to personal and cultural identity. Plotted as they are in an immensely diverse range of settings, Moore’s narratives are as representative of ideological and theological landscapes as they are of geographical and historical worlds. His fictional landscapes - Algeria, Canada, eastern Europe and Haiti, as well as the more obvious Ireland and America - are therefore physical and, in the widest sense, metaphysical.  

Significantly, though, in terms of ideology, Moore’s treatment of the themes of post-Vatican II theology converges with an increasing literary preoccupation with issues of colonialism and
postcoloniality. Pre- and post-Vatican II Catholicism thus holds an ambivalent ideological as well as theological status in Moore's novels to the extent that theology maintains either a supportive and 'colonial' or a challenging and 'postcolonial' stance with regard to 'imperialism'. Moore thus uses a range of settings characterised by encounters which are both 'colonial' and Catholic, 'imperial' and theological. This thesis provides the only presently existing, full treatment of Moore's work as a literary convergence of the theological and the ideological, and specifically as a convergence of post-Vatican II and postcolonial perspectives.
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I am indeed grateful to many conference organisers, journal and book editors for allowing me space to present and publish papers. In particular, worthy of mention are the following: Professor Stanley Porter, Head of Theology and Religious Studies at the University of Surrey Roehampton; Professor Tadhg Foley of the Department of English at the National University of Ireland, Galway; Dr Bill Campbell, of the Centre for Beliefs and Values, Department of Theology and Religious Studies at the University of Wales Lampeter; and the Conference Peer-Review Team of the British Association of Canadian Studies. Such conference events over the years have been an invaluable means of clarifying my own thoughts on Moore’s portrayal of Catholicism - in writing and through peer-review. The interdisciplinary and contextual range of these events has demonstrated for me too the true breadth of interpretative possibilities for Moore’s work - from conferences on Death (University College Chichester, 1997), Religion and Sexuality (Roehampton Institute London, 1998), Jewish-Christian Relations (Roehampton Institute London, 1999), Faith in the Millennium (Roehampton Institute London, 1999) to the Third Galway Conference on Colonialism (National University of Ireland, Galway, 1999) and Canadian Nation Building, the Twenty-Fifth Anniversary Conference of the British Association of Canadian Studies (University of Edinburgh, 2000). I hope in this thesis to have demonstrated too, though, a unifying and interpretative coherence within Moore’s work.

Finally, and with all due respect, condolences are offered to Jean, the widow of the late Brian Moore (1921-1999), and thanks offered for her permission to access certain material in the University of Calgary archive a year ago at a difficult time so close to Brian Moore’s death. The submission of this thesis (January 2000) marks a sad anniversary.
Chapter One

Landscapes of Encounter: The Portrayal of Catholicism in the Novels of Brian Moore

The quest for a doctrine appropriate to the landscape may be taken as an image of the development of Catholic theology since Vatican II; it symbolises the way in which Catholic theology in the post-conciliar period is dependent upon the Council’s readjustment of contemporary Catholic identity. In addition, it presents a theme that will become central to post-conciliar theology: the priority of the ‘landscape’ of lived experience in the articulation of theological doctrine. As the features of Catholic faith-experience were altered by the Council, the consequent theological reflection followed contours different from those that preceded it.¹

Introduction

If the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965)² radically changed the public persona of Roman Catholicism,³ it is as fair to say the late Brian Moore (1921-1999) is one of the few novelists whose literary portrayal of Catholicism so trenchantly investigates the period prior to and

³ I use predominantly the term Catholic to refer to the Roman Catholic Church in this work, seeing the two as commonly interchangeable. See, though, R. McBrien, Catholicism (San Francisco: HarperCollins, [revised edition] 1994). McBrien comments:

Are Catholics who are in communion with Rome Roman Catholics or just plain Catholics? Some inside as well as outside the Catholic Church think it ecumenically insensitive to drop the adjective Roman because so many Anglican, Orthodox, Protestant, and Oriental Christians also regard themselves as Catholic. But other Catholics object to the use of the adjective Roman on ecclesiological grounds. For such Catholics Roman tends to confuse rather than define the reality of Catholicism.

The history of the Church begins with Jesus’ gathering of his disciples and with the postresurrection commissioning of Peter to be the chief shepherd and foundation of the Church - but in Jerusalem, not in Rome. Therefore, it is not the Roman primacy that gives Catholicism one of its distinctive marks of identity within the family of Christian Churches, but the Petrine primacy. The adjective Roman applies more properly to the diocese, or see, of Rome than to the world-wide Church which is in union with the Bishop of Rome.

Indeed, it strikes some Catholics as contradictory to call the Church Catholic and Roman Catholic at one and the same time.

(p. 2.)
following this Church Council. Moore’s novels represent a distinctive literary contribution to our understanding both of the portrayal of Catholicism in twentieth century fiction in English and of the changing theological face of Catholicism in the same period. From the publication of *Judith Hearne* (1955) until his final novel, *The Magician’s Wife* (1997), the religious and specifically Catholic themes of Brian Moore’s major fictional work place him firmly on the interface of literature and theology.

What is implicit here is the notion of theological/ literary intertextuality. If this has specific origins as an *explicit* term in contemporary criticism, if this has specific origins as an *explicit* term in contemporary criticism,7 as my own latterly cited volume indicates (see note 6 below) the vast historical precedence for the term in practice predates de facto its origins in twentieth century theory. In terms of specific distinctions between Catholic theology and fiction concerned with Catholic themes, Whitehouse’s comments are useful:

My own view is that there is a valid distinction to be drawn between what for convenience I call Catholic *writing* and Catholic *literature*. The former I see as work intended, whatever its methods and approach, to persuade, influence and perhaps even convince. It is epitomized in theology, apologetics and polemics. The latter is fundamentally artistic, the fictional expression of idiosyncratic and subjective insights rather than general and analytical ratiocination.8

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5 For a critical overview of Catholicism in British fiction, see T. Woodman, *Faithful Fictions: The Catholic Novel in British Fiction* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1991). See also K. O’ Flaherty, ‘Catholicism and the Novel: A Comparative View’, in M. Harmon and P. Rafroidi, eds., *The Irish Novel in Our Time* (Lille: Publication de L’Université de Lille, 1976), pp 11-30; R. Welch, *Irish Writers and Religion* (Gerards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1992); cf P. Sherry, “The End of the Catholic Novel?” *Literature and Theology*, volume 10 (1996), pp. 165-175. In this article Sherry questions recent criticism which claimed an effective end to the Catholic novel. Sherry argues against those who suggest that the ‘Catholic Novel’ associated particularly with Graham Greene in his middle period, Evelyn Waugh, George Bernanos and Francois Mauriac that far from having disappeared, came to an end some time ago’. Sherry argues effectively that critics such as Bergonzi who claim such a demise of the ‘Catholic Novel’ neglect the fact that it has “changed its nature and geographical location, and widened its scope”. Brian Moore’s work certainly fits such a literary/geographical re-designation. For a wide-ranging anthology of the relations between Catholicism and literature, see also J.C. Whitehouse, ed., *Catholics on Literature* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1997).


7 On intertextuality as a term in contemporary criticism, see G. Allen’s *Intertextuality* (London: Routledge, 2000) which examines its specific origins in the work of Julia Kristeva, as well as its complex critical antecedence.

Still, such an approach raises the problem of authorial intention and - (even as critically developed by reception theory and reader-response criticism\(^9\)) - this, I argue, is of limited scope for an analysis of Moore’s portrayal of Catholicism. Most fundamentally, though, Whitehouse’s stated distinction most crucially neglects the domain of intertextuality and, specifically, the dynamic relation between literature and theology - Whitehouse’s “Catholic writing” and “Catholic literature” - in Moore’s fiction. Debate on the question of the ‘Catholic novel’ as a product of Catholic belief is thus set aside here, as is the wider relation between authorial faith and literary output.\(^{10}\) What is indisputable is the prevalence of Catholic themes throughout Moore’s major literary works. It is from a consideration of these Catholic themes, which have surprisingly evaded systematic critical attention, that most critical benefit may be derived in understanding Moore’s considerable \textit{oeuvre} - both as literary texts and as works in intertextual relation to Catholic tradition. Arguing, then, that biocritical considerations unnecessarily detract from an understanding of these thematic complexities in the novels themselves \textit{as texts}, the present task is to make explicit the literary/theological intertextuality within Moore’s fiction.\(^{11}\) This intertextuality is most clearly demonstrated in terms of an historical theology in which Moore’s portrayal of Catholicism reflects developments in pre- and post-Vatican II Catholicism. A religious tradition etymologically defined by its universality,\(^{12}\) Moore’s literary treatment of such developments is accentuated through the particularities of\(^{9}\)


\(^{10}\) Cf. J.C. Whitehouse, ‘Grammars of Assent and Dissent in Graham Greene and Brian Moore’, in Whitehouse, ed., \textit{Catholics on Literature}, pp. 99-107, and specifically the highly speculative conclusions drawn on two of the respective authors’ novels:

For all its doubts and disbelief, \textit{Monsignor Quixote} still seems to be written from an insider’s point of view. The real nature of a church and its faith are suggested by someone to whom, for all his quixotic relation with them, they are familiar. The attitudes and practices of a region of human reflection and hope are known and in principle interiorized. \textit{Catholics} is a book by a former inmate of what used to be called ‘the household of faith’ who knows, remembers, understands quite a lot, but not everything, about the place he has left. (p. 107).

\(^{11}\) The present study focuses upon the generally accepted literary canon of Moore’s nineteen published novels currently in print. The term ‘fiction’ in the text will refer to this ‘canon’.

\(^{12}\) See McBrien, \textit{Catholicism}. Catholicism is here defined by its universality but also by the diversity of its cultural and historical expression:

Catholicism is a rich and diverse reality. It is a Christian tradition, a way of life and a community. That is to say, it is comprised of faith, theologies, and doctrines and is characterised by specific liturgical, ethical and spiritual orientations and behaviours; at the same time, it is a people, or cluster of peoples with a particular history.

The word \textit{Catholic} is derived from the Greek adjective, \textit{katholikos}, meaning “universal”, and from the adverbial phrase, \textit{kath' hōlou}, meaning “on the whole” (p. 1).
Moore's literary treatment of such developments is accentuated through the particularities of culture and place, just as this becomes increasingly crucial within post-Vatican II Catholicism itself. In the novels of Moore, then, geographical location together with theological history are key factors for understanding personal and cultural identity. Moore's narratives, plotted as they are in an immensely diverse range of settings - literary constructions preoccupied with the metaphysical as much as the physical dimensions of place - are as representative of ideological and theological landscapes as they are of geographical and historical worlds.

The Novels of Brian Moore: Critical Contours

A diverse, critical literature accompanies Moore's prodigious literary output, including studies by Dahlie, Flood, Foster, Studing, McIlroy, Tener and Steele, O'Donoghue, Sullivan and Sampson. Still, as Sullivan has commented, "It is very difficult to find a formula that would serve as a universal interpretive key to Moore's protean fictive production". Sampson's recent characterisation of Moore as "the Chameleon Novelist"

Yet there are inherent tensions here between the universal Church and particular, local churches. Writing in 1991 McDade was right to comment that the current "centre of interest is in establishing local theologies appropriate to the lived experience of that community. The difficulties inherent in this 'localising' approach will, one suspects, be more and more evident in the future ... as Rome endeavours to 'rein in' the rebellious horses" (p. 441). The conflict between the continuing attempt of a universalising Roman hegemony over local churches is then appropriated by Moore in many of his final fictions, from Catholics onwards but is the special focus of chapter six, below.

For a geographer's perspective, see C.C. Park, Sacred Worlds: An Introduction to Geography and Religion (London and New York: Routledge, 1994).


J. Flood, Brian Moore (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1974).


J.F. Tener and A. Steele, eds., The Brian Moore Papers First Accession and Second Accession: An Inventory of the Archive of the University of Calgary Libraries (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 1987).


(4)
seemingly supports such an assertion.

For critics, the national and literary identity of the writer as exile both adds to such potential interpretative difficulties and provides for a hermeneutical resolution. Born and brought up in Belfast,25 Brian Moore was a natural migrant: after journalistic wanderings in the post-World War II ruins of eastern Europe,26 he emigrated to Canada in 1948.27 Moore retained Canadian citizenship until his death in January 1999 but as early as the late 1950s he had moved from Montreal to New York,28 and from the east to the west coast of the United States by the mid-1960s.29 He and his second wife, Jean, subsequently wintered in Malibu, California, and since 1967 summered in Nova Scotia30 where, in 1995, the Moores had the building of a second home completed.31 (Moore’s final resting place, though, was on native Irish soil.) Based on Moore’s Canadian citizenship (and comparisons with Malcolm Lowry’s literary residence in Canada), Dahlie acknowledges the writer’s Irish background but sees Moore as a Canadian writer.32 Indeed, in both Dahlie’s early and later studies, Moore’s migrations are a key source for interpretation of the writer’s fiction, especially as Moore’s novels highlight conflict and encounter between the Old World of Europe and the New World of North America.33 While the themes of the writer as exile and the importance of place within Moore’s fiction maintain a central focus for Dahlie, Moore’s status as Canadian writer has been 

25 Sampson, Brian Moore, pp. 9-49.
26 Sampson, Brian Moore, pp. 52-65.
27 Sampson, Brian Moore, pp. 66-76.
28 Sampson, Brian Moore, pp. 125-136.
29 Sampson, Brian Moore, pp. 169-176.
30 Sampson, Brian Moore, pp. 184-185.
31 Sampson, Brian Moore, p. 289.
confirmed fairly persistently.34

Similar critical issues of place and biographical detail surface in Flood's Brian Moore. Flood's monograph thus links biographical history and literary creation under the following headings: 'The Novelist in Disguise',35 'The Guilt of the Novelist',36 'The Power of the Novelist'37 and 'The Novelist as Revolutionary and Conservative'.38 Her distinctly psychoanalytic method identifies typically Freudian themes in the writer's life and fiction. In her chapter on 'The Power of the Novelist', for instance, an interview of Dahlie is cited to support both her biocritical and psychoanalytic hermeneutic:


35 Flood, Brian Moore, pp. 13-34, covering Judith Hearne and The Feast of Lupercali.

36 Flood, Brian Moore, pp. 35-63, covering The Luck of Ginger Coffey and An Answer from Limbo.

37 Flood, Brian Moore, pp. 64-88, covering The Emperor of Ice-Cream, I Am Mary Dunne and Fergus.

38 Flood, Brian Moore, pp. 89-96, covering The Revolution Script and Catholics.
Moore remarks on a change in himself and in his circumstances which occurred between the writing of An Answer from Limbo and The Emperor of Ice-Cream: "I am much happier now than I was when I was thirty-five or forty. Emperor was written at a crucial time in my life - it was the first book after I changed."  

Flood proceeds in typical psychoanalytic vein:

The change which Moore acknowledges in his life is clearly reflected in his fiction, not only in The Emperor of Ice-Cream but also in the two novels which followed it [I Am Mary Dunne and Fergus]. The Emperor of Ice-Cream shows significant changes in the recurring patterns of Moore's fiction. Once again he gives us the conflict between the fantasizer-son and the rigid authoritarian father, but this time the conflict lacks the deep, driven pain characteristic of its earlier appearances, and the issue of the conflict at last is the reconciliation of father and son, the father's acceptance of the son's triumph.

Flood thereby sees the author's fictions as providing some form of literary/therapeutic resolution.

In terms of canonicity, in contrast to Dahlie, Flood's early study places Moore in the context of an Irish canon: the Bucknell University Press Irish Writers Series, of which Flood's study is one volume, thus identifies Moore's place within the critical canon of Irish writers which also includes (in the series) Friel, Heaney, O'Casey, Synge and Yeats. It is a literary, canonical determination accepted by many other critics such as Rafroidi, Jeffares, Deane, Murray and Bolger, though some, such as Cronin, Foster and Longley ascribe a

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39 Flood, Brian Moore, p. 64.
40 Flood, Brian Moore, p. 64.
41 Flood's work is restricted to novels published up to 1972, and thus concludes, as we have noted, with a consideration of Catholics and The Revolution Script. The latter is usually classified as more journalism than fiction and it is therefore not included in this present study. It is an account of the kidnap of a British trade minister, James Cross, and a French Canadian politician, Pierre Laporte, by the Quebec liberation terrorist group, the Front de Liberation du Quebec (FLQ), in Montreal in 1970.
42 P. Rafroidi, 'The Great Brian Moore Collection', in Harmon and Rafroidi, eds., The Irish Novel in Our Time, pp. 221-236.
48 J. W. Foster, Forces and Themes in Ulster's Fiction (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1974) reads Moore as part of the socio-cultural, and specifically religious setting of Belfast.
more narrowly Belfast designation to the author. Others, such as Kiberd, emphasise Moore’s Irish roots at the same time as his cross-cultural affiliations.

O’Donoghue’s critical study Brian Moore also places the novelist within this tradition of Irish writing. She works under a number of headings which themselves highlight both the range of Moore’s fiction, the apparent difficulty of thematic characterisation and the problematic of canonical labelling. O’Donoghue’s is a study which combines biocritical considerations with one of the first significant stylistic analyses of Moore’s narrative technique, an approach which is developed by Sullivan.

Sullivan’s A Matter of Faith acknowledges debts to Flood, Foster, Dahlie and O’Donoghue. Critical of Flood’s reduction of Moore’s fiction “to a disguised psychobiography”, Sullivan reserves most praise for O’Donoghue:

Despite the healthy growth in recognition that Moore has always deserved, very few commentators have engaged with the nuances of Moore’s stylistic and narratological choices: the craft of his fiction. It is much to O’Donoghue’s credit that she deals with this aspect of Moore’s fiction in the most intelligent and comprehensive way to date.

Sullivan credits O’Donoghue too with seeing “Moore’s ambiguous relationship to faith and belief” as a “kind of structuring premise”. Noting that Moore’s “hostility to religion and Catholicism in particular has gradually disappeared”, that “he now sees spiritual faith, not just as another kind of belief but as the highest kind there is”, Sullivan comments:

50 D. Kiberd, Inventing Ireland: The Literature of the Modern Nation, p. 5.
52 I return to the taxonomic issue of Irish writing itself at the beginning of chapter two, below.
53 Her working headings are: ‘The Early Belfast Novels’ (Judith Hearne, The Feast of Lupercal, but interestingly not The Emperor of Ice-Cream); ‘Novels of Exile and Escape’ (all novels from The Luck of Ginger Coffey to The Mangan Inheritance, which strangely includes the supposed “sport” Catholics). ‘Belief in a Secular World’ and ‘Politics as Morality’ cover the increasingly geographical and theological breadth of Moore’s fiction from The Temptation of Eileen Hughes through Cold Heaven, Black Robe, The Colour of Blood to Lies of Silence.
54 This is possibly derivative of an earlier study. O’Donoghue acknowledges P.F. Walsh, Technique as Discovery: The Novels of Brian Moore (unpublished PhD thesis, University College Dublin, 1973).
Moore has, of course, never been hostile to belief; indeed his whole oeuvre is a testament to his fascination with the mystery of belief, the enigma of faith, both of which are necessarily premised on absence.  

While emphasising the difficulty of finding that “formula that would serve as a universal interpretive key to Moore’s protean fictive production”, Sullivan ventures to state one hermeneutical possibility, as “the over determined loneliness (if not alienation) ... at the centre of Moore’s oeuvre”.  

Open in stating that his study presents “no master-narrative of interpretive study here”, Sullivan’s final chapter reveals his methodological bias. Sullivan here provides an extensive analysis of The Great Victorian Collection as Moore’s ‘Masterplot’. The story told is that of Anthony Maloney, a University of McGill professor, and the ‘recreation’ of a collection of Victorian artefacts in the car park of his motel:

There is in this fable ... a gesture towards Moore’s own Collection of fictive creations ... It is not so much that Moore has dreamed the same dream over and over again - indeed he is in many ways the most protean of contemporary novelists - but that the “dream,” the fictive creation, must always be taken as “real”.

Sullivan nevertheless attempts to counterbalance (rather than overturn) a prevailing analysis of Moore’s fiction as classical realism, something also undertaken earlier by Cronin:

In many of the general criticisms that we have of Brian Moore’s fiction, a common observation is that his method is ultraconventional and that he belongs to the tradition handed down by the Victorians. It has been suggested that his work needs little or no exegesis and that this has been a reason for the relative paucity of critical attention.

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63 Sullivan, A Matter of Faith, p. 117.
Although it is true that Moore's fiction, overall, displays a "simple excellence" \[65\] this apparent simplicity is not achieved through the reworking of uniform stylistic and narrative techniques. There is, in his total output, a considerable degree of experimentation within the terms of his adamantly defended realist stance, and Moore has successfully blended modern innovations in narrative with that of more traditional representation.\[66\]

Drawing on the Platonic distinction in poetic discourse between diagesis (the poet's authorial voice) and mimesis (the direct representation of a character's speech, "drama being the purest form of the latter"), Sullivan concludes that "In modern terms, the diagesis belongs to those sections of a novel concerned with recounting an event and mimesis with the enactment of such an event".\[67\] Further, he suggests that, "It would not be too much of an exaggeration to say that the entire modernist impulse in narrative experiment was one that sought to efface or displace the diagesis, in effect, to dramatize the novel"\[68\]:

There are various ways to achieve this displacement, including the invention of surrogate narrators (James and Conrad), stream of consciousness (Joyce and Woolf) and what Lodge (after Bakhtin) \[69\] calls "the focalization of the narrative through character". This latter is a kind of ventriloquial effect in which narrative is "spoken" through a character's personality, a technique that Joyce exploited and one that Moore uses to great effect, especially in the first five novels.\[70\]

Moore's frequently used narrative technique, then, of writing in a classic realist, third person style while using 'stream of consciousness' to provide the impression of a first person narrator, "a fusion of the classical realist text's dramatic scene and authorial commentary", is described by Sullivan as "diagesis with mimetic effect"\[71\]:

Many of Moore's characters (it could be argued all of them) have to learn the hard lesson of distinguishing between dream and reality (Anthony Maloney is of course no exception here), and this ventriloquial technique helps to demonstrate that lesson without authorial comment.\[72\]

Sullivan's conclusion is that Moore's literary experimentation - the "masterplot that informs his fictive enterprise" - is a "cautious inventiveness" wherein Moore as ironist (as in *An Answer from Limbo*), "astute scholar of film montage" (as in *Fergus*) and subtle, even "Joycean",


\[72\] Sullivan, *A Matter of Faith*, p. 120.
manipulator of point of view are among those skills of technique which have been previously overlooked by critics.73

Still, as influences on Moore’s literary technique as well as his preference for particular fictional forms have been variously identified with classic realism,74 modernism75 and post-modernism,76 there is clearly no final interpretative resolution here. Moore himself has acknowledged a similar diversity of influences, from Joyce77 to Borges.78 Controversially too the author has been in characteristic denial of some less than canonical forms in pseudonymous (and now out of print) ‘pulp’ works dating from the early 1950s which financed his early ‘literary’ novels.79 The ‘great’ European and American fictional influences are thus apparent in intertextual literary references within his own novels, especially when Moore is writing about novelists, such as Brendan Tierney and Fergus Fadden.80 Moore is equally disparaging - especially in his early Irish novels - of popular literary and dramatic forms (and, given his ‘pulp’ works, this is somewhat ironic).81

Sampson’s Brian Moore: The Chameleon Novelist is the most recent full length study of

74 Sampson is the latest in a line of critics to see the nineteenth century novel as the major influence on Moore; cf. J. Cronin, ‘The Resilient Realism of Brian Moore’, The Irish University Review, volume 18 (Spring 1988) pp. 24-36.
78 See the epigraph from Jorge Luis Borges in No Other Life:
    God moves the player, he, in turn, the piece.
    But what God beyond God begins the round
    of dust and time and dream and agonies?
79 There is restricted access to relevant material in the University of Calgary Brian Moore Special Collection.
80 See below for my consideration of An Answer from Limbo and Fergus, pp. 88-95 and 103-111, respectively.
81 See below for my consideration of The Feast of Lupercal and The Emperor of Ice-Cream, pp. 59-66 and 66-72, respectively.
Moore’s life and work82 and is advantaged by access to a literary output made complete by the author’s death.83 Sampson accessed the Brian Moore Special Collection at the University of Calgary and interviewed the author, in addition to friends, relatives and acquaintances of Moore.84 Unfortunately — and typical of biocritical approaches to Moore’s work since Dahlie and Flood onwards — Sampson succumbs to the arguably inevitable pitfalls of reading the writer into the novels.85 Sampson’s ‘thesis’ is that Moore is a novelist who never writes the same novel twice — hence, “the chameleon novelist”. Thus, for example, The Magician’s Wife is hailed as justification and further, final confirmation of this view — one work cited as justification for an idea which supposedly relates to all Moore’s novels. Sampson thereby contends that Moore has written yet another work of fiction which fails to fit the mould:

Most of all, the novelist wishes to remain chameleon-like — hidden from himself and others. This writing life must remain fluid and open to improvisation. And so The Magician’s Wife, like all the other novels, surprises with its inventiveness. Moore deliberately resists a determined blueprint in the discovery of his way into each new novel. Even the mastery of technique is itself a danger that must be resisted if each novel is to be a new probing of the meaning of his experience.86

So, remaining with Moore’s final novel, Sampson is determined (in a manner which is not untypical of his work) to uncover the psycho-biography of the writer within the text of The Magician’s Wife. Sampson’s summary of the narrative is preparatory ground for this:

This novel of two journeys undertaken by the magician Henri Lambert and his wife Emmeline in 1856, the first to the French court as the guests of the Emperor, and the second later in the year to Algiers and out into the Sahara desert, is once more a novel of displacement, role-playing, and the craving for belief. Emmeline is the centre of consciousness in the narrative, which carries her into a moral and emotional limbo between two worlds; Henri is a supremely successful performer, a conjuror who uses scientific principles to beguile native audiences, yet as a husband, he is absent —

82 With the assistance of Jean Moore, Patricia Craig is currently working on an authorized biography.
83 At his death, Brian Moore was working on a novel on Rimbaud.
84 See Sampson, Brian Moore, pp. 333-336.
85 My reasons for focusing on the texts of Moore’s novels and their intertextual relation with Catholic tradition derives from a desire for methodological clarity. Simply put, in regard to the portrayal of Catholicism, the texts, Moore’s novels themselves, reveal more consistently the author’s theological and related concerns than any extant interview, biographical or biocritical sources. Where I cite Moore’s own considerations of his writing from interview sources, I do so only in this opening chapter by way of illustration and to draw attention away from the author and to his literary output. Moore’s citation here is thus relevant: “There is no point in visiting a great writer for he is incarnate in his works”. See B. Moore, ‘Imagination and Experience’, in C. Boylan, ed., The Agony and the the Ego: The Art and Strategy of Fiction Writing Explored (London: Penguin, 1993), pp. 47-54. Sampson’s use of this on the opening page of his biocritical study is both ironic and typical of how few critics of Moore have taken such advice to heart.
86 Sampson, Brian Moore, p. 293.
egocentric, obsessive and sexually impotent. 87

Yet Sampson sets aside the latter’s “outer coverings of political parable, this time focused on colonialism, and of an historical period set in Moore’s favourite period, the mid-nineteenth century” and claims the following with some assurance:

Brian Moore is, of course, both Emmeline and Henri. The exiled and lonely consciousness of Emmeline is due not only to the geographical displacement or to the different racial and religious identity that she discovers among the Muslims in Algeria, but to her alienation from the deliberate and over-civilized social forms of French culture. The conventions, fashions, and roles that are required of those who aspire to a higher social status impose an inauthentic identity, one Henri finds easy to embrace for his personal identity has been subsumed into the public role of the magician ... His desire to obliterate the feelings of vulnerability which arise from chance events, such as illness and death, has made him a monomaniac who has lost all roots in the “commonplace” facts of life. 88

In terms of actual biography, though, too little in the way of psychological profile is added to the man whose literary elusiveness was maintained to the end. 89

Sampson thus withdraws from biography into biocritical speculation for a substantial part of his work, as evidenced by the following:

Since the mid-1960s, Moore has chosen isolation over social involvement. Jean accepted that isolation with him and became his constant companion. His first marriage had been an urban affair, energized by involvement in a lively social and professional scene; Brian and Jean have opted to withdraw almost entirely from that kind of busy social and literary milieu. Not only does Moore disappear into his identity as a novelist in the second half of my biography of him, Jean disappears also. 90

Sampson himself acknowledges too his own restricted use of biographical sources. 91 While noting Moore’s general assistance in relation to information access, Sampson acknowledges that “In other cases he withheld permission, and as a result, the treatment of certain issues is, to a degree, less vivid or textured than I would have liked”. 92 In all, Sampson’s characterisation of Moore as “the chameleon novelist” converges with disclaimers concerning the biographical authority of his own work. By so doing Sampson limits the scope of his work both as

87 Sampson, Brian Moore, p. 294-5.
88 Sampson, Brian Moore, p. 295, my emphasis.
90 Sampson, Brian Moore, p. 165, my emphasis.
91 Again, see Sampson, Brian Moore, p. 333-336, for a list of sources.
92 Sampson, Brian Moore, p. 333.
biography and as criticism. A crucial opportunity is missed for uncovering any thematic or stylistic unity within Moore’s life-long literary output.

**Landscapes of Encounter: The Portrayal of Catholicism in the Novels of Brian Moore**

I want briefly to return to Sullivan in order to establish the principal direction for my own contentions regarding Moore’s oeuvre. In attempting, then, to counterbalance a perceived trend in Moore’s fiction, Sullivan states:

> As is the case with most writers in the “classic realist” tradition, especially modern or contemporary writers, most attention has been paid to Moore’s thematic concerns at the cost of his stylistic innovations. In the work of such writers, in contrast to the modernists, say, or the defamiliarizing metafictionalists, language is a “transparent window on reality,” so there is little or nothing to discuss. Yet within this realist philosophy of belief in the reader’s ability fully to recover experience “through” language, a classic realist like Moore can display a fair amount of stylistic ingenuity.93

Assertions of Moore’s literary experimentation are in fact less controversial than might at first appear. Yet, their interpretative importance needs to be restricted here to challenge the insupportable implication, dating from Ricks,94 that the contemporary classical realism of Moore’s fiction leaves “little or nothing to discuss”.

Thus, speaking in early interviews of his own approach to writing fiction, Moore asserts the primacy of *story* over its literary *form*, and *narrative content* over the *technique of its portrayal*.95 In another early interview Moore elaborates further:

> I think that I have an interest in clarity and the sort of mind that doesn’t want my reader to be deceived or awed by technique. I think a good story tells itself, as Mann said; that’s the truth of it; that if you find the perfect way to tell it nobody will even notice that there’s technique.96

In this regard, a persistent critical lapse surfaces in the interpretative foci on Moore’s fiction. In the main, then, there is a presupposition that a thematic and content-led approach has largely exhausted its interpretative possibilities. Consequently, commentators seek alternative critical

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94 Ricks, ‘The Simple Excellence of Brian Moore’.
options, either stylistic treatments of formal, literary technique (O'Donoghue, Sullivan\textsuperscript{97}) or biocritical analyses (Dahlie, Flood, Sampson). The latter alternatives all retain useful insights into Moore's work, yet any holistic hermeneutic - to which so many have alluded\textsuperscript{98} - remains elusive. I want, then, to reassert the primacy of a content-led approach and re-examine the possibilities for a thematic unification in Moore's fiction. Amidst such diverse, preceding commentary, I want to focus on two major (and as yet insufficiently inter-related) thematic strands, which are, I argue, central to an understanding of Moore's canon: the representation of place and the portrayal of Catholicism.\textsuperscript{99}

The prominence of place as a theme in studies of Moore's fiction most often appears in biocritical studies where its importance lies in the correlation between the author's own migrations and his writing.\textsuperscript{100} Thus, most critically, many - especially since Dahlie - have used Moore's emigration from Ireland to North America as a key to understanding Moore's fictional portrayal of 'Old World' Europe - especially Ireland - and the 'New World' of North America - both the United States and Canada. Some critics are obviously more thoroughly dependent upon the author's life as a key to his fiction than others but all those cited have depended upon

\textsuperscript{97} For an early if brief consideration, see P. French, 'The Novels of Moore', The London Magazine, February 1966, pp. 89-91; cf Walsh, The Novels of Brian Moore: Technique as Discovery.

\textsuperscript{98} Julian Barnes, 'Elusive Author, Elusive Text', is cited from a 1994 award ceremony, by Sampson, Brian Moore, p. 3.


the biocritical approach to a degree, even those providing more formal stylistic analyses. Such an approach may well be appropriate for Moore’s early Belfast novels (*Judith Hearne*, *The Feast of Lupercal* and *The Emperor of Ice-Cream*) or the early North American works (especially *An Answer from Limbo* and *The Luck of Ginger Coffey*). After all, Moore was a writer who formerly lived in Belfast, who moved to North America, and whose portrayal both of Ireland and America is prominent in these early novels. The biocritical approach here has, then, a degree of basic credence. Thus, by way of example, in an interview with Moore by Adair, published under the appropriately biocritical title of ‘The Writer as Exile’, Moore identifies Belfast itself with the beginnings of his disenchantment with organised religion and Catholicism in particular:

> I didn’t reject those influences in quite such an idealistic way. You see I started going to Confession as child and I now date a lot of my troubles to that. I was a child who was incapable of confessing things to a stranger in a box: I was a very highly sexed child and, to be perfectly frank about it, when people say my work is erotic it’s because sex has played a big part in my life ... So I had trouble with Confession and I started telling lies, and that was a mortal sin, so automatically I thought there was something wrong with me .... I began to think of myself as someone concealing something. And that unhappiness - you can’t blame poor Belfast for that - that unhappiness is the thing which starts the unhappiness with Belfast and led me to criticise the Church itself and also my parents’ political and religious ideal.\(^{101}\)

Still, such a treatment is too limited in scope to provide a full appraisal, either of the latter novels or his most recent fictions; and it is especially inadequate for an understanding of Moore’s fiction over the full span of a writing career in which overtly autobiographical elements have become systematically subsumed by more universal, and thus inevitably less personal, religious and more widely ideological themes. The biocritical approach here, as elsewhere, hampers our effective understanding of Moore’s writing. In this regard, the use of Moore’s citation of Tolstoy by Sampson is unintentionally ironic: “There is no point in visiting a great writer for he is incarnate in his works.”\(^{102}\)

Place nevertheless retains its usefulness as a means of understanding Moore’s major fictional works. Yet its chief significance lies not in worn biocritical correlations but in the features of the texts themselves, that is, in the manner in which cultural representations - of ideology, of theology, and so forth - are reinforced by narrative location.\(^{103}\) It is for this reason that I have

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preferred on the whole the use of the term 'landscape', for geography in Moore's novels conveys a complexity of intertextual resonance which the term 'place' seems to lack. Moore's novels, then, as texts, are concerned with the writing of worlds which, I argue, are as metaphysical as they are physical; and it is this pervasive preoccupation - with correlations between place, culture and textual representation\textsuperscript{104} - that leads us to an overview of the second critical, thematic strand, that is the preoccupation with religious, especially Catholic, themes.

Yet, immediately, the lack of extended analysis of Moore's portrayal of Catholicism is surprising; more so given the centrality of religion throughout his novels.\textsuperscript{105} Thus, to focus on one substantial study, O'Donoghue rightly suggests Moore is writing on Catholicism even when his themes are overtly secular.\textsuperscript{106} Yet again, though, O'Donoghue's biocritical dependency detracts from our full understanding of Moore's portrayal of Catholicism. Thus she makes reference to how Moore (still psychologically scarred by his own schoolday experiences at St Malachy's, "Belfast's Diocesan College") has changed in his attitude to

\textsuperscript{104} E. Said, \textit{The World, The Text and the Critic}, (London: Faber, 1984) provides some relatively early critical precedence for this. I am also broadly following the line taken by T. Eagleton, for instance in \textit{ Literary Theory}, (Oxford: Blackwell [second edition], 1997) that no text can be hermetically sealed from history.

\textsuperscript{105} See D. Spencer, \textit{The Second Vatican Council and the English Catholic Novel} (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Liverpool, 1996). Graham Greene and Evelyn Waugh are presented as the pre-Vatican II exemplars by way of contrast with a post-Vatican II consideration of Michael Carson, Alice Thomas Ellis, David Lodge and Brian Moore. As will become apparent in my own thesis, much of Moore's fiction depends upon a portrayal of pre-Vatican II Catholicism. Further, while we have addressed the difficulty of Moore's particular place within national literary canons, Moore's implicit categorisation here as an 'English' Catholic novelist is surely open to challenge. In addition to major studies by Dahlie, Flood, O'Donoghue, Sullivan and Sampson, the treatment of religious themes in Moore's novels has been a persistent feature of criticism across national canonical borders, a feature which nevertheless lacks comprehensive treatment: see, for instance, J.H. Dorenkamp, 'Finishing the Day: Nature and Grace in Two Novels by Brian Moore', \textit{Eire}, volume 13 (1978), pp 103-112; D. Staines, 'Observance without Belief', \textit{Canadian Literature}, no. 73 (Summer 1977), pp. 8-24; T. Brown, 'Show Me a Sign: The Religious Imagination of Brian Moore.' \textit{Irish University Review} volume 18, (Spring 1988) 37-49. The criticism of Michael Paul Gallagher is worthy of special mention since it is clear from the Calgary Special Collection that Gallagher acted as one of Moore's chief advisers on the religious themes in his novels from \textit{Catholics} onwards; see, M.P. Gallagher, 'The Novels of Brian Moore', \textit{Studies} 60 (Summer 1971), 180-95, 'Brian Moore's Fiction of Faith', \textit{Gaetiana} (University of Caen) 5 (1985), 89-95, 'Religion as Favourite Metaphor: Moore's Recent Fiction', \textit{Irish University Review}, volume 18 (Spring 1998), pp. 50-58. R. Hartill, \textit{Writers Revealed: Eight Contemporary Novellists Talk about Religion, Faith and God} (New York: Peter Bedrick, 1989) is a comparative study but one whose focus is obviously upon writer rather than text.

\textsuperscript{106} O'Donoghue, \textit{Brian Moore}, p. 9.
Catholicism, on two accounts: firstly, subsequent to a transformation in the Catholic Church especially since the 1960s and, secondly, Moore’s dawning recognition that people must believe in something.\textsuperscript{107}

I want to deal with the second point - religion as favourite metaphor - first. O’Donoghue thus cites Moore:

We go along in life with some belief held in front of us which keeps us going. Most of my novels investigate the period in someone’s life when that belief is withdrawn, when they’re forced to examine their whole life ... I found that, while I’m not religious myself, religion is a wonderful metaphor for belief.\textsuperscript{108}

O’Donoghue adds the following comments, “Moore may not be religious himself, but the last section of the above remark does not give credit to the seriousness with which he has treated religious belief in his recent novels or the increasingly high value he has placed on it”.\textsuperscript{109} Lamentably, opportunities for further analysis here are neglected; indeed consciously so, O’Donoghue claiming that, “Since he wrote Catholics, the direction taken by the Catholic Church as regards doctrine and ritual has concerned Moore no further ...”\textsuperscript{110} O’Donoghue’s perspective is in this regard seriously misplaced: on the one hand Moore supposedly understates his fictional portrayal of Catholicism and then on the other O’Donoghue suggests that, since Catholics, (that is, from 1972), “the direction taken by the Catholic Church as regards doctrine and ritual has concerned Moore no further”.\textsuperscript{111} This is, of course, palpably untrue when we look at Moore’s subsequent fiction. O’Donoghue thus chooses to cite other author-derived interview material to suggest that the belief in question is more metaphorical than simply (or substantively) Catholic, opting to assess the metaphor of religion as a form of human belief without the necessarily consequent analysis of Catholicism. The point about the primacy of text over biocritical interpretation, then, holds here too. The theme of faith may well be used metaphorically, but the context is so often explicitly Catholic that any analysis of faith outside of its very specific socio-cultural, ideological and theological context is bound to lead to superficiality in the treatment of belief.

\textsuperscript{107} O’Donoghue, Brian Moore, pp. 139-140.
\textsuperscript{108} Cited O’Donoghue, Brian Moore, p. 140; cf. note 102, above p. 16 on Gallagher’s commentary.
\textsuperscript{109} O’Donoghue, Brian Moore, p. 140.
\textsuperscript{110} O’Donoghue, Brian Moore, p. 143.
\textsuperscript{111} O’Donoghue, Brian Moore, p. 141, my emphasis.
So it is that O'Donoghue remains largely overly-dependent upon Moore's own statements about his changing attitudes to Catholicism; thus, when biocritical prompts for further analysis of Catholic tradition arise such opportunities are neglected. For example, O'Donoghue cites Moore on the contrast between the Belfast Catholicism of his upbringing and developments later in the century: “But then, of course, you had Pope John XXIII and things started to change and then I became very interested ... One of the greatest revolutions of this century has been the revolution within the Catholic Church”. O'Donoghue neglects too the opportunities present for further theological analysis even when comments directly relate to texts; that *Catholics* establishes the author's “attitude towards changes in the institutional Church during the 1960s and the early 1970s” is entirely correct but the nature of this intertextuality is not really explored.

Similarly, Sullivan, while certainly dealing with Catholic themes, again neglects both the theological detail and historical transformations within Catholic tradition over the period of Moore’s writing. At a fairly basic level, there is no reference to the Second Vatican Council in his index. Thus Sullivan attempts to show that “allied to personal quest for some form of certainty, Moore's work - especially after *Catholics* - becomes concerned in more complex ways (although such concern is present in Judy Hearne's demand for a “sign”) with what could be called the semiotic of belief”; but by the same token Sullivan has ironically neglected that textuality, that system of signification, at the heart of modern Catholicism: the Second Vatican Council, an event defined through its textuality.

One might have expected Sampson's *Brian Moore* to provide, as the first full length literary biography, greater consideration of the cultural diversity in Moore's portrayal of Catholicism. The thematic treatment of Catholicism, though, is one characterised again by significant

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113 O'Donoghue, *Brian Moore*, p. 142.
114 Cf. my considerations of the novella *Catholics* as a pivotal text in Moore’s portrayal of Catholicism, below, pp. 118-130.
115 Sullivan, p. xiii.
absence: Sampson’s index contains no reference to Vatican II.\textsuperscript{117} Sampson is strong on the literary intertextuality that is inherent in Moore’s European destinations; and as a biocritical study it is understandable why Sampson makes so much of Moore’s personal post-War European discovery of the Paris of Joyce and the France of Flaubert, only dreamt of as a Belfast teenager.\textsuperscript{118} Predictable though, is the manner of Sampson’s interpretation of Moore’s Catholic interests. These take a biographical turn when, commenting on \textit{The Statement}, Sampson claims that

In this novel, one can see his continuing interest in the mentality of those Catholics, such as his father, who were prepared to overlook the actions of the fascists because they placed the preservation of the Catholic ethos above politics and the rule of law.\textsuperscript{119}

Further:

While the Catholic ethos of French politics fascinated him, the pleasures and freedoms of the culture generally also became part of his permanent attachment to France ... His love of French literature might have been sparked at St. Malachy’s perhaps, or through his awareness of his aunts’ education in Caen, or his father’s holiday there. At any rate, Catholic France was given a special status in the Moore household.\textsuperscript{120}

The neglect of the broader social and cultural (especially the ideological and theological) contexts for Catholicism provides yet further impetus for the focus of this present study.

I suggest, then, that two thematic strands - Moore’s fictional landscapes and his portrayal of Catholicism - do form that elusive and coherent hermeneutical whole. Thus, I contend that a critical approach which combines consideration of representations of geography and place (simply put landscape) needs to be integrated with an emphasis on Moore’s portrayal of Catholicism; a move which represents a critical unity incorporating the full corpus of Moore’s novels. Key here is the manner - Moore’s intertextual ground - whereby both literary text and religious tradition persistently interact, that intertextuality between Moore’s fiction and Catholic theology.\textsuperscript{121} Still, if the relative critical neglect of the \textit{detail} of Catholicism is evident from our

\textsuperscript{117} The occasional reference in the main body of the text is insufficient. Take, for instance, the following:

In the summer of 1967 or 1968, on the annual visit to Jean’s family home in Kentville, Nova Scotia, the Moores had been walking one Sunday morning when they overheard a church service in progress. The evangelical style of the vernacular singing led Moore to think that it was a Baptist church, but Jean pointed out that it was, in fact, the post-Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) Catholic service. (Sampson, \textit{Brian Moore}, p. 208.)

\textsuperscript{118} Sampson, \textit{Brian Moore}, pp. 52-65.

\textsuperscript{119} Sampson, \textit{Brian Moore}, p. 54.

\textsuperscript{120} Sampson, \textit{Brian Moore}, p. 55.

\textsuperscript{121} Cf. note 6 above, p. 2.
review of the literature on Moore, then perhaps less obvious is the manner in which these two strands - of landscape and Catholicism - achieve their interpretative unity. Key here is the manner in which both the novels of Brian Moore and Catholic tradition itself increasingly reflect a theological and cultural diversity in the latter half of the twentieth century. This diversity is most clearly manifest in the ‘local’ and through the culturally (that is geographically and historically) particular - a plurality which is both fictional and meta-fictional, physical and metaphysical. Moore’s fictional landscapes shift too from early portrayals of cultural hegemony in his portrayal of Catholicism to an increasing heterogeneity of religious and ideological diversity. ‘Landscapes of encounter’ conveys then something of the historical dynamism, geographical diversity and cultural plurality present both within Catholicism and Moore’s fictional portrayal of this tradition.

I am arguing, then, for a place for Moore’s novels within a Catholic world. Moore’s novels reflect a particular convergence of fictional narrative and what Lyotard would term the grand-narrative of Catholic tradition. However, it is a Catholic world which in the time covered by Moore’s literary output has changed considerably; and this is necessarily reflected in a changing dialectic between Catholicism and the fiction which represents this tradition and deals with themes relevant to it as a worldview. In terms of pre- and post-Vatican II Catholicism and this relationship to fiction, Whitehouse comments:

In Catholic thought there was a shift in apologetics and the notion of the magisterium and the consequent introduction of a new lexis. In the Catholic novel, there was a movement away from a picture of human beings working out their own destiny towards a representation of them in a dialectical and critical relationship to their formative culture.

If “To date, there is no clear sign of the emergence of what may come next, a totally post-Vatican II novelist”, Moore, in so effectively portraying both pre- and post-Vatican II eras, indicates something of this narrative shift.

Besides resisting any overarching, formalist analysis, I am nevertheless following the

122 J-F. Lyotard, The Postmodern Condition: An Enquiry into Knowledge (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984). Of course, both the fictional and historical persistence of religious traditions, amongst other grandnarratives, mitigate against Lyotard’s expectations of their demise.

123 Whitehouse, Catholics on Literature, p. 20.

124 Whitehouse, Catholics on Literature, p. 20.
definition of the literary as fiction here and this I think is appropriate to my thematic approach to Moore’s work. Here I am also in part of course following Moore too by giving priority to narrative content (most basically story) rather than the technique of the telling; but, crucially, I prioritise, as far as possible, the intertextual content of Moore’s novels and not (as with biocritical approaches) the authorial motivation which might underlie them. So too, though, while I acknowledge Moore’s intertextual relation with Catholicism, two forms of textuality (say literature and theology) remain distinguishable, though perhaps interestingly literature is likely to have had and continues to have considerably less influence on the formation of Catholic tradition than Catholicism might on the development of fictional forms preoccupied with it. Thus, as shall become evident, while I am asserting the rightful, cultural place of the text in the world - here Moore’s novels in the context of the world of Catholic theological history - Moore’s fictions remain fictions. Both literature and theology, then, themselves both defined by their textuality, retain their distinctiveness as cultural forms, despite their intertextual relation (here in Moore’s portrayal of Catholicism). In terms of ecclesiastical and theological history, the defining ‘moment’ for twentieth century Catholicism was the Second Vatican Council. The present task, then, is to demonstrate, by way of provisional outline, both the distinguishing features of pre- and post-Vatican II Catholicism and the intertextuality of Moore’s diverse portrayal of this tradition.

Moore’s Portrayal of ‘Pre-Vatican II Catholicism’: A Preliminary Outline

Theologically, then, pre-Vatican II Catholicism was well defined; and if its ecclesiological self-definition provided sharply set boundaries between itself and other churches, other faiths and the world at large, it was at least a worldview in which both laity and hierarchy knew their place. Thus Rausch comments on the period immediately prior to the Second Vatican Council:

When Pope Pius XII died in 1958, the Catholic Church was, to all casual observers, in excellent shape. In the first half of the twentieth century the Church had been led by a number of strong popes, particularly Pius XII himself, who guided the Church through the Second World War and focused its energies against the postwar threat of Communism. The Church was continuing to grow in numbers and influence.


Simultaneously, the grandnarrative of Catholic tradition is not taken as some meta-fictional device here, merely a metaphor for belief. While I make no epistemological judgments concerning Catholic tradition itself, I am nevertheless somewhat at odds with approaches which reduce theological grandnarrative to fictional categories; see, for instance, L. Bentley, ‘Beyond the Liturgy: An Approach to Catholicism as Genre in the Work of James Joyce’, Literature and Theology, volume 12 (1998), pp. 159-169.
Seminaries, convents and monasteries were filled to the bursting point. Catholic theology, if not very creative, was very orthodox; there almost no dissent, no public disagreement. Catholics knew who they were; they were proud of their Church and had a clear sense of their own identity.127

As Rausch goes on to comment, however, the surface situation barely concealed its authoritarianism, its hierarchical domination, and its fundamental insularity in the face of the modern world:

The Catholic Church in the middle of the twentieth century considered itself very much a Church under siege. Deeply suspicious of the modern world, the Church was on the defensive. Catholic scholarship had been crippled by the atmosphere of suspicion and mistrust that followed the Modernist crisis at the beginning of the twentieth century. Books by Catholic authors were rarely published without a review by ecclesiastical authorities, they had to obtain an imprimatur from the bishop or a nihil obstat from an official censor of books. The Catholic Church was officially not interested in ecumenism. In the years immediately before Vatican II most Catholics were warned not to attend a Protestant service.128

In brief, the major inheritance of Roman Catholicism in the first half of the twentieth century was from Vatican I (1870) in which the doctrine of papal infallibility was established.129 There is a degree of irony in that the cumulative loss of secular influence perhaps may have stimulated an authoritarian ecclesiastical backlash. The sense of siege which Rausch talks about and the boundaries which he thereby highlights in regard to the Church in the modern world (the Modernist crisis was at its most fundamental a reaction of the Church against ‘modern’ developments in scholarship) was an inheritance of the Church’s self-definition originating from the nineteenth century in particular but one which can be traced back to the Counter-Reformation and the sixteenth century Council of Trent (1545-1563).130 In many ways the collective consciousness which characterised the Catholic Church in the period prior to Vatican

II was little different from that prior to Vatican I; and the sense of separation of Church and world is nowhere better illustrated than by Pius IX’s publication of the Syllabus of Errors in 1864 which represented a systematic condemnation of the ‘errors’ of the modern world and which rejected any notion of accommodation with “‘progress, liberalism, and recent departures in civil society’”. It was a lack of accommodation which was certainly mirrored in the condemnation of Modernism in Pius X’s encyclical Pascendi and the Holy Office’s decree Lamentabili (both 1907).131

The Early Irish Novels

(Judith Hearne, 1955; The Feast of Lupercal, 1958; The Emperor of Ice Cream, 1965)

Such a Catholic world is largely portrayed by Brian Moore’s first novel, set in the claustrophobic and morally repressive environment of 1940s Belfast. Judith Hearne is spiritually marginalised by her Catholic faith in a Protestant Ulster and alienated from the Church as well as any meaningful place in the social order which is compounded by her alcoholism and her failings in love with the self-seeking James Madden. In Judith Hearne’s Belfast, the geography of Ireland is as much a socio-cultural as physical landscape; in particular, Belfast represents theological as well as more obvious limits. Here, a very specifically defined landscape is integral to Moore’s representation of Catholicism as a Church at pains to keep the morally wayward in line. More ‘rebellious’ characters such as schoolmaster Diarmud Devine in The Feast of Lupercal fare little better against the pervasive trinity of social forces of home, school and church.

The appearance of the youthful academic failure, aspiring creative force, father hater and ARP warden, Gavin Burke, in The Emperor of Ice-Cream marks a fitful transition from the previous two portrayals of figures in a Catholic landscape. The Second World War setting of the latter novel provides Moore with an opportunity to extend the context of conflict of individual against overbearing religious and social forces into a more overtly political arena, an arena hinted at in Judith Hearne. In Moore’s presentation of Belfast Catholicism - and through the protagonist Gavin Burke - The Emperor of Ice Cream widens the portrayal of struggle to one against the naivities of religious and political belief. Here Gavin Burke challenges his Catholic nationalist father’s pro-Nazi sympathies in the early stages of the Second World War -

131 Rausch, ‘The Church and the Council’, in Hayes and Gearon, eds., Contemporary Catholic Theology, pp. 259-278.
and thereby highlights the flawed if complex alliance of some Irish Catholic nationalists in the early years of the Irish Free State, heightened here in the North as German wartime bombing enters what remained, post-Partition, the British imperial city of Belfast. The novel’s late ’30s/early ’40s setting and its appearance in 1965, just at the close and before any tangible effects of the Vatican II Council, clearly confirms The Emperor of Ice-Cream’s place in a pre-Vatican II mould of Roman Catholicism. Gavin Burke’s successful rebellion against an authoritarian father, a model of authority matched in a Vatican I Catholicism dominated by papal infallibility and the authority of clerical hierarchy over Catholic laity, is only part though of this character’s success. His passing involvement with a group of decadent artists late in the novel is indicative of an alternative train of aesthetic and moral vision which had already been a feature of his first novel dominated by an American rather than Irish landscape, An Answer from Limbo. That such experimentation in lifestyle was Protestant, that it would have been an impossibility for Belfast Catholics, provides more than an ironic fictional backdrop to the fact that Moore, already of course an exile from Ireland since 1948, could only set forth and develop this theme of an alternative worldview to Belfast Catholicism not within its physical, social and theological confines but in physical distance from it.

The Early American Novels
(The Luck of Ginger Coffey, 1960; An Answer from Limbo, 1962; I Am Mary Dunne, 1968; Fergus, 1971)

Rejection of and retrospection on Catholicism only gradually lead to the fictional development of the theme of finding a suitably all-encompassing replacement for it. In all of the novels in this phase the immigrant Irish characters seek various forms of replacement for an authoritative model of pre-Vatican II Catholicism with its unaccommodating stance against the modern world. Such differentiation between Church and world allowed for Moore’s fictional search for religious substitution to be equally well demarcated. In the pre-Vatican II phase of Catholicism and Moore’s portrayal of the Church at this time, the limits between Church and world are easily defined and indirectly allow Moore’s characters the freedom to accentuate their rebellion in seeking other forms of meaning and worldview: economic success with Ginger Coffey; psychological/sexual definition with Mary Dunne; aesthetic endeavour with Brendan Tierney and Fergus. Ways in which the portrayal of landscape is integral to the portrayal of Catholicism should already be partly apparent: Ireland, at least Belfast, becomes the landscape which is synonymous with a narrow pre-Vatican II Catholicism; America, by
contrast, becomes a secular antithesis, a landscape which represents both a physical and theological move from Irish Catholicism.

Thus in Moore's first 'North American' novels, *An Answer from Limbo*, we see in Brendan and Jane Tierney a model of American liberalism, as shown in their adoption of the secular materialist values of modern day New York, this being contrasted by the arrival of Brendan's strictly traditional Catholic mother from Ireland. The encounter is, again, both one in which the author treats Catholicism as a theme, even in rejection/retrospection, but one in which encounter is between different sets of values and contrasting worldviews. Place/country/landscape take on idealistic as well as physical contours. A Vatican I model of clearly defined Catholicism lends itself easily to limits of theological in- and exclusion, a matter modelled, as implied by the facts (in a novelistic sense) of physical migration; here cultural interplay, the Irish Catholic mother visiting the Americanised liberal son, is highlighted by the transposition in the geographical location.

The book marks an important stage in Moore's presentation of Catholicism. The physical shift to North America in *An Answer from Limbo* is thus a distancing from an Irish Catholic moral context to the secular, liberal framework of American law and constitution. But if the protagonist has wholeheartedly rejected the religion of his birth, the novel is to a much greater extent than *Judith Hearne* and *The Feast of Lupercal* concerned not simply with rejecting Catholicism but with providing an equally all-encompassing metaphysic by way of substitution, something which Gavin Burke could only hint at and unrealistically aspire to in his more restricted Belfast world. For Brendan Tierney it is writing, symbolised by his resignation from his post as journalist and his struggle to write and publish a literary masterpiece, his great first novel, which becomes his substitute for everything. *I Am Mary Dunne* and *Fergus* were both published after the close of Vatican II but the portrayal of Catholicism in both remains pre-Vatican II. A couple of instances to support this must suffice. Mary Dunne, a married woman and naturalised American, is framed from its opening with a representation of Mary Dunne as a Catholic convent schoolgirl, her secular American identity defined against an Irish Catholicism. Not dissimilarly, the hallucinatory, psychological visitations on Fergus - again a naturalised American, a thoroughly secular screen writer living in California - are from a distinctly pre-Vatican II Irish Catholic past. In both novels, emerging,
historical realities within the Catholic Church have not yet surfaced within Moore’s novels but such a fictional portrayal, particularly of Vatican II and its still unfolding theological aftermath, are not so distant; it would seem opportune then to outline the main features of transformation which were embodied by the Second Vatican Council.

Moore’s Portrayal of Post-Vatican II Catholicism and Beyond: A Preliminary Outline

While it is important to see the Second Vatican Council in the context of the preceding Councils, and the distinctiveness of Vatican II itself, any attempts to draw distinctions which are too hard and fast would be inappropriate. Still, it is indeed difficult to overstate the transformation which resulted from the Council initially instigated by John XXIII (whom most observers expected to be a merely caretaker pope). When he called for the Council soon after his election in 1958 with a quest for renewal, aggiornamento, a ‘bringing up to date’ of Church, it was a call to a Church which had largely atrophied in its insular response to massive changes in contemporary global society. By the time the Council had concluded its work in 1965, decrees of the Church’s teaching authority, the Magisterium, here the Collegiality of bishops, indicated change on a scale probably never before seen in the Church’s history. What distinguished this Council from others was its foundational outlook as a pastoral rather than doctrinal council. Most, if not all, previous councils, from the early Church through to Trent and Vatican I, had arisen in response to supposed doctrinal or other perceived challenges either to the Church’s teaching or its authority. Vatican II simply recognised the need both to adhere to its long tradition and to re-present itself to the world in the light of changes which had occurred there and, as such, was a modification - if not reversal - of the ecclesiological and theological tone established by Vatican I and followed so assiduously by the Church from the late-nineteenth to mid-twentieth centuries. For such reasons the Second Vatican Council is often referred to as a ‘pastoral’ rather than ‘doctrinal’ Council.

132 The twenty-one ecumenical councils of the Church (in chronological order) are as follows: Nicaea I, 325; Constantinople I, 381; Ephesus, 431; Chalcedon, 451; Constantinople II, 533; Constantinople III 680-681; Nicaea II, 787; Constantinople IV 869-870; Lateran I, 1123; Lateran II, 1139; Lateran III, 1179; Lateran IV, 1215; Lyons I, 1245; Lyon II 1274; Vienne, 1311-1312; Constance, 1414-1418; Florence, 1431-1445; Lateran V, 1512-1517; Trent 1545-1563; Vatican I, 1869-1870; Vatican II, 1962-1965. See M. Walsh, ‘Councils in Church History’, in Hastings, ed., Modern Catholicism, pp. 14-19, and ‘The History of the Council’, also in Hastings, ed., Modern Catholicism, pp. 35-46.
133 P. Hebblethwaite, ‘John XXIII’, in Hastings, ed., Modern Catholicism, pp. 27-34.
The teaching of the Council is represented in sixteen key documents, cited here in the order of their official approval:

4 Dec 1963
Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy
- Sacrosanctum Concilium
Decree on the Mass Media
- Inter mirifica

21 Nov 1964
Dogmatic Constitution on the Church
- Lumen Gentium
Decree on Eastern Catholic Churches
- Orientalium Ecclesiarum
Decree on Ecumenism
- Unitatis Redintegratio

28 October 1965
Decree on the Pastoral Office of Bishops in the Church
- Christus Dominus
Decree on the Sensitive Renewal of Religious Life
- Perfectae Caritatis
Decree on Priestly Formation
- Optatam Totius
Declaration on Christian Education
- Gravissimum Educationis
Declaration on the Relation of the Church to non-Christian Religions
- Nostra Aetate

18 Nov 1965
Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation
- Dei Verbum

7 Dec 1965
Declaration on Religious Freedom
- Dignitatis Personae Humanae
Declaration on the Missionary Activity of the Church
- Ad Gentes
Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests
- Presbyterorum Ordinis
Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the World of Today
- Gaudium et Spes

Most commentators on Vatican II would argue that the most important documents are the Constitutions, since they provide the keys to unlocking the basic meaning of the Council. The Decrees and Declarations depend on the Constitutions and show the practical implications of these for the Church.

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See C. Jamison, D. Lundy and L. Poole, To Live Is To Change: A Way of Reading Vatican II (Chelmsford, Rejoice Publications, 1995). The opening words of the documents in Latin are usually the means whereby the texts are designated and this is followed throughout.

Jamison et al., To Live Is To Change, p. 18. For a summary overview, see A. Hastings, 'The Key Texts', in Hastings, ed., Modern Catholicism, pp. 56-67. Vorgrimler, ed., Commentary on the Documents of Vatican, five volumes, still provides the most authoritative account of the Council's textual formation.

Jamison et al., To Live Is To Change, p.19, emphasis in original.
As one might expect, more than thirty years after the conclusion of the Council, much theological comment has accumulated. It is not intended here substantively to duplicate such commentary or the textual analysis on the development of particular Council documents from draft form to magisterial approval. It is, however, the intention here to comment broadly on the reception of the Council documents, and to a lesser extent on their postconciliar pronouncements, and not simply as part of an ongoing development of Roman Catholic thought in this area of contemporary theology but as an integral part of the literary reflection of such developments within the fictional writings of an author so preoccupied with Catholic thought both prior and subsequent to the Council.

While integral to the traditions of preceding Councils, many of Vatican II's pronouncements presented so different an outlook that it might be easy to argue that its pastoral emphasis had doctrinal implications, and key areas of the Council's pronouncements are worth highlighting. The definition of the Church itself shifted from a hierarchical model to one in which it was defined not by its figure in authority but by its laity, an ecclesiology emphasising the community rather than hierarchy, the Church as the 'People of God'. The Latin form of much of the liturgy switched to the vernacular, the removal of this universality in language signalled further massive democratisation in the Church - distinct peoples and individual cultures achieve priority in terms of the medium of worship. In the study of scripture, modern biblical methods are formally encouraged, a move which itself provided a strong move towards the other formal steps towards ecumenism. Further, though, Dignitatis Personae proclaimed the right to religious freedom for all, with Nostra Aetate removing the traditional 'no salvation outside the Church' to present a model of universality of salvation,

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137 See note 2 above, p. 1.
including those religious traditions beyond Christianity and those with no religious belief.\textsuperscript{145} The Church also focussed its attention beyond the theological to the political and the social and faced the plight of many societies in contemporary times: \textit{Gaudium et Spes}\textsuperscript{146} provided the momentum for the Church's wider social, cultural and political involvement. The separation of the Church from the world, so marked by the century of Church history preceding Vatican II had ended, and the implications of this are, of course, still being worked out. Still, we certainly see elements of the Church's new thinking reflected in the novels of Brian Moore.

In essence, the separation of the Church from the world, accentuated since Vatican I, was brought to an historical close by the Second Vatican Council. Still, bearing in mind Vatican II's place in a wider Christian history - as well as previous Councils of the Church - and recognising that the post-Vatican II Church retains its notion of historical continuity, hard and fast distinctions between pre- and post-Vatican Catholicism are unhelpful if the continuities are ignored. The notion of a \textit{radical continuity} seems to encompass both the \textit{continuity} through tradition and the \textit{discontinuity} with the more negative aspects of the Church's past together with a more positive view of its relationship with the 'world' in the future. Thus, in literary terms, features of a pre-Vatican II Catholicism remain in many of Moore's novels published even twenty or thirty years after its closure - yet traces of the beginnings of a transformation in theological history are apparent in works set and written in periods prior to the Second Vatican Council.\textsuperscript{147}

Nevertheless, the massive transformation within Catholicism resulting from the Second Vatican Council provided Brian Moore with an extraordinary range of material which, in subsequent post-conciliar times, has been used in a suitably wide-ranging manner in Moore's novels. The resultant portrayal of Catholicism within his fiction thus mirrors the significant changes (as well as both stasis and conflict) within the Church itself; but this essentially implied relationship between religion, more properly here Catholic theology, and literature - already

\textsuperscript{147} The residual effects of pre-Vatican II Catholicism on a post-Vatican II world will be developed as appropriate in chapters four, five and six, below.
highlighted\textsuperscript{148} - becomes considerably more complex post-Vatican II. As Moore's fictional portrayal of a monolithic post-Vatican I Church reflected an ecclesiastical and theological outlook in which hierarchy and authority defined the boundaries of Church and world so clearly, a post-Vatican II Catholicism which redefined the relationship between Church and world - indeed the definition of the Church itself - had the effect of making Moore's portrayal of Catholicism ever more plural and diverse.

Critically, for the first time, I make an ambitious attempt here to evaluate Moore's novels in complex intertextual relation with the theological and ideological histories of Catholicism which his \textit{oeuvre} so consistently portrayed through a lifetime of writing. Also of critical importance here is the Church's redefinition of itself through the Second Vatican Council, making this a pivotal event in Moore's intertextual relations with Catholic tradition. Here, the increasing theological and ideological plurality of post-Vatican II Catholicism - crucially through the priority given to laity and as a consequence to individual cultures - not only allowed for a diversification in the geographical settings for Moore's portrayal of Catholicism but reflected too the manner in which the universality of post-Vatican Catholic theology had increasingly become determined in its form by the historical particularities of both geography and culture.

\textit{Ireland Revisited}
\begin{quote}
\end{quote}

If a key defining moment in twentieth century Catholicism, then, was the period marking the Second Vatican Council between 1962 and 1965, the direction of Moore's fiction in the postconciliar period can be said to be equally marked by his own consideration of changes which had taken place in the Church as the century drew to a close. Thus the 'futuristic' \textit{Catholics} essentially charts the fictional progress of the Catholic Church after Vatican II. The radical changes in the Church's thinking, both in its view of itself and its mission of salvation in the modern world become projected in \textit{Catholics} on to the aftermath of fictional revolutions of an imagined Vatican IV. That Moore chose to portray such revolution in Catholic thinking in the context of Ireland is significant. That the island was the main focus for Moore's fictional rejection of Catholicism in his early Belfast novels only adds to the significance of his less strident and even partially sympathetic presentation of a traditional model of post-Vatican II/

\textsuperscript{148} See, for instance, notes 5, 6, 7 and 10, above, pp. 2-3.
post-Vatican IV Catholicism in this novella against the forces of institutional and doctrinal change within the ranks of the Church itself. Moore’s fictional defence of Catholic tradition in Ireland heightens our awareness of a major development in his thinking not only about the Church but about the Church’s role both within contemporary society and, given Catholics’ futuristic setting, the society of the future. Centrally, the presentation of Ireland’s landscape is integral to the portrayal of an encounter within Catholicism’s own ranks: Catholics becomes the vehicle for the fictional analysis of change within the Catholic Church but just as importantly represents a development in Moore’s fictional portrayal of Catholic religion in Ireland vis-a-vis the early Belfast novels. The sympathetic portrayal of the traditionalism of the Irish Catholic abbot over and against the less favourable presentation of Father Kinsella, the young and ‘revolutionary’ representative of a newly liberalised Rome, introduces a note of irony and surprise. One wonders if with the American nationality of Kinsella, Moore is indirectly perpetuating the notion of America’s liberalism; Catholicism’s encounter with liberalism becoming internalised while the old geographical stereotypes remain. Still, in this novella, many preoccupations of Vatican II are reflected directly: the renewal of liturgy (Sacrosanctum Concilium), the accommodation of Catholicism with other world faiths (Nostra Aetate) and the search for social justice (Gaudium et Spes).

*The Mangan Inheritance* begins in Canada, shifts its action for a large part of the novel to southern Ireland, and returns to conclude in the landscape in which its narrative began, continuing to problematize the secular. That James Mangan seeks his poetic and ancestral antecedence in Ireland highlights the island’s aesthetic history, with a *poet manque* heritage extending Moore’s portrayal of Ireland as a Catholic place.

Moore’s later Irish novels continue, though, to deal in various ways with the representation of post-Vatican II Catholicism. Set for the most part in France, Sheila Redden’s affair with Tom Lowry in *The Doctor’s Wife*, against the worsening Troubles in Belfast illustrates an emerging political ascendancy and consequent decline in Catholic religiosity: Vatican II had liberalised the Church and weakened aspects of moral authority and, while Paul VI’s contentious encyclical *Humanae Vitae* (1968)\(^{149}\) attempted to strengthen the moral side of this, ordinary Catholics, as evidenced by Sheila Redden, are no longer necessarily held in train by Catholic moral teaching.

In this novel too, the Parisian priest that Sheila Redden consults represents an accommodation between Catholicism and French existentialism. *The Temptation of Eileen Hughes* and *Lies of Silence* too both represent ways in which a liberalised post-Vatican II Church has lost its hold on the lives of ordinary Catholics. Bernard McAuley’s love for Eileen Hughes takes on a theological frame, his love is a replacement for the divine love which he feels has been denied him. In *Lies of Silence* Michael Dillon’s moral dilemma is whether to inform the police of the bomb plot or keep silent and save his wife’s life. It is, however, only part of the moral culture in this final Irish novel, although the latter quandary complicates telling his wife about his affair with a young journalist. Dillon’s untroubled, lapsed-Catholicism is a world away from the moral qualms suffered by Moore’s earlier protagonists. Similar though to an earlier portrayal of Irish Catholicism, Moore’s somewhat retrograde identification of the priest in *Lies of Silence* with IRA terrorism marks a similar identification highlighted with Gavin Burke’s Irish father’s pro-German sympathies in *The Emperor of Ice Cream*, Moore has returned to a simplistic identification between Irish Catholicism and Irish Nationalism.

**North America Revisited**

*(The Great Victorian Collection, 1976; Cold Heaven, 1983; Black Robe, 1985)*

Moore’s fictional portrayal of Catholicism is clearly dependent upon the portrayal of place. Thus *Catholics* was the beginning of a period of writing in which Moore’s reappraisal of Catholicism coincided with a fictional return to the landscape of Ireland, a period concluding with *Lies of Silence*. In a largely overlapping period from *The Great Victorian Collection* to *Black Robe*, Moore’s parallel preoccupation with America becomes evident. Moore’s representation of uncertainties in fictional encounter with a range of secular perspectives will eventually allow for an increasingly sympathetic portrayal of Catholicism. Thus the novel which Sullivan has perhaps over-defined as Moore’s masterplot, *The Great Victorian Collection* does reach to the heart of Moore’s increasing dissatisfaction with the certainties of an empirically verifiable realism, even to the extent of undermining the fictional possibilities of a narrative re-presenting worldly realities.

*Cold Heaven*, though, marks the beginning of the final stages of Moore’s dissatisfaction with the secular. As the protagonist ironically but in the end successfully struggles to maintain her agnostic faith in the face of powerful religious experience Moore signals America’s place as a
fundamentally religious landscape in which secularity has no right to automatic ascendency. As evidenced by the mental efforts of Marie Davenport, secular agnosticism needs, almost against the reason of experience, to struggle for predominance. In particular, though, the often all-too Catholic Marian visions amidst the well defined beauty and purity of a Californian coastline presents a new vision of sacralised American landscape in which religious scepticism seems ill-conceived.

Serving to confirm Moore’s re-valuation of America’s fictional place as a sacred rather than secular world is his representation of a seventeenth century, early colonial Canada. Black Robe is set in North American landscape where geography heightens both metaphysical difference and cultural encounter: Black Robe’s seventeenth century Canada is sacralised by Algonkin, demonised by Jesuits. Yet the clash of colonial French Catholicism and not-yet-colonised First Nations here reveals too an occasional shared sense of awe in the face of a wilderness, so seemingly distant from the Montreal of Ginger Coffey. Certainly there is here a great shift in the presentation of a North American geography from earlier novels: the literary ‘purification’ of the landscape is central: Black Robe is a pre-industrial environment, a world before the urban corruption of any Canadian or American cityscape. Given such considerations, the world of Father Laforgue’s encounter with the Algonkin and other Indian worlds, though vastly dissimilar, is marked by a fundamental metaphysical struggle in a ‘pre-modern’ world. The divine, the transcendent, in Black Robe is no longer played out in the midst of the secular materialist and narrowly reductionist worldviews of a modernist scepticism. The conflicts presented in Black Robe are in terms of particular interpretations of the world, especially the physical landscape itself, but one sacralised view of the world largely meets another, even if definitions of sacred and profane differ widely in the encounter. The world of Black Robe, whatever its precise definition, and whatever its horrors, is one characterised by a sacralised presence. By contrast, Moore’s early Irish and early North American novels define a world in which the forces of Enlightenment scepticism and ‘reason’ are still being played out, as we have seen, from Judith Hearne right through to Fergus.

There is one way, at least, though, in which Moore’s portrayal of the Catholic world in Black Robe is thoroughly contemporary rather than historical. To some extent it presents an anachronistic portrayal of Catholicism which is considerably more in line with twentieth than
seventeenth century Catholic thinking. Despite Jesuit letters of cultural analysis which form a supposedly historical context for the novel, Laforgue’s final appreciation of the Indian world and its people is one which, of all Moore’s novels, presents the most sophisticated treatment of contemporary Catholic thinking concerning the universality of salvation, perhaps the most significant defining doctrinal characteristic of Vatican II itself (Nostra Aetate, Lumen Gentium and Humanae Personae Dignitatem have already been cited); most importantly for our understanding Black Robe as a novel, Moore has thrown such questions back into a landscape and into a time before such questions could even have been theologically formulated. Given the history of political and religious colonisation throughout the Americas, through the encounter of worldviews in this particular colonial wilderness, Moore presents his most conclusive critiques both of subsequent north American ‘civilisation’ and the narrowness of Catholic (and broadly Christian evangelical) mission. Accordingly, Black Robe is the proper context in which to view Moore’s long literary experimentation with North America and appropriately indicates a closure of the novelist’s preoccupation with it. Black Robe represents too a transition in Moore’s treatment of Catholic theological landscape beyond which Moore’s drawing of key Vatican II themes are reflected in an increasing diversity of geographical setting.

The Church in the Modern World
(The Colour of Blood, 1987; No Other Life, 1993; The Statement, 1995; The Magician’s Wife, 1997)

The portrayal of Catholicism in Moore’s most recent fiction, from Black Robe onwards, variously re-presents a world in which Catholicism has found new ways of involvement rather than, as in the pre-Vatican II days, separation from the world. So, in The Colour of Blood we see the Church aligned against political oppression and as a rallying point against injustice in eastern Europe - as well as presenting a soteriological accommodation with the good social intentions of atheistic communism. In No Other Life we have the Church in Latin America - specifically ‘Haiti’ and decisively through the politicisation of the Church in liberation theology - very much on the side of the poor and the politically oppressed. It is not, though, by all


(35)
means always a positive portrayal. Thus Moore raises issues of significance for a post-Vatican II Church which needs greatly to reflect, and critically so, on its past: in *The Statement* upon Catholic-Jewish relations, especially during and directly after the Holocaust in Europe and, in Moore’s final novel, *The Magician’s Wife*, upon Catholic relations with Islam. Landscape and encounter remain central to the portrayal of Catholicism in all of these novels. In a post-Vatican II Catholic world, cultural difference achieves an even greater significance. Thus, language being central to cultural definition, shifts to a vernacular liturgy were part of a more general move towards a post-Vatican II localisation of Catholicism, both theologically and in terms of ecclesiology (however contested such developments have subsequently become during a centralising papacy). Consequently, Moore’s later novels contain portrayals of Catholicism as diverse theologically as they are geographically - from eastern Europe (*The Colour of Blood*), the Caribbean (*No Other Life*) to North Africa (*The Magician’s Wife*) - with such cultural and historical plurality enhancing the conflictual nature of these landscapes of encounter.

It is appropriate, then, to turn now to the intertextual detail of these literary landscapes and Moore’s portrayal of Catholicism therein, the writing of a Catholic world which begins in Belfast.

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Part II

The Fictional Portrayal of ‘Pre-Vatican II Catholicism’:
The Early Irish and American Novels
Chapter Two

The Early Irish Novels

(Judith Hearne, 1955; The Feast of Lupercal, 1958; The Emperor of Ice Cream, 1965)

Introduction

Kiberd has claimed that if Ireland did not exist, the English would have had to invent it. Kiberd’s Inventing Ireland: the Literature of the Modern Nation rests largely upon a thesis which sees the literary output of Irish writers and Irish national consciousness in terms of a complex historical pattern of political but also social and cultural interaction with a colonising neighbour. To Kiberd, this becomes a seminal pattern of Empire-building (Kiberd compares the colonisation of Ireland with that of the Americas) in which the development of cultural identity played as serious a part in colonisation as superior brute force. Reminiscent of Said’s

2 Cf. S. Deane, Strange Country: Modernity and Nationhood in Irish Writing Since 1790 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998). Deane presents a provocative distinction between a literate coloniser and an oral, colonised culture and the interaction of these with socio-economic factors, especially the contrast between plenty and deprivation which arise from territorial occupation:

The sounds that issue from the mouths of the Irish - as speech, song, or wail - pose a challenge for those who wish to represent them in print. Similarly, what is taken in by those mouths - food and drink - poses a problem of another sort. Food is problematic, especially during the Famine, because there is so little of it; and drink is problematic, because there is much of it. A starving or drunken people obviously lack articulacy. They cannot tell their own story, nor can their own story be told by someone else who has no experience of these extreme conditions ... The movement from an oral to a print culture is not simply a matter of translating folk tales or customs from the mouths of the people to the page. It involves an attempt to control a strange bodily economy in which food, drink, speech, and song are intimately related. Can a printed account in English represent the history that lives in the mouths of the Irish? This is a question to which the concept of national character attempts to provide an answer. But that concept cannot be mobilized effectively unless it admits a connection between itself and the territory of Ireland. (pp. 55-56.)

3 Kiberd comments, along the same lines as Said (see below pp. 42-43), that more advanced imperial, military force also implied, as early as the sixteenth century, social and cultural inferiority of the colonised: “From the sixteenth century, when Edmund Spenser walked the plantations of Munster, the English presented themselves to the world as controlled, refined and rooted; and so it suited them to find the Irish hot-headed, rude and nomadic, the perfect foil to set off their own virtues.” (Kiberd, Inventing Ireland, p. 10.) The Third Galway Conference on Colonialism has recently posed the question ‘Was Ireland a Colony?’ Its focus was on the status of Ireland after the 1800 Act of Union and on subsequent place of Ireland in relation to British Imperialism. Keynote speakers included Terry Eagleton, David Lloyd and Robert Young. The event was held in June 1999 at the National University of Ireland, Galway. I am grateful to the organisers for allowing space for my own presentation, ‘Theology and Imperialism: Post-Colonial Ambivalence in Brian Moore’s Portrayal of Catholicism’. (38)
linking of writing and mindset of Empire, Kiberd’s postcolonial agenda combines with a masterly overview of ‘Irish’ literature. From Wilde and Shaw through Yeats and Synge, Joyce and Beckett, to “the writer and society 1960-90”, the literature of the modern Irish nation is shown by Kiberd to provide a textual map of an Irish cultural consciousness which frames a poetic, dramatic and fictional context for questions of economic, social, and political as well as religious importance. Irish literature is based upon encounter with the colonising other, and in every respect reflects a dynamism which is both culturally enriching as well as destructive. Immigration being a feature of both the Irish nation post-Famine and a central tension in Irish writing, Kiberd places Moore in this literary (and broader social and cultural) context as the


5 There is an overlap of the canons of Irish and English literature in Kiberd’s treatment of the literature of modern (Irish) nation, as indeed there is with the work of Brian Moore. Moore, for instance, has an accepted, however minor, place amongst Irish, British and North American, especially Canadian, literary canons, as discussed earlier (pp. 5-9).


6 See also Deane, Strange Country, especially ‘Control of Types, Types of Control’, pp. 100-144; the focus on James Clarence Mangan (pp. 122-139) as “a participant in the discourse of degeneracy and the discourse of nationalism” has obvious relevance to Moore’s The Mangan Inheritance.

7 For a less politicised interpretation of Irish literature over the past twenty-five years, see D. Bolger, ed., The Picador Book of Contemporary Irish Literature. His extensive anthology, including Brian Moore, attempts to overturn the presentation of Ireland as “a society somehow obsessed with its relationship with a former colonial power” (see pp. xii-xiii).

writer as immigrant and exile. Kiberd rightly points out that Moore, having dealt in his early novels with his native land, went on to concentrate on novels with a strong cross-cultural emphasis. In so doing, Moore continues to stress an inherent and necessarily conflictual encounter which so often permeates writing originating from Ireland but it is a conflictual encounter which has been neglected in Moore's portrayal of Catholicism in his early Irish novels.

Thus, if, as Kiberd points out, cultural definition of Ireland was dependent upon unequal and often oppressive social, cultural as well as often tragic economic and political, relations with England - and by extension British Empire - as colonising neighbour, then one of the great distinguishing factors which highlight such distinctions, particularly post-Reformation, was the issue of religion. Protestantism, more properly Anglicanism becomes the religion of Empire (even defining Englishness), in contrast to Catholicism a contrast which was certainly one of the ways in which Irishness and Irish nationalism, Irish culture and society, were so easily able to be distinguished as 'other'. Post-Partition, though, in the interest of unity within the South, Yeats - himself of course a Protestant as well as political and literary figurehead in an independent Ireland - rightly sought a reasoned compromise over too harsh an identity of Irishness and Catholicity. Fulton too has pointed the difficulties of too easy an identification between Irish nationalism and Roman Catholicism. For both political and economic reasons, though, the centrality of religion surfaces (and indeed continues to re-surface) in the issue of

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10 Given the complexities of the literary and political taxonomies in these early comments, especially in the light of Moore's use of political, literary and indeed theological geographies in his fictions, I use the term *Irish fictions* to describe a physical designation of Moore's novels in terms of their primary settings. Here, as elsewhere, though, Moore's cross-cultural focus means that such a designation does not exclude references beyond the country of Ireland, say to relations between Ireland and America. I make also no literary distinction between the Republic in the South and the Six Counties in the North. Earlier critics thus commonly designated Moore's first fictions as 'Belfast novels' and, in my view, this fails to illustrate the whole Ireland breadth of these works.
This might be seen most harshly in the Famine years of the 1840s when the land could not sustain a largely rural and Catholic Irish population and when, through subsequent generations of Irish immigration, the land, the mythic Emerald Isle, is looked at with the nostalgic vision of a disinherit ed past. Kiberd highlights this well:

Ever since the Famine, emigration had perforce made internationalists of the Irish, for there were few families without a son or daughter or cousin writing letters home from some distant land.

Landscape, the place Ireland itself, becomes a (re-)imagined land for the exile and a metaphor for colonial dispute for those engaged in political struggle. The landscape of the island of Ireland as a whole becomes a thematic arena for the Irish writer, either as resident, or more frequently, as in Moore's case, exile. Especially for the period covered by Moore's early Irish novels, as highlighted by John Foster in his study of forces and themes in the fiction of Ulster, land, territory and a sense of place become preoccupations of the Irish writer. Naturally

See again, for instance, Foster, Forces and Themes in Ulster Fiction. By contrast, Bolger is worth noting:

The ridiculous phrase 'Anglo-Irish literature' has helped to reinforce [a] crippling notion of what constituted Irish literature, so that the literature of a young nation undergoing rapid change was still supposed to be dominated either exclusively by the Northern Troubles or by icons like the Catholic Church for an inbred peasant hunger for land ... (Bolger, The Picador Book of Contemporary Irish Fiction, pp. x-xi.)

Foster, Forces and Themes in Ulster Fiction; again, cf. note 13 above. Deane makes some useful refinements in terms of historical usage:

Speech has its norms and abnorms; so too has land. If we look at the ways in which the island of Ireland has been figured in literary and political discourse, we can see, from the Famine onward, a terminological shift that indicates sequences of attitude toward the object that is nominated as 'Ireland'. Three terms are of particular importance - territory, land, and soil. 'Land' is the middle term in the sense that it always occupies the civic space in the ontological hierarchy the three constitute. 'Territory' I will call the term that belongs to the conception of the state; 'land' belongs to the conception of Ireland as an economy, within the civic sphere; 'soil' is the term that belongs to a nationalist and communal conception of Ireland as a cultural reality that is not fully represented in the modes of articulation that are proper to the other two. (Deane, Strange Country, p. 70; also, pp. 70-78.)

Deane argues that "Soil is prior to land", that:

The romantic-nationalist conception of the soil, its identity with the nation, its ownership by the people, its priority over all the administrative and commercial systems that transform it into land, is the more powerful because it is formulated as a reality that is beyond the embrace of any concept. It does not belong to the world of ideas; it precedes the idea of the world as a politically and economically ordered system. (p. 77).

Arguably, Moore's 'landscapes of encounter' predominantly represent, especially through the author's portrayal of Catholicism, a preoccupation with the relations of religion and ideology to territory and land. The pre-conceptual notion of soil, as here understood by Deane, might arguably be seen to surface in Moore's 'Irish Revival' treatment of Ireland's elemental environment in the novella Catholics.
enough, within the familiar territory of conflictual political encounter represented by post-Partition Ulster society, the landscape has boundaries in which political allegiance is nowhere more clearly highlighted than through religious difference.\textsuperscript{17}

It is Edward Said, though, who presents most clearly a broader canvas into which these peculiarly Irish preoccupations fit. Thus, this encounter of physical and theological territory in Ireland, shared by Moore’s early Irish novels, can be placed within a wider, global political geography. As Said states in a critical passage from \textit{Culture and Imperialism}:

> It is difficult to connect these different realms, to show the involvements of culture with expanding empires, to make observations about art that preserve its unique endowments and at the same time map its affiliations, but, I submit, we must attempt this, and set art in the earthly, global context. Territory and possessions are at stake, geography and power. Everything about human history is rooted in the earth, which means we must think about habitation, but it has also meant that people have planned to have more territory and therefore must do something about its indigenous residents. At some very basic level, imperialism means thinking about, settling on, controlling land that you do not possess, that is distant, that is lived on and owned by others. For all kinds of reasons it attracts some people and involves others in untold misery. Yet it is generally true that literary historians who study the great sixteenth-century poet Edmund Spenser, for example, do not connect his bloodthirsty plans for Ireland, where he imagined a British army virtually exterminating the native inhabitants, with his poetic achievement or with the history of British rule over Ireland, which continues today.\textsuperscript{18}

\textit{Vis-a-vis} Kiberd and in respect of Moore’s fictional portrayal of Catholicism, the historical position of both land and culture in Ireland has clear relevance to Moore’s full range of ‘Irish’ novels but when we extend our analysis of Moore’s portrayal of Catholicism and its formation and definition by an increasingly diverse range of physical and cultural landscapes \textit{beyond} Ireland, we see that Said’s postcolonial analysis of culture and imperialism is also more widely applicable. In fact from Moore’s first novel to his last (\textit{The Magician’s Wife}) it is possible to identify a trace of such postcolonial reading beyond the conflictual encounters of Catholic-Protestant/ Nationalist-Unionist Belfast. By this reading, what Said usefully calls “a geographical inquiry into historical experience”\textsuperscript{19} is not simply in the relation between England and Ireland but a wider experience of colonial relations on a global scale, albeit often

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{19} Said, \textit{Culture and Imperialism}, p. 6.
\end{footnotesize}
highlighted through Irish migration to the Americas. This transcontinental perspective on colonialism is present even in Moore’s first novel, though in the margins of the narrative. Hearne’s would-be suitor, James Madden, for instance, somewhat ironically shares the cultural perception of the classically exotic other, most notably in conversation with the literal, colonial figure of Major Mahaffy-Hyde:

‘O, I’ve been in those waters,’ Major-Mahaffy-Hyde said, looking speculatively at his empty port glass. ‘Jamaica, Bermuda, Haiti, Cuba. Some wonderful spots. I remember in Haiti, it’s a nigger republic, you know, some of the white men there lived like kings. Great whacking big houses, villas, mansions, a dozen servants. Pretty little mulattoes. Hot-blooded little things, the tropics, the sun does it. Fondle a few round bottoms!’

This passage is of particular interest because it is a cultural environment to which Moore returns nearly thirty years later in a literally postcolonial Haiti; but also since the projected and derogatory national characteristics of a dominated indigenous population are similar to those given by the English to the Irish in Kiberd’s analysis. But we should note that in this encounter, the nominal Catholic James Madden may not challenge the colonial major’s perceptions of indigenous cultures outside England (Ireland here seems to be a colonial home for the major) but, contra O’Donoghue’s “monstrous Catholicism”, it is as much British imperialism as Catholicism which Moore portrays as oppressive.

In Ireland, then, traditional, historical claims of economic and political grievances have invariably tended to highlight both land and religion, often though not exclusively reflecting the

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21 Judith Hearne, p. 53. See H. Bhabha, ‘The Other Question: The Stereotype and Colonial Discourse’, on the sexualisation of difference in colonial relations, in Newton, TwentiethCentury Literary Criticism, pp. 293-301.
22 See the discussion of No Other Life, see below, pp. 206-219.
23 On comparing Major Mahaffy-Hyde’s comments with Kiberd’s, see above footnote 3 on p. 38.
24 More widely, though, Moore’s portrayal of Catholicism retains a great degree of ambivalence in relation to colonialism in particular. In my ‘Theology and Imperialism: Post-Colonial Ambivalence in Brian Moore’s Portrayal of Catholicism’ (conference paper, Third Galway Conference on Colonialism), I argue that Moore presents Catholicism as variously colonised (in Moore’s fictional portrayals of Catholicism in Ireland), coloniser (as an adjunct of French imperialism in Canada and Algeria - Black Robe and The Magician’s Wife respectively) and anti-colonial or postcolonial (as an ecclesiastical force against a range of ‘imperialisms’ in, for instance, eastern Europe and Haiti, as in The Colour of Blood and No Other Life, respectively).
grievance of a predominantly rural and Catholic Irish population. This tension between land and religion is heightened in a post-Partition Ireland, the landscape itself seeming to highlight cultural and especially religious difference. Thus Belfast historically represented an important industrial city of the British Empire. Its post-Partition decline as an industrial centre mirrored Britain’s post-Second World War decline as an imperial force. Further, Belfast’s increased isolation was marked as an industrial centre within rural Ulster and from the outside in relation to both an increasingly urbanised, post-colonial Britain and a rural and newly established neighbour in the form of the Irish Free State/Republic of Eire. Further, Belfast became a focal point of political (that is ideological) struggle which surfaced from the late 1960s in protest over civil rights and open armed conflict from the 1970s onwards in which both land and religion gave at least outward definition to the opposed communities.

That the sectarian-political violence that emerged in the North has at least an overtly religious dimension is well known, though it is a dimension, like the role of the South, that is not uncontested. Fulton’s opening comments to his authoritative *The Tragedy of Belief: Division, Politics and Religion* indicate how comment on ‘the Troubles’ has duly neglected both the wider perspective of Eire in the narrower conflict within Ulster together with a neglect of the role of religion:

Commentators on the Ulster conflict tend to locate its causes either within the boundaries of the Northern Ireland Statelet or across the waters in Britain. ‘The Troubles’ are seen to result from the unsatisfied, Northern nationalist lust for a united Ireland, the intransigence of the Northern loyalist majority, or the lingering imperialism of Britain. The role of the Republic of Ireland is barely considered. The Southern Irish

25 See, though, Brown on a post-War population shift from country to town in the Republic of Ireland as a result of disaffected emigration:

Independent Ireland had survived politically, but the years of the war had seen the stirrings of changes that in the following thirty years were to alter the shape of Irish society in quite radical ways. Predominant amongst these was the widespread rejection of rural life that in the immediate post-war period quickened into what almost accounted to an Irish exodus. So the Commission on Emigration reported in 1956 that a situation had arisen in which the province of Leinster was almost as populous as Munster and Connacht combined and noted that nine counties, most of them essentially rural counties of the north-west and along the western seaboard, accounted for three-quarters of the aggregate decline in the twenty counties in the state in which population reduction had occurred between 1946-51. The result of this post-war emigration was to shift the balance between the towns and the countryside... This change in the Irish social profile was due less to the growth of the towns and cities than to rural depopulation.

(Brown, *Ireland: A Social and Cultural History*, p. 211.)

26 See again, for instance, Foster, *Forces and Themes in Ulster Fiction*; also Brown, *Ireland: A Social and Cultural History.*

27 See again, Whyte, *Church and State in Modern Ireland* and *Interpreting Northern Ireland.*
State appears simply as an aggravant to the situation, a weakling on terrorist control, but rarely an integral part of 'the Troubles'.

A number of writers consider the role of religion to be equally unimportant. The use of the term catholics and protestants to describe the opposing groups is seen to be misleading and preference is given to the term nationalists and loyalists. In addition, that protestant fears of a catholic Ireland have any substance is easily dismissed as fruit of protestant misunderstanding and prejudice.\(^{28}\)

By this analysis, the supposedly static and insular Belfast Catholicism of Moore's critics to date can barely be that. In the wider context of Ireland and the residue of Empire, the closely defined boundaries of Catholicism, characteristic of the religion's post-Vatican I ecclesiology, is necessarily in conflict not simply with the forces of modernity, but here, in Ireland, with the conflictual relations between the immense forces of political and theological opposition: the landscape of Catholic Ulster is a landscape of tense encounter not stasis. Moore's early Irish narratives re-present the political and theological grandnarratives of Irish society in conflict, and, as we shall see, a society which has its place too, however minor, on the world stage of international struggles.

Thus Brian Moore's portrayal of Catholicism in three early Irish novels - *Judith Hearne*, *The Feast of Lupercal*, *The Emperor of Ice Cream* - can be read as part of a historical and political context which is mapped by the wider geographical and theological territory of the island of Ireland as a whole. It is a context in which the portrayal of Catholicism is integral to an encounter with the Protestant, Unionist and British 'other', as well as, on the margins of all these early Irish narratives, the cultural 'other' (especially but not exclusively American) beyond the British Isles themselves. Moore's treatment of the political situation in Northern Ireland is present from his first fictions and not something which simply becomes overt with novels like *The Doctor's Wife* and that receives no 'full-blown' treatment until *Lies of Silence*. Thus the consciousness of many of Moore's characters within these earlier novels, especially in their relations to Catholicism, strongly reflect recent events in Irish cultural and political history, even if they only engage in them relatively passively.

In short, since the political re-determination of geo-political boundaries was along religious (that is Catholic and Protestant) lines and historical allegiances marked by a recurrent sectarianism on all sides, the new physical map provided clear, post-Partition delineations of theological as well as geographical territory. After his seminal *Church and State in Northern*

Ireland, one of the clearest statements of the complexities of this post-Partition Ireland is to be found in Whyte’s insightful *Interpreting Northern Ireland*. His broad-based and multi-disciplinary review of writing and research on Northern Ireland provides a wide-ranging overview of the situation. Whyte’s own summary of his early chapters on the religious, economic, political and psychological aspects in that order (chapters 1-4, respectively) thus presents a statement of the various historical interactions of religion, politics and land in the context of this divided community.29 Whyte’s highly simplified but useful shorthand version of the latter complexities sets forth an adequate range of boundaries and encounters:

1. Britain v. Ireland
2. Southern Ireland v. Northern Ireland
3. Capitalist v. worker
4. Protestant v. Catholic within Northern Ireland30

Allowing for inevitable exceptions, Whyte adopts the following labels to highlight extant division:

1. traditional nationalist
2. traditional unionist
3. Marxist
4. two-community, or internal conflict31

Subsequent ‘settlements’ (especially subsequent to the ‘Good Friday Agreement’ of 1998) and the decline of Marxism as ideology in a post-Cold War world naturally modify the precise, present currency of Whyte’s range of boundary encounters. Nevertheless, Moore’s Irish novels, from *Judith Hearne* through *The Doctor’s Wife* to *Lies of Silence* cover a period in which Whyte’s reading of Northern Ireland has a direct historical relevance.

For Catholics in Belfast the historical situation, however we apply Whyte’s possible oppositions, has meant both a religious and political marginalisation which has heightened encounter with the religious or political other.32 Protagonists from Moore’s early Irish novels, our current concern, including Judith Hearne, Diarmuid Devine and Gavin Burke, are thus

32 Whyte has a version of this and calls it a ‘Double-Minority Model’; see Whyte, *Interpreting Northern Ireland*, pp. 100-101.
themselves marginal to the degree that their identities are in contrast to a dominating political ideology whose ecclesiastical allegiances are very different from and even threatening to their own, and as a result heightens their encounter with such difference. In the wider body of a universal Church (not simply the Church in Ireland), they are yet further marginalised by their various (and not always so pathetic) refusals to adhere to (or reach difficult accommodations with) the social, moral and theological norms of a pre-Vatican II Catholicism. It is the latter and much broader (social, political and economic) marginalisation of these characters together with the narrower 'theological' marginalisation in Protestant Ulster which many commentators have neglected (or at least failed to take seriously) in Moore's earlier (as well as later) works set in Ireland.

In Moore's early Irish novels, then, integral to portrayal of Catholicism in Ulster are the complexities of both the physical and socio-cultural landscape in which the dual factors of religion and land have, more widely, been such powerful and formative influences on Irish history and literature. In all respects, it is the characters' catholicism which heightens their encounter within the politically and religiously divided personal and social landscape of mid-twentieth century Belfast. The fictional loss of Catholic identity in Moore's early Irish novels invariably leads to alienation, where even the cultural roots of one's own personal identity become an encounter with the other. In the terms of one critic's socio-literary analysis, this alienation from the 'primitive' and pre-modern community of Irish Catholicism leads in turn to a ritual reintegration within the community.33 We can think, for instance, of Judith Hearne and Diarmuid Devine. For characters such as Gavin Burke, though, the alienation from catholicism becomes a recognition of the fiction of belief itself and the search for an aesthetic alternative. Moore's early Irish novels hold in tension, then, the pre-Vatican II Catholic encounter with the cultural other, but it is a tension in which narrative itself presents possibilities for the dismantling of the grandnarrative of Catholic belief. If Moore's portrayal of pre-Vatican II Catholicism is in part a critique of that tradition, this critique is most strongly felt in the narrative form itself: the narrative re-presentation of Catholicism highlights the possibility of the grandnarrative of Catholic tradition being of no greater status than the 'little narratives' of fiction.

33 Foster, *Forces and Themes in Ulster Fiction.*
Judith Hearne (1955)

When *Judith Hearne* was published in 1955 there was no sense in either theological or more broadly social and cultural terms that the self-definition of Catholicism, fundamentally the place of the Catholic Church in the modern world, was about to change. Indeed, the Church’s place in the pre-Vatican II world was one in which it had set itself, doctrinally and pastorally, as diametrically opposed to change. In particular, in the ultra-authoritarian nineteenth century the definition of papal infallibility together with consequent stances against modernity, including political change, was without doubt the Church’s means of exerting theological power in the face of inevitably declining political influence. The rise of science in the nineteenth century too must also be seen as presenting a considerable weakening of the Church’s authority as a source of knowledge, already undermined by developments in European thinking which flowered in the Enlightenment and which subsequently brought considerable secularisation to European society at large. In this context, Vatican I led the Church into an ecclesiological and theological ghetto in which separation from the modern world actually encouraged conflict with it. By defining itself against modernity, the Church facilitated increasingly direct and confrontational encounter with the forces it sought to reject.

Such a Catholic world is largely portrayed by Brian Moore’s first novel set in an environment of 1950s Belfast where the Church retains a degree of control. This supports too Foster’s distinction between “primitive” and “existential” outsider. Foster’s analysis draws upon van Gennep’s discussion of rites of passage and is dependent upon a distinction between two forms of society, those (pre-modern) societies which are structured by rigid rituals and those

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36 See A. van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1977), a classic 1909 anthropological study. The term primitive is rarely if ever used in current anthropological writings. In terms of his application of anthropological theory, Foster’s work was published in 1974 and overlapped with the developing work of Victor Turner, the anthropologist who has done most to develop van Gennep’s work, especially in arguably his defining text, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974). Turner’s work points to continuities rather than discontinuities between traditional, rural and modern, urban societies. In particular, Turner develops the notion that modern industrialised societies have simply transformed the human need for ritual order into different forms. See, for instance, V. Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre: the Human Seriousness of Play* (New York: Performing Arts Journal, 1982).
societies in which ritual control and order has largely diminished:

Normally the individual is well integrated in a heavily ritualised, rural and primitive society. If he is not, or he is in conflict with the community ... there are ritual methods of exclusion with which he is familiar; exclusion in such society does not usually produce anomie. The situation is very different in modern urban society which is de-ritualised and dehumanised. In such a society the ritual methods of aiding the individual in his transition have diminished but his ritual needs have not.37

According to this analysis, Judith Heame, as a member of a pre-modern community (by her Church's own self-definition38) still has the social and cultural roots of her exclusion to hand, they themselves define her isolation from that community:

... almost all Moore's outsiders have at some stage to be discussed in terms of their indigenous or transplanted Irishness. Only when Irishness is dimly rather than vividly presented may we begin to claim that Moore's primitive outsider has become the existential outsider, that modern fictional hero whose alienation, springing from no readily accessible or comprehensible social reality, carries the burden of symbolising our own alienation.39

By contrast, there are those fictional characters who, alienated too from modernity, epitomise the literary and existential outsider and lack any such defining social, cultural or especially moral orientation.40

In Ireland, Foster identifies community and Church as providing Hearne's ritual definition.41

38 This is an important if incidental result of the Church's post-Vatican I stance against 'Modernism'.
39 Foster, Forces and Themes in Ulster Fiction, p. 155.
40 Camus's outsider, Mersault, provides a defining example. Cf. Said's deconstruction, 'Camus and the French Imperial Experience', Culture and Imperialism, pp. 204-224.
41 Thus we might usefully cite Fulton, The Tragedy of Belief, on the place of religion and law in the Republic of Ireland:
   One of the key institutions which embodies the values of dominant alliances in states is the institution of law. It is important particularly because it draws together both coercion and hegemony in the state. In fact, in the Republic of Ireland, Catholicism is doubly important. Not only does it form a part of the dominant beliefs of catholic nationalists, but their state form gives catholic social teaching coercive and hegemonic support. Catholicism is present in everyday life through state law, as well as through authoritative statements by clergy and through the national-popular consciousness. (p. 133).
   Such hegemony is a principle underlying the founding of the Irish Constitution in 1937, as Fulton goes on to comment. It is undoubtedly an important one when examining this close correspondence between Church and the wider social fabric of the community life. The anti-abortion campaigns of the early 1980s are cited as further evidence, and one might add the debates up to and including the 1990s on divorce. Recent scandals within the Catholic Church in Ireland, often involving priests and bishops, have however weakened such Church-State hegemony. As a consequence the link between Catholic Church and the wider Irish community is certainly one which has more historical than contemporary import.
Seeing Hearne's crisis as a preeminently social matter, and therefore one amenable to sociological analysis, her predicament is one of ritual exclusion and quite literally (given the sacrilegious tabernacle incident) ritual disintegration. While this analysis provides useful sociological insight into the ritual of inclusion and exclusion and the creative application of van Gennep's analysis of ritual to Belfast society and fiction, Foster's downplaying of the theological importance of Hearne's predicament inevitably leads to an over simplification both of his applied sociological reading from van Gennep's *Rites of Passage* and the metaphysical impact of Hearne's social and particular ritual exclusion. Thus, while rightly identifying the close correspondence between community and Church in his analysis, the social dimension is overplayed at the expense of the theological.42 The theological and metaphysical (a reductionist might claim psychological43) aspects of Hearne's collapsing worldview are thus reduced to a failure to play a proper, that is integrated, role within her community.

If comparisons between Moore and Joyce44 have any credence we might compare Father Quigley's sermon in *Judith Hearne* with the Jesuit retreat sermon in Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. In both instances, the ecclesiastical hold of the priest in both literary-Irish cultures, itself highlighting a pre-Vatican II uniformity, derives only in part from threats, implied or otherwise, of social exclusion, and to a much greater degree upon the far greater threat of 'metaphysical exclusion'; excommunicatory force within the Church lends its greatest fear not from merely being set outside the boundaries of a human community but, especially pre-Vatican II, from the all too real expectation of eternal damnation, that is, an altogether more frightening, trans-historical, soteriological prospect. The commonplace pre-Vatican II notion that 'There is no salvation outside the Church' would not be theologically supportable post-Vatican II.45 In Hearne's world, though, the implications of social exclusion are as nothing to the threat of the believer's major transcendental fears. As Flood accurately suggests in relation

42 Cf.: Fulton, *The Tragedy of Belief*; Whyte, *Church and State in Modern Ireland*; Whyte, *Interpreting Northern Ireland*.
43 We see this throughout Flood, *Brian Moore*.
to Quigley’s sermon, “Essentially the parishioners are guilty of preferring the pleasures of time and the body to the certainties of eternity”. In mirroring the Irish Catholic world of Belfast in the 1950s, it is, in addition to the narrower social order, this transcendental context or wider metaphysical environment in which the pitiable Judith Hearne is made to struggle.

Thus, in the pre-Vatican II Catholic world of the Church represented by Moore in *Judith Hearne* the power of hierarchy is sustained not simply by social control since this, as we shall see, is shown to be waning. In a world in which modernity, whether the Church likes it or not, impinges on the lives of Belfast’s late-imperial subjects, the Catholic hierarchy retains its trump, theological card: the power of salvation, to loose the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Indeed, as this following passage from Father Quigley’s sermon indicates the time with which he lambasts and threatens his parishioners is not human time but God’s time, a sharp contrast between immanent and transcendent orders:

‘... speaking of time, your time will come before the judgment seat of Heaven. Don’t worry about that. And then it won’t matter a brass farthing whether you were a dandy at the football pools, whether you know every film star by name from Charlie Chaplin to Donald Duck, whether you can reel off the name of every dog that ever won a race at Dunmore or Celtic park.

*There’ll be no time for that. No time at all ...*’

But the Catholic world represented here is one in which the Catholic Church, by admission of one of its clergy, is losing out in earthly time.

‘Plenty of money! Plenty of time! Plenty of time! Yes, the people of this parish have both of these things. Time and money. But they don’t have it for their church. They don’t even have an hour of a Sunday to get down on their bended knees before Our Blessed Lord and ask for forgiveness for the rotten things they did during the week. They’ve got time for sin, time for naked dancing girls in the cinema, time to get drunk, time to fill the publicans’ pockets and drink the pubs dry, time to run half-way across


47 *ibid.*, p. 73. The images of eternity in the Jesuit retreat sermon in Joyce’s *The Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977), can be paralleled here. I cite the following extract from Father Arnall’s sermon by way of illustration but specifically because of the sense it presents of hell as being a separation from ‘country’, a fear matched by Hearne’s link between social and metaphysical isolation at the end of Moore’s novel:

Consider finally that the torment of this infernal prison is increased by the company of the damned themselves. Evil company on earth is so noxious that even the plants, as if by instinct, withdraw from the company of whatsoever is deadly or hurtful to them. In hell all laws are overturned: there is no thought of family or country, of ties, of relationship. The damned howl and scream at one another, their torture and their rage intensified by the presence of beings tortured and raging like themselves. All sense of humanity is forgotten. The yells of the suffering sinners fill the remotest corners of the vast abyss. The mouths of the damned are full of blasphemies against God and of hatred for their fellow sufferers and of curses against those souls which were their accomplices in sin.

(pp.112-113.)
the town and stand in the rain watching a bunch of dogs race around a track, time to see the football matches, time to spend hours making up their football pool, time to spend in beauty parlours, time to go to foreign dances instead of ceilidhes [sic], time to dance the tango and the foxtrot and the jitterbugging, time to read trashy books and indecent magazines, time to do any blessed thing you could could care to mention. Except one.

'They - don't - have - time - for - God.'48

But both these extracts from Quigley's sermons present a different view of the Catholic world which has predominated in the criticism directed at Moore's 'Belfast' novels, a view which needs to be redrawn.

On first account, then, this is the "overworked Irish soil" which the novelist John Banville sees addressed by so many Irish writers,49 part of this picture being the dreary life of the Irish, and here more narrowly Belfast, Catholic. O'Donoghue expectedly talks of "beleaguered" and later "monstrous Catholicism".50 Sullivan writes of the "insular world" of Belfast51 with the notion of a distinctive brand of Irish puritanism suffusing social life in Northern Ireland. This is a common critical perspective which, as if to mirror this "overworked" literary Irish soil likewise permeates critical discussion of these early novels.52 In terms of Moore's early Irish novels, of course, such a landscape had been painted as earlier criticism still with Dahlie's discussion of the grim, "soulless and sterile" city of Belfast.53 Of the literature of the Six Counties, Cronin commented on Ulster's fictions confirming a dreary realism which failed to allow the reader any transcendence from the enervating life of the province.54 So pervasive is this view that it is clearly an easy critical inheritance to accept and commentators on Moore, such as O'Donoghue and Sullivan, seem to have done so wholesale.

Even in Longley's review of the writer and Belfast some decades later, and taking the metaphor

48 ibid., p. 72-73.
49 For a discussion of this, and Banville's explicit neglect of Moore within the considerations of the modern Irish novel, see Sullivan, Brian Moore, pp. 8-9.
50 O'Donoghue, Brian Moore, pp. 3; 14 ff.
51 Sullivan, Faithful Fictions, pp. 11 ff.
52 Sullivan, Faithful Fictions, pp. 8-9.
Belfast as "barbarous nook", Longley comes to accept that Hearne (as well as Devine) speaks for the city of Belfast as a whole. This is, to Longley, a city where even street names seem to signify an all-pervading, unavoidable spiritual domination of the physical environment, its dismal meteorology matching its grim physical appearance and its equally depressing sectarian theologies and ideologies. Longley further suggests that the city represents a very specific "soul landscape". This may be the case, and the comparison between physical and spiritual environment is valid, but whether this "soul landscape" wholly fits the critical images of the city in literary criticism of Moore is another matter.

Thus one aspect largely neglected by critics of Moore is the late-colonial and post-Partition focus in this early novel which sets the religious dimension of Belfast's catholicity in political context. In Moore's chapter of open allusion to Joyce's stream of consciousness structured in a manner openly reminiscent of Ulysses, it is Lenehan, one of Mrs Rice's less-well drawn lodgers, who provides the sharpest (some might argue sectarian) colonial critique of Belfast Catholics in religious and political terms: "Irish and Catholic, I tell you most of the Catholics in this town are bloody little West Britons and, if they're not that, the pictures have turned them into comic cut imitations of Yanks." If, as Kib anti argues, the Irish have often been historically re-presented as a pejorative other to English cultural identity, it is the ascendancy of America's cultural imperialism which Lenehan clearly also has in mind, though this contrasts with the commonly held support of many Irish Americans (in ideological if not in an active political sense) against the imperialism of Britain in Ireland. Lenehan represents, then, the most complete model of resistance to British political and American cultural imperialism. As Lenehan represents the most complete picture in the novel of Irish cultural pride and political resistance, it is a position Madden, thirty years in the States, falling between status as American and now returned Irish exile, who disabuses Lenehan of American political interest in the struggles of either Irish culture or nationalism:

"We get all types of screwballs in New York. Now, takes these guys [the minute men earlier referred to], they're just like the people in Belfast. No matter what the argument is, they always drag Ireland in. Always handing out leaflets against the British. Why,

55 Longley, The Living Stream, p.103.
56 Longley, The Living Stream, p.103.
57 Longley, The Living Stream, p.104.
58 Longley, The Living Stream, p.103.
59 ibid., p. 45.
nobody in New York, or anywhere else, gives a ghaddam ..., what happens to the Six Counties.'

Lenehan's retort to Madden of course equally well conceptualises the politico-religious divide, 'And you call yourself an Irishman. An Orangeman, more likely.'

The setting of the American Bible film epic, *Samson and Delilah*, which Madden and Hearne watch on their fourth date presents another opportunity for Madden to continue with his celebration of all things American: "And the night he took her to dinner, he spoke of America, its wealth, its hugeness, its superiority to Ireland in all things material". Although in the immortal lines of the novel's forgotten humour "Mr Madden ate jujubes and thought of California", the film represents a cinematic entry of America directly into the world of Belfast. If our re-reading of Father Quigley's sermon gives insight into the a morally freer world than represented to date by Moore's critical inheritance, the cinematic *Samson and Delilah* represents a world beyond the city itself. If America was economic hope of the Irish immigrant since the Famine, with Madden part of a century and more of such moves, cinema extends beyond the enclosure of Belfast's narrower sectarian encounters outside the building of the cinema. The enclosure of the cinema withdraws the reader and the viewer of the film from the gritty realism outside but to another form of enclosure, or security. But the film points to a wider transformation, not simply an escapist few moments in the cinema, but one which is inherently, and explicitly, theological. Again, as with Quigley, the power of the Church rests not in its social control, waning anyway in a post-Enlightenment, industrialised Europe, but in its power to sustain a broader vision of apparent social limitation. Thus America, a land of supposed secularity, reworks the grandnarrative of Christian-Jewish salvation history through cinematography and the world of Israelite-Philistine conflict from millennia past appears in Belfast. The film medium might be seen as accentuating the illusoriness, the unreality of the grand-narrative or its persistent accessibility amidst the industrial landscape of Belfast society. Regardless, for the duration of the film (either imaginative escape from everyday Belfast reality or confirmation of a wider held set of religious beliefs), there is momentary, transcendental relief from the limits of the city.

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60 ibid., p. 45.
61 ibid., p. 45.
62 ibid., p. 99.
The conclusion of the film, though, is definitive, and the encounter of shifts from the transcendent to the temporal: “The End, coming right at you, THE END”. While the emphasised, emboldened words (THE END) imply an eschatology as much as a more limited conclusion to the Bible epic, which could be seen as the ending of the grandnarrative itself, it is here (at this ending) that the political and essentially sectarian realities strike immediately in the audiences’ responses to the world of the ‘news’. With Madden, his American allegiance is now replaced by a more heartfelt Irish nationalism which would align him to Lenehan. Hearne, at the centre of the novel as the supposed victim of circumstances out of her control, demonstrates here too the strength of her political consciousness. The end of the film is then Moore’s opportunity to demonstrate their small statement of political resistance:

The items. First: The Queen. A few claps. More. The house applauding, louder and louder. Miss Hearne and Mr Madden sat with their hands in their laps. No handclaps for her, a foreign queen. Let them give back the Six Counties and then we’ll clap. Irish people, a disgrace, applauding like that. But Protestants, what can you expect, Scots Protestants, black-hearted all.

For all its apparent post-War, economic difficulties and understandable post-Partition, political insularity - only two to three decades after Civil War - Belfast is not entirely true to the bleak inheritance portrayed with such critical ease by so many commentators.

Closer inspection of both Father Quigley’s sermon and the cinema scene (as medium for sacred and profane worlds) present then, in summary, the Catholic Belfast world as a society which - for all the Church’s evident displeasure - enjoys its leisurely, if limited, transcendence from what may well be the harsher aspects of the city’s social realities. While Catholicism retains its hold over the lay populace, the hegemony of the Church’s hierarchy (its authoritarian nature in Vatican I officially defining its ecclesiology) is maintained through a transcendent rather than social authority. Ecclesiastical influence in Moore’s Belfast, if Quigley’s well-defined socio-cultural picture is to be believed, to be clearly on the wane in the decade before Vatican II. Indeed, the universal Church’s recognition of this may have itself facilitated John XXIII’s announcement of the Council in the late 1950s and was no doubt on the minds of the assembled magisterium when Vatican II finally opened in 1962.

Where the power of the Church is felt most acutely here is evidently on its margins and if there

63 *ibid.*, p.98.
64 *ibid.*, pp. 98-99.
was ever a figure to represent the most sorrowful literary embodiment of such margins, it is Judith Hearne. In the male-dominated world of the 1950s Catholic Church, a domination retained today, it is perhaps not unexpected that the social and transcendental marginalisation of the weakest personalities amongst its flock should be a woman; but it would be a misconception to suggest that even in the Catholic world of Judith Hearne that her situation would be anything more than an exception (not the rule or norm) in a changing social world which even Father Quigley accepts as a contemporary Belfast reality.

Indeed, the increasingly residual power of the Church is shown if one returns to the most natural of comparisons with the classic Jesuit sermon in Joyce’s Portrait; one could imagine, for instance, the latter sermon being peppered with instances of punishment for personal (and so often sexual) sin but perhaps not the indirectly humorous portrait of a society taking almost great delight in “sinning” together in its innocent pursuit of undoubtedly well deserved leisure. The Church’s most authoritarian, ecclesiological stance in Vatican I was at least in part a defensive measure against the political forces of the modern world together with post-Enlightenment liberal culture, rational philosophy and a science no longer dependent for epistemological reference upon God. So too, in the 1950s world of Belfast, Father Quigley, despite the congregation marking sound church attendance, is rapidly becoming an increasingly less influential figure. By extension Quigley marks too a fictional and historical decline in the Church in the decade immediately prior to Vatican II. Thus Hearne’s pleas to the priesthood are ignored (her confessions to Quigley are heard with disinterest and disdain) or openly rejected (consider her retributive but rebuffed assault on the tabernacle). Quigley, as representative of Catholic hierarchy, thereby dismisses the devout - but marginal and demanding - Hearne, concentrating his much needed energies on his Sunday congregation; addressing the latter as he does, Father Quigley demonstrates his concerns for that majority whose dependency on the Church is increasingly less certain.

Unlike those simply formally in attendance Hearne is, by contrast, in the deepest metaphysical

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65 Catholic minority status in Belfast may have assisted in the weakening of the social control of the Church. As Fulton points out, by contrast in the post-Constitution (1937) Republic, the definition of the State through its catholicity assisted in establishing a Church-State Catholic hegemony. Brown, A Social and Cultural History of Ireland is useful here, but in terms of cultural control, see Carlson, Banned in Ireland: Censorship and the Irish Writer. In Judith Hearne, see the reference to the Index on p. 170.
sense, a woman struggling with theological realities - even if her pleas for a sign are unanswered and, even if, like so many of Moore’s characters, it is the absence rather than the presence of God which is most forcefully felt. Judith Hearne for all her doubt is a devoted Catholic. More than simply formal or social, Hearne’s piety is only in part accountable in terms of her terrible loneliness from which she does seek consolation; for example, by attending Sunday Mass. Her metaphysical alienation is all the more powerful because of the acuteness of her sense of theological and not simply social loss. At the end of the novel, the circularity represented by the signs which “which make things home” represent both disappointed social expectation (the photograph of her Aunt D’Arcy) and an absence of soteriological hope (the icon-like Sacred Heart). Hearne’s struggle to find meaning in the midst of all her desperation thus reaches a near mythical struggle within the disappointments of everyday reality - heightened by the sense of the pervading emptiness of these signs of the social and the sacred (Aunt D’Arcy and the Sacred Heart).

A near-sacrificial victim, it is Judith Hearne who shows the greatest ethical stance in the novel through the care of her sick, latterly deranged and manipulative Aunt D’Arcy. For Hearne, now in her early-forties and at the threshold of middle age, this concern means she may have quite literally given her life for another. From 1931 to 1947, this self-sacrifice, pitiable though it is, has been the source of Hearne’s alcoholism and impecunious financial condition. Her own exclusion from the social order is, as a result, comprehensive: apart from alcohol she doesn’t partake of the social scene described by Father Quigley; a stereotypical but failed Irish American James Madden increasingly represents the decline of hope in finding a likely suitor; her visits to the genteel world of the O’ Neills are greeted with social discomfort by these adult ‘friends’ and mocking fun by the younger generation of Una, Kathy and the other children. It seems that even her fairly low socio-economic rung on Belfast’s (in this instance admittedly grim) socio-cultural ladder is in jeopardy.

Judith Hearne is thus spiritually marginalised by her Catholic faith in a Protestant Ulster and physically ghettoised by her meagre, impecunious ‘digs’ existence; but, while far from ideal, it is the Church that functions in the end as that safety-net. Alienated from any meaningful place in the social order, it is the Church which finally presents her major source of residual

66 This is a view early shared by M. Prosky, ‘The Crisis of Identity in the Novels of Brian Moore’, Eire-Ireland, volume 6 (Fall 1971), p.109; pp. 106-118.
inclusion, though the nuns that care for her at the home in Earnscliffe are contrasted unfavourably with the Sacred Heart congregation she remembers from school, ("the Sisters of Mercy have no charity and the Sisters of Charity have no mercy"67). The Sacred Heart of Jesus, easily despised icon of pre-Vatican II Catholic piety, likewise provides for a theological security: the image of the Sacred Heart is used by Moore not only to secure a circularity between the beginning and the end of the book but - in the midst of her failed alcoholic struggle against the two reserve bottles of whiskey - it is to the Sacred Heart that Judy in both sorrow and remorse turns in the middle of the novel. Here, with both Aunt D’Arcy's face and that of Christ's symbolically turned away (as Hearne has turned from them), their presence remains powerful, almost mystical in their unseen, emotional intensity. Forgetful now in her early morning binge on the second bottle, it is the image of Christ, face still turned away, which remains with Judy in her alienation. Judy’s room becomes in the subsequent blackout both the sign of her social isolation and her actual transcendence: the world, for Judy, had indeed stopped, the world of her Aunt D’Arcy and all the failing that that brought upon her, is literally behind her. Time, one of the novel’s major and ever-recurring motifs, has been - however artificially, temporarily and unsatisfactorily - transcended.

If Hearne’s isolation is compounded by her alcoholism and her failings in love with the self-seeking James Madden (American and here false hope of both Irish immigration and an ageing woman), Hearne is a certainly a victim of exclusion; still, her desire for meaningful social and religious inclusion within the world of Belfast distinguishes her greatly not only from the archetypal (certainly European) literature of the outsider of the period, but to a large extent from the Irish literature of cultural resistance which both preceded and inspired Moore, particularly Joyce.68 Indeed, Foster's distinction between the "primitive" and "existential" outsider becomes ever more pertinent when, in the final chapter of the novel, Judith Hearne, in a spiralling decline (long commented on by critics) - hospitalised, in the care of said Catholic nuns, ministered to by Father Quigley and close to despair - seeks a desperate renewal of faith in the words, "I do not believe, O Lord, help my unbelief".69 Hearne’s is not simply a quest for social acceptance but for a meaningful place in a transcendental order. It is a world as

67 ibid., p. 217.
68 See above, pp. 48-50.
69 ibid., p. 252.

(58)
defined by theology as by the social geography of Belfast. Realising, then, that her formal, if passionless, attachment to religious faith is the one thing that provides some cultural anchor in her rootless life, Hearne ponders the existential difference that belief might make:

If you do not believe, then how many things would seem different. Everything: lives, hopes, devotions, thoughts. If you do not believe, you are alone. But I was of Ireland, among my people, a member of my faith. Now I have no - and if no faith, then no people ...70

The appearance of the Sacred Heart alongside Aunt D’Arcy, as respective theological and socio-cultural anchors, state as much. But, though Hearne’s personal narrative is just one story in 1950s Belfast, it provides, nevertheless, an insight into the grandnarratives of political and religious life of the time, both North and South of the disputed border.

**The Feast of Lupercal (1958)**

Set amidst a dreary urban geography, and meteorology to match (drizzle, rain and fog predominate71), *The Feast of Lupercal* represents a Belfast in which the vagaries of plot and character are clearly intended to deride the city’s narrow provincialism; a provincialism supposedly most vividly highlighted by the social and cultural blinkers of the Catholic clergy and its chief instrument of enculturation, schooling.72 The main body of extant criticism holds no surprises. What is confirmed is a clear–collective and unchallenged–trend in the criticism of Moore’s early Irish novels. Their very specifically defined Belfast city landscape is integral to the representation of a morally repressive Catholicism. We can supplement, though, the accepted critical picture of these novels by showing how the mechanisms of social control exerted by the Church derive largely from its access to a transcendental order. In fact, in all Moore’s novels this is a key factor: beyond the limited confines of a particular social and cultural landscape is a more metaphysical geography which derives in large part from a

70 ibid., p. 252.
71 Rain in Belfast is highlighted as one grim motif amongst many by Longley, *The Living Stream*, p. 88.
72 Adding to previous considerations of Catholicism and the law in the Irish Republic, Fulton comments that “a second area where political religion has hegemonic power and structures the popular consciousness throughout Ireland is in the shaping and running of its institutions of education, particularly primary and secondary schools”. His chapter on ‘Schooling on Political Religion’ “outlines the way in which the schooling systems were shaped from the early nineteenth century by a combination of church and state politics, developing in both the North and the South as expressions of catholic nationalism and protestant loyalism.” (Fulton, *The Tragedy of Belief*, p. 171).
Catholic theological perspective. Moore’s writing here, though, as ever, re-presents the often harsh lived social realities of this theology; place therefore remains crucial to the determination of theological form in socio-cultural and, of course, literary context.

The transcendental order of the Catholic Church is, however, much less evident in *The Feast of Lupercal*. “Diarmuid Devine, BA (Junior and Senior English)” is a more ‘rebellious’ (schoolmaster) protagonist who fares, in terms of ultimate autonomy, only slightly better against the trinity of social forces which Sullivan has identified in this same sequence of novels as ‘Home, School and Church’. Interestingly, Hearne was a ‘tutor’ too, of sorts, but for private tuition she is dependent upon the whims of individual families. This contrasts with Devine’s more mainstream role as teacher within a Catholic college and distinguishes the nature of their marginality when they confront the boundaries of acceptability. When the personal scorn of friends and eventual professional opprobrium of colleagues (inevitably) descend upon Devine for engaging in an impotent liaison with, of all people, a Protestant woman, the early impressions of Catholic Belfast presented through the figure of Judith Hearne are sufficiently confirmed. This time this happens through a male protagonist - Catholic repression knowing no gender boundaries. When Devine accepts the ‘generous’ mercy of his principal, the said forces of conformity have returned another to their fold. A repressive Catholic Church is shown to be at pains to keep the morally weak and wayward such as Judith Hearne or Diarmuid Devine in line.

The model of a strongly authoritarian, Vatican I Catholicism remains in place in this Belfast. Still, the critical picture remains incomplete. The manner in which such theological perspective impinges upon the particular social and cultural - and of course political - landscape of Belfast needs to be more fully examined. In *The Feast of Lupercal*, as with Moore’s other early Irish novels, justice needs to be done to the facts of Irish - political and religious - history. In particular, attention needs to be paid to the intense difficulties, in a post-Partition Ireland, of being a member of the minority Catholic community in Protestant dominated Ulster. If Ulster Catholicism seems rigidly defined and sectarian, and Protestantism appears to be the cultural and especially religious other, then greater critical account needs to be taken of the political and particularly geo-political reasons for this. This notion of Catholic/ Protestant otherness is

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73 Sullivan and Flood both recognised the key importance of these; see also Foster, *Forces and Themes in Ulster’s Fiction*, p. 71.
something which comes across strongly in *The Feast of Lupercal* (sexualized and exoticized through Una Devine). This especially focuses the reader on the centrality of geography, particularly a political and religious geography, to the definition of culture - and both the fiction and theology here contribute to the definition of such a complex landscape.

In *The Feast of Lupercal*, southern Ireland here then represents a sort of cultural unconscious to the North, a matter dealt with lightly yet effectively by Moore’s story of thwarted love. Una Clarke is thus a Protestant but a Dublin Protestant (“pagan Protestantism”74), her exotic otherness (“Una Clarke was a stranger”75) is highlighted by her minority status amidst a Catholic majority (inverse to that in Belfast) but throws into grim relief the conflictual relations between Protestant and Catholic in the North:

> For in Mr Devine’s world, protestants were the hostile Establishment, leaders with Scots and English names, hard blunt businessmen who asked what school you went to and, on hearing your answer, refused the job. He feared them as Spanish protestant might fear cardinal: their power was great, their intolerance absolute. To them Catholics were a hated minority, a minority who threatened their rule.76

This conflict, an encounter not simply of ideology but religious difference, accentuated by the physical border between North and South, is marked too when Una and Diarmuid are on an early theatre date. When Una meets a fellow native of Dublin and fellow Protestant while Devine is buying drinks at the bar, the latter’s religious and sectarian suspicions, as well as sexual insecurities, surface. Ronnie Irwin had been to (the predominantly Protestant) Trinity but left without a degree - yet became an outgoing, personal and clearly a financial success. Devine, by contrast, had completed his degree, but at the (largely Catholic) National University. Yet, while not a total failure, Devine’s suburban Belfast digs and school teaching career can hardly be said to match the high (even if fantasy-led) expectations of a one time Baudelairian rebel as he had felt himself to have been at university.77

Here life histories are interwoven with indicators of theological as well as political and wider cultural difference in a series of cross-border exchanges: Ronnie Irwin and Una Clarke are in Belfast temporarily, Diarmuid Devine had ‘escaped’ only briefly to Dublin before returning to

74 ibid., p. 32.
75 ibid., p. 32.
76 ibid., p. 32.
77 ibid., p. 48-51.
his native Belfast. Here the contrasting freedoms of the minority Protestants in Dublin against
the Catholic minority in Belfast does seem to suggest that repression in Ulster is largely the
province of the Catholic community. It suggests too that it is largely self-imposed. Moore
demonstrates this most clearly by contrasting Catholicism with the aesthetic freedom which is
posed as a key alternative. Such freedom is often perceived as the province too of Protestants
(we will see in The Feast of Lupercal but also in The Emperor of Ice-Cream). Thus, without
the same degree of central, authoritarian control which characterised Vatican I Catholicism,
Protestantism's innate individualism undoubtedly allowed for greater moral and aesthetic
freedom. Still, the portrayal of Catholicism in Moore’s Belfast needs to take into account
both the authoritarian nature of a post-Vatican I Church as well as minority political and
religious status in Ulster. By appropriate contrast, in the post-Partition Irish Free State,
Protestantism actually proved far less able to resist Catholic/ Nationalist hegemony than
minority Northern Catholics - Protestant minority status in the South, even after the 1937 Irish
Constitution and the formation of the Republic, had few benefits.

It is thus easy to overplay the wholesale suggestion of moral repressiveness of Catholicism in
Belfast in Moore’s early Irish novels (even Father Quigley is partly indicative of this). Devine
(like Hearne) can be seen as an exception to rather than the rule of Belfast Catholic life. Nowhere is the exaggerated critical application of the life of sad individuals to a wider Catholic
population more evident than in Moore’s presentation of Devine’s sexuality. Devine, then, may
thus blame his Catholic education for his sexual inadequacies (nowhere more marked than in
his cruelly embarrassing impotence before Una) but he continues to take his pay from it. For
obvious reasons too, not all recipients of Catholic education could be said to match Devine’s
level of sexual inadequacy. After their overhearing of the argument between Devine and Una’s
uncle, Tim Heron, the (poorly metred!) obscenities which the boys of Ardath write in lavatorial
scrawl about the unconsummated ‘affair’ itself highlights that sexual licence is not limited to the
Protestant, even in Belfast. This all tells us something about the misreading of Belfast’s
Catholic world: firstly, while the masters do what they can to repress scandal and its exposure

78 See T. Woodman, Faithful Fictions: The Catholic Novel in British Fiction, pp. ix-
xiv. Woodman lightly observes that the novel itself might be considered a Protestant art form.
79 See Brown, ‘The Fate of the Irish Left and of the Protestant Minority’, Ireland: A Cultural
and Social History, pp. 102-137.
80 Cf Dahlie: “Belfast clearly destroys Miss Hearne, but it is equally the Miss Hearnes who
constitute Belfast, and who make it the soulless and sterile city that it is.” (Brian Moore, p.12.)
by the boys in the school, the repression of sexual expression in the years immediately preceding Vatican II is very limited; secondly, any extremities of repression are accentuated by the Catholic minority status in the North. Re-examining the complex and subtle undercurrent of North-South relations in *The Feast of Lupercal* allows, then, for a richer reading of the portrayal of Catholicism in 1950s Belfast.

It would therefore be incorrect to assume that Moore’s theological-political treatment of Ireland is more prominent in later rather than early Irish fictions, in works like *The Doctor’s Wife* and *Lies of Silence*. We have seen this not to be the case from Moore’s first novel. Moore’s second provides too a significant foray into the portrayal of religious sectarianism. Thus, in *The Feast of Lupercal*, the fact that Una Clarke is a Dublin Protestant is crucial (“Information about a stranger needs no defence”\(^81\)) and accounts for her involvement with a married man. In particular, though, it provides further evidence of Moore’s early fictional preoccupation with the socio-political, and certainly moral, implications of religion in geo-cultural context:

> Mr Devine had heard it said, of course, that Ulster Protestants were atypical: in England, and even in Dublin, things were not quite so bad. There, Protestants were unbigoted pagans, enjoying a freedom which Catholics would never tolerate. To this world, to this pagan Protestantism, Una Clarke, a Dubliner, must surely belong. It changed everything. Among people like that an affair with a married man was possible. Anything was possible.\(^82\)

This sneaking respect, combined with a fear of the well-defined other, surfaces even more strongly, of course, in *The Emperor of Ice-Cream* with Gavin Burke’s open admiration for Protestant aesthetic freedom.

The absence of aesthetic freedom is as central, though less overt, to the portrayal of a Belfast Catholicism in *The Feast of Lupercal*. Thus, the Dean of Discipline, McSwiney, early in the novel dashes Devine’s hope to put on a play by Synge. Instead, the Dean’s preferred ‘kitchen’ drama of *Mulligan’s Will* is chosen, in which the despised Tony Moloney, because of his

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\(^{81}\) *ibid.*, p. 32.  
\(^{82}\) *ibid.*, pp. 32-33.
Dublin accent, is likely to gain the lead role. The implied rejection of the stage-Irishman by Devine is accompanied by the parallel compounding of national stereotype by the cultural as well as more obvious religious conservatism of the priesthood. The social and cultural context (and palpable ludicrousness) of the Index of Banned Books by the Catholic Church at this time is a necessary critical corollary here but the matter is more complex. In rejecting the cultural tastes of the Church - the morally innocuous and popular over and against the morally and aesthetically challenging - Devine, inspired not only by Synge but also Baudelaire, is a prototype of many self-consciously literary figures created by Moore in later fictions, such as Brendan Tierney and Fergus. Literature here provides not simply a way of opposing the Church but is provided as a fully alternative and all-encompassing way of life.

Devine, though, perhaps because of his many years in Catholic education, takes the part of a much weakened aesthetic alternative to Catholic worldview. The years when a radical reading of the world seemed possible as an undergraduate in Dublin ("he knew all about Baudelaire and Rimbaud and Verlaine and orgies") never seemed to have been more than poetic fantasy ("he had never done more than kiss a girl"). The aesthetic alternative to Catholicism as all-encompassing metaphysic, entailing sexual licence as always in Moore, is in Devine less of a waning hope than disappeared possibility. If Una had rekindled this hoped for sexual and artistic hedonism, a Catholic moral conscience seems now too strong and his desire too weak to lead to consummation. There is, thus, in Devine’s case, a tension between his willingness to

83 Kiberd comments on the “brogue” and mispronunciations that became a source of easy laughter on the English stage (Inventing Ireland, p. 625) but traces (pp. 12-13) the stage Irishman back to Captain Macmorris in Henry the Fifth:

When a Welsh comrade-at-arms seems to question Irish fidelity to the crown, Macmorris explodes:

Flauellen: Capatain Macmorris I thinke, looke you, under your correction, there is not many of your Nation -


The implication that there is no Irish nation. See also, ‘What ish my Nation?’, D. Cairns and S. Richards, Writing Ireland: Colonialism, Nationalism and Culture, pp. 1-21.

84 Again see Carlson, Banned in Ireland.


86 ibid., p. 50.
coach Una for the forthcoming *Mulligan's Will* and his over-sensitive awareness of certain, unstated moral expectations:

Certain things were expected of the staff in a Catholic college. Certain standards were implied. A man like himself risked censure by taking a twenty-year-old Protestant girl out to public restaurants, by coaching her without her family’s permission. It was all perfectly innocent, of course, but it would not look innocent to the authorities. Man was born sinful, he must avoid the occasions of sin. The men who ran Ardath did not believe in words of honour, they did not consider human word a match for the devil’s lures. No, force must be met by force. Occasions of sin must be rigorously guarded against, was that not clear? Then why did he, a teacher of boys, show such a bad example? The authorities would say he courted an occasion of sin; he had risked giving scandal. He had not guessed at his danger, he realised now. For the past fortnight he had lived in a vacuum: the inward turning world of a man in love.87

As it happens, the play and coaching the girl in fact do become an occasion for scandal. His success as a theatrical coach (a church sexton is even witness to this) is not matched by sexual success. Una Clarke suspiciously returns, though, to the Herons’ home, where she is staying, only in the early hours of the morning. This becomes the ultimate motivation for Tim Heron’s humiliating caning of Devine, as witnessed and halted by one of the Ardath priests. This incident in turn leads to the formal meeting at the conclusion of the novel between the Dean of Discipline, Tim Heron and Devine with the Principal in the latter’s office. Of course, these events also facilitate the returning of Devine to the Ardath teaching flock, much to the displeasure of Father McSwiney. Ironically, it is Devine’s impotence which provides the key to his rehabilitation within the school, and indirectly wider Catholic community, where, also indirectly, Devine retains his authority, residual as it is, as teacher at a Catholic college.

Devine had been right about the Dean earlier ("There was no hope of changing that authoritarian mind"88) but the Principal represents a milder, more liberal wing of thinking. While Devine’s recapitulation and the refusal of the Principal to countenance the proffered resignation, is generally seen by critics as the final breaking of Devine’s will and the ultimate power of the Church, here in its educational role, a more sophisticated reading is certainly possible if we take the plot and the character of the Principal as part of a wider theological history.

In chapter thirteen, for instance, we are thus told the following about the Principal:

He was old, he had little appetite, he had much to do. So many papers, so many tasks:

87 *ibid.*, p. 73.
88 *ibid.*, p. 39.
the sleeves of his soutane shone and his pens fitted easily against the thick callous of his forefinger. But these outward signs could do no more than hint at the constant and diverse labours which Dr Keogh had accumulated to screen him from the boredom of his tenancy: there was a history of diocesan organisations to be revised; there were notes for a book on Cardinal Celina; sermons for special retreats, orations for parish centenaries, memoranda on certain aspects of canon law. Above all, in chaotic and cancerous growth, were notes, drafts and reference periodicals for his *magnum opus*: a record of Irish clerical pilgrimages to the Vatican in the nineteenth century, with an account of the reasons for, and the results thereof.89

Like Devine, whose clothing is early linked with a Victorian age ("the Victorian respectability of waistcoat")90, the Principal, clearly ageing and on the verge of retirement, is a scholarly man whose breadth of vision has been engendered by the intellectual environment of the Irish College in Rome, the climate of which seems to have modified his temperament. The breadth of the Principal's thinking is contrasted with the narrow provincialism of this entrenched Belfast Catholicism. Still, the nineteenth century links between the Irish (here more narrowly Belfast) clergy and Rome presents an historical link between 1950s Catholicism and the past of Vatican I, as well as the years of Modernist challenge to the Church which the nineteenth century represented. Thus as ageing but increasingly liberal representative of a post-Vatican I but pre-Vatican II Catholicism, the Principal does have the greatest authority in the novel; yet his compromising shift in regard to Devine is symptomatic of an increasingly more accommodating Church. Indeed, the time of publication of *The Feast of Lupercal* roughly coincides with the election of the seventy-eight year old and supposedly caretaker Pope John XXIII who was to make the surprise call for the Second Vatican Council. *The Feast of Lupercal*, aside from our reading of the fictional portrayal of one Catholic narrative in the wider context of Irish political history, also represents a key turning point in the grandnarrative of Catholicism itself.

*The Emperor of Ice-Cream* (1965)

The appearance of the youthful academic failure, aspiring creative force, father-hater and ARP warden, Gavin Burke, in *The Emperor of Ice-Cream* marks a fitful transition from the previous two portrayals of figures in a Catholic landscape, a Belfast which is both physical and spiritual. The Second World War setting of the last novel in the series under consideration provides Moore with an opportunity to continue to highlight the conflicts of individual against

89 *ibid.*, p.174.
90 *ibid.*, p.10.
overbearing religious and social forces.\textsuperscript{91} Further, though, in the presentation of Belfast Catholicism, Gavin Burke's struggle is against both the naiveties of religious \textit{and} political belief. Catholic belief here, as in other earlier and later novels which centre on the portrayal of religion in Ulster, is enmeshed with political belief; but \textit{The Emperor of Ice-Cream} traverses a slightly earlier decade and extraordinarily interesting political period in post-Partition Ireland.\textsuperscript{92}

Gavin Burke's doctor father is of significance here, an embodiment of the old maxim, the enemy of my enemy is my friend, and perhaps one of this aphorism's most misguided applications. The wartime neutrality of the Irish Free State was undoubtedly a matter of economic as much as political impotence.\textsuperscript{93} The Great Famine and subsequent waves of immigration from the nineteenth century onwards (including of course those to England), combined with the absence in the south of any industrial base of significance, deprived the new state of any capacity for involvement.\textsuperscript{94} Still, on both sides of the newly created border, there were some who manifested a sympathy, however misguided, with German aggression born out of long time hostility to Britain. In the enclosed world of Ulster, with its stated allegiance to England and the mainland of Britain, sympathy with German aggression was most naturally found amongst the indigenous, minority Catholic population. Thus the portrayal of Catholicism here, especially in the figure of Gavin's father, is not simply a matter of Catholic identification with the Irish nationalism of the South - and the identification with anti-Partition voices in the post-1937 Republic - but with the malign forces of Nazi Germany. As such, Gavin Burke's struggles against the familial and especially patriarchal forces of conformity, and by turns Ulster Catholicism, must gain the reader's sympathy. In some ways it is this novel rather than any other which represents Moore's most significant fictional critique of Catholicism in Ireland: the identification of Catholic culture as part of political struggle against a more powerful colonial force, while contentious, is less defensible when it becomes an allegiance, in whatever

\textsuperscript{91} Flood is able, of course, with the father-son conflict here to make much of a psychological hermeneutic, the Belfast setting also greatly aiding the possibilities of biocritical analysis.
\textsuperscript{93} See reference in latter note 95.
\textsuperscript{94} For an historical of this and the participation of Irish citizens in the Second World War, see R. Doherty, \textit{Irish Men and Women in the Second World War} (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1999).

(67)
inconsequential form, with fascism.95

Gavin is a would-be poet and dramatist, and thus a model of Moore's consistently upheld - albeit acknowledged as flawed - vision of an aesthetic alternative to religion, and Catholic tradition in particular. Here, Moore's literary portrayal of Catholicism in this Irish context necessarily invokes the political as well as religious landscape of Ulster, together with the violent world which will soon invade its newly created borders; but Moore uses and extends the metaphor of the creative arts to instil the parallel between the historical and the literary. Thus, prior to the unexpected bombing of Belfast, the personal and political denouement of the narrative, the wider and just unfolding political dramas of world history are reflected by the staged unrealities of an Ulster theatre:

Ernst Tausig, a German communist leader who had been tortured and compromised by the Nazis, looked across the room at his brother and his mistress. He weighed a revolver in his hand. "Tell, Carl," he said, "our agony is real. But we live in the joy of a great coming people! The animal kingdom is past. Day must follow night."96

Gavin's passing involvement with a group of decadent artists (and he wonders if they might also be homosexuals) late in the novel is indicative of the fictional development of a moral and aesthetic alternative to Catholicism,97 an aesthetic and moral vision which had already been a feature of a novel dominated by an American rather than Irish landscape, An Answer from Limbo. These early Irish novels remain firmly preoccupied, then, not only with stories centred on fairly ordinary protagonists within Ulster's new geographical borders, but also with broader fictional themes which reflect Belfast's very specific, political and theological landscape.

We see in this novel, then, a developing and concurrent theme in Moore's portrayal of Catholicism in the Church's involvement with politics; and it is assuredly this political factor which makes the portrayal so fully integrated with the factors of geography - the determinations of landscape (physical and ideological) affect the form and subsequent portrayal of Catholic religion and its myriad social and cultural manifestations. The irony is that in The Emperor of Ice-Cream the allegiance, however loose and conversational, of a Catholic minority (and

95 To this period in world as well as specifically Church history Moore returns in The Statement (see below, chapter six) and fuller consideration of this theme is given there.
96 ibid., p. 72.
97 Again, that such decadence is Protestant is not insignificant; cf. The Feast of Lupercal, above, pp. 59-66.
certainly a minority of Catholics) with Nazism identifies the colonised with another form of imperialism. This identification of Catholicism with oppressive political forces is not, however, unique to *The Emperor of Ice-Cream*. The explicit identity of Catholicism with the Nazi sympathies and overt war crimes in the figure of Brossard during the Vichy regime in Second World War France is marked in *The Statement*. (In terms of fictional history, the bombing of Belfast by the Luftwaffe which dramatically concludes *The Emperor of Ice-Cream* takes place in the same fictional space as Brossard’s crimes against humanity.) Themes of ‘Catholic’ imperialism and colonisation are taken up in other geographical locations and in the setting of other ideological landscapes by Moore in *Black Robe* and *The Magician’s Wife*.  

The novel’s late ’30s/ early ’40s setting and its appearance in 1965, just at the close and before any tangible effects of the Vatican II Council, clearly confirm too *The Emperor of Ice-Cream*’s place in a pre-Vatican II mould of Roman Catholicism. Gavin Burke’s successful rebellion against an authoritarian father - a model of authority easily matched in a Vatican I Catholic ecclesiology dominated by papal infallibility and domination of clerical hierarchy over Catholic laity - is central to this character’s success but it is a success which extends beyond the merely familial.

Gavin’s failure to matriculate is the narrative means by which he is able and in fact forced to take on the role of young volunteer in the Air Raid Precautions unit. Gavin’s new uniform and helmet marked ‘First Aid Party’ are the symbolic marks of his entry into another world so distinctive from that of the Catholic bigotry represented by his father. The predominantly working class personnel and one ‘stereotypical’ or token, failed member of the middle classes (the alcoholic Freddie Hargreaves) are representative of this alternative socio-economic world. This alternative world beyond Gavin’s family - the Protestant-dominated, Air Raid Precautions Unit - provides for his encounter with the religious and ideological other. On an interpersonal level, Gavin is largely accepted amongst their company and this provides - ironically in wartime - Moore’s vision for a peaceful, social coexistence across the Catholic-Protestant denominational divide.

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98 See below pp. 181-189 and pp. 229-239, respectively.
Revolution, though, is real to Gavin Burke; and the overturning of the moral and metaphysical hegemony of the Church is both political and aesthetic. Thus, in part internal monologue against his elder brother, in part against the cultural values of his own middle class background in a world torn by strife and, crucially, against the Catholic faith, both as doctrinal and moral authority, it is the poet as the prophetic seer who dominates Gavin’s radically alternative (even if young and naive) worldview:

How could you explain to Owen that you suspected that there were things wrong with you, that, for one thing, you were a sex maniac whose every moment was plagued by thoughts of girls, that you sensed you would become a drunkard the first chance you got, that you no longer believed in God or His One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, yet remained unreasonably in dread of God’s vengeance for the fact of this unbelief? ... How could you tell Owen that the real future of your generation had been foreseen by a group of modern poets whom Owen had never read, would never read? 100

Gavin’s identification with poetry as a source of meaning is not simply the narrow replacement of religious by aesthetic experience but an optimistic expectation of social and political change— even if in Gavin’s case it is somewhat naive, and even impotent, as a form of rebellion. Poetry is both an aesthetic and political alternative to a conservative Catholicism, especially that of Gavin’s father’s right-wing, axis sympathies. Disillusioned with what Gavin perceives to be a tired, traditional nationalism, he is no longer interested either in the politics of the Irish and Catholic nationalist community represented by his father. Instead, Gavin opts for a politically inspired aesthetic through a popularised, revolutionary ‘Marxism’. Thus, “The poets knew the jig was up; they knew the rich and famous would crumble with the rest” and apocalyptic lines from MacNeice are cited: “We shall go down like the palaeolithic man/ Before some new Ice Age of Genghiz Khan.” 101 Yeats is cited too in support (“Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold/ Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world” 102) and Belfast’s preoccupations are placed on the world stage:

It was all prophetically clear. Hitler was Yeats’ ‘Second Coming.’ He was the rough beast, its hour come round at last, slouching towards Bethlehem to be born. 103

Unable to identify with the Catholicism and attendant Irish nationalist politics of a former generation, Gavin’s struggle is to identify with the wider conflict, the class struggle engendered by a socialist grandnarrative. A politicised, aesthetic opposition to Catholicism is

100 ibid., p. 10.
101 ibid., p. 11.
102 ibid., p. 11.
103 ibid., pp.10-11.
made too, then, into an explicit identification with the struggle against Hitler. Extending well beyond the boundaries of the island of Ireland itself, *The Emperor of Ice-Cream* is thus an important examination of the conflictual geography of Ireland as part of a broader, Europe- and indeed world-wide political struggle.

Opposed to inherited tradition, though, Gavin’s aesthetic vision is not only at odds with Catholicism but provides psychological release from the social conformity of Owen as well as a developmental leap beyond Gavin’s Oedipal conflict with his father. Gavin’s psychological release at the close of the novel is more than an instinctual *Thanatos* overriding *Eros*, an initiation of a late adolescent youth into the adult world of wartime death. Gavin’s perception of the naivety of some Belfast Catholics in identifying with Germany (because anti-British) is vindicated but the German bombing of Belfast, when it starts, signals a possible source of unity in adversity between both sides of the community. This is neatly signalled when one of the nationalist ARP wardens, in tears, says to Gavin Burke and Freddie Hargreaves, “‘Did you know they blew up the Falls’”:

‘They bombed every part of the town,’ Gavin said. ‘They didn’t hold back just because the Falls Road is Catholic...’

Moore is also careful to highlight the placing of the neutral Republic’s emergency services at the disposal of the Six Counties, indicating that the German sympathies felt by the nationalist community may have surfaced more strongly amidst the minority of Catholics in the North. However, even in the height of the bombing the strength of Catholic anti-British feeling anecdotally extends to open sympathy with the German bombers, an English naval rating having “heard two men cheering in a pub as Lord Haw-Haw, the Nazis’ English-speaking commentator, reported on the German radio that Belfast would be completely wiped out.” Still, the place of the nuns in the Belfast hospitals servicing this emergency, read in conjunction with the assistance of the South, ameliorates the potential Protestant critique of the Catholic minority:

An injured Heavy Rescue worker told them [Gavin and Freddie] that he had seen the engines of the Dublin Fire Brigade, pumping away in the York Street area, their peacetime headlamps blazing. His story was confirmed by others, and, soon, the hospital nuns, very-

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105 *ibid.*, p. 241.
106 *ibid.*, p. 229.
pleased by this news, were telling patients how the Dublin Fire Brigade, God bless them ... had driven one hundred and thirteen miles, crossing the border from neutral Eire, to help with the conflagration.107

When the Germans actually bomb Belfast after a long phoney war it marks a temporary narrative closure of Moore the novelist with his native land.

Certainly, though, and for instance in An Answer from Limbo - which predates The Emperor of Ice-Cream - Ireland retains a distinct if background presence within early American fictions. Indeed, Ireland persists as an unconscious geography of the mind in the protagonists of all the early American novels; that is, in the lives of Brendan Tierney, Ginger Coffey, Mary Dunne and Fergus Fadden. The literal re-presentation of the historical destruction of the Old World narrative setting for his early Belfast novels marks a major closure with the city as narrative landscape for his work until Lies of Silence. Belfast, though, maintains a presence in Moore’s fiction prior to this; and the island of Ireland, as we shall see in chapter four, remains both an important narrative setting and a key to the portrayal of (a post-Vatican II) Catholicism. Here, then, in the last of the early Irish novels, the textual mirror of Belfast’s historical destruction marks more of an attempted than actual end to the writer’s preoccupation with Ireland as a theological, ideological and physical landscape. Moore’s continuing literary preoccupation with the Old World is thus a continuing feature of his New World, early American fiction.

107 ibid., p. 228.
Chapter Three

The Early American Novels

(The Luck of Ginger Coffey, 1960; An Answer from Limbo, 1962; I Am Mary Dunne, 1968; Fergus, 1971)

Introduction

Emigration has been a feature of Irish national life and thus Irish cultural identity since the Famine years of the 1840s. We might recall the above cited reference in Kiberd which suggests that the Famine had made internationalists of the Irish. It is a literary commonplace too that emigration formed part of the life history of many of Ireland's great writers, whether to England, as in the case of Wilde, or mainland Europe in the case of Beckett and Joyce. Indeed, for the artist, remaining in Ireland became subject to the need for justification or an assertion of political or aesthetic identity. As Duffy demonstrates, geographical displacement, voluntary or otherwise, becomes, with a degree of inevitability, a dominant theme in the Irish

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2 Kiberd, Inventing Ireland; p. 472; see above, pp. 38-42.

3 Kiberd highlights well the devastation on the landscape and culture of Ireland whose scars Jamie Mangan encounters: "To many, the old Ireland had cease to exist after the famines of the 1840s and the vast emigrations to England and North America ... The effect of such disasters was to make the Irish feel like strangers in their own country" (Kiberd, Inventing Ireland, p. 530). Yet if the nineteenth century exodus was primarily motivated by economic considerations, and mid-twentieth century by de-population of the Irish countryside a result of disillusionment with the harsh rural realities of a supposed idyll, the period of nationalist identity with Catholicism marked a cultural motivation for leaving in the early years of the Free State. As Kiberd also comments, "By the end of the 1920s many artists and intellectuals had come to the bleak conclusion that Ireland was no longer an interesting place in which to live" (Kiberd, Inventing Ireland, p. 264).

4 Daniel Corkery's list of the Irish cultural expatriates in the opening chapter of his Synge and Anglo-Irish Literature is represented by Kiberd as "some kind of dereliction of national duty" (cited Kiberd, Inventing Ireland, p. 264).
writing for both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Achieving a mythical status as a land of political, religious and aesthetic freedom, America retains a special relationship with Ireland here, a matter of which we had hints in James Madden’s return to his native isle in Judith Hearne. This present chapter provides an ideal opportunity to examine the distinctive place of the Irish exile as Catholic in North America within Brian Moore’s early fiction.

If Catholic encounter with Protestantism in Moore’s early Irish fiction highlights the latter’s greater degree of moral and aesthetic liberalism, Moore’s early North American fiction provides insight into a world of secularity where such freedoms are increased enormously for the Catholic migrant. In this fictional North America, Moore’s Catholic characters (often of Irish origin) encounter a literally New World. Geographically separated from Old World Irish Catholicism (even Mary Dunne’s Canadian upbringing hearkens back to Irish roots), encounter

5 See Duffy, ‘Literary Reflections on Irish Migration in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries’; cf Carlson, Banned in Ireland.

6 There is an abiding presence in Moore’s early Irish novels of a distinction between a critically engaged higher culture and a populist aesthetic consciousness (of McSwiney versus Devine, for instance) which continues in his early and later American novels, especially when Moore is portraying the frustrations of writers, Brendan Tierney being a classic case in the fictions to be discussed in this chapter. For many Irish writers, of course, the identification of nationalism and Catholicism in a Free State and post-constitution Republic meant living with the restraints of a narrow and often repressive Catholic worldview. In 1926, for instance, Kevin O’Higgins, Minister of State for Justice for the new Government of Cumann na nGaedig instigated the Committee of Enquiry on Evil Literature. This led directly to the Censorship of Publications Act of 1929, restrictions on contemporary Irish and European literature were effective until well into the 1960s. For a critical overview, see again, Carlson, Banned in Ireland. Writers featured through interviews with the editor include Benedict Kiely, John Broderick, John McGahern, Edna O’Brien, Lee Dunne, Maurice Leitch and Brian Moore. Moore’s first four novels - Judith Hearne, The Feast of Lupercal, The Luck of Ginger Coffey and An Answer from Limbo - were all banned in Ireland.

with the non-Catholic other is significantly heightened, with the cityscape of Belfast and the rural (if unconscious) landscape of rural Ireland exchanged for the landscape of rural Canada and the cityscapes of Montreal, Toronto and New York, or the new ‘landscape’ motif of the sea and shoreline of the Californian Pacific.8

In all four novels considered here - The Luck of Ginger Coffey, An Answer from Limbo, I Am Mary Dunne and Fergus - dramatic shifts in such physical landscape mirror equally drastic challenges to an Irish Catholic inheritance. Indeed, the encounter between religion and (an often naively ‘aesthetic’) secularism is accentuated by the distinctive environments of Moore’s North America: the city of Montreal contrasts strongly with Dublin and the rural southern Irish Catholic world left by Ginger Coffey and his family; for Brendan Tierney, the new ‘Rome’ of New York is the place to be a writer, but for his mother it is an isolating world, the antithesis of even the residual community of a sectarian conscious Belfast housing estate; for ‘Mary Dunne’, her personal, sexual history is a history of cities (Toronto, Montreal, New York), a separation from semi-rural Catholic Butchersville of childhood and, more distantly, Catholic Ireland; for Fergus, the seascape of the Californian Pacific could not provide a sharper, geographical contrast with the landscape of his Irish childhood, and this makes the metaphysical encounter of the two all the more powerful. In all instances, migration is both geographical and theological, for the migrant’s shifts in geographical location highlight a parallel movement from cultural (here Catholic) roots. Yet, in showing the persistence of theological thinking, either through the metaphor of characters’ interior monologues (The Luck of Ginger Coffey and I Am Mary Dunne) or the re-presentation of the Catholic past in fantasy (Fergus), it would seem that physical distance alone cannot engender complete dissociation from the factors of early enculturation. Further, and this is seen most strongly in An Answer from Limbo, if Canadian and American secularity directly and indirectly critiques Catholicism’s worldview, such secularity is itself subject to radical challenge.

Here then, textual shifts in physical landscape mirror transformations in social and cultural perspective for the Catholic immigrant. The fictional context of Moore’s novels thereby highlights the manner in which the experience of migration, and specifically Irish migration, is

8Such motifs in Moore’s fiction are widely exploited by biocritical commentaries from Dahlie, Brian Moore through O’Donoghue, Brian Moore, and Sullivan, Faithful Fictions to the most recent, Sampson, The Chameleon Novelist.
evident as a collective social and cultural experience: societies are themselves transformed by patterns of migration, and such transformation is reflected in cultural output of such a society. The literature of Ireland and America, not simply in the twentieth century, thus reflects the evolution and or impoverishment of society through this geography of human movement.  

The history of North America, to an even greater extent than Ireland, is the history of migration, and indeed colonisation, and its literature reflects this. The novels of Brian Moore reflect such historical, social trends most effectively through the identity and identity-crisis of individual protagonists. Each early American novel reflects in its own way broad trends through individual experience, and of special interest here is the manner in which Moore portrays Catholic grandnarrative and the crisis of such grandnarrative from the perspectives of his protagonists, and their often inconsequential life stories.

As White suggests in his ‘Geography, Literature and Migration’, it is this key, generic human issue of identity which naturally comes to the fore and is often painfully heightened for the migrant, and it is this which provides ideal ‘material’ for the writer of fiction:

At any point in our lives we can think of ourselves as relating to a number of identities - in gender terms, in terms of a stage in the life course, in terms of age and family status, in terms of economic identity, ... in terms of linguistic, religious and other cultural identities and in terms of ethnic identity. In the analysis of identity shift through migration it can be argued that creative literature contains some of the most effective explorations of identity issues.

This is certainly true of Moore’s early American novels: Ginger Coffey’s life situation is essentially the critical experience of the economic migrant; Brendan Tierney’s is a model (and apparently confident) renunciation of his Irish Catholic cultural inheritance but with crisis inherent in the exchange of religious for secular values; Mary Dunne’s position reflects a crisis of identity resulting from geographical disorientation as much as her sexual liberalisation, the

9 See Jacobson, Special Sorrows: The Diasporic Imagination of Irish, Polish and Jewish and Immigrants in the United States, for the North American context. See again the wide-ranging collection of essays edited by King et al., Writing Across Worlds: Literature and Migration.
10 See Bradbury and Temperley, eds., Introduction to American Studies, on American colonial, cultural and political histories.
11 See P. White, ‘Geography, Literature and Migration’ in King et al., eds., Writing Across Worlds. White, though, highlights an important element of reserve about defining too fixedly the migrant’s personality and socio-cultural bearings prior to migration:

This is not to say that migrants, before migration, have necessarily fitted in to a homogeneous societal structure with no traces of discordance: indeed, sociological and anthropological studies have often suggested that migrants may be effectively ‘lost’ to their home communities long before they actually pack their bags and leave, and of course ‘not fitting in’ may be the primary cause of migration. (p. 2)
latter a key to our understanding her shift from Catholic values; Fergus’ predicament indicates the inescapability of the culture and society of one’s birth and upbringing, despite physical migration. In all cases, the Catholic dimension of their life experience persists either as an aspect of the (individual) psychological or (collective) cultural ‘baggage’ which they (or recent ancestors) bring from the Old World to the New.

In this respect, for the manner in which he highlights both the individual and collective in the literature of migration, White is again worth citing. In a book which shares with this present thesis a concern for one particular cultural manifestation of the migration, here that of literary output, White suggests the following two levels for a consideration of this literature of migration:

At one level we can consider individual works, but at another we can consider a full body of literature that arguably hangs together through a relationship with a migratory record or history, often on a societal scale. At the first level, therefore, we may be dealing with individual authors and with the representation of the experience of particular people; at the second we may be concerned with responses in whole societies or nations that have been affected by population movement.

Brian Moore’s early American novels reflect both levels of preoccupation. Firstly, Moore as an author reflects the concerns and experiences of particular individuals in their migratory paths. Secondly, his early American novels highlight too that collective dimension one would expect in Irish and North American culture, containing as they both do such particular historical traditions of migration. In these increasingly cross-cultural novels where encounter with the

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12 Cf I Am Mary Dunne, the latter being published in 1968, the same year as Humanae Vitae. For the reaction of the Catholics in North America, especially to the Church retaining a conservative stance on personal morality, see L. McLaughlin, The Pill, John Rock and the Church: The Biography of a Revolution (Boston: Little, Brown, 1982); also W.W. May, ed., Vatican Authority and American Catholic Dissent (New York: Crossroad, 1987).


other is an expected commonplace of the migratory experience. Moore thus fuses individual and collective experience through inevitable contrasts between the fictional landscapes of Ireland and America. Certainly for the period covered by these early North American novels (1962-1971), the physical and cultural space of North America becomes, in a no doubt overstated hegemony,\(^ {15}\) a literary meeting ground for Catholicism and secularism where, depending on one’s perspective, either side could be deemed as ‘other’.\(^ {16}\)

This ‘otherness’ and the sense of encounter which this inevitably generates in these novels may have been accentuated too by historical ossification. Thus Moore’s portrayal of Catholicism is here distinctly pre-Vatican II despite the fact that dates for publication extend beyond the closing of the Council in 1965: Ginger Coffey’s Montreal in late 1950s setting (and publication in 1960) certainly predates Vatican II as does the portrayal of his decisively abandoned Catholicism; in the portrayal of late 1950s New York, Brendan Tierney certainly lives in a pre-Vatican world, his mother’s Catholicism reflecting this strongly, though the book was published in the year the Council opened (1962); Mary Dunne’s residual Catholicism more fully reflects the pre-Vatican II Catholicism of her childhood in Butchersville than any direct historical developments in the post-Vatican II Church, though there are hints in the novel of the conservative Vatican teaching on sexual morality. Despite the publication of *Fergus* in 1971, Fadden’s phantasmagoric confrontation with “the dead and the absent living” is certainly an encounter with a consciously historical rather than any ‘contemporary’, that is post-Vatican II, Catholicism. It is, then, to these literary landscapes of the Catholic encounter with the secularised other that this chapter turns in considering the detail of Moore’s early American novels.

\(^ {15}\) Cf. above, pp. 38-47, on Catholicism being part of the definition of otherness in relation to England.

The Luck of Ginger Coffey (1960)

If emigration for aesthetic freedom might be the province of a cultural elite, economic necessity might be said to be amongst the more common and most basic of incentives. Moore’s first sojourn into North American territory appropriately reflects this in The Luck of Ginger Coffey with a stylistic mix of comic and near tragic realism from which the scriptural and the theological are never much distant: James Francis Coffey, for instance, “was not poor in spirit”, he “was just poor”.17 Recently emigrated from an Ireland whose Catholicism is equated with rural tradition, economic disadvantage and social stagnation, Coffey’s ‘escape’ (“a man who has cut loose from all the old codology and cant at home”18) is to a supposed land of urban opportunity in Canada’s progressive, forward-looking Montreal, a New World North America with a supposed hint of France, a supposedly more exotic trace of the Old World continent of Europe. Expectation, though, fails to meet the complexities of Canada’s cross-cultural realities, where, as in the early Irish novels, the physical features of the environment, a meteorology of place, seems to define this New World as much as its culture. So, where Coffey had expected Montreal to be “a sort of Frenchy place”, it was “French my foot”, more “a cross between America and Russia”: “The cars, the supermarkets, the hoardings; they were just as you saw them in the Hollywood films. But the people and the snows and the cold ... wasn’t that the real Siberian stuff?”19 With a meteorological motif which persists throughout The Luck of Ginger Coffey,20 as it does in the later Canadian fiction of Black Robe,21 the unfavourable physical environment matches increasingly poor economic prospects which, on both counts, seem harsher than Old World experience.

In this new physical and economic landscape, memories of priestly sermonising from an Irish Catholic childhood persist too. The emphasis on sin and the negative aspects of soteriology in Coffey’s school recollection of Father Cogley, characteristic too of Father Quigley in Judith

17 The Luck of Ginger Coffey, p. 20.
18 ibid., pp. 44-45.
19 ibid., p. 9.
20 In a short passage late in the novel which reflects the close correspondence between Canadian identity and the implied image of Canadian landscape, Coffey later pities “Poor old Canada ... Not even a flag to call its own. Land of Eskimo and Mountie, land of beaver and moose -” ibid., p. 213.
21 See below pp. 181-189.
Hearne, is marked, though, by important narrative differences. Most significantly, unlike the immediacy of the priestly message received by Hearne as she sits in her new parish church, Father Cogley’s words have been retained by Coffey, more than twenty years after hearing the sermon, as interior monologue. Geography and religious disinclination have now separated him from the Church where geography and a desperation to believe have ensured that Hearne remained within its immediate grasp. Still, Cogley’s interiorized theological monologue, integral to Coffey’s supposedly irreligious stream of consciousness now inevitably colours his sense of place and the processes of - even motivation for - his own migration from Ireland to Canada. It is as if the priest’s words of warning against patterns of economic Irish immigration acted as the spur for the young Coffey yet now seem confirmed in their veracity. Indeed, Father Cogley’s diatribe is directed not simply against the usual targets of sin which threaten to weaken the Church’s hold over congregation but against the the mobility of the community (Irish emigration) itself:

The pulpit was on the right of the school chapel. Ginger Coffey, aged fifteen, sat under it while Father Cogley, a Redemptorist Missioner, preached the retreat. There’s always one boy - Father Cogley said - always one boy who doesn’t want to settle down like the rest of us. He’s different, he thinks. He wants to go out into the great world and find adventures. He’s different, you see. Aye, well Lucifer thought he was different. He did. Now, this boy who thinks he’s different, he’s the lad who never wants to finish his studies. Ireland isn’t good enough for him, it’s got to be England or America or Rio-dee-Janeero or some place like that. So, what does he do? He burns his books and off he runs. And what happens? Well, I’ll tell you. Nine times out of ten that fellow winds up as a pick-and-shovel labourer or at best a twopenny penpusher in some hell on earth, some place of sun and rot or snow and ice that no sensible man would be seen dead in. And why? Because that class of boy has no love of God in him, because that class of boy is an ordinary lazy lump and his talk of finding adventures is only wanting an excuse to go away and commit mortal sins ... And let me tell that boy one thing ... If you burn your books you burn your boats. And if you burn your boats, you’ll sink. You’ll sink in this world and you’ll sink in the next ...22

Physical space clearly has metaphysical implications here: migration being regarded if not sinful in itself then indicative of a wilful pride that could lead to sin. Recognising the false economic hope of the Irish Catholic immigrant the symptomatic abandonment of education (one dominated of course by the Church23), Cogley indicates the perils inherent in shifts of physical geography with more metaphysical, soteriological threats. Of course, the preoccupation with perceived exoticism of place ("it’s got to be England or America or Rio-dee-Janeero or some place like that"24) is precisely the journey that Moore’s narratives take:

22 ibid., p. 21.
23 Father Cogley dominates the chapel as he does Coffey’s recollection of school.
24 ibid., p. 21.
from the harsh naturalism of the Belfast of the early Irish and American fictions to an increasing preoccupation with landscapes made strange by fable, allegory and fantasy in later Irish and American novels (*Fergus*, *Catholics*, *The Great Victorian Collection*, *The Mangan Inheritance*) and finally to regions such as the Caribbean (*No Other Life*) and continents such as Africa (*The Magician’s Wife*), a post-Vatican II Catholic world where even the history of other cultures (*Black Robe*, and again *The Magician’s Wife*) is read with a respect for indigenous worldviews inconceivable in a pre-Vatican world which dictated that there was no salvation outside the Church.25

Though “I[t was all missionary malarkey, of course],"26 the irony in terms of this largely naturalistic portrayal of an ex-Catholic protagonist, is that Coffey's encounter with the New World is as true to Father Cogley’s predictions as it is untrue to Ginger’s expectations.27 Certainly James Francis Coffey, failed BA, does not seem to have matched his family's respectable economic or religious pedigree. Coffey’s father, a solicitor who had been “buried in the brown habit of a Dominican Tertiary” is a model of prosperity and piety, while his elder brother Tom, a missionary priest in Africa, “worrying about the Moslems stealing his African

25This exclusivist soteriology derives from Clement of Alexandria (died around 211 AD.): “Outside the Church no salvation” (*Extra ecclesiam nulla salus*); see J. Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1997), pp. 84-109. Dupuis recognizes the prevalence of positive attitudes to non-Christian religions from subsequent periods of Church history. Dupuis indicates (p. 101-102) how Vatican II retained the essence of the formula (in *Lumen Gentium*, 14, for instance, the Church is “necessary for salvation”) has to be balanced with the ground-breaking *Nostra Aetate*. A key phrase of the latter is that “The Catholic Church rejects nothing that is true and holy in these religions. She has a high regard for the manner life and conduct, those precepts and teachings which, though differing on many points from her own teaching, nevertheless often reflect a ray of that truth which enlightens all ...” (*Nostra Aetate*, 2). Dupuis is keen to see the history of a theology of religion pervading all of Catholic Church history and therefore lessens the emphasis on Vatican II’s newness: “The possibility of salvation outside the Church has been recognized by the Church tradition long before Vatican II ... If Vatican II innovates in any way on this account, the newness must be seen in the optimistic way the council looks at the world at large, as is best exemplified by the pastoral constitution *Gaudium et Spes*” (Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, p. 161; cf. pp. 158-179). The postconciliar magisterium (the collective authority of the Church) in the pontificates of Paul VI and John Paul II marks, as Dupuis acknowledges, a sea-change in interfaith relations. This post-conciliar issue of interfaith dialogue is treated in Moore’s *Catholics*, as it is in Moore’s novel of specifically Jewish-Catholic relations in *The Statement* and, and in the context of Catholic-Muslim relations in *The Magician’s Wife*.

26 ibid., p. 21.
27 See above, pp. 79-80.
converts" seemingly indicates the only respectable option for world travel away from Ireland.\textsuperscript{28} With the return passage money now spent and no job in prospect, it is early on, then, that Coffey’s economic hopes are dashed. Like many of these early American novels, though, the protagonist’s Catholicism persists if not in the formal practice of religion then in the metaphor of religious language which colours an otherwise secularised consciousness.\textsuperscript{29} Thus Coffey, worried about telling his wife Veronica about the likely permanency of their stay in Canada, makes a visit to a church\textsuperscript{30} as a way of “putting off judgement day”.\textsuperscript{31} Even if his visit is pragmatic rather than devotional, Coffey recognises that “[w]arm it was in God’s house”, a place where “interior darkness was familiar” despite his absence from any church since leaving the place he still calls “home”, that is Ireland.\textsuperscript{32} Finally facing the scorn of Veronica, Coffey wishes (in a transference of biblical narrative into the novel) her as “Lot’s wife”.\textsuperscript{33} From the outset of the narrative, then, Father Cogley’s sanctimonious outpourings which had so powerful a retentive effect on Coffey’s boyhood memory of Catholic Ireland are soon translated into Coffey’s evident, that is actual, disappointment with Canada. The interior monologue of Old World theology becomes a concrete, New World manifestation of economic failure.

Coffey’s fantasies lead, though, to other realms, both geographical and metaphysical, which extend beyond the reality of economic failure on both sides of the Atlantic:

He lay back, entering a world where no earthly women were. In that world soft houris moved, small women of a Japanese submissiveness, administering large doubles and sweet embraces with club sofa and beds. In that world, men of thirty-nine were Elder Brothers, prized over any Greek stripling. In that world, a man no longer spent his life running up hill, his hope in his mouth, his shins kicked by people with no faith in him. In that world, all men had reached the top of the hill; there were no dull jobs, no humiliating interviews, no turndowns; no man was saddled with grinning wives and ungrateful daughters, there were unlimited funds to spend, the food was plentiful and non-fattening, there were no Father Cogleys handing out warnings, no newspapers

\textsuperscript{28} ibid., pp. 24-25; this of course prefigures Moore’s treatment of Muslim-Christian relations in \textit{The Magician’s Wife}, see below, pp. 229-239.
\textsuperscript{29} The technique of Moore’s free indirect speech has been commented on by O’Donoghue and Sullivan at some length. What such critics neglect is the persistence of a theological perspective in the supposedly secularised interior monologues of Moore’s characters.
\textsuperscript{30} ibid., pp. 24 ff.
\textsuperscript{31} ibid., p. 35.
\textsuperscript{32} ibid., p. 24.
\textsuperscript{33} ibid., p. 40.
worrying you with atom bombs, no sneerers and mockers waiting to see you fail, no
rents to pay, no bank managers. In that world you could travel into beautiful jungles
with four Indian companions, climb a dozen distant mountain peaks, sail rafts in
endless tropic seas. You were free. By flicking your fingers in a secret sign, you could
move backwards or forwards in time and space, spending a day in any age that took
your fancy, but as a leader of that age, the happiest man of that day. In that free world...

In that world, both quarts finished, Ginger Coffey fell asleep.34

Ironically, of course, retreat into fantasy has been a common critique of religious belief since
Feuerbach, a projection of personal and collective human hopes onto an indifferent universe,
and this indeed underpins the naturalistic technique in Moore’s fiction.35 Failing in both the
religious worlds of Ireland and the secular world of North America is a double failure.
Coffey’s fantasy, an implicit rejection of any American economic ‘dream’ or theological
projection, (both potentially collective fantasies) is thoroughly individualistic, approaching pure
solipsism. The naturalistic setting of Ginger Coffey, though, is also the narrative space where
such a critique of religion is acknowledged and questioned by Coffey’s philosophical self-
examination. Coffey’s doubts are directed to both the theology of ecclesiastical compulsion
(“one of his secret reasons for wanting to get away to the New World was that in Ireland,
church attendance was not a matter of choice”36) and towards self-doubt about his own
scepticism of a naturalistic explanation of the universe: “Suppose all the prayers, the penances,
the promises were true? Suppose the poor in spirit would inherit the kingdom of heaven?”37 As
if by way of solution to this complex metaphysical conundrum, Coffey’s imagination
seemingly presents an alternative fictive landscape which avoids confrontation with failure in
both religious and secular domains.

If the encounter of the Catholic in Northern Ireland was one of confrontation with the

34 ibid., p. 43.
35 One is often struck, for example, at the indifference of the universe in Moore’s novels, an
indifference most chillingly shared by believer and unbeliever alike, and it is in this sense that I
read Moore’s technique as naturalistic. I deal with this moral indifference in Moore’s fiction in
L. Gearon, ‘No Other Life: Death and Catholicism in the Novels of Brian Moore’, Journal of
Beliefs and Values, volume 19 (1998), pp. 33-46; see also L. Gearon, ‘Catholics: Sexuality
and Death in the Novels of Brian Moore’, in M.A. Hayes, W. Porter and D. Tombs, eds.,
36 ibid., p. 24.
37 ibid., p. 25; this questioning of doubt rather than faith, also ironic, is additionally to be
found in Moore’s fiction, with Cold Heaven representing the most developed example.
Protestant (that is religious) and British colonial (or political) other, Ginger Coffey seems to lack any of the expected Irish Catholic allegiances. On the question of impending divorce, Ginger declares to his daughter Paulie that “‘Your mother and I aren’t real Catholics any more. You know that.’” 38 And, while Ginger had duly served in the Irish army, recalls how “the thick in the government announced that Ireland would stay neutral”.39 Indeed, this absence of expected Catholic religiosity or Irish nationalism is noted by one of the Coffey’s only Canadian friends, Gerry Grosvenor (who later demonstrates his friendship with the couple by a supposedly unconsummated affair with Veronica). Grosvenor, though, acknowledges the romanticism which seemingly prevails in the absence of these religious and political realities, all that appears left of the Ireland’s cultural life in the secularised world of Canada:

... Gerry talked about Ireland. He said he was glad they were not going back there. He said until he met the Coffeys he had considered Irish people bigoted, untrustworthy and conventional. Although he had some very good Irish friends, he said. But he had been relieved to find that the Coffeys were not nationalists or religious. Although he admired people who believed in something, didn’t he? Of course, none of his Catholic friends ever went to church, he said. Which was a relief to him. Yes, the Irish were wonderful people, imaginative, romantic and creative. Wonderful people.40

Of course, Grosvenor’s romanticism highlights the processes of cultural construction which geographical distance can engender. The harsher reality of Coffey’s experience of the failures of immigration might lead to sympathy with Coffey’s or the disillusionment with both Old and New Worlds. Indirectly, then, Coffey and Grosvenor mark positions which, across the economic divide separating them, are unified by the re-creation of an imagined world. In this regard, The Luck of Ginger Coffey is a meta-fiction for such constructions, either for the creation of imagined cultural past or make-believe to deal with an unsatisfactory present.

Coffey’s proofreading on the Tribune draws attention to another, denominational, divide unified by the joint experience of immigration, with the boss MacGregor, his “Low Church Scottish rumble”41 a reminder of Catholic-Protestant conflict in Belfast. Here, even MacGregor’s administrative routines are regarded in theological terms, as “The old man spiked

38 ibid., p. 160.
39 Such an attitude in marked contrast to the anti-British nationalism we see in a later novel from Gavin Burke’s father in The Emperor of Ice-Cream.
40 ibid., p. 49.
41 ibid., p. 51.
a scrap of paper like Calvin drowning sin”\textsuperscript{42}, the “\textit{Holy Bible}” on his bookshelf.\textsuperscript{43} With proofreaders “monks performing a rite of exorcism” they intone “a short chant of MacGregorian abuse”.\textsuperscript{44} MacGregor is the immigrant success story in a land where economics underpins Canadian cultural identity, a matter highlighted by Fox, chief amongst the proofreading underlings:

Quiet now,” Fox shouted. ‘I have to explain the facts of life to our immigrant brother. Do you want to be remembered, Paddy? Of course you do. Then you must bear in mind that in this great country of ours the surest way to immortality is to have a hospital wing called after you. Or better still, a bridge. We’re just a clutch of little Ozymandias in this great land. Nobody here but us builders. This is Canada’s century, they tell us. Not America’s, mind you. Not even Russia’s. The twentieth century belongs to Canada. And if it does, then you had better know your values. Remember that in this fair city of Montreal the owner of a department store is a more important citizen than any judge of the Supreme Court. Never forget that, Paddy boy. Money is the root of all good here. One nation, indivisible, under Mammon, that’s our heritage. Now drink up.”\textsuperscript{45}

Again the theological language (“Money, that was Our Saviour”\textsuperscript{46}) underpins the heights of this harsh, secular reality and leads Coffey to wonder if he been “wrong to bet his all on Canada”.\textsuperscript{47} Listening to the proofreading colleague, their perceptions of his new land seem to mirror with the greatest of irony his own perception of the land he had left behind; “they seem to think Canada is the back of beyond”.\textsuperscript{48}

Now separated from wife and child, and living in a “downtown limbo”\textsuperscript{49} in “a far off country”\textsuperscript{50} where, if money was “Our Saviour”, Ginger Coffey’s residency at the YMCA is a sign of his lack of salvation. This unenviable status, though, becomes for Ginger a subject for salvation. In the midst of all his personal, social and especially economic failings, his very anonymity becomes transformed into a quasi-religious humility, for indeed Coffey, for all his ineffectiveness, is largely guiltless, and it is this innocence, this lack of culpability for his

\textsuperscript{42} \textit{ibid.}, p. 52.
\textsuperscript{43} \textit{ibid.}, p. 53.
\textsuperscript{44} \textit{ibid.}, p. 79.
\textsuperscript{45} \textit{ibid.}, p. 73.
\textsuperscript{46} \textit{ibid.}, p. 98.
\textsuperscript{47} \textit{ibid.}, p. 75.
\textsuperscript{48} \textit{ibid.}, p. 75.
\textsuperscript{49} \textit{ibid.}, p. 68.
\textsuperscript{50} \textit{ibid.}, p. 80.
failing which itself becomes the source of his imagined ‘redemption’:

Wouldn’t it just serve them right if he never tried to find them, if he just disappeared altogether and settled in here like a mole gone to ground. Not a bad life either: sleeping late every morning, eating his breakfast in some cafeteria, going for walks, seeing the odd film, having a daily swim in the pool downstairs and then each night, to work at six. No ties, no responsibilities, no ambitions. By the holy, that would be a grand gesture. To retire from the struggle, live like a hermit, unknown and unloved in this faraway land ... he would be a mystery man, the hermit of the YMCA ... a hermit in the city ... Ah, you are a saint James Francis Coffey.51

Taking on the uniform of Tiny Ones, the diaper disposal company in which he becomes a fair success, he “thought of the first time he had worn a uniform, as a private in the regiment of Pearse”52 and there is a comparable impotence, here between his current economic role and the ineffectual status of a neutral Irish army in the midst of world conflict.53 Yet, in the cinema, so prevalent in Moore’s fiction (from Judith Hearne onwards), Coffey reflects on the facts that he would not be alone in suffering disappointment:

New Canadians: thousands like her came here each year; thousands started all over again in humble circs. You heard such stories: lawyers forced to take work as checkers, doctors as lab assistants, professors driving trucks. And still they came, from every country in Europe, riding in old railway colonist cars to the remote provinces of this cold, faraway land ... Wasn’t he too a man who would always be a stranger here, never at home in this land where he had not grown up.

He tried watching the film, but somehow the filmed America no longer seemed true. He could not believe in this America, this land that half the world dreams of in dark front seats in cities and villages half a world away. What had he in common with his true America? For Canada was America: the difference a geographer’s line. What had these Hollywood revels to do with the facts of life in a cold New World.54

This dawning reality is an indication of Coffey’s psychological growth, no longer content with (solipsistic or Hollywood) fantasy.

Indeed, with this more realistic assessment of his life chances, it is the enduring metaphors of his Catholic past which provide the conceptual context for his renewed struggle to gain his wife and child back from Grosvenor. Refusing to fake an adultery scene which would enable a quick divorce with Veronica and facilitate a possible wedding with Gerry, he suddenly “awoke on the cross of his new obsession”.55 Indeed, the structure of the novel reflects too a parallel in

51 ibid., pp. 106-107.
52 ibid., p. 116.
53 See above, pp. 66-72.
54 ibid., p. 170-171.
55 ibid., p. 194.
the Catholic devotional practice of the ‘Stations of the Cross’ in a number of ways. Given the
overriding metaphor of Coffey’s new determination (“the cross of his new obsession”56), the
novel’s fourteen chapters indirectly reflect the fourteen stations of this Catholic ritual. Relevant
too is the name of Coffey’s wife, Veronica, the woman in Catholic medieval hagiography
accredited with wiping the face of Christ during the Passion and whose cloth retained the
imprint of Jesus’ face. So too at the trial for indecent exposure at which Coffey a little unfairly
finds himself it seems appropriate that above the judge “there was a large crucifix” where the
“Christ figure seemed to recline, head to one side, as though trying to catch the half-audible
mumble of the clerk of the court”,57 the divine regarding the secular proceeding almost
inconsequentially. When Coffey narrowly escapes a custodial sentence, the prose, unusual for
Moore, approaches something akin to a mystical theology outside on the steps of the court:

He was free. The night that had passed, the cells below stairs, the shouting warders,
the terrifying laughter of the spectators in court; it had happened and yet it had not. It
was a nightmare washed into nothingness by the simple and glorious fact of freedom.
The city, its roofs and cornices crusted with snow, its rushing inhabitants muffled in
furs, seemed a busy, magical place, a joy to be abroad in. For one liberating moment
he had become a child again; lost himself as a child can, letting himself go into the
morning, a drop of water joining an ocean, mystically becoming one... He was the
sky.58

Structurally, there is an ambivalent theological circularity in the narrative here. As Coffey’s
story begins, the interior monologue of Catholicism (even “the boredom of the mass”59)
retained from an Irish childhood still colours Coffey’s consciousness. Coffey’s physical
migration from Ireland and lapsed Catholic state marks, though, a theological distancing from
the Church which cannot fully overcome the metaphors of religious thinking in his perception
of a secular Montreal. At the close of the book Coffey’s mystical (that is complete)
identification with childhood (the adult Coffey, “a child again”60) perhaps less certainly marks
too a psychological acceptance of the Catholicism which had so effectively defined that same
childhood.

56 ibid., p. 194.
57 ibid., p. 224.
58 ibid., p. 233.
59 ibid., p. 24.
60 ibid., p. 233.
An Answer from Limbo (1962)

Brendan Tierney’s limbo is both geographical and theological. If his “Exile now means exile from this ... My island is no longer my home ...”,61 it is the theological certainties (however unpalatable) of Catholic Ireland which he has left behind as much as the land itself. Thus, “Wasn’t it simply that I was twenty-two, that fifteen and seven made twenty-two, seven years of telling lies to keep the religious peace, seven years of observance without belief, seven years of secret rage at each mention of my ‘immortal soul’?”.62 Brendan Tierney ventures forth to New York, away from the “provincial mediocrity” of his “native land” to “the Rome of our day”.63 It is a potentially lonely and violent place where Brendan’s mother, visiting from Ireland, meets friends in the dangerous open spaces of Central Park. One such friend, Mrs Anaspey, tells her that the Catholics here are “‘the kind of Catholic would strangle you with the rosary beads for one dollar in your purse’”.64 Indeed, Mrs Tierney notes that “Catholics here were not very tolerant” and

The priests preached sermons on Sundays that hardly had the word God in them but plenty about the communists and the chinese and so on. And that bishop on television, all decked out in his crucifix and cape and biretta and telling jokes, some of them not in the best taste. There was nothing holy about that, was there? And Mrs Anaspey, she always had the hard word for everybody.65

It is a city where Brendan’s wife, late in the novel, wanders the city to confront only limited signs of social cohesiveness amidst the Spanish-speaking Puerto Ricans there, “ignored in that thick familial atmosphere, she found herself wondering why in all New York it was only these poor unwanted immigrants, imprisoned in their alien language and customs, who still lived life in a real community”.66

The city’s cultural diversity and the anonymity of its physical space marks the decline of the community and the rise of the individual comes to epitomise the indeterminacy of the limbo

61 B. Moore, An Answer from Limbo, p. 31.
62 ibid., p. 29.
63 Imperial, of course, rather than Catholic Rome.
64 ibid., p. 95.
65 ibid., p. 95.
66 ibid., p. 225.
state. When the Brendan Tierney's child, Liam, suffers a playground accident, Brendan's mother thinks of the soteriological consequences for the unbaptized child: "If he dies she thought, he cannot go to heaven. He will go to Limbo; that's the place for children who have never been baptized: in Limbo they stay for eternity, never in the sight of God." Here, New York's secularism is reflected in a symbolic, atheological absence, the physical, built environment mirroring in Brendan's consciousness the death of God where "Across the street I saw a lighted checkerboard of windows at Union Theological Seminary. But the theologians were abed."69

It is not only Mrs Tierney, therefore, that encounters the contrast between theological certainty and the epistemological openness of liberal American culture. Throughout the novel, as with Moore's other early American writings which reflect so much of post-War secularism, the language of theology persists in this atheological world, even in the title of the novel. It surfaces consistently most notably in the consciousness of Tierney as a writer the further he moves into the increasingly anchorless realm of his own story, where "I am living, no longer in New York, but in the world of my characters".70 To follow John Wilson Foster's distinction between primitive and existential outsider, Tierney's adherence to the pre-modern forms of Irish Catholicism is so residual that his growing alienation from family, friends and cultural roots mean he is without doubt the first protagonist of Moore's to face the heart of a thoroughly contemporary, existential angst.71 The struggle for meaning amidst the essential anomic of the New York metropolis, a seeming cultural free for all and apparently collective moral free fall, is represented by Brendan Tierney's transference of libidinal energy into his writing as metaphysical anchor.

Yet, ironically, it is the cultural and more narrowly theological certainties which are seen by Brendan Tierney as a source of literary success in America. It is the geography of childhood

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67 Cf., the "Downtown limbo" of Ginger Coffey, p. 68.
68 ibid., p. 225.
69 ibid., p. 236; the term "atheology" was classically characterised by M.C. Taylor, Erring: A Postmodern A/Theology (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1984).
70 ibid., p. 101.
71 Cf. above, pp. 48-50, that is, Foster's distinction between "primitive" and existential" outsider.
which marks the contours of Brendan Tierney’s sudden, almost mathematical certainty about the re-inclusion of this departed Catholic world (Catholic Ireland, “Home, that Moscow of the mind”), albeit in the service of literary ambition:

When the answer came to me, it reminded me of my scolds when, out of nowhere, you suddenly knew that Ankara was the capital of Turkey. Or in algebra you found what $x$ was. Because I knew one thing, everything else was simple. Simple as genius ...\(^{72}\)

... in that moment, at the corner of 6th and Greenwich Avenues, the answer came. Ankara is the capital of Turkey. My mother.\(^{73}\)

Geography is the metaphorical key here, as elsewhere in Moore’s fiction; in order to achieve his aesthetic ideal, Brendan needs, ironically, to re-encounter the Old World of his mother and she, in service to her son’s obsession, sees how the New World America has transformed him; Mrs Tierney’s most fundamental encounter with the New World is as a place of lonely death amidst Old World memories.

*An Answer from Limbo* marks an important stage in Moore’s portrayal of Catholicism, representing, like *The Luck of Ginger Coffey*, a physical shift to North America and yet unlike Moore’s first North American fiction, a more conceptually sophisticated response to Catholicism. If migrant Irish-American protagonists or disillusioned Catholics remaining in Ireland tend to reject or remain ambivalent to the religion of their birth, Brendan Tierney is concerned not simply with rejecting or remaining in uneasy stasis with Catholicism but with providing an equally all-encompassing substitution for it. For Brendan’s mother, by contrast, the physical and cultural distance from Ireland simply highlights her sense of Catholic worldview rather than weakens it. The current issue for all the early American novels, though, (*The Luck of Ginger Coffey*, *I Am Mary Dunne* and *Fergus*) is that America presupposes the liberal secularism which Catholicism invariably encounters there.

Except for marginal hints at religious diversity, this, of course, is a limited portrayal of North American religious life in the 1950s.\(^{74}\) The outrageously stereotypical presentation of the lecherous Vito Italiano, and his Italian Catholic mother, is one of the few instances in these early American novels where non-Irish Catholicism is portrayed. Catholicism retains, though its sense of otherness. Sexual liberalism is at the root of Italiano’s character. It is presupposed

\(^{72}\) [ibid.](#), p. 7.
\(^{73}\) [ibid.](#), p. 13.
\(^{74}\) Cf. [ibid.](#), p. 173, Brendan’s mother in dialogue with the Zen Buddhism of D.T. Suzuki.
that, in the face of New World morality the recent Catholic migrant will abandon his religion which satisfies only old women, here ageing Catholic mothers. Protestantism, of course, the great force which provided the cultural roots of white Anglo-Saxon American ancestry and still informs American ‘Civil Religion’ is likewise ignored in Moore’s portrayal of American religion even when it is an important part of America’s secular life.

American liberalism, then, is only part of the picture, if a relatively important one. Brendan Tierney in fact ultimately rejects this aspect of liberal American culture as firmly as he does the much more restrictive morality of the Irish Catholicism of his mother. He recognises American liberal attitudes to sexuality in particular, with its attached culture of psychoanalytic dependency, as just as cultic as Christianity: “The trouble with analysis ... is that it’s becoming a religion with Messiah and Holy Writ and even its Judases like Ferenczi and Reich - and a whole damned priesthood.” Where in another early American novel, Mary Dunne, a failed creative spirit, finds meaning in sexual encounter as a model of liberation from Catholicism, for Brendan Tierney it is writing, symbolised by his resignation from his post as journalist and his struggle to write and publish a literary masterpiece, his great first novel, which becomes his substitute for everything: his job, his wife, his children, his mother, and finally himself.

Not unnaturally, after resigning from a hack-journalistic post he cares nothing for, his marriage is the first casualty. As his obsession with literary posterity takes firm root, there is a consequent detachment from sexual desire. It is not simply a loss of sexual libido. Brendan’s untitled novel and its painful struggle into existence become a vicarious form of sexual activity, just as writing has replaced Catholicism too, his book becoming “the belief that replaces belief.” With doubtless intended irony, then, this supposedly heroic and self-sacrificing attempt at literary greatness leads to the rather ordinary and unsurprisingly mundane breakup of his marriage to Jane.

Just so his lack of militant atheism increases the gulf between himself and his mother. Further to writing as vicarious sexual activity, the creation of the novel becomes the means by which

75 ibid., p. 124.
76 ibid., p. 266.
the writer Brendan Tierney hopes to transcend death and replace religion. After a late night, drunken argument with his wife, he seeks to talk with his mother in their New York apartment:

‘Please,’ I said. ‘It’s still early.’
‘It’s not early, it’s late. And tomorrow I have to go to early Mass.’
‘Ah, yes. Mass. If only Mass were the answer.’
‘Mass is the answer.’
‘Ah, Mamma, Mamma. There are far fewer things in heaven than are dreamt of in your philosophy.’
‘How do you know?’ she said. ‘Who told you what there is in heaven?’
‘Nobody. That’s the trouble. That’s why I’ve made writing my religion.’
She smiled. ‘You call that a religion?’
‘Well, it’s an act of faith that by own efforts, some part of me will survive the undertaker.’
‘Brendan, that’s no religion, that’s pure vanity.’

Intimately connected with the romanticism of place and folk-heroism of writing, Tierney’s quest detaches him from the existential self of memory, his childhood roots, the Catholic Brendan of “the young Scouts of Ireland.” Now New York, where his novel writing becomes associated with his own rebirth, is at the root of his transformed, literary identity, “The man I am become in these past few weeks is kin only to that old writer who some day, sitting on a balcony in Nice or San Francisco will try to think back to this year and this place, to the moment when he was truly born.”

In producing a work which he hopes will be read by future generations rather than simply a best selling work to be pulped making its writer and publisher (here Gardiner Key) wealthy, Brendan seeks immortality through writing. Indeed, Brendan Tierney commonly associates his own literary career with the greats of European literature, the novel being suffused with such references, for instance in what follows to Flaubert and Gide:

The literary life in New York was a great charade in which people pretended to be other than they were. Their ambitions remained private fantasies: they had neither real beliefs nor the courage to implement them. Was I one of them? Was I really serious about my manuscript? And if I was, why was I drunk, kissing strange girls, then running through the streets looking for my wife? Why wasn’t I working tonight? Was I really prepared to be a Flaubert, labouring my life away at Croisset in an endless search for the right words; was I prepared to face the future of Gide’s lonely old writer man in the

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77 ibid., p. 83.
78 ibid., p. 117.
79 ibid., p. 117.
endless solitude of some hotel room? 

It is a point of interest that Brendan’s cultural anchor remains firmly European. The historical significance of Spain for the American writer, here so reminiscent of Hemingway, is also highlighted but in a heated debate with his one time mentor Ted Ormsby, and subjected to a typical Tierney critique:

Spain, Spain, I’ve been to Spain. You suggested it, remember? The trouble with Spain, Ted, it’s the solution of your generation, not mine. The idea of living in some foreign funkhole just because it’s cheap belongs to the thirties. This is the fifties. Times have changed. A writer today must be at the centre of things. New York is the centre. 

Yet Ted Ormsby, the supposed romantic faces a retort which highlights the moral vacuity of Brendan’s quest for art for art’s sake:

‘Still the romantic, aren’t we Ted? Always wanting a cause to die for.’
 ‘And what about you Brendan, have you no cause but yourself?’
 ‘Causes? Colonialism, the class system and all that. Don’t you realise, Ted, that those aren’t real causes any more. The trouble with today’s causes, they’re bound to succeed. The Welfare State isn’t a cause any more in these islands. Even in Ireland it’s inevitable.’
...
‘Three quarters of the world don’t have enough to eat, yet you -
 ‘That problem won’t be solved by revolution and you know it. Just as the fact of the atom bomb can’t be charmed away by pacifists.’

In his moral vacuum, Europe remains Brendan Tierney’s secularised aesthetic anchor, a bastion against Irish Catholic roots and North American anomie. Still, like Fergus after him, he must face the charge of his political and final moral indifference.

While through Brendan’s wife’s maiden name, Jane Melville, the heritage of nineteenth American literature is very indirectly acknowledged, it seems that ‘current’ trends in ‘contemporary’ American literature are scorned. Thus, while the publication of Brendan’s one time friend Max Bronstein’s novel instils a degree of jealousy which spurs Brendan to finish his own novel very early on in _An Answer From Limbo_, Bronstein becomes in Moore’s fiction a recurring parody of the ‘Beat generation’ writing and culture of the time; “This morning he was wearing sandals, sunglasses, green chino trousers and a red shirt imprinted with a design

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80 We might look at Tierney’s other self-comparisons: “My earlier attempts at paterfamilias, my role-playing of a Sunday at home now seemed an unreal, unnecessary farce. Balzac, during some crisis in his personal life, dismissed it with: ‘And now for the important thing: ‘Who will Eugenie Grandet marry?’ “ibid., p. 159, and Conrad “We salute that Pole”, ibid., p. 102.
81 ibid., p. 20.
82 ibid., p. 21.
of yellow birds. Recently he has grown a beard which mocks this Beat fancy dress". Tierney similarly later castigates “the false artist, posturing through life as he spews out his tiny frauds”, asking what spectacle is “more degrading than the lives of these Village Rimbauds, covered in the vomit of sickly pastiche, crying out their genius and their purity and their mouths filled with rotten teeth".

Even the decor of the Tierneys’ New York apartment symbolises a complex cultural distance between one form of contemporary America, and its flirtation with the East (now in encounter with Catholic Ireland): “When I saw that room, Jappened by Jane, I began to feel afraid. Anyone who can conceive of that Zen shrine as suitable for my mother will never understand my mother’s world. Will I myself understand it?” Culture becomes the means of contrast between Brendan’s dead father just as the fashions of ‘contemporary’ American life separate him from his mother. A devout man, “a Grand Knight of Columbus”, Brendan’s literary idols become in his eyes the despised figures of corruption in Irish cultural life and Catholic religion (in ways to be found also in the religiously charged aesthetic differences between father and son in The Emperor of Ice-Cream): “He despised the work of Somerville and Ross (a travesty of Ireland), James Joyce (a sewer), Oscar Wilde (a blackguard) and John Millington Synge (bunkum)”.

There is a notable and certainly self-conscious irony presented by Moore in An Answer from Limbo. It is that Brendan’s preoccupation with literary survival directly leads to the cruel and isolated death of his mother in a New York flat she is caretaking for an Irish-American relative, Frank Finnerty. Meanwhile, as his mother dies alone, Brendan struggles towards the completion of his book, isolated in his own way, a self-imposed exile from three generations, that of his own represented by his wife, the previous generation by his mother, and the future generation by his two children, Liam and Lisa. We have an early example of a trait common to Moore’s later fiction with the death of a major character providing fictional closure to the text of

83 ibid., p. 11.
84 ibid., p. 57.
85 ibid., p. 28.
86 ibid., p. 61.
the novel.⁸⁷

In this novel, though, it is not simply the physical limit of an individual's life being marked by the physical limit of the text, so increasingly common as a technique in Moore's fiction, but the ritual burial of Brendan's Irish Catholic mother represents the symbolic death of a traditional Catholicism on secular American soil. Just as importantly, though, Brendan Tierney's antipathy toward the naiveties of Catholic belief and practice show a degree of ambivalence at the funeral itself. The moment of death and the finality of the physical burial highlight the insecurities of an otherwise confident New York secular materialism. If we take seriously the psychological emptiness of Brendan's final reflection on near Faustian self-sacrifice, then his radical alternative to God, sex and protection against death (writing as a metaphysical panacea) has failed. Rather bleakly, in the last lines of *An Answer from Limbo* Brendan Tierney is at the graveside of a literal and metaphorical Catholicism (his mother's) but left to confront the mortal weaknesses of his own selfishly individualistic, aesthetic vision.

Thus, in Moore's second 'North American' novel, *An Answer from Limbo*, we see in Brendan and Jane Tierney a model of American liberalism in their adoption of the secular materialist values of 'modern day' New York, this being being contrasted by the arrival of Brendan's strictly traditional Catholic mother from Ireland. Catholicism's encounter is between different sets of values and contrasting worldviews. Place, country and landscape here take on idealistic as well as well physical contours. An authoritarian, Vatican I Catholicism is portrayed, marking well defined limits of theological inclusion and exclusion. This is most clearly demonstrated by physical migration where geography marks theological as well as physical distance (and in differing ways this is the case for Brendan and his mother). Here cultural interplay, for instance the Irish Catholic mother visiting the Americanised, liberal son, is thus highlighted by transposition of geographical location. Yet Mrs Tierney's perceptions that American Catholicism is dissimilar to the Catholicism of Ireland shows something which is to become important both in Moore's fiction as well as in Catholicism itself, particularly as, post-Vatican II, cultural difference in Catholicism surfaces in its theology and ecclesiology. In a post-Vatican II world differences in geography and culture will further highlight theological difference in the worldviews Catholicism encounters, and within Catholicism's own internal.

⁸⁷ Cf. note 35 above, p. 83; see again, Gearon, 'No Other Life', *Journal of Beliefs and Values*, and Gearon, 'Catholics', in Hayes et al., eds., *Religion and Sexuality*. (95)
cultural and geographical variations. In later fiction such as *The Colour of Blood*, *No Other Life*, *The Statement* and *The Magician's Wife*, this is something which Brian Moore exploits to the full.

**I Am Mary Dunne** (1968)

Mary Dunne's sexual liberalisation (setting aside the issues of psychological insecurity when these are related to marriage and changes of name) reflects the moral climate of the 1960s. Of course, such liberalisation marks too Mary's distance from the Butchersville Catholicism of her past. It marks too, following the relative revolution of the Second Vatican Council, the retention by the Catholic Church of a conservative attitude to sexual morality, a matter confirmed three years after the close of the Council with the 1968 papal encyclical, *Humanae Vitae*. Still, in ways more similar to Fergus' haunting by a distinctly Irish pre-Vatican II Catholic past, it is Mary Dunne's Catholic schooling, her own pre-Vatican II past (including the symptomatic Latin education) which frames the novel's portrayal of Catholicism. The opening paragraphs - where Mary deliberately misquotes/mistranslates Descartes' famous *cogito ergo sum* to *cogito ergo memento*, we are what we remember - highlights the centrality of Catholic worldview as much as the personal complexities of her varied sexual relationships.

(Cartesian doubt, of course, cannot be said to have ever been a major feature in Catholic education.) With one major exception, then, it is a pre-Vatican II Catholicism with which Moore is concerned in *I Am Mary Dunne*.

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88 For the global context for the reception of this, probably the best known and most controversial of all twentieth century papal encyclicals, and one which was most symptomatic of a post-Vatican II conservative backlash in areas of personal morality, see P. Hebblethwaite, *Paul VI: The First Modern Pope* (New York, Paulist Press, 1993). There is a shorter piece by Hebblethwaite, 'Paul VI' in Hastings, ed., *Modern Catholicism*, pp. 45-54, which contains an idiosyncratic defence of *Humanae Vitae*. Paul VI's response to the hostile reception of *Humanae Vitae* is well indicated by Duffy's observation that "He never wrote another encyclical, and the last ten years of his pontificate were marked by deepening gloom, as he agonised over the divisions within the Church and his own unpopularity" (*Saints and Sinners*, p. 281). After the brief accession of John Paul I in the late summer of 1978, the current Pope John Paul II, while presenting some radical social teaching, has maintained a conservative stance on personal morality. The insightful official biography, Szule, *John Paul II*, reveals the little publicly known fact that Karol Wojtyla, as Archbishop of Krakow, was one of the major drafters of *Humanae Vitae*. This was one of the matters excluded from consideration at the Council. The report by the "Birth Control Commission", after seven years of deliberations reported to Paul VI that Catholic opposition to artificial contraception could be reasonable sustained but that opposition to birth control has little scriptural foundation. Paul VI, largely under the influence of Karol Wojtyla, overturned the Commission's conclusions. In 1967, a year before the publication of *Humanae Vitae*, Wojtyla was named cardinal. See especially, Szule, *John Paul II*, pp. 253-255.
Like the next novel in this sequence of early American fiction, *Fergus*, the narrative of *I Am Mary Dunne* takes place over a single day. The timescale, together with the common use of free indirect speech or stream of consciousness technique in both reflects Moore's 'modernist' preoccupations, these works thus continuing to demonstrate the influence of Joyce in Moore's early Irish novels so noted by commentators. *I Am Mary Dunne* is an uncertain quest for a stable identity, born Mary Dunne, she married Jimmy to become Mary Phelan, married Hat to become Mary Bell and Terence, her most recent husband, to become Mary Lavery ("I play an ingenue role, with special shadings demanded by each suitor"99). The consequent psychological fragmentation ("But seriously, Dunne, Phelan, Bell, Lavery - just think if it were you, would you remember?"90) invades the narrative with recollections of past, personal history invading the narrative throughout the day's duration. What creates the certainty of each persona is the fixity of place, or rather the fixed memory of place and its complex of associations: "I am a changeling who has changed too often and there are moments when I cannot find my way back".91 For each phase of family life, for each new married relationship, a different environment predominates: the countryside of Butchersville for Mary Dunne, Toronto for Mary Phelan, Montreal for Mary Bell, New York for Mary Lavery.

In Mary's mind her family's immigrant Irish-Canadian roots are well characterised in terms of family geography and - in the location of this geography with post-Famine history - heighten the possibility of an alternative family biography:

Father Malone, according to Grandma Dunne, was the name of an Irish cardinal. It seems the cardinal led thousands of Irish emigrants to Australia to save them from the famine. My great-grandfather was to have gone to Australia with the cardinal's group and had christened his new baby in honour of the cardinal. But, at the last minute, Great-grandfather Dunne changed his mind, raised his own passage money, and sailed to Quebec instead. If he had sailed to Australia I would not have been. Sometimes, I think of that.92

Mary's Catholicism becomes increasingly residual as the novel progresses, something which she herself admits in regard to her relationship with Jimmy whose sperm she "feared" ... "And I dreamed of abortions. I didn't believe I'd be able to go through with one. I suppose the last

89 B. Moore, *I Am Mary Dunne*, p. 31.
90 ibid., p. 167.
91 ibid., p. 115.
92 ibid., p. 15.
vestige of being a Catholic was the little part of me which still saw it as murder.”93 In a world in which she has left Catholicism behind in Butchersville, religious language still colours Mary’s consciousness and experience of the world: with Hat “there were I love you’s and do you love me’s and yes I do’s, the first prayers the first of those litanies I would come to know as prayers of failure”94; as biblical narrative defines her later unfaithfulness to Hatfield Bell, “I Simon Peter to Hat’s drunken Christ, yes, I denied him”95; and as she sees “My father the lecher. My father who art in hell.”96 Crucially too, biblical narrative defines her experience of ecstasy with Terence “my saviour, I shall not want, he maketh me to lie down in green pastures, he restoreth my soul. Yes, that’s right. He’s my new religion. He’s life after death.”97 Similarly, Mary later claims “Naked is make it new, there is no past, you are my resurrection and my life and out of my depth I cry to you and now Terence maketh me lie down in green pastures ...” 98

Here, with Terence, the cityscape of New York as much as the language of religion defines the experience:

Through the glass panel of the the bus window, my face slid past the facade of the Metropolitan Museum. My bus had crossed the park from West Side to East and now I was reminded that the Met, for me, is Terence. The Met where we met. Even today, sitting on the bus in the Hat dooms, the sight of the Met raised me in joy, remembering thee, O Terence ...99

As Mary moves further in experience and distance from Butchersville, ("At twenty, my life stretched before me like an empty horizon"100) the Butchersville of Sacred Heart nuns and her mother, the psychological landscape of home remains well defined in relation to her memory of place:

... my whole world, you became - what? A letter from Nova Scotia ... written in that convent hand ... the Sacred Heart nuns taught you fifty years ago ...

... A Holy Day of Obligation. Oh, Mama, back there in Butchersville, back where there are holy days of obligation, where - rain, hail, snow or lumps beneath the skin - you

93 ibid., p. 138.
94 ibid., p. 35.
95 ibid., p. 46.
96 ibid., p. 67.
97 ibid., p.109.
98 ibid., p.170.
99 ibid., p.109.
100 ibid., p.10.
are commanded by the Church to rise, back your old green Chev on to that bleak
Canadian highway, and drive eight miles to Immaculate Conception Church.101

Typically again, her present day consciousness is transformed by the religious language of the
past, so New York’s secular and liberal world is transformed by the inherited theology of the
past, where the “women became cardinals in their pews at High Mass”102 and reminds her of
“those distorted paintings of cardinals by Francis Bacon and I wondered if I first saw those
paintings in the Museum of Modern Art or was it later with Terence at the big Bacon show at
the Guggenheim?”103 Moore thereby shows the persistence, in ways probably alien to Brendan
Tierney, of the religious in (collective) aesthetic experience as well as in Mary’s (individual)
consciousness. This Mary is married to the English playwright, Terence Lavery, her own
literary and acting aspirations have been renounced to her husband’s ambitions. For Mary
Lavery, Europe has becomes imaginatively transformed, travel no longer a means of escape
(the migrant girl from Butchersville) but a mark of success, and so she tells Karl Dieter Peters
that “We’re going to be in Europe all summer”.104 Terence’s Englishness, even his appearance
is important (though Hat parodies this same appearance as Beatle-like105), as are other
references to European culture such as the Turner Show at the Museum of Modern Art.106
Europe and European culture retain, as they did for Brendan Tierney, a sort of (cultural)
benchmark.107

Earlier phases of her life, with Hat in Montreal for instance, are defined through place. Distant
then from a Catholic upbringing in Butchersville Montreal nevertheless defines Mary’s friend
Janice in ways which her friend acknowledges could not apply to Mary, adding to Mary’s
alienation from both self (“I wasn’t Mary Dunne when I met Janice, I was still Mary

101 ibid., pp. 10-12.
102 ibid., p. 3.
103 ibid., p. 3.
104 ibid., p. 20.
105 ibid., p. 104.
106 ibid., p. 43.
107 Still, it is a Europe whose recent historical memory has been contaminated by the
holocaust, as Mary recalls early in the novel:

As I gave the driver my address I remembered an article I read once about the trail of Hess,
the Auschwitz commandant, an article in which the Polish State prosecutor was quoted as
saying that the main crime of the Auschwitz camp guards was not sadism; it was
indifference ... ibid., pp. 6-7.
Phelan108) and place:

We're different, I mean I'd miss Montreal. Of course you weren't born there, you
don't feel that way, only people who were there, only people who were born there do,
I suppose. But you know, when I think of all those years I used to dream of living in
Paris or New York I know now that that was all daydreaming, because, no matter
where I was, I'd miss Montreal.109

Mary simply considers how great it was “to have left it forever”110:

Those awful winters, the days of Duplessis. But that Montreal, Duplessis' Montreal, is
the only one I know. And it doesn't exist anymore. When I go back now, I don't know
the place. It makes me feel old.111

In Montreal with Hat, it is not only the unhappiness of the relationship which is associated with
place but the ridiculousness of religion when she observes there the “Ancient Arabic order of
Nobles of the Mystic Shrine”, “red fezzes incongruous on their aging protestant faces”,112
wondering “how could I explain why those failures in foolish hats, those old joiners, looking
so damned silly as they marched behind the blue and gold shakos of the boys in hussar
uniforms from Rosewood Central High, why did they make me weep?”113 Montreal, for Mary
exists now in memory only, the great coda for the novel itself, and true to the narrative's
occasional Proustian reference, “for me it is gone, my old Montreal”:

That is true of all my old towns. I move away and they change and, in their changing,
they die and so live only in my memory.114

Janice, the person Mary discovers informed Hat of the affair Mary was having with Terence, is
more settled as a migrant and regards her own mother’s exotic experience of old Europe
(Janice's mother had travelled in Imperial Russia, had met Rasputin and Proust115) as dull; but
this is an outlook which is parodied. It is, though, through North American space, here the
cityscape of New York, that Mary makes the associates between happiness and Terence:

A few days after Hat left for Washington, I took Hat's boy, Pete, into New York to
catch the plane to Toronto. Pete had been visiting us for six weeks and after I put him
on the plane I went up to Jody Terrel's for a drink and that was how I met Terence, that

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108 ibid., p. 100.
109 ibid., p. 41.
110 ibid., p. 41.
111 ibid., p. 101.
112 ibid., p. 82.
113 ibid., p. 82.
114 ibid., p. 102.
115 ibid., p. 54.
was something, I can’t explain it, but we met again that next day, and then, every day. I took the train to town to be with him, sometimes even staying overnight in his apartment on the Lower East Side. Which was foolish and dangerous, of course, but, how can I explain it, I was living in state of elation, waking up in excitement every morning, finding myself smiling in the street when I thought of Terence and me, hating to go to sleep, feeling there never was, never would be a time like this, that New York was the greatest city, that, oh, that I had no nerves anymore. For the first time in my life I was happy.\footnote{116}

That she feels no guilt for the affair with Terence ("I had no sorrow for what I had done to Hat"\footnote{117}) emphasises her distance from her Catholic upbringing. Further, though, travelling to meet Terence, the cab heads for “the Algonquin”. It is a venue which reminds the reader of America’s actual, historical cultural heritage and the destruction (a culture reduced to the name of a bar) imposed upon it by European, Christian settlers, a matter which Moore of course addresses at length in \textit{Black Robe}.

For each transformation of marital status marked by place, there is also what the anthropologists term the liminal, the ritually undecided, the in-between state,\footnote{118} here a state between suitors, when personal identity is most uncertain: “It’s a down Tilt, it’s the knowledge that someone has gone off on a journey and that you have stayed behind. They have gone. You have stayed behind”.\footnote{119} Again, Moore defines Mary’s relationships through place, her consciousness marked as much if not more so by shifts in landscape as alterations of name:

Two years ago ... in the Plaza San Jacinto in El Paso, Texas, three little Indian girls stared me into the dooms. Remember them dooms? Please God, let me forget them. Dry hot winds blow down through Texas, down to the Mexican border, rushing into El Paso del Notre, filling its streets and squares with dust. A border town; it made think of a cheap army surplus store. At noon, lawyer Guzman’s jitney brought half a dozen of us back to it from Cuidad Juarez and our quick divorces, the jitney crossing Cordova bridge over the muddy ditch that is the Rio Grande, past the US customs building and along a long, dusty road to a bus terminal where the bus from Mexico was unloading people with Indian faces, poor people who crossed the street from the terminal like pilgrims going to a shrine, the shrine a long block of cheap clothing, furniture and appliance stores, filled with shoddy goods ‘Made in the USA’.\footnote{120}

If there is a world beyond Mary’s direct personal experience, the events of world history subtly penetrate the narrative, a newspaper blown, for instance, onto Mary’s knee declaring death in
the Delta for the Viet Cong.121

Moore’s strongly naturalistic literary technique - with a studied metaphysical neutrality - (“There doesn’t have to be ... any ... PURPOSE”122), highlights too the wider evolutionary and cosmic history of Mary Dunne’s much smaller story. Thus, when Mary and Janice walk through the Rambles, a rural part of Central Park but with a danger characteristic of the city, Mary observes:

Ahead of us, above the treetops, was the roof of the Museum of Natural History, the whole building, big as Roman basilica, coming into view as we went down the path towards the West Side. A yellow rush of cabs moved uptown on Central Park West, passing the museum entrance. I thought of the plaque at the entrance honouring Teddy Roosevelt; the place was built for him, it’s his sort of museum, stuffed animals, boy scout enthusiasms, dinosaur bones and scale models ... At the other end of the block was the Planetarium ...123

Both Natural History Museum and Planetarium jointly provide at least ambiguous alternatives to a theological understanding of the world and Mary’s place amongst the museums - as post-Enlightenment tributes to human science and reason - is indicative of her stated secularism. Thus later, at the end of the novel Mary, discovering her mother’s tumour may not be malignant, is nevertheless repulsed by her mother’s apparent resignation to the divine will. Mary’s distance from Butchersville, equally theological as physical, is decisive and seemingly unequivocal:

God: I see Jesus, effeminate and sanctimonious; he wears a wispy brown beard and a white nightgown. He holds his hands up, palm outward, as though stopping traffic. He stops me. When his name comes up in our conversations, my mother and I become strangers in a darkness, far away from contact with each other; strangers on a long distance wire.124

Confronting, though, her intense psychological disequilibrium, at a head as Terence sleeps, she rejects suicidal impulses and comes to an acceptance of her existential limit. Moore, again so commonly ending the narrative with literary reflections on death, ensures textual ending naturalistically mirrors existential limit, “And death which frightened me all day, death which brought hints of these dooms, death did not frighten me now, death was quiet graves, Hat’s grave, my father’s grave, stone markers in the snow”.125 Admitting that she is “the sort of

121 ibid., p. 90.
122 ibid., p. 166.
123 ibid., p. 110-111.
124 ibid., p. 227.
125 ibid., p. 229.
person who is very susceptible to environment", 126 it is the 'Cartesian' language of the conven classroom of childhood (Cogito ergo sum/ Memento ergo sum) that persists when she declares, adopting the form of religious litany, that "I am Mary Dunne, I am Mary Dunne, I am Mary Dunne". 127 The irony here is that, like Ginger Coffey, Mary returns to her childhood cultural roots (family, church, school) and apparently also to the innocence of childhood belief as a stable source of personal identity in a world without apparent theological meaning.

_Fergus_ (1971)

Moore explores similar themes of residual but persistent migrant Catholic identity in _Fergus_. Learning that "Forgetting is the most terrible thing that can happen to person", 128 Fergus Fadden's residency on the Californian coast provides the setting for visitations from an Irish past, from "Ireland the most distressful country, Europe's back of beyond". 129 As in _I Am Mary Dunne_, historical and present experience are linked through memory, thereby connecting past theological space and present physical place. With two novels published, the thirty-nine year old writer’s confidence in using literary form, here a film script adaptation of the second novel, is undermined as effectively as his sexual insecurity. Here we have, in essence, the novel's dual complex of minor concerns, themes now commonplace in Moore’s fiction: Catholic teaching on human relations (sexual promiscuity, marriage, divorce) and writing as a replacement for religious belief. Fergus' doubts, though, about both his liberalised sexuality and literary alternative to Catholicism finally reveal more major concerns about surviving death. Eventually, then, more fundamental concerns about an afterlife override Fergus’ more temporal concerns with sexuality and writing.

Initially, however, sexual insecurity is much to the fore, as the opening line of the novel ("When his girl left, Fergus wept’’130) suggests. Fergus' argument with Dani, a generational as well geographical and cultural difference leads him to reflect that, "It was so easy to make mistakes with someone from another country, of another generation, someone from California,

126 *ibid.*, p. 231.
127 *ibid.*, p. 168.
128 _Fergus_, p. 158.
129 *ibid.*, p. 104.
130 *ibid.*, p. 1.
for godsakes". 131 Sexuality becomes more defined by place throughout the novel as Catholic teaching (principally relating sex and sin) from Fergus’ Irish past are reiterated throughout the text. The distinctly ‘Church militant’ ecclesiology defines precisely the pre-Vatican II portrayal of this theme. Father Maurice Kinneally, “MA, Doctor of divinity” - an intertextual ghost from The Feast of Lupercal - intercedes for the New World Fergus (a “moral cesspool”) “as a captain in the Church militant, ever ready to defend the souls of the boys in his care against the devil and all his female hordes”. 132 As with I Am Mary Dunne, sexual morality is the only aspect of post-Vatican II conservatism (“Yes, the Catholic aim in life is the propagation of the faithful”133) that is hinted at when Fergus sees his young mother as a young married woman (“always expecting”134) and comments that “History was against you ... Imagine if you could be born, say, twenty years from now, when birth control will be permitted for Catholics?” 135 Fergus reflects too the divisions that the particularly controversial conservatism of Humanae Vitae provoked within the Catholic Church:136 “Did you know that, nowadays, the Catholic Church is split down the middle on whether to ban it or permit it?”137 His father, to whom the latter question is principally addressed remains within the mould of the pre-Vatican Church as we see his attachment to the liturgical forms (“Mustn’t miss the first gospel”138) which were disregarded after Sacrosanctum Concilium. Making to leave his son’s house for the Mass, then, it is an umbrella that Dr Fadden seeks, a phantom living not only in the pre-Vatican II world but still in Moore’s fictional Ireland with that consistent literary-meteorological rain motif; but, in California, two worlds colliding, there is the ironic recognition that “it’s a lovely day”.139 (For Fergus it certainly isn’t.) Here, again, meteorology (“the inevitable Irish rain”140) becomes cultural, further emphasising this now common metaphorical pattern of physical as theological distance between these Old and New Worlds.

131 ibid., p. 9.
132 ibid., pp.11-12.
133 ibid., p.140.
134 ibid., p.14.
135 ibid., p. 14; cf. Aunt Mary, Mrs Christie, and her insane husband, with “illness is no cause for annulment”, ibid., p. 32.
136 See notes 12 and 88 above, p. 77 and p. 96, respectively.
139 ibid., p. 26.
140 ibid., p. 136.
Aesthetically, as well as sexually, the relationship between writing and religion, so prevalent in *An Answer from Limbo* is further developed. Fergus' blend of fantasy and realism extends the possibilities of philosophical discussions with different apparitions addressing different areas of this relationship in ways which with the naturalistic given the intellectual imbalance between mother and son in *An Answer from Limbo* would not be possible. We see the insecurities prompted for Fergus when the producer “Redshields had not phoned in three weeks” and Fergus' thoughts that “Boweri was through with him”.141 This insecurity surfaces on a number of fronts. There is the charge that Fergus is “Just a Catholic writer”.142 The response (“I was never a Catholic writer”)143 provides a forced distance between Fergus' writing and his Catholicism but a curious metafictional summary of literary classification; though of course, as in *An Answer from Limbo* we know little of the content (plot, characters, and so forth) of either Brendan Tierney's or Fergus Fadden's novels.

From the poet Hugh Gildea there is the challenge of politics and its relationship with writing (later developed by Chaim Mandel) that “Writing is the crux of the matter”: “He told me he didn’t want to take an active part in politics because he believed the writer engaged was always a revolutionist manque. And usually wound up as a writer manque. He cited several examples.”144 Fergus' literary reputation is, as it was for Brendan Tierney, “a substitute for belief”145 but here such motives are deconstructed by his sister Maeve:

> As a Catholic you were brought up to believe in a life after death. But you can’t believe in it. So you invent a substitute. You start worrying about your reputation outliving you. Your work becomes your opportunity to cheat the grave. That very attractive thought, particularly for ex-Catholics. That’s why you care so much about your literary status.146

More positively, writing is also the manner in which Catholic Ireland and secular America may be linked. In Fergus' own family, his mother's uncle Dan was “‘famous the length and breadth of Ireland as a *scanuiche* [sic], a storyteller’”.147 Indeed, Fergus' attachment to Yeats

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141 *ibid.*, p. 6.
142 *ibid.*, p. 69.
143 *ibid.*, p. 69.
144 *ibid.*, p. 69.
145 *ibid.*, p. 40.
146 *ibid.*, pp. 40-41.
147 *ibid.*, p. 63.
provides a strong tie between the New World Fergus and at least one explicitly valued aspect of Old World cultural past, with Maeve's acceptance of Yeat's Protestantism being wryly presented in the text:

'We used to have him [W.B. Yeats] in school, the "Lake Isle o' Innisfree ... Sister Innocenta reading it as though it was Holy Writ ... '"^{148}

Of course, he's not really Irish. I mean, he was a Protestant, he's Anglo-Irish et cetera. Still, he was in the Irish Senate ... I suppose we could claim him.'^{149}

There is too, perhaps inevitably, a fundamental relationship between the writing and landscape, and the stated exploitation of the relationship again links Ireland and America: "Wouldn't it sicken you, the Dublin people making a shrine out of that blinking Martello Tower he used to live in? Of course, it's just a trick for the yankee tourists. The Dublin people will do anything for the almighty dollar".^[150]

Indeed, of all Moore's early novels, though, it is *Fergus* which makes most explicit the landscape (here natural rather than built environment) of encounter in physical and metaphysical terms. Until *Fergus*' publication, no other novel had given the natural environment such prominence. With the Californian shoreline, an indeterminate and unstable environment of land and sea, the imagery of place provides an opening and fictional closure to Fergus Fadden's story. Thus, when Dani left him that morning, "He opened the glass doors and stepped out onto the terrace overlooking the sea. He stood facing the deserted beach and the waves breaking over it".^[151] It is this place becomes the setting for the encounter between a pre-Vatican II Irish Church and a divorced, morally liberal and theologically sceptical Fergus just as, historically, the Church from which Fergus has become dissociated is, after the Second Vatican Council, changing. Fergus' father, without the same benefit of historical witness to such change as the living, claims that "the laws of the church don't change", that they "haven't changed in two thousand years".^[152] With an implied eye to the revolutions of the Council years 1962-65 as well as to the conservatism of some post-Vatican II encyclicals, Fergus responds,

^[151] *ibid.*, p. 3.
"They’re changing now, Daddy".153

In ways which preface Moore’s later and more complex treatment of the resilience of scepticism in a liberalised post-Vatican II American Church in Cold Heaven, the shoreline is the focus for Fergus’ enforced and uncomfortable encounter with a physically distant but now so psychologically close Irish Catholic past. Here his present environment shares the metaphysical coordinates for the home of Ireland:

Behind the house were mountain slopes, with clumps of chapparal and, here and there, tall century plants like vizier’s staffs, blooming once a year with strange feathery foliage, a landscape existing continuously in his mind as a real range of mountains and also as a fantasy backdrop from which, rearing out of the film screens of childhood, Hollywood cowboys might clatter through a mountain gulch. The house, like this landscape, existed both in the present and in his past, as this real house by the sea in California and as the house he now imagined it was, that house overlooking Belfast Lough, with a view of distant shipyard gantries, the house he was born in.154

Later, he finds himself at prayer, joining the family he had supposedly left in Ireland: “And there in the moonlight, on the shores of the Pacific, kneeling in this unused back bedroom, Fergus led the dead and the absent living in his first prayers in twenty-five years: the Our Father, ten Hail Marys, and the Glory Be to the Father. It was as though he had never been away.”155

Visitations, then, include the critical literary-Catholic ‘trinity’ of Moore’s fiction; home, school and church. From home there are Julie and Dr James Fadden, mother and father, “the grammar of our emotions”, Sister Maeve in the uniform of the Cross and Passion Convent, Aunt Kate, Mary Mother Gonzaga or Aunt Mary (“The real you is in Ireland, married, forty-three years old, four kids, the wife of Dr Dan Coyle”156), and Kathleen (“one of the few family members who didn’t fidget at her prayers”157). Representatives of church are Father Vincent Byrne (“Parish priest Church of the Holy Redeemer Belfast”158), Father Alonzo Aloysius Allen (“a Passionist Father from Mount Muckish Monastery, County Donegal, known as the greatest

154 ibid., p. 27.
155 ibid., p. 104.
156 ibid., p. 40.
157 ibid., p.104.
158 ibid., p. 89.
mission preacher in Ireland"\textsuperscript{159}). From school there are the figures of Father Maurice Kinneally ("MA, Doctor of divinity"\textsuperscript{160}) and the "Very reverend Daniel Keogh, MA, DD, president of St. Michan's School for Boys, Belfast".\textsuperscript{161} This final work of Moore's early American fiction integrates not only the environments of Old and New Worlds but old and new narratives, an intertextuality where many of these figures bear close semblance to characters in former fictions.

Outside the 'trinity' there is Fergus' old love Peggy Sanford, the woman abandoned when he left Europe for America at twenty-four, "the person he had betrayed"\textsuperscript{162} and other 'friends'. For the most part, like the consciously insular post-Vatican I Catholic Church, outside this 'trinity' the world of politics seems barely to impinge. Answering the charge that "It's a very low class of a person that has to cross the water to America", Fergus replies, "And President Kennedy?"\textsuperscript{163} Fergus for the most part takes a low profile and mostly deferential appearance as Catholic defendant in a trial on an unclear charge of adulterous voyeurism on Mrs Findlater. In the trial Fergus' 'politically' subservient stance in the face of the Royal Ulster Constabulary violence against the religious minority reflects the realities of Ulster politics. And enter here one time supporter of Irish Home Rule, Winston Churchill. Paddy Donlon heightens the political impotency of Fergus ("a man is what he does not what he says"\textsuperscript{164}). Former friends represent various global struggles: from colonial conflict (with Patrick Sarsfield dying in India) or early Cold War struggle (with Hugh Gildea, to Paddy Donlon "a Stuck up Protestant got [sic], he was. A Catholic, to him, was dirt", a Hugh Gildea dying in Korea\textsuperscript{165}).

The most telling criticism of Fergus, though, is that which could be levelled at the consciously 'separatist', literally other-worldly pre-Vatican II Church,\textsuperscript{166} that both have a tendency to be apolitical, even ahistorical. Despite Fergus' weak counter-charges against Mandel of having

\begin{footnotes}
\item[159]\textit{ibid.}, p. 144.
\item[160]\textit{ibid.}, p. 11.
\item[161]\textit{ibid.}, p. 92.
\item[162]\textit{ibid.}, p. 80.
\item[163]\textit{ibid.}, p. 15.
\item[164]\textit{ibid.}, p. 120.
\item[165]\textit{ibid.}, p. 125.
\item[166]See above, for instance, pp. 22-24.
\end{footnotes}
terior sexual motives for political activity, it is a charge most effectively put by Fergus' former friend from Greenwich Village:

The problem here ... is that this man is not living in history. His work, such as it is, ignores the great issues of the age. His life is narcissistic; he is completely ensnared by the system. True, he has rejected his ethnic background and has denounced the class, race and religion into which he was born. But to reject is not enough. Lacking a true foundation, he has fallen back on the cliche: the romantic sacerdotal ethic of art for art's sake, which was already dead and buried forty years ago. And so, ultimately, made reckless by his rootlessness, he has been led, sheeplike, to the final solution. Hollywood! 167

As with Moore's other early American novels, the historical, theological realities of an immigrant's cultural past become, through the metaphors of consciousness especially, part of the immigrant's present; theological language being displaced into a secular context. Thus, on seeing his father in the living room Fergus uses the expletive "Jesus Christ". His father, with the habit of ritual, responds with the Sign of the Cross. Fergus sees him "touching, in turn, his forehead, his chest, his left shoulder, then his right, just as he had done in life" and recalls his embarrassment with his father "doing it in public in the street or on a bus, if he happened to pass by a Catholic church". 168 Fergus reflects on the persistence of belief despite his physical and conscious distance from it:

Yesterday he could have said 'Jesus Christ' a hundred times and it would have been a meaningless expletive. But now he was conscious he had taken the Holy Name in vain. Which used to be a mortal (or was it venial) sin.

Philosophical about it all (the past is the past), he turned toward the glass doors, and there, as always, was the sea, the long Pacific breakers beginning their run two hundred yards from shore. 169

Place is significant in Fergus' insecure relationship with Dani. He had talked "of taking her abroad to show her all those places she had never seen - London, Rome, Stockholm, Dublin, and, of course, Paris". 170 Europe is seen again, as so often in the early American novels, as providing a cultural anchor for the refined American immigrant, though with vanity typical of Moore's writer protagonists the "thought of Faulkner steadied Fergus". 171 Neither the anchor of Faulkner as token American writer nor a literary European heritage can secure for Fergus the metaphysical certainty he seeks. His future with Redshields and Boweri uncertain and his life with Dani unpromising, for Fergus nothing approaches the narrow and inward-looking

167 ibid., p. 67.
168 ibid., p. 2.
169 ibid., p. 3.
170 ibid., p. 7.
171 ibid., p. 25.
certainties of Catholic Ireland - a place and a consciousness he cannot fully leave behind, a certainty which allows “The Irish people know that it is not this world that counts”, that “this life is but a preparation for eternity”.172

All of Fergus’ preoccupations, then, with relationships and writing, pale into insignificance as Dr Fadden precisely summarises for his son the unchanging essence of Catholic teleology: “We’re here on earth for one reason, and for one reason only. To save our immortal souls.”173 Here, talking to his theologically estranged son in the novel’s recurrent conversation on the afterlife, Dr Fadden rejects analogy as a means of explanation for a qualitatively different, radically other world, the existence of which Fergus is so keen to determine but which his ghostly visitors refuse to characterise: “It would be someplace you’d never seen, someplace so different you couldn’t even imagine it”.174 Dissimilarities between place, between Old and New Worlds, are made to look trivial in the process of failing description for this metaphysical realm. Still, the presence or absence of meaning which the answer might bring is highlighted by Dr Fadden, “Don’t you see? If you have not found a meaning, then your life is meaningless”.175 Lines which remind us of Mary Dunne’s descent into anomic when she struggles to convince herself that, “There doesn’t ... have to be a ... PURPOSE”.176 The metaphysical world presented by the fantasies of Moore’s fiction remains as mysterious to Fergus as Catholic belief in the afterlife itself. As the narrative draws to a close it is the latter grandnarrative of Catholic belief which is highlighted by the contrast between the physical and metaphysical. Fergus’ heart attack and near-death experience highlights his own proximity to both in another way. There, then, in the well-defined Californian landscape, bizarrely, the visions of a Catholic past disappear along the beach road but, apparently, to a more ethereal destination:

A sudden wind whipped the stalks of beach grass, sending a thin skirt of sand off the beach, to move like a low-lying fog along the concrete surface of the beach road as his father, at the shoulder of the road, picked up his black medical bag and went toward the waiting car. The Morris Minor stood, hood a tremble, mudguards quivering, headlamps yellow-bright in the moonlight, waiting to drive off to some other, inconceivable world, a world which, his father said, would have no reality for the likes

172 ibid., p. 150.
173 ibid., p. 158.
174 ibid., p.167.
175 ibid., p.168.
176 B. Moore, I Am Mary Dunne, p. 166; see above p. 102.
of him. 177

When Moore returns to the landscape of North America in his later fiction it is a world in which encounters with polarities of faith and scepticism are no less powerful for his characters. It is a world in which Moore’s novels explore the insubstantiality of physical appearance (*The Great Victorian Collection*), the landscapes of early missionary Canada (in *Black Robe*) and the numinous, late colonial roots of religious experience in contemporary Catholic America (*Cold Heaven*). In all cases, it is the physicality of the world (or its insubstantiality) which both undermines the commonsense definitions of narrative realism and heightens the encounter with Catholic theological worldviews. Still, more immediately, it is to the landscape of Ireland which we now return, to a text pivotal to our understanding of Moore’s portrayal of pre- and post-Vatican II Catholicism, the novelist’s first significant treatment of the historical changes in theological thinking in a post-Vatican II world, *Catholics*.

177 *ibid.*, p.168.
Part III

Fictional Portrayals of ‘Vatican II Catholicism’ and Beyond
Chapter Four

Catholicism Reappraised: Ireland Revisited


Introduction

Transformation in Roman Catholicism resulting from the Second Vatican Council provided Brian Moore in subsequent post-Conciliar times with an extraordinary range of literary material. The resultant portrayal of Catholicism within Moore’s fiction thus mirrors theological change within the Church itself. However, this relationship between religion, here Catholic theology, and literature, already discussed in earlier chapters, becomes more complex in a post-Vatican II era. Moore’s fictional portrayal of a largely monolithic, pre-Vatican II Church reflected the inherent simplicities of an ecclesiastical and theological outlook in which hierarchy and authority defined the boundaries between Church and world so clearly. Post-Vatican II, Catholicism redefined itself, and in particular the often antagonistic and divisive relationship between Church and world. It was the range of theological and ecclesiological redefinition within Roman Catholicism (a range in large part charted by the sixteen documents of the Second Vatican Council and subsequent post-Conciliar publications) which ensured a greater plurality in Moore’s fictional portrayal of Catholicism, a plurality which became part of Catholicism’s ‘modern’ understanding of itself and integral to its theological redefinition.

Moore’s (fictional-theological) intertextual range is thus extended in those novels which deal most fully with post-Vatican II times and themes. Where, for instance, early Irish and American fictions allowed for the predominance of a European canon by way of such intertextual reference (Flaubert, Gide, Joyce and Proust have all been noted), Moore’s post-Vatican II fiction achieves greater theological as well as literary intertextuality. Thus, for example, with an early example in this important phase of the novelist’s work, "Catholics,"

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1 An outline of such was presented in chapter one.

2 See above, for instance, pp. 92-93. The explicit presence of Irish/European fiction in Moore’s early Irish and American novels is often portrayed as aesthetic opposition to Catholicism. The presence of the Index of books banned by the Catholic Church and the Irish equivalent in post-Independence Eire, and on which Moore’s works appeared, was a demonstration of this aesthetic/theological conflict. See note 6 above p. 74.
Beckett, Synge and Yeats form part of the novella’s literary self-consciousness; but this novella, Moore’s first text significant for its portrayal of post-Vatican II Catholicism, deals explicitly too with the ‘texts’ of liberation theology and strongly implies an ongoing Catholic commitment to inter-faith relations, matters which were only publicly evident in Catholicism since the publication of documents such as Gaudium et Spes, Lumen Gentium and Nostra Aetate. Such post-Vatican II themes such as liberation theology become increasingly evident in later fiction such as The Colour of Blood and No Other Life and as inter-faith relations, or more properly inter-faith conflict, is developed in The Statement. Even historical novels such as Black Robe and The Magician’s Wife deal with the cultural confrontations of the past with the eyes of theological, post-Vatican II, present.

This chapter is an exploration of the beginnings of such theological intertextuality which will extend from Catholics through to Moore’s final fiction, The Magician’s Wife. Thus where Moore’s novels reflect issues of historical and contemporary theological concern within the Church, especially as demonstrated in Vatican II and key post-Conciliar documentation, these are manifestly integral to Moore’s literary preoccupations. In addition, the notion of Moore’s novels as a landscape of encounter achieves pre-eminence in his portrayal of post-Vatican II Catholicism: where place as much as Catholicism defined the early Irish fictions and North America provided a space of secular opposition to Irish Catholicism in the early American novels, Moore’s ‘post-Vatican II’ fictions provide a sense of secular and theological space within a trans-national Catholic Church where the particularity of place and cultural difference gain further in theological significance. Of particular significance here was a distinct and explicit shift in the Catholic ecclesiology, the Church’s redefinition of itself; not only was there a new emphasis in ecclesiology from Church as hierarchy (we see the ‘Church Militant’ in

3 See above pp. 27-31. See E. McDonagh, ‘The Church in the Modern World’ (Gaudium et Spes), in Hayes and Gearon, eds., Contemporary Catholic Theology, pp. 294-315.
Moore’s earlier fiction too to the “People of God” in Lumen Gentium, but this, combined with the democratising effects of a shift from Latin to vernacular usage within the Church inevitably gave priority to laity and as a consequence individual cultures. Arguably, it is this move, especially the heightened awareness of cultural plurality within the universal Church that allowed Moore not only to diversify the geographical settings for the portrayal of Catholicism but to reflect too that cultural plurality inherent within such physical, geographical difference: Moore’s landscapes of encounter - the fictional and meta-fictional meeting of Catholic and the non-Catholic other - eventually extend, then, beyond Ireland and North America to eastern Europe (The Colour of Blood), the Caribbean (No Other Life) and North Africa (The Magician’s Wife).

Moore’s later fictions, from Catholics through to The Magician’s Wife, also reflect too, though, internal conflicts within Catholicism itself. Just as tendencies towards either stasis or change over a great many issues were marked and obvious during the Council so too in the Church similar tensions remain evident over a range of doctrinal and pastoral issues. For instance, if recent tendencies within the Church have been marked by a reversal in the inherent radicalism of Vatican II to a more conservative contemporary tone in many areas of Church life (Pope John Paul II being widely regarded by many as a conservative), tension and conflict within the Church in post-Conciliar times can be attributed to such conflict between ‘conservative’ or more ‘revolutionary’ elements within Catholicism.

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6 See the reference to Father Kinneally, “a captain in the Church Militant”, Fergus, p. 11.
9 For a short overview, see Hebblethwaite’s articles in Hastings, ed., Modern Catholicism, including ‘John XXIII’, pp. 27-34 ‘Paul VI’, pp. 48-55; ‘The Curia’, pp. 175-181; ‘John Paul I’, pp. 444-446; ‘John Paul II’, pp. 447-456. See also, Walsh, John Paul II, and Szule, John Paul II. For an excellent popular but highly authoritative account of the changing nature of the papacy in post-Vatican II times, again see Duffy, Saints and Sinners: A History of the Popes. The latter has an outstanding bibliography on all aspects of Church history especially relevant to the periods covered by Moore’s fiction.
10 If brevity has made Keogh’s an uneven treatment, his ‘Church and State’ contextualises elements of post-Vatican II conservatism with concordats of the Catholic Church earlier in the twentieth century - with Fascist Italy (1929), Nazi Germany (1932), and Franco’s Spain (1953); see Hastings, ed., Modern Catholicism, pp. 289-302. See also: J.D. Holmes, The Papacy in the Modern World (London: Burns & Oates, 1981); J. D. Holmes and B. W. Bickers, A Short History of the Catholic Church (London: Burns and Oates, 1983).
Geography and cultural particularity are again marked factors here: simplistically put, the Church in Africa, Asia or South America may often reflect different pastoral priorities than perhaps the European Church. By far the most notable instance of such differing priorities is in the area of Catholic social teaching. Here liberation theology is both the most notable instance of such geographical diversification (as the post-Vatican Church worked to emphasise the needs of local churches) and that area most contested by a re-centralising papacy in the

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11 For an overview, see the outstanding one-volume survey, A. Hastings, ed., A World History of Christianity (London: Cassell, 1999). Hastings’ volume contains excellent bibliographies on Church history and is most notable for its emphasis on the global geographical encounter of Christianity and the resultant cultural diversification and plurality of Christianity as a world religious tradition. In the context of complex global histories over many continents, the supposed ‘spiritual colonialism’ of missionary activity was often, though not exclusively, an adjunct of territorial imperialism. Postcolonial studies are a little thin on the relations between theology and imperialism; Gearon, ‘Theology and Imperialism: Post-Colonial Ambivalence in Brian Moore’s Portrayal of Catholicism’, conference paper, Third Galway Conference on Colonialism. I argue that Moore presents Catholicism as variously colonised (in Moore’s fictional portrayals of Catholicism in Ireland) coloniser (as an adjunct of French imperialism in Canada and Algeria - Black Robe and The Magician’s Wife respectively) and anti-colonial or post-colonial (as an ecclesiastical force against a range of imperialisms in, for instance, eastern Europe and Haiti, as in The Colour of Blood and No Other Life, respectively). I develop this theme in chapters five and six, below.

12 For one of the most succinct and authoritative recent overviews, see R. Charles, Christian Social Witness and Teaching: the Catholic Tradition from Genesis to Centesimus Annus Volume II The Modern Social Teaching: Contexts: Summaries: Analysis (Leominster: Gracewing, 1998). Personal and social morality are not, of course, themselves unrelated in post-Vatican II theological terms; see T.P. Rausch’s chapters in Hayes and Gearon, eds., Contemporary Catholic Theology: ‘The Church and the Council’, pp. 259-278; and ‘Sexual Morality and Social Justice’, pp. 403-433. The latter is particularly useful too for contextualising post-Vatican II social teaching in the light of relevant encyclicals prior to the Council. Rausch identifies three stages of development in Catholic social teaching over the past century. Stage I (1891-1939) includes Leo XIII’s Rerum Novarum (1891) on workers’ rights in an increasingly industrialised society, Pius XI’s Quadragesimo Anno (1931) with its idea of ‘social justice’ as a guiding principle for public institutions and the economic order, and Pius XI’s Mit Brennender Sorge (1937) which criticized the Nazi violation of Catholic rights. Stage II (post-World War II), which witnessed the internationalisation of Catholic social teaching and noted for John XXIII’s Mater et Magistra (1961), calling for the eradication of the economic disparity between rich and poor and Pacem in Terris, against the nuclear arms race. This second phase included the key Vatican II documents on social justice, notably Gaudium et Spes, but also the 1967 encyclical by Paul VI, Popularum Progressio. Stage III, identified by Rausch as a post-1971 period includes the following social encyclicals of John Paul II: Laborem Exercens (1981), “stressing the priority of labour over capital and of people over things ... an evenhanded critique of both liberal capitalism and Marxism”; Sollicitudo Rei Socialis (1987), a celebration and development of the themes of Popularum Progressio which, following liberation theology, calls for a preferential option for the poor; and Centesimus Annus (1991) marking the centenary of Rerum Novarum, and Evangelium Vitae, John Paul II’s encyclical on human life. The latter is a key instance of Rausch’s thesis linking personal and social Catholic morality. The latter encyclical thus links a perceived contemporary lack of respect for life indicated by world poverty, war and the arms race with practices such as the death penalty and abortion.
post-Vatican II Church. If Moore’s post-Vatican II fiction (more properly the beginnings of his preoccupation with post-Vatican II themes) represents an increased theological intertextuality, then it is the Second Vatican Council itself which provided the impetus for such literary preoccupations. We certainly see elements of the Church’s new theological thinking reflected in Moore’s portrayal of Catholicism. Still, those tensions between conservative and more radical elements within Catholicism, determined as much by geography as cultural difference, are part of Moore’s portrayal of Catholicism just as much as they are part of the Church’s ongoing theological history.

Moore’s re-evaluation of post-Vatican II Catholicism begins, though, with an imagined Church Council and a fictional revisitation of Ireland; and it is with Ireland that this chapter remains after an examination of Moore’s portrayal of Catholicism in theological conflict in the novella Catholics. Thus, from an analysis of the historical antecedence of aesthetic and ideological alternatives to Catholicism and Irish nationhood in The Mangan Inheritance, this chapter

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examines variously an increasingly secularised Catholicism in an Ireland of the North which is becoming simultaneously more liberal and more violent. Thus the theme of love as both an erotic and sublime alternative to Catholic belief in *The Doctor's Wife* and *The Temptation of Eileen Hughes* is developed against the ideological backdrop of a Catholicism *marginalised* by the modernity it sought to accommodate through the Second Vatican Council and a Catholicism which is simultaneously *centralised* through its politicisation by sectarianism, a process which reaches its peak in *Lies of Silence*.

*Catholics* (1972)

If a key defining moment in twentieth century Catholicism was the period marking the Second Vatican Council between 1962 and 1965, the direction of Moore’s fiction in the post-Conciliar period can be said to be equally marked by his own consideration of subsequent changes which had taken place in the Church as the century drew to a close. Thus, with a mixture of fiction and ‘faction’, the ‘futuristic’ *Catholics* essentially charts key developments in a post-Conciliar (that is post-Vatican II) Catholic Church. The radical changes in the Church’s thinking, both in its view of itself and its mission of salvation in the modern world become projected on to *Catholics*, a shift from grandnarrative to the smaller, more contained world of the novella; thereby partly allegorising the historical (theological and ecclesiological) aftermath of the Second Vatican Council with the imagined future of a ‘post-Vatican IV’ scenario.

Less theological prediction than historical reflection on a theological present (that is the 1970s), Moore’s *Catholics*, if it were to be taken as a predictive of future ecclesiology and theology is a ‘failed prediction’ of the 1990s Church: in the late 1990s present, the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church has not instigated any abandonment of metaphysical and theological realism nor opted instead for a radical programme of liberation theology. Yet the Church in the 1990s
does reflect an ongoing tension between ‘conservative’ and ‘radical’; and, indeed, beyond Catholicism there are many Christian thinkers who do reflect a strong religious anti-realism. In terms of predictions, then, of a theological future, Moore’s literary expectations of a radical Rome may have been misconceived but his portrayal of the future global importance of liberation theology were not. Kinsella’s recall of his superior’s words are nevertheless full of irony if read in contemporary theological context (Europe certainly reflecting a hierarchical conservatism): ‘You must show them that while you are the Revolution and they are Tradition, the Revolution is the established faith and will prevail.’

The importance of *Catholics*, at least in terms of Moore’s portrayal of Catholicism, thus rests primarily on the manner in which it reflects the theological preoccupations of the time (the immediate aftermath of Vatican II) and for its seminal treatment of so many themes in post-Vatican II theology in the global Church.

That Moore chose to portray such revolution in Catholic thinking in the context of Ireland is also significant. Moore’s early Irish fiction used geography, the physicality of place, to enhance the portrayal of cultures in encounter, especially religious and political culture. In these early works, the proximity of opposition in a limited space often heightened such encounters by the inevitability of contrast, difference and otherness permeating these fictions: Northern British Province and Southern Irish Republic; urban Irish cityscapes (of Belfast and Dublin) and Irish rural landscapes (of Ulster and Republic). In these early Irish fictions there was also

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14. If the spirit of Vatican II represented a new radicalism, such radicalism was severely curtailed in the immediate aftermath of the Council by the Church’s teaching on sexual morality, something not addressed by *Catholics* but taken up as a key literary/theological theme by post-Vatican II Catholic novelists like David Lodge, perhaps also illustrating the limited theological range of such writers. Perhaps understandably, Paul VI’s social radicalism, evidenced in documents such as *Popularum Progressio* (1967), were overshadowed by *Humanae Vitae* (1968). Such conservatism continues to be the mark of the papacy of John Paul II as well in personal morality. On social morality, while John Paul II’s papacy has been marked by moves to restrict the influence of political ideologies of the left in theologies of liberation, elements of his social teaching are often more radical. See, for instance, note 12 above, p. 116 and also note 88 above, p. 96. See also Walsh, ‘The Conservative Reaction’ in Hastings, *Modern Catholicism*, pp 283-288. On related issues of social concern, see chapter six below.


the widening of geographical and ideological (if not yet theological) context with encounters between Ireland as an island and the more distant continent of America, encounters between Ireland (as colonised) and British Empire (as coloniser), and also the Second World War juxtaposition of Ireland’s neutrality and a wider world in conflict. 18

In such instances, Irish Catholicism is linked strongly to Irish nationalism, an interrelation of religious and ideological grandnarrative which Moore maintains in *The Doctor’s Wife*, *The Temptation of Eileen Hughes* and, of course, *Lies of Silence*. 19 Less obviously, there is an identity between the grandnarratives of Irish nationalism and Irish Catholicism in *Catholics* itself, the latter novella arguably presenting a time in which political conflicts have been resolved to leave only theological and ecclesiastical struggles. Thus Moore presents a partially sympathetic view of pre-Vatican II/‘pre-Vatican IV’ Catholic tradition in this novella against the forces of institutional and doctrinal change within the ranks of a modernising Church. Moore’s fictional defence of Catholic tradition in Ireland heightens our awareness of a major development in literary/theological thinking in his novels, not only about the Church but about the Church’s role both within contemporary society and, given the ‘post-Vatican IV’ setting of *Catholics*, the society of the future.

As in the early Irish fictions, then, integral to the portrayal of theological tradition is the presentation of Ireland’s landscape; the island’s name alone, “Muck”, having an earthiness which implies a rural groundedness, a cultural heritage which stands in contrast to the urbane (and urban) theological sophistication of Kinsella, the American-trained ecclesiastical visitor from Rome. The novella is thus dependent on geography for a representation of the nuances of religious and secular culture in encounter. For Muck Abbey, “founded 1216, rebuilt 1400-70”, it is process contextualised by the ‘out of print’ “Weir’s Guide to Religious Monuments”,

18 See above, pp. 66-72.
19 See Brown, *Ireland: A Social and Cultural History*:
A study of the main developments within Irish Catholicism in the late nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries is a prerequisite for any informed understanding of the social and cultural history of modern Ireland. The great nineteenth century struggles in the Irish Church between the centralizing apparently ultramontanist party led by ... the first Irish Cardinal, Paul Cullen, and older local more independent forms of Catholicism had been resolved in favour of a church loyal to Rome. (p. 27). Moore’s *Catholics* reflects a very much ongoing tension between these two ecclesiastical factions, one finally resolved in favour of the ultramontanist (if liberalised) ‘post-Vatican IV’ Rome.
that is by centuries of conflict which mark the Ireland’s colonial history from Norman conquest through Cromwellian Catholic persecution (which the Abbey avoided) to the ‘post-Vatican IV present’. Vatican IV represents, though, the community’s most difficult theological challenge, no less for the implied abandonment of ecclesiastical tradition which the abbey’s historical legacy helped maintain; after so many centuries of conflict from external aggressors it is the internal reform of the Church itself which is the source for the deconstruction of tradition.

Significantly, then, the Ireland of Catholics is geographically and theologically indeterminate, representing a recalcitrant but threatened Irish Catholic tradition whose theological isolation is heightened by its geographical position between a progressive Europe and the radical Americas. As the Father General of the Albegensian [sic] Order points out to Kinsella in Rome: “It is a cliche to say that it was expected. Even Vatican IV can’t bury two thousand years in a few decades. But I’d have thought Spain. Or, perhaps, some former Portuguese possession’ ”. The General sighed. “We are so infallibly fallible, aren’t we? Wasn’t it Chesterton who said something about a thing being too big to be seen? Ireland. Of course”. And it is Ireland, the land itself identified with the maintenance of tradition, which becomes the focus of “Ferry tours from Liverpool and Fishguard, charter flights from Leeds, Boston, New York - pilgrimage from France - even bella Italia”. And just as the Father General demanded of Kinsella to “Get that old fool down off that mountain” , it is the geography of Ireland, the

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20 In terms of both relevant ecclesiastical history and Catholics’ preoccupation with tradition and sacramental orthodoxy, the founding date for Muck Abbey of 1216, just after the Fourth Lateran Council, is most significant. As Duffy comments on the pontificate of Innocent III (1198-1216):

... the keynote of Innocent’s pontificate was practical, pastoral reform. Theology at Paris when he was a student was dominated not by high speculation, but by practical topics such as the morality of laity, the celebration of the liturgy, the reform of the Christian life. These were issues that recur throughout Innocents’ writings, and that characterise his greatest achievement, the Fourth Lateran Council, which met in 1215. The Council tackled an enormous range of issues, all of them practical: the establishment of orthodox teaching, especially on the sacraments - this was the council that defined the doctrine of Transubstantiation - new regulations requiring every Christian to go to confession and communion at least once a year ... rules for the better discharge of episcopal duties and especially preaching and catechising the people, and reform of the monasteries. (Duffy, Saints and Sinners, p. 112).

21 ibid., p. 16.
22 ibid., p. 16.
23 ibid., p. 17.
physical landscape, which simultaneously suggests spiritual ascent and religious dissension. It is the geographical which also engenders and develops Moore’s literary and theological intertextuality. Thus, in Catholics identity between religion and nationalism develops through inherent reference not only to the Conciliar and post-Conciliar textuality of theological change from Vatican II onwards (the all but critically ignored theological intertextuality of this pivotal work) but also to the political aesthetics of ideology and specifically Irish nationhood within the novella, often cited as being Synge’s Aran Island diaries and Yeats’ prophetic poetry (“What rough beast, its hour come round at last”). What is of key interest here is that Moore’s literary and theological intertextuality has developed an almost ‘about turn’. Thus Moore’s typical early Irish and American characters, especially the writers, often cite the canon of European and particularly Irish literature (Yeats, Joyce, Synge) in opposition to theological orthodoxy; the aesthetic a challenge to the theological. Here, in Catholics, such intertextuality becomes, in a post-Vatican II/‘post-Vatican IV’ era, the opportunity for a literary and theological realignment; away from the opposition between Irish literary canon and Catholic religious orthodoxy to an identity between both literary and theological tradition, between religion and nationhood.

Significantly, therefore, Muck Island is set off the Kerry Coast, Moore’s strong, poetic portrayal of Irish rural landscape and Atlantic seascape marking his first literary journey into a reappraisal not only of Catholic theological thinking but also for a re-examination of place, the emphasis shifting from the the city of Belfast, where the rural Catholic world of the Province and the South are a geographical and cultural unconscious to a Protestant, colonial North, to a world in which rural Catholicity predominates. With an ambivalence typical of Moore, though, landscape and theology are also subject to intertextual encounter with secular and theological literature in a world now de-sacralised:

... this lonely place, a place which now, in its noon darkness, made him [Kinsella] think of a Beckett landscape, that place in which Vladimir and Estragon might have waited for Godot. The rainbow had seemed to end, down there, in the centre of the

24 ibid., p. 13.
25 For wider sample treatments of the relationship between writing and nationhood in Ireland, see above, pp. 38-47.
26 Somewhat speculatively, the fictional disappearance of Protestant and colonial other might also imply, since unstated, a unity of both Catholicity and nationhood in a future united Ireland; see L. Gearon, ‘A Theology of the Other: Some Postcolonial Themes in Brian Moore’s Late Twentieth Century Fiction’, in S. Porter, M.A. Hayes and D. Tombs, eds., Faith in the Millennium (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, forthcoming, 2000).
white cross formed by two concrete ribbons of road. In such phenomena people once read signs of God's hand.27

Kinsella's encounter with Abbot O'Malley is thereby marked by the sceptical ambivalence inherent or apparent in both revolution and tradition which finally belies the ecclesiastical certainty which both men supposedly represent.

 Appropriately, though, and for all its brevity, Catholics most crucially provides a literary overview of many major areas of theological (liturgical, doctrinal, pastoral) and ecclesiastical (organisational) transformation within Catholicism. These key transformations from the Second Vatican Council (liturgical change, ecumenism/inter-faith relations, social teaching and ecclesiology) are all subsequently addressed in Moore's other fictions with post-Vatican II preoccupations and further reiterates the pivotal importance of this short work.

The first and most prominent of this novella's themes, then, that of liturgical change, was also, if incidentally, the first and most prominent of the statements arising from the Second Vatican Council in Sacrosanctum Concilium.28 The most obvious of transformations in the public face of Catholicism understandably marks the fiercest defence of tradition by Father Matthew in Catholics:

And if the Mass was in Latin and people did not speak Latin, that was part of the mystery of it, for the Mass was not talking to your neighbour, it was talking to God. Almighty God! And we did it that way for nearly two thousand years and, in all that time, the church was a place to be quiet in, and respectful, it was a hushed place because God was there, God on the altar, in the tabernacle in the form of a wafer of bread and a chalice of wine. It was God's house, where, every day, the daily miracle took place. God coming down among us. A mystery. Just as this new mass isn't a mystery, it's a mockery, a singsong, it's not talking to God, it's talking to your neighbour, and that's why it's in English, or German or Chinese or whatever language the people in church happen to speak. It's a symbol, they say, but a symbol of what? It's some entertainment show, that's what it is. And the people see through it. They do! That's why they come to Coom Mountain...29

The linguistic issue here of the shifting importance of sacramental signifiers and divine signified reflects issues of substantive, theological concern for a Catholic community, as it did

27 ibid., p. 24.
29 ibid., p. 47-48.
for the post-Vatican II Church. Thus Sacrosanctum Concilium’s changes to Catholic liturgy predominantly affected the rite of Mass, most notably the shift from Latin to vernacular, but it also made the sacramental life of the Church more accessible to a lay Catholic populace. This increased democratisation (by implication) evident in Sacrosanctum Concilium in turn reflected broader changes in ecclesiology evident in documents such as Lumen Gentium with a decisive shift in self-definition of Church as “hierarchy” to “People of God”. Demonstrably indicating how even the most systematic aspects of Catholic theology impinge on the lived experience of Catholic community (at least in Moore’s Ireland), the reaction against the aggiornamento which suffused the Council and the post-Conciliar world finds its voice in Father Matthew and its focus on the liturgy: “You can all see what is being proposed here. It is a denial of everything the Mass stands for”.

If liturgical changes in the novella relate to ecclesiological re-definition (indicated in the latter statements by Abbot O’Malley and Father Matthew), transformations in liturgy are also inextricably linked to ecumenism and interfaith relations, the second main theological theme of Catholics. Unitatis Redintegratio thus provided as statement of the Catholic Church’s willingness to establish a unified, post-Reformation Christendom, while, still more radical, were statements on interfaith relations in Nostra Aetate. The instructions to the Abbot from the Father General of his Order explain the delicacy of ensuring liturgical reform in relation to inter-faith dialogue, neatly mirroring Moore’s intertextual, literary theology:

While the needs of your particular congregation might seem to be served by the retention of the Latin Mass, nevertheless, as Father Kinsella will explain to you, your actions in continuing to employ the older form are, at this time, particularly susceptible to misinterpretation elsewhere as a deliberate contravention of the spirit of aggiornamento. Such an interpretation can and will be made, not only within the councils of the Church itself, but within the larger councils of the ecumenical movement itself. This is particularly distressful to us at this time, in view of the apetura, possibly

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30 See F. Sullivan, “The Church We Believe In”, and ‘Evaluation and Interpretation of the Documents of Vatican II’, in Hayes and Gearon, eds., Contemporary Catholic Theology, pp. 316-334 and pp. 335-348, respectively.

31 ibid., p.100.


33 While a special relationship was stated as existing between Christianity and the religions of Judaism and Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism are also both explicitly cited in Nostra Aetate as possible means to salvation. See note 5 above, p. 114. See also G.C. Anawati, ‘Excursus on Islam’, Vorgrimler, ed., Commentary on the Documents, Volume Three, pp. 151-154; H. Dumoulin, ‘Excursus on Buddhism’, in Vorgrimler, ed., Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II, Volume Three, pp. 145-150.
the most significant historical event of our century, when interpenetration between Christian and Buddhist faiths is on the verge of reality.34

It would be many years before the outline agenda of these new statements on soteriology would progress in the Catholic Church's actual, historical relations with other faiths, the Jewish faith in particular, and prominent theologians have received Vatican censure for extending the relations either too speedily or too far, tensions which Moore develops in later works, especially in *The Statement*.35 Again, though, we can see the seminal importance of this short work, *Catholics*, which substantially initiates Moore's literary treatment of post-Vatican II Catholicism.

A third important focus in *Catholics* is that of pastoral theology which reflects Catholicism's greater concern with social justice in the late twentieth century, the theological voice of which was the Vatican II document *Gaudium et Spes*.36 Moore, though, directly links the theme of Catholic social teaching in *Catholics* with its most radical embodiment, liberation theology.37

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34 *ibid.*, p. 43-44.

Moore, of course, returns to the issue of Catholic-Jewish (and indeed western-Arab) relations in his 1995 novel, *The Statement*.

36 Cf. note 12, above, p. 116.
37 Linden provides an accessible statement of the movement's defining 'option for the poor': This meant, first and foremost, the engagement of the poor in their own personal, socio-economic and political liberation. In the same sense, liberation theology is accountable to the poor as the people of God, rather than to any school of theologians or the international academic community. (I. Linden, *Liberation Theology: Coming of Age* (London: CIIR, 1997), p. 6)

While liberation theology has its systematic, academic exposition, then, it is within Catholicism a theology in which the demands for doctrinal clarity meet the urgency of pastoral need. (More properly we should speak of theologies of liberation rather than a monolithic theology of liberation since one of the features of the latter is its recognition of the particularity of such need within the universality of salvation.) To its critics, though, such thinking reflecting a dangerous synthesis (expressed at its most extreme) as Marxism and Catholic theology. For its political and theological opponents, though, often one and the same, the decline of Marxist ideology in a post Cold War world signalled the end too of liberation theology, as Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger speaking in 1996, has been cited, " 'The fall of the European governmental systems based on Marxism turned out to be the twilight of the gods for that theology' ". (Cited Linden, *Liberation Theology*, p. 4).
The latter’s pastoral origins from the 1950s onwards can be identified within Latin American “basic ecclesial communities”, as characterised by the Dutch theologian Carlos Mesters, and this significantly (if incidentally) aids Moore’s presentation of an increasingly culturally plural, theological geography, which itself reflects the developing historical awareness of such plurality within Catholicism itself. Thus, while Gaudium et Spes provided a public theology which encapsulated the concern for social justice within the Church, the meeting of South American bishops at Medellín (1968) is often regarded as important for the translation of the largely European theological preoccupations of Vatican II into a ‘Third World’ socio-economic setting.38 Seminal, post-Vatican II theological writings are Gustavo Gutierrez’s A Theology of Liberation (1971), Paola Freire’s Pedagogy of the Oppressed (1972)40 and Leonardo Boff’s Jesus Christ Liberator (1972)41; but what is of particular literary interest is the historical proximity of Moore’s presentation of liberation theology in Catholics with the publication of these key (if in 1972 untranslated) South American texts.

38 Medellín, Colombia, was the meeting place for CELAM, the council of South American bishops who met in 1968 to discuss the implications of Vatican II for their continent. A. Hennelly, Liberation Theology: A Documentary History (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1990) is the most authoritative single volume source of primary texts, including the Medellín declaration. It is important to recognise, though, that the influence of theologies of liberation extends beyond South America where it nevertheless found its most powerful, originary definition in the work of Gutierrez, Freire and Boff. Thus see (as also fully referenced in note 13, above, p. 117): Witvliet, A Place in the Sun: Liberation Theology in the Third World; Fern, Third World Liberation Theologies; Pieris, An Asian Theology of Liberation; Martey, African Theology: Inculturation and Liberation; Hennelly, Liberation Theologies: The Global Pursuit of Justice; Amalados, Life in Freedom: Liberation Theologies from Asia; Linden, Liberation Theology: Coming of Age?; Comblin, Called for Freedom: The Changing Context of Liberation Theology. Nor, of course, has the influence of liberation theology been restricted to Catholic theology. Most notably see the work of the Protestant theologian Bonino, importantly his early, Liberation of Theology (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1976). Bonino has recently spoken too of the challenges to Catholic hegemony in South America Faith in the Millennium Conference, Roehampton Institute London, 1999 (see M. Bonino, ‘The Future of Liberation Theology’, in S. Porter, M.A. Hayes and D. Tombs, eds., Faith in the Millennium (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, forthcoming, 2000). On the declining Catholic hegemony in South America, see P. Berryman, Religion in the Megacity: Catholic and Protestant Portraits from Latin America (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 1996).


Ready to leave for Muck, then, Kinsella is reminded of his now crippled spiritual mentor ("the Brazilian militaires broke his back"42), a continent and an ideological world away, "He felt cold. He thought of Hartmann in the rain forest of Brazil"; Hartmann who had argued that the Church "despite its history and its dependence on myth and miracle, exists today as a the quintessential structure through which revolution can be brought to certain areas of the globe".43 Kinsella's apparent certainties, those of the new ecclesiastical order, now a challenge rather than support for social hierarchy, are set now to upset the order of the island community, as, at the novel's close, Kinsella's 'new' theological and political assuredness is contrasted with the abbot's metaphysical uncertainty. When the Abbot asks Kinsella if Hartmann "talks much of God", the abbot has to refine his question to make it accessible to the young priest, "'No, what I mean is ... Is it souls he's after? Or is it the good of mankind?"44 Sympathising with both the popular and monastic attachment to the Latin Mass, the Abbot's scepticism is revealed as bleaker, more all-encompassing than Kinsella's; and he is equal if not more advanced than Kinsella in the (albeit contradictory) 'contemporary' thinking on a 'theology of atheism':

'Are you asking me what I believe?'
'Yes, if you wish. There is a book by a Frenchman called Francis Janson, have you ever heard of it? An Unbeliever's Faith it's called.'
'I have not read it.'
'It is interesting. He believes there can be a future for Christianity, provided it gets rid of God. Your friend, Father Hartmann, has mentioned Janson in his own writings. The idea is, a Christianity that keeps God can no longer stand up to Marxism.'45

Following Hartmann, Kinsella emphasises Christianity's social rather than metaphysical teaching. With reference to Yeats, and open allusions to Synge's Aran Island diaries, Moore's novella thereby provides an intertextual space which is literary, political and theological. It is the inherent critique of Kinsella's post-Vatican II/IV theology to which Moore returns most explicitly in a later novel, *The Colour of Blood*, dealing with secular and ecclesiastical politics in the late stages of the Cold War.

42 *ibid.*, p. 40.
43 *ibid.*, p. 20-21.
44 *ibid.*, p. 41.
45 *ibid.*, p. 67.
Ecclesiology is the final and probably the most subtle of all Moore’s treatments of theological theme in *Catholics*, though there is one particularly clear exchange between Kinsella and the Abbot which reflects the disconcerting effect of increased responsibility brought about ecclesiastical democratisation. Abbot O’Malley makes the point well to Kinsella about the parishioners from Cahirciveen and pilgrims from elsewhere who are attracted to the old Latin rite of the Mass:

They haven’t changed. They want those old parish priests and those old family doctors. Sheep need authoritarian sheepdogs nipping at their heels from birth to funeral. People don’t want truth or social justice, they don’t want this ecumenical tolerance. They want certainties. The old parish priest promised that. You can’t, Jim.”

Indeed, this passage provides a *coda* for the theological themes at the heart of the novella. In Moore’s portrayal of Catholicism here we are some fictional distance from Ginger Coffey’s “boredom of the Mass”, the (indirectly humorous) persecutions of Father Quigley’s sermonising for Judith Hearne or Brendan Tierney’s confident dismissal of the Church.

For all its published statements of increased democratisation in ecclesiology, though, Moore presents the irony of Kinsella’s task as the promulgation of an essentially ‘progressive militancy’ to rival older model of the ‘Church Militant’. For all its apparent abandonment of the trappings of office (“Kinsella reflected on the times; cardinals went shabby in mufti, hirelings of all kinds had increased their false panoply of rank”), the Church retains a strong hierarchical authority which is potentially all the more pernicious for its denial. At a minor level, this is symbolised by Kinsella’s “ecumenical” clothing, his mother even commenting that, “‘You don’t look like a priest, I just can’t imagine you are one’.” Yet Kinsella’s appearance marks a more covert militancy, his clothing resembling less the nondescript or nonprescriptive conventions of contemporary fashion than a member of a church army, carrying as he does “a paramilitary dispatch case, a musette bag, and wearing grey-green denim fatigues”. More broadly, this is shown to demonstrate the deceptive surface change of the Church’s ecclesiology, its (supposedly) radically altered model of itself,

49 *ibid.*, p. 20.
50 *ibid.*, p. 12.
which in actuality retains much of its pre-Vatican IV/ pre-Vatican II authority and dependence on hierarchy as a means of ecclesiastical control; Kinsella’s mission, direct from Rome, an illustrative case in point.

The ecclesiastical and doctrinal certainties of the past are most marked in the community’s nickname for Kinsella as “the inquisitor”, an uncomfortable and here also ironic historical reference to a period in Church history when theology’s enforcement was through ecclesiastical authority at its most extreme. However, it is a term and a label which Kinsella dismisses as absurd at the end of the twentieth century: “‘How can we even define what heresy is today?’” The Abbot’s response enforces the perceived irony of change within the church: “‘Yesterday’s orthodoxy is today’s heresy.’” While on a personal level, the Abbot dates his crisis of faith to his visit to Lourdes, within the context of Church history he wonders if, “Aggiornamento, was that when uncertainty had begun?”51 and whether doctrinal instability and theological doubt have roots in, or are at least linked to, declining institutional control over the individual, his own last bastion of identity with ecclesiastical authority: “Changes of Doctrine. Setting oneself up as an ultimate authority. Insubordination”.52 However briefly hinted at, Moore aligns these changes in theology and ecclesiology in Catholicism with those adopted during the Protestant Reformation four centuries earlier, with a revolt against Catholic authority that was as much institutional as it was doctrinal and theological: “He looked at the tabernacle. Insubordination. The beginning of breakdown. And, long ago, that righteous prig at Wittenberg nailing his defiance to the church door”.53

Stepping out from the enclosure of the abbey guest house, standing on the island shore on the last morning of his visit, Kinsella’s meeting with a “rush of breakers” and the “long retreating roar of water” is reminiscent of Matthew Arnold’s ‘Dover Beach’ and the withdrawing tide of religious faith; the dominating physical presence of land and sea highlighting at the twentieth century ending of Catholics, as for Arnold in the nineteenth, the absence of faith. Indeed, plausibly, Moore’s strong, naturalistic presentation of environment here hints at a metaphysical emptiness, the “null” which the abbot enters when he finally leads the community in the Our

51 ibid., p. 83.
52 ibid., p. 83.
53 ibid., p. 84.
Father (now “Prayer is the only miracle”\textsuperscript{54}) in order to heal division (“Relieved their voices echoed his”\textsuperscript{55}). What is left when “prayers seemed false or without meaning at all”\textsuperscript{56} is obedience. Devoid of supernatural context, in a reversal of Moore’s literary persistence of theological consciousness in a secular world,\textsuperscript{57} the emptying of theological meaning, O’Malley seeing his role as “a sort of foreman here, a sort of manager”, the role of the abbot as “not a lot different from a secular job”\textsuperscript{58}.

\textit{Catholics}, with its Vatican II/ Vatican IV parallels, can be seen as an enduring theological allegory which, for Moore, presents in seminal form many of the themes to which he returns in later novels. Portrayal of environment is, though, crucial to the presentation of Catholicism in the narrative here, as it is in both earlier and later fiction. Conceivably too, then, the landscape of Muck and the Atlantic seascape convey in physical terms, by way of Moore’s naturalistic technique, that empty mental state the abbot encounters when capitulating to Kinsella and Rome (“not from an excess of zeal” but from “a lack of it”\textsuperscript{59}) which leads him to “the hell of the metaphysicians: the hell of those deprived of God”\textsuperscript{60}.

\textit{The Mangan Inheritance} (1979)

If \textit{Catholics} presents a post-Vatican IV Irish Catholic future, \textit{The Mangan Inheritance} presents an Irish Catholic past with the eyes of a post-Vatican II present. The latter shares with \textit{Catholics} too a ‘tripartite’ narrative structure. In both narratives the graphic preoccupations of both narratives with the landscape and culture of Ireland is accentuated by Ireland’s literal placement in the centre of the text. At the heart of both works of fiction is an idyll of west

\textsuperscript{54} \textit{ibid.}, p. 101.
\textsuperscript{55} \textit{ibid.}, p. 102.
\textsuperscript{56} \textit{ibid.}, p. 78.
\textsuperscript{57} See, for instance, the treatment of \textit{I Am Mary Dunne}, above, pp. 96-103.
\textsuperscript{58} \textit{ibid.}, p. 94.
\textsuperscript{59} \textit{ibid.}, p. 94.
\textsuperscript{60} A fine, alternative theological reading is presented where Shepherd compares the abbot’s “null” to the dark night of the soul so famously characterised by St. John of the Cross; see A. Shepherd, ‘Place and Meaning in Brian Moore’s \textit{Catholics}’, \textit{Eire-Ireland}, volume 15 (1980), pp. 134-140.
coast Irish life, the cultural at one with the environmental, textually enclosed by the outside world: in *Catholics* it is the arrival and departure of the American Kinsella from Rome which marks the invasion as well as enduring insularity of Muck; in *The Mangan Inheritance*, it is the New Yorker Jamie Mangan's departure from and return to North America (the United States and Canada) which highlights and simultaneously deconstructs the rural Irish ideal so beloved of the Irish Literary Revival.61

In both books too is the implied unity of the island of Ireland; aesthetically, politically and religiously: Ireland is 'Yeatsian', a free state, and Catholic. In neither is there any sense of a 'North', nor any hint of present Troubles; only the history of colonial conflict marks the landscape, and does so strongly, but not in terms of any present actuality. The religious, political and artistic coordinates of an Irish national consciousness reflect internal tensions - theological, ideological and aesthetic - but these are matters of detail which do not threaten the sense of an overall unity. If *Catholics*, though, reflects a period of religious and theological adjustment in a post-Vatican II/IV world in which Ireland's political nationhood and aesthetic (especially Yeatsian) consciousness is determined and accentuated by its west coast of Ireland setting, thereby stressing the religion and theology, then *The Mangan Inheritance* prioritises the political and the aesthetic over the religious while acknowledging Catholicism as integral to both nation as concept and nation as place. It is thus the genealogy of the Mangan family Bible which provides the textual key and inspiration for the physical and spiritual journey from Canada to Ireland but it is a residual Catholicism, a Catholicism in which the literal traces of Catholic ancestry are contained within a sacred text which no longer functions as a religious guide to the secularised, Mangan emigres.

Mangan's aesthetically rarefied journey begins with perhaps Moore's most populist and least convincing opening for a storyline, that of the marital abandonment of a mediocre journalist and one-time poet by an acclaimed, filmstar wife, Beatrice Abbot. Jamie Mangan's move from New York to visit the remote Canadian retreat of his father and the latter's youthful second...

61 James Clarence Mangan (1803-1849) of course predates this 'movement' (see "literary revival" in Welch, ed., *The Oxford Companion to Irish Literature*) but Mangan's importance cannot be overstated for his subsequent influence. Thus, see, for instance, D. Lloyd, *Nationalism and Minor Literature: James Clarence Mangan and the Emergence of Irish Cultural Nationalism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993). See also Deane, 'James Clarence Mangan's Afterlife, 1850-1925', in *Strange Country*, pp. 122-139.
wife is the means for the introduction of the family Bible, re-opening the story of the Mangan line (the "inheritance"). Crucially this leads to Jamie Mangan’s recognition of his doppleganger in a mid-nineteenth century daguerreotype supposedly of the poète maudit James Clarence Mangan. This discovery is Jamie Mangan’s “resurrection” (“To Mangan the poet,” he cried. “To my resurrection. To my life!”62), the now not uncommon motif of the theological persisting in the secular consciousness of a Moore protagonist. The death of Beatrice Abbot with her new lover in a drunken road accident three weeks after the married couple’s separation provides, with increasingly implausibility, the means for Jamie Mangan to explore the Mangan inheritance in Ireland with some ease and without financial inhibitions since the late Beatrice Abbot, it is discovered, had not changed her will. Jamie Mangan’s significant financial inheritance is, however, seemingly more assured and, as it happens, less burdensome, than the ancestral poetic inheritance he is to discover in County Cork.63

Jamie Mangan the New Yorker, then, in moving to Canada (“Canada: cruel landscape, its settlement a defiance of nature. Home.”64) and back to Ireland, retraces the novelist’s steps in intertextual return to Ireland: a path which had seen Moore’s novels dwell initially in Ireland and move into North America via the Canada of The Luck of Ginger Coffey. The description of Canada and its inhospitable landscape indicates a literary throwback to American frontier

63 Mangan turned and mounted the stepping stones on the cemetery wall, coming down on the other side, inside consecrated ground. He moved through shin-high wet grass, past gray stone plinths and lichen Celtic crosses ... Almost at once, a greening stone loomed before him and he saw his name writ large.

MANGAN
PATRICK JAMES MANGAN
Departed this life
1 January 1899

There in the cloud-darkened field mangan took out his notebook and compared the dates he had written down from his family Bible and the parish register. This was the grave of his great-grandfather ...
He moved on to a nearby grave and read the headstone.

FERGUS MANGAN
Erected by his loving family
1919-1972

ibid., pp. 160-161.
64 ibid., p. 18.
literature, even to the first settlement of Canada but provides too a breadth of intertextual self-reference to Moore's own canon of early and later North American fiction. Moore's fiction here thereby looks back to the Canada which had become home for characters such as Ginger Coffey and Mary Dunne but, for those of us with an overview of Moore's entire oeuvre, forward to the landscape of Canada's past so vividly created in Black Robe. Jamie Mangan's childhood spent on the edge of the Canadian wilderness and his subsequent journey to an ancestral Ireland is traced and prefigured in the bedroom of his childhood, "a Laurentian landscape in pastels ... replaced by "The Doors of Dublin"".65 It is a journey which the daguerreotype rekindles too as it romanticises a fictive Irish idyll with the re-presentation of national self image which early photography allowed:

Often the name and address of the photographic studio, scrolled in elaborate curlicues, adorned the bottoms of the photographs, and as Mangan read off the names of Irish cities - Galway, Cork - it came to him that these long-ago kin of his were members of the first generation in human history to see themselves plain, not in a lake's reflection or in the ephemeral shimmer of a looking glass, or distorted by the talents or whim of a portrait painter's brush, but fixed forever as they were in life.66

"My Dark Rosaleen" is celebrated by Jamie's father as the Mangan poem which characterised Ireland and an anti-English nationalism of the Famine years; "the poem that made him Ireland's greatest poet. That and few others he wrote at the time of the famine".67 Dismissing Jamie's call for the preeminence of Yeats, Jamie's father insists on the polemical force of Mangan as poet and nationalist, an aesthetic of violence which made "for the common people of Ireland" his poetry "the stuff that sent men out to kill the landlords".68

Catholicism's presence in The Mangan Inheritance is subtle but the links between national and religious consciousness are evident: it is Father Burke who leads Jamie Mangan to the graves of his predecessors.69 The Father Drinan biography of James Clarence Mangan that Jamie Mangan reads in Canada70 indicates too the historical Irish Catholic identity for the nationalist

65 ibid., p. 24.
67 ibid., p. 57.
68 ibid., p. 57.
69 ibid., pp. 155-162; see note 63, above, p 132.
70 ibid., pp. 57-58.
aesthetic of the nineteenth century poet.  

The once aspiring poet, however, finds the land of Ireland different from its idealised literary landscape:

That sense of familiar unfamiliar which he had felt earlier now deserted him. Here his readings of Joyce and Yeats and O'Casey were no help. He felt he did not know Ireland at all.  

The abandoned cottages that litter the pages of the text are signs of Ireland's famine history written into the landscape. The deconstruction of this rural, post-Yeatsean idyll (made self-conscious by the early appearance of the Norman tower which Mangan sees off the Drishane headland) is accomplished by the juxtaposition of physical beauty with human cruelty and violence. Here place as human settlement and physical environment is both scarred and left fundamentally unmarked by the turmoil of Irish colonial history:

... he looked at the tower and thought of the broken-roofed cottage he had seen earlier, relic of emigration or famine. Abandoned, castle and cottage were co-equal in neglect, testament to the way in which this country, more than any other he had known, seemed to master time and history, rejecting men's effort to make their presence felt.  

From the cottage the estate agent Feeley mistakenly gives Mangan, his stabilising reference point (through a cultural geography) is the invisible America he has left behind:

... that landscape, still as a medieval painting, unchanged and unchanging, the sea, the great headlands circling the bay like outstretched arms. Far off on the horizon the Fastnet light house flashed its secret message. It came to him that he was looking toward America from a point of land which was the most westerly part of Europe.  

Here the cultural reference points are centred upon a faith which are alien, from the "large photograph of Pope John", symbol of transition to a post-Vatican II era on the mantelpiece of the cottage to a seemingly more distant theological history, itself reflected in the Irish landscape, "The distant vista of fields, the church spire and the slate roofs far below, all of it was like a world long gone, still as a Poussin landscape, unchanged and unchanging"  

The Church, like most others he had seen in Ireland, appeared unconscionably large for the village which surrounded it. Enclosed by a graveyard of Celtic crosses...

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71 Cf. Sister Innocenta in *Fergus* (p. 38) reading Yeats' poetry as it were "holy writ"; see above, pp. 105-106.
72 ibid., p. 97.
73 ibid., p.161
74 ibid., p.106.
75 ibid., p.105.
76 ibid., p.112.
The transition to a post-Vatican II held in the balance of a Janus-like political and devotional history in the living room area where hung “variously, lithographs of Pope Paul, John F. Kennedy, and our Lady appearing to Saint Therese at Lisieux”.77 Here too the parish priest, Father Burke, is one of Moore’s most innocuous ecclesiastical characters to date, almost unprepossessing, and all the more sympathetic for that. A willing assistant to Jamie Mangan in the latter’s quest for a poetic and decidedly irreligious ancestry, it is the priest who identifies Holy Cross Parish, Dublin, as the grave site link to James Patrick Mangan, Jamie’s great-grandfather and, as importantly, to both the beauty of a landscape which belies the political violence of its history, “Dunmanus Coos. A beautiful spot. Two of the Fenian leaders, killed in ‘98 are buried there ... O’ Bofey and Sean Rahilly”.78

A major part of The Mangan Inheritance is Moore’s development of the parallels between the nineteenth-century James Clarence Mangan and the twentieth-century Jamie Mangan: the latter feels at home when he meets the youthful Kathleen and her criminal brother, binge drinking and falling for the younger woman; Jamie is attacked in Bantry, as his ancestor was, loses too a tooth in the fight, a disfigurement matched in the daguerreotype. The absentee landlord motif of Irish colonial history in the early nineteenth century is also mirrored in Jamie Mangan’s illicit sojourn in Gorteen, the large house that had come into possession by Conor and Kathleen but which had been lost through neglect and dissipation. This is an inversion of the ‘big house’ narrative of Protestant Ascendancy; here the specific post-Partition context of the Anglo-Irish and predominantly Protestant symbols of English political and cultural domination.79 In Gorteen, the name of old Mangan house now sold to an Englishman abroad, Jamie Mangan is, then, “a squatter in some English absentee landlord’s bed”80; Jamie Mangan mirroring not only the poète maudit lifestyle and physical image of the daguerreotype but reflecting too the social and economic structure of the Irish nineteenth century, “the famine days when half of Ireland walked the road without a home”.81

77 ibid., p. 123.
78 ibid., p.157.
80 ibid., p. 199.
81 ibid., p. 192.
Jamie Mangan’s eventual meeting with his more contemporary doppelganger, the incestuous poet and sex-offender, his Uncle Michael Mangan, confirms that religion is less influential here than the aesthetic: “our strain of the Mangan family are all without the consolations of religion. Hell fire isn’t what we’re afraid of ... We’re afraid that we’ll be forgotten”.82 We see the poet aspiration of many a Moore prototype from both the early Irish and American novels surfacing here at their most grotesque. Led to the castrated poet and uncle by Dinny Mangan, it is the latter who had facilitated his father’s escape from justice to a life of harsh isolation, the always close reality of the myth of west coast Irish idyll - like Catholics, but here the interaction of religion and national identity suffused by landscape is absent, leaving a secular aesthetic as a supposedly ideal of human consciousness. It is a move with which many characters in Moore’s early Irish and American novels are familiar, but here portrayed at its most disturbing. The semi-sane Eileen Mangan, wife of the disappeared, had spent a life in and out of mental institutions and the latter absences are the self-confessional account given to Jamie Mangan for his uncle’s sexual molestation of his daughter Maeve, and later Kathleen, his late brother’s daughter.

Michael Mangan’s castration by Maeve led to his internal Irish exile, facilitated by his son Dinny, to a place “lonely as a Hopper landscape”,83 where, suffused with the marks of the earliest conquest of Ireland (“lookout point and stronghold by long ago Norman conquerors”), was land now “abandoned to sea birds, rabbits, and, here and there, high on the rocky ground a few black-faced sheep”.84 Michael Mangan’s books in Latin are the texts of classical imperialism, both religious and political, and the works in the Irish language the supposed means of their resistance: “Here at land’s end, a man amid his books in a ruined Norman tower, living like a hermit writing verse”.85 The German’s farm, of course, which precedes access to Jamie’s contemporary (and yet Gothic) doppelganger, combined with the phallic ruin of the Norman (and yet Yeatsian) tower allows Moore to both draw together and deconstruct two of his key secular alternatives to religion, the aesthetic and the psychoanalytic.

82 ibid., p. 284.
83 ibid., p. 273.
84 ibid., p. 275.
85 ibid., p. 283.
Jamie thus initially sees and approves of the books in Michael Mangan’s library: “Marvell, Donne, Hopkins, Yeats, Eliot ... There were paperbacks of Dostoevsky, Gogol, Tolstoy, Turgenev. There were histories of Ireland, books on the Irish language, Joyce’s Portrait, Camus’s The Plague. There were novels by Lawrence and Hardy and the collected essays of Swift, all of them titles he would be pleased to see on his own shelves”.

Michael Mangan, himself a mutilated ‘ruin’ and unrepentant victim of his own aesthetic vanity inhabits and proudly boasts of a literal and metaphorical, post-Yeatscan (simultaneously an unconscious, post-psychoanalytic) ‘tower’: “I live in a Norman tower, like Yeats himself, thirteenth century this one is, and with a far grander view than ever Yeats looked out from his at Thoor Ballylee ... Some day this place will be like Thoor Ballylee”. The post-Yeatscan myth of the Literary Revival, culture and nationalism intertwined against imperialism, all permeated by a consciousness of the land itself, is, though, further deconstructed, again literally and metaphorically, a building and an ideal unceremoniously dismantled: “In another country this ruined castle on its splendid promontory of land would be a tourist sight, a national treasure ... Here in Ireland it was a sheep pen”.

And so Jamie Mangan, outraged at the historical image and contemporary embodiment of the poete maudit returns to Canada, a journey made urgent in the narrative by the appropriately Oedipal theme of a father’s death. So little does Jamie Mangan actually escape his “inheritance”, though, that in the deathbed scene the overbearing Freudian overtones are brought to forestalled libidinal conclusion by Jamie’s unconsummated desire for his father’s young wife. Displaced desire is finally transferred into financial ‘possession’ by the father’s revelation of his pregnant wife’s monetary dependence on the son. As in Ireland, though, the physical environment making human struggle small by the dismissal of human achievement into ruins which litter the landscape, so too in Canada: the death of a father and the desire of the son for the mother are contextualised by the near metaphysical “smoking Arctic air: a landscape of death”.

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86 ibid., pp. 282-283.
87 ibid., p. 305.
88 ibid., p. 277.
89 ibid., p. 332.
Moore's novels have a strong sense of generational difference which is often used to depict social and cultural transformation, a theme well illustrated by *The Mangan Inheritance*, and which is developed in Moore's portrayal of Catholicism in the North of Ireland, the focus for the remainder of this chapter. The parents of many of his protagonists feature prominently in his fictions and it is often this older generation which represents, through a familial focus, differences in respective understandings or perceptions of Catholicism, a worldview which was consciously muted in *The Mangan Inheritance*. In earlier fictions, though, the mother (the mothers of Brendan Tierney and Mary Dunne, for instance) or the father (of Gavin Burke) or the mother and father (of Fergus) represent a stalwart pre-Vatican II Catholic belief whose certainty often contrasts strongly with more liberal, more sceptical offspring; though, as we have seen, in these fictions the theological often permeates even the most apparently secular of consciousnesses. In *Catholics*, however, Moore somewhat modifies this sense of generational difference. James Kinsella reflects on his mother's lack of faith and, indirectly, his late father's commitment, as "Agnostic herself, his mother had continued her son's religious education after her husband died". Moore thus shows there is no easy correlation between belief in the past and doubt in the present, yet simultaneously demonstrates how forms of Catholic belief have altered; Kinsella's mother, "a Liberal, born in the nineteen thirties ... did not believe in the combination of Holy Orders and revolutionary theory". Of course, the absence of easy correlation between a believing older generation and a more sceptical younger one is explored perhaps most notably when Moore treats the deathbed scepticism of Father Michel's mother as a central motif in *No Other Life*.

As in earlier fictions then so it is in Moore's later Irish novels: Ireland is a nation where intertwined political and religious history continues to unify and/or divide the generations - *The Temptation of Eileen Hughes, The Mangan Inheritance* and of course *Lies of Silence* - all a case in point. Moore's portrayal of Catholicism in all cases unifies as a theme, whether it is a source of familial or wider social concord or, as is more often the case, discord and conflict;

90 See, for instance, above, pp. 102-103, on the litanic conclusion to *I Am Mary Dunne*.
91 *ibid.*, p. 20.
92 *ibid.*, p. 21.
93 See below, pp. 210-211.
and theme for Moore transcends literary form. Thus a Catholic consciousness permeates the full experimental range of Moore’s early narrative forms: from the grim naturalistic realism of *Judith Hearne* through the tragic-comic tones of *The Emperor of Ice-Cream* to the mixture of realism and Gothic fantasy of *The Mangan Inheritance*. In all, though, the landscape of Ireland (understood in the widest sense – northern city, southern village, Atlantic seashore) is the enduring presence. It is place which contextualises the diversity of cultural (aesthetic, political and religious) encounter. In Moore’s Ireland, the physical takes on metaphysical qualities: ideological and aesthetic, theological and spiritual.

In *The Doctor’s Wife*, political and religious difference has too a marked inter-generational flavour and this is well expressed by Sheila’s brother late in the novel as he travels to Paris in order to remedy the crisis in his sister’s marriage:

> Dr Deane walked out toward the waiting plane, thinking of his father and his father’s great friends, Dr Byrne and Chief Justice McGonigal, remembering their arguments about Shaw and Joyce, about Mussolini’s policies vis-a-vis the Vatican, and the morality of Ireland’s neutrality during the war. Not intellectuals, but men who read a lot, who loved discussion and despised golf, who never cared about the size of their house or the make of their motorcar. That older generation, passionate, literate, devout, still seemed to him more admirable and interesting in their enthusiasms and innocence than the later generation that claimed him as its own... His father would never have put pleasure before principle as Sheila did, especially in an *affaire de coeur*. But then, as Sheila said, that older generation lived in the certainty of their beliefs. That was the point, exactly the point. If this were 1935 and Sheila were my father’s younger sister, the whole discussion would have been conducted in the context of sin. I can talk of it only in the context of illness. My father would have talked of the moral obligations involved. I can only surmise the emotional risks.\(^\text{94}\)

Indeed, here are some of the major themes of the Moore’s novels to date (1976): pre-Vatican II Catholicism (“Mussolini’s policies vis-a-vis the Vatican”); an understated treatment of Ireland’s ambivalent political status on the world stage, indirectly vis-a-vis Britain (“the morality of Ireland’s neutrality during the war”); an undercurrent of the psychotherapeutic culture of modern society (“I can only surmise the emotional risks”); and, of course, writing

\(^{94}\) B. Moore, *The Doctor’s Wife*, pp. 158-159.

\(^{95}\) There is at least a parallel here between these and Moore’s treatment of Irish nationalist empathy with Nazism before the bombing which brought Belfast into the Second World War. Moore’s wider treatment of more active Catholic-Nazi relations in Vichy France is dealt with of course in *The Statement*, see below, pp. 219-229.

\(^{96}\) See the above discussion in regard to *The Emperor of Ice-Cream*, pp. 66-72; cf note 95, directly above.

\(^{97}\) In *An Answer from Limbo*, Brendan Tierney presents the clearest critique of this with his comparisons between religious and psychoanalytic priesthhoods; see above especially p. 91.
(used variously to uphold or subvert Catholic values\textsuperscript{98}) as part of both Irish national identity and Moore’s theological and literary intertextuality (“their arguments about Shaw and Joyce”).\textsuperscript{99}

In ways which parallel Moore’s structural use of North America to open and close The Mangan Inheritance to focus more tellingly on Ireland in the main body of the text, so too in the cross-cultural narrative of The Doctor’s Wife, Moore’s use of France for the setting of Sheila Redden’s affair with the American Tom Lowry in France and Sheila’s ambiguous last days in London are secondary to his fictional reflections on Belfast in the early 1970s, as well as the antecedence of political and religious struggle in Ireland. Certainly for Sheila Redden, reflections on Ireland, both North and South of the border, form part of a persistent unconscious throughout the novel, as early on in France: “Into her mind came the view from her living room at home. The garden: brick covered with English ivy, Belfast’s mountain, Cave Hill, looming over the top of the garden wall, its promontories like the profile of a sleeping giant, face upward to the grey skies”.\textsuperscript{100} Such memories of place, Mary’s Irish unconscious, serve to highlight rather than lessen Irish realities of religious and political life. Here the violence of Ulster naturally dominates, particularly the bomb in Clifton Street near Kevin Redden’s surgery (“The soldiers had warned him in time”), and the political conflict invades the Paris flat of her friend Peg: “but now, in the half-dark hall, Mrs Redden saw, not Peg, but that other woman, blond, with dust in her hair, blood on her face, running out of the Queen’s arcade, shaking her fist. ‘Fucking Fenian gets!’”\textsuperscript{101} The vision returns as she recalls holding a priest’s hat as he gives a dying man the last rites, the woman again shouting “‘Fucking Fenian gets!’ as if Mrs Redden and the priest and the old man had set the bomb off and were not victims like herself”.\textsuperscript{102} An inconsequential Paris barge also draws comparisons with Ireland in less troubled but for Sheila Redden no less unsatisfactory times:

\textsuperscript{98} This is a really persistent theme in Moore’s early fiction, particularly for male characters. Early instances of the literary as aesthetic resistance to Catholicism include Rice in Judith Hearne and Dáirmuid Devine in The Feast of Lupercal, a stance opposed by the Dean of Disciphe, McSwiney as well the naturalised Irish-Americans, Brendan Tierney and Fergus Fadden. A crucial overview of the tension between literature and Catholicism in a post-Partition Ireland is provided in Carlson, Banned in Ireland.

\textsuperscript{99} See, for instance, Catholics, above, p. 122.

\textsuperscript{100} ibid., p. 16.

\textsuperscript{101} ibid., p. 34.

\textsuperscript{102} ibid., p. 42.
She looked at this passing barge, at this man who sailed his floating home through inland waterways to cities like Brussels, Amsterdam, and Hamburg, cities she had never seen, might never see. To sail away from all of the things that hold and bind me, to sail away, to start again in some city like Brussels or Amsterdam. Into her mind came the place Kevin always took them to for their summer holidays, a Connemara village with a fishing dock at the end of the single street, the fishermen’s boat coming in from the sea at dusk, sailing into that postcard view of the sea bay under the Dolmen peaks of the Twelve Bens ....

Although Tom Lowry was not like those other “Yanks”, “those desperate loud double knits who went around Ireland in tour buses”, he sees Ireland (“the seaside in your part of Ireland is beautiful. That northern coast”\textsuperscript{104}) with the eyes of the (exotic) American (New York Greenwich Village) other. (Kevin Redden’s view of Tom Lowry, “some Yank just out of Trinity, with his PhD in James Joyce’s Laundry list”, is understandably less positive.) The contrast with her view of Ulster as a geographical and cultural desert is telling, university being “four more years of being locked up in Ulster”. Taking a year out after doctoral work on Joyce at Trinity (Hugh Greer’s “Joyce -Yeats show”\textsuperscript{105}) to work in Vermont, he embodies the geographical mobility which Sheila Redden has so craved but, unlike Sheila, is able to root himself comfortably in the cultural life of a romanticised Irish Revival. For Sheila Redden, by contrast, the grandnarratives of Irish history reflected in such literature become irrelevant, and Ireland “a tiny nation whose meaningless historical memories were of playing Snap in rainy, rented houses in Portrush in the summer”.\textsuperscript{106}

\textit{The Doctor’s Wife}, though, is notable for the way such contrary, ambivalent evocations of place (especially Ireland as defined by the geographical and cultural other) are integral to a dynamic, often generational, shift between pre- and post-Vatican II (and indeed pre- and post-Troubles) portrayal of Catholicism. While \textit{Catholics} suggests similar oppositions and transitions in a fantasy of a Catholic future based on the realities of an historical post-Vatican II present, \textit{The Doctor’s Wife} for all its lack of fantasy, allegory and theological projection, still deals (but with a more self-conscious realism) with changing post-Vatican II worldviews.

Three major themes emerge here. The first, sexual liberalisation (Sheila Redden’s affair with

\textsuperscript{103} ibid., p. 38.
\textsuperscript{104} ibid., p. 58.
\textsuperscript{105} ibid., p. 39.
\textsuperscript{106} ibid., p.149.
Tom Lowry is common to Moore’s pre- and post-Vatican II novels, being a motif shared with all the early American (and distinguishable from the early Irish) fictions. The second and third themes might easily be viewed as one: the secularisation of a post-Vatican II clergy in Ireland through politicisation and in France through existentialist philosophy. Both latter themes, though related, develop in Moore’s later fiction and might therefore be treated separately. Indeed, it would be easy to see the common thread in Moore’s portrayal of Catholicism here as that of hierarchy (specifically minor clergy) and there is something of this in the novel when Sheila Redden compares the Catholic priest in Paris (“A priest should be poor. Irish priests were not ...”107); but the politicisation of clergy is very particular to both the Irish question in general (especially relations between Catholicism and nationalism) and Moore’s later Irish fiction in particular, especially *Lies of Silence*. Further, Moore’s treatment of ‘priest as existentialist’ is his most significant venture into Catholic encounter with a developed and systematic atheism rather than the more apathetic agnosticism, or atheism by default, of Moore’s earlier, particularly American, protagonists (which is incidentally largely characteristic too of Sheila Redden108). The latter is also a significant theme arising from Vatican II (especially *Lumen Gentium*) and prefigures the increasingly wide ranging treatment of Moore’s portrayal of Catholic encounter with Marxist-inspired ideology in *The Colour of Blood* and *No Other Life*; indeed, as it also prefigures Catholic encounter with non-Christian religions (as opposed to simply the Protestant other) in *Black Robe* and *The Magician’s Wife*.

Moore’s anti-heroine, then, is a woman whose affair with Tom Lowry brings only very temporary release from middle-class Belfast life. Her eventual decline into North London anonymity where she shares nothing with the London Irish that she is encouraged by her boss to meet. Here the well-intentioned “You want to join one of those Irish clubs. There’s an Irish club over in Camden Town” is followed by the inane, “I like Irish songs” and emphasises Sheila Redden’s alienation from class, politics and religion.109 In the end, she cannot follow Tom Lowry, nor follow her variation of an Irish dream of exilic alternatives to join “that Other Place”, America, whose flag in the passport office “impeccably clean, impressively displayed

107 ibid., p. 134.
108 ibid., p. 167.
109 ibid., p. 229.
... seemed more like the symbol of a religion than a national banner". Renunciation of both American emigration and Irish home leads in London to her implied confrontation with the only serious question, raised in the novel's earlier discussions of Camus, indicated euphemistically by the motif of the suddenness and ordinariness of urban disappearance: "She went through the gates and walked off down the street like an ordinary woman on her way to the corner to buy cigarettes". London here a geographical and metaphysical limbo, it is a desperation with (and fundamental alienation from) urban culture which many of Moore's women of rural origins often suffer.

For many Catholics, as for Sheila Redden, the last semblance of ecclesiastical credibility in the liberal times of the 1960s, after the promise of Vatican II, was lost with Paul VI's pronouncements on birth control and sexual morality in *Humanae Vitae*, matters explicitly ridiculed by Fergus Fadden. Thus, only after sexual intercourse with Tom Lowry does she "remember the diaphragm", worrying if she is pregnant by him, but thinking too of the "awful guilty feeling of first using it on Kevin's advice" and how once "it had seemed so sinful; now so safe" that she wonders how she could have forgotten it, the Catholic teaching of *Humanae Vitae* set, now even unconsciously, aside. (Interestingly, the major concern of lay Catholics in the post-Vatican era, birth control, was neatly sidestepped by 1972 novella *Catholics* through the use of a celibate community.) The liberalisation of sexual attitudes, which had by the early 1970s suffused western society, affected too a large part of the Church: that the world of Belfast is so affected (Sheila Redden's extra-territorial as well as extramarital affair) adds to the sense of social transformation since Moore's early portrayal of pre-Vatican II Catholicism in *The Lonely Passion of Judith Hearne*, *The Feast of Lupercal* and *The Emperor of Ice-Cream*.

110 *ibid.*, p. 236.
111 *ibid.*, p. 236.
113 See above, pp. 103-104.
114 *ibid.*, p. 78.
115 See above, note 12 and 88, p.77 and p.96, respectively.
Sheila Redden’s ‘freedom’ is characteristic too of that liberal or more often lapsed Catholicism that was so strongly engendered in the post-Vatican II era, undoubtedly by accident rather than design, and which, characteristic of so many of Moore’s lapsed Catholics (“when was the last time I knelt in church and prayed”\(^\text{116}\)) is expressed with some theological astuteness:

She had thought the word ‘God’. The word usually came to her lips these days as a meaningless ejaculation. She no longer prayed. She remembered when all that had changed, at the time of Pope John. It had all begun when people lost their fear of hell and damnation. If you no longer feared damnation, you no longer had to believe in heaven.\(^\text{117}\)

Liberation from Catholic morality leads Sheila Redden, then, not only to a re-discovery of self through sexuality but also to a self-conscious replacement for Catholicism as worldview, a sort of ‘sexual humanism’ evident also in Mary Dunne’s narrative. Again, in early American and now later Irish fictions, this supposedly secularised consciousness is expressed in theological, even sacramental terms:

... tonight, in the quiet of this moonlit room, that feeling came back to her, that pure Sunday communion peace. It filled her, shocking her, for wasn’t this sin, here in this room, committing adultery with this boy, how could this be that same state, that pure feeling of peace? Yet it filled her, it possessed her totally. It was as though wrong was right. Her former life, her marriage, all that had gone before, now seemed to be her sin. These few days with Tom were her state of grace.\(^\text{118}\)

Yet in Ireland, it is typically the restraints of sectarianism which help sustain the importance of a public Catholic identity as a front for residual, privatised faith: “...of course, if anyone asked her, she would still say she was a Catholic. In Ulster today, to declare that you were no longer a Catholic was to risk being thought a turncoat. But she did not think of herself as a Catholic. Not any more”.\(^\text{119}\)

The political, especially IRA, violence ‘on behalf’ of a Catholic minority, is then the major backdrop to Sheila Redden’s Belfast social unconscious while in France, and this is part of an apparently sectarian rather than religious ascendency. The Troubles have in their own way highlighted religious difference, but such difference existed before and is reflected in Moore’s earlier Irish fictions. Now, no longer politically and religiously subservient, the Catholic

\(^{116}\) ibid., p. 87.
\(^{117}\) ibid., p. 87.
\(^{118}\) ibid., p. 88; the obvious parallel here is with Mary Dunne. See, for instance, above pp. 97-98.
\(^{119}\) ibid., p. 88.
minority, still ghettoised, is politicised by violence. It is, of course, a matter of historical chance that the rise of the Troubles in Ireland coincided with the beginning of a liberalised post-Vatican II Church. If Moore’s early Irish novels portray the Church’s power beginning to wane (Father Quigley is no Joycean Jesuit), then the post-Vatican II Church in his later Irish novels has lost all semblance of moral authority, and this to an extent represents the irony of Vatican II’s key failure: in adjusting finally, after a century and more of resistance, to the forces of the contemporary world in such modernising documents such as *Lumen Gentium* and *Gaudium et Spes*, the Church lost much of its residual authority: “And so they slid out of it, and now they never put their feet inside a church door except on great occasions like a wedding or a funeral”.121 Ironically, now they are “Just like Protestants”.122

Of course, in the North, such an identity between Catholic and Protestant is difficult in practice. Kevin Redden, employed at “the Protestant teaching hospital, which, when you considered he was a Catholic, meant he knew his stuff”123 is himself marginally embroiled in the sectarian conflict to an extent as surgical consultant to British Army. If the novel, though, more broadly charts the ascendency of the sectarian violence of the 1970s it explicitly charts too the waning of majority belief in either ideology or religion, as Sheila comments to her brother Owen Deane: “The Protestants don’t believe in Britain and the Catholics don’t believe in God. And none of us believes in the future. ... Nowadays all we believe in is having a good time ...”124 Still, “It was, she sometimes thought, a bad joke that when the people at home no longer believed in their religion, or went to church as they once did, the religious fighting was worse than ever”.125

The ineffectual symbols of post-Vatican II authority, here an increasingly less influential Irish priesthood, is evident from Kevin Redden’s suggestion that, “Twenty years ago I’d have put the priest on her. But nobody heeds the priests nowadays”.126 Seems Irish precursor of the

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121 ibid., p. 87-88.
122 ibid., p. 88.
123 ibid., p.122.
124 ibid., p.154.
125 ibid., p. 87.
126 ibid., p.178.
golf playing brethren in *Cold Heaven* the politicisation of the Irish hierarchy becomes more sinister in *Lies of Silence* when, unable to wield ecclesiastical authority, the priesthood is portrayed as clinging to residual power through the forces of IRA violence; that is, a fuller, fictional identification of Catholicism with Irish nationalism. It is such a later politicised portrayal which, for Sheila Redden, has roots in both her own childhood and Ireland’s historically close relationship - post Irish Free State - between secular and Church hierarchies; as she recalls her Uncle Dan’s funeral:

> Everybody who was anybody was at the funeral, the cardinal in his crimson silks, sitting in the episcopal chair at the side of the altar during the Mass, and at the Glasnevin cemetery I saw De Valera: he took his hat off and stood, holding it over his chest as the priest said the prayers for the dead. Lemass, the Prime Minister was beside him ...127

His death (“Daniel Deane, 1899-1966”128) marks the effective end of a childhood innocence for Sheila Redden, the beginning of the end of a political innocence for Ireland just prior to the Troubles and, a year after the close of the Second Vatican Council, the increasing decline in both the religious and political authority of the Irish Catholic Church:

> ... it was Ireland that had changed. Belfast bombed and barricaded, while in Dublin new flats and American banks had spoiled the Georgian calm around Saint Stephen’s Green ... Yet paradoxically, here on the Riviera, nothing had changed ... Belfast, with its ruined houses and rubbled streets, was now, to her, the alien place...129

Yet, even in Paris there are points of similarity and hints of civil disturbance in France to which Moore returns in *The Statement* and *The Magician’s Wife* where in a Parisian square “four police wagons filled with French riot police sat, waiting for trouble” and “She thought of home”.130

Yet if French geographical contrast highlights the post-Vatican II sexual liberalisation of a middle class Irish character like Sheila Redden (no pre-Vatican II Judith Hearne) and serves as a means to highlight a decline in religious adherence but incidental rise in sectarian violence, *The Doctor’s Wife* also treats another area of transformation in Catholicism, the dialogue with atheistic philosophy, already hinted at in *Catholics*. The French location provides, of course, almost stereotypical possibilities for presenting a particular Continental form of existentialism

127 *ibid.*, p. 20-21.
128 *ibid.*, p. 21.
129 *ibid.*, p. 45.
130 *ibid.*, p. 32.
but the vehicle of Catholic priest, sympathetically portrayed, impressively reflects major post-Vatican II developments in the Church’s accommodation with the religious and philosophical plurality demonstrated in Lumen Gentium and Gaudium et Spes.\textsuperscript{131}

Geography is again tellingly used to facilitate an important aspect of Catholic encounter with the atheistic other. Thus the French priest Sheila Redden meets, Father Brault, establishes a conciliatory middle ground, a position of tolerance which contrasts with the sectarian exclusiveness of sectarian Irish Catholicism. So too the history and geography of Paris contrast with Ireland for Sheila Redden; “the Seine wound among streets filled with history no Irish city ever knew”.\textsuperscript{132} While in Notre-Dame’s Chapelle d’Accueil, the priest as “principal actor” initially signals for Sheila Redden the theatrical artificiality of belief and their subsequent conversation marks a theological openness to doubt seemingly unknown in the Irish clergy, subsequent reflection (and her final anonymous disappearance in London) draws her further into an angst-ridden, existentialist anomie:

‘Did you think, “God is here”? No, God is not here. Notre-Dame is a museum, its pieties are in the past. Once these aisles were filled with the power of faith, with prayer and pilgrimage, all heads bowed in reverence at the elevation of the Host. Once people knelt here, in God’s house, offering the future conduct of their lives against a promise of heaven. But now we no longer believe in promises. What was it the priest said? Camus, suicide, the only serious personal question.\textsuperscript{133}

If the priest finally appears as “God’s comedian”, pen ready at his aide memoir ledger, an eschatological reminder of God’s final judgement, then it is a self-conscious foolishness. Rejecting Sheila Redden’s premise that “You can’t go on believing, once you think the idea of God is ridiculous”,\textsuperscript{134} the priest’s “‘I can and I do’” is an affirmation of belief through negative theology, with themes of love and religion that Moore further develops in The Temptation of Eileen Hughes:

‘I know,’ the priest said. ‘It doesn’t make sense. But believing in God is like being in love. You don’t have to have reasons, or proofs, or justifications. You are in love, voila tout. You know it.’\textsuperscript{135}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{131} See below, for instance, pp. 191-206, for a discussion of such accommodations in relation to The Colour of Blood.
\item \textsuperscript{132} ibid., p.15.
\item \textsuperscript{133} ibid., p. 137.; cf. the question of religion and performance in the post-Enlightenment France of The Magician’s Wife. See below, pp. 230-232.
\item \textsuperscript{134} ibid., p. 216.
\item \textsuperscript{135} ibid., p. 216.
\end{itemize}
The Temptation of Eileen Hughes (1981)

The treatment of ‘romantic’ love/adultery presented in The Doctor’s Wife, the portrayal of a Belfast Catholic woman distanced if not fully liberated from either country or religion, is developed in The Temptation of Eileen Hughes. If the sexual encounter between Sheila Redden and Tom Lowry is at least minimally paralleled with theological notions, for example of grace, in The Temptation of Eileen Hughes the married Bernard McAuley’s obsessional and seemingly non-sexual desire for Eileen Hughes reflect a theological paradigm of divine love. Aside from Bernard McAuley’s use of pornography for sexual satisfaction and his acceptance of his wife’s routine unfaithfulness, the interactions between the rich Catholic business man and young and far less privileged Catholic woman of the novel’s title mark a significant advance in every respect of Moore’s portrayal of a liberalised, and especially sexually liberated, Belfast Catholic lay populace. Bernard McAuley’s economic success is itself a mark not of change but prejudicial stasis in the Province, Bernard McAuley, “the richest Catholic in Lismore” and distinctive for that, the McAuley’s being “the only Catholic in Claranrinal Avenue”. Like Kevin Redden he has advanced socially and economically, despite religious denomination.

More fundamentally, though, the opportunity for the sorts of moral choices open to the relatively underprivileged Eileen Hughes is also indicative of a Catholic Belfast world which has also drastically changed from its early portrayal in Moore’s novels. (If Sheila Redden marks, with her husband, a social advance on the down-at-heel class pretensions of an impoverished Judith Hearne, Moore shows with Eileen Hughes a degree of social and economic advance too for the working class of Belfast.) Thus, far from the compromises for the marginalised figures of early Irish novels (notably Judith Hearne and Diarmuid Devine), Eileen Hughes demonstrates a strength of personality which contrasts the failed and eventually successful suicide of Bernard McAuley. In the final scenes of the novel she walks the Irish landscape, alone but independent, in a parkland, a common setting between the urban and the rural which pervades many of Moore’s Irish and American works.

136 B. Moore, The Temptation of Eileen Hughes, p. 198.
137 As stated, employed at “the Protestant teaching hospital, which, when you considered he was a Catholic, meant he knew his stuff”, (p.119).

(148)
As in *The Doctor's Wife* too, Moore uses another country to reflect upon the religious and social portrayal of Ireland, with the action of *The Temptation of Eileen Hughes* being set in London as opposed to France, the final return of Bernard and Eileen to Belfast at the end of the novel adding a circularity which confirms this. The geography serves, as it had in *The Mangan Inheritance*, as an interstitial region, a liminal space where physical distance provides for metaphysical reflection. Further, though, Moore now holds in tension a portrayal of a liberalised but severely weakened Catholicism with the presentation of the failures of secular materialism in the form of Bernard McAuley's unsatisfying economic success. In a land transformed by liberalised religious attitudes and further entrenched by sectarian attitudes, the latter's obsessional human love, modelled, as stated, by a theological paradigm of divine love, presents no simple resolution to the now common narrative dialectic of religious-secular encounter in Moore's novels, a dialectic established early in the novel:

"Would you believe that while I was at Queen's during my BSc, I suddenly wanted to give it all up and go away and give myself to God. Yes, the priesthood. But the minute I mentioned this vocation of mine at home, my dear old father came right up through the floorboards like Beelzebub, buying me a brand new car and lashing pound notes for me to spend weekends in Dublin. And I fell. Yes, at the tender age of nineteen, I became a fallen angel. I went over to Mammon." ¹³⁸

The sense of rejection by God which his failed vocation to the religious life engendered and his going "over to Mammon" sets Eileen Hughes in the role of an extension of his devotions from the divine to the human.

Significantly, Bernard McAuley's love for Eileen Hughes is likened in historical terms to a courtly, pre-modern romanticism when he declares: "I love you the way knights fell in love in medieval days ... It was an impossible love for a lady in a tower. Often the lady was married and honor forbade that the lover ever try to possess her. Sometimes he wouldn't even declare his love". ¹³⁹ Of course, he does declare his love and this moment of "epiphany" appropriately reveals the theological analogy at the heart of his most humanist of obsession, the human person. *The Temptation of Eileen Hughes*, then, presents a unity of theme which is central to the novel's success a piece of fiction: the secular substitution for religious belief. *The Temptation of Eileen Hughes* is in very many respects a culmination and refinement of Moore's examination of those unsatisfactory alternatives to Catholicism which become most apparent in

¹³⁸ *ibid.*, p. 21.
¹³⁹ *ibid.*, p. 77.
the early American protagonists: economics for Ginger Coffey, literature for Brendan Tierney
and sex for Mary Dunne.

If the return to Ireland has led to no easy fictional alliance with the Church there, the
persistence of theological consciousness in the increasingly secularised post-Vatican II minds
of Moore’s characters, Bernard McAuley presents, for all his obsession-derived faults, an
attempt at a self-sacrificing intentness lost to the self-absorbed Irish-Americans. Bernard thus
declares the distinction between the physicality of sex and metaphysical refinement of his
religion of love which demonstrates the theological method at the conceptual centre of his
humanistic worldview (“Love is a religion whose God is fallible”140):

Listen, sex isn’t love. I know that. It’s the opposite of love. Love, real love, is quite
different from desire. It’s like the love a mystic feels for God. It’s worship. It’s just
wanting to be in your presence, that’s enough, that’s more than enough, it’s everything
there is. That’s what it’s been like for me since the first day I saw you.141

Thus “ ‘[W]hen you fall in love with someone ... it’s a sort of miracle ... it’s almost religious.
The person you love is perfect. As God is perfect’ ”.142 There are obvious contradictions here
in Bernard’s ‘humanist theology’, notably between perfection and fallibility, but perhaps his
evident self pity has interfered with his rational judgement:

What do I care? I’m trying to save myself, not the world. I told you when I was twenty
I wanted to be a saint, to save my soul, to love God, to do good. But it seems I wasn’t
wanted in that way. And, until now, I never knew in what way I could make some
sense out of my life.143

Eileen Hughes becomes, then, for Bernard McAuley the object of such a ‘religion’: “ ‘I rejected
God then. And now you’re my God’ ”144: “ ‘There, working in the shop. I’ve worshipped
you. In silence. In devotion’ ”.145 Morally, as well metaphysically, Eileen as object of
devotion and service, represents a typology of and opportunity for sanctity:

It’s funny but all those Christian things are true. Better to give than to receive. Giving
love without expecting to be loved in return. Doing what will be best for the other
person. Easy to see how people become saints. It’s not hard, not hard at all.146

140 ibid., p. 75.
141 ibid., p. 57.
142 ibid., p. 76.
143 ibid., p. 76.
144 ibid., p. 158.
145 ibid., p. 57.
146 ibid., p. 152
The possibility of a second rejection is more than he can bear and his first attempted suicide, a continuity with the treatment of Camus in *The Doctor’s Wife*, delineates a theological exclusiveness, the boundary territory beyond which the humanist Bernard cannot transgress, in Catholicism, “the one sin there’s no forgiveness for”. In the London hotel where the McAuleys and Eileen Hughes have been staying, the location of Eileen’s sexual encounter with the marijuana smoking American of distinctly cowboy appearance (an uncommon tragi-comic juxtaposition for Moore), Eileen, fearing Bernard’s death, “thought of calling a priest”. Here Bernard confronts his own exclusion from both Catholic and his self-made devotion to Eileen:

‘A priest? ... Why a priest? I’m ... killing myself. I’m destroying the temple of the Holy Ghost. Right? Didn’t you say yourself, that is a sin there’s no forgiveness for?’

The few days in London are for Eileen Hughes a heady mix of experiences, encounters with sex and near-death, which differ markedly from early expectations on the journey from Ireland (“here she was in London, her first time across the water”) with the voice of false, would-be immigrant hope: “… because I’ve seen this, maybe I’ll see all those other places too, New York and Paris, and someday maybe I’ll even live someplace like this with a job that will pay me enough to send plenty of money home to Mama”. It is this mother who hears on her fiftieth birthday the cockcrow call close by Ulster Linen Works which made her “made her think of her childhood on a farm in Donegal”. The relative peace of a pre-Troubles Southern past and and Eileen’s London present are marked by an Ulster of sectarian, and lingering colonial, struggle:

‘... there’s been no playing in the streets here in Lismore. Nothing but British Army patrols and searches and bombings and shootings and burn-outs ... It’s not the boys people worry about now. It’s bombs and bullets. And the people don’t see each other the way they used to: the old life is gone forever, everybody stays at home, stuck up to the telly, you never go over to your neighbour’s, is it any wonder there’s more drink and tranquillisers than ever?’

The generational theme of so many of Moore’s novels allows yet again for a view of a pre-Vatican II religious as well as (pre-Troubles) political history, as a neighbour of Eileen’s...

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147 *ibid.*, p. 157.
149 *ibid.*, p. 9.
150 *ibid.*, p. 8.
151 *ibid.*, p. 25.
152 *ibid.*, p. 27.
mother reflects:

"Isn't it well for them, this generation," Mrs. McTurk said, leaning up against the doorway. "I mean, in your day and mine, missus dear, Irish people only went to the Continent once in a lifetime, a pilgrimage to Lourdes or Rome. And now they're off at the drop of a hat, the way it was a day excursion, only it's the Costa Brava, or some place like ..."  

The changed, post-Vatican II theological territory of Ireland is never too distant an unconscious geography of the narrative. Still, returned to Ireland, but prior to Bernard’s suicide Mary’s visit to Mona McAuley demonstrates the depth of theological memory:

It was a wet afternoon, drizzling and dark, the sort of afternoon that would make the Garden of Eden look a misery, but when Eileen went through the gates into the driveway of Tullymore she was struck by the beautiful way the front grounds were kept up... she knew he was here someplace and might even be watching her as she came up the drive.  

Having encountered only rejection, it is as if Bernard has in a newly post-lapsarian world absented himself from the world of his created devotion, Bernard’s invisible presence here the implied omniscience of an unseen God in an Edenic garden.

Yet, despite the unity of theme, theological transference in an Ireland which has witnessed a post-Vatican II transformation in Catholicism, the sight of the large house which so impressed Eileen and provoked Bernard to declare his devotion, that moment of epiphany indicates too the undercurrent of a wider intertextuality in the novel: of the ‘big house’ in Irish literature, and so too the colonial heritage ingrained so deeply in nationalist folk memory of days of Irish Catholic oppression. Thus Bernard’s secret country house in County Louth “was built in the eighteenth century by one of Cromwell’s officers, some murderer paid off in Irish land”, a Cromwellian reference which appears early even in Moore’s futuristic novella, Catholics.  

The Anglo-Irish Betty and Derek Irwin, friends of Bernard’s in London, highlight too something of the tensions and accommodations of English colonial history in Ireland, Eileen Hughes’ surmising they were “probably well-to-do Irish Prods”, “accents that were English but not quite”. After Bernard’s suicide and the funeral at Saint Patrick’s, Mona McAuley moves too to London and a “big house in Chelsea”, indicating similar cultural alienation and

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153 ibid., p. 33.  
154 ibid., pp.198-199.  
155 ibid., p. 55.  
156 See above, pp. 120-121.
accommodation. The 'big house’ motif established - the mock-serious ‘Protestant Ascendancy’ returned to mainland Britain perhaps - the subtle Daniel O'Connell “liberator” reference in the final pages of the narrative draws no political closure but, given the ongoing Troubles, the aesthetics of nation and narration most fully explored by Moore in The Mangan Inheritance. Here the complex of aesthetic, political and theological grandnarratives centred around the revolutionary nineteenth century Irish poet James Clarence Mangan, a late twentieth century search for ancestral roots in a rural Ireland seemingly untouched by Vatican II. Here, though, Lies of Silence deals significantly with the politicisation, or at least the perceived politicisation, of Catholicism in an Ireland some years from the 1998 Good Friday agreement in a Belfast which might be unrecognisable to Judith Hearne.

Lies of Silence (1990)

Lies of Silence marks Brian Moore’s fictional closure with Ireland. It is a world tired of politics and priests, a world that ends with the inevitable death of Michael Dillon; textual limit mirrored, as in so many later fictions, in metaphysical limit. With a cultural undercurrent of theological and political conspiracy that continues to characterise an Ireland of seemingly endless Troubles, it is this metaphysical limit which frames the text. In a post-Vatican II world which has lost its theological sense and a political world which relives its own history through the divisions of Irish landscape, the enduring (not yet post-)colonial encounter of Catholic and Protestant is heightened by the street by street proximity of division. It is a violence in which the history of division is a seemingly permanent landscape of encounter, where both cultural time and cultural space prevent accommodation. Here centuries of conflict are defined by the minutiae of the spatial, where road names (Antrim, the Falls) themselves mark the sectarian divide. It is a violence of inner city Belfast which invades the ordinary, even mundane, suburbs, where in the midst of the hostage-taking at the centre of the plot, Mr Harbinson, a retired bank manager, is seen coming out of his front door and “slipping a lead on his Airedale dog”, unaware “that he was being watched by armed men in balaclava helmets”.

For Michael Dillon, then, the landscape is, naturally, well-defined and the self-referential

157 Ibid., p. 110.
158 See above, pp. 130-137.
159 B. Moore, Lies of Silence, p. 69.
nature of and intertextual portrayal of the Irish landscape heightens the tensions of the sectarian plot. The abiding but increasingly forlorn hope of exile by geographical distance is, though, seemingly thwarted by psychological entrapment:

Dismissed from Keogh’s busy, money-breathing world, Dillon stood looking out at a mountain which reared up like a stage backdrop behind the city. Long ago, in school, daydreaming, he would look out of the classroom window and imagine himself in some aeroplane being lifted over that grey pig’s back mountain to places far from here, to London, New York, Paris, great cities he had seen in films and photographs, cities far away from the dull constrictions of home. Outside now, in the mezzanine bar, familiar Ulster voices were raised in a wave of chat and jokes. It was as though he were still in that long ago classroom, still daydreaming, still trapped.\textsuperscript{60}

Even at the novel’s close in London’s Hampstead, a semi-rural idyll of a world away from the violence of the city of Belfast, it seems that Dillon cannot avoid the consequences of a personal history which now plays an integral part in the culture of sectarianism. Morally distanced early on in the novel from Catholic roots by adultery and planned divorce, Michael Dillon attempts to distance himself too from the sectarianism which is perceived to identify the Church with a violent nationalism.

Reflecting on the contradictions of being kidnapped by a ‘Catholic’ IRA, Dillon’s is a consciousness which reminisces bitterly on his own impotent part of a wider collective and collusive Catholic past as he drives to his hotel to make delivery of the bomb which is to kill the Orangeman Pottinger: “See this car on its way to kill innocent people, see my wife in a room with a gun at her head, and then ask your Cardinal if he can still say of these killers that he can see their point of view.”\textsuperscript{61} Then, as he drives through the city, he sees the cultural marks of the Protestant other:

... into the roundabout at Carlisle Circus. In its centre was a stone plinth which had once supported the statue of a Protestant divine, a statue like many of the city’s monuments, toppled in the war and never replaced. The white Ford came circling around behind him as he entered Clifton Street and drove past the headquarters of the Orange Order, that fount of Protestant prejudice against Catholics. Above the ugly grey stone building was a statue which had not been toppled by war or civil strife, a Dutch prince on horseback, waving a sword, staring out over the damaged city at ancient unchanging Irish hills, a statue commemorating a battle three hundred years ago in which the forces of the Protestant House of Orange defeated, on Irish soil, the forces of the papist English king. At the bottom of Clifton Street he turned right, driving along the edge of those Protestant and Catholic ghettos which were the true and lasting legacy of this British Province founded on inequality and sectarian hate.\textsuperscript{62}

\textsuperscript{60}ibid., p. 114.
\textsuperscript{61}ibid., p. 81.
\textsuperscript{62}ibid., p. 82.
of sectarian division in the history of Northern Ireland as in *Lies of Silence* - the troubled ('working class') Belfast inner city and 'peaceful' ('middle class') Belfast suburbs - one is reminded of Kevin Redden's comments that "it's all economics, it's not patriotism". That Kevin Redden was lucky to get a post at a Protestant teaching hospital adds a ring of truth to this. Indeed, the "lies of silence" passage at the heart of Moore's last Irish novel correlates religion and poverty as endemic to a sectarianism in an Ulster where Catholicism (as Protestantism) is otherwise a spent force, especially as regards its influence on a liberal, middle class populace.

The narrative portrayal of Catholicism in *Lies of Silence* is thus of a grandnarrative at its most violent and most indifferent, a violent indifference which is the key to the narrative's title. Almost as a motif of the inconsequentiality of extremism, Mr Harbinson, insignificant to both the novel and its wider points of religious and political reference (narrative plot and grandnarrative history), provokes Michael Dillon's anti-sectarian diatribe:

...Dillon felt an anger rise within him, anger at the lies which had made this, his and Mr Harbinson's birthplace, sick with a terminal illness of bigotry and injustice, lies told over the years to poor Protestant working people about the Catholics, lies told to poor Catholic working people about the Protestants, lies from politics and parliaments, lies at rallies and funeral orations, and, above all, the lies of silence from those in Westminster who did not want to face the injustice of Ulster's status quo.

This is a Catholicism which (post-Vatican II and post-Troubles) has, in Belfast at least, been both liberalised (and thereby weakened) and politicised (and thereby made more powerful).

Thus there are no 'religious' Catholics in *Lies of Silence*. The priest, 'wee Father Connolly' epitomises Catholicism's entrenched sectarian politicisation just as Michael Dillon, together with his lover and his wife, epitomise its moral liberalisation. It is as if the authority of late twentieth century Catholic Church in Ireland overrides, but only residually and through political fanaticism, the loss of an authority which has been eroding by attrition from both pre-Vatican II and pre-Troubles' days. It is, however, an accommodation which seemingly matches a weakening of the 'authority' of the republican extremists too. After his daughter has been released and decided to speak out against the IRA ("if Catholics are calling for "Brits

166 *ibid.,* p. 57.
167 *ibid.,* p. 69-70.
168 See above, for instance, pp. 144-146.
outs” they should also call for “IRA out’ ’. Moira Dillon’s father thus reflects on this decline of the republican movement in post-Free state and post-1937 Constitution Ireland:

‘My daughter! My daughter! Sittin’ in her house with the IRA pointin’ a gun at her head. Before the war, when I was a wee boy, if anyone had told me that, I’d have said you’re daft. I mean, back in then the IRA was finished, a bunch of dodos that nobody needed anymore. Sure, we had the same Troubles in those days, a Catholic would never get a job if there was a Protestant up for it. But then the war came and there was more jobs and I used to think all that bigotry’s dyin’ out and after the war things will get better. But they didn’t. And then in the sixties the civil rights marches started and it was on the telly an’ the whole world saw the prods beatin’ us up and the police helpin’ them. Now that the outside world sees what’s goin’ on here, things will get better. But they got worse. And you know the rest.’

It is not Moira, though, but Michael Dillon who marks the continuing failure of conflict resolution. Initially rejecting the pleas of Father Connolly (the uncle of one of the momentarily unmasked terrorists) that Michael should not identify his nephew, the recanting of this stance comes too late and the assassin’s bullet reaches Michael Dillon even in his London hideout. Dillon, like the priest, remains embroiled in the sectarian complicity earlier so despised.

Commentators have rightly criticised *Lies of Silence* for Moore’s treatment of conflict in Northern Ireland as over simplistic in its bald statement of sectarian oppositions. It does indeed lack the sophisticated portrayal of *The Doctor’s Wife* where Sheila’s Redden’s unconscious provides a more convincing sense of historical struggle and present tragedy. It lacks too the subtle presentation of a history of culture in conflict as political and aesthetic observable in *The Mangan Inheritance*. The thriller mode may account for but not excuse Moore’s easy statement of sectarian encounter but what takes the volume beyond the limitations of its form is its metaphysical conclusion. Michael Dillon’s death is both a simple twist of a thriller plot and a more fundamental literary-theological aporia, no less than the silence of God which greeted the abbot at the end of *Catholics*, the novella which began Moore’s revisitation of Ireland. In an increasingly doubt-ridden Catholic world faced with the effects of globalisation, its theology in turmoil at the interface of conflicting ideologies, where even Catholic history is read in the light of a post-Vatican II theology, it is a silence of God which increasingly permeates much of Moore’s final works of fiction.

169 *ibid.*, p. 173.
170 *ibid.*, p. 173.
171 See, for instance, Corcoran, *After Yeats and Joyce*, pp. 135-137.
172 Clifton Street is the sight of the bomb near Kevin Redden’s surgery.  
(157)
The narrative of sectarian violence thus continues to characterise the conflict of grandnarrative in Ireland and Moore makes close identification, if a little wearily, between religion and politics.

Moore shows here, though, the way in which sectarianism crosses its own self-imposed religious divide, Michael and Moira Dillon themselves being 'Catholic'. Michael Dillon's moral dilemma is either to cooperate with the IRA and save Moira, the wife he plans to leave for another woman, or deliver the bomb and kill and maim the innocent at the hotel he manages. The irony is that 'Catholic' Michael Dillon is coerced into the attempted bombing of the Protestant extremist, Dr Pottinger. Still, as for the youthful terrorists who have taken them hostage in their own house, it is a Catholicism in name only. Just so, Michael Dillon surmises on Mr Harbinson's Protestantism, "no more a religious Protestant than Dillon was a religious Catholic". Moore, at his most moralistic, thereby presents both the 'ideals' of the Republican 'Cause' of colonial struggle: "Mr Harbinson would never fight a civil war to prevent Ulster becoming part of the Irish Republic, or take up arms to affirm his status as a citizen of the United Kingdom. Mr Harbinson, like ninety percent of Ulster, Catholic and Protestant, just wanted to get on with his life without any interference from men in woolen masks". The ridiculous (but for that still frightening) masked manifestation of the hidden, youthful faces of the IRA foot soldier 'volunteers' belies the religious dimension of the conflict, as does the religious apathy of the majority caught within the sway of sectarianism. Still, for all its nominalism, something which Sheila Redden admits of herself partaking, it is a secularised political faith in which religious difference between Protestant and Catholic becomes heightened through a geography of terror where sectarianism defines territory.

The inner city invasion of the suburbs indicates too both a narrative necessity (it is where Michael Dillon, the hotel manager, fittingly lives) and the economic nature of the divide and its perpetuation. That Protestant-Catholic is one amongst many means for expressing this territory of ideological conflict, and class struggle another expression of the same divide, has been noted in the context of Moore's early Irish novels. Considering the geographical economics

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163 ibid., p. 69.
164 See above, pp. 144-145.
165 See above, pp. 45-47.
Chapter Five
North America Revisited:
Post-Vatican II and Postcolonial Perspectives
(The Great Victorian Collection, 1974; Cold Heaven, 1983;
Black Robe, 1985)

Introduction

As Catholics was the beginning of a period of writing in which Moore’s reappraisal of Catholicism coincided with a fictional return to the landscape of Ireland (the beginning of a period concluding with Lies of Silence), The Great Victorian Collection marks Moore’s parallel literary treatment of North America, brought largely to geographical, ideological, and theological closure by Black Robe. In this chapter, then, I trace the textual shift away from the very much hegemonic secularism of Moore’s early North American fictions (The Luck of Ginger Coffey; An Answer from Limbo, I Am Mary Dunne; Fergus) to a greater cultural (and especially religious) heterogeneity in his later North American novels. Such heterogeneity is greatly enhanced by an appropriation of historical perspective in which contemporary issues, especially those of religious and political import, are brought into heightened focus. To this end, I argue that Moore’s later American works highlight an increasing convergence of ideology and theology; and that post-Vatican II, Moore’s literary theology increasingly finds an ideological context within a postcolonial perspective.1

Moore’s Irish fictions have always contained, perhaps inevitably, at least marginal references to the colonial context of Catholicism in Ireland (as in the early Irish novels).2 Later Irish fictions (as in the ‘futuristic’ Catholics) contain by contrast a possibly postcolonial context within which to read Irish Catholicism. This contextualising of the theological within the history of imperialism is retained in Moore’s early and later American fictions, and most forcefully in the author’s last works. I adopt the term postcolonial here most explicitly since

Moore’s portrayal of Catholicism retains something of an ambiguous relationship to the imperial, and thus to the historical states of coloniality and postcoloniality. The colonial context of some novels is more central, explicit and obvious than others. If there has, to date, been some exploration of Moore’s treatment of ‘spiritual colonialism’ and appropriation of history in these settings, such literary criticism has not examined how Moore’s portrayal of Catholic colonial history might be affected by a postcolonial (and indeed, however anachronistically) post-Vatican II perspective.

In short, Moore’s later American novels present an authorial perspective which is advantaged by a particular view of theological and ideological history. We see this tension between the contemporary and the historical exhibited, I argue, throughout the later North American novels: in the ‘modern’ setting of California of The Great Victorian Collection with its British Empire sub-text; in the historical (Spanish colonial) background to the Catholic Church in the ‘contemporary’ California of Cold Heaven; and in Moore’s supposedly historical account of French Catholic imperialism and Christianizing mission in early colonial Quebec. The focus on Moore’s final three American fictions (The Great Victorian Collection, Cold Heaven and Black Robe) shows a literary convergence of postcolonial and post-Vatican II perspectives in Moore’s novels; a matter particularly illustrative of the author’s ever-prominent (and ever diverse) treatment of theology and metaphysics in the light of ideology.

There is something worth noting here about the distinction in postcolonial theory and criticism between postcoloniality, as historical and political state of the postcolonial, and postcolonialism, the theory of postcoloniality within and beyond the academy. My emphasis

3 I use the terms colonial and imperial interchangeably here and in the classical sense of that cited by Said in chapter 2 (see above p. 42 ff.) where both colonialism and imperialism involves the removal or possession of territory by an external political and/or military force. Understanding that the nuances of cultural imperialism are ever-present after, say, an occupier has departed, I interpret the postcolonial moment historically. From the Third Galway Conference on Colonialism, National University of Ireland, Galway, June 1999, I am especially grateful for Professor Robert Young’s clarification of this issue of postcoloniality and historicity in his paper, ‘Assimilation and Violence’. Adopting an historical interpretation too of the postcolonial moment, Young’s paper compared and contrasted the states of postcoloniality in Ireland and Algeria (the contexts of course for Moore’s first and final novels).


(see note 3 above, p. 159) is on Moore’s use of the historical states of postcoloniality - Moore is not elaborating any theoretical construct even if his fictions borrow from ideological and theological perspectives to enhance the representation of the historical moment. Thus an emerging assumption within the field is that a distinction also needs to be made between postcolonial theory, as cultural commentary on power imbalances between the colonised and coloniser, and postcolonial criticism, as the more (actively) political and engaged involvement in overcoming such power imbalances. This is perhaps best illustrated by distinguishing between seminal texts, say, between the postcolonial criticism of Fanon’s The Wretched of the Earth and the postcolonial theory of Said’s Orientalism. Both centre concerns around power imbalances and the oppressive use of such power for domination - territorial gain, cultural and political imperialism - but the two have differences of emphasis and approach. It is possible here to postulate a scale dependent upon the emphasis placed upon either an ‘engaged’ stance or more ‘detached’ cultural criticism position. Such a scale might be described as ranging from a politically engaged anti-colonial/ imperial nationalism (postcolonial criticism) to trans-national cultural commentary (postcolonial theory). If we again compare Fanon and Said, it is the difference between the postcolonial criticism of Fanon’s anti-imperialist, revolutionary stance against colonialism in The Wretched of the Earth and the postcolonial theory of Said’s (trans-national) cultural analysis of Orientalism, further exemplified, even typified by Culture and Imperialism. Moore’s fictions remain representations of postcoloniality in theological context rather than ideological appropriations for historical transformation.

In the context of the literary influence of Vatican II Catholicism on Moore’s fiction and the author’s portrayal of this, three key areas are of most relevance for our present discussion. First, the Church redefined itself at the Second Vatican Council as an institution from a hierarchical to a more egalitarian (if as yet far from democratic) ecclesiology, from a ‘Church
militant’ to the ‘People of God’. The key document here is *Lumen Gentium*. Second, *Lumen Gentium* illustrates too another development, a theology also arising from more moderate ecclesiology, that is, a radical redefinition of soteriology. Essentially the shift from ‘no salvation outside the Church’ to a universal model of salvation could not be more marked. Here, the Church recognised the possibility of salvation for those outside the Church, a doctrine incorporating ecumenism in *Unitatis Redintegratio*, and, in *Nostra Aetate*, the possibility of salvation through the religious other of Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism and Islam, and even atheism in *Lumen Gentium*. Third, despite a history of social teaching which predates the Second Vatican Council, the Church demonstrated a growing awareness that the Vatican I ‘separation’ of the Church from ‘the world’ prevented a full involvement with issues of social, economic and political import. *Gaudium et Spes* is generally recognised as the document which most fully exemplifies this new spirit of active socio-economic engagement and Christian responsibility. The latter, for instance, is accredited, particularly post-Medellín, with the development in liberation theology of conjoining a ‘people of God’ ecclesiology with a pastoral theology of social justice, already hinted at in Moore’s earliest portrayal of liberation theology in *Catholics*, and to be more fully developed in *The Colour of...*
Blood and No Other Life.

It is this identity with the poor against injustice and oppression in which inheres a potential degree of commonality in approach and ideological orientation between post-Vatican II theology and postcolonialism. Indeed, it is liberation theology (or more correctly theologies of liberation) which most closely reflect this convergence of postcolonial and post-Vatican II perspectives. That liberation theology and postcolonialism share varying degrees of emphasis on Marxist analysis is a highly contested point of such theological/ideological reference. Nevertheless, their shared stance against economic inequalities and exploitation presents a common front in terms of achieving social-structural transformation - even if perceptions of such shared goals have led to an over-stated identification of Marxist ideology with Catholic theology. Such identification is inevitably reinforced when the analysis of oppression is rooted in the history of the colonial and especially where liberation is defined through its

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15 A. Kee, *Marx and the Failure of Liberation Theology* (London: SCM, 1990) provides a critical re-assessment of this accepted theological/ideological synthesis. Ferm, similarly distancing liberation theology from Marxism, writes of Marxism being used as the “red flag of denunciation” for liberation theologians while arguing that, “There is no doubt that a definite preference for socialism and a strong opposition to capitalism are widespread among Third World liberation theologians, especially in Latin America”. Yet, he argues that if “Marxism meant (1) state ownership and complete state control of the economy, (2) the overthrow of nonsocialist governments by force, and (3) an atheistic worldview” then it would be difficult to find a liberation theologian to qualify. (See Ferm, ‘Christian and Marxist’, *Third World Liberation Theologies*, pp. 107-115.)
postcoloniality. 16

With a key emphasis upon the historical context of salvation, such theological/ideological analyses naturally lead to an examination of the structural roots of injustice in an historical as well as a contemporary context. 17 In many theological communities, often but not exclusively in former colonies, the re-examination of biblical scholarship in post-colonial contexts led not simply to an analysis of the historical roots of present day inequalities but to a re-examination

16 See Dussell, ed., The Church in Latin America. Dussell’s survey provides an historical and detailed regional survey from pre- to post-colonial times. The position of Church can be said to have varied from its identification with colonial powers, especially those of Portugal and Spain from the sixteenth century onwards, through the periods of emancipation in the early nineteenth century to its ambivalent relation with the emergence of communist and fascist ideologies in the twentieth:

From 1914 to 1945, as a result of two wars for the hegemony of the capitalist world, power passed from Britain to the United States ... The Russian Revolution of 1917 (and the Mexican one of 1910) raised the spectre of communism in the organs of the Roman Church. Germany, Japan and Italy, with other countries late to undergo the industrial revolution, sought in fascism ... the means of developing their industrial and colonial power.

This is the context in which the two pontificates of Pius XI (1922-39) and Pius XII (1939-58) cover the whole of the period under consideration [1930-1959, that is, immediately preceding Vatican II] From the time of Pius XI, who sympathised with “nationalisms” and mistrusted socialism, two key years stand out: first, 1931, when he wrote the encyclicals Quadragesimo Anno, criticizing socialism, and Non abbiamo bisogno, setting limits to the facism of Mussolini; second, 1937, when he condemned Hitler’s Nazism in Mit Bennender Sorge, while setting limits to socialism in Divinis Redemptoris.

Pius XII, obsessed with saving the structures of the Church in the midst of a Europe in ruins, saw the German invasion of Russia as a lesser evil, but also appreciated the threat posed by fascist totalitarianism.

(E. Dussell, The Church in Latin America, p. 139.)

The radical alignment of the Church with the poor as opposed to powerful in a post-Vatican II period, prepared for by events in civil society as well as ecclesiastical, according to Dussell, is the mark of the Church’s identification with truly post-colonial political structures in Latin America. Dussell’s chapter on ‘Recent Latin American Theology’ (pp. 391-402) identifies the preparation (1958-68) and formulation (1968-72) of liberation theology as well as the rise of its critics (1972-9). The successful Sandanista Revolution in Nicaragua, including its revolutionary priests, must be seen as one particular flowering of Marxist ideology and Catholic theology in a social structural synthesis; and it is this period (from 1979 onwards) in which Catholicism’s ambivalence has become marked, Dulles writing of two currents: “One was made up of those church people who became closely linked with the ruling groups - military juntas, local bourgeoisie or transnational companies - taking their line from the U.S. State Department; the other of those who, following another tradition, carried on the commitment to the poor that had developed since the Council” (p. 396).

17 Guterriez, classic, seminal A Theology of Liberation is subtitled ‘History, Politics and Salvation’. (163)
of texts central to Christianity itself. The historical irony here, of course, is that in so many colonial histories, the imperialism of economic and political might was vouchsafed by theology, a dual expression of material power and supposed cultural superiority, with colonisation often accompanying and consolidating missionary conquests. Moore’s later novels portray these often unresolved perspectives on political and theological history through narratives in which Catholicism variously displays an ambivalent historical relationship with colonialism: identified on the one hand with imperial power through missionary activity (subtly in The Great Victorian Collection and more explicitly in Black Robe) and on the other with its postcolonial subversion - especially through theologies which identify with the marginalised and the oppressed (as in, if indirectly, Cold Heaven).

As a way of approaching Moore’s final works, specifically here the later American novels, I

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18 In their introductory survey, for instance, Boff and Boff identify certain favoured biblical texts within liberation theology:

- Exodus, because it recounts the epic of politico-religious liberation of a mass of slaves who, through the power of covenant with God, became the people of God;
- the Prophets, for their uncompromising defense of the liberator God, their vigorous denunciation of injustices, their reinvocation of the rights of the poor, and their proclamation of the messianic world;
- the Gospels, obviously, for the centrality of the divine person of Jesus, with the announcement of the kingdom, his liberating actions, and his death and resurrection - the final meaning of history;
- the Acts of the Apostles, because they portray the ideal of a free and liberating Christian community;
- Revelation, because in collective and symbolic terms it describes the immense struggles of the people of God against all the monsters of history.


am suggesting then that post-Vatican II theology and postcolonialism (theory and criticism) share a common stance on a number of grounds, and here I identify three: an emphasis on historical perspective in the analysis of social-structural inequality; an identity with the marginalised and oppressed 'other'; and a radical, social interpretation of texts. Thus, in identifying the historicity of oppression certain notable instances of post-Vatican II theology and postcolonialism provides ideological and theological focus on (and give voice to) the marginalised other and provides for religious and ideological readings of texts as either economically and politically transformative or inherently conservative. Thus, where the seminal writings of (say) liberation theology and postcolonialism provide a shared reading of texts as either upholding the colonial or subverting the imperial, Moore's final novels are themselves party to reexamination of political and theological history: in literary terms, a process which in these later American novels is evident in seminal form within *The Great Victorian Collection*.

**The Great Victorian Collection (1976)**

Having arrived to investigate “an anonymous complaint that a fairground was being set up illegally” in the parking lot of a Carmel motel, Lieutenant Henry Polita of the Salinas County Sheriff's office asks Anthony Maloney if he is a Catholic. Maloney answers, "No." Asked what the police officer meant, Lieutenant Polita says, "I mean this is a miracle, isn't it?" From Polita and his colleague, it is an ironic and mocking scepticism which thus greets Maloney’s ‘dream’ of the ‘Great Victorian Collection’. A reconstituted Victoria and Albert Museum in the midst of Carmel, California, this is a world from which the formal marks of religious practice and belief have disappeared.

A young history professor from McGill, Montreal, Maloney is thus delayed on his first trip for an academic seminar at Berkeley. Montreal, Quebec, remains still a contested land in tension with English-speaking domination of Canada, and thereby torn by a double colonial identity, tying Quebec to France and more indirectly to England. From one contested land - French Canada in tension with the Old World and the New - to California, a model of cultural flux, Maloney exchanges interwoven sets of seemingly unstable cultural signifiers (English speaking

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French-Canadian) for another, “his first trip to the West Coast” to explore the Big Sur region where “one could hardly fail to be appalled by the values evidenced in this place”. The dream of the Victorian Collection derives from a period which was the area of his doctoral thesis, “A Study of the Effects of Gaining a Colonial Empire on the Mores of Victorian England as Exemplified by the Art and Architecture of the Period” and is essentially a reconstruction of artefacts and scenes he might have observed when “in connection with his thesis he had journeyed to England to visit museums and libraries to look at various public buildings”. A specially marked influence was that of the Great Exhibition of 1851.

Maloney’s dream is a reconstruction of a world he had only known indirectly - through his thesis and through visits to London. It is recreation which is highlighted, though, by differences in both culture (the artefacts of the Collection) and landscapes which are integral to it. A shed thus contained “an exhibition of oils and watercolours by Victorian Royal Academicians: landscapes, stormy seascapes, portraits, illustrations from the novels of the day”. This encounter of physical landscape and ideological grandnarrative - Maloney’s dream of Empire and in the land of the American Dream - is heightened when Maloney meets Vaterman the Monterey Courier, and local New York Times correspondent. Momentarily leaving the journalist as he observes the paintings it reminds Maloney “that in the time of the old Queen, something like this Collection would first have been announced to the world in a series of artist’s drawings in The Illustrated London News as a marvel, a far-off miracle, to be accepted by most of the population as yet another wonder. But, today, in this age of instant distrust, who would believe it?" The need to translate the dream of the Collection into a

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22 ibid., p. 3.
23 ibid., p. 4.
24 ibid., p. 5.
25 Opening on May 1, 1851 at the Crystal Palace, at Sydenham Hill, the Great Exhibition: ...followed on a half century of exhibitions, particularly in Paris, but it was no less significant as the premiere of nearly a century of international expositions to come, across Europe, but in particular to Britain, France and the United States. Whereas the earlier exhibitions in Paris had been intended to foster growth in national manufactures, the international expositions developed in an age that contemplated the increasing importance of free trade and global economic competition, and eventually came to celebrate the imperial and colonial enterprise. (Harlow and Carter, Imperialism and Orientalism, p. 332; see also pp. 333-339.)
credible story for *The New York Times* becomes crucial for Maloney; but the landscape as much as the culture of America threatens the dream and its potential plausibility: “he looked at the Victorian paintings, alien and vulnerable under this metal American sun”. This is a New World which is historically, theologically and ideologically, a world away from the Old World of Empire, a world in which the denial of religion is easy, undertaken by Maloney without qualm. Yet *The Great Victorian Collection*, for all its apparent, conscious neglect of the religious provides a major subtext for the portrayal of Catholicism which will form the basis (at least indirectly) for Moore’s later fictions, even if it is seemingly marginalised to the monosyllabic exchange between Maloney and Polita.

The Victorian Collection thus persists as a shared reality for Maloney and those who subsequently flood to see the Collection - and indeed for those who flood to see the replica of the Collection, reproduced supposedly for its own protection as the Great Victorian Village. Collectively, Maloney’s dream and its reproduction in the Victorian Village are models of the degeneration and decline of religious culture which were the marks of the (cultural, economic and political) growth of Empire as much as it was of the Enlightenment.

Yet the zenith of post-Enlightenment, European empire building, in Moore’s novel represented by Maloney’s dream, was one in which religion was *both* adjunct of imperialism *and* increasingly relegated to a privatised region on the margins of culture. Maloney’s dream represents the metaphysical scepticism of a post-Enlightenment world where the theological and ideological constructs of empire building have seemingly disappeared. Thus the rationalism of the academic establishment - here the American Professor Clews and the British establishment figure of Sir Alfred Mannings - is key to asserting the Collection’s authenticity or

28 *ibid.*, p. 27.

29 Gandhi observes that the post-Enlightenment “birth of nationalism in Western Europe is coeval with the dwindling - if not the death - of religious modes of thought ... Nationalism ... fills the existential void left in the wake of paradise” (Gandhi, *Postcolonial Theory*, p. 104); cf. Deniau’s comment in *The Magician’s Wife* on the new religion of nationalism, below, p. 233-234.

30 Thus, for instance, Matthew Arnold’s *Culture and Anarchy*, his treatise on the forces of civilization against barbarity at ‘home’ and abroad, dates to the same period as ‘Dover Beach’, his seminal poem on the decline of religious faith with the rise of nineteenth science and industrialisation. *Culture and Anarchy* and ‘Dover Beach’ in this sense mark the twin forces of the growth of Empire and the decline of religious belief apparent in *The Great Victorian Collection*. See Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, in P.J. Keating, ed., *Matthew Arnold: Selected Prose* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970), pp. 202-300.
otherwise. The opinions of Clews and Manning thus lead to the *Monterey Courier* headline: BRITISH, AMERICAN EXPERTS CONCUR: CARMEL 'DREAM' COLLECTION IS A FAKE: Yale Professor hints at scheme to defraud would-be collectors.31 By contrast with this post-Enlightenment rationalism, the religious witness in the novel becomes a “madman, lips moving in a silent babble” with his own banner ‘headlines’: “GOD ALONE CAN CREATE: Do not believe this lie”.32 Academic and rationalistic credence is provided by Lord Rennishawe, “Hellenist of stature” and “proprietor of Creechmore Castle in Wales, a repository of Victorian treasures which Maloney had visited”;33 and this credibility is also sought through the ‘scientific’ mediation of Dr Spector of Vanderbilt University, the parapsychology researcher who charts Maloney’s final inability to maintain both the dream and his own sanity.

If early on, then, the most frequent request made by visitors was to be shown the room in which “the original dream had taken place” they soon become content with its subsequent imitation; and if the second most frequent request of visitors was to see the dreamer himself, Maloney deteriorates “to the point that the tour guides, if they saw him approach, would turn their groups into another aisle”.35 Six months after the original dream and its reproduction, the place of both - in the physical and ideological setting of the American landscape - demonstrate near total assimilation into the foundational ideals of American society, an integration emphasised by the Collection’s place alongside the cultural icons of the American Dream:

... a traveller on the highways of California approaching Los Angeles, San Francisco, the gambling cities of the desert, or remote national monuments such as Joshua Tree or Death Valley, could not fail to see a sign, positioned at fifty mile intervals. Beneath a simplified drawing of the south portico of the Crystal Palace was the legend:

VISIT CARMEL-BY-THE-SEA
Home of
THE GREAT VICTORIAN COLLECTION36

The Victorian Village becomes then a consumerist reconstruction of Victorian culture and Victorian imperialism:

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31 ibid., p. 60.
32 ibid., p. 72; appearing again on p. 174, “The madman was back”.
33 ibid., p. 113.
34 ibid., p. 199.
35 ibid., p. 201.
36 ibid., p. 196
There were ... two large family restaurants, the General Gordon and the Gladstone; a food market named Covent Garden; and a number of shops, including the Olde Curiosity Shoppe, the Florence Nightingale Tea Room, Oscar Wilde Way Out (a men's-wear boutique), and, finally, a large warehouse supermarket filled with cheap reproductions of Victoriana and misleadingly named the Great Victorian Collection. The whole was fronted by an altered scale reproduction roughly corresponding to the south portico of the Crystal Palace.37

Maloney’s dream, by means of this Victorian Village, is thus marketed and packaged for the American dream, becoming indeed indistinguishable from it, many visitors actually believing “that the warehouse supermarket was the great Victorian Collection”.38

The dream, however, survives Maloney’s continued psychological deterioration and final suicide. Dr Spector’s article, ‘Psychokinetic Elements in the Manifestation of Dreams: The Carmel Experiments’, The Journal of Parapsychology, Vol. XX, No. V, including excerpts from Maloney’s journal, provides closure for the novel and yet the substance of the Collection itself, which - perhaps with too the ideological trace of empire - survives Maloney’s death:

The Collection, in Dr Clew’s opinion, had suffered some deterioration since he had last examined it, probably as a result of having stood for more than a year in a semi-outdoors, subtropical location. But it was, essentially, intact.39

In more optimistic times earlier in the novel, though, threatened with the loss of and then actually fired from his post in Montreal, Maloney’s megalomania knows few bounds.

Prompted into another dream, that of being both campus hero and finally vindicated academic genius (there’s a touch of Brendan Tierney here), the defence at McGill is coordinated by a former history colleague, John Palliser.40 Maloney’s excited self-reflection after the phone call from his friend is that he is a “a historian who was witness to that moment in history when a man’s dream literally came true”.41 His reflection demonstrates the centrality of the novel’s theme of “the Victorian era as a factor in modern man’s historical consciousness”, an “extension of my PhD thesis” ... “I’d be an outstanding lecturer, unique in my field”.42 If Maloney does predate the development of postcolonial theory by a decade or two (!), The Great

37 ibid., p. 198.
38 ibid., p. 198.
39 ibid., p. 212.
40 ibid., p. 117-120.
41 ibid., p.120.
42 ibid., p.120.
Victorian Collection establishes an amount of groundwork for themes in which theology and imperialism will begin to surface more explicitly in Moore's later American fictions through to his final works, and most obviously in The Magician's Wife.

Cold Heaven (1983)

In ways which prefigure Black Robe, Cold Heaven - Moore's penultimate North American fiction - presents the roots of Catholicism within the historical context of Church mission and early colonial enterprise, here late seventeenth century Spanish imperialism. Cold Heaven's focus on the embodiment of faith and scepticism - and tension between the two - in the character of Marie Davenport is part therefore of a wider historical encounter between a contemporary, liberalised post-Vatican II faith in contemporary America with a colonial and counter-Reformation Catholicism which was its historical predecessor. Indeed, the indigenous population marginalised by the process of imperial and theological expansion provide signals not only of a pre-colonial Catholic inheritance but a continued post-colonial religious presence. Moore's novels reflect this post-Vatican II Catholic global pluralism. Cold Heaven signals the development of this process.

Beginning with her husband's 'resurrection' following his 'death' in the boating accident (in a French location which opens the novel) Marie Davenport's experience of the numinous is centred around the geography of the Monterey Coast, not far from where Anthony Maloney had his own visionary encounters in The Great Victorian Collection. Her contemporary visionary experience, though, achieves historical depth by Moore's theological contextualisation. Catholic theology and Catholic theological history thus provide at least the potential for a fuller epistemological grounding than Maloney's finally inexplicable dream. The following passage therefore serves crucially not simply as a meta-text for the reading of Marie Davenport's experiences but as a wider history of ideological and theological grandnarrative of which her experiences form a part, pointing to encounters of old and new worlds, Catholicism

and imperialism:

Our Lady of Monterey

On an expedition to the Monterey Peninsula in 1780, the Archbishop of Merida sent this statue in care of the Franciscan monks to be conquistadora of this new land. On arrival the monks placed it in a temporary altar and later installed it in the mission in this place.

In 1799 Captain Portillo gave the statue a silver crown in thanks for the miraculous relief of his vessels when they were almost shipwrecked on the cliffs near this chapel. An invocation to our Lady of Monterey produced a sudden, total calming of the elements for several minutes during which the vessels were enabled to come about and the crews and vessels were saved.

When the mission was abandoned after secularization, the statue was cared for by local Indians in their homes. After the Sisters of Mary Immaculate established their convent here in 1921, the statue was found in the home of one of the surviving Indian families. It was restored to its original chapel in 1937.

It is, of course, a Catholic grandnarrative from which Marie Davenport has consciously excluded herself, seemingly like so many of her predecessors in Moore’s early American works: “Her mother who was only nominally a Catholic, had placed Marie as a day pupil in convent school ... She knew almost nothing about the Catholic faith and at once got in trouble with the nuns ... Her father had not let her change schools even though he was not a Catholic”. Indeed “Marie had never known this religion into which she had been baptized. That was the irony, that was the mystery.” Montreal born and bred, she is a French Canadian who has forgotten too her historical and cultural identity: “She was alone in a foreign country. She had learned French in a school in Montreal. She knew nothing of France.” Where, however, these former faithless North Americans (Ginger Coffey, Brendan Tierney, Mary Dunne, and Fergus) retain Catholicism as a continuing, if unconscious, grammar of their emotions, and where Anthony Maloney’s experiences re-present all the elements of the miraculous without the conceptual content, Marie Davenport is a unique North American Moore character in the way her encounter with the numinous is explicitly of a religious character, and is so very precisely defined in terms of her Marian visions in the same region where the original late seventeenth century vision of Mary had appeared.

It is the anniversary of Marie Davenport’s vision while Marie is on holiday with her husband

44 B. Moore Cold Heaven ibid., p. 64.
45 ibid., p. 21.
46 ibid., p. 53.
47 ibid., p. 16.
Alex. The nominal comparison between Marie and the Virgin Mary presents some ironic
distance between the original appearance and devotional reception of the vision of ‘Our Lady of
Monterey’ and Marie Davenport’s own Marian vision, which in its latterday appearance meets
with denial rather than religious affirmation. Alex’s ‘resurrection’ throws in an eschatological
dimension to the plot, a preoccupation with the metaphysics of death not uncommon in
Moore’s fiction, especially later work.48 Add Marie’s guilt at her visionary denial combined
with her sexual infidelity and we have a clear portrayal of classical Roman Catholic eschatology
of the ‘last things’: death, judgement, heaven and hell.49 The Yeatsean title (the novel’s title
derives from Yeats’ ‘The Cold Heaven’) heightens a literary context for this eschatology which
is matched by a scriptural intertextuality deriving from the New Testament story of Lazarus.50

There are, however, wider frames of cultural and geographical reference in the narrative
beyond the eschatological. If one of Catholicism’s distinctive features is the devotional as well
as theological preeminence of Mary as the Mother of Jesus, the sightings of the Marian visions
on the Californian coastline present here a sacralised American landscape in which religious
scepticism seems ill-conceived. In this variant of faithful fictions - scepticism struggling against
faith rather than the obverse - landscape is central to the definition of events. Thus Mary’s
sighting of lightning striking the rock late in the novel is epiphanic, reiterating the sustained,
transhistorical preeminence of the environment on the sacramental. More impressive than her
first vision, this latter experience of the numinous literally transforms the physical landscape
itself - a cruciform shape appears on the rock.

Indeed, the transcontinental theme of mysticism and transformative spiritual experience is
highlighted in a powerful array of references to and accounts of the numinous in Catholic
devotional history: from the simplest of uneducated piety (Bernadette Soubirous, the children
of Beaupain51) to ‘Doctors’ of the Church (St John of the Cross, Teresa of Avila and Teresa

48 See note 35 above, p. 83.
49 See The Catechism of the Catholic Church (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1994), pp. 226-
241.
50 John, chapter 11, verses 1-44; cf. Alex Davenport’s fear of becoming known as “a sort of
Lazarus”, ibid., p. 96; “the Lazarus thing”, ibid., p. 142; and Marie Davenport’s confident
unconscious the citation from John: “I am the resurrection and the life”, p. 175.
51 ibid., p. 111.
of Liseux\textsuperscript{52}). For all her apparent ignorance Marie Davenport is surprisingly knowledgeable of the teleology of salvation history: "Bernadette Soubirous, the children of Beauraing, the shepherd at Gaudeloupe; they had been disbelieved when they first told their stories. All had returned to the scene to be given some further sign, to convince the doubting priests. The priests always doubted: it was part of the pattern".\textsuperscript{53}

Marie Davenport’s visionary experience provides for her a privileged position, even if this is both uninvited and unwelcome, her supernatural experience and that of the numinous generally providing a metatext for the reading of the novel’s portrayal of a Catholicism otherwise degraded by its petty institutionalisation and post-Vatican II liberalisation:

And then I felt something strange ... It was a sort of silence, as if the sea wasn’t moving, as though everything was still. Then the branches of the cypresses rustled and shook and someone came through the trees below me. It was a young girl: she couldn’t have been more than sixteen. It was a cloudy day, did I say that? There was no sun at all. And yet she was surrounded by a little golden path of light.\textsuperscript{54}

Marie’s is obviously a repetition of the original miraculous and saving vision. For Marie, however, it is the odd theatricality of the moment that she perceives, not the suggested halo of Monsignor Cassidy, suggesting that for her it was “more like a stage light”, that it was “phony-looking”, though the religious language of the vision provides its Christian contextualisation: “‘Marie, I am your Mother. I am the Virgin Immaculate’ “.\textsuperscript{55} As for other of Moore’s sceptics, religious ritual is a theatrical pageant.\textsuperscript{56} When Alex is later resuscitated it is this which creates the contradictions of belief and scepticism: she pleaded to God for Alex’s life “as if she believed” but when he is revived she is uncertain of the cause of his improved condition. Her own experience of denial thus originally marks the injury while her momentary (if simply petitionary) faith seems to mark his apparent cure, both linked to the events of contemporary and historical experience of the numinous, the tensions again always marked in Marie Davenport’s mind between the material falsity of religious practice and the power of genuine divine intervention:

Into her mind came the stupid doll face of the statue she had seen in the chapel of the

\textsuperscript{52} ibid., p. 198-199; cf the geographical link to Carmel made by Father Niles below, pp. 174-175.
\textsuperscript{53} ibid., p. 111.
\textsuperscript{54} ibid., p. 105.
\textsuperscript{55} ibid., p. 105; also p. 210.
\textsuperscript{56} cf. The Doctor’s Wife, and Moore’s portrayal of the French priest, M. Le Pere Michel Brault, “God’s comedian, preparing some strange theatrical skit”, p. 213.
Sisters of Mary Immaculate. The words of the printed notice beneath the statue filled her ears as though someone spoke them aloud. An invocation to Our Lady of Monterey produced a sudden, total calming of the elements for several minutes during which the vessels were enabled to come about and the crews and vessels were saved. Invocation or medical treatment? She was again in the pit of the question. 57

Marie’s final position is a denial of both the numinous (but evidently not its possibility) and its institutionalisation in the Church.

Marie Davenport’s is, though, as fundamentally a rejection of the place of religion as a source of cultural identity. In San Francisco with her lover a chorus of voices sing an Irish ballad in “a New York Irish sort of pub”58 with photographs of Dublin streets, the lyrics of nationalist violence (“With drums and guns and guns and drums/ The enemy nearly slew ye”59) disavowed too by Daniel “shaking his head at a young woman who had come by with a tray and a notebook, asking for contributions for some Irish cause”.60 It is Marie who parallels the economic exploitation for the “Irish cause” with a “false black nun” collecting in the name of a Church to which she did not belong.61 Paranoid though she is, and perhaps not unreasonably so, Marie associates the collecting nun with the inevitable quest to build a shrine and to make the place of her vision a place of pilgrimage. Forced into a visionary state over which she has no control the possibility of a future reconstruction of the scene is not unlike that fate suffered by Anthony Maloney. Marie later fears that she would be “vouchsafed a second vision, and this time, perhaps, there would be witnesses to testify that the Virgin had spoken to her, commanding her to tell the priests to make this place a place of pilgrimage”.62 When Sister Anna ‘takes over the vision’, this is precisely the ‘form’ of the divine plan, “‘People will come. This will be a place of reverence’”.63

The likely commemoration of the site of the numinous makes an intractable link between experience and its spatial determination, coordinates which are as geographical as they are

57 ibid., p.116.
58 ibid., p. 127.
59 ibid., p. 127.
60 ibid., p. 128.
61 ibid., p. 130.
62 ibid., p. 191.
63 ibid., p. 233.
spiritual. Marie, the modern and sceptical prophet, unwilling but chosen by God is likened by Father Niles to Saul of Tarsus, an analogy which forever links the numinous to the geography of a first century Palestine just as subsequent events in Christian history continue to mark the numinous of the personal within the specifics of otherwise unremarkable history and unsuspecting cultural geography:

There had been no special reason for choosing them; the simple Indian shepherd; the half-starved French peasant girl rooting around a riverbank for scrap of food; the illiterate Italian children; the pious postulant in the Paris chapel. And now me, the unbelieving adulteress.

Marie's sexual history is of course no particular bar to Christian discipleship.

In fact, the novel links both sexual and visionary experience (Marie experiencing her first numinous experience after her first sexual encounter with Daniel as it also links the mental uncertainties of Marie's experience - sexual and soteriological - with the search for divine purpose, a divine teleology with insanity (“Isn't this the way mad people think; they see a purpose in things, a plot, a scheme that doesn't exist?”). The religious parallels with the social and psychological marginality in Church history are, however, recognised by Father Niles, and he attempts the vain with the more cautious Monsignor between the place of Carmel and the religious history of the order which founded it:

Well, first of all it was Carmelite friars who landed here in 1602 and named this place, the Bay of Carmel. And then the Carmelite Order, as you know, is the Order which is linked to the tradition of mysticism and the great mystic saints, St Teresa and St John of the Cross. And then, in modern times, Saint Therese of Lisieux, was of course, a Carmelite nun.

It is, nevertheless, a history which in the post-Vatican II era which sees a newly liberalised (here) American Church - Monsignor Cassidy (“God's Golfer”) and Father Niles, “watching as a pass was dropped on the twenty-five yard line”. It is a Catholic world which has alienated itself from the sacred, a sense of the sacred which Father Niles tries to recapture and which simply puzzles the Monsignor: “The miracle lady. Funny thing, the way Ned can’t let go of

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64 ibid., p. 145.
65 ibid., p. 140.
66 ibid., p. 142.
67 ibid., p. 173.
68 ibid., p. 214.
69 ibid., p. 111.
that story. Come to think of it, he’s more like a newspaperman than a priest, nowadays”. It is a matter of further puzzlement to the Monsignor that Ned’s bishop had given permission and funds for Ned’s present occupation: “Times have changed. Imagine a bishop going for a program of that sort”.

Marie’s view of the Church is inherited as much from her pre-Vatican II convent education (in 1983 hardly a literary innovation) and in the Church of Saint Benedict Labre (“the bright polish of institutional poverty”) where she meets Father Niles, “It was as though her inquisition had begun”, the obvious links to a more sinister Catholic past. When Father Niles elaborates the New Testament precedence of her experience with the Saul of Tarsus analogy, she declaims, “That was just those Bible stories, they’re like fairy tales, long ago, we can’t check on them”. If the Catholic Church recognises one divine source for revelation and two ‘channels’ for its transmission, the revelation of scripture and tradition, Marie Davenport’s scepticism is certain in its rejection of both. Her lack of catholicity is, however, no bar to Father Niles’ enthusiasm either when he cites that the Virgin had appeared to Alphonse Ratisbonne in 1842, “He wasn’t a believer. In fact, he was an Alsatian Jew.”

There is a distinction between the realities of Church life and the transcendent mysticism which forms part of Catholic Christian history. The young idealism of Father Ned Niles is parried by the more rational and mundane faith of Monsignor Barney Cassidy who wonders if all of us “in religion haven’t become too practical”. In the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception too the parallels between the institutional and the devotional become apparent. Mother Paul, the head of the convent, taking the name of her male visionary ancestor, while portrayed sympathetically is no match for the practical wisdom of the Monsignor; while the effusive, would-be visionary

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70 ibid., p. 136.
71 ibid., p. 136.
72 ibid., p. 141.
73 ibid., p. 141.
74 ibid., p. 145.
75 cf. Dei Verbum, in Falnnery, ed., Vatican II, pp. 750-765, especially chapter 2, verse 9: “Sacred Tradition and sacred Scripture, then, are bound closely together, and communicate with one another. For both of them, flowing out of the same divine well-spring, come together in some fashion to form one thing, and move towards the same goal”.
76 ibid., p. 141.
Sister Anna has all the enthusiasm and excess of piety of Father Niles, the latter pair kneeling together at the site of Marie’s vision, on Sister Anna’s face a look of “indescribable adoration”.77

The reader is uncertain whether to believe Sister Anna’s testimony that the Virgin had added words not conveyed to Marie, that “People will come. This will be a place of reverence”.78 The expected shift between the experience of the numinous and the institutionalisation of place parallels the events of Lourdes which lost Abbot O’Malley his faith in Catholics but Monsignor Cassidy’s humorous scepticism balances with oppressive scepticism, “We’re not starting up a building fund, not by a long shot”.79 This sort of mental balance shared by Monsignor Cassidy to dissociate his Church from the inquisitorial compulsions of the past by which she still feels marked (“Signs, miracles, solicitings. This is force. I am being punished”80):

Mrs Davenport, you still have the right to refuse. It’s basic to Christian theology that man is free to say no to God. Miracles and miraculous appearances are only signs which solicit belief. That’s all they are. Remember, the Church doesn’t require anyone to believe in miracles.81

It allows the Monsignor finally to relinquish her responsibility or even mention Marie in his inevitable report to the bishop: “‘Remember if you say you saw nothing, nobody can prove otherwise. Except God, of course. And I think God has let you go. I think you’re right. It’s Sister Anna’s vision now’”.82 So Marie returns to her secular life, the devotion of her love for Daniel, as it was in the beginning of the novel, free from the imposition of the sacred to the secularity of her her affair with Daniel and the ending of her marriage. Mother Paul allows Marie too to recognise the sincerity of Marie Davenport beneath her sceptical protestations, this politely spoken girl who reputedly “hates religion and all that it stands for” - her face, though, that “of a nun as it might be depicted in a religious painting: pale, beautiful, suffering - a holy face”.83 In this respect the closest figure to Marie is Mother St. Jude, “the old and holy nun”, in whom Marie recognises (in ways which Mother sees in Marie) the look “of love mixed with

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77 ibid., p. 231.
78 ibid., p. 231.
79 ibid., p. 231.
80 ibid., p. 159.
81 ibid., p.159.
82 ibid., p. 235.
83 ibid., p.189.
reverence, a look she had never known form any other human being ... In that moment, mysteriously, her fear of this place and these people was subsumed in a larger feeling, a feeling of peace”.84

Marie retains, then, her privileged position to the end of the novel which is finally characterised by the exercise of freewill. In the final analysis, Marie's is a determination not to accept the transformative burden of faith rather than a scepticism in regard to the signs of the miraculous with which she is confronted. It is, however, Monsignor Cassidy, the voice of the novel's theological reason rather than mysticism, who reminds Marie, " 'Remember, the Church doesn't want you to do anything you don't want to do. But perhaps Our Lady does. That's something else' ”.85 The distinction between the sacred and its institution, the novel’s prevalent theme, and that which has contaminated theological with imperial history, is finally left unresolved. For Monsignor Cassidy, in this lack of resolution, the final mystery of the divine as transcendent and immanent means “Faith is a form of stupidity”.86 A religious reading of the world, as indeed a religious reading of the novel, allows the natural world in which the events of the miraculous and visionary occur remain open to interpretation. Here the natural and supernatural seemingly interchange according to the personal hermeneutical tools of the observer; and so for Marie, at the physical site (and sight) of her Marian vision “...within seconds, the darkness lifted. All was still. She waited. There was nothing supernatural here”:

It was, again, a normal cloudy afternoon. This was a cliff on the coast of California, a meeting of land and water, the natural confrontation of elements in a serene, familiar world. She turned away, continuing to walk along the cliff path towards the convent, when, beneath her, there started a familiar trembling, as though the ground were shaken by an explosion. Within seconds, it passed. She had felt this before in the years she lived in California. It was an earthquake tremor, a minor movement on the Richter scale. She turned, looked out to sea again, then down at the cliff below, looked and shocked, looked again. The great shelf of rock had cracked. A thin straight line ran down its entire length, a fissure less than six inches wide, intersected by a second narrow fissure, also straight, the whole forming a great cross that ran the length and breadth of the rock she looked back to the spot where the twisted trees guarded the cavelike place. But all was normal. Gulls wheeled in from the ocean, crying like banshees. She looked again at the great cruciform design, an accident of nature, caused by earthquake, by a fault in the earth’s crust.87

This is the world which hearkens back to Kinsella at the end of Part I of Catholics, standing at

84 ibid., p.197.
85 ibid., p.160.
86 ibid., p. 221.
87 ibid., p.175-176.
the symbolic cross of roads in a natural environment signalling the absence of the divine where people once saw the hand of God, but here for the unbeliever Marie Davenport: “I am now in a world where nature is no longer natural. Why was there an earthquake at the very moment I walked away from the cliff? Why did it split the rock into the shape of a crucifix?” It is a world which retains the signs of divinity but where for Marie too “God was absent”, but through choice, through the exercise of her “right not to believe”. With the “strange theatrical light to glow beneath the cavelike entrance” (reminiscent of Christ’s resurrection as much as that of Lazarus) interspersed with her husband’s funerary shrouds, Cold Heaven constantly reiterates the intertextual reference to the Gospel of John from which the story of Lazarus is taken too, “I am the resurrection and the life”. With death remaining a prevalent theme in Moore’s novels, the numinous is here not simply a constant reminder of the existential limitations of human life but a reminder of the possibilities of a religious eschatology.

But locale remains ever important as a reminder of this. To the pious, Carmel (“a lovely spot”) may now be “a natural place for a pilgrimage” and there is some sense that the vision genuinely was now Sister Anna’s. In addition to Sister Anna’s comment that this “would be a place of reverence”, something added from Marie Davenport’s testimony, there is thus the stated physical appearance of the Virgin in the latter’s vision: “Her skin is dark, like a Mexican’s”. This provides a narrative circularity to the visionary. It was in the process of Spanish mission to the indigenous peoples that the Virgin first appeared and “when the mission was abandoned after secularization” the commemorative statue “was cared for by local Indians in their homes.”

88 B. Moore, Catholics, p. 24.
89 ibid., p. 178-179.
90 ibid., p. 190.
91 ibid., p. 233.
92 Again, “She saw the doctor lift the white sheet. I am the resurrection and the life.”; ibid., p. 205.
93 ibid., p. 214.
94 ibid., p. 214.
95 ibid., p. 233.
96 ibid., p. 233.
97 ibid., p. 64.
Most significantly, though, this prefaces Moore’s post-Vatican II shift in focus for his portrayal of Catholicism. From *Cold Heaven* Moore no longer examines the place of Catholicism, as institution and worldview, through western culture and society. We have thus already looked at his treatment of the historical shift of Catholicism pre- and post-Vatican II. Such treatment focussed, often in cross-cultural ways, on Ireland and North America. If Moore uses these settings again, it is to look, though, at their social and cultural margins: to indigenous peoples in the history of the colonial Canada of New France (*Black Robe*), to the struggle against Communist imperialism (*The Colour of Blood*), to the oppressed in the Caribbean (*No Other Life*), to Jewish persecution (*The Statement*) and in his final novel to French colonial incursion into Islamic Algeria (*The Magician’s Wife*). With a post-Vatican II portrayal of Catholicism increasingly loosing its Eurocentric focus, especially post-Medellin, it is entirely natural that Moore’s novels should themselves reflect, in the novelist’s continuing preoccupation with religion as favourite metaphor, an increasing geographical and theological diversity.

Moore’s final writings therefore throw light on his preoccupations not only with Catholic theology but Catholic encounter with the cultural and specifically religious other; and I want to show ways in which the notions of identity set against alterity, otherness and difference are key themes too in both post-Vatican II theology and postcolonialism and how these two perspectives are provided with a reflective, literary space in the novels of Brian Moore. Moore’s later portrayals of Catholicism need to be viewed within a wider ideological context just as his theological themes become increasingly prominent. Moore’s constant heightening of otherness and difference in encounter becomes geographically and culturally diversified in these later fictions; theologically, where post-Vatican II and post-Medellin Catholicism developed its global ideological involvement, Moore also found renewed theological meaning in issues of social justice. Moore’s post-Vatican II novels demonstrate, then, continued preoccupation with Catholicism but increased awareness of theology’s political dimension and active ideological commitment, the link between political and salvation history; and, in his concern for justice Moore demonstrates an interest in post-Vatican II theology and post/coloniality. We have already recognised Catholics as a turning point in Moore’s portrayal of Catholicism in a fictional return to Ireland whose intertextual references heighten theological as

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well as political and literary 'revolutions'. In *Cold Heaven*, we have seen the emergence of Moore’s concerns with those on the religious and political margins; but while in *Cold Heaven* the Mexican Virgin and the Indians who had looked after the early colonial statue of Mary ‘after secularization’ represent such models of historical disempowerment in Moore’s fictions while remaining on the margins of the narrative itself, Moore shifts the focus in later novels to the marginalized themselves, and for this his move involves a look to the religious and cultural ‘other’ in history.\(^9^9\)

This move marks a fictional as well as theological watershed. While retaining a perennial concern with marginality, obvious from *Judith Hearne*, Moore’s focus from *Black Robe* onwards is to new landscapes of encounter. What is evident, though, is not only the fictional globalization but greater ideological and theological diversity. Moore’s most notable interests in his late fictions reflect, then, a convergence of post-Vatican II Catholic and postcolonial thinking, perspectives especially apparent from *Black Robe* to Moore’s final novel, *The Magician’s Wife*, novels whose historical settings predate both postcolonial criticism and the Second Vatican Council but, significantly, whose ideological and theological positions do not. Both *Black Robe* and *The Magician’s Wife* provide a treatment of cultural, religious and ideological otherness in historical context while demonstrating a wider authorial presentation of a more contemporary shift from pre- to post-Vatican II theology and from a colonial to postcolonial perspective; and it is to the first of these treatments, Moore’s fictional closure with and theological/ideological perspective on North America, that we now turn.

*Black Robe* (1985)

Moore’s story of seventeenth century French colonial and missionary enterprise in Quebec tells

of the journey of a Jesuit priest, Father Laforgue, to the northern outpost of Ihonatiria.\textsuperscript{100} Though Laforgue’s is a journey of personal transformation through encounter with the (indigenous) ‘other’, it is a natural successor to \textit{Cold Heaven} in both geography and theme.\textsuperscript{101} I argue that this transformation in Laforgue marks (however anachronistically) the later historical shift in post-Vatican II theology as well a postcolonial perspective: from a distinct otherness (‘there is no salvation outside the Church’) to identity, an empathetic respect for difference, a stance in favour of those marginalised in the history of imperialism.

Apart from \textit{The Magician’s Wife}, in no other of Moore’s novels is the final, physical destination of a protagonist’s journey so clearly set out as it is in \textit{Black Robe}; and in no other is a protagonist’s opening theological certainty more seriously undermined through encounter with a landscape and a worldview as alien. As the narrative opens Father Laforgue awaits the result of discussions between Champlain, the “founder of this land”\textsuperscript{102} and Father Bourgue, the Jesuit Superior. The potential guides, the “Savages”, Chomina and Neehatin, wait on. While the Algonkin, though, are in the room where the discussions are taking place (but presumably distanced from the discussion by language), Laforgue is outside on the ramparts. At once he seems excluded, then, a man apart from his native France, but one also more subtly


\textsuperscript{101} Cf O’Donoghue’s comment that “if one accepts ... that Moore intended the themes of this novel to be universal, not just limited to Quebec province in 1635 ... then it becomes possible to see \textit{Black Robe} as an extension of \textit{Cold Heaven}”, (J. O Donoghue, ‘Historical Themes, Missionary Endeavour and Spiritual Colonialism in Brian Moore’s \textit{Black Robe}’, \textit{Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review}, volume 23 (1993), pp. 131-132; see also pp. 131-139). Yet I root the comparison in historical terms: both \textit{Cold Heaven} and \textit{Black Robe} are comparable not simply because of their shared North American geographical contexts but because of an increasing focus on those marginalised by the historical processes of colonisation.

\textsuperscript{102} \textit{Black Robe}, p.14.
an outsider from the counsel of both civil and religious authorities.

In this territorial extremity of the joint secular and ecclesiastical powers of the French state and Roman Catholic Church, Laforgue is a man eager with Jesuitical ambition for the salvation of souls. Still awaiting confirmation of his journey outside the Commandant’s fort quarters, Laforgue instinctively avoids meeting a fur trader (the economic precursors of colonisation proper) who has (significantly) abused him recently, moving “closer to the shadow of the ramparts”\(^\text{103}\) to hide, a tendency to concealment characterising duplicity as much as cowardice. In so doing he has to look up, his inferiority further signified, to see Champlain’s face framed in a window; and it is the Commandant’s perception of Laforgue, “the lonely figure of the priest”\(^\text{104}\) amidst the small, still emergent colonizing community against the backdrop of a vast Canadian landscape that establishes the novel’s physical and metaphysical perspective. Champlain’s view of “the settlement of Quebec” only “a jumble of wooden buildings”\(^\text{105}\) extends beyond the fragility of this human habitation as “in a painting ... towards the curve of the great river”;\(^\text{106}\) that on this river “four French ships lay at anchor” and in a week “would be gone”\(^\text{107}\) highlights the protagonist’s impending distance from the familiarity of French land and culture. Indeed the novel marks a transition from the western contexts of Ireland and America to countries on the geographical and cultural margins of the ‘West’ and here with culture soon to be marginalised by the colonization, as Laforgue fears he will never again see “the red flame of Richelieu’s robe come towards me in the long gallery of the Palais de Justice” but driven too by the twin forces of imperialism and missionary conquest: “The journey to almost certain death of a priest and a boy, against the chance to save a small outpost for France and for the Faith”\(^\text{108}\).

The journey and the harsh physical realities of Canada’s landscape continue to serve such allegorical purposes throughout the book; but it is an allegory underpinned, or perhaps undermined, by the ‘Author’s Note’ on the historical authenticity of the geographical setting

\(^{103}\) \textit{ibid.}, p.13.
\(^{104}\) \textit{ibid.}, p.13.
\(^{105}\) \textit{ibid.}, p. 13.
\(^{106}\) \textit{ibid.}, p.13-14.
\(^{107}\) \textit{ibid.}, p.14.
\(^{108}\) \textit{ibid.}, p.16.
and anthropological detail. If the Canadian landscape is used not simply to demonstrate the historical encounter of French Catholic and native Indian culture but as a more self-conscious vehicle for universalising the theme of the relative nature of any worldview there is a risk that the force of historical authenticity is overridden by an allegorical reading, or even by links to the author's own life, not uncommon in studies of Moore but a temptation worth resisting. The risk here is that the cultural opposition becomes such that the encounter risks stereotype or simple idealisation; on the level of physical landscape, Canada itself becomes the idealised wilderness and, with this, the characterisation of both savage and Black Robe risks amounting to little more than a dramatised anthropology, a story whose allegorical theme of cross-cultural conflict is as 'contemporary' as it is historical.

Indeed, Moore's story of seventeenth century French colonial and missionary enterprise, in telling of a Jesuit missionary journey, the sort well recorded by 'history', can be provided with

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109 Kelly comments that, "Like many 'historical' novels, Black Robe is a fable for our world, insistently contemporary in its exploration of the conflict between religious faiths, or rival sorceries, as they must always seem to each other". (Kelly, 'Imaginative Initiation', Irish Literary Review, p. 45.)

110 See, for instance, H. Dahlie, 'Black Robe: Moore's Conradian Tale and the Quest for Self'. Dahlie here draws comparison between Moore's historical novel and Conrad's Heart of Darkness, but suggests that "On a simpler level Black Robe can be seen as Moore's obligatory response to the Canada he first became acquainted with as a new immigrant in the late nineteen forties, a land he saw as essentially empty and wild, a land where one could literally get lost mere moments from any habitation". (p. 89)

111 Kelly comments:
In his efforts to create a realistic picture of part of precolonial Canada, Moore is careful not to idealize the Indian or caricature the Black Robe, but he is not always successful in his aim. His flexible narrative style generates a vivid and varied sense of separate racial worldviews. But the Indian ethic is used in an all too familiar way to point up the deficiencies of Christian practice. (Kelly, Irish Literary Review, p. 45)

Kelly cites a passage in which Moore does highlight an Indian moral superiority - the one in which Daniel Davost's defence of Algonkin people begins, "The Savages are truer Christians than we will ever be" - but rightly concedes that, "In spite of this conventional idealisation, the novelist shows himself to be resourceful at finding ways to present the Indian way of life in all its brutal reality" (Kelly, Irish Literary Review, p. 45).

112 Again, Dahlie is worth citing both to confirm and counterbalance this:
Though this kind of wilderness situation, and the specific Algonkin-Iroquois-Jesuit conflicts, give the novel a particular Canadian or New World applicability, the clash of beliefs and cultures, as the Belfast-born Moore well knows, has no geographical restriction ... In his presentation of this conflict, therefore, Moore achieves both a historical and contemporary verification, and by allowing the third person point of view to be shared among a number of individuals from both the French and the Savages, he emphasizes the relativistic nature of belief and the proprietary interests that its disciples share, thus achieving a spiritual and psychological verification as well. (Dahlie, 'Black Robe: Moore's Conradian Tale and the Quest for Self', p. 89)
a more public than private interpretation. The authorial perspective on history unavoidable in any critical commentary encourages this, though critics are often sceptical of the novel’s historicity. Thus Laforgue’s *is* a journey of personal transformation through encounter with the (indigenous) ‘other’. Moore’s *Black Robe* may thus be subject to a possible universalised allegorical interpretation on the human condition rather than an historical particularity. Still, the novel as theological (and cultural/anthropological) history, that is the historical representation of Jesuit mission in an encounter with the indigenous other within early colonial Canada, needs to be taken more seriously; and for what is relevant to the less obvious voice of contemporary Catholic theology within the text as much as to the explicit historical references in Moore’s introduction. It is this transformation in Laforgue—which on one level is the psychological change in the protagonist’s character—in a more complex interpretation marks the later historical shift in post-Vatican II theology as well a postcolonial perspective. Again, this might be stated as shift from a distinct otherness (‘there is no salvation outside the Church’) to empathetic respect for difference. This historical perspective and Moore’s presentation of European/First Nations encounter needs to be reviewed.

The preparatory ‘Author’s Note’, then, makes plain the sources of historical research for *Black Robe*: Graham Greene’s *Collected Essays*, the latter’s discussion of *The Jesuits of North America* deriving in turn largely from the work of Francis Parkman (1823–1893) who in his turn had consulted the Jesuits’ letters to their supporters in France, the *Relations*. From the outset of his novel Moore contextualises the cultural encounter between the French Jesuits and ‘Les Savages’—as the confederacies of indigenous tribes were collectively known to the French—in colonial Canada:

The Huron, Iroquois, and the Algonkin were a handsome, brave, incredibly cruel people who, at that early stage [that is, the seventeenth century], were in no way dependent on the white man and, in fact, judged him to be their physical and mental inferior. They were warlike; they practised ritual cannibalism and, for reasons of religion, subjected their enemies to prolonged and unbearable tortures. Yet, as parents, they could not bear to strike or reprove their unruly children. They were pleasure-loving and polygamous, sharing sexual favours with strangers as freely as they shared their food and hearth. They despised the ‘Blackrobes’ for their habit of hoarding possessions. They also held the white man in contempt for his stupidity in not realizing that the land, the rivers, the animals, were all possessed of a living spirit and subject to laws that must be respected.

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114 See note 100 above, p. 182.
From the works of anthropologists and historians many facts about Indian behaviour not known to the early Jesuits, I was made doubly aware of the strange and gripping tragedy that occurred when the Indian belief in a world of night and in the power of dreams clashed with the Jesuits' preachments of Christianity and a paradise after death.\textsuperscript{115}

This pervasive sense of complete otherness is reinforced as Father Laforgue progresses towards the Ihonatiria Mission before the full onset of the harsh Canadian winter. This 'otherness' was largely down to the Jesuits description of difference between Christian Europe and

... this Country,-and with Nations who do not differ from us more in Climate and in Language than they do in their nature, their way of acting, and their opinions, and in everything that can exist in Man, except body and Soul ... \textsuperscript{116}

Accompanied by Algonkin guides, they encounter the feared Iroquois. Escaping the horrors of cannibalism, torture and the certainty of death at the hands of Iroquois tormentors, the much reduced party of travellers encounter the fur traders Casson and Vallier returning from the Huron country down with Algonkin six paddlers. Illustrating the post-Reformation as well as early colonial context, Casson, the Huguenot, and Vallier, the Catholic, have set aside religious difference in their trade expedition but it is the Huguenot Casson who admits of the strength of the theological underpinning of imperialism:

The Jesuits were the real rulers of this country. Champlain was completely under their thumb. He was like a priest himself, now, in his old age, lecturing everybody on the importance of saving the Savages' immortal souls.\textsuperscript{117}

As it was to the Jesuit correspondents to France in the seventeenth century \textit{Relations}, Laforgue's mission is one in which "the dangers of this journey were transformed miraculously into a great adventure, a chance to advance God's glory here in a distant land".\textsuperscript{118}

The notion of otherness is reciprocal. In the perception of the indigenous peoples, the culture of the priests are different from the traders: " 'What sort of men are you? You don't come here, as other Normans do, to trade furs. You ask to live with us in our villages, and yet you stay

\textsuperscript{115}ibid., p. 8; essentially a summary of mutually uncomprehending attitudes expressed in the \textit{Relations} but with Moore's authorial overview from a 'postcolonial' perspective.


\textsuperscript{117} ibid., p.178.

\textsuperscript{118} ibid., p. 47.
apart in this house. No one may sleep here and you hide your nakedness from us. Why?' 119

Still, the motives of religion and trade (theology and economic imperialism) become confused. Thus the shaman Mestigoit remarks to Laforgue, “I see it now. You are just another Norman pig, a greedy fucker in love with furs” 120; and, as an Algonkin leader also later admits to Laforgue, ‘Norman’ greed becomes the source of personal and collective corruption: “I have become as you, greedy for things" 121

Although Laforgue eventually reaches the Ihonatiria Mission to find Father Duval dead and Father Jerome stroke damaged, he decides to stay “in this land God gave to Cain, the devil's land, living among barbarians” 122 for the sake of their salvation; but traditional soteriology (evident in the seventeenth Relations 123), the quest for souls and mass baptisms, is increasingly making less sense. In the encounter between First Nations and Jesuit at the Ihonatiria Mission, Aenons, a friend of (now also murdered) Father Jerome speaks with prophetic intensity of mutual cultural difference and of the manner in which religious conversions make vulnerable people of the indigenous tribes:

‘You and your god do not suit our people. Your ways are not our ways. If we adopt them we will be neither Norman nor Huron. And soon our enemies will know our weakness and wipe us from the earth.’ 124

Struck by metaphysical doubt Laforgue's faith is restored by a compassionate transformation, as soteriological as it is personal:

He looked up at the sky. Soon, winter snows would cover this vast, empty land. Here among these Savages, he would spend his life. He poured water on a sick brow, saying again the words of salvation. And a prayer came to him, a true prayer at last. *Spare them. Spare them, O Lord.* 125

There is a decided shift away from a traditional understanding of mission as soteriological conquest to empathy, compassion, and, finally, at the conclusion of the novel, identity. Father Laforgue’s concluding stream-of-consciousness leap to identification with the indigenous people, previously seen as other, is summed up by the litanic conclusion of the novel and takes

119 *ibid.*, p. 221.
120 *ibid.*, p. 69.
121 *ibid.*, p.152.
122 *ibid.*, p. 88.
123 See, for instance, note 116, above, p. 186.
124 *ibid.*, p. 220.
125 *ibid.*, pp. 223-224.
Moore’s novel beyond the comparisons with Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*:  

*Do you love us?*  
*Yes.*

In the journey of Laforgue to Ihonatiria shifts in his thinking mark (from Moore’s wider authorial stance) a transition (again, anachronistic as it might be) from pre- to post-Vatican II and from colonial to postcolonial perspective. Indigenous people are no longer ‘Savages’, neither civilised nor transformed by Christianity. Still, in terms of a move from pre to post-Vatican II theology, this is an emphatic shift from the salvific subjugation of the other through the universal imposition of Christian uniformity to the celebration of difference through an identification which is both psychological (as it occurs in Laforgue’s perception of the other) and theological (as it reflects a wider shift in Catholicism’s approach to mission). In terms of the move from the colonial to the postcolonial, and from pre to post-Vatican perspectives, theology is finally (if ambiguously) differentiated from imperialism.

Moore’s fictional return, then, to the physical landscape of North America marks a change in the textual portrayal of Catholicism by an indirect reinterpretation of the secular assumptions of the early American novels, *The Luck of Ginger Coffey, An Answer from Limbo, I Am Mary Dunne* and *Fergus*. The later American fictions - from Anthony Maloney’s ethereal metaphysical constructions which resist Catholic definition (‘Are you a Catholic’ - ‘No’) through Marie Davenport’s experience of a theologically well-defined numinous (that is, Marian visions which are decidedly Catholic) to Laforgue’s journey from an exclusive to universal soteriology - mark both a transition (in *The Great Victorian Collection*) and a transformation (in *Cold Heaven* and *Black Robe*) in Moore’s portrayal of Catholicism in an American context. If the usual scepticism of Moore’s protagonists remains from the early

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126 See note 110 above, p. 184.  
127 *ibid.*, p. 224.  
128 Being wary of universalising the diverse patterns of colonisation and liberation, histories of the Canadian First Nations nevertheless rarely reflect such a positive view of early seventeenth century Catholic encounter. For further discussion, see, for instance, S. Castillo and V.M.P. De Rosa, eds., *Native American Women in Literature and Culture* (Porto: Universidade Fernando Pessoa, 1997), especially, P. Mota Santos ‘Good Indians and Bad Indians: The European Perspective of Native Americans as Depicted in ‘The Mission’ and ‘Black Robe’, pp. 185-190, though Santos deals with the contrast in film. Perhaps enigmatically, the post-Vatican II Church maintains too its commitment to ‘mission’ while retaining a universal soteriology. See *Ad gentes divinitus*, in Flannery, ed., pp. 813-856. in other words, post-Vatican II holds in the balance the inherent (or potentially) contradictory stances of respecting and valuing other faith traditions (as in *Nostra Aetate*) while retaining a commitment to both evangelization and mission.  
American novels, this scepticism is under increasing epistemological pressure from the experience of the numinous uncommon in any of Moore’s previous fictions: the later American fictions are thus significant for their representation of a literary quantum shift where religion per se is taken more seriously than before, a process that Moore’s final novels will extend and yet, typically, draw only to ambiguous conclusion. In direct relation to these later American novels, though, metaphysically, Moore moves from the heightened uncertainties of empirical reality evident in The Great Victorian Collection through the certainty of a faith denied in Cold Heaven to a universalised affirmation of salvation for all in Black Robe. In Moore’s later American fictions, metaphysical ‘realities’ now compete on equal epistemological grounds with the secular.

Theologically, such a dramatic shift is facilitated by Moore’s developing historical portrayal of Catholicism: from unambiguous pre-Vatican II dogma and ecclesiology, which divided Church from ‘world’, to the plural, theological ambiguities of a post-Vatican II Church more involved with politics and society in all its global diversity, as we shall see especially accentuated in the next chapter. If Catholicism’s historical transformation is of inherent interest to Moore, though, the ideological perspective of the colonial - already apparent in the margins of The Great Victorian Collection and Cold Heaven (and traceable back to Judith Hearne) - takes joint centre stage with the theological in Black Robe. The authorial benefit of historical insight, however, enables Moore to take a trans-historical overview which conjoins post-Vatican II and postcolonial perspectives. Moore’s juxtaposition of the social and the metaphysical, thus enables his later and final literary treatments of colonial history to be interpreted through these wider post-Vatican II and postcolonial perspectives in No Other Life and The Magician’s Wife; while, more broadly, the theological and the ideological underpin Moore’s examination of the complexities of Church-State relations in The Colour of Blood and The Statement. In these works, to be considered next, Moore’s portrayal of Catholicism increasingly reflects a post-Vatican II plurality within the Church which is as diverse geographically and culturally as it is theologically.
Chapter Six

Moore's Portrayal of the Church in the Modern World: Theological Universality and Cultural Particularity

(The Colour of Blood, 1987; No Other Life, 1993; The Statement, 1995; The Magician's Wife, 1997)

Introduction

In examining Moore's portrayal of Catholicism, a distinction has been made between the theological stance of the pre- and post-Vatican II Church. In the last chapter, I identified in particular three key areas which are of most relevance for the present discussion: first, the Church's redefinition of itself as an institution from a hierarchical to a more egalitarian (if as yet far from democratic) ecclesiology, from a 'Church militant' to the 'People of God'; second, a theology also arising from more moderate ecclesiology, that is, a radical, truly universal redefinition of soteriology in which is recognised the possibility of salvation for those outside the Church; third, the Church's growing involvement with issues of social, economic and political import, an incorporation of theology with politics most famously elaborated from Medellin in liberation theology.

I have already argued that a potential degree of commonality in approach and ideological orientation exists between post-Vatican II theology and postcolonialism. In this present chapter, I argue that this convergence of post-Vatican II and postcolonial perspectives becomes even more marked in theologies of liberation; and that such is reflected in Moore's later fictions. Such an identity is significantly reinforced when the analysis of oppression is rooted in the history of the colonial and especially where liberation is defined through its postcoloniality. Thus, with a key emphasis upon the historical - material, politico-economic - context of salvation, such theological/ideological analyses naturally lead to an examination of the structural roots of injustice in historical as well as contemporary context; and, indeed, Moore uses history too to significant literary effect when exploring themes which are arguably

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amongst some of the most current in contemporary Catholic theology. What also becomes apparent here is the importance of geographical demarcations of movement in theological and ideological convergences. As will become apparent in this chapter, post-Vatican II Catholicism’s theological universality increasingly achieves some notable and distinctive (that is culturally particular) expressions. The Colour of Blood, No Other Life, The Statement and The Magician’s Wife certainly reflect this.

The Colour of Blood (1987)

Published in the late 1980s, in the final years of the Cold War, The Colour of Blood portrays an ideological landscape of east-European Church-State relations which has now passed into history. If the complex of social and cultural, political and theological ramifications are still in the process of transformation ten years after the revolutionary year of 1989, then such

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2 See McDade, ‘Catholic theology in the Post-Conciliar Period’ in Hastings, ed., Modern Catholicism. The following comments are notable:

> If human history becomes an indispensable locus revelationis for the Church - and I take this to be the principal theological orientation of the Council, the central intuition maîtresse of post-conciliar theology - then human history becomes the locus theologicus for the post-conciliar theologian ... This also has the effect of revivifying biblical and historical theology - the study of the ‘script’ of inherited tradition - because the relationship of the various texts to their contexts illuminates the character of theology as something ‘enacted’ in varying cultural milieux. (p. 423)


To commentators, though, who have adopted a biocritical approach the fictionalised world of Moore’s novel reflects a universalised conflict of political and religious interests and deals with themes which transcend the particularity of setting. Following Moore’s own interpretation, such critics argue that the novel while strongly reminiscent of Poland is set in a country which Moore had created from the synthesis of a variety of personal experiences. In his A Matter of Faith (pp. 95-97), for example, O’Sullivan sees Moore’s time in post-War eastern Europe, in particular his journalistic reporting of Church-State relations, as a possible source of inspiration for this novel. Sullivan argues the novel’s setting - at least in terms of the basic ideological conflict between Communism and Catholicism - had probably changed little between the late 1940s and the late 1980s.
ramifications are unexpected in Moore’s novel. Thus the ambivalent relationship of theology to Marxism, so prominent a feature of liberation theology’s development - and so central a part of its critique - is represented in The Colour of Blood as the primary aspect of the struggle of Church against State in a Cold War Soviet context (though an explicit theology of liberation is essentially undeveloped in the novel). One must also be wary of the dangers of extending the context of ‘Poland’ in The Colour of Blood as a pattern of Church-State relations for Soviet Russia or the rest of eastern Europe. In Soviet Russia, for instance, the dissident movement that developed subsequent to the Khruschev policy of active religious persecution manifested in forms of distinctively aesthetic forms of political resistance in which eastern orthodox faith provided a model of national cultural history distinctive from the imposition of a Communist

4 Walters comments, for example:

In October 1990 the Soviet Union passed a new law on the freedom of conscience, at last replacing the harsh Stalinist law of 1929 ... After decades of persecution all denominations found themselves legally the most free in the world: free to reopen churches, monasteries and theological academies, to publish, to engage in mission, social work and political activity. Similar freedoms of course came to believers in all the formerly Communist countries of Central and eastern Europe after the events of 1989. State persecution was however soon replaced by a whole range of different problems. The main task facing the Churches was that of re-establishing themselves as properly functioning organisms within society. In most Communist countries they had been severely restricted in their witness and their infrastructure dismantled; parish life had ceased to exist. They were generally speaking critically short of money, equipment, literature and the material sources of all kinds which were taken for granted by denominations in the West, and also lacked trained clergy. (Walters, ‘Eastern Europe since the Fifteenth Century’, in Hastings, ed., A World History of Christianity, p. 321.)

5 While the influence of a liberation-type theology was apparent in limited and unsystematic ways within Soviet eastern Europe, the fact that the place of liberation theology in the Communist world is the least theoretically developed indicates much; see Linden Liberation Theology Coming of Age?. The Cold War separation of all eastern Churches (and not simply Catholicism) from global developments in Christianity tended to result in conservative Churches. For the Catholic Church, this meant separation from many of the influences of the Second Vatican Council. The delegation from Poland to Vatican II, which included the then Bishop Karol Wojtyla (subsequently Pope John Paul II) was initially refused permission leave to attend.
hegemony. Significantly, then, Moore here accurately reflects the inherent tensions of Church-State relations during this period - and most notably in the dialectic or conflict between challenge and accommodation - especially the manner in which the language of Church-State opposition in eastern Europe, particularly Poland, often reflected a distinctive brand of religious nationalism in which Catholic national identity lends itself to opposition to state-imposed atheistic culture and worldview.

If Vatican thinking since the accession of Cardinal Wojtyla reflects a conservative interpretation of the political implications of Vatican II social teaching, John Paul II’s papacy significantly provides an important context for understanding the events which centre around Church-State

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6 Walters comments:
The Khrushchev anti-religious campaign lasted from 1959-1964 and led to the closure of two-thirds of the 20,000 legally operating churches. The total of some 7,000 churches still open in the mid-1960s was to remain more or less unchanged until the later 1980s. The traumatic shock the Khrushchev anti-religious campaign delivered to religious believers inside the Soviet Union was one of the factors giving rise to the religious dissent movement of the 1970s and the 1980s. In 1971 Alexander Solzhenitsyn, for the first time identifying himself as a Christian, wrote to the Patriarch exhorting him to stand up to the state’s anti-religious policies. (Walters, ‘Eastern Europe since the Fifteenth Century’, in Hastings, ed., A World History of Christianity, p. 317.)

As Walters also notes the official, state-sanctioned Russian Orthodox representatives on the World Council of Churches tended to downplay the actualities of religious persecution.

7 For the part played by the Catholic Church in this respect, see J. Haynes Religion in Global Politics (London: Longman, 1998); specific on the Polish context, see ‘Poland: From Church of the Nation to Civil Society’, pp. 92-113. This trend is well summarised by Walters:

Generally speaking the communist governments which came to power in Eastern Europe after the Second World War attempted first of all to restrict religious practice, closing places of worship and arresting and even murdering clergy and believers, and then later attempting to co-opt the Churches for political ends. These policies had least effect in countries with a Roman Catholic majority, the obvious example being Poland, where the Catholic Church retained far more authority and legitimacy than the government throughout the Communist period. (Walters, ‘Eastern Europe since the Fifteenth Century’, in A. Hastings, ed., A World History of Christianity, p. 319.)


Characterised by a strong identity between nationalism and Catholicism, Szulc’s John Paul II provides useful historical background on the resultant distinctiveness of Church relations with Polish Communism, from the first decade of the post-War period (pp.153-197) until the election of Solidarity in Poland in 1989 and eventual fall of Soviet Communism itself (pp. 388-416).

8 This does not exclude some progressive social teaching. John Paul II’s encyclical Sollicitudo Rei Socialis (‘On Social Concern’), 19 February 1988, marking the equally progressive Paul VI’s Popularum Progressio (1967), condemns the excesses of capitalism and communism. As Hennelly comments, a careful reading of this social encyclical will show how John Paul II has incorporated “the major themes of liberation theology into a true synthesis”. See Hennelly, Liberation Theology: A Documentary History, p. 521.
conflict in *The Colour of Blood*. By contrast, studies of this novel tend to universalise its themes into allegory, the journey of Cardinal Bem being said, like that of Father Laforgue's in *Black Robe*, to represent some personal spiritual odyssey rather than the particularities of theology in a Cold War setting. This approach is naturally limited in interpretative scope. I want therefore to present essentially two geographical/theological frames of historical reference and argue that if such universalisation is possible then it is best undertaken in the context of the culturally particular.

There are, then, two frames of geographical reference which set *The Colour of Blood* in an appropriate, historical and theological context. Here, the novel makes use of an east-European setting and this facilitates an exploration of Church-State relations in terms of a complex *realpolitik* (which of course predates the Cold War) but the theological/geographical frame of reference extends too, in explicit terms, to Latin American liberation theology. Thus, the opening and closing of the narrative - an attempted and failed and only latterly successful assassination of a major ecclesiastical figure - provides, with its resonances the failed assassination of Pope John Paul in 1981 and the successful assassination of Archbishop Romero in El Salvador in 1980, both a consonance and dissonance of theological history. Again the narrative unites (European and Latin American) continents in terms of ecclesiastical history just as it equally implies a perhaps unexpected fissure in theological perspectives: between the conservative turned radical in Romero and the radical turned conservative in Pope

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9 Such an analysis is presented by O'Donoghue, *Brian Moore.*
10 D.W. Ferm's study, *Third World Liberation Theologies* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 1986), provides ample illustration of the global synthesis of Marxism and Christianity. The title of his volume also crucially indicates the post-Vatican II diversity of theology in particular, cultural contexts.
In terms of the confluence of ideology and theology behind the Soviet Iron Curtain in which Catholicism provided a coherent sense of religious nationhood against an atheistic state, Moore's novel is a literary synthesis of the latter distinctively east European model of political resistance with a geographically radical theology which achieved its most noted, seminal articulation in South America.

The figures of the Polish pope and the South American archbishop provided paradigms of and for the historical readjustment to post-Vatican II theological transformation within the Catholic Church; and both the theological and political dimensions of this readjustment have relevance for interpreting Moore's novel. Politically, Romero's death marked a violent point of transition, initially to civil war in El Salvador but longer term to a wider, if prolonged and bloody, 'democratisation' in many South American countries. Theologically, such democratisation led, if incidentally, to a theological shift too, one away from the politicisation of the Church. John Paul II's papacy epitomises, and indeed influenced, both periods of transition. The Colour of Blood, without historical hindsight, thus provides a limited reading of the signs of the ideological and theological times: in recognising the theological critique of

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13 See Szulc, Pope John Paul II; and for a briefer account, Duffy, Saints and Sinner: A History of the Popes, pp. 282-292.
politicisation (often through theologies of liberation) within the Church during John Paul II’s papacy, Moore could not be blamed for failing to expect the outcome of such political and theological critique - the dual papal critique of the politicisation of Christianity and Communism - would lead to the decline of both liberation theology as active theological force and the fall of the Soviet Communist system itself. Moore nevertheless reflects the post-Vatican II tensions between the theologically universal teaching of Catholicism and its particular cultural interpretations; and *The Colour of Blood* represents a loose literary synthesis of these.

If theologically and ideologically, then, Moore’s most notable interests in his late fictions reflect a convergence of post-Vatican II Catholic and in the widest sense anti-imperial and postcolonial thinking, such a convergence can be traced, as we have noted, to *Catholics* where Moore presents the first explicit references to liberation theology. Both *Catholics* and *The Colour of Blood* highlight the ambivalent historical relations between Marxism as an ideology and Communism as a system in relation to Christianity; both novels jointly indicating the increasing prevalence in a post-Vatican II world of such tensions and accommodations. In a post-Vatican II Soviet Union, and through the satellite countries of Iron Curtain eastern Europe, tensions between Christianity’s accommodation and conflict with State Communism remained, while in Latin America, especially subsequent to the Cuban revolution, ‘Marxist’ ideology was increasingly apparent in liberation theology. The Cold War, of course, both heightened and complicated such tensions.

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14 When the Abbot asks if Kinsella’s mentor Hartmann “talks much of God”, the abbot has to refine his question to make it accessible to the young priest, “‘No, what I mean is ... Is it souls he’s after? Or is it the good of mankind?’” (p. 41); ‘The idea is, a Christianity that keeps God can no longer stand up to Marxism’ (p. 67). Following Hartmann, Kinsella emphasises Christianity’s social rather than metaphysical teaching. With persistent reference to an apocalyptic Yeats (“‘What rough beast, its hour come round at last’”), Moore’s novella thereby provides, as we have seen, an intertextual space which is literary, political and theological.

15 See *Gaudium et Spes*, on ‘Kinds of Atheism and Its Causes’ (para 19), ‘Systematic Atheism’ (para 20), ‘The attitude of the Church Towards Atheism’ (para 21).
as did the 1978 election of a Polish pope.  

The encounter between ideology and theology in *The Colour of Blood* holds, then, a literal and historical significance. Moore is trying to say something about particular Church-State relations in a Russian-Soviet satellite; the narrative extends intertextually to the grandnarratives of ideology and theology. Cardinal Bem's passage through the unnamed eastern bloc country may also be a personal spiritual odyssey which may be interpreted as a wider allegorical journey of faith - a late twentieth century *Pilgrim's Progress* perhaps. Yet Bem's struggle equally, if not more importantly, represents the real and particular, that is historical, struggle of peoples and nations in the era of the Cold War, both in eastern Europe and beyond it.

The novel opens, then, with Cardinal Bem chauffeur-driven into Proclamation Square in the capital of this unnamed country. The square's "statues, roofs and monumental buildings were wetted slick" and "the pavement glistened", the forces of nature, the natural environment, gently imposing themselves upon the city, its human history (statues and the monuments of human achievement) rightly contextualised, placed into perspective by something more elemental, more lasting. It is as if this very juxtaposition - man and meteorology - which leads the hero of the novel into a reverie which takes him beyond the everyday business of the city, from the immanent to the transcendent. So, having left "the meeting" (the nature of the meeting clearly not important), he is reading "not his notes, but a small book by Bernard of Clairvaux":

> Do you not think that a man born with reason yet not living according to this reason is, in a certain way, no better than the beasts themselves? For the beast who does not rule himself by reason has an excuse, since this gift is denied him by nature. But man has no excuse.

Sometimes, reading St Bernard, he could abandon the world of his duties and withdraw into that silence where God waited and judged.  

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16 Kee, *Marx and the Failure of Liberation Theology* identifies both the Second Vatican Council and the Cuban Revolution as the twin forces for this theological/political synthesis in liberation theology; see, pp. 131-146. Importantly, though, Kee questions the Marxist 'credentials' of liberation theology. Essentially, Kee argues that amongst the important elements liberation theology neglects in Marxist ideology is Marx's critique of religion itself. Marxism thus becomes a convenient label for the desire for social 'revolution' as a rallying cry for those wishing to effect social structural change just as, for the critics of liberation, the Marxist label presents an easy form of political critique, one used by the Vatican itself. With his Polish background, John Paul II was hardly likely to view over-favourably overtures to an ideology which, as manifested in Soviet Communism, had repressed the Church and restricted religious freedom throughout the Cold War period.

Commenting on the Clairvaux passage, critics have contrasted the supposed rationality of human nature, suggested by the figure of Bem, with the ‘beastly’ unreason of the assassins who, even as Bem contemplates that silence of a waiting and judging God, approach in a black car in the following sentence.18

Yet the Clairvaux reference has far more complex interpretative possibilities. If Christian tradition has thus presented ‘active’ and the ‘contemplative’ forms of praxis,19 Bernard of Clairvaux - in his writings and monastic reforms - is seemingly identifiable with the latter but as the novel progresses it becomes clear that Moore is also drawing on Bernard of Clairvaux’s insights as a thinker on Church-State relations in the middle ages.20 By contrast with such subtleties, Bem’s would-be assassins belong to a group known as the Christian Fighters, a Catholic terrorist group explicitly linked to a ‘liberation theology’, and are unfavourably contrasted with Bern/ Clairvaux throughout the narrative by their purely ‘active’ and this-worldly praxis. Set within the broader context of Church history, then, Bem’s reading of Bernard of Clairvaux at the beginning of The Colour of Blood provides a crucial ecclesiastical key to understanding his subsequent reticence in the face of those Catholic forces who would

20 Saint Bernard of Clairvaux (1091-1153) was the twelfth century monastic reformer and founder of the Cistercian Order but he was also an adviser to popes. For a collection of St. Bernard’s writings concerned more with ecclesiastical rather than spirituality and mysticism, see J.D. Anderson and E.T. Kennan, eds., St. Bernard of Clairvaux: Five Books of Consideration: Advice to a Pope (Kalamazoo, Michigan, 1976). Bernard was responsible for the elevation of papal status in the middle ages: ‘Why should you not be placed on high, where you can see everything, you who have been appointed watchman over all? But this was a call not to dominion, but to ministry through the office of your episcopacy’ (Cited Duffy Saints and Sinners: History of the Popes, p. 101.) The Papal Bull Unam Sanctum - issued to assert papal supremacy over the political struggles in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries-contained the infamous statement: “it is altogether necessary for salvation for every human creature to be subject to the Roman Pontiff”:

He insisted that the Pope wielded both the spiritual and secular sword, but gave the secular sword to princes to use for the good of the Church. (Duffy, Saints and Sinners: History of the Popes, p. 121.)

As Duffy also comments, this document draws support from the writings of Bernard of Clairvaux. For sources of original texts of this papal Bull and related texts, see Bettenson, Documents of the Christian Church, pp.157-161.

There is a more subtle if not rather strained intertextual reference to Moore’s portrayal of Belfast’s Catholic education portrayed in The Emperor of Ice Cream; the patron of Mr Devine’s school, St Malachy, Archbishop of Armagh who died in 1146, according to Duffy (p. 109), “died in the arms of St. Bernard”. For a recent study of Bernard of Clairvaux and the twelfth century theological climate, see A.H. Bredero, Bernard of Clairvaux, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Erdmans, 1996).
literally ‘revolutionise’ the Church.

As Cardinal, though, Bem has only limited choice in the way of the alternatives of religious contemplation or social action. His role as the Primate of the Church in his country necessarily immerses him within ecclesiastical as well as to a lesser extent State politics. Bem’s preferred stance with regard to the latter is the path of accommodation and official concordat rather than revolutionary confrontation with the government, a path historically taken by the twentieth century Church. Yet such a path is easily regarded by more radical clerics, in actuality as in Moore’s novel, as a way of collaboration as much as compromise. Cardinal Bem, a moderate, identifies with a contemplative Catholic tradition both through his reading of the Clairvaux passage as the narrative opens and, as the narrative unfolds, through his subsequent resistance to the violent revolution which Archbishop Krasnoy hopes to call for at the Commemoration for the Rywald Martyrs, an event to which the novel’s plot leads:

He thought ahead to the Jubilee celebrations next Tuesday, to the thousands and thousands of pilgrims who would come to Rywald and climb the Jasna mountain to the church, built two hundred years ago to honour the September martyrs. There in that place dedicated to God, a concatenation of events could be set in motion destroying all his gains: the right to have church schools, the right to publish religious literature, the right to worship freely, the right to build churches in the new territories. All that would disappear. Instead, there would be tanks in the streets, torture in secret rooms, prisons overflowing, riots, beatings, deaths. Help me, O Lord. Let me be in Rywald on that day. I must be seen. I must be heard.22

21 Concordats establish freedom of the Church within a State and thus offer, at least technically, protection for the rights of the faithful and ecclesiastical governance. After the First World War Vatican coordinated concordats were signed with the following: Latvia (1922); Bavaria (1924); Poland (1925); Rumania (1927); Lithuania (1927); Italy (1929); Prussia (1929); Baden (1932); Austria (1933); Germany (1933); Yugoslavia (1935). Cold War accommodation of Christianity behind the Iron Curtain proved more difficult. The persecution was symbolised by the figure of Cardinal Jozef Mindszenty, arrested, tortured and given a show trial in Hungary, 1948-9. (Note the title of Bem’s loyal servant in *The Colour of Blood.*) It seems the Vatican found accommodation with the extremes of right more easy than left. In 1949 Pius XII decreed excommunication against any who joined the Communist Party. After Russian tanks crushed the 1956 Hungarian Revolution, three encyclicals of denunciation were published in ten days and as, Duffy notes, “The contrast with the silences of the war years was striking” (p. 267). The matter of Catholic-fascist alliance is of course the subject of Moore’s 1995 novel, *The Statement*. The post-Vatican II world was of course very different again. The Communist world universally acknowledged that key document of the ‘Church in the Modern World’, *Gaudium et Spes*, did not denounce Communism, and in fact did not exclude atheists from salvation.


22 ibid., p. 61. (199)
Archbishop Krasnoy’s planned speech, leaked to Bem through his aide Father Malik is in stark contrast to such accommodation:

The nation in this critical time is like a great forest at the end of a summer of dreadful drought. A spiritual and moral drought. On the floor of this forest are millions of pine needles. It takes only a spark to set them ablaze. And what is that spark? Is it not the recent proof that those who rule us hold the Church in contempt? This callous behaviour towards the religious leadership of the nation could be the spark that will set the forest ablaze, a fire that will cleanse and purify. Much could be destroyed, but in the end the nation will be strengthened in its faith and its freedom. We must ask help in our present plight. We must unite to show the strength of our national will. Here, in this place, on this day at the shrine of the Blessed Martyrs, I call on all of you to stand behind the Church in this hour of need.23

The post-Vatican II, indeed post-revolutionary Church, had a difficult ecclesiastical task, needing to ensure its own survival in the face of persecution and repression while offering some theological resistance to regimes on whom the Church in turn depended; and Moore’s novel deals with both the problem and its resolution.

Thus the Second Vatican Council promulgated a series of decrees in this area of ecclesiastical governance which aimed to retain too a degree of theological integrity in such circumstances. The Council maintained here a delicate balance between affirming the rights of religious freedom (in Dignitatis Humanae) and holding too to the view - in the new spirit of aggiornamento - that the Church should not exclude from either dialogue, or even salvation, persons of good faith of either agnostic or atheistic persuasion (evidenced in both Lumen Gentium and Gaudium et Spes).24 It is in this context that The Colour of Blood must be read. Interestingly, of course, if we return to the paradigmatic figure of political ambivalence in John Paul II - not the oversimplified conservative so often portrayed - then we see that the young Archbishop Wojtyla was a major influence in these very areas of theological transformation in Catholic thought at Vatican II itself, that is, religious freedom and the

23 ibid., p. 19.

24 Most radically the Council even place the blame for lack of belief on those Christians who gave such a poor account of their own faith:
Without doubt those who wilfully try to drive God from their heart and to avoid all questions about religion, not following the biddings of their conscience, are not free from blame. But believers themselves often share some responsibility for this situation ... To the extent that they are careless about their instruction in the faith, or present its teaching falsely, or even fail in their religious, moral, or social life, they must be said to conceal rather than to reveal the true nature of God and of religion. (Gaudium et Spes, para 19, in Flannery, ed., Vatican II, p. 919.)

(200)
Indeed, John Paul II's papacy, less than ten years after his succession in the year of the three popes, was to further transform the relation between theology and ideology and, in practical terms, the *realpolitik* of Cold War politics and eventually of course ensuring its irrevocable decline and fall. Pope Paul II was a survivor of Nazi-occupied Poland as well as Stalinist repression and later anti-Church laws behind the Iron Curtain. It is a history which is in part at least shared by Cardinal Bem:

... now, as he genuflected before this makeshift altar and rose, saying the words that told his meagre audience that the mass was ended, he thought of those masses said in prisons and concentration camps by his fellow priests, so many of whom had died during the long years of German occupation. He had been a fifteen-year-old schoolboy when the first Soviet tanks arrived in the streets of the capital, driving the Germans back, block by razed block. While the other boys of his generation regretted that they had been too young to fight, he had felt cheated of the honour of suffering abuse and imprisonment in Christ's name.

Unlike Bem, Karol Josef Wojtyla (as Archbishop of Krakow and delegate to Vatican II) was

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26 1978 saw the deaths of Paul VI and John Paul I, as well as the election of John Paul II; see Szulc, *Pope John Paul II: The Biography*, pp. 269-283. This official biography is by no means a hagiographical work. In terms of historical range, it largely supersedes the biography by M. Walsh, *Pope John Paul II*.
27 See Szulc, T. *Pope John Paul II*, pp. 201-265. The section of Szulc's relates the meteoric rise of the young Bishop Karol Wojtyla through Vatican II, in the midst of which he was (in 1963) appointed Archbishop of Krakow, and subsequently Cardinal (in 1967). Szulc's major revelations of this time are related to the influence of Archbishop Wojtyla on the drafting of *Humanae Vitae* and the rejecting of the conclusions of the Committee on Birth Control (set up by John XXIII) which ruled against a continuance of traditional Catholic teaching against artificial birth control. Pope Paul VI took Wojtyla's advice in 1967, the year Archbishop Wojtyla was made Cardinal, and the year before the publication of *Humanae Vitae* itself.
28 *ibid.*, p. 45.
also a key instigator of new theological thinking on Church-State relations. As Pope John Paul II, Wojtyla was less than favourable, though, to communist regimes which repressed religious freedom. Unlike Bem, Wojtyla as Archbishop and Cardinal within the Polish Church played therefore an important role within the Polish Church in using religion as part of an historical sense of nationhood which provided powerful theological opposition to the communist state, and might to this extent be closer identified with Krasnoy. It is the precise

30 As Bishop of Krakow in 1962, Karol Wojtyla had a major influence on the formation of *Lumen Gentium*. This was important here not only for its increasingly egalitarian definition of the Church, shifting in its ecclesiology from a hierarchical model of clergy to 'the people of God'. As Archbishop of Krakow, in 1963 Karol Wojtyla exerted some influence on the Council's great text of social reform, *Gaudium et Spes*. Aside from its social teaching, *Gaudium et Spes* is known for its radical 'accommodation' with atheism. Crucially it balances a critique of atheism with the call to dialogue. Thus it comments:

> Among the various kinds of present-day atheism, that one should not go unnoticed which looks for man's autonomy through his economic and social emancipation. It holds that religion, of its very nature, thwarts such emancipation by raising man's hopes in a future life, thus both deceiving him and discouraging him from working for a better form of life on earth. That is why those who hold such views, where ever they gain control of the state, violently attack religion, and in order to spread atheism ... make use of all the means by which the civil authority can bring pressure to bear on its subjects. (*Gaudium et Spes*, 20, in Flannery, ed., Vatican II, p. 920).

Yet the document also offers the following stance:

> Although the Church altogether rejects atheism, she nevertheless sincerely proclaims that all men, those who believe as well as those who do not, should help to establish right order in this world where all live together. This certainly cannot be done without a dialogue that is sincere and prudent. (*Gaudium et Spes*, 21, in Flannery, ed., Vatican II, p. 922).

See again Dulles, *The Splendour of Faith: The Theological Vision of Pope John Paul II*. This provides a wide-ranging of the pope as theologian.

31 In speaking of the growing *Ostpolitik* towards Moscow initiated by both John XXIII and Paul VI, Szulc summarises the ambivalent stance well as it came to be initiated by Karol Wojtyla:

> Such was the complexity and subtlety of this situation that Wojtyla, as a Polisharchbishop, could favour an improved relationship with communism as a matter of constructive long-range diplomacy while squaring off with communist authorities over the treatment of the Church there. It was a state of affairs that the West never understood. Nor, for that matter, was it understood that the most interesting young personality in the Church emerging from the Second Vatican Council was a Polish archbishop name Karol Wojtyla. That is why, perhaps, the advent of John Paul II would be such a surprise. (Szulc, *Pope John Paul II*, pp. 233-234.)

32 John Paul's first visit to his Polish homeland in 1979 as pope predated the rise of the Polish worker's party, Solidarity, by a year. Solidarity led by Lech Walesa maintained its strong Catholic identity as source of opposition to the Communist regime in Poland. The martial law imposed by General Jaruzelski in 1980 arguably led to the beginning of the end of communism in Poland. The election of Mikhail Gorbachev in 1985 to the post of general secretary of the Soviet Communist Party and the 're-structuring' of Perestroika which followed saw improved relations with the Vatican. Democratic Polish elections occurred in Poland in 1989 and the symbolic fall of the Berlin Wall in the same year. When President Bush and President Gorbachev met in Malta to end effectively the Cold War on December 2 and 3 of 1990, Gorbachev met John Paul II on December 1. See Szulc, *Pope John Paul II*, pp. 297-416.
dangers of this politicisation that Cardinal Bem is aware in Moore’s novel when he confides to his aide that “the people are using religion now as a sort of politics. To remind themselves that we are a Catholic nation while our enemies are not. To remind us that we always continued to be a nation even when the name of our country was taken off the map.”

Wojtyla’s ecclesiastical career may itself be said to have consisted of a life of resistance to ideological domination in various guises - both the State Fascism of Nazi occupied Poland and State Communism of Soviet-directed domination from Stalin onwards. Yet, as pope, John Paul II’s post-Vatican II stance of dialogue with atheism and accommodating realpolitik as a former member of the Catholic Church hierarchy in Poland masked an antipathy to Soviet Communism. This also extended, perhaps inevitably, to a less than favourable assessment of the ‘Marxist’ politicisation of Christianity so evident in liberation theology. Yet there is an irony here in the critique of Catholicism’s politicisation in that religious belief - especially in Karol Wojtyla’s Poland - provided cultural identity in the face of both Nazi and Communist repression.

Still, such a stance is given little theological credence when it surfaces in Moore’s characterisation of Bem. Thus - as we see with conservative critiques of politicisation during John Paul II’s papacy - in conversation with Father Malik, Bem openly distinguishes between a religion which serves narrowly social rather than more transcendental ends:

‘... It’s all part of our collective memory and we cherish it. But what has it got to do with our love of God?
‘Perhaps it’s brought us closer to God, Eminence?’
‘I wonder. Are we filling the churches because we love God more than before? Or do we do it out of nostalgia for the past, or, worse, to defy the government? Because if we do, Kris, then God is mocked.’

33 ibid., p. 176.
34 Arguably, the satellite Communist states around the Soviet Union, such as Poland, maintained a degree of autonomy, thus enabling a challenge the my use of the term ‘imperial’ in relation to, say, Hitler’s Germany and Stalin’s Russia. Both illustrate, however, the classical patterns of colonisation demonstrated by earlier empires (say nineteenth century European ones): that is all are characterised precisely by territorial gain and the attempted imposition of ideological hegemony. The battle for territory is followed by, indeed integral to, the war of cultural subjugation. In a world where war has become industrialised, systematic annihilation is often the most effective means of achieving the latter; see E. Wyschogrod, *Spirit in Ashes: Hegel, Heidegger and Man-Made Mass Death* (London and New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).

35 Again, see Kee, *Marx and the Failure of Liberation Theology.*
36 op cit., p. 176.
A natural contemplative, Bem has no choice, though, as cardinal, but to involve himself with matters of ecclesiastical as much as those of atheistic state governance; and this in a period which, as in Poland prior to the collapse of Communism, is marked by the ascendancy of Church over State:

In his ten years as bishop and seven as cardinal he had seen the power of the State erode while the Church, despite its mistakes, had assumed greater and greater power over people’s minds. The party had unwittingly strengthened that power by stripping the Church of its prewar estates and leaving it as poor as the people themselves. And yet, as he knew, this churchly power was not real. It was the sort of power that he, as cardinal, would have held in the sixteenth century. In those days the Cardinal became the head of State in the interregnum between the death of one king and the coronation of his successor.37

Just so Bem’s secular counterpart, Prime Minister Urban, a former Jesuit school companion, both personalises and equally highlights the final absence of qualitative distinction between power relations, either secular or ecclesiastical. Equally committed to a life of political involvement, secular but inextricably bound to the life of Bem’s Church, Urban like Bem has a personal lifestyle which without irony is likened to the monastic and the contemplative (and by name to the papacy38): “Urban is unmarried, they say he lives an ascetic life”.39

If the ideological and religious worlds of these two men are linked through a notional ‘politics’ of social action, a connection between secular and ecclesiastical governance, both are subject to authority beyond the physical, geographical space in which they operate; Cardinal Bem being ultimately answerable to Rome and Prime Minister similarly to Moscow. Yet, despite these links to an ‘outside’ world, ironically more defined than the unnamed country and its capital where the action takes place, both men are also contained within these geographical limits, physical limits which are themselves imagined. The East-European sounding names of places (the Volya river, the Jasna mountain, the suburb of Praha, the towns of Gneisk and Rywald) serve both to heighten the Soviet bloc atmosphere while at the same time creating a world of fable. The realpolitik worlds of Rome and Moscow serve only to highlight this very unreality. Differences in ideology, the atheistic communism of the ex-Jesuit scholboy Urban and the ‘conservative’ Catholicism of Church-State accommodations of Bem, so characteristic of the

37 ibid., p. 71-72.
38 See Duffy, Saints and Sinners: A History of the Popes, pp. 293-299: there have been eight Pope Urbans, the first between 222 and 230 and the last between 1623 and 1644.
39 ibid., p. 158.
post-revolutionary Church, are well matched to the historical territory by the Cardinal’s persecuted journey through the geo-political landscape of *The Colour of Blood*.

*The Colour of Blood*, set in an unnamed country, reflects the real struggles of the Catholic Church in the years of former Soviet rule in eastern Europe during the Cold War. Cardinal Bem, already having survived an assassination attempt at the novel’s opening, is caught between the repression of an atheistic government and the unpredictable activities of revolutionary Catholic extremists who perceive Bem as representing a potential compromise with the hated powers of the State. It is, in the end, the sister of a Catholic extremist, Danekin, who perpetrates the death of Bem during Mass at the end of the novel:

> It was as if he stood at the edge of a dark crevasse, unable to see to the other side. The silence of God: would it change at the moment of his death? He held up the Host as though to give it to her. He saw her finger tighten on the trigger.

> And heard that terrible noise.\(^{40}\)

The religious doubts evident here in the mind of Bem before his certain death re-introduces that strong element of metaphysical uncertainty into the event: on the one hand, Bem seems assured that his assassination is “God’s will” but, on the other, he is confronted by the “silence of God”, and the latter being contrasted with the murderous audibility of ‘that terrible noise’ as the gun is fired. Bem’s life is ended, literally and metaphorically, by the final sentence of the book. The metaphysical possibilities of anything beyond these - the ending of the book and the ending of the man, either in terms of an afterlife for Bem or in terms of the validity of any metaphysical speculation beyond the events of the narrative - is a resounding uncertainty. It is a metaphysical doubt which might supposedly throw into question both religious and theological grandnarrative. Yet, just as one commentator has placed the metaphysical emptiness of Tomas O’Malley at the conclusion of *Catholics* in the positive context of mystical theology,\(^{41}\) so too we can reflect on Bem’s own positive reading of the silence of God, that which we witness from the novel’s opening, whereby, “reading St Bernard, he could abandon the world of his duties and withdraw into that silence where God waited and judged”\(^{42}\); and which elsewhere in the novel Bem “As always in prayer, in the act of prayer, he sought to open that inner door”

\(^{40}\) *ibid.*, p. 191.

\(^{41}\) Cf. Shepherd, ‘Place and Meaning in Brian Moore’s *Catholics*, *Eire-Ireland*.

\(^{42}\) *ibid.*, p. 7.
again "to the silence of God, a God who waited, watched and judged". The final and most significant encounter which frames the text is eschatological; it is a metaphysical encounter of persons in relation with the uncertain finality of death which provides an ambivalent existential context for both ideology and theology. If this contrast between the temporal and the transcendent is the source of narrative/ grand-narrative conflict over the involvement of theological engagement with the political, it is the eschatological which continues to provide the existential meta-'text' for Moore’s next novel.

No Other Life (1993)

Indeed, perhaps nowhere else do we see this literary theological reflection on death, and specifically Catholic approaches to death, more effectively developed than in the rather aptly named novel, No Other Life. If the eschatological permeates many of Moore’s novels, this narrative presents too a metaphysical context for issues of ideological and theological conflict and accommodation. Set in an imaginary Caribbean island, No Other Life is strongly reminiscent of the Haiti of recent decades and of course especially the presidential rise of the

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43 ibid., p. 61.
44 See again Gearon, ‘No Other Life: Death and Catholicism in the Novels of Brian Moore’, Journal of Beliefs and Values, and Gearon ‘Catholics: Sexuality and Death in the Novels of Brian Moore’, in Hayes et al., eds., Religion and Sexuality.
Catholic priest Aristide. The novel is the first person narrative of a Catholic priest, Father Paul Michel, who reflects, in the days after his formal retirement, upon his place as a white missionary figure in the multi-ethnic island of Ganae where, in his final years, he has served as principal of a Catholic college of higher education. The novel’s opening strongly suggests the book’s main theme of death, particularly in the context of lives lived as it were through a seemingly ephemeral passage of years:

In the old days they would have given me a gold watch. I never understood why. Was it to remind the one who is being retired that his time is past? Instead of a watch I have been presented with a videotape of the ceremonies. My life has ended. My day is done.

The image of the traditional retirement clock is juxtaposed here with the technologically progressive. This scene of a (potentially re-viewable) official ending both emphasises the finality of a life while representing the beginning of the text itself. So the ending of a fictional public persona marks the start of the novel; yet it is one which takes the narrative back to the past.

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Aristide’s rule was a short in the Haiti of the early 1990s and one which provoked considerable hostility to the Vatican. Indeed, Aristide himself was less than favourable to the Vatican. Aristide saw that the institutional church of Haiti had given succour to the dictatorial regimes of the Duvaliers. One of the great triumphs of the Duvalier regime had been to win (in the early 1960s) the right to appoint its own bishops, something which since the Ultramontanist days of Vatican I had been undertaken from Rome. When Francois Duvalier came to power he rid Haiti of the foreign-appointed clerical hierarchy. The move to give the State power of episcopal appointment was resisted by Rome but, as Griffiths comments, “through a strange irony, Duvalier was aided by the deliberations of the Second Vatican Council then taking place in Rome and which came down strongly in favour of finding local leadership for churches which had previously been considered ‘missions’ ” (p. 50). The Haitian Catholic Church, then, as much as the State was targeted by Aristide.


46 *ibid.*, p. 1.
The book is thus more a reflection upon the orphaned Jean-Paul Cantave, known as Jeannot, from the impoverished village district of Toumalie. Travelling around Ganae for scholarship boys to improve the ethnic balance of a predominantly privileged white and “mulatto” college intake, Father Michel finds a woman in Toumalie, “a widow with four children of her own and two boys who were the orphaned children of her brother, a warehouse clerk who had died three years ago.”47 One of the orphaned boys was Jeannot. Speaking to Jeannot’s guardian about his plans for giving the boy a new life “she gave him into my care as casually as she would give away a puppy from a litter”.48

Here, then, in a trend which characterises the use of life history and grandnarrative throughout the novel, personal and wider theological history, the stories of individuals are used by Moore to reflect post-Vatican II transformation of Church landscape in the modern world. Most crucially, the Church in this post-Vatican II period faced just those questions of social justice which became so evident in nations in the aftermath of colonialism. Against the backdrop of Ganae’s harsh socio-economic setting, its colonial history succeeded as so often in dictatorship, Jeannot’s accomplishments, firstly as a scholarship student at the college and then, inspired by Father Michel, as a seminarian and priest are all the more notable, as indeed they were for Aristide. But whereas the chance childhood meeting of Father Michel with Jeannot’s family in Toumalie highlights Jeannot’s apparent good fortune, Jeannot’s subsequent and near meteoric rise to leadership of Ganae as priest-president have all the marks of destiny. Jeannot’s character and the trapping of office though, while initially matching Father Michel, later, almost inexorably match those of the dictator Domergue. Nevertheless, Jeannot’s movement from the world of religious ministry into the same political arena which had maintained, through the inequalities of military dictatorship, the oppression which had kept his own family, his village and the majority of the people of Ganae in poverty, is initially a sign of hope for Ganae; but, finally embroiled in the political machinations of various power brokers, Jeannot is forced into a potential compromise with the new dictatorship. At the occasion to mark his relinquishing of the presidency and forced seal of approval for a corrupt government, Jeannot calls all to prayer. To the surprise of all, not least his political opponents, Jeannot symbolically merges into the vast crowd of his supporters who had come in prayerful witness to mark Jeannot’s supposed public resignation. Jeannot thus returns to the masses who had brought him (however

47 ibid., p. 7.
48 ibid., p. 7.
temporarily) to power, his political and spiritual integrity retained; and here of course Aristide's history departs from that of Jeannot.49

For all the intricacies of Jeannot's characterisation, a personal focus on the ideological and theological grandnarrative plot of a post-Vatican II and post-colonial time, the novel's most important meta-text is its eschatological meditation. At the close of his own life, the narrator's memory is a personal recollection of one man's political and ecclesiastical rise to prominence, as well as final, anonymous death; yet No Other Life, through Father Michel's recollections, presents too a social view of the anonymity of death on a Caribbean island through poverty, political neglect by indigenous state authorities and ecclesiastical indifference from a conservative Rome distant from the harsh realities of Ganaean life.

The narrative, from the existential focus of its title, thus constantly draws the reader inexorably to the central theme of the book as early on we learn that "In Ganae, because of the heat, funerals are sudden".50 We have the murder by Colonel Maurras of the child who happened to be part of a protesting crowd.51 Through the great levelling of geographical and cultural distance in the earth itself, that is as a place of burial, we are early on too drawn from Ganae back to Quebec and to an historical encounter of culture and belief and, with subtle intertextual reference to another Moore location, from the colonial encounter of Black Robe to a latterday and postcolonial mission:

Behind the chapel there is a cemetery. In it are buried the priests of our Order who died in Ganae. It is small and quiet, shaded by jacaranda trees. In the nearby chapel we heard the shuffling of feet, then silence, as the service began ... On the worn gravestones I could read the names of our priests, French and Canadian, forgotten now, their labours ended, their bodies rotted to anonymous bones in the unforgiving soil of this lost and lonely land. What was the true meaning of those lives, lived far from France and Quebec.52

49 In The Aristide Factor. Griffiths lists Moore’s No Other Life in his highly useful annotated bibliography. He comments:

This extraordinary novel is so ‘in touch’ with what was happening in the darkest times of Aristide’s exile has captured the enigmatic nature of the Haitian president’s character that it simply has to be described as a tour de force, as does its intriguing denouement - which might well have been the way things eventually turned out. (p. 299)

As it happens, Rene Preval was elected successor to Aristide, the latter handing over the reigns of the Haitian presidency on 7 February 1996. In that year Aristide announced his marriage to Mildred Trouillot. On recent Haitian history, see note 45 above, p. 207.

50 ibid., p. 42.
51 ibid., p. 42.
52 ibid., p. 18-19.
We have too the death of the dictator Doumergue. This latter event presents Jeannot with the opportunity, soon seized, to combine political with priestly office and which (like the liberation theology Jeannot is intended to represent) finally fails to effect real and lasting social structural change.

The generational features we have noted too in Moore's early portrayal of religious belief surfaces in *No Other Life*. Following a call from Henri, his brother in Quebec, Father Michel is drawn from Ganae to Canada to his mother's deathbed following a sudden coronary attack. From the universal the novel draws us to the particular: Father Michel is drawn to his own story and the death of his mother; the reader is drawn back in intertextual, geographical reference to the treatment of early colonial history - and the Church's involvement in this - by the protagonist narrator's return to Quebec. The mother's scepticism reflects an about face. In her deathbed scene, the reader is drawn to a socio-historical memory of place which distantly evokes *Black Robe* and to a postcolonial reconsideration of mission; in the latter context, both personally and collectively, in which context the certainties of belief and conquest are themselves jointly subjugated to an eschatological emptiness:

'Do you remember when you were a little boy and did something bad? I would say to you, "Remember, Paul, the Man Upstairs is watching you." Do you remember that?"

'Of course, I do.'

'I was wrong to tell you that,' my mother said. 'There is no one watching over us. Last week, when I knew I was dying, I saw the truth. Paul, I have prayed all my life. I believed in God, in the Church, I believed I had a soul that was immortal. But I have no soul. When we die, there is nothing. That's why I sent for you. I must speak to you - you of all my children. Paul, listen. You must give up the priesthood. When I think how I guided you towards it, when I think of the times I told you how happy it would make me if you became a priest. If it weren't for me you might be a doctor doing useful work like your father and Henri. You'd be married, you'd have children. You would not have wasted your life telling people something which isn't true. Please, Paul. You're forty-seven years old. It's not too late. Promise me. Leave the priesthood now."

'Maman, you're wrong. You didn't make a priest. I was the one who decided it. And you will go to heaven. You will.'

53 *ibid.*, pp. 45.

54 Jose Miguez Bonino, the most noted of all Protestant liberation theologians spoke both of this at the Faith in The Millennium Conference, Roehampton Institute London, May 1999. Bonino also spoke of the challenges to Catholic hegemony in Latin America from the rise of Protestantism - for which also see Hastings' recent *A World History of Christianity* - and an increasing diversification of religious practice from both 'Western' (here North American and European) new religious movements and the revival of indigenous pre-Christian belief systems. See J. M. Bonino, 'The Future of Latin American Liberation Theology' in Porter et al., eds., *Faith in the Millennium*.

55 See above, for instance, pp. 138-140.

56 *ibid.*, p. 72.
'No.' She lay back on the pillows, her eyes not on me but on the red votive lamp flickering between the painted plaster statues on the mantelpiece. 'There is no other life,' my mother said.57

Here the text opens itself to an implicit psychoanalytic as much as a socio-historical critique of Catholicism, and indeed religion in general from Feuerbach through Freud.58

Father Michel, a celibate, thus encounters the mother’s room as he had in childhood; and given Freud’s classic critique of religious belief as an infantile form of wish-fulfilment, in the scene which continues to haunt the priest his belief retains the traces of an earlier stage in his physiological and psychological history which might be read as thwarted. A psychoanalytical hermeneutic at this stage of No Other Life might further make much of the mother here as both object of oedipal desire and (given her rejection of the heavenly Father) denial of comforting substitutions: Father Michel can neither possess the mother nor, following the mother’s denial of any religious replacement for the father (God), possess any sexual, religious surrogate. The mother, giver of life, talking of death and absence of eschatological hope is an image which Father Michel retains for the rest of book; and when she is laid to rest his anger and disillusionment are obvious:

In a funeral parlour three streets away, my mother’s body waited burial, her voice stilled, that voice which, in sixty-seven years of daily prayer, praised and honoured a God who, in her last hours, deprived her of that ultimate consolation of religion, belief in a life after death.59

This sceptical refrain permeates Father Michel’s perceptions of the violence and death which characterises political and ecclesiastical life on Ganae. In short, the eschatological again continually provides the meta-text for the historical intricacies of both ideology and theology.

57 ibid., p. 73.
58 Vatican resistance to ‘progress, liberalism and modern civilisation’ was notable from the Syllabus of Errors (1864) under Pius IX. Rationalism and socialism were amongst its targets, though progressive social teaching was evident in Rerum Novarum (1891), Leo XIII’s famous encyclical plea for the poor in industrial society. Nevertheless, the post-Vatican I tone of ‘Church against the modern world’ set a trend encapsulated by the decree Lamentabili and the encyclical Pascendi (both 1907) which condemned theological attempts at reconciliation with ‘Modernity’. If major advances in nineteenth century rationalism delivered critiques of religion in the life sciences (notably with Darwin) and in the politico-economic sphere (through Marx), only five years after Lamentabili, Freud’s Totem and Taboo (1912) would advance the psychoanalytic critique of religion which would be developed in The Future of an Illusion (1927) and Civilization and Its Discontents (1930); see A. Dickson, ed., Civilization, Society and Religion, The Pelican Freud Library, volume 12 (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985). This is one of Moore’s few literary portrayals of religion as distorted projection of human desire; indeed, No Other Life effectively conjoins both psychoanalytic and Marxist critiques.
59 ibid., p. 86.
When the Cardinal speaks critically to Father Michel in Rome of Jeannot’s (Father Cantave’s) homespun revolution, it is this tension between the temporal and the transcendent which reflects the Church’s wider critique of liberation theology itself.\(^{60}\) If an accessible definition of this movement is found in its pastoral and theological direction as “first and foremost, the engagement of the poor in their own personal, socio-economic and political liberation”,\(^{61}\) in this, to its critics, liberation theology reflects a dangerous potential synthesis (expressed at its most extreme) as Marxism and Catholic theology.\(^{62}\) Thus:

‘Let me explain. I know that Father Cantave and others like him sincerely believe that by improving the lot of the poor they are doing God’s work. They also believe that Rome is hostile to change, that here in the Vatican we do not understand the modern world. They are wrong. We understand the world, as it was, as it is, and as it may become. We know that the Church is changing and will change. But if, by following

\(^{60}\) This is by no means as clear cut as popular presentations of the conservative papacy of John Paul II might indicate. The earliest opportunity John Paul II had to comment on ‘liberation theology’ was at the Third General Conference of the Latin American Bishops — “Evangelization in Latin America’s Present and Future” — at Puebla de los Angeles, Mexico, 27 January – 13 February 1979. Pope John Paul II made an opening address to the Conference on 28 January. There are some implicit criticisms of liberation theology (which is not identified explicitly), the Pope being especially critical of the use of the Marxist terminology of “alienation” to describe the “institutional” or “official” Church. The Pope identifies the Church’s commitment to a progressive social teaching but one in which the dignity of the human person and not political ideology forms the basis of a struggle for justice:

The complete truth about human beings is the basis of the church’s social teaching, even as it is the basis for authentic liberation. In the light of this truth we see that human beings are not pawns of economic or political processes, that instead these are geared toward human beings and subject to them. (See Hennelly, *Liberation Theology: A Documentary History*, pp. 224-232; p. 232.)


\(^{61}\) Linden, *Liberation Theology: Coming of Age?*, p. 6.

the preachings of Father Cantave, the people of Ganac lose the Kingdom of God in the course of improving their lot here on earth, then you and I must remember our duty. Our duty, and Father Cantave’s duty, is to remember always that, while it is a holy and wholesome thought to wish to improve the material lives of the poor, the primary task of the Church is, and always has been, to save their immortal souls. In this day and age, that task may not be uppermost in the minds of clerics such as Father Cantave. Sincere as he may be, he is still mortal, frail, capable of falling into heresy and leading his people away from the true faith.’63

For its political and theological opponents, though, often one and the same, the decline of Marxist ideology in a post Cold War world - and into which literary-political No Other Life (published in 1993) can be placed - signalled the end too of liberation theology, as Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger speaking in 1996 claimed that, “‘The fall of the European governmental systems based on Marxism turned out to be the twilight of the gods for that theology’”.64 Concomitantly, the Marxist critics of liberation theology have challenged it for not being Marxist enough.65

In No Other Life, then, Aristide’s fictionalised history is part of an extended consideration of Catholicism’s late twentieth century theological history. Crucially, then, despite its inherent radicalism and genuinely global character, decrees from the Second Vatican Council were perceived by the Third World as emanating from a Eurocentric Church. Medellin and similar South American councils of bishops such as that at Puebla marked the perceived need to further translate the universal teaching of the Church (especially its social teaching) from a European to a Latin American context; and such a translation, often radical, has subsequently been undertaken by theologians globally into very specific cultural forms.66 This theological translation itself extended through the Third World to often former colonial states at a time too of ideological ferment. The post-Vatican II period was thus marked by a generalised translation

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63 ibid., p. 96.
65 Again, see Kee, Marx and the Failure of Liberation Theology. The latter’s opening lines sets the tone and focus for his provocative assessment of the theological and political progress of liberation theology:
   Latin American theology of liberation is widely assumed to be too Marxist: in reality it is not Marxist enough. It is frequently criticized for its unquestioning acceptance of Marx: on closer inspection there are crucial aspects of Marx’s work it simply ignores ...
   Liberation theology continually declares itself to be on the side of the oppressed; through its resistance to Marx it perpetuates an ideology of alienation. (p. ix).
66 See Ferm, Third World Liberation Theologies.
of a universal pastoral teaching into the practicalities of local church contexts across all continents where Catholicism had a presence. It was also a time when many states were seeking new political identities in a post-colonial and post-Cold War period.

Father Michel’s account of the rise of Jeannot/ Aristide is part of just such a history; yet his crisis has inevitable pastoral implications. He questions quite fundamentally his place in the ecclesiastical order in a world wrought by doubts as metaphysical as they are political. If Rome, despite the inherent political radicalism of Vatican II, has circumvented this same ideological radicalism in practice, it is a matter made more difficult for Father Michel by a failing transcendental hope, that resurgent eschatological assurance of a politically conservative Church hierarchy in Rome. Returning to Ganae, then, and observing Jeannot’s physical but morally symbolic ‘clean-up’ of Ganae’s streets, Father Michel is no longer certain where his own pastoral priorities lie:

What was my duty? Was it, as the cardinal said, to save these people’s immortal souls, or was it to help Jeannot relieve their mortal misery? And as I stood there ... seeing the happiness in the faces of those who crowded around the tables to eat the simple food prepared for them, into my mind came that quiet but deadly sentence. There is no other life.67

Jeannot himself personalises the dangers implicit in the Church’s involvement with the State. Symbolically, we see aspects of Jeannot as priest-president develops a lifestyle which begins, if subtly, to emulate that of the former dictator: Jeannot lives in Doumergue’s palace, is driven in Doumergue’s car and, most ironically, sleeps in the same bed Doumergue breathed his last.

It is Father Michel who begins to see Jeannot, though duly empowered by the democratic process, becoming himself an autocratic symbol: “This wasn’t ‘liberation theology’. This was faith built around one man.”68 Nevertheless, the many speeches made by Jeannot continue to reflect the concerns of a liberation-type theology which, contrary to its critics, continues to present eschatological as much as temporal hope: “ ‘Brothers and Sisters/ Do not be afraid./ We will come into our paradise, I promise you’”.69 As so often in the recent revolutionary history of Haiti during the presidency of Aristide, Jeannot’s famous and recurrent “machete speech”

67 ibid., p. 101.
68 ibid., p. 101.
69 ibid., p. 115.
calls the people to arms to overcome social and economic oppression.70

The line that “Priests see death more often than do other men” would certainly seem to be the case on Ganae as, subsequent to the “machete speech”, the forces of the military’s counter-revolution emerge and come to a meditative head as the book draws to its close. Standing by body of Mathieu, Jeannot’s bodyguard, Michel reflects upon other sights of death and dying recently encountered:

I stood by his corpse, not in tears as Jeannot was, but sick, my mind filled with images of death: Mathieu, the corpse on the bonfire at Damienneville, the mutilated body of Colonel Maurras into college sacristy, the children hiding behind their dead parents in a Papanos ditch.71

As if the very saturation by the experience of the constancy of death close at hand strengthens the doubts placed in his mind by his dying mother, Father Michel’s crisis of belief permeates the rituals of death:

I had not said a prayer for [Mathieu’s] soul. The familiar words came to mind, ‘Eternal rest grant unto him, O Lord. And let perpetual light shine upon him.’ But they were remembered, not said. Perpetual light? Eternal rest? My mother’s words came back.72

Seeking sanctuary in the hills in fear of their own lives Michel and Jeannot, in the novel’s most bizarre portrayal of death, enter the village of Lavallie and encounter a wake at which the corpse appeared as the most important guest:

The dead man was seated at a table dressed, as was the custom, in his best clothes, a clean white shirt, denim trousers, sandals. His old fedora we perched jauntily upon

70 Moore’s parallels the tone and inclination of Aristide’s theological/ political rhetoric. The following extract is taken from a post-coup d’etat oration in 1986 (four years before Aristide was elected president in Haiti’s first universal suffrage elections) addressed to Prosper Avril, the coup leader, the army and the Haitian people:

When we get to [our] distant [destination]
we will have made a worthy revolution.
We will upset the table of privilege so that we too
will be
welcome to sit and eat.
We have come from far away in order to arrive at a
remote destination.
We want to get there.
We will get there,
in the name of Jesus who has helped us
come all that great distance to arrive at our rightful
destination.
Amen.

As Griffiths has commented, “all the way through his oration, it had been unclear whether this was intended as a sermon or a political speech”. See Griffiths, The Aristide Factor, p. 122.

71 ibid., p. 164.

72 ibid., p. 172.
his head. On the table was a funerary wreath fashioned from white frangipani and red immortelles. A dish of plantains, beans and rice had been set before him and an unlit cigarette dropped from his lips. He was a peasant in his thirties, scarecrow thin, as were most of the others in the room. And then I saw the bullet hole in his temple. The blood had been cleaned away.\textsuperscript{73}

The religious significance for those gathered of Jeannot’s appearance is not lost in the scene as Moore describes it, and Moore again draws strong theological parallels from the occasion:

And now, as in a biblical miracle, Jeannot had appeared at the dead man’s wake. The villagers did not ask why he had come or ask how he knew of the death. The Messiah is not a man. He co-exists in the world of the flesh and the world of the spirit ... He was God’s messenger. Because of this, the room was filled with a strange exaltation. These lives of poverty, of endless toil, of children’s early deaths, of storms that washed away the meagre crops, of soldiers and \textit{hleus} who beat and pillaged, were, in that room, on that day, transformed into the promise of a future life. Now, with the Messiah come among them, they believed anew. Paradise would be theirs.\textsuperscript{74}

Jeannot’s Christ-figure status here, as elsewhere, epitomises the soteriological hopes present within theologies of liberation. Such theologies dramatically altered - and necessarily - traditional christology, essentially characterising Jesus as a revolutionary, a shift christologically reminiscent of Boff’s \textit{Jesus Christ Liberator}.\textsuperscript{75} This revolutionary characterisation of Jeannot brings a hitherto absent christological perspective into Moore’s portrayal of liberation theology, a representation which epitomises, both as ideal and critique, such christology.\textsuperscript{76} The comparison with Boff’s seminal work makes the point effectively since Boff was himself silenced by the Vatican. If Boff’s christology stressed, in short, that Jesus could be interpreted as a revolutionary political figure, his divine involvement in human history an intervention against injustice and oppression, Moore’s Father Cantave is a revolutionary figure too whose theology has shifted too far into ideological involvement, as (at

\textsuperscript{73} ibid., p. 172.
\textsuperscript{74} ibid., p. 173.
\textsuperscript{76} This christological perspective is thus inherently criticised in John Paul II’s opening address at Puebla:

\textit{In some cases people ... indulge in types of interpretation that are at variance with the church’s faith... people purport to depict Jesus as a political activist, as a fighter against Roman domination and the authorities, and even as someone involved in the class struggle. This conception of Jesus as a political figure, a revolutionary, as the subversive from Nazareth, does not tally with the church’s catechesis.}


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least from a Vatican perspective) did Aristide's.77

Still, if Jeannot had not radically altered the lives of the people, it seems that their physical condition is of less significance than their mental attitude of devotion to Jeannot, the Christ-figure suddenly in their midst. At the Lavallée wake, Moore presents an empathetic view of the simple religious hope of Ganae's rural poor, especially their optimism about death in the midst of economic difficulties and political barbarity:

We were at the table with the dead man and offered precious cigarettes ... The wake resumed, but all was changed: life had vanquished death. The corpse, stiff and silent at the table, would rejoin us one day in another, truer world.78

It is with the undeniable physicality and the final mystery of human mortality that Moore leaves us at the end of No Other Life. This presents, though, interesting parallels with the transformation of liberation theology in the 1990s and, arguably, an ironic ideological and theological as well as narrative circularity. Thus if from its inception liberation theology was rooted in the expectations of social structural change - a Marxist critique of economics being as crucial as its neglect of Marxist critique of religion - these expectations failed, clearly, to materialise. Indeed, in addition to the failures to effect social structural, especially economic change, the reversal of the incipient radicalism of liberation theology from a conservative papacy coincided, at least in South America, with a challenge to Catholic hegemony itself.

When “ten years since that day when Jeannot seemed to disappear from this earth”79 in a Ganae where there had been no further revolution but where “to the dismay of the elite and the army, an ungovernable rage and resentment consumes the daily lives of the poor”,80 Father Michel recalls how one year after his disappearance a woman from Toumalie, Jeannot’s village, hands him the inscribed pocket watch which Father Michel had once given Jeannot as a present. Led to Toumalie to meet Frederic, Jeannot’s brother, separated from Jeannot all those

77 Aristide’s radical political views had ensured his expulsion from Haiti in 1982 by the bishops there. When they again demanded his removal from the island in 1986, a wave of popular support was demonstrated as the streets of Port-au-Prince were crowded by followers, bringing the city to an effective standstill. As Griffiths comments, 'Radio Soleil announced that Aristide was still in Haiti because, 'il se trouve dans l'impossibilité de partir, it is physically impossible for him to leave.' (Griffiths, The Aristide Factor, p. 119).
78 ibid., pp. 173-174.
79 ibid., p. 209.
80 ibid., p. 209.
years ago when Father Michel had entered the village, it is Frederic who takes Father Michel to the unmarked, mountainside grave of Jeannot who had died of a fever soon after his disappearance. At the end of the novel Moore presents us with none of the fleeting consolation offered at the wake in Lavallie. At the conclusion of his personal history, Father Michel’s final, theological, meditation on death presents a doubt-ridden context for both ideological and theological struggle:

And then I was alone with Jeannot, alone for the last time. I looked at the ground, anonymous as the unmarked graves of peasants who had died a hundred years ago. Jeannot, his incantatory voice for ever silent, Jeannot who had passed into legend. If only he were the Messiah, if only the gravestone could be rolled back. But I stood on this earth and he lay beneath it, his frail body returning, ashes to ashes, dust to dust.

I knelt down by the unmarked grave but not to pray. I touched the muddied earth in a useless caress as though, somehow, he would know that I had come here. I wept but my tears could not help him. There is no other life.81

*No Other Life* presents then a metaphysical ambivalence which arises from a perceived lack of rational or theological grounds for belief and, through its compensatory functions, seemingly upholds those economic, psychological and sociological critiques of religion which form the philosophical foundations of modernity.

Seen in this context, liberation theology’s appropriation of one such (Marxist) critique of religion is both ironic and provides at least theological grounds for the Catholic Church’s latterday theological suspicion concerning such appropriation. In contemporary theological history, it has provided the ecclesiastical justification (in the context of a conservative papacy) for the post-Vatican II reassertion of centralised authority, especially over the particular (cultural, economic, political) interpretation of the Church’s universal social teaching and Church-State relations. It is a reasserted authority which is often resentfully regarded as reimposition of a universalising European Church over the non-European cultural particularity; and, of course, in postcolonial terms this has more than a degree of irony.

Yet, *No Other Life* provides a wider existential context for these encounters. A narrative circularity – the novel begins and ends with a priestly reflections on life and death – is part of a sustained eschatological meditation. If *No Other Life* provides a physical (that is literary) limit for Jeannot as part of the textual fabric of Moore’s story, the novel provides too wider intertextual reference points to the grandnarrative of which Jeannot and his Catholic narrator are

81 *ibid.*, p. 215.
both an integral part. Still, the grandnarratives of theological and ideological history seemingly lack here a fundamental teleology. Moore's appropriation of theology and ideology retains, then, a final and extreme ambivalence: through the naturalistic portrayal of the scene of Jeannot's burial (there is only the earth) and the implied 'silence of God' (as we last saw with Bern's assassination) Moore may be interpreted as making a fiction of all grandnarrative; or, like Wittgenstein, creating a metaphysical space in which that of which we cannot speak, we ourselves (or at least the novelist) should remain silent.82

_The Statement (1995)_83

While eschatological themes - especially of death and final judgement - continue to permeate _The Statement_, this novel is Brian Moore's literary-historical reflection on Catholic-Jewish

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82 I am of course referring to Wittgenstein's famous conclusion to his _Tractatus Logico Philosophicus_.
relations, a matter which has a long pedigree in his fiction. Moore fictionalises the story of the Nazi collaborator and war criminal Paul Touvier, though his focus is less on Church-State relations during the Second World War than post-War

84 Specific indications of an interest in Jewish-Catholic relations surface in Moore’s early work. For instance, in The Luck of Ginger Coffey, James Francis Coffey associates Irish Catholicism with anti-Semitism, a stance matching pre-Vatican II Catholic thinking on Catholic-Jewish relations, the traditional “Teaching of Contempt”. Coffey’s personal rejection of Catholicism seems, though, to distance himself from such anti-Jewish stance: “He did not agree with many of his countrymen in their attitude to the Jews. None of his best friends were Jews, but that was no reason to dislike Jews was it?” (p. 31) In An Answer from Limbo, a work published in 1962, the year when the Second Vatican Council opened, the protagonist, Brendan Tierney, is also an Irish immigrant who has further distanced himself from his Catholic roots. Such distance is shown most marked by the contrast between Brendan and his Irish Catholic mother. Brendan had asked her to come to New York to child mind his two children while his wife, Jane, worked, and he, having given up work, struggled to complete his first novel. On her arrival in New York from Ireland, though, Tierney’s mother immediately causes offence to Jane, Brendan’s part-Jewish wife. Thus, Brendan’s mother comments on her son’s changed appearance:

‘Sure, I didn’t know him at all, when he met me,’ she said, smiling. ‘With those dark glasses on him I took him for some Jew man.’
‘Mamma, Jane’s mother is part Jewish.’ (p. 38)

Brendan attempts to defend his mother by way of conciliation:
‘Well, she didn’t really mean any harm, you know. It’s not her fault either.
She just doesn’t know any Jews.
‘Come off it Jane, you’re not Jewish’
‘I’m one quarter Jewish. And your children are one eighth Jewish, remember. What’s going to happen if she fills them full of anti-semitism?’
‘She won’t. I’ll speak to her. Let’s be fair, darling. Remember your grandmother and her remarks about the drunken goyim.’
‘That’s different. My grandmother had cause.’
‘Your mother came from a backward environment, that was why she thought all Christians were drunks. And my mother comes from a backward environment too. Same thing.’ (p. 39)

85 For one of the only translated English accounts of Touvier’s discovery and trial, see R.J. Golsan, ed., Memory, the Holocaust and French Justice: the Bousquet and Touvier Affairs (London: University of New England, 1996).

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theological developments. Convicted of crimes against humanity in Vichy France during the Second World War and finally uncovered in a French monastery, Paul Touvier was only arrested in 1989 after over forty years on the run, having been sheltered by extremist elements within the Catholic Church. Moore explores the changing historical and theological face of Catholic-Jewish relations from the mid- to late twentieth century through one literary text, *The Statement*, one of Moore's most sensitive treatments of Catholic inter-faith relations through a literary-historical reflection on Catholicism in Vichy France and the subsequent post-War sheltering of those accused of crimes against humanity, especially Jewish persecution, by extremist elements within the Catholic Church. Within this novel, Moore effectively integrates developments in post-Vatican II Catholic thinking as well as in social and political attitudes within France.

In terms of the portrayal of Catholicism, *The Statement* is particularly important for its focus upon a key theological issue for the post-Vatican II Church, that of Catholic-Jewish relations; and, more broadly, Catholic theological understanding of religious pluralism. The narrative shifts between 1940s Vichy France and the 1980s, a time-frame which spans not only the major phase of Moore's own career as a novelist but also marks developments from pre- to post-Vatican II Roman Catholic thinking in the same period. Significantly, the period was characterised by a move away from the traditional 'Teaching of Contempt' of Catholics towards Judaism to a more conciliatory stance. The changes are most noted in four documents arising from the Second Vatican Council and the post-Conciliar period, these being:

*Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions, Nostra Aetate*, October 28, 1965, Ecumenical Council Vatican II;


88 See Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*.

Guidelines and Suggestions for Implementing the Conciliar Declaration, Nostra Aetate, December 1 1974, Vatican Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews;

Notes on the Correct Way to present the Jews and Judaism in Preaching and Catechesis in the Roman Catholic Church, June 24 1985, Vatican Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews;

We Remember: a reflection on the shoah, 16 March, 1998, Vatican Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews.90

(Again, the trans-historical dimension sets the narrative in a timescale from mid-1940s to late 1980s France and spans not only Moore’s own career as a novelist but also marks developments from pre- to post-Vatican II Roman Catholic thinking in the same period.) The Statement, then, certainly mirrors certain theological developments; and, much to the fore here, Moore’s focus on France shows how literary treatment of theological universals can be demonstrated by the particularities of encounter within a specific location.

The Statement, then, opens with a strong evocation of France from the perspective of the anonymous “R”. His quarry is Pierre Brossard, a wartime Nazi collaborator in Vichy France based on Paul Touvier and the plot mirrors the patterns of post-War political (religious and secular) collusion which allowed Touvier to escape justice for over forty years. One early assumption in the novel is that the assassin is part of a Jewish conspiracy to track down and kill those who have escaped justice for their crimes against humanity; another assumption is that “It was a known fact that the Church was involved”.91 Brossard, however, manages to kill his potential assassin (as later he kills “T”, his second would-be assassin). “R”’s death early on reveals both the identity of “R”, one David Tattenbaum, a false Jewish-Canadian identity, and the nature of “The Statement”, the paper to be pinned to the murdered Brossard:

THE STATEMENT
COMMITTEE FOR JUSTICE FOR THE
JEWISH VICTIMS OF DOMBEY

This man is Pierre Brossard, former Chief of the Second Section of the Marseille region of the milice, condemned to death in absentia by French courts, in 1944 and again in 1946, and further charged with a crime against humanity in the murder of fourteen Jews at Dombey, Alpes-Maritimes, June 15, 1944. After forty-four years of delays, legal prevarications, and the complicity of the Catholic Church in hiding Brossard from justice, the dead are now avenged. This case is closed.92

92 ibid., p. 2.
The latter "Statement" highlights Moore's treatment of anti-semitism within the narrative while *The Statement*, the book itself, amplifies the unfolding historical context of the ideological and theological grandnarrative within post-War France and within the post-Vatican II Roman Catholic Church.

Influenced by Graham Greene, Moore uses a sub-genre of writing which he has identified as the "metaphysical thriller". In this instance, a complex series of factional interactions link conflicts of the novel's plot to wider conflict between and within competing grandnarratives. Simplistically, the major parties can be divided into two main groups. Firstly, there are the protectors of Brossard, significantly those high in French political office as well as reactionaries within the Church. Secondly, there are the pursuers of Brossard, notably these include representatives of French justice and a reformed Church hierarchy. Within this metaphysical thriller, which largely mirrors the Touvier incident except for Brossard's eventual assassination, protectors and pursuers highlight ideological and theological shifts in French political and Catholic ecclesiastical history.

The series of geographical moves, shifts in landscape and setting as Brossard moves around France in search of an ever elusive security, also present then, different maps of ideological and religious debate. Associating monasticism with political and religious conservatism, Moore's reactionary forces within the Church are those which demonstrate independence from changes within the post-Vatican II Catholic Church: in Salon du Provence is Dom Vladimir Gorkakov of Abbaye de St Cros; in Aix, Dom Andres Vergnes of Prieure de St Christophe; in Cannes, Abbe Fessard; in Armijnnon, Dom Henri Armijnnon, the Carmelite Abbey St Michel des Monts at Villefranche; and finally in Nice, Dom Olivier Villedieu of the Prieure de la Fraternite St Donat. In fear of either imminent capture or assassination, Brossard's passage from monastery to monastery provides Moore with the opportunity for the reader to hear clearly the voice of political right within the French Church and their reflections on Vichy

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93 See Sampson, Brian Moore, pp. 286-288.
94 ibid., p. 84.
95 ibid., p. 88, p. 119.
96 ibid., p. 190, p. 193, p. 195.
French history. Thus, for instance, the Abbot addresses Father Blaise, the Abbot’s liberal “perehospitalier”:

‘... under the Marechal Petain, France was given a chance to revoke the errors, the weakness and selfishness, of the Third Republic, that regime that caused us to lose the war to the Germans. Of course, it was a sad time. I’m denying it. Part of the country was occupied, but you must remember there was a large free zone, the zone of the Vichy Government, the Marechal’s government, which was giving us the hope of a new co-operation between our country and Germany. Under the Marechal, we were led away from selfish materialism and those democratic parliaments that preached a false equality back to the Catholic values we were brought up in: the family, the nation, the Church. But when the Germans lost the war, all that was finished. Stalin’s communist armies overrun Europe. The enemies of religion came back in force.’

Establishing within his fiction an intertextual space which is both literary and theological, Moore explicitly integrates the historical context of Vatican II within the narrative moves of The Statement. Thus the Prieure Fraternity of St Donat, Dom Olivier, has chosen to follow Monsignor Lefebvre, “the former Archbishop of Dakar who believed that, with the abandonment of the Latin mass and the changes that followed Vatican II, Rome was no longer the true Church”. Active resistance to post-Conciliar liturgical change is thus portrayed as a mark of political extremism. Dom Olivier’s pre-Vatican II liturgical conservatism is associated with the perniciousness of classical Christian anti-semitism, the association of the Jews with evil personified in the form of the devil, as he explains to the man he had sheltered for so many years:

‘Pierre, one of the reasons we have lost the true path is the Devil, more than at any other time in history, has managed to conceal his ways and works. The people have forgotten that the Evil One exists. And, alas, the Church, the Papal Church, has not seen fit to remind them of his existence. If, indeed, the Papal Church believes that the Devil still exists. I am not sure of that, as I am not sure of anything in connection with present-day Rome ... We know, and we have always known, that the Jews do not have the interests of France at heart and that they are still willing to sow dissension and feelings of guilt and blame, more than forty years after the German Occupation. I see that lust for vengeance as inspired by the Devil.’

Brossard concurs, reflecting with unrepentant anti-semitism that the “Devil isn’t someone with a cloven hoof and a forked tail. The Devil is the Jews”. With Brossard’s greatest public

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97 See above, note 86, p.220, and note 87, p. 226, for historical and theological background, especially ecclesiastical involvement. For an accessible account of this period, see R. Price, A Concise History of France, pp 244-277.
98 ibid., p. 73.
99 ibid., p. 175.
100 ibid., p. 195.
101 ibid., p. 207.
advocate, Monsignor le Moyne,102 innocent of crimes but duped by a revisionist view of Holocaust history ("The numbers of the dead are exaggerated no doubt, but what matter?"

Moore seemingly presents a fairly damning picture of post-War Catholic involvement in perpetuating prejudicial attitudes to Judaism. However, with his portrayal of Brossard's pursuers, such a simplistic picture is modified if not fully overturned.

If Brossard's flight around the south of France, then, is charted by Moore as a complex ideological and theological landscape, Brossard's protectors are only one face of this map of French political and Catholic ecclesiastical life. Thus, post-War political and post-Vatican II Church reform are shown as having radically altered this ideological and theological landscape of France. The literal and metaphorical territory which allowed Brossard to escape justice is shown to have been reduced exponentially. Thus, massed against Brossard are those representative forces which would seek redress for the injustices of France's and the Church's wartime and post-War past. There are a number of such identifiable forces pursuant of Brossard, one of whom turns out to be a former protector.

One major change to France's theological map is the post-Vatican II Catholic Church itself. Thus Archbishop Delavigne's commission, consisting of an independent group of secular, university historians, attempts to provide evidence of ecclesiastical culpability (though not legal judgement). With openness towards the Vatican's "murky" record,104 including the acknowledgement of "the post-war Vatican passports issued to Nazis to help them escape to South America",105 Delavigne recognises the diversity of post-Vatican II Catholicism with his comment the "Church is not monolithic, particularly in France".106 Representative of such progressive-conservative diversity, Brossard's protectors are indicative of the unreformed elements within the the Church. Indeed, unreformed elements in the post-Vatican II Church provide the wider critique of the Church's past, one of indifference as much as active persecution. As one monk comments to a pro-Brossard supporter, the Church "forgives itself

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102 *ibid.*, pp. 42 ff.
103 *ibid.*, p. 44.
104 *ibid.*, p. 66.
105 See Duffy, *Saints and Sinners: A History of the Popes*, pp. 264-265. This matter which came to special prominence in the 1980s.
106 *ibid.*, p. 66.
for its silence when thousands of Jews were sent to their deaths".\textsuperscript{107} Response to recent publications from the Vatican on Catholic-Jewish relations would indicate that much ground still needs to be covered before full reconciliation, statements from the Vatican being described by critics as "a bridge too short".\textsuperscript{108} Still, Delavigne’s position does mark the major shift in Catholic inter-faith relations since the Second Vatican Council, from\textit{ Nostra Aetate} onwards.\textsuperscript{109} Internal tensions within the grandnarrative of Catholic theology nevertheless remain reflected in Moore’s fiction.

If the public face of Catholic-Jewish relations changed with pronouncements of the Second Vatican Council and post-Conciliar Church, political change in post-War France is portrayed as lacking such a definitive break with the past. The new state \textit{juge d'instruction} investigating the Brossard case, Madame Annemarie Livì,\textsuperscript{110} indeed highlights the long-standing divisions between police and army which later reveal that Church involvement must be seen in the wider content of continuing political support.\textsuperscript{111} Thus, setting the case of Brossard against other post-War trails such as that of Klaus Barbie (and Brossard himself a fictionalised Paul Touvier), the likely assassins of Brossard cannot be traced to “one of the well-known Nazi-hunters like the Klarsfelds or the Wiesenthal Centre”\textsuperscript{112} and this provides the clue to culpability within the French political hierarchy. Moore hereby integrates the grandnarrative of competing political ideologies (as well as competing Catholic theologies) into his novel, providing a meta-

\textsuperscript{107} \textit{ibid.}, p.154.
\textsuperscript{108} Editorial, \textit{The Tablet}, 21 March 1998, p. 371; also pp. 390-391. This was in response to the Vatican publication of “We remember: a reflection on the shoah”, 16 March 1998, by the Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews. See also, R. Hill in the same issue, pp. 372-373.
\textsuperscript{110} \textit{ibid.}, p. 36; pp. 122-123.
\textsuperscript{111} The magistrate’s early comments to Colonel Roux help clarify this:
‘I’ve been told that it concerns the relations between the Commissariat of Police and the Vichy regime. It’s a matter of record that the French police were pro-Petain and collaborated with the German occupiers in deporting Jews to German concentration camps ... The gendarmerie, on the other hand, were sympathetic to the Resistance and to the de Gaulle forces fighting outside France. As a result the gendarmerie has a clean record in the matter of collaboration with the Germans. The Commissariat of Police does not.’ (p. 36)
It is for this reason that, in the novel, the investigation of Brossard is transferred from the police to the army.
\textsuperscript{112} \textit{ibid.}, p. 123.
text for the analysis of post-War French political and ecclesiastical history.

Thus, here we have Moore’s denouement as reflection of contemporary theological history; given the resistance to this development during Vatican II, Moore’s portrayal of apparently simplified opposition is not far from historical actuality. Thus, just as deliberations at the Second Vatican Council on Jewish-Christian relations were affected by feelings of bitterness and resentment from Arab Christians in the middle-east, what The Statement demonstrates is the interaction between not only competing (conservative/reformed) theologies but competing (again conservative/reformed) political ideologies. Thus Colonel Roux, one of Livi’s fellow investigators, reveals that “other Frenchmen are similarly charged but have never been brought to trial. But if Brossard is caught and tried, their trial can’t be put off any longer. So, to sum up Madame, I don’t believe the Church alone had the power to help Brossard escape the police and the courts over a forty-year period”.114 Significant here is Commissionaire Vionnet who had arranged the immediate post-War release of Brossard for information received, a means of covering up a “question about deportation orders signed by someone high up in the prefecture in Paris”. Politically most sensitive, though, is the place of Maurice de Grandville:

Now eighty years old, with a record of past action requiring judicial investigation, which, over the years, had accumulated thirty tomes of evidence, without his ever spending a night in prison, he had outlived the statute of limitations on his former deeds. Except one, the one that had shadowed his long career. In the years of the German Occupation, as Secretary General of the prefecture of the Gironde, he had facilitated his SS colleagues by organising a series of French deportation trains which sent sixteen hundred people, including two hundred and forty children, to their deaths in Nazi extermination camps. For this action there was no statute of limitations. The crime against humanity.115

It is de Grandville’s money, channelled by Vionnet and Pochon, which has been supporting Brossard financially while certain monasteries have provided physical shelter. De Grandville, fearing Brossard’s revelations on capture, thus arranges for the latter’s assassination. Aware of public knowledge of Church complicity with Brossard and expecting no public surprise if a Jewish group is found to be responsible for killing Brossard, it is these de Grandville, Vionnet and Pochon are who are revealed as the hirers of the assassins and authors of the “statement”

114 ibid., p. 67.
115 ibid., p.183.
which would point, incorrectly, to Jewish involvement in the death of Brossard.

The complexities of this metaphysical thriller are greater for its trans-historical plot, and, to borrow from Lyotard, for the manner in which the grandnarratives of politics and religion merge within Brossard’s much smaller story. With the Commissioner’s involvement in the repression of Algerian protest which led to independence in 1962, and through the character and background of the second failed assassin “T”, Moore, highlighting the contentious issue of immigration in modern day France, presents Catholic-Jewish prejudice and persecution within the wider context of racial conflict and cultural intolerance. Here “T” looks at the photograph of the young Brossard and reflects on his earlier meeting with de Grandville in the context of his own immigrant family history:

Now he’s supposed to be seventy, he should be dead, he’s part of history. The milice. Those days are old movies, that’s all, Nazi uniforms, propeller bombers, Casablanca with Ingrid Bergman, and chez nous, Rommel in the desert with his tanks, and the Americans landing at Algiers. Papa was a little kid in the Arab quarter in Oran, he saw Rommel’s tanks on the run, then the winners, Americans, French, British, parading through the streets, he loved that, he loved uniforms, Papa, he wanted to be a soldier, not the ones in France, not Vichy, not the ones this guy fought for, but de Gaulle’s. Not that it mattered. No matter which French side you fight for, the French will fuck you, like they did Papa, who couldn’t wait to grow up and join the French army, yes, in ’55, signing on in Algiers, he was twenty years old, and they filled him full of lies, he was to be a Harkis, part of an elite commando, auxiliary troops, riding camels, encamped beside the French, Papa was in the top commando, the Georges, Muslims against French officers, fighting for Salan and the junta against the FLN, our own brothers. I wonder if that rich Jew officer tonight knew I’m the son of a Harkis. No, he wouldn’t know that. I’m not dark, like Papa. I can always pass for French.116

Elsewhere in the novel similar themes are presented. As Bouchard, the winegrower, talking with Monsignor le Moyne, arch-advocate of Brossard says, returning “obsessively to the subject of immigrant population”, blaming the Muslim element in his son’s school for the boy’s involvement with drugs: “‘Le Pen is right,’ he said. ‘Send them back where they came from. What do you think Father? Wouldn’t you vote for Le Pen, if you were me?’”117

France, though, becomes a prison for Brossard as, trapped by memory, political changes in


117 ibid., pp. 44-45; See Price, A Concise History of France , on the rise of the National Front in France, pp. 350-353; 356; 358; 369.
French society and theological shifts in Church culture, his demise becomes inevitable. Residual pre-Vatican II attitudes and post-Vatican II developments in Catholic thinking on Catholic-Jewish relations are thus mirrored within The Statement when his (still undiscovered) political protectors take direct responsibility for his assassination. In the last lines of the narrative we are left with Pierre Brossard’s final and unrepentant stream of consciousness which, at least in part, reflects too the collective conscience of extremist elements within the Catholic Church:

Pain consumed him but through it he struggled to say, at last, that prayer the Church had taught him, that true act of contrition for his crimes. But he could feel no contrition. He had never felt contrite for the acts of his life. And, now when he asked God’s pardon, God chose to show him fourteen dead Jews.118

If Brossard is finally unrepentant for both his crimes and his anti-Semitic attitudes, his death at the hands of right-wing, former political protectors marks a public separation of such ideological and theological extremes. Wartime collaboration between Church and Vichy government had been possible because of albeit loosely shared and perhaps unsystematic, anti-Semitic attitudes, the classical ‘teaching of contempt’ which historically marked Jewish-Catholic relations. If in post-War France anti-Semitic and more broadly racist ideology remains prominent through figures such as Le Pen and the French National Front, then post-Vatican II, it is an ideology which the Church can no longer support theologically.

*The Magician’s Wife* (1997)

Moore’s final novel confirms the importance of colonial geography in the representation of religious and ideological space. Landscape is central to the portrayal of belief in *The Magician’s Wife* just as it has been in his other fictions but its explicitness is distinctive. Set in the mid-nineteenth century, the book is divided between two continents, a cross-cultural feature not unknown to his other novels, but unlike before this book’s two geographical settings are stated as titles, openly linking both history and geography; the first being “France, 1856” and

118 *ibid.*, p. 218.
the second, with Moore's first full, literary journey into Africa, "Algeria, 1856". The Magician's Wife portrays the historical roots of Catholic cooperation within the French colonization of North Africa but finally contextualizes both theology and imperialism within both a postcolonial and post-Vatican II perspective.


context, despite a vastly different physical and ideological landscape, is reminiscent of *Black Robe*: It seems that Moore has again looked to the past for a physical place to experiment with the ambiguities of contrasting and conflicting belief systems - in *Black Robe* between the French Jesuits and the First Nations, and in *The Magician’s Wife* between the modern scientific rationality (and residual Catholicism) of the French and the pre-modern faith of Islamic Algeria.\(^{122}\)

On the French side, then, there is a clear but ambiguous alliance between religion and politics in a post-Enlightenment France.\(^{123}\) The relationship between the Church and powers of the Napoleon’s State is thus consistently uneasy, with the narrative highlighting the continued centrality of Catholic religious orthodoxy, and thus continued papal influence, in the presence of the sectarian and religious other within nineteenth century French society: “Freemasons, like Jews, were frequently cited as the enemies of religion and although Napoleon III was known to be more liberal than his predecessors the Church had lost none of its powers to punish transgressors”.\(^{124}\) At Mass, though, for instance at Compeigne, the Emperor is not present; and the Empress with a ‘modern’ self-reflection critically surveys this central Christian sacrament of the eucharist within a generalized state of secularization:

Emmeline knelt at her pew and put her head down as if in prayer. But she did not pray. After a few moments she looked at the congregation and saw that, as so often at Mass, she was not alone in this absence of prayer. The ladies in their lace veils were covertly studying their neighbours. The gentlemen perused their missal like inattentive students, and everyone from time to time looked up at the alcove where the Empress knelt, her hands entwined in her rosary, her eyes fixed on the altar. Emmeline glanced sideways at her husband and saw that, as always in church, he read his missal carefully, from time to time studying the movements of the priest on the altar as though by paying close attention he might one day solve the mystery of changing bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ. What *did* he think of miracles; did he, who had said that all such things were illusions, include in his condemnation the mystery and miracle of the Mass?\(^{125}\)

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\(^{122}\) Moore’s literary representation here of encounter between imperial France and Muslim Algeria arguably risks portraying opposed cultural hegemonies, something of which Said warned in *Orientalism*:

I have been arguing that “the Orient” is itself a constituted entity, and that the notion that there are geographical spaces with indigenous, radically “different” inhabitants who can be defined on the basis of some religion, culture, or racial essence proper to that geographical space is equally highly debatable idea. (Said, *Orientalism*, p. 322).

\(^{123}\) For an overview of the shifting fortunes of relations between the Vatican and post-revolutionary France, see Duffy, *Saints and Sinners*, pp. 194-244.


\(^{125}\) ibid., p. 67.
The preeminence of the secular forces over and above those of the Church does not mean, though, that the Third Republic are averse to using religion as a means of political influence. Aside from the social conformity enforced amidst a largely secular gathering at Compeigne, it is Napoleon's representative Deniau, Head of the Bureau de Arabe, who sees the merits of employing Lambert's magical powers to convince the Arabs of the superior spiritual authority of French 'Christians' over Muslim religious leaders.

There is no little irony here, of course, in that Lambert represents from the outset of the novel a man who has aspiration to all the scientific rationality that the Enlightenment can afford. The preoccupation with clocks (there are forty of them in Henri Lambert's Tours' residence) is largely symptomatic of this, as is the predominance of mechanical gadgetry in the household. The devices which alert the head of the household to intruders or more benign visitors suggests more significantly a secular struggle for omniscience, a clear analogy to powers of a scientific modernity to replace a pre-modern religiosity.

Ironic too is Lambert's quest for personal and social status - as is the embarrassment of the magician's wife who fears that is that Lambert is simply a magician, a conjuror, a performer of tricks. Thus, at home in France, he may entertain theatres with his skills but educated audiences will always assess his performance as precisely that, a demonstration of trickery and pretence, however skilful. That less educated or sophisticated audiences, especially in the French countryside, identify Lambert's skills with the supernatural ("local tradesmen who think us in league with the devil"126) and a most definitely pre-modern, indeed often pre-Christian, pagan worldview only illustrates his imprecise and indeterminate status as representative of either the pre-modern or the modern.

Lambert does constantly attempt to be more than a magician, to raise both his social and scientific status. This is indicated in his willingness to help the Emperor and France in ways which would, and which in the end do, make him more than an entertainer, it being his wife's major social fear that he be regarded as only that; and it is part of Lambert's argument to convince her to attend the royal gathering at Compeigne to which she feels she will be excluded: "you'll be treated as the wife of an inventor, which is just as high a calling as a

126 ibid, p. 29.
sculptor or writer or any of the other intellectual". From the outset, though, Lambert remains on an epistemological (as well as socially indeterminate) middle ground between pre-modern magic religiosity and the scientific modernity of the Enlightenment, as he himself realizes: "He no longer thought of himself as a magician. Now he was an inventor, a scientist. But would a real scientist spend his days making mechanical marionettes?"

Still, it is Colonel Deniau, the key instigator in using Lambert for political ends, who plays upon the potential perceptions of Lambert’s ‘magical’ skills as spiritual authority amongst the Arab population, a rhetoric which Lambert himself takes to heart: “‘Fear mixed with awe and reverence for the unknown, for something we do not understand. That’s at the heart of all magic ... But in Africa ... the Arabs will never have seen illusion such as I can devise. Believe me, to them I will be the most holy of marabouts’”.

That electricity is used as part of the demonstrations to impress and frighten the ‘unscientific’ Arabs indicates then a colonial use of modernity under the guise of a superstitious, pre-modern religiosity, Lambert being described “a great Christian sorcerer”; as Deniau claims: “‘What we need to convince the Arab is something even more spectacular, something which will both frighten and amaze them ... supernatural powers’”.

In contrast to an expanding but secularising French Empire, Algeria represents a reverse demarcation between religious (marabout) and secular (sheik) authority. It is the marabouts’ capacity to declare jihad against the French which is central to Deniau’s colonial manipulations, as he explains to Lambert: “‘Muslim countries are very different from ours. Their marabouts or saints have a political and spiritual influence which is greater than the power of any ruler ... An unfortunate situation for the sheiks’”.

However, aside from French recognition of marabout’s political influence through religious authority, Deniau sees nationalism epitomising the true faith of imperialism, a substitute for French Catholic identity in post-Enlightenment

127 ibid., p. 8.
128 ibid., p. 4.
129 ibid., p. 76.
130 ibid., p. 112.
131 ibid., p. 58.
132 ibid., p. 58.
times: “Today’s true devotion was reserved for the flag”133: “I have great plans for Algeria. I see it as the meeting ground between East and West and the key to our empire’s economic expansion” .134 Already a declining influence in post-Enlightenment France, Catholicism retains then a merely nominal role in Napoleon III’s colonial advancement; but attempts to convince the Arabs of the spiritual superiority of ‘Christianity’ over Islam with no more than Lambert’s electrical trickery does indicate the role religion played in the imperial process; but, conversely, from Algerian side, of course religion later plays a major part in the resistance of imperialism and Enlightenment inspired secular modernity.135 It is of course a perverse ‘theology of imperialism’ which thus provokes Lambert to admit: “I am a sorcerer. I am Christian. I am French. God, whom you call Allah, protects me. As he will protect my country from any enemy who dares to strike a blow against France” .136 Such comment is shared by Deniau in using the false miracle of science for imperial ends under the guise of a duplicitious religiosity: “we may convince them that Islam is not alone in possessing miraculous powers. In other words we will present him as a greater marabout than Bou-Aziz and convince them that God is not on their side but ours” .137

It is, though, the magician’s wife (her designation a sign of derivative status and social marginality138) who reveals the trickery behind the surface ‘spiritual’ power of her husband’s

133 See Gandhi, Postcolonial Theory. Gandhi provides some discussion of how “the birth of nationalism in Western Europe is coeval with the dwindling-if not the death-of religious modes of thought”. Of course, such a perspective naturally neglects religion in global context, as Hastings’ historical overview mitigates against such Eurocentrism at least in the history of Christianity. More broadly, see J. Casanova, Public Religions in the Modern World (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1994) and J. Haynes, Religion in Global Politics (Harlow: Longman, 1998).

134 Ibid., p. 58.

135 On the increasing global influence of Islam, again see Casanova, Public Religions in the Modern World and Haynes, Religion in Global Politics.

136 Ibid., p. 59.

137 Ibid., p. 61.

magic to this leading marabout, Bou-Aziz, thereby exposing the bankruptcy of this complicity between between ‘theology’ and imperialism. Moore had earlier set a number of possible manifestations of compromise for Emmeline: first with a lecherous Napoleon III at Compeigne and later ironic juxtaposition of female and eastern licentiousness in a second potential sexual encounter between Emmeline and Deniau: “And at the moment she sensed that in a strange exotic country she would face a new dilemma. For, in that momentary covert closing of an eye, was proposed the ultimate betrayal”. 139

It is not exploited sexual power but combined political and spiritual authority, though, which the narrative provides Emmeline and, later, Bou-Aziz. Thus in the novel’s key encounter between the magician’s wife and Bou-Aziz, two figures on the imperial margins, Moore focuses on ‘otherness’, giving voice and finally power to the disempowered: the female other within the physical bounds of imperial France but beyond influence there now given the narrative opportunity to subvert Empire; the Islamic other, geographically ‘external’ to North Africa, but open to imminent subjugation and territorial incorporation. Bou-Aziz, though, finally makes no use of the insight provided by Emmeline and in accepting the will of Allah allows for French conquest to be completed. Here, though, is presented Islam’s weakness and strength: in accepting the will of Allah and not exposing Lambert, Algeria receives but finally resists French colonialism. This strength is recognised by the magician’s wife, woman and herself ‘other’: “Their faith was not more spiritual than Christianity, but it was stronger, frightening in its intensity, with a certitude Christianity no longer possessed”.140

Afterall, on the way to Compeigne she (“Catholic but no longer devout”141) and Lambert “had forgotten to include prayer books in their luggage”, symptomatic that ‘Religious observance became an obligation, not an act of worship’ that ‘In large measure, she had lost her faith’.142 By contrast, while in Algeria, close to the Sahara (the “spiritual landscape” acknowledged even

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139 ibid., p. 61.
140 ibid., p.198.
141 ibid., p. 68.
142 ibid., p.195.
by Deniau,143) we have the closest contrast between the formal but insincere, residual religiosity of post-Enlightenment France and a world where spirituality was a reality integral to all aspects of Algerian life:

Never in France, in cathedral, conven or cloister, had she felt the intensity of belief everywhere present in the towns, villages, farms and deserts of this land. It was a force at once terrifying and inspiring, a faith with no resemblance to the Christian belief in Mass and sacraments, hellfire and damnation, sin and redemption, penance and forgiveness.144

In a world where ‘Everything comes from God’ and where the marabout are seemingly defined by ‘baraka - holiness’ Emmeline’s new-found spiritual assuredness is replaced by despair when her identity is displaced from both European home and the religious, cultural and geographical other:

As of this moment she no longer felt she belonged in the world of Tours, Paris and Compeigne. And yet she must return to it. There was no other choice. For this world of total fervour, of blind resignation, was one she neither could, nor would, wish to enter.145

It is this distinct religious, cultural and political identity which neither French imperialism nor the ambiguously complicit Catholicism can eliminate in the process of colonization, the trace of the subjugated other nowhere more apparent than in the mosques converted for other uses. In the following passage this relationship between imperialism and Catholicism is most clearly signalled as Archbishop Francois du Chatel says High Mass in celebration of victory in the South:

In this former mosque, columns fifty feet high supported the cupola which was lit from above by stained glass windows. The altar was on the north side, decorated by a painting of the Virgin which had been presented to the cathedral by the Pope. Yet above this painting in prominent relief was a series of ornate, interlaced sentences from the Koran which had not been erased despite the fact that they proclaimed in Arabic that there is only one God and Muhammad is his prophet.146

The sign of Islam’s theological simplicity remains in the trace of the Shahadah and the theological impurity of Catholicism is revealed; indeed, just as the expectations of Lambert being recognised as a Christian spiritual force by the imperialist French, he becomes perceived

143 Speaking of Emmeline’s fear of the desert, Deniau remarks: “ ‘The Sahara? Three hundred thousand square miles is the figure we have calculated. And yes, it can be frightening. But it is also a spiritual landscape. To enter it you must become like it, a tabularasa.’ ”; ibid., p. 127.
144 ibid., p. 196.
145 ibid., pp. 195-196.
146 ibid., pp. 107-108.
by Algerian Muslims as its evil antithesis, an “infidel sorcerer”, “Chitan”/“Satan”.\textsuperscript{147}

Of course, Moore risks an oversimplified representation of Catholicism here - particularly through Lambert - as a tradition entirely in collusion with imperialism. There is thus much in the narrative by which both Catholicism and Islam might share sympathies in a nineteenth century context: both would reject Lambert’s sorcery per se, and certainly its pretence to supernatural origin and efficacy. More widely, as we have seen, Catholicism in the nineteenth century was itself as embattled politically as it was theologically: politically the loss of the papal states in Italy, for instance, coincided historically with manifold challenges to theology presented not only by enlightenment rationalism but the rise of science and industrialisation. We have already outlined the anti-modernist response of the Church from Vatican I in the mid-nineteenth century through to the latter half of the twentieth century; and Moore’s later novels such as \textit{The Colour of Blood} and \textit{The Statement} indirectly illustrate how in the twentieth century Catholicism has continued both to accommodate with and to struggle against such modern manifestations of imperialism as communist ideological forces and Nazi fascism, respectively. Lambert’s characterisation (and indeed Emmeline’s perception of Islam’s spiritual purity in desert Arab landscape) risks a simple reversal of the traditional western misrepresentation of Islam (still current today), that is, a portrayal of good Islam/ bad western Christian imperialism.

As we have seen, though, Lambert has been used for imperialist political ends under the guise of a pseudo-Catholic religiosity to convince Muslim Arabs of the superiority of Christianity not only spiritually but politically. Moore has rightly highlighted here the key cultural difference between a separation of Church and State in nineteenth century France and the integration of religious and secular power in nineteenth century Islamic Algeria. Just as today, as the twentieth century draws to a close, the struggle between secular state in post-Independence Algeria and those who would wish for a return to this historical theocracy remains, Moore as always seems more overtly concerned with the dangers of religion as it becomes embroiled in the mechanisms of state power. We saw this in the tension presented between Church and State in \textit{The Colour of Blood, No Other Life} and \textit{The Statement}. In Moore’s final novel, though, Lambert’s lack of humanity is seen most profoundly not in his

\textsuperscript{147} \textit{ibid.}, p.115. (237)
single-minded pursuit of political gain (in the widest sense, personal and national) but in the neglect of his servant, Jules Guillaumin, as the latter dies a lonely death from cholera. It is a death made more painful by Lambert’s failure to visit and a lack of humanity heightened further by Lambert’s considered indifference when Guillaumin finally dies. Just so, Catholicism finally retains its spirituality authority - as it has lost its meaning for those embroiled in the corrupting privileges of empire, court and privilege - as the Jesuit priest ministers the last rites to Jules Guillaumin in his dying days.\textsuperscript{148} Once again, of course, we see a personal eschatological encounter providing (here on the margins) a literary and metaphysical contextualisation for human history.\textsuperscript{149}

In \textit{The Magician’s Wife}, with an authorial foresight on history, both flag and faith, nationalism and religion, are nevertheless seen as the twin forces which eventually win Algeria’s independence. Moore’s italicised sentences of conclusion to \textit{The Magician’s Wife} thereby contextualise the novel in events which give credence to an historical, meta-fictional and postcolonial reading of his fiction:

\textit{The following year, in the summer of 1857, French armies under the command of Marechal Randon and General MacMahon subdued the tribes of Kabylia, thus completing the conquest of Algeria by France.}

\textit{In the summer of 1962, Algeria officially declared its independence, ending the French presence in that country.}\textsuperscript{150}

Coincidental perhaps, but the year of Algerian independence, 1962, is that of the opening of the Second Vatican Council. It might be argued that Moore’s novel attempts to link explicitly a new post-Vatican II theological thinking with a postcolonial perspective. Interpreting the relationship with Islam as ‘people of the Book’, the Second Vatican Council provided a radical re-identification with Islam in a relationship as historical as it is textual - a universal soteriology

\textsuperscript{148} \textit{ibid.}, pp. 165-173.


\textsuperscript{150} \textit{ibid.}, p. 215.
accepting difference and celebrating the other. Moore presents the history of Catholicism as complicit in French colonialism but, taking the wider post-Vatican II and postcolonial perspectives, it is a Catholicism implicitly rehabilitated by a new allegiance with the oppressed and the marginalised.

The Magician's Wife presents two distinct landscapes and cultures in one historical encounter. Focusing on a specific year in the colonial histories of France and Algeria, Moore's final novel presents the events of 1856 as part of a wider, subsequent history, to which novelist and reader have privileged access. As in Black Robe, issues of colonisation relate both the religious and secular, and this relationship between theology and imperialism certainly adds too to the complexities of the encounter in The Magician's Wife. Here Moore portrays the often anti-religious spirit of Enlightenment rationalism that was to provide a frequently aggressive (economic, political, scientific) process of a modernising hegemony. With colonialism - cultural and territorial imperialism - being the most militant expression of such European hubris, religious traditions have sought both rapprochement with and resistance to such modernity. Moore's later novels clearly portray the risks inherent in Catholicism's attempts at either. The Magician's Wife provides a literary view of the historical antecedence of such accommodation and confrontation. Moore's final novel provides too a view of how both the theologically universal and the culturally particular will come increasingly to the fore in a postcolonial and post-Vatican II era.


152 A potential area of contention here of course is that while retaining its openness to truth within all religious traditions, Catholicism remains a religion committed to evangelization and missionary activity in the widest sense.
Part IV

Conclusion
Chapter Seven

Moore's Portrayal of Catholicism: A Conclusion

Since Judith Hearne's ill-fated liaison with James Madden, Moore's narratives have personalised the encounter of both cultures and continents. Invariably, shifts in physical, metaphysical and cultural geography - often though not exclusively through migration - push characters' identities, especially their Catholic identity, to the limit and more often crisis. A complex of physical, overtly-stated geographical locations, Moore's narratives represent too a dense literary realm of ideological and theological intertextuality. These literary environments encompass in the broadest sense the confrontation of Catholicism with other, often conflicting, worldviews. We have examined at some length the particularities of novels whose primary focus has predominantly been Ireland and America, though, as with so many of Moore's novels, his texts are both cross-cultural and trans-continental. It has been contended that these physical and metaphysical, political and religious, landscapes of encounter represent Moore's distinctive literary portrayal of Catholicism; and, crucially, that the formation and reformation, the construction, deconstruction and reconstruction of Catholic identity which these novels contain are best understood by placing both the novels themselves and their portrayal of Catholicism in the context of a wider Catholic theological history, particularly in the light of the Councils of the Church. For Moore, not surprisingly, it is the period before and after the Second Vatican Council which is the most significant, indeed pivotal, context for understanding his portrayal of Catholicism.

Yet a major area of neglect in critical appraisals of Moore is precisely the analysis of the theological detail of Catholicism so portrayed in his novels. It has been the consistent underlying premise of this thesis that an examination of the wider cultural, social, ideological, as well as theological development of Catholicism as an historically evolving worldview is thus required. As consistent benchmarks of Catholic Christian theology over twenty centuries, it is the Councils of the Church which provide the key, defining positions of Catholicism over the full extent of its history. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, I have argued, then, that, historically, Catholicism has been defined by two such Councils: Vatican I and Vatican II. Sufficient detail has been addressed to these as appropriate theological reference points for

\[1\] This was established through a review of relevant critical literature in chapter one.
Moore's novels; indeed, to the extent that pre- and post-Vatican II Catholicism provides the fundamental structure for this thesis. Even for the one novel outside of a nineteenth or twentieth century context, *Black Robe* enables too a (partially anachronistic) reading of post-Vatican II theology within a literary treatment of missionary activity in early colonial Canada.

In broad terms, the case for developing a neglected (and essentially) theological hermeneutic for understanding Moore's portrayal of Catholicism has been strengthened not simply by the abiding presence of Catholic themes within Moore's novels but because of the contemporary theological transformation of Catholic tradition itself. While a crucial area of this transformation is Catholicism's self-definition, or ecclesiology, just as important in a post-Vatican II era has been the character and direction of Catholicism's encounter with religious and ideological difference. Thus, while sectarianism still characterises Catholic encounter with (say) the Protestant other in Irish society on many levels (as evidenced by Moore's early and later Irish fictions), the post-Vatican II Catholic encounter with religious and ideological difference has been and continues to be of a qualitatively different order from that of pre-Vatican II days. It is such reformulations of theology, especially subsequent to the Second Vatican Council, that need to be considered when surveying Moore's portrayal of Catholicism, especially in later works where theological and ideological concerns are so forcibly conjoined.

There is here, though, in Moore's portrayal of Catholicism, a point of significance which extends beyond developments within Catholicism itself, one arising somewhat cumulatively from Moore's increasing preoccupation with the public role of religion. This is, of course, especially apparent in his ambivalent (historical and contemporary) portrayal of Catholicism's

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2 We see a similar anachronistic use of theological and ideological perspective in *The Magician's Wife*; alternatively, of course, we can see the novelist using a privileged overview of history, both novels openly displaying Moore's perspective of the present for a view of the past.

3 This is epitomised in the range of interfaith dialogue; again, for instance, see Gioia, ed., *Interreligious Dialogue: The Official Teaching of the Catholic Church* (1963-1993).

4 Whyte's models of opposition discussed above (pp. 47-49) are still valid. Also relevant of course are the increasing number of post colonial studies of Ireland which reassert the issue of Catholicity and Nationalism; see, for instance, Eagleton's provocative preface to *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger*, pp. ix-xii.

relations with imperialism and colonialism, and ideology in general. Moore hereby provides literary focus on the growing sociological and historical evidence that counters the once accepted premises of (Enlightenment-derived) secularization theory: that with increasing modernization, societies become increasingly less religious; that diminishing public and political significance for religion effectively entails the residual presence of religious belief and practice as an increasingly private phenomenon. The secularization thesis is thus countered by the global persistence of religious belief and practice in a number of studies, again both historical and sociological.

Moore’s oeuvre sets, then, a literary agenda which implicitly calls for renewed critical focus on the theological in the study of literary texts; particularly in the manner in which such intertextuality highlights the ambivalent relationship between the theological and the imperial. What becomes most clear is that many of the assumptions concerning the complicity of theology - especially Christianity - in the history of imperialism and colonization needs to be revised in the light of contemporary transformations in theological thinking. Within Catholicism, the need for such revision of assumptions is highlighted by post-Vatican II developments in theology: most significantly in social teaching, but also in an increasingly pluralised (if not democratised) ecclesiology and a universalist soteriology. In an historical period which has witnessed revolutions in postcolonial relations and post-Vatican II theology, the late Brian Moore’s five decades of writing - from Judith Hearne to The Magician’s Wife - confirm the need for such revision within a literary context; and it is perhaps surprising that biocritical commentators have not remarked on how Moore’s perspective of committed non-believer adds weight to this case for re-assessing the place of theology in the literary representation of postcoloniality.

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8 For a wide range source of archival material on this encounter, see Harlow and Carter, eds., Imperialism and Orientalism: A Documentary Sourcebook. The predominant focus on British Empire means of course that Protestant rather than Catholic missionary activity looms large.

Moore's later novels share similar theological and ideological preoccupations. Aside, then, from those novels which reflect Catholicism's complicity with imperialism as in *Black Robe* and *The Magician's Wife*, his portrayal of post-Vatican II Catholicism draws upon the political influence of theology in giving voice to those marginalised within colonial and imperial histories. In the novels this invariably highlights the ambivalent historical and contemporary role of the Catholic Church. This joint ideological and theological focus is apparent where, for good or ill, Catholicism retains a prominent public role. Thus, in *The Colour of Blood*, the Catholic Church struggles to maintain a balance between national life and religious identity in the context of atheistic communism in eastern Europe. In *No Other Life*, a fictionalised priest-president - Aristide - struggles against the dictatorial aftermath of French and American colonization, even in the face of ecclesiastical intransigence from the Vatican. In *The Statement*, Moore portrays contemporary attempts within the Church to make amends for Catholic anti-Semitism during the Vichy France, while the author's final work, *The Magician's Wife*, examines Catholic theological complicity within French imperialism in nineteenth century North Africa.

In line, then, with that already highlighted tension between Catholic theological universality and the particularity of its cultural (and specifically) geographical expression, post-Vatican II Catholicism has increasingly lost its eurocentric focus, a tension not without its own ecclesiastical conflicts. It is thus entirely natural that Moore's novels should themselves reflect too an increasingly evident geographical as well as theological diversity: the author’s continuing preoccupation with religion reflecting substantive and not simply metaphorical interests in Catholic tradition. Indeed, where post-Vatican II Catholicism seems to have

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10 See P. Lemoux, *People of God: The Struggle for World Catholicism* (London: Viking, 1987). Duffy's comment a decade later is worth noting: Under John Paul II, the authority of local hierarchies has been systematically whittled away. Vatican theologians have challenged the theological and canonical status of the National Conferences of Bishops, arguing that episcopal 'collegiality' is only exercised by the bishops gathered around the Pope, never by the bishops acting independently. Joint decisions of Conferences of Bishops - like those of Latin America, or the North American bishops, represent merely collective decisions, introducing inappropriate democratic structures into the hierarchy of the Church which have no theological standing. In all this, one can see the reversal of trends inaugurated by his predecessors, like the devolution of authority to local churches which was so striking a feature of Paul VI's pontificate. (Duffy, *Saints and Sinners: A History of the Popes*, p. 290; see also, pp. 268-292.)

11 Cf. Gallagher, 'Religion as Favourite Metaphor'.

(244)
gained greater strength in the diversity of its global, and not simply eurocentric development. Moore's novels demonstrate renewed theological meaning in issues of social justice, especially post-Medellin; but, as we have seen, both in literary and historical terms, such potentially 'revolutionary' politicisation has not been without its conservative critics. Thus, from the 1980s onwards, and from Cardinal Wojtyla's accession to the papacy in particular, Vatican thinking has demonstrated a shift away from the potential political upheaval inherent in radical interpretations of Vatican II, especially the overt politicisation of the Church through theologies of liberation. Especially in the area of Church-State relations, Moore's later fictions reflect too the tension between the temporal and the transcendent which is so current an issue in contemporary Catholicism and its unfolding theological history.

12 See H.J. Pottmeyer, Towards a Papacy in Communion: Perspectives from Vatican Councils I and II (New York: Crossroad, 1998). This is a useful and authoritative account of the shift from a centralising ecclesiology in Vatican I to a model of a Church conceived in terms of communion with the Second Vatican Council - the definition of the Church as 'the People of God' in Lumen Gentium being an indication of the latter. On the subsequent conservative modification of this by a conservative hierarchy, see A. Dulles, The Splendour of Faith: The Theological Vision of Pope John Paul II (New York: Crossroad, 1999). Dulles comments:

The doctrine of collegiality came to the fore in Vatican II, which pointed out that in the Catholic Church the entire body of bishops, together with the pope as their head, constitute a stable group that succeeds to the college of the apostle with and under Peter. As a group they are co-responsible for the supreme direction of the universal Church. They exercise their collegiality in the strict sense when the pope calls the entire body of bishops to collegial action, as happens, for instance, at an ecumenical council. Dulles goes on to explain (pp. 60-63) how, under the papacy of John Paul II, there has been a distinct if subtle theological shift towards primacy over collegiality.
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