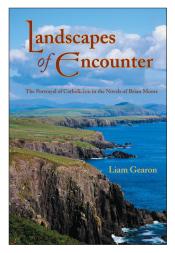# University of Calgary Press

LANDSCAPES OF ENCOUNTER: THE PORTRAYAL OF CATHOLICISM IN THE NOVELS OF BRIAN MOORE
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Making a difference.
Making you think.

Part II
The Fictional Portrayal
of Pre-Vatican II
Catholicism

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Chapter 2

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.[1] Kiberd's *Inventing Ireland: the Literature of the Modern Nation* contests that the literary output of Irish writers and Irish national consciousness has been formed in terms of a complex historical pattern of political, social, and cultural interaction with a colonizing neighbour.[2] To Kiberd, this represents a pattern of Empire-building (Kiberd compares the colonization of Ireland with that of the Americas) in which the development of cultural identity played as serious a part in colonization as superior brute force.[3] Reminiscent of Said's linking of writing and the mindset of Empire,[4] Kiberd's postcolonial exegesis interweaves with a masterly overview of Irish literature.[5] From Wilde and Shaw through Yeats and Synge, Joyce and Beckett, to the writers and society of 1990, the literature of the modern Irish nation is shown 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.[6] Irish literature is based upon encounter with the colonizing other, and in every respect reflects a dynamism which is both culturally enriching and destructive.[7] Immigration being both a feature of the Irish nation post-Famine and a central tension in Irish writing,[8] Kiberd places Moore in this literary (and broader social and cultural) context as the writer as immigrant and exile.[9] 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 conflict-bound encounter which so often permeates writing originating from Ireland—but which has been neglected in critical writing on Moore's portrayal of Catholicism in his early Irish novels.[10]

If, as Kiberd points out, cultural definition of Ireland was dependent upon unequal and often oppressive social and cultural, as well as often tragic economic and political, relations with England—and by extension the British Empire—as colonizing 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—a Protestant as well as a political and literary figurehead in a post-Partition Ireland—rightly sought a reasoned compromise over too harsh an identity of Irishness and Catholicity.[11] Fulton too has pointed out the difficulties of too easy an identification between Irish nationalism and Roman Catholicism.[12] For political and economic reasons, though, the centrality of religion surfaces—and indeed continues to re-surface—in the issue of land.[13] This might be seen most harshly in the Famine years of the 1840s when the land could not sustain a largely rural 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 disinherited past.[14] 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."[15]

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 as 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.[16] Naturally 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.[17]

It is Edward Said 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 *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. (5)[18]

Vis-à-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 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 it is possible to identify a trace of such postcolonial reading beyond the conflictual encounters of Catholic-Protestant and Nationalist-Unionist Belfast. By this reading, what Said usefully calls "a geographical

inquiry into historical experience"[19] is not simply in the relation between England and Ireland but a wider experience of colonial relations on a global scale, albeit often highlighted through Irish migration to the Americas.[20] This transcontinental perspective on colonialism is present even in Moore's first novel, though in the margins of the narrative. Judith 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!" (53)

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 (in *No Other Life*); 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.[21] 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.[22]

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 grievance of a predominantly rural Catholic Irish population.[23] 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 both as an industrial centre within rural Ulster and from the outside in relation to both an increasingly urbanized, postcolonial Britain and a rural and newly established neighbour in the form of the Irish Free State and later Republic of Eire.[24] 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.[25]

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 to *The Tragedy of Belief: Division, Politics and Religion* indicates how comment on "the Troubles" has duly neglected both the wider perspective of the South and the role of religion in the narrower conflict within Ulster:

> 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 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. (26)

By this analysis, the supposedly static and insular Belfast Catholicism described by Moore's critics to date can barely be that. In the wider context of Ireland and Empire, and in addition to conflicts with modernity itself, Catholicism confronts here the forces of political and theological opposition: 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, a society which, as we shall see, has its place too, however minor, on the world stage of international struggles.

Moore's portrayal of Catholicism in *Judith Hearne, The Feast of Lupercal,* and *The Emperor of Ice Cream* can be read therefore as part of a historical and political context 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—in the margins of these early Irish narratives—the cultural "other" 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 which receives no full 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 determination of geopolitical boundaries was along religious (that is Catholic/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 multidisciplinary 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 (chapters 1–4, respectively) presents a statement of the various historical interactions of religion, politics, and land in the context of this divided community.[26] 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 Ireland.[27]

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 conflict.[28]

Subsequent "settlements" (especially subsequent to the Good Friday Agreement of 1998) and the decline of Marxism in the 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 marginalization which has heightened encounter with the religious or political other; Whyte has a version of this and calls it a "Double-Minority Model."[29] Early Moore protagonists—Judith Hearne, Diarmuid Devine, and Gavin Burke—are thus themselves doubly marginal. Their cultural identities contrast directly with a dominating political ideology whose ecclesiastical allegiances are also very different from and even threatening to their own, which 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 marginalized 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 social, political, economic, as well as theological marginalization of these characters within Protestant Ulster which many commentators have neglected, or at least failed to take seriously, in Moore's works set in Ireland.

In Moore's early Irish novels, then, integral to his portrayals of Catholicism in Ulster are the complexities of both the physical and socio-cultural landscapes 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.[30] 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 representation of Catholicism highlights the possibility of the grandnarrative of Catholic tradition being of no greater status than the narratives of fiction.

Judith Hearne (1955)

When *Judith Hearne* was published in 1955, there was no sense in either theological or broader social and cultural terms that Catholicism was about to undergo any fundamental transformation. Indeed, the pre-Vatican II Church 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 declining political influence.[31] 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 secularization 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 1950s Belfast where the Church retains a degree of control. This supports too Foster's distinction between "primitive" and "existential" outsider.[32] Foster's analysis draws upon van Gennep's discussion of rites of passage[33] and is dependent upon a distinction between two forms of society, those (pre-modern) societies which are structured by rigid rituals and those 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.[34]

According to this analysis, Judith Hearne, as a member of a pre-modern community (by her Church's own self-definition[35]) 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.[36]

By contrast, there are those fictional characters who, alienated too from modernity, epitomize the literary and existential outsider and lack any such defining social, cultural, or especially moral orientation.[37]

In Ireland, Foster identifies community and Church as providing Hearne's ritual definition.[38] Seeing Hearne's crisis as a social matter, and therefore one amenable to sociological analysis, her predicament is one of

ritual exclusion and given the sacrilegious tabernacle incident, quite literal ritual disintegration. 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. But 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. The theological and metaphysical 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 Joyce have any credence,[39] 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. The far greater threat is that 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 expectation of eternal damnation. The commonplace pre-Vatican II notion that "There is no salvation outside the Church" would not be theologically supportable post-Vatican II.[40] 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 to Quigley's sermon, essentially "the parishioners are guilty of preferring the pleasures of time and the body to the certainties of eternity."[41] 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 theological trump 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 lambastes 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 judgement 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 ..."* (73)

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 the town and stand in the rain watching a bunch of dogs race around a track, time to go 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 care to mention. Except one.
> "They—don't—have—time—for—God." (72–73)

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.[42]

On first account, then, this is the "overworked Irish soil" which the novelist John Banville sees addressed by so many Irish writers, part of this picture being the dreary life of the Irish, and here more narrowly Belfast, Catholic.[43] O'Donoghue comments on "beleaguered" and later "monstrous" Catholicism.[44] Sullivan writes of the "insular world" of Belfast[45] 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.[46] In terms of Moore's early Irish novels, of course, Dahlie has painted such a landscape with his discussion of the grim, "soulless and sterile" city of Belfast.[47] 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.[48] 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 Moore and Belfast some decades later, and taking the metaphor of Belfast as "barbarous nook," Longley comes to accept that Hearne 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."[49] 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.

One aspect largely neglected by critics is the late colonial and post-Partition focus which sets the religious dimension of Belfast's catholicity in political context. It is Lenehan, one of Mrs. Rice's 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. (45)

If, as Kiberd argues, the Irish have often been historically represented 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 Irish pride and resistance to British political and American cultural imperialism. It is a position James Madden, thirty years in the States and 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, nobody in New York, or anywhere else, gives a ghaddam...what happens to the Six Counties." (45)

Lenehan's retort to Madden of course equally well conceptualizes the politico-religious divide, "And you call yourself an Irishman. An Orangeman, more likely" (45).

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" (99). Although in the immortal lines of the novel's often 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 the economic hope of the Irish immigrant since the Famine, with Madden part of a century and more of such moves, then 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 transformation wider than an escapist few moments in the cinema, one which is inherently, and explicitly, theological. Again, as with Quigley, the power of the Church rests not in its social control, which is waning anyway in a post-Enlightenment, industrialized 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 either accentuating the illusoriness, the unreality, of the grandnarrative 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.

The conclusion of the film is definitive, and the encounter shifts from the transcendent to the temporal: "The End, coming right at you, THE END" (98). The emphasized words (THE END) imply an eschatology, the ending of the grandnarrative itself, as much as a more limited conclusion to the Bible epic. And it is here (at the movie's ending) that the political and essentially sectarian realities strike immediately in the audience's responses to the world news. Madden's American allegiance is now replaced by a more heartfelt Irish nationalism which would align him with 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 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. (98–99)

For all its apparent post-War economic difficulties and understandable post-Partition political insularity—only two to three decades after the Civil

War—Belfast here 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 the media for the 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 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 is maintained through a transcendent rather than a social authority. Ecclesiastical influence in Moore's Belfast, if Quigley's well-defined socio-cultural picture is to be believed, was 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 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 marginalization 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.[50]

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 upon God for epistemological reference. So too, in the world of

1950s Belfast, Father Quigley, despite the congregation marking sound church attendance, is rapidly becoming an increasingly less influential figure. By extension, Quigley marks too a 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 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 she 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 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.

A near-sacrificial victim,[51] it is Judith Hearne who shows the greatest ethical stance in the novel through the care of her sick, and 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 supposed 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 marginalized by her Catholic faith in a Protestant Ulster, this state mirrored by the physical ghetto of her impecunious digs existence; but, while far from ideal, it is the Church that functions in the end as a safety net. Alienated from any meaningful place in the social order, it is the Church which finally presents her major source of residual inclusion. And this even 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" (217). The Sacred Heart of Jesus, an easily despised icon of pre-Vatican II Catholic piety, likewise provides for a theological security. A defining image at the beginning and end of the book, in the midst of her failed alcoholic struggle against the two reserve bottles of whiskey—it is to the Sacred Heart that Judy Hearne in sorrow and remorse turns for succour. 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.

Hearne's isolation is compounded by her alcoholism and her failings in love with the self-seeking James Madden (American, and here, the false hope of both Irish immigration and an aging woman). She is 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 outsider of European literature of the period, but to a large extent from the Irish literature of cultural resistance which preceded and inspired Moore, particularly Joyce. Indeed, Foster's distinction between the "primitive" and "existential" outsider becomes ever more pertinent. So, in the final chapter of the novel—hospitalized, in the care of Catholic nuns, ministered to by Father Quigley and close to despair—Judith Hearne seeks a desperate renewal of faith in the words, "I do not believe, O Lord, help my unbelief" (252). Hearne's is not simply a quest for social acceptance but for a meaningful place in a transcendental order. It is a world as defined by theology as by the social geography of Belfast. Realizing, 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.... (252)

The Sacred Heart and Aunt D'Arcy, as respective theological and socio-cultural anchors, signify 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 a meteorology to match (drizzle, rain, and fog predominate), *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. This provincialism, by most accounts, most vividly highlighted by the social and cultural blinkers of the Catholic clergy and its chief instrument of enculturation, schooling.[52] 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 Catholic theological perspective. Moore's writing here, though, as ever, represents 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 much less evident in *The Feast of Lupercal* than is Judith Hearne. "Diarmuid Devine, BA (Junior and Senior English)" is a more rebellious protagonist, a schoolmaster 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."[53] Interestingly, Hearne is too a tutor, 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 both characters' marginality when they confront the boundaries of acceptability. When the personal scorn of friends and eventual professional opprobrium of colleagues 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 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 in 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 religious "other," then greater critical account needs to be taken of the political and particularly geopolitical reasons for this. This notion of Catholic-Protestant otherness is 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 fiction and theology here contribute to the definition of such a complex landscape.

In *The Feast of Lupercal*, southern Ireland 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 a Protestant but a Dublin Protestant, "pagan Protestantism." Her exotic otherness ("Una Clarke was a stranger") 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. (32)

This conflict, an encounter not simply of ideology but religious difference, accentuated by the physical border between North and South, is marked 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 College 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 (48–51).

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 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 of Protestants—seen in *The Feast of Lupercal* but also *The Emperor of Ice-Cream*. Thus, without the same degree of central authoritarian control which characterized Vatican I Catholicism, Protestantism's innate individualism undoubtedly allowed for greater moral and aesthetic freedom.[54] Still, the portrayal of Catholicism in Moore's Belfast needs to take into account both the authoritarian nature of a post-Vatican I Church *and* 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.[55]

It is thus easy to overplay the wholesale suggestion of the moral repressiveness of Catholicism in Belfast in Moore's early Irish novels. Devine (like Hearne) can be seen as an exception to, rather than the rule of, Belfast Catholic life.[56] 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 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 a 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 obscenities which the boys of Ardath scrawl in the lavatory 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. First, while the masters do what they can to repress scandal and its exposure by the boys in the school, the repression of sexual expression in the years immediately preceding Vatican II is very limited. Second, any extremities of repression are accentuated by Catholicism's 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 the 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 too provides a significant foray into the portrayal of religious sectarianism. In *The Feast of Lupercal*, the fact that Una Clarke is a Dublin Protestant is crucial; information about a stranger "needs no defence," 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. (32–33)

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

The *absence* of aesthetic freedom is as central to, though less overt, than the portrayal of 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 Dublin accent, is likely to gain the lead role. Devine's implied rejection of the stage-Irishman[57] 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 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.[58] In rejecting the cultural tastes of the Church—the morally innocuous and popular over and against the morally and aesthetically challenging—Devine is a prototype of many self-consciously literary figures created by Moore in later fictions, such as Brendan Tierney and Fergus Fadden. Literature here provides, not simply a way of opposing the Church, but a fully alternative and all-encompassing way of life.[59]

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 seems never to have been more than poetic fantasy: "he knew all about Baudelaire and Rimbaud and Verlaine and orgies" but "had never done more than kiss a girl" (50). 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 a disappeared possibility. If Una had rekindled this hoped for sexual and artistic hedonism, his Catholic moral conscience seems now too strong and his desire too weak to lead to consummation. There is, thus, a tension between Devine's willingness to coach Una for the forthcoming *Mulligan's Will* and his over-sensitive awareness of certain 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. (73)

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, Devine,
and 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 the wider Catholic
community, where, also indirectly, Devine retains his authority, residual as it
is, as a teacher at a Catholic college.

Devine had been right about the Dean earlier, there was "no hope of
changing that authoritarian mind" (39), but the Principal represents a milder,
more liberal wing of thinking. While Devine's capitulation 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: 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 (174).

The Principal, aging 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 an aging 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 publication of *The Feast of Lupercal* roughly coincided 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 final novel in the series under consideration provides Moore with an opportunity to continue to highlight the conflicts of the individual against overbearing religious and social forces.[60] Further, though, in the presentation of Belfast Catholicism, Gavin Burke's struggle is against

the naiveties of religious and political belief. Catholic belief here, as in other of Moore's novels which centre on the portrayal of religion in Ulster, is enmeshed with political belief; but *The Emperor of Ice-Cream* traverses a slightly earlier decade and an extraordinarily interesting political period in post-Partition Ireland.[61]

Gavin Burke's solicitor 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. 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.[62] Still, on both sides of the newly created border, there were some who manifested, however misguided, a sympathy—born out of long-time hostility toward Britain—with German aggression. 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 which represents Moore's most significant 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 inconsequential form, with fascism, a period of history to which Moore returns a full thirty years later in *The Statement*.

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 and religious landscapes 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 instill 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 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." (72)

Gavin's passing involvement with a group of decadent artists late in the novel is indicative of the fictional development of a moral and aesthetic alternative to Catholicism, an aesthetic and moral vision already featured in the American novel of 1962, *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 certainly a minority of Catholics) with Nazism identifies the colonized 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 identification of Catholicism with the Nazi sympathies and overt war crimes of Pierre 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.) Moore develops the theme of Catholic

missionary imperialism in other geographical locations and ideological landscapes in *Black Robe* and *The Magician's Wife.*

The novel's late thirties to early forties 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 distinct from that of the Catholic bigotry represented by his father.[63] The predominantly working class personnel and token if failed middle class—and 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.

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 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, 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? (10)

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 Catholic nationalist community represented
by his father. Instead, Gavin opts for a politically inspired aesthetic through
a popularized, 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." Yeats too is
quoted in support: "Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold /Mere anarchy
is loosed upon the world." 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. (10−11)

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
politicized, aesthetic opposition to Catholicism is 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 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*,[64] 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 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..." (241). 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" (229). 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 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. (228)

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 Moore's early American fictions, to which we will now turn. 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 an 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 North American fiction.

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Chapter 3

The Early North 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.[1] We might recall the above-cited reference in Kiberd which suggests that the Famine had made internationalists of the Irish.[2] 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 to mainland Europe in the case of Beckett and Joyce.[3] Indeed, for the artist, remaining in Ireland became subject to the need for justification or an assertion of political or aesthetic identity.[4] As Duffy demonstrates, geographical displacement, voluntary or otherwise, becomes, with a degree of inevitability, a dominant theme in Irish writing for both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[5] 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.[6] In this fictional North America, Moore's Catholic characters (often of Irish origin) encounter an almost literal New World.[7] Geographically separated from Old World Irish Catholicism, encounter with the non-

Catholic other is significantly heightened, with the cityscape of Belfast and the pastoral (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 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 the 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 migrants' 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 North American secularity directly and indirectly critiques Catholicism's worldview, such secularity is itself subject to radical challenge.

Here, 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 evident as a collective social and cultural experience: societies are themselves transformed by patterns of migration, and such transformation is reflected in the 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.[9] The history of North America, to an even greater extent than Ireland, *is* the history of migration, and indeed colonization, and its literature reflects this.[10] The novels of Brian Moore reflect such historical and 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 the Catholic grandnarrative and its crisis from the perspectives of his protagonists, and their often inconsequential life stories.

As White suggests in "Geography, Literature and Migration," it is this 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.[11]

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 liberalization, the latter a key to our understanding her shift from Catholic values[12]; Fergus's 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 their 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 volume a concern for one particular cultural manifestation of the migration, that of literary output, White suggests the following two levels for a consideration of this literature of human population movement:

> 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.[13]

Brian Moore's early American novels reflect both levels of preoccupation. Firstly, Moore 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.[14] In these increasingly cross-cultural novels where encounter with the "other" is an expected commonplace of the migratory experience, Moore thus fuses individual and collective experience through contrasts between the fictional landscapes of Ireland and America. Certainly for the period covered by these early North American novels (1962–71), the physical and cultural space of North America becomes a literary meeting ground for Catholicism and secularism where, depending on one's perspective, either side could be deemed as "other."[15]

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 publication dates extend beyond the closing of the Council in 1965: *Ginger Coffey*'s late 1950s setting (and publication in 1960) certainly predates Vatican II, as does the portrayal of Coffey's decisively abandoned Catholicism; in late 1950s New York, Brendan Tierney certainly lives in a pre-Vatican II world, his mother's Catholicism reflecting this strongly, though

the book was published in 1962, the year the Council opened; Mary Dunne's residual Catholicism more fully reflects the pre-Vatican II Catholicism of her childhood in Butchersville than it does 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 *Fergus*'s publication date of 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 to these literary landscapes of the Catholic encounter with the secularized other that this chapter turns in considering the detail of Moore's early American novels.

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" (20). Recently emigrated from an Ireland whose Catholicism is equated with rural tradition, economic disadvantage, and social stagnation, the escaped Coffey's, "a man who has cut loose from all the old codology and cant at home," 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 (44–45). 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?" (9). With a meteorological motif which persists throughout *The Luck of Ginger Coffey*, as it does in the later Canadian

fiction of *Black Robe*, the unfavourable physical environment matches increasingly poor economic prospects which, on both counts, seem harsher than Old World experience.[16]

In this new physical and economic landscape, memories of priestly sermonizing 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 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 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 emigration 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 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....(21)

Physical space clearly has metaphysical implications here, migration being
regarded as, if not sinful in itself, then indicative of a wilful pride that could
lead to sin. Recognizing the false economic hope of the Irish Catholic
immigrant—the symptomatic abandonment of education, one dominated
by the Church—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" (21), is precisely the
journey that Moore's narratives take: 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 II world which dictated that there was no
salvation outside the Church.[17]

Though "it was all missionary malarkey, of course" (21), 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. 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 converts" (24–25),
seemingly indicates the only respectable option for world travel away from

Ireland, and gives us distant hints of Moore's much later treatment of Muslim–Christian relations in *The Magician's Wife*.

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 secularized consciousness. And if 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 secularized interior monologues of Moore's characters. Thus Coffey, worried about telling his wife Veronica about the likely permanency of their stay in Canada, makes a visit to a church as a way of "putting off judgement day" (35). Even if his visit is pragmatic rather than devotional ("warm it was in God's house") it is a place where the "interior darkness was familiar," and this despite his absence from any church since leaving the place he still calls "home," that is, Ireland (32). Finally facing the scorn of Veronica, Coffey (in a transference of biblical narrative into the novel) wishes her as "Lot's wife" (40). 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 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 Bothers, 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 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 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. (43)

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.[18] Coffey's fantasy, an implicit rejection of any
American economic "dream" or theological projection (both potentially
collective fantasies), is thoroughly individualistic, approaching pure solipsism.
Coffey's, though, is also a narrative space where such a critique of religion
is acknowledged and questioned by philosophical self-examination. Coffey's
doubts are directed both to 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" (24), and towards
self-doubt about his own skepticism: "suppose all the prayers, the penances,
the promises were true? Suppose the poor in spirit would inherit the kingdom
of heaven?" (25). 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 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" (160). And, while Ginger had duly served in the Irish
army, he recalls how "the thicks in the government announced that Ireland

would stay neutral" (33). (The question of Irish neutrality during the Second World War is developed more fully in *The Emperor of Ice-Cream*.) 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 acknowledges a prevailing, residual romanticism, all that appears left of the Ireland's cultural life in the secularized 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. (49)

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 the disillusionment of Coffey with both the 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 metafiction 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" (51) a reminder of Catholic-Protestant conflict in Belfast. Here, even MacGregor's administrative routines are regarded in theological terms, as the "old man spiked a scrap of paper like Calvin drowning sin," the Holy Bible on his bookshelf (51–52). The proofreaders, "monks performing a rite of exorcism" intone "a short chant of MacGregorian abuse" (79). 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 Ozymandiases 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." (73)

Again the theological language, "money, that was Our Saviour" (98), underpins the heights of this harsh, secular reality and leads Coffey to wonder if he been "wrong to bet his all on Canada" (75). His proofreading colleague's perception 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" (75).

Now separated from wife and child, and living in a "downtown limbo" in "a far off country" (52 – 53) where—if money was "Our Saviour"—Ginger Coffey's residency at the YMCA is a sign of his damnation. 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 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. (106 –
> 107)

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" (116), with a comparable impotence here between his current economic role and the ineffectual status of a neutral Irish army in the midst of world conflict. Yet, in the cinema, so prevalent in Moore's fiction, Coffey reflects on the fact 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. (170 – 71)

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" (194). Indeed, the structure of the novel reflects too a parallel in 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," 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's 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" (224), the divine regarding the secular proceeding almost inconsequentially. When Coffey narrowly escapes a custodial sentence, the prose, unusually 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. (233)

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" (24), retained from an Irish childhood, still colours Coffey's consciousness. Coffey's physical migration from Ireland and lapsed Catholic state, though, marks 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 identification with childhood, the adult Coffey, "a child again" (233), perhaps

less certainly marks an ambivalent psychological acceptance of that Catholicism which had so effectively defined his early years in Ireland.

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 ...." (31), 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'?" (29). Brendan Tierney ventures forth to New York, away from the "provincial mediocrity" of his "native land" to "the Rome of our day" (9)—imperial, of course, rather than Catholic, Rome. 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" (95). Indeed, Mrs. Tierney notes that "Catholics here were not very tolerant." In addition:

> 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. (95)

It is a city where Brendan's wife, late in the novel, wanders the city to confront only limited signs of social cohesiveness only 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" (225).

The city's cultural diversity and the anonymity of its physical space marks the decline of the community and the rise of the individual, and

comes to epitomize the indeterminacy of the limbo state.[19] When the Tierneys' son, Liam, suffers a playground accident, Brendan's mother thinks of the soteriological consequences for the un-baptized 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" (225).

Here, New York's secularism is reflected in a symbolic, atheological absence,[20] 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" (236). It is not only Mrs. Tierney, therefore, who 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" (101). 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. The struggle for meaning amidst the essential anomie 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—literary creativity as metaphysical anchor.

Yet, ironically, it is the cultural, and more narrowly theological, certainties which Brendan Tierney sees as a source of literary success in America. It is the geography of childhood which marks the contours of his sudden, almost mathematical, certainty about the reinclusion 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 .... (7)

> ... in that moment, at the corner of 6th and Greenwich Avenues, the
> answer came. Ankara is the capital of Turkey. My mother. (13)

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 highlights rather than weakens her sense of Catholic worldview. 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, the unlikely juxtaposition of Mrs. Tierney and D. T. Suzuki (173), this, of course, is a limited portrayal of North American religious life in the 1950s. 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 that, in the face of New World morality the recent Catholic migrant will abandon his religion which satisfies only old women, here aging 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 recognizes the American liberal attitude toward 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" (125). 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, symbolized by his resignation from his post as a 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, his book becoming "the belief that replaces belief" (266). With doubtless intended irony, then, this supposedly heroic and self-sacrificing attempt at literary greatness leads to the rather ordinary and unsurprisingly mundane break-up 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 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 my own efforts, some part of me will
> survive the undertaker."
> "Brendan, that's no religion, that's pure vanity." (83)

Intimately connected with the romanticism of place and the 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" (117). 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" (117).

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 endless solitude of some hotel room? (75–76)

It is a point of interest, though, that Brendan's cultural anchor remains largely European. We might look at Tierney's other grandiose 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?'" (159). And with homage to and identity with Conrad, "We salute that Pole" (102).

Yet the historical significance of one European country for the American writer, a Spain reminiscent of Hemingway, is both highlighted and contested 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. (20)

Still, Ted Ormsby, the supposed romantic, faces a retort which challenges 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." (21)

In his moral vacuum, Europe remains Brendan Tierney's secularized 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 finally moral, indifference.

While through Brendan's wife's maiden name, Jane Melville, the heritage of nineteenth century American literature is very indirectly acknowledged, it seems that Moore scorned current trends in contemporary American

literature. Thus, while the publication of Brendan's one-time friend Max Bronstein's novel instills 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 of yellow birds. Recently he has grown a beard which mocks this Beat fancy dress" (11). Brendan 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" (57).

Even the decor of the Tierneys' New York apartment symbolizes 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, Japanned 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?" (28). 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)" (61).

A notable, and certainly self-conscious, irony in *An Answer from Limbo* is that Brendan's preoccupation with literary survival directly leads to the cruel and isolated death of his mother in the 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: 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 the novel.[21]

In this work, though, it is not simply that the physical limit of an individual's life is 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 naivety 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 but left to confront the mortal weaknesses of his own selfishly individualistic aesthetic vision.

Thus, in Moore's second North American novel, 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 contrasted by the arrival of Brendan's strictly traditional Catholic mother from Ireland. Catholicism's encounter here is between different sets of values and contrasting worldviews. Place, country, and landscape take on idealistic as well as 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 Americanized, 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, after 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 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 liberalization (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 liberalization 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*.[22] Still, in ways more similar to Fergus's 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*.

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 often 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 married Terence, her most recent husband, to become Mary Lavery: "I play an ingénue role, with special shadings demanded by each suitor" (31). The consequent psychological fragmentation ("Dunne, Phelan, Bell, Lavery—just think if it were you, would you remember?", 167) invades the narrative with recollections of past personal history 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" (115). 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-characterized 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. (15)

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 vestige of being a Catholic was the little part of me which still saw it as murder" (138). From a Catholic world left behind in Butchersville, religious language still colours Mary's consciousness. With Hat "there were I love you's and do you love me's and yes I do's, the first prayers for our earthly kingdom, the first of those litanies I would come to know as prayers of failure" (35). And biblical narrative defines her later unfaithfulness to Hatfield Bell, "I Simon Peter to Hat's drunken Christ, yes, I denied him" (46); and as she sees her father "the lecher," "my father who art in hell" (67). 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" (109). 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" (170).

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

> Through the glass panel of 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.... (109)

As Mary moves further in experience and distance from Butchersville, the Sacred Heart convent school and her mother, at twenty "life stretched before me like an empty horizon" (10), 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 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. (10–12)

Typically again, as 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" 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?" (3). 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" (20). Terence's Englishness, even in appearance, is important, Hat parodying this same appearance as Beatle-like (104). Important too are other references to European culture such as the Turner Show at the Museum of Modern Art (43). Europe and European culture retain, as they did for Brendan Tierney, a sort of cultural benchmark. 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 .... (6–7)

Earlier phases of her life, with Hat in Montreal for instance, are defined too 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 Phelan," 100) and geography:

> 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. (41)

Mary simply considers how great it was "to have left it forever" (41):

> 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. (101)

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 ageing protestant faces," 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?" (82). 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" (102). Janice, the person who, 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 Proust) (54), 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 association 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 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. (75)

That she feels no guilt for the affair with Terence ("I had no sorrow for what I had done to Hat," 70) emphasizes 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 imposed upon it by European, Christian settlers (a culture reduced to the name of a bar), a matter which Moore addresses at length in *Black Robe.*

For each transformation of marital status marked by place, there is also what the anthropologists term the liminal, the ritually undecided. A liminal state, here a state between suitors, is 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" (66). 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, fillings its streets and squares with dust. A border town; it made me think of a cheap army surplus store. At noon, lawyer Guzman's jitney brought half a dozen of us back to it from Ciudad 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." (110–11)

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 (90).

Moore's strongly naturalistic literary technique—with a studied metaphysical neutrality, "There doesn't have to be … any … PURPOSE" (166)—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.... (110–11)

Both the Natural History Museum and the 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,
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 as 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. (227)

Her psychological crisis at a head as Terence sleeps, Mary rejects suicidal
impulses and comes to an acceptance of her existential limit. Moore, again
ending the narrative with literary reflections on death, ensures that 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" (229). Admitting that she is "the sort of person
who is very susceptible to environment" (231), it is the Cartesian language
of the convent 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" (168). 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" (158), Fergus Fadden's residency on the Californian coast provides the setting for visitations from an Irish past, from "Ireland, that most distressful country, Europe's back of beyond" (104). 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's doubts, though, about both his liberalized sexuality and literary alternative to Catholicism finally reveal more major concerns about surviving death. Eventually, then, more fundamental concerns about an afterlife override Fergus's 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" (1), suggests. Fergus's argument with Dani, a generational as well as 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*, for godsakes" (9). Sexuality becomes more defined by place throughout the novel as Catholic teaching (principally relating sex and sin) from Fergus's 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" (11–12). 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" (140), that is hinted at when Fergus sees his young mother as a young married woman, "always expecting," 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?" (14). Fergus reflects too the divisions that the particularly controversial conservatism of *Humanae Vitae* provoked within the Catholic Church: "did you know that, nowadays, the Catholic Church is split down the middle on whether to ban it or permit it?" (26). His father, to whom the latter question is principally addressed remains within the mould of the pre-Vatican II Church as we see his attachment to the liturgical forms, ("Mustn't miss the first gospel"), 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" (26). For Fergus, however, it certainly isn't. Here, again, meteorology, "the inevitable Irish rain" (146), becomes cultural, further emphasizing this now common metaphorical pattern of physical as theological distance between these Old and New Worlds.

Aesthetically, as well as sexually, the relationship between writing and religion, so prevalent in *An Answer from Limbo* is further developed. *Fergus's* 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 given the intellectual imbalance between mother and son, in the naturalistic *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 thought that "Boweri was through with him" (6). This insecurity surfaces on a number of fronts. There is the charge that Fergus is "Just a Catholic writer." The response, "I was never a Catholic writer" (69), provides a forced distance between Fergus's writing and his Catholicism but a curious metafictional summary of literary classification; though, 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 in *Fergus* 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 engagé was always a revolutionist manqué. And usually wound up as a writer manqué. He cited several examples" (69). Fergus's literary reputation is a substitute for religious belief, as it was for Brendan Tierney, 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. (40–41)

More positively, writing is also the manner in which Catholic Ireland and secular America may be linked. In Fergus's own family, his mother's uncle Dan was "famous the length and breadth of Ireland as a *scannaiche* [*sic*], a storyteller" (63). Indeed, Fergus's attachment to Yeats 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 ...
>
> "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." (38–39)

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, "the Dublin people making a shrine out of that blinking Martello Tower ... anything for the almighty dollar" (40).

Indeed, of all Moore's early novels, it is *Fergus* which makes most explicit the landscape (here the natural, rather than the built, environment) of

encounter in physical and metaphysical terms. Until the publication of *Fergus*, no other novel of Moore's 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 a 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" (3). It is this place which becomes the setting for the encounter between a pre-Vatican II Irish Church and a divorced, morally liberal and theologically skeptical Fergus just as the Church from which Fergus has become dissociated is, after the Second Vatican Council, changing. The spectre of Fergus's father is part of the seemingly unchanging pre-Vatican II world of theological certainty, evident in his claim that "the laws of the church don't change," that they "haven't changed in two thousand years" (14). 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, "they're changing now, Daddy" (14).

In ways which preface Moore's later and more complex treatment of the resilience of skepticism in a liberalized post-Vatican II American Church in *Cold Heaven*, the shoreline is the focus for Fergus's 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 chaparral 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. (27)

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" (104).

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, about whom Fergus says, the "real you is in Ireland, married, forty-three years old, four kids, the wife of Dr Dan Coyle" (40), and Kathleen, "one of the few family members who didn't fidget at her prayers" (104). Representatives of church are Father Vincent Byrne, "Parish priest Church of the Holy Redeemer Belfast" (89), and Father Alonzo Aloysisus Allen, "a Passionist Father from Mount Muckish Monastery, County Donegal, known as the greatest mission preacher in Ireland" (144). From school there are the figures of Father Maurice Kinneally, "MA, Doctor of Divinity" (11), and the "Very Reverend Daniel Keogh, MA, DD, president of St. Michan's School for Boys, Belfast" (92). 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 resemblance to characters in former fictions.

Outside the "trinity," there is Fergus's old love Peggy Sanford, the woman abandoned when he left Europe for America at twenty-four, "the person he had betrayed" (80), 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?" (15). Fergus for the most part takes a low profile and his appearance as defendant in a trial on an unclear charge of adulterous voyeurism on Mrs. Findlater is mostly deferential. In the trial Fergus's politically subservient stance in the face of the Royal Ulster Constabulary's 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" (120). Former friends represent various global struggles: from colonial conflict (with Patrick Sarsfield dying in India) to

early Cold War struggle (with Hugh Gildea, dying in Korea, to Paddy Donlon, a "stuck up Protestant get [*sic*]," to whom a Catholic "was dirt" (125).

The most telling criticism of Fergus, though, is that which could be levelled at the consciously separatist, literally other-worldly pre-Vatican II Church, that both have a tendency to be apolitical, even ahistorical. Despite Fergus's weak counteroffensive against Mandel (of the latter having ulterior sexual motives for political activity) the charge against Fergus is most effectively put by his 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! (67)

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" (2). 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. (3)

Place is significant in Fergus's 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" (7). Europe is seen
again, as so often in the early American novels, as providing a cultural anchor
for the refined American immigrant, though with the vanity typical of Moore's
writer protagonists the "thought of Faulkner steadied Fergus" (25). 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 certainties of
Catholic Ireland—a place and a consciousness he cannot fully leave behind, a
certainty which allows that "the Irish people know that it is not this world
that counts," that "this life is but a preparation for eternity" (150).

All of Fergus's preoccupations with relationships and writing pale then
into insignificance as Dr. Fadden precisely summarizes for his son the
unchanging essence of Catholic meaning: "We're here on earth for one
reason, and for one reason only. To save our immortal souls" (158). Here,
talking to his theologically estranged son in one of the novel's may
conversations 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 characterize: "It would be someplace you'd never seen, someplace
so different you couldn't even imagine it" (167). 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" (168), lines which remind us of Mary Dunne's descent into
anomie when she struggles to convince herself that, "there doesn't have to
be ... any ... PURPOSE" (166).

The metaphysical world presented by in *Fergus* 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 the metaphysical. Fergus's 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 of him. (168)

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 skepticism 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*.