The Second Vatican Council and the English Catholic Novel

Thesis submitted in accordance with the requirements of the University of Liverpool for the degree of Doctor in Philosophy

by

Dorothy Spencer

July 1996

Abstract

This thesis aims to explore the effect of the Second Vatican Council on the contemporary Catholic novel in England. A concern with the placing of literary works in history is emphasised in conjunction with an essentially realist approach to the novel.

The novels of Graham Greene and Evelyn Waugh provide the main literary setting for a more thorough study of contemporary fiction; the Second Vatican Council itself is also examined in detail.

The four authors concentrated on are: Michael Carson, Alice Thomas Ellis, David Lodge and Brian Moore. They have been chosen to provide a good cross-section of Catholic writers. Their work is considered in relation to Catholic fiction from the earlier part of the twentieth century with especial regard to Vatican II itself, and the work of both contemporary Catholic and non-Catholic writers.

By studying literature from the past in relation to that of the present, it is hoped that some useful ideas may arise about what may be generated in the future.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank: my supervisor Bernard Beatty for his patience and understanding; my husband Paddy for being a computer wizard AND all the rest of it; my children: Jacob, Caitlin, Isaac and Rosamund — two of whom arrived in the middle of things, all of whom helped to slow it down — but without them it wouldn't have been worth doing anyway.

I'd like to thank Michael for the insider information, the professor for books and general support, Anna for the courage of her convictions, Brian for the sleepless nights, David for his duplicity, Sheila and Steve for inspiration and Liz and Phil for putting up with me.

Kiitos to Helsingin Yliopisto for the ATK, Matti Rissanen for making me honorary, and the little man of Vironkatu 9.

Finally, thanks to John Henry and to all who believe in the terrible truth and beautiful lies, and because of Joseph and Philip this is very humbly dedicated *Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam.*

That if there be any God or any true religion, then it is in the Papists, because the service of God is performed with more ceremonies, as elevation of the Mass, organs, singing men, shaven crowns, etc. That all Protestants are hypocritical asses.

Christopher Marlowe

'I thought you lot had to eat fish on Fridays.'
'Ah, you're way out of date. Vatican II said we don't have to do that anymore.'
'Who's Vatican II, the deputy Pope?'
'Ignoramus! The Pope's infallible! You can't have deputy infallible!'

Nuns on the Run – Jonathan Lynn

contents

Part One :

Introduction

Chapter One: INTRODUCTION

Catholicism in Britain has a well-established cultural heritage and Catholics are recognised as having made a rich historical contribution to British life even after the Reformation. In recent times, in British literature, this can be seen as having reached a pinnacle with the novels of Evelyn Waugh and Graham Greene in the first half of the twentieth-century. David Lodge[1] writes about the important part Catholics have played and their unique contribution to literature over the last hundred years or so. This contribution is out of proportion to their actual numbers. Thomas Woodman in his detailed survey of the development of a specifically Catholic form of the novel[2] discusses the widespread influence Catholic writers have had. Some of the topics he raises are relevant to this thesis.[3]

In this thesis I concentrate on a specific aspect of Catholic history, the Second Vatican Council (1962–5), and its effect on those Catholic writers and their work. To do this it is necessary first to examine the state of the Catholic novel before the Council. This is done in Chapter One. Greene and Waugh are undoubtedly the most renowned Catholic writers of this century. By looking at the first obviously 'Catholic' novel of each writer, *Brighton Rock* and *Brideshead Revisited* respectively, the development of the Catholic novel in Britain is examined. A comparison of these two very different works also serves to expose certain concerns and ideas

[1]In the essay "The Catholic Church and Cultural Life" (1980), pp. 32–7 of David Lodge (1988) *Write On* Harmondsworth, Penguin.

[2]See Thomas Woodman (1992) *Faithful Fictions: The Catholic Novel in British Literature* Milton Keynes, Open University Press.

[3]Woodman recognises the Catholic sense of "difference" that is here examined in terms of nationalism and with relation to sexual, political and social orientation. However, he uses World War II as a dividing line as his position is essentially secular.

which are shared by Greene and Waugh and seem to be of particular, though not exclusive, interest to Catholic writers. The issues seen in Greene and Waugh are then re-examined in the light of Vatican II through the fiction of contemporary novelists.

The environment prior to the Council is that which produced *Brighton Rock* and *Brideshead Revisited*, and, of course, it also led to the Council itself. The second chapter, therefore, looks at the Council. Some factual detail is given as the actual documents produced by Vatican II are not widely known. However, the folklore of the Council and its *perceived* meaning are at least as important as its factual existence as a historical event. Therefore, Vatican II is looked at from several different perspectives. In this way, the first two chapters provide the setting against which a number of contemporary authors can be investigated.

I concentrate on just four novelists: Michael Carson, Alice Thomas Ellis,[4] David Lodge and Brian Moore, but make reference to other writers as appropriate. I hope that there is sufficient scope for comparison in the representative instances yet not so many different writers as to make a closer reading of each impossible in the allotted space.

This thesis makes the assumption that fiction is a reflection of life, although never a straightforward one. However, precisely because it is not a simple mirror image — as, for example, an objective history might be supposed to be — fiction may, paradoxically, be more revealing than a direct relation of events. The view that fictional characters provide an indication of what real people think and how they behave, and that imaginary situations can be informative as to real ones, requires a specific approach to the literature itself.[5]

It is generally considered to be somewhat "old-fashioned" to concentrate on

[4]This is a pseudonym, her real name being Anna Haycraft.

[5]Milan Kundera, interviewed by Ian McEwan, (reprinted in Malcolm Bradbury (1977) *The Novel Today* London, Fontana) has described what the novel can do (pp. 217–8) in terms which make it clear that he, although not a straightforward realist writer, acknowledges the importance of character and plot in his own novels.

character and plot when studying fiction and yet this is precisely what this thesis does because it is concerned with what fictional characters, and the situations in which they are placed, can tell us about life; Catholic life in particular. It is also because the writers examined herein are essentially realist novelists.[6] To this end I also make reference to current journalism as this too offers a version of real-life events

This thesis presumes the importance of historical placing for all works of art. The time at which any work is written is crucial to the fabric of the work itself. Even "timeless" works are a result of the time in which they were produced and cannot fully escape it. Greene and Waugh and their contemporaries form the literary background the four later novelists grew up with; they all acknowledge the importance of these literary figures in their past and in the same way they all make mention of the Vatican Council and its importance to themselves and their fiction.

The Second Vatican Council is the most important event in recent Church History[7] and falls neatly between Greene and Waugh, writing in the late 30s and early 40s, and the four contemporary novelists writing in the 1990s.[8]

In the following discussion two other concerns emerge: gender issues and nationalism. These are not unconnected to historicism. Indeed, they serve to emphasise that just as any work places itself in time, so it positions itself by the nationality, sexual orientation and whole biography of its creator.

The four contemporary authors I have chosen have been selected to provide the full range of Catholic fiction in as few novelists as possible. Many other Catholic

[6]Alice Thomas Ellis is the least realist as she employs many aspects of post-modernist technique. The others, particularly Lodge, have a non-realist dimension too, which they deploy, most often, in comic mode.

[7]For example, Hebblethwaite (1995) *The Next Pope* London, Fount writes: "The Second Vatican Council...remains the most epoch-making event in the life of the Catholic Church in the twentieth century".

[8]All four are still active authors and the fact that two of them were publishing work before the Council is actually advantageous when comparing the various novels.

writers and their work, some of them much better known,[9] are mentioned only in passing and where relevant to the works of these four. The four primary authors provide a reasonably complete spectrum of Catholic writers in the following way: Ellis provides the female perspective while Carson contributes specifically to the homosexual viewpoint; both Lodge and Moore published some fiction before the Council thus allowing for comparison of 'pre' and 'post' Vatican II novels within the work of a single author; Moore provides a necessary Irish slant, necessary because of the importance of Irish Catholicism to English Catholics; Ellis is the only convert among them whereas Lodge had only one Catholic parent and Carson two.[10] Perhaps most importantly, these four writers seem to cover the most likely possibilities for Catholic belief: from most conservative to liberal and from practising to non-practising. Although they are contemporaries and, of the four, three live permanently in Britain, they have no personal links to each other[11] which could affect the validity of this group as a sample.

There is one chapter each[12] for Carson, Ellis, Lodge and Moore and then a final section of conclusions in which the findings of the previous four chapters and how they relate to their "setting" is examined.

[9]For example, Muriel Spark, and the later novels of Graham Greene.

[10]It goes without saying that both Moore's parents were practising Catholics, given the year of his birth, 1921, and the country.

[11]The only example of this I am aware of is Alice Thomas Ellis's friendship with Beryl Bainbridge whom I mention only in passing.

[12]The order is simply alphabetical.

Part Two :

The Setting

Chapter Two: Brideshead Revisited AND *Brighton Rock*

The novelists Graham Greene and Evelyn Waugh are forever fated to be linked together as Catholic novelists—even as *the* Catholic novelists. For it was not until their emergence in the first half of the twentieth century that the concept of a specifically Catholic novel became so widely accepted as a form. Not that there had not been previous novels written by Catholic authors and even concerned primarily with Catholic issues but for reasons which will be investigated these two novelists somehow established the existence of the Catholic novel as a phenomenon in England as it had never been seen before.

Naturally, Roman Catholicism and its preoccupations were not the sole interest of either of these authors. Greene describes himself as having a period during which he wrote deliberately and specifically about Catholic concerns and it is worth noting that *Brighton Rock* and three of his subsequent novels which can be said to comprise this part of his writing are almost unanimously considered to be among his best works (*The Power and the Glory* (1940), *The Heart of the Matter* (1948), *The End of the Affair* (1951)[1]). However, he was clearly unhappy with the label of Catholic novelist with which he became stuck for the rest of his life protesting that he was rather a novelist who happened to be a Catholic; but then at least one definition of Catholic writer is indeed no more than that:

> ... by 'Catholic Literature' is not to be understood a literature which

[1]See, for example, p. 5 of David Lodge (1966) *Graham Greene* Columbia, Columbia University Press.

> treats exclusively or primarily of Catholic matters, of Catholic doctrine, controversy, history, persons, or politics; but it includes all subjects of literature whatever, treated as only a Catholic would treat them, and as he only can treat them.
>
> (Newman 1976, p. 296)

Without question Waugh's most decidedly Catholic novel and his first to deal overtly with Catholic issues is *Brideshead Revisited* (1945). He describes the theme of the book as "the operation of divine grace on a group of diverse but closely connected characters". (Waugh 1962, p. 7) Thus, it is to this, and also to Greene's first Catholic novel *Brighton Rock*, that we will turn for a detailed investigation of the stereotypical Catholic novel — partly because it is his first and therefore can be viewed comfortably alongside Waugh's first and also because it is actually set in England rather than in one of the more exotic locations so favoured by the seasoned traveller Greene.[2]

These two great texts have helped to form the idea of the Catholic novel as a recognisable form. But, if Catholicism was such unusual subject matter, then how were these novels able to be of such immediate success when first published? The answers lie in both the authors' own preparation of the ground by factors within their novels and by the way in which more general developments within society and its literature had laid a course for them. This chapter is not an attempt to shed new light on the novels of Greene and Waugh or to offer another critical analysis of *Brighton Rock* or *Brideshead Revisited*. The novels and authors are too well-known and studied usefully to do so. Rather the intention is to investigate Greene's and Waugh's first Catholic novels in the context of Catholic novels in general and so provide a backdrop to the changed state of the Catholic novel following the Second Vatican Council. The important points are: firstly that these two novelists are credited, at least in popular terms, as Catholic novelists; secondly that *Brighton Rock* and *Brideshead Revisited* were self-consciously produced by their creators as Catholic works (and each was the first to be written by

[2]Lodge makes more detailed reference to Catholicism's exotic appeal in *Write On*, pp. 32–36.

each author) and thirdly, both were written prior to the Second Vatican Council but not too long before it so that they are products of the twentieth century, like the Vatican Council itself, and were written in the same climate of Roman Catholicism that led to the convening of that Council. Through these two novels the following will be discussed: the Catholic milieu and the effect that a Catholic outlook has on the content and shaping of the novel, and the dominant concerns of Catholics at this time.

The earlier novels of both Waugh and Greene are not markedly different in content from those of their contemporaries. They make passing reference to Catholicism, it is true, but no more than any non-Catholic writer might. The publication of *Brighton Rock* and *Brideshead Revisited* establish them as Catholics and for the development of the Catholic novel in Britain reflects what has been described as "the sharpening crisis". (Woodman 1992, p. 28) However, as Lodge has correctly pointed out, "Beneath the glittering mockery of Waugh's work in the 'thirties there is a hardening core of positive belief to which his subsequent development can be traced". (Lodge 1959, p. 590) Many of Waugh's novels before *Brideshead Revisited* were highly acclaimed whereas *Brighton Rock* was Greene's first really successful novel. Although it would be both unfair and a gross oversimplification to label Waugh's pre-*Brideshead* work as good and his post-*Brideshead* as poor, his writing certainly did not suddenly develop to excellence by overt use of Catholic themes.[3] Greene, on the other hand, seems to have truly found his métier once he engages deeply with Catholic issues and his finest novels come from *Brighton Rock* onwards.

It is important that Greene and Waugh write about Catholic themes in a contemporary context as this provides not only a view of Catholic literature but an insight into the state of Catholicism itself at the time. It can hardly be stressed too thoroughly just how different these two men are in terms of their personal religious beliefs and this fact alone puts paid to any idea that before the

[3]See Lodge (1959, pp. 587 9).

Second Vatican Council there was only one possible and very narrow definition of Catholicism. Politically Greene and Waugh take opposing views with Waugh right-wing and Greene decidedly on the left. From his earlier comments it may seem strange that he never did turn towards the political right which Lodge suggests is "the logical consequence of conversion to Catholicism" (Lodge 1966, p. 17) for "his generation of intellectuals" (Lodge 1966, p. 17) but the reason is crucial to his writing which thrives on the conflict between two opposing sets of belief; Greene himself put it:

> I find myself always torn between two beliefs: the belief that life should be better than it is and the belief that when it appears better it is really worse.
>
> quoted in (Lodge 1966, p. 18)

Greene's stance was unusual at the time when Catholicism was to some degree seen as an alternative to Communism. However, the Dominican magazine *Blackfriars* in the 1930s, was anti-Franco, earning itself the nickname "Redfriars". Abroad there was a history of more left-wing tendencies. The priest and philosophical writer Lamennais opposed the French revolution not for its attack on the monarchy but only for its overthrow of religion. After the revolution he founded, in conjunction with Montalembert and Lacordaire, the paper *L'Avenir*, which advocated an aggressive democracy with its motto *Dieu et Liberté*. However, his appeal to the Pope to support the paper against the Conservative bishops failed and he subsequently left the Church. Although left-wing ideas were not unknown within the Church they tended to be upheld by a minority and not supported by the hierarchy. Thus it is not surprising that some Catholics had sympathies with right-wing movements including Fascism; though some right-wing Catholic writing, associated with *L'Action Francaise* was condemned. During the Spanish civil war it was rare for an English Catholic not to side with Franco (Republican attacks on priests and nuns intensified this position, of course). Bernard Bergonzi used his 1981 novel *The Roman Persuasion* to deal with the difficulties

encountered by those who did not support Franco.[4] The wide gulf between Waugh and Greene caused Greene to say later, "We were deeply divided politically, were divided even in our conception of the same Church." (Woodman 1992, p. 29) Greene in particular, despite having a contemporary setting for his novels sets most of them abroad in strange, unfamiliar surroundings. There are many reasons for this, of course. Always attracted by anything strange and new Greene was a great traveller and it would have been odd indeed if he did not use his travels for material in his writing, but exotic locations certainly make the whole business of dealing with extreme situations and characters easier. And yet, although *Brideshead Revisited* is set mainly in England the characters employed to show Catholicism do not do so in a way obviously relevant to, say,

> Benediction on a Sunday evening at the parish church of an industrial suburb, followed by a meeting of the legion of Mary and a whist drive organised by the union of Catholic Mothers.
>
> (Lodge 1988, p. 33)

If one looks outside the work of Waugh and Greene to that of their contemporaries one finds the same thing. Probably the only Catholic author of the time who does purport to write about the everyday life of ordinary Catholics is Bruce Marshall and even his attempts are only partially successful. In *Father Malachy's Miracle* (1931), for example, he makes so much use of a sort of sentimentalised supernaturalism that his original intention to deal with the mundane and routine is largely masked by the need to make the story more appealing.[5] The normalcy of Catholicism is not proffered by either Greene or Waugh and yet the variety of different individual Catholics represented by both (and most especially by Waugh even within a single family unit) makes it clear that a single standard form of Catholicism is not, and never has been, applicable.

[4]Writing in 1967, George Scott refers to the popular view that Catholics supported Franco. See his introduction to *The R.C.s: A Report on Roman Catholics in Britain Today*, London, Hutchinson.

[5]See Woodman (1992, p. 30) for more detail.

It is important to remember that it was not until the eighteenth century that the novel itself became popular as a literary form and only in the nineteenth century that this 'new' form of writing became so universally popular. Therefore, that a specifically Catholic form of the novel should not emerge until this time (and not be perceived until later) is not very surprising. It is interesting that what is generally seen as the first Catholic novel in England, Elizabeth Inchbald's[6] *A Simple Story* (1791), is concerned with an aristocratic Catholic; the central figure is a priest of an aristocratic family named Dorriforth (his Christian name is never revealed). The essential plot is that he is obliged to take into his house and under his protection his young and highly attractive Protestant ward Miss Milner. He later unexpectedly succeeds to the family title and is therefore obliged to be laicized (which is apparently achieved without difficulty) because it is necessary for him to marry so that the family line may continue; what might be expected to be a major and rather difficult issue for Dorriforth is passed over very lightly. Indeed, any prospective religious issues are largely undeveloped and even as a priest, the only religious action Dorriforth is ever depicted as performing is that of private prayer. His position is important not as a Catholic but as an aristocrat;[7] indeed, subsequent events show him as a man of so many faults and so excessively sure of himself and fully capable of implacable resentment that it is hard to imagine him as a very successful priest.

The Catholic novel as such, to a large extent, followed the rise of the novel form in general. However, certain factors did contribute to create the right environment for a Catholic fiction to emerge:

> three major factors combined to change the whole picture of English Catholicism after the mid-century: the massive scale of the Irish immigrations, the restoration of the hierarchy in 1850 and the influence

[6]Although it is not generally well-known, Elizabeth Inchbald was the translator/adaptor of *Lovers' Vows* which comes into Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park*. It was originally a play by Kotzbue in German.

[7]See p. 27 below.

> of the Oxford movement conversions. The enormous increase in the Catholic population and the expansion in church building were almost entirely the result of the Irish influx. They made up approximately four-fifths of the total number of Catholics in Victorian England.
>
> (Woodman 1992, p. 5)

The Irish immigrants were poor and that their presence was largely ignored by novelists is not surprising. Even today novelists are hardly representative of society as a whole, certainly in the 1800s only members of the middle and upper classes would be novelists. They naturally wrote of what they knew. The lives and occupations of the working-class Irish would hardly be likely to form a part of this. However, as the immigrants became gradually integrated into society and with the increase in general literacy as time progressed, the descendants of this neglected class did come to swell the readership for Catholic literature.

The restoration of the Catholic hierarchy (1850)[8] had a different but still important effect on the position of Catholics and Catholicism in England as it

> created a high profile for Catholicism and was the subject of controversy for several years. The presence of a Cardinal in the heart of Protestant London had an inevitable impact on the consciousness and both Wiseman and his successor Manning were in their different ways extremely formidable men with an enormous sense of the dignity of their position
>
> (Woodman 1992, p. 5)

Cardinal Wiseman made his own personal contribution to the advancement of the Catholic novel with his own novel *Fabiola* (1854) about some of the early Christian martyrs, and his commissioning of a number of other Catholic historical novels. As the century drew to a close, the *fin de siècle* emerged as a reaction to dominant Victorian values. The appeal of the Church of Rome became strong in such circles; Ernest Dowson, Francis Thompson, Aubrey Beardsley, John Gray

[8]Pope Pius IX restored the English hierarchy. See the collection of essays *The Roman Catholics 1850-1950* (London: Burns and Oates, 1950) edited by George Andrew Beck.

and Oscar Wilde were all converts. Catholicism had a different appeal for these intellectuals from that which attracted the famous Oxford Movement converts. Newman found himself drawn to Rome through the Anglican Church as did the great Catholic poet Hopkins.[9] But the late Victorian aesthetes, such as Wilde and his contemporaries, were attracted by the differentness of the Catholic church for other reasons. Morally the Church was highly respectable but it had an exotic quality and offered a change from the narrow morality of mainstream Victorian thinking which appealed both to their decadent tendencies and to their sense that morality was founded on religion rather than the other way round. The idea that only a Catholic is really capable of evil[10] was appealing and the place given to suffering and the importance of mortifying the flesh surely had a masochistic appeal to some of the converts. The homosexual tendencies of writers such as Wilde and Gray may seem out of place in connection with Catholicism but a relationship between the two is not so unusual[11] and is one of the issues which will be looked at particularly with regard to more contemporary fiction.[12]

Even the briefest look at Catholic novels in the early part of the twentieth century must advert to the works of G.K. Chesterton and Hilaire Belloc.[13] These two men foreshadow the advent of Greene and Waugh as a pair of Catholic writers. Even without much specific reference to Catholicism, Belloc's novels, which are often satirical, are set upon a base of Catholic values and ideals. Chesterton uses popular fictional forms (most notably his priestly detective Father Brown) for his fiction because, as he puts it,

> the simple need for some kind of ideal world in which fictitious persons

[9]Newman's reception into the Church in October 1845 appeared to Wiseman (who was to be the first Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster in the restored hierarchy) to be the beginning of the return to the Catholic faith. (Ker 1995, p. 433)

[10]See p. 26 below.

[11]Ronald Firbank converted in 1908 and had an impact on Waugh's writing. Firbank's novels develop the homosexuality of Wilde and Gray.

[12]The novels of Michael Carson are most pertinent here.

[13]James Joyce will undoubtedly have had an influence on Greene and Waugh as he does on the later Catholic writers.

> play an ideal part is infinitely deeper and older than the rules of good art, and much more important.
>
> (Coates 1984, p. 160)

The prolific work of Chesterton and Belloc and their popularity to a wide public helped to dispel the sense of inferiority felt by Catholic intellectuals and the two authors have enjoyed long standing pre-eminence in the English Catholic cultural world which they helped to establish. By utilising this popular fictional form as Chesterton did before him, Greene provides, as it were, a cover for his more serious intention: a sustained look at eternal themes embodied in Roman Catholicism.

Brighton Rock was first published in 1938 and a great popular success. Its form is that of a detective story and a thriller. The reader's attention is caught by the opening line as Greene makes it quite clear that a sensational drama is about to be performed: "Hale knew, before he had been in Brighton three hours, that they meant to murder him."[14] (Greene 1970, p. 5) *Brideshead Revisited* first appeared in 1945 apparently from a very different mould. Waugh writes of the aristocracy and Greene of low-life gangsters but Catholicism unites them. The social environments in *Brideshead Revisited* and *Brighton Rock* are poles apart but the characters share a religious outlook (albeit a fictionalised version of that religion) which causes many of the same concerns and issues to be depicted in both novels even though, again, they clearly show there to be no single Catholic milieu. From the perspective of history it is now quite possible to trace the development of the English Catholic novel which in many ways reached its pinnacle with the works of Greene and Waugh but it is doubtful whether, without their writings, such a phenomenon would ever have been recognised as existing in its own right. In retrospect Greene's novel *A Gun For Sale* is generally seen as a secular forerunner to the more successful *Brighton Rock*. The harelipped murderer Raven foreshadows Pinkie Brown. However, in *A Gun for Sale* Raven's criminality is symbolic of the evil of the world; he is merely a scapegoat and as

[14]This is from the revised edition. Until 1970, the opening was different.

the small man who does the dirty work for others is much less culpable. Whereas Raven may be amoral, he is very much a victim of a violent society; Pinkie is a Catholic and therefore has no excuse, he should know better and, as such is much more responsible for his own actions (also, although only a small time villain, Pinkie is his own boss).

Both novels employ the same device of a police pursuit which can only end in death. By utilising Catholic belief, however alien it may be to much of his audience, Greene has actually turned things to his advantage. By taking on board wholesale this background of Catholic teaching the extreme situations as presented in *A Gun for Sale* are heightened yet further in *Brighton Rock*. Greene likes to write on the edges of life and his innate pessimism fuels this. His conversion to Catholicism aids this kind of writing as:

> Increasingly there flows into his work the current of antihumanism that runs so strongly through most Christian and specifically Catholic writing from the Decadence onwards; so that by 1939 we find Greene in *The Lawless Roads* declaiming against Progress, Human Dignity, great empty Victorian concepts that life denies at every turn.
>
> (Lodge 1966, p. 17)

Brighton Rock looks like a conventional thriller but is complicated by reference to a transcendent order: the Catholic Church. This has its problems, as Greene's representation of Catholicism is necessarily a fictional one for his fictional characters and must differ in some respect from the actual Church. The Catholic Church exists in reality and Catholicism is the earthly manifestation of the Justice which it sees as existing in the divine realm. The Catholic Church exists as a historical entity accepted by Catholics and non-Catholics alike: as a religious organisation headed by the Pope. It also has a formal existence with three divisions: the Church Militant (Catholics on earth), the Church Suffering (those in Purgatory), and the Church Triumphant (the faithful in Heaven). Thus, the clear distinctions between Heaven and Earth, and Life and Death so crucial

to the secular view are reversed by a Catholic perception. The reality of Catholicism is more problematic. Although the Church itself is a fact, the faith on which it rests uses fictional forms, for imagined worlds have a role to play in ordinary perception and are not wholly the preserve of the novel. In this respect the Second Vatican Council may be considered as fiction as well as fact.[15] The reality of Catholicism may be described as the assumption of a set of beliefs yet these beliefs cannot easily be represented in other than quasi-fictional terms. An example of this is the opening of John's gospel 'In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God'. This may be interpreted as the origin of God and yet Christian belief holds that God has no origin. The term 'beginning' causes similar problems and the exact relationship between the Word and God himself (are they the same thing or not?) cannot logically be determined. Essentially the problem is intrinsic to the use of language which is by its nature limited.[16] The divine order can be suggested but not contained in language.

To look at representations of Catholicism through fiction is more complicated still, as 'Catholicism' is further removed from its base. The novelist's own beliefs (and it should be remembered that these may alter in time and so from one novel to another) cannot be disregarded as it is his personal view which will to at least some extent dictate the fictional depiction of Catholicism in his work. In addition to the writer's own faith, his view of the Church as an organisation and system of belief is also relevant to his fictional representation of it in a novel. A novel may involve a number of characters (Catholic and non-Catholic) and their ideas and beliefs as shown by their creator with regard to his Creator further complicate the picture. Greene and Waugh, in themselves and by their fictional creations, are good examples of just how different the perceptions of Catholicism can be.

[15] As elaborated on in Chapter 3.

[16] Translation exacerbates these problems: the original Greek has the term λογος of which 'word' is only one possible translation.

They offer a reminder that just as fiction mirrors reality so Catholicism reflects a transcendent order of things but the mirror represents things darkly. This difficult relationship between Catholicism in the World and Catholicism as depicted in a novel is one that must be considered throughout this study.

Greene's hero (if one may correctly refer to Pinkie Brown as such) is a Catholic as is the young waitress Rose with whom Pinkie becomes involved and finally marries. There is nothing unusual here; Catholicism has a certain intriguing appeal and its mysteries, ceremonies and trappings have been exploited by Catholic and non-Catholic authors alike. Greene is certainly building upon an established tradition which has lasted from Lewis's *The Monk* (1796) and Mrs Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolfo* (1794) through Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) where religious artefacts such as crucifixes and the consecrated host are of such consequence as to persist even today in a more gaudy form in popular horror stories such as William Blatty's *The Exorcist* (1971). Particularly in the latter half of the nineteenth century, a number of minor Catholic novelists used their religion precisely as a means of supplying this kind of sensationalist material for their novels. The larger audience by then in existence required much more than edification and morally improving fiction; they wanted entertainment.

One of the first Catholics to have her novels taken seriously in the non-Catholic literary world was Mrs Pearl Craigie. After an unhappy marriage she turned to Roman Catholicism adding Mary Teresa to her name. Under the pseudonym John Oliver Hobbes she wrote both novels and plays with considerable success but their success lies chiefly in the replayed theme of renouncing human love for the higher love of God. A rather superior example of the genre is Josephine Mary Ward's *One Poor Scruple* (1897); again the central issue is the renunciation of earthly love but here it is rather more skilfully and subtly presented. The psychological realism of this work is impressively revealed through the gradual persuasion of the heroine Madge Riversdale by her sister-in-law not to abandon her Faith. A sense of the period is well conveyed and the position of British Catholics in the

nineteenth century particularly well-depicted. Certainly, such works were popular with a late Victorian audience and even the less talented authors all played their part in setting the scene for and increasing the acceptability of Catholic works.

The growth of the reading public and increased sense of confidence in British Catholicism are reflected in the popular success of Benson's novels in the first twenty years of the twentieth century. Monsignor Robert Hugh Benson was the son of a notoriously anti-Catholic Archbishop of Canterbury and thus his conversion was particularly notable. His *Come Rack, Come Rope* (1912) was common reading for Catholic schoolboys as late as the 1960s and has played a part in the development of Catholic novelists writing today.[17] As his novels have a continued importance for later writers so he too employs earlier works. Francis Thompson's "The Hound of Heaven"[18] is the source of one character's outburst about faith,

> 'It is, Frightful. It grips you: and it won't let you go. You can kick and scream and protest; but it's got you. You can think you've lost it; you can laugh at it: but you haven't lost it: you've only covered it up'
>
> (Benson 1915, pp. 342–3)

The same motifs fascinate Waugh and Greene and provide an excellent example of the continuity of Catholic fiction at this time. However, Greene's choice of genre for his novel is his only deliberate concession to popular taste. Beyond that he makes little allowance for a non-Catholic audience's understanding and appreciation of Catholicism. Waugh uses no deliberate popular form, although his use of a soldier as narrator and his memories of his pre-war life do seek to attract an audience naturally concerned about war and accustomed to such a retrospective format. However, the war itself plays little part in the drama save as a break between the present position of the narrator and his past. As a natural divider the war makes the past seem further away when, in reality, only a few

[17]For example, Michael Carson has referred to reading this text during his schooldays.
[18]See also p. 49 below.

years have passed. Clearly, war as a reason for change adds a romantic dimension to the action which is important to Waugh's writing.

For a background to Greene's Catholic writing one must turn to the French Catholic novel. Unlike Protestant England, France had long recognised the peculiar appeal of the Catholic Faith as subject matter especially to Catholic writers. This was largely thanks to Chateaubriand's successful work of Christian apologetics, *Le Génie du Christianisme* (1802) which argues eloquently for religion's appeal to man's deepest instincts. Mauriac[19] in particular was certainly a major influence on Greene's writing, indeed Greene declares it so, and similarities can be drawn between the two.[20] Furthermore, Greene's writings include some serious critical pieces on Mauriac. Any clear awareness of a specifically English Catholic tradition within literature is missing although it is known that Greene was intrigued by the English writer Frederick Rolfe. He was a convert to the Catholic Faith, and styled himself Baron Corvo and alternatively Fr. Rolfe (he was a failed candidate for the priesthood). He had a largely unhappy life plagued by financial difficulties and alienated many would-be supporters and admirers by publicly abusing them and pestering them for financial help. He was flamboyant and a self-professed homosexual. His most successful work *Hadrian VII* (1904) is a fantasy based at least partially on a kind of wish-fulfilment: the hero George Arthur Rose is saved from a life of poverty as a writer and elected as Pope. A. J. Symons has written an excellent account of his life in *The Quest for Corvo: An Experiment in Biography* (1934).[21] However Greene's interest does seem to have been rather more to do with Rolfe's flamboyant lifestyle than his literary works.

Waugh, although undoubtedly familiar with French Catholic writing, displays

[19]See, for example, pp. 179–207 of Malcolm Scott (1989) *The Struggle for the Soul of The French Novel: French Catholic and Realist Novelists 1850-1970* London, Macmillan.

[20]See, for example, Conor Cruise O'Brien (1963) *Maria Cross* Wheathampstead, Anthony Clarke Books, and Philip Stratford (1964) *Faith and Fiction* Paris, Notre Dame University Press for more on Greene and Mauriac.

[21]See also the biography M. Benkovitz (1977) *Frederick Rolfe: Baron Corvo* London, Hamish Hamilton.

little if any indebtedness to such a literary tradition. His means of gaining acceptance for his specifically 'Catholic' work are at once crucial to the text itself and indicative of his awareness of the absence of an established English literary tradition. Waugh's Catholicism arises, unlike Greene's, essentially from Anglicanism. As with Newman, his strong Protestant faith led him ultimately into the Catholic Church. The appeal for Greene was more comparable to that felt by the Decadent poets at the turn of the century. For Waugh there was also his love of Victorian England and the nineteenth-century way of life as he perceived it. His aesthetic taste is the clearest indicator of this displayed in his novels. The novel *Brideshead Revisited* seeks to be and is quintessentially English. Based around the English aristocracy and utilising Oxford University with all its nineteenth-century connotations of beauty, tradition and romance, the first section of the novel at least, concentrates on the growing relationship between the narrator, Charles Ryder, and the younger son of Lord Marchmain, Sebastian Flyte. Through Waugh's craft we join the narrator in falling in love with this young man, so beautiful, charming and thoroughly English. And yet at the same time we learn that he is a Roman Catholic. Although his family is often mistaken for a Catholic aristocratic family, it is important to remember that Lord Marchmain is in fact a convert to the faith; converted by his wife Teresa prior to their marriage. This conversion is all a part of Waugh's plan to stress that Catholicism itself is not, as so often perceived, (especially in Victorian times and through the writings of authors such as Charlotte Brontë in *Villette* an Italianate invasion or, towards the twentieth century, an Irish working class import, but it is the original faith of the English, 'the Faith of Our Fathers'[22] which Marchmain actually thanks his wife for restoring him to:

'D'you know what papa said when he became a Catholic? Mummy

[22]The title of a well-known Catholic hymn which is particularly associated with 'traditional' Catholicism. Moore refers to it in *Catholics* (p. 73) as does Carson. See p. 120, Chapter 4 below.

> told me once. He said to her: "You have brought back my family to the faith of their ancestors." '
>
> (Waugh 1962, p. 212)

This corresponds to Waugh's own view about Catholicism's place in English history:

> England was Catholic for nine hundred years, then Protestant for about three hundred, then agnostic for a century. The Catholic structure still lies lightly buried beneath every phase of English life; history, topography, law, archaeology, everywhere reveals Catholic origins... It was self-evident to me that no heresy or schism could be right and the Church wrong.
>
> (Waugh 1949, p. 10)

When Lord Marchmain later abandons his Faith and family it is no accident that takes him to live with his mistress in Italy. Rather the implication is that foreign Catholicism is somehow less pure and correct than English Catholicism. The feelings of an author who is himself a convert may not be totally irrelevant here and there is something of the idea that a belief is stronger when under attack. Thus as a minority in England, the Catholic population may be more devoted to its faith and committed to a healthy practice of it than in Italy — the home of countless Popes and with the Vatican in its environs — where, perhaps inevitably, people are lax about actual daily observance of what is contained within the weekly Profession of Faith.

Although Waugh does not make reference to any Catholic tradition of literature either in England or abroad, he does appeal strongly to the reader's aesthetic sense. The eldest Marchmain child, Brideshead, is interesting in being shown as a Catholic without aesthetic taste. Speaking of Marchmain House to Charles, he says:

> 'You know it's being pulled down? My father's selling it. They are going to put up a block of flats here. They're keeping the name - we can't stop them apparently.'

> 'What a sad thing.'
> 'Well, I'm sorry of course. But you think it good architecturally?'
> 'One of the most beautiful houses I know.'
> 'Can't see it. I've always thought it rather ugly...'
> (Waugh 1962, p. 209)

Art forms are well described, particularly architecture, and it is no accident that our narrator is himself to become a successful architectural painter. The old chapel of Brideshead Castle itself is described in the prologue to the main text so that physical beauty and Catholicism are linked from the beginning. It is within the character of Sebastian that the link is most clearly underlined however. Charles' relationship with him is not blatantly homosexual but the implication is there. That the reader is meant to understand the two young men as having an active sexual relationship is unlikely especially considering the official[23] moral climate towards homosexuality at the time of writing. However, physical attraction certainly plays a large part in their friendship and on at least one occasion they are unashamedly naked together which is not very 'English'. The beauty of youth combined with the decadence of the age reminds us of some aspects of Waugh's earlier novels. The biting sarcasm and black humour typical of novels like *Vile Bodies* is not quite absent but it is greatly muted. Julia and Rex have difficulties in arranging their marriage which Waugh handles with humour especially when it emerges that Rex is divorced:

> 'Don't you realize, you poor sweet oaf,' said Julia, 'that you can't get married as a Catholic when you've another wife alive?'
> 'But I haven't. Didn't I just tell you we were divorced six years ago.'
> 'But you can't be divorced as a Catholic.'
> 'I wasn't a Catholic and I was divorced. I've got the papers somewhere.'
> 'But didn't Father Mowbray explain to you about marriage?'
> 'He said I wasn't to be divorced from you. Well I don't want to be. I can't remember all he told me—sacred monkeys, plenary indulgences, four last things—if I remembered all he told me I shouldn't

[23]The Oxbridge climate between the wars was quite favourable towards homosexuality.

> have time for anything else. Anyhow, what about your Italian cousin, Francesca? —she married twice.'
>
> 'She had an annulment.'
>
> 'All right then, I'll get an annulment. What does it cost? Who do I get it from? Has Father Mowbray got one? I only want to do what's right. Nobody told me.'
>
> (Waugh 1962, p. 189)

but the underlying themes are important and thus the situation is rather different from the surface treatment given to Nina and Adam:

> 'Oh, I say, Nina, there's one thing - I don't think I shall be able to marry you after all.'
>
> 'Oh, Adam, you are a bore. Why not?'
>
> 'They burnt my book.'
>
> 'Beasts. Who did?'
>
> 'I'll tell you about it to-night.'
>
> 'Yes, do. Good-bye, darling.'
>
> (Waugh 1938, p. 34)

The reader is also reminded of Oscar Wilde's *The Portrait of Dorian Gray* (1890). Sebastian does destroy his body and good looks through alcoholism but it seems that this is the way forward for his soul: as if by some modern-day form of mortification of the flesh,[24] the inner Sebastian actually flourishes and becomes more beautiful, almost saintly. As his elder brother Brideshead enigmatically says: "I believe God prefers drunkards to a lot of respectable people." (Waugh 1962, p. 140) Waugh harks back to the glorious days between the wars which is when *Brideshead Revisited* is actually set but he is also reminding his readers of the decadence around the turn of the century. Fr. Rolfe and his flamboyant lifestyle come to mind again. Indeed, there seems to be an intriguing connection between homosexuality, abuse through drugs and drink, and a Catholic belief as seen in the poetry of the Decadence. Obviously such an interesting combination is not lost on novelists but the apparent dichotomy is explained by Greene's comment,[25]

[24]See p. 35 below.

[25]Greene's likeliest source for this is T.S. Eliot's (1930) essay on Baudelaire. See Norman Sherry's biography p. 646.

"a Catholic is more capable of evil than anyone." (Greene 1970, p. 246) The 'Age of Decadence' did not play as great a role in Catholic fiction in England as it did on the continent, with Rolfe as a notable exception.

However, it was from this time, the late Victorian era, that Catholic writers felt more inclined to confront the increasingly secular nature of society through their fiction. For some writers this drift towards secularisation brought out their religiosity and helped to create an audience ready to read about religion precisely because of its apparent disappearance from everyday life. Such fiction provided a means (as it had even with the early Gothic novel) of "peeping" at Catholicism, and Christianity in general, for reader and writer alike.

As converts to Catholicism both authors are quite typical of English Catholic writers of this time, the educated 'cradle Catholic' being as yet a rare creature in English society. Sebastian Flyte does mention the presence of different types of Catholics[26] referring to at least "four cliques" but without expanding upon what he means. Certainly there would be the Irish immigrant Catholics[27] and also a number of converts. Both of these groups were often regarded with suspicion by 'old Catholics', that is, those English Catholics or 'Recusants' who had kept the Faith throughout Penal times and had kept their blood clear of any taint of Protestantism. Lady Marchmain's own family were of this kind; Waugh explains this for the readers' benefit:

> The family history was typical of the Catholic squires of England; from Elizabeth's reign till Victoria's they lived sequestered lives, among their tenantry and kinsmen, sending their sons to school abroad, often marrying there, inter-marrying, if not, with a score of families like themselves, debarred from all preferment, and learning, in those lost generations, lessons which could still be read in the lives of the last three men of the house.
>
> (Waugh 1962, p. 134)

[26]See p. 36, this document.

[27]Irish-born residents (over 95% of them Catholic) rose from half a million to over three quarters of a million between 1861 and 1961. (Hornsby-Smith 1987, pp. 118–9)

Some of this group would be of ancient aristocratic blood and would often have lost their land and homes because of their beliefs but a certain portion would be ordinary Catholics who had simply managed to avoid a large degree of persecution by keeping quietly out of harm's way, for example, in Lancashire and Yorkshire,[28] and even pretending to embrace Protestantism. Understandably, the more aristocratic elements of the Catholic population were liable to suffer the most from persecution simply because of their high social and political profile and were often inclined to criticise those, normally rural, communities which held out against adversity by virtue of being overlooked.[29] The greater importance of high-bred blood over religious vocation, as seen in Inchbald's character, Dorriforth, is lightly echoed in *Brideshead Revisited* when Nanny Hawkins refers to Julia's newly cropped hair:

> '...it was a shame to cut her hair; such a lovely head of hair she had, just like her Ladyship's. I said to Father Phipps it's not natural, He said: "Nuns do it," and I said, "Well. Surely, father, you aren't going to make a nun out of Lady Julia? The very idea!" '
>
> (Waugh 1962, p38)

Not only because she is a beautiful woman but as a member of the Marchmain family Julia has an obligation to marry which even to the deeply religious Nanny Hawkins has precedence over any question of a religious vocation. Julia herself is well aware of her duty:

> She was wondering, dispassionately and leagues distant from reality, whom she should marry...'If only one lived abroad,' she thought, 'where these things are arranged between parents and lawyers.'
>
> To be married, soon and splendidly, was the aim of all her friends.
>
> (Waugh 1962, p. 174)

[28]Joseph Leatherbarrow (1947) *The Lancashire Elizabethan Recusants* Manchester, Manchester University Press, provides a valuable insight into Catholic communities after the Reformation.

[29]See Bossy (1975) for a history of English Catholics.

The clear-cut definitions of how the aristocracy should behave are reflected by the representations of how Catholics should conduct themselves. There are variations but only on an established theme. The crux of "what is right" is constant; the characters may stray from the path but their deviations are apparent even to themselves. The core of what Catholicism embodies is fixed and thus a specifically Catholic form of the novel was possible. These two great authors defined the Catholic novel and, having done so, they made its very existence known.

It is now proposed to look at a number of issues relevant to both *Brighton Rock* and *Brideshead Revisited*. Although it has been said that this study is not an attempt to add to the wealth of criticism about Greene and Waugh; within the context of these concerns some investigation into and reference to the texts is necessary in order to establish a working frame of reference for later discussion of post-Vatican II novels.

One important concern, for instance, is betrayal. Greene repeatedly uses images of betrayal in his work and *Brighton Rock* is no exception. The setting of rival gangs around Brighton racecourse provides a rich breeding ground for it. Pinkie Brown has recently taken over the leadership of his gang upon the murder of the previous leader and as such is quite understandably constantly aware of the potential any and all of his associates have for betraying him either to the police or to rival gang members. What he is not prepared for is the total trust of Rose which provides a dramatic contrast to his constant threat of betrayal. As a character, Pinkie is painted very black. He is like a figure from a morality play; a tortured soul. Greene's interest in Rolfe is a likely source for Pinkie's character as Norman Sherry outlines:

> The uniqueness of Rolfe to Greene was that he was an example of someone living life on a different, even heroic level—a return to the days of Dante or Milton: 'Temptation, one feels, is seldom today so heroically resisted or so devastatingly succumbed to.' Both Pinkie and Rolfe actively seek their own damnation.

(Sherry 1990, p. 645)

Pinkie is about as evil as he can be and Rose is astonishingly good. She already knows the worst about Pinkie but her trust does not falter. He feels that he must trick her to make her 'safe' even to the extent of marrying her simply from fear of what she might do if she discovered the truth about him. It is beyond his comprehension that she should remain loyal to him, as she does, if she knows the truth; that she does know the truth and yet is so unswervingly faithful is the strength of this character. Clearly the chances of one criminal being betrayed by another is not an exceptional theme in a detective thriller about the criminal underworld in Brighton, but it is the linking of this with the concepts of Transcendent Good and Evil which gives Greene's approach a rather different perspective. His use of ordinary material to write about eternal values and the divine realm is comparable to T.S. Eliot's similar endeavour in *The Cocktail Party* which, "takes his problems in holiness out of Church in order to show them to us in our comparatively godless daily lives." (Eliot 1974, p. 237)
Worldly 'Good' is brilliantly depicted by the character of Ida Arnold. She is introduced to the reader as a singer in a bar:

> She wasn't old, somewhere in the late thirties or early forties, and she was only a little drunk in a friendly accommodating way. You thought of sucking babies when you looked at her, but if she'd borne them she hadn't let them pull her down: she took care of herself. Her lipstick told you that, the confidence of her big body. She was well-covered, but she wasn't careless; she kept her lines...
>
> (Greene 1970, pp. 6–7)

She is fleshy and therefore worldly, she has a motherly appearance without being a mother, she is motherlike but no Madonna and "she took care of herself" implies that she is essentially selfish. The juxtaposition of her and all she stands for with Rose's pure goodness forms the crux of the moralising in the novel. Later we learn that Ida has a husband but is separated from him and that she likes to

gamble. She stands for life: *this* life; as she says "I always say it's fun to be alive." (Greene 1970, p. 17) Greene sums up her whole attitude as "nothing mysterious", (Greene 1970, p. 100) that is, she belongs firmly in this world. In a secular novel a fun-loving, easy-going character like Ida could be the heroine; she would make an attractive amateur sleuth outshining the petty efforts of the police with her continual emphasis on what is Right.

> 'I'm a sticker where right's concerned.'
>
> 'I believe in right and wrong.'
>
> 'I know what's right.'
>
> 'It's the business of anyone who knows the difference between right and wrong.'
>
> 'I like doing what's right that's all.'
>
> (Greene 1970, pp. 17, 55, 192, 299, 299)

The constant repetition has a dull and monotonous effect on the reader which helps to prevent her character becoming glamorous in any way. However, it is not the secular view as represented by Ida that Greene is concerned with and thus she must be seen by the reader as evil or at least misguided. Her attempts to entice Rose away from Pinkie certainly do fail because she cannot comprehend how Rose feels, both because she is not religious but also because she does not recognise Transcendent Good when she sees it. She is blinded by her own idea of Right.

> 'I only came here for your sake. I wouldn't have troubled to see you first, only I don't want to let the Innocent suffer'—the aphorism came clicking out like a ticket from a slot machine. 'Why, won't you lift a finger to stop him killing you?'
>
> 'He wouldn't do me any harm.'
>
> 'You're young. You don't know things like I do.'
>
> 'There's things you don't know.' She brooded darkly by the bed, while the woman argued on: a God wept in a garden and cried out upon a cross; Molly Carthew went to everlasting fire.
>
> 'I know one thing you don't. I know the difference between Right and Wrong. They didn't teach you that at school.'

> Rose didn't answer; the woman was quite right: the two words meant nothing to her. Their taste was extinguished by stronger foods—Good and Evil. The woman could tell her nothing she didn't know about these—she knew by tests as clear as mathematics that Pinkie was evil—what did it matter in that case whether he was right or wrong?
>
> (Greene 1970, p. 199)

This essential distinction between Right and Wrong and Good and Evil and the understanding that they are not necessarily the same reflects the biblical idea of how different are the ways of God and Man. Ida puts her trust in Right and Wrong and worldly perceptions of Justice. Rose sees how the law of the land can betray, and the limitations of secular Justice. For Rose only the Church will not fail her and Pinkie, as a member of that Church, she trusts.

Yet if anyone is damned it must be Pinkie, but as he himself constantly reminds us:

> 'You know what they say—"Between the stirrup and the ground, he something sought and something found".'
>
> (Greene 1970, p. 91)

Naturally Rose is the only person to complete this for him: "'Mercy.'" she says. (Greene 1970, p. 91) Already Rose seems ready to sacrifice herself in order to save Pinkie's soul. After his death her feelings are clarified when we learn about the views of Charles Péguy. Péguy (1873–1914) kept himself in a state of sin because he "decided that if any soul was going to be damned, he would be damned too". (Greene 1970, p. 246) Despite this, Péguy was an ardent Catholic, he died at the battle of the Marne fighting as a common soldier having refused a captaincy. A Catholic and a Socialist himself, Péguy would have a clear attraction for Greene.[30]

Betrayal within *Brideshead Revisited* is essentially that of one individual betraying another. Most obviously Sebastian fears Charles' betrayal and so un-

[30]Romain Rolland has skilfully arranged much of Péguy's writings in his *Charles Péguy* (1942) Albin Michel, Paris. Conor Cruise O'Brien has a Chapter on Péguy in *Maria Cross*. See also p. 37 below.

successfully tries to keep him apart from his family. Lady Marchmain has been betrayed and abandoned via the mundane route of adultery by her husband and even she is guilty, in the sense, non-Catholic but still operative, that she prevents her husband from being true to himself and Cara his mistress simply by refusing ever to divorce. As Cara tells Charles :

> he [Lord Marchmain] is a volcano of hate. He cannot set foot in England because it is her [Lady Marchmain] home; he can scarcely be happy with Sebastian because he is her son. But Sebastian hates her too.
>
> (Waugh 1962, p. 99)

As an aside, Cara is interesting firstly because she is more than just Alex Marchmain's mistress here — she is an Oracle as she bluntly states what is the clear truth for the benefit of narrator and reader alike. She predicts Sebastian's alcoholism:

> 'Sebastian drinks too much.'
> 'I suppose we both do.'
> 'With you it does not matter. I have watched you together. With Sebastian it is different. He will be a drunkard if someone does not stop him. I have known so many. Alex was nearly a drunkard when he met me; it is in the blood. I see it in the way Sebastian drinks. It is not your way.'
>
> (Waugh 1962, p. 100)

Cara is interesting also for the simplicity of her religious belief; she is corrected on some theological points by Brideshead but has a trust that is portrayed as worth much more than knowledge. When Charles is questioning the family about the importance and significance of the Last Rites, it is Cara who says:

> 'All I know is that *I* shall take very good care to have a priest.'
> 'Bless you,' said Cordelia, 'I believe that's the best answer.'
>
> (Waugh 1962, p. 314)

Thirdly, Cara's faith is simple like Rose's; it is not complicated by too much education as Brideshead's has been.

But for Waugh, as for Greene, the Church does not betray. From one point of view Catholicism is the cause of all Sebastian's difficulties but the Church is shown as unchanging as well as unyielding so that Sebastian can return to his faith because that is unaltered while he has changed. The constancy of Catholicism that is portrayed here by Waugh is something to which all the major protagonists cling even whilst kicking against it. Sebastian's attachment to Nanny Hawkins is indicative of this ambiguity. In *Brighton Rock* , too, the characters perceive the Church as the one constant in life, just as death is the only certainty in life. The preoccupation with death in Greene's work is not, however, shared by Waugh. Against the sense of personal betrayal is set the larger perspective of society's betrayal of the past. Great families like the Marchmains must give way to the upstarts, the Hoopers of the world, as it changes beyond all recognition thanks to the Second World War. Waugh obviously regrets the passing of such things and yet without the War the Brideshead chapel would have remained closed and unused; it had been shut up long before — the War can not be blamed for that. Rather the Marchmains and their kind had simply had their day as Rex Mottram accurately saw.

> he began again on the Marchmains:
> 'I'll tell you another thing too - they'll get a jolt financially soon if they don't look out.'
> 'I thought they were enormously rich.'
> 'Well they are rich in the way people are who just let their money sit quiet. Everyone of that sort is poorer than they were in 1914, and the Flytes don't seem to realize it... I don't mean that they'll be paupers; the old boy will always be good for an odd thirty thousand a year, but there'll be a shake-up coming soon...
>
> (Waugh 1962, pp. 168 9)

Sebastian's eventual flight from his family and the machinations of Mr Samgrass, and his relationship with the unloveable Kurt, show just how much he needs

to be able to demonstrate his own loyalty. A hopeless case like the syphilitic Kurt allows Sebastian to develop in a way his own family never did or could allow him. Kurt relies on Sebastian and trusts him. It is being trusted by another person which is so crucial to Sebastian.[31]

Later, after Kurt's death, Sebastian's involvement with the monks is another indicator of his need to be useful. The relationship is a healthier one too because he is also being helped in a manner that he is not forced to reject. He can be both useful and trusted; dipsomaniac that he is. For the first time in his life he can be allowed an appropriate degree of trust from the brothers. Brideshead understands in his practical way:

> When Brideshead and I were left alone he said: 'Did you say Sebastian was drunk?'
> 'Yes.'
> 'Extraordinary time to choose. Couldn't you stop him?'
> 'No.'
> 'No,' said Brideshead, 'I don't suppose you could. I once saw my father drunk, in this room. I wasn't more than about ten at the time. You can't stop people if they want to get drunk. My mother couldn't stop my father you know.'
>
> (Waugh 1962, p. 128)

Charles wants to cure him in a less possessive way than Lady Marchmain but he still wants Sebastian to change. Cordelia and Brideshead can accept him the way he is and indeed it is through his alcoholism that he is brought back to his Catholic Faith. Waugh's conversion to Catholicism is very different from that of Beardsley and Wilde but here he shows us a character similar in decadence to those earlier writers and the combination of religion and abuse of the body is again insisted upon. Like Cara speaking the Truth on Sebastian earlier, Cordelia does it here. She has visited Sebastian and he is very weak but living with the monks:

[31]See how important Rose's trust in Pinkie is too, compare p. 30 above.

> 'Poor Sebastian!' I said. 'It's too pitiful. How will it end?'
>
> 'I think I can tell you exactly, Charles. I've seen others like him, and I believe they are very near and dear to God. He'll live on, half in, half out of, the community ... Then one morning, after one of his drinking bouts, he'll be picked up at the gate dying, and show by a mere flicker of the eyelid that he is conscious when they give him the last sacraments. It's not such a bad way of getting through one's life.'...
>
> I said. 'I suppose he doesn't suffer?'
>
> 'Oh, yes, I think he does. One can have no idea what the suffering may be, to be maimed as he is no dignity, no power of will. No one is ever holy without suffering. It's taken that form with him...'
>
> (Waugh 1962, p. 294)

Suffering[32] is perceived as a Catholic privilege by Waugh and is comparable to the perhaps masochistic attraction it had to Wilde and his contemporaries.

In the later stages of the novel, Julia becomes increasingly important. Like Sebastian she appears as at least half agnostic and her rebellion against her religion and her mother is a symbol that shadows Sebastian's to a large extent. Ultimately, she becomes Charles' lover. As is stated, Sebastian was in many ways the forerunner to his sister:

> 'It's frightening,' Julia once said, 'to think how completely you have forgotten Sebastian.'
>
> 'He was the forerunner.'
>
> 'That's what you said in the storm. I've thought since, perhaps I am only a forerunner, too.'
>
> (Waugh 1962, p. 288)

Julia is correct in her prediction that she herself is only a forerunner to the ultimate love of Charles' life — God himself. However, she too renews her relationship with God and indeed is the one to make the break with Charles. She feels that her relationship with Charles is wrong and that in God's eyes it will continue to be wrong even after their mutual divorces are finalised and they are

[32]However, before Vatican II the importance of suffering as a means to salvation is highlighted; after the Council, though not displaced by any specific doctrinal shift, it falls from prominence in customary spiritual life.

married. Thus, by giving up the one thing she wants so much she hopes to atone for much of her past life.

> 'I've always been bad. Probably I shall be bad again, punished again. But the worse I am, the more I need God. I can't shut myself out from his mercy. That is what it would mean; starting a life with you, without him... it may be a private bargain between me and God, that if I give up this one thing I want so much, however bad I am, he won't quite despair of me in the end.'
>
> (Waugh 1962, p. 324)

Again this is linked directly to a concern with betrayal. Julia feels that she must no longer betray God lest he should cease to keep faith with her. Charles, although heart-broken by her decision, sees it in terms of Divine Grace and knows her to be right. By this stage he is almost converted himself having developed from once, as a young Oxford undergraduate, not recognising that Catholics were different: to a position where he acknowledges God and accepts His will.

> '... I wish I liked Catholics more.'
> 'They seem just like other people.'
> 'My dear Charles, that's exactly what they're not—particularly in this country, where they're so few. It's not just that they're a clique—as a matter of fact, they're at least four cliques all blackguarding each other half the time—but they've got an entirely different outlook on life; everything they think is important is different from other people. They try and hide it as much as they can, but it comes out all the time.
>
> (Waugh 1962, p. 87)

The reader's close association with this character and its transformation tends to encourage belief in the Divine. If Ryder can accept it, and the reader has been empathising with him throughout the novel, then it is necessary for the reader to accept too if the novel is to be successful.

The Catholic clergy have a role to play in both texts. In Anthony Trollope's novels, 'the clergy' refers to an interconnected group of ministers of various ranks

and their families.[33] For Greene and Waugh it means specifically priests. Although we encounter Jesuits and Franciscans it is their role as priest which is important. In *Brideshead Revisited* there are a few different examples of priest to observe, in *Brighton Rock* only one. His appearance right at the end of the text seems to be an attempt to justify the novel's purpose as a story concerned with much more than just the sensationalism of the thriller. He may be the only priest present in *Brighton Rock* but he is there in order to represent the Church as a whole. Greene shows his universal nature by stressing his namelessness:

> Outside she looked up at the name on the confessional box - it wasn't any name she remembered. Priests come and go.
>
> (Greene 1970, p. 247)

Again we get an impression of constancy: priests come and go but the Church goes on the same. With his reference to Péguy the priest adds an intellectual dimension and has the task of helping and possibly comforting the helpless Rose.

> 'If he loved you, surely,' the old man said, 'that shows there was some good...'
> 'Even love like that?'
> 'Yes.'
>
> (Greene 1970, pp. 246–7)

The theological views of Péguy are a favourite of Greene. He uses this priest to stand for all priests spelling out the message to Rose (who knows nothing of theology) because he does not want his audience, possibly as ignorant as Rose herself, to miss this vital point:

> 'There was a man, a Frenchman, you wouldn't know about him, my child, who had the same idea as you. He was a good man, a holy man, and he lived in sin all through his life, because he couldn't bear the idea that any soul could suffer damnation.' She listened

[33]Particularly his 'Barsetshire' series, for example, *The Warden* (1855) and *Barchester Towers* (1857) both reprinted by Oxford University Press, in 1985 and 1984 respectively.

> with astonishment. He said, 'This man decided that if any soul was going to be damned, he would be damned too. He never took the sacraments, he never married his wife in church. I don't know, my child, but some people think he was - well, a saint. I think he died in what we are told is mortal sin - I'm not sure: it was in the war: perhaps...' He sighed and whistled, bending his old head. He said, 'You can't conceive, my child, nor can I or anyone the ... appalling... strangeness of the mercy of God.'...
>
> He shivered and sneezed. 'We must hope and pray,' he said, 'hope and pray. The Church does not demand that we believe any soul is cut off from mercy.'
>
> (Greene 1970, p. 246)

The whiskey priest in *The Power and the Glory*[34] is a priest of a different kind. He is a sinner and yet the importance of the priesthood is stressed as it is his role as a priest which matters in the saying of Mass and hearing of Confessions rather than his existence as a man. However, it is his God-given ability to change bread and wine into the body, blood, soul and divinity of Jesus Christ himself which, as he fears, means that he is still worthy of damnation. This, of course, is a self-conscious Catholic insistence. Péguy's views are incorporated by Greene yet again:

> 'I don't know a thing about the mercy of God: I don't know how awful the human heart looks to Him. But I do know this—that if there's ever been a single man in this state damned, then I'll be damned too.'
>
> (Greene 1962, p. 259)

Greene's *The Heart of the Matter* indeed starts with an epigram from Péguy:

> *Le pécheur est au coeur même de chrétienté... Nul n'est aussi compétent que le pécheur en matière de chrétienté. Nul, si ce n'est saint.*
>
> quoted in (Sykes 1977, p. 326)

The despairing but essentially good man, Scobie, in *The Heart of the Matter*, is a literary descendant of Pinkie Brown. Scobie does eventually kill himself but

[34]This novel was condemned by the Church for the use of an alcoholic priest as a role model, see pp. 271–2 of the biography Michael Shelden (1995) *Graham Greene* London, Minerva.

has been so well portrayed as 'good' and doing everything for the best that the reader can not possibly be satisfied with the prospect of his damnation. The idea of suicide was present in *Brighton Rock* but it is not until this later work that the theme is fully developed.

Waugh reviewed this new novel for *The Tablet*[35] critically. He queried the book's moral significance:

> We are told that [Scobie] is actuated throughout by love of God. A love, it is true, that falls short of trust, but a love, we must suppose, which sanctifies his sins. That is the heart of the matter. Is such a sacrifice feasible? To me the idea is totally unintelligible, but it is not unfamiliar... To me the idea of willing my own damnation for the love of God is either a very loose poetical expression or a mad blasphemy
>
> (Sykes 1977, p. 327)

The two men corresponded further on this issue which does not seem to have harmed their friendship. As the controversy over *The Heart of the Matter* raged in *The Tablet*, Greene wrote to Waugh:

> 'Dear Evelyn, You've made me very conceited. Thank you very very much. There's no other living writer whom I would rather receive praise (& criticism) from. A small point I did not regard Scobie as a saint, & his offering his damnation up was intended to show how muddled a mind full of good will could become when once "off the rails." '
>
> (Sykes 1977, p. 327)

Waugh replied:

> 'Dear Graham, I am delighted that you did not take the review amiss. My admiration for the book was great—as I hope I made plain.
>
> 'It was your putting that quotation from Péguy at the beginning which led me astray. I think it will lead others astray. Indeed I saw a review by Raymond Mortimer in which he states without the hesitation I expressed, that you thought Scobie a saint.'
>
> (Sykes 1977, pp. 327–8)

[35]This is an intellectual Catholic weekly newspaper read by many educated Catholics.

Such conflict of opinion is indicative of how different the religious ideas of these two authors were. Waugh would be unlikely to have felt happy with the conclusion to *Brighton Rock*: it seems that the text with its indication of new life and hope (Rose may be pregnant) may actually have a happy ending in some sense at least if only it were not for the fact that "She walked rapidly in the thin June sunlight towards the worst horror of all." (Greene 1970, p. 247) The "worst horror" is the gramophone record Pinkie has left her on which she believes she will hear the words of love but he has, in fact, recorded:

> 'God damn you, you little bitch, why can't you go back home for ever and let me be.'
>
> (Greene 1970, p. 177)

This seems to be painting the picture as unnecessarily black. Clearly, it depends upon what Greene intended his reader to feel about Pinkie's eternal fate. Ultimately, the question can not be resolved, yet it is surely no accident that the permanent record which Pinkie leaves behind him in this life may be interpreted so conveniently as being indicative of his eternal destiny in the next.

In *Brideshead Revisited*, in much the same way that we meet a variety of different lay Catholics, we also meet a selection of different priests. One the reader does not actually meet but hears much about is the Monsignor. There is a suggestion that Sebastian should live with him and Brideshead displays a little more of his character:

> Brideshead was as grave and impersonal as ever. 'It's a pity Sebastian doesn't know Mgr Bell better,' he said. 'He'd find him a charming man to live with. I was there in my last year...'
>
> (Waugh 1962, p. 140)

Brideshead is not only "impersonal", Sebastian complains he is also "Jesuitical". (Waugh 1962, p. 90) There is no warmth in his religious belief. As Charles says:

> 'D'you know, Bridey, if I ever felt for a moment like becoming a Catholic, I should only have to talk to you for five minutes to be cured. You manage to reduce what seem quite sensible propositions to stark nonsense.'
>
> 'It's odd you should say that. I've heard it before from other people. It's one of the many reasons why I don't think I should make a good priest. It's something in the way my mind works, I suppose.'
>
> (Waugh 1962, pp. 158–9)

It is no accident that it is the characters of Julia and Sebastian rather than the confirmed Catholics: Cordelia, Brideshead and Lady Marchmain, who lead Charles gradually to embrace Catholicism as he finally does through the agency of the death of the most thoroughly lapsed and scoffing Catholic of the whole family, Lord Marchmain. Various friars with whom Sebastian is involved are seen chiefly through Charles Ryder's eyes. As Lady Marchmain lies dying, Charles goes to Morocco in search of Sebastian and finds him in a hospital run by Franciscans. First he speaks to a lay doctor and then to one of the friars:

> he told me Sebastian was in no danger, but quite unfit to travel. He had had the grippe, with one lung slightly affected; he was very weak; he lacked resistance; what could one expect? He was an alcoholic. The doctor spoke dispassionately, almost brutally, with the relish men of science sometimes have for limiting themselves to inessentials, for pruning back their work to the point of sterility; but the bearded, barefooted brother in whose charge he put me, the man of no scientific pretensions who did the dirty jobs of the ward, had a different story.
>
> 'He's so patient. Not like a young man at all. He lies there and never complains - and there is much to complain of. We have no facilities. The government give us what they can spare from the soldiers. And he is so kind. There is a poor German boy with a foot that will not heal and secondary syphilis, who comes here for treatment. Lord Flyte found him starving in Tangier and took him in and gave him a home. A real Samaritan.'
>
> (Waugh 1962, pp. 205–6)

Very succinctly Waugh has shown Sebastian first in secular and then in religious terms. It is of course yet another method Waugh uses to give a deeper perspective upon the different Catholic characters, to exhibit them through the

eyes of different people. Perhaps his most effective example of this is Sebastian and his relationship with the other characters. Because of his 'problem' he is naturally discussed by the clerical figures and members of his family. Charles as narrator is privy to much of what is said by others as well as adding his own perspective. This itself alters naturally with time as the tale progresses and as his ideas about his friend are both altered and strengthened by what others say.

The two priests to have the most importance are the Farm Street Jesuit Father Mowbray who instructs Rex Mottram and the parish priest Father Mackay who visits the dying Lord Marchmain and finally administers the Last Rites. These two men are quite different; the first, being a Jesuit, is intellectual in his approach and is described as: "a priest renowned for his triumphs with obdurate catechumens." (Waugh 1962, p. 185) Father Mackay is described only in passing. It is explained that he is not well known to the family. He is visiting from a nearby village, Brideshead chapel itself having been closed: "he was a stocky, middle-aged, genial Glasgow-Irishman". (Waugh 1962, p. 311) Father Mackay is certainly less of an educated man than Father Mowbray but his role in administering the Last Rites to Lord Marchmain increases his importance in the text. Waugh, sympathetic to the aristocracy in secular society, makes it clear that social and intellectual ranking have nothing to do with the nature of priesthood or faith. Father Mackay is a simple man at heart, when his offers of religious assistance are initially rejected by the dying man he is not discouraged and comforts Cordelia:

> '... can only apologise.'
> '... poor soul. Mark you, it was seeing a strange face; depend upon it, it was that—an unexpected stranger. I well understand it.'
> '... Father, I am sorry... bringing you all this way...'
> 'Don't think about it at all, Lady Cordelia. Why, I've known worse cases make beautiful deaths. Pray for him... I'll come again...'
>
> (Waugh 1962, p. 311)

Death is naturally an central subject for a Catholic. The death of Lord March-

main is one of the most memorable scenes of the book and with good reason. It is the turning point for both Julia and Charles, and for the latter it signals his conversion. Waugh makes no scruples about referring directly (via Charles) to the account of Christ's Passion in the Gospels.

> I suddenly felt the longing for a sign, if only of courtesy, if only for the sake of the woman I loved... I prayed more simply; 'God forgive him his sins' and 'Please God, make him accept your forgiveness.'
>
> So small a thing to ask...
>
> ...and Lord Marchmain made the sign of the cross. Then I knew that the sign I had asked for was not a little thing, not a passing nod of recognition, and a phrase came back to me from my childhood of the veil of the temple being rent from top to bottom.
>
> (Waugh 1962, p. 322)

It is Lord Marchmain's death which brings Julia 'to her senses', that is, she will no longer be unfaithful to God; the "twitch upon the thread"[36] has brought her back.

The treatment of death in *Brighton Rock* is obviously more violent. This is after all a detective thriller and so we are much more concerned with murders, suicides and such like than peaceful deathbed scenarios. The apparent ease with which Pinkie kills and accepts murder as a part of the way of things is at least partly explained by his own childhood: "hell lay about him in his infancy." (Greene 1970, p. 68) Such an unloving and unlovely background as his is something that no modern child psychologist would fail to make use of in defending his criminal behaviour. However, Greene is more concerned with making Pinkie believable than defending him; as a Catholic he must be responsible for his own behaviour and all the bad upbringing and poor examples of childhood cannot save him from this responsibility. In marked contrast we have the purity and goodness of Rose. From what Greene shows of her family background the reader can only be surprised that she has turned out to be such a paragon of virtue.

[36]The title of Book Three of *Brideshead Revisited*. The idea comes from Chesterton, which is evidence that Waugh, as well as Greene, is influenced by Chesterton.

Greene appears to be trying to emphasise that, ultimately, each is responsible for his or her own actions, irrespective of background or upbringing. The suicide pact between Rose and Pinkie is chillingly well portrayed. Presumably Pinkie has no intention whatsoever of actually killing himself but goes to elaborate lengths to persuade Rose of the necessity for both their deaths. Suicide is of course the ultimate sin from a Catholic viewpoint. It involves the sin of Despair and because of its finality allows no possibility of repentance. However, the possibility of salvation is always there. Most people would consider Adolf Hitler to be a likely candidate for eternal damnation but as Lodge says:

> In fact there is no guarantee that Hitler is in Hell; he might have made an Act of Perfect Contrition a microsecond after squeezing the trigger in his Berlin bunker.
>
> (Lodge 1980, p. 7)

Pinkie's repeated "Between the stirrup and the ground"[37] is another way of expressing the same view. Rose's reasons for agreeing to kill herself (for she is clearly not planning an escape or to do anything other than obey Pinkie) are a part of Greene's intention to make the simple view of suicide as an evil act much more complex. She would kill herself not out of Despair but out of love and her complete trust in Pinkie as the one who knows what is the best thing to do. Thus, as Charles Péguy tried to do, so she also is able to turn something apparently evil into something of great good. The inevitable end of Pinkie Brown is not therefore to die by his own hand although ironically he does die of his own vitriol.

For a Catholic writer any treatment of death necessarily includes a consideration of Hell and Heaven and the Judgement that precedes them. Catholic writers in particular use Hell not only as a device to add excitement and horror to their work, they also need to discuss the implications of damnation with regard to their characters. The Catholic Arthur Conan Doyle eventually abandoned his

[37]See above p. 31.

faith precisely because he could not accept the doctrine of Hell. He became one of many intellectuals in late Victorian/Edwardian society to display an intense interest in spiritualism. Greene himself seems to have had no problem in accepting the doctrine of and fully believing in the real existence of Hell, and yet his continued interest in Péguy is reminiscent of Anne Brontë's hope that there is no eternal damnation. This personal belief was cherished by Anne throughout her short life and is important to the heroine of her second novel, Helen Huntingdon, when she speaks of her drunkard husband's death:

> How could I endure to think that that poor trembling soul was hurried away to everlasting torment? it would drive me mad! But thank God I have hope—not only from a vague dependence on the possibility that penitence and pardon might have reached him at the last, but from the blessed confidence that, through whatever purging fires the erring spirit may be doomed to pass—whatever fate awaits it, still, it is not lost, and God, who hateth nothing that He hath made, will bless it in the end!
>
> (Brontë 1979, p. 452)

The same idea emerges in her moving poem *A Word To The Elect*:

> And, when you, looking on your fellow-men,
> Behold them doomed to endless misery,
> How can you talk of joy and rapture then?
> May God withhold such cruel joy from me!
>
> (Chitham 1979)

Another Catholic writer, and friend of Greene, Antonia White, clings to at least the possibility of this idea. Her heroine Nanda Grey contemplates the doctrine of Hell:

> It was not so much the thought of hell for herself that appalled Nanda, for after all, she knew the means of avoiding it, but she sometimes lay awake at night worrying miserably over the damned. For months she would forget all about them, then an account of a horrible accident or a sermon like this would remind her of them. She would pray frantically

> for them, forgetting that it was useless. In spite of this, she would go so far as to beg Our Lady to do something for them, clinging to some vague legend about their being allowed one day's respite in ten thousand years. Sometimes, she even doubted that their punishments were eternal, only to remember, horrified, that the eternity of hell was an article of faith, and that to doubt it endangered her own soul.
>
> (White 1978, p. 135)

But later in the book, when she and her school friends are a few years older they have found a source of consolation on this subject:

> 'I sometimes wonder,' Clare said, 'how Catholics can bear the thought of anyone, however wicked, being in a hell like that.'
>
> 'Ah,' said Léonie, 'we've got you very neatly there. It's only a dogma that hell exists; it isn't a dogma that there's anybody in it.'
>
> (White 1978, p. 164)

Heaven has less dramatic impact than Hell but it is also less tangible in a way. Heaven is something that can only be longed and hoped for, to believe oneself to be saved is a sin referred to as 'Presumption upon God's Mercy'.[38] On the other hand to fear that one is damned is exciting from a fictional stance and understandable from a religious position. Hell is foregrounded in popular pre-Vatican II Catholicism anyhow in a way that Heaven is not. Hell becomes less prominent after the Council but Heaven does not increase in importance proportionally as might be imagined. Some modern orthodox Catholic theologians, whilst not denying the existence of Hell, argue that there are other orthodox ways of regarding it than the Augustine view which has dominated Western Christianity. [39]

Sexual matters in relationship to Catholicism obviously feature large in many novels. Many modern authors writing about Catholicism concentrate almost exclusively on the problems raised by secular values as compared with Catholic

[38]This is given in *The Penny Catechism* as one of the six sins against the Holy Spirit. The other five are: despair, resisting the known truth, envy of another's spiritual good, obstinacy in sin and final impenitence (CTS 1971, p. 57). Lodge discusses them in *How Far Can You Go?* p. 44.

[39]See von Balthasar (1984, p. 128).

sexual practices and beliefs. Within the Church itself there seems to be a never ending debate on the Church's role and even its right to have any role or say over this most intimate area of people's lives. A basic interest in matters sexual is not an innovation and the sensationalism offered to the writer (and readers) by such subject matter has long been employed by Catholics and non-Catholics alike—albeit in less graphic detail than is common today. Waugh's view in *Brideshead Revisited* is stated quite simply and it is the traditional Church view: that sex outside of marriage is wrong. He does not seek to condone Lord Marchmain's relationship with Cara and yet on her first appearance he is very careful to avoid any possibility of sensationalism:

> Lord Marchmain's mistress arrived the next day. I was nineteen years old and completely ignorant of women. I could not with any certainty recognise a prostitute in the streets. I was therefore not indifferent to the fact of living under the roof of an adulterous couple, but I was old enough to hide my interest. Lord Marchmain's mistress, therefore, found me with a multitude of conflicting expectations about her, all of which were, for the moment, disappointed by her appearance. She was not a voluptuous Toulouse-Lautrec odalisque; she was not a 'little bit of fluff'; she was a middle-aged, well-preserved, well-dressed, well-mannered woman such as I had seen in countless public places and occasionally met. Nor did she seem marked by any social stigma.
>
> (Waugh 1962, p. 97)

The only sexual passion is between Charles and Julia on the voyage. Waugh approaches it tentatively as do his characters:

> later that night when she went to bed and I followed her to her door, she stopped me.
>
> 'No, Charles, not yet. Perhaps never. I don't know. I don't know if I want love.'
>
> (Waugh 1962, p. 244)

Later in melodramatic fashion they do become lovers; it is in the midst of a storm:

> with her lips to my ear and her breath warm in the salt wind, Julia said, though I had not spoken, 'Yes, now,' and as the ship righted herself and for the moment ran into calmer waters, Julia led me below.

> It was no time for the sweets of luxury; they would come, in their season, with the swallow and the lime flowers. Now on the rough water there was a formality to be observed, no more. It was as though a deed of conveyance of her narrow loins had been drawn and sealed. I was making my first entry as the freeholder of a property I would enjoy and develop at leisure.[40]
>
> (Waugh 1962, p. 248)

This is the closest we get to a sex scene and it is more embarrassing than anything else as if Waugh himself is ashamed of what his characters are doing and trying perhaps too hard to ensure that his readers do not enjoy it either. The symbolism of the sea and the awkwardly poetic language do not help because they are too out of place within the novel's general style. Indeed they only help to make us feel uncomfortable and glad when the scene is quickly over. It is difficult to find instances in his fiction where Waugh does write positively about sex.[41] However, it seems likely to have been his intention to make his reader feel that what the lovers are doing is wrong and prepare the ground for the time when they too will realise it. Greene is more complex in his treatment of sex. On the one hand we have Pinkie's unnatural and excessive hatred of sex as dirty and animal and then on the other Ida who makes sex dirty and animal because it is purely a matter of pleasure. Again Pinkie's feelings are largely formed by his childhood memories.

> He lay still thinking. 'What a dream!' and then heard the stealthy movement of his parents in the other bed. It was Saturday night. His father panted like a man at the end of a race and his mother made a horrifying sound of pleasurable pain. He was filled with hatred, disgust, loneliness
>
> (Greene 1970, p. 186)

What both writers have in common is their serious treatment of sex as subject matter. It is not used by either for cheap sensationalism. Sex, at least in the fictional Catholic environments that Greene and Waugh have developed, is a

[40]Waugh revised the love-making scene in 1962. The revised version is quoted here.
[41]In earlier novels Waugh is satirical about sex and in later ones it is marginalised.

serious matter and both authors depict it so as to avoid a light-hearted response from the reader. Indeed, Greene's treatment of it gives a grotesque quality for Pinkie at least. Only with Rose is the situation improved for here we have sex as an expression of human love (on her part at least) with the necessary, from a Catholic standpoint, openness to procreation.

The final concern under consideration is not overtly Catholic. Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) and William Godwin's *Caleb Williams* (1794), for instance both dramatise pursuit. Nevertheless, there is a distinctively Catholic tradition here. It is, again, shared by both writers. The pursuit of Man by God is an important and recurring theme for Greene and one which Waugh also makes use of in *Brideshead Revisited* with his section so aptly entitled "A Twitch Upon The Thread". Francis Thompson put the same idea beautifully in his most famous work:

> I fled Him, down the nights and down the days;
> I fled Him, down the arches of the years;
> I fled Him, down the labyrinthine ways
> Of my own mind; and in the midst of tears
> I hid from Him, and under running laughter.
> Up vistaed slopes I sped
> And shot, precipited
> Adown Titanic glooms or chasmed fears,
> From those strong feet that followed, followed after.
>
> (Thompson 1952)

This poem, well-known in itself, was particularly popular with English Catholics. Certainly, all of Waugh's characters are pursued to a greater or lesser degree depending upon their individual circumstances. Particularly for those apparently furthest away from God the pursuit and final restoration of these lost sheep to the Good Shepherd is often the most strange. Cordelia, for example, never loses her faith and is quite happy but not all her family are as fortunate.

> 'So you see we're a mixed family religiously. Brideshead and Cordelia are both fervent Catholics; he's miserable, she's bird-happy; Julia and

> I are half-heathen; I am happy, I rather think Julia isn't; mummy is popularly believed to be a saint and papa is excommunicated - and I wouldn't know which of them was happy.'
>
> (Waugh 1962, pp. 86–7)

Sebastian and Julia as the lapsed children both have strange paths to follow and Lord Marchmain, although he has had many happy years with his mistress, (albeit in self-imposed exile in Italy) is not enviable. His difficulties lie towards the end of his life as he fights both his illness and the pull of God. Charles Ryder as narrator puts forward the secular cliché:

> I said to the doctor, who was with us daily: 'He's got a wonderful will to live, hasn't he?'
> 'Would you put it like that? I should say a great fear of death.'
> 'Is there a difference?'
> 'Oh dear, yes. He doesn't derive any strength from his fear, you know. It's wearing him out.'
>
> (Waugh 1962, p. 316)

The message is clear and, for the Christian, a comforting one, God never abandons his people although they may choose to neglect and even ultimately reject him. None of Waugh's major characters in *Brideshead Revisited* do ever completely turn away from God and thus there is a happy ending, beyond the fiction, for each of them. It is the interaction of the various characters which brings them ultimately in their many varied ways to God. The narrator, Charles Ryder, is of course also drawn to God and the Catholic Faith through his very association with the Marchmain family; without this long, complex and varied acquaintance, he might never have experienced his eventual conversion. However that may be, all the characters are eventually restored to their Faith through no human medium but the action of Divine Grace.

Greene himself clearly had a feeling of God's pursuit within his own life. His biographer recounts the following:

> Once I asked him if, like his atheist character Bendrix in *The End of the Affair*, he was hounded by God. His answer was revealing: 'I hope so. I hope so. I hope God is still dogging my footsteps.'
>
> (Sherry 1992, p. 13)

This idea of God as one who never gives up and who pursues his 'victims' relentlessly is used again and again by Greene in his Catholic novels. Pinkie is most obviously pursued by human agencies in the form of the police and Ida. The essential difference is that neither of these secular forms can benefit him in the end whereas the pursuit by God will do so. As with Greene's other novels, whether it is the pursuit of the criminal character by the police or the victim by his torturers or the traitor by those whom he has betrayed, the actual pursuit

> symbolised the pursuit of man's soul, his inner self, by God; he was hunted down in his search for a peace that often was found only in death... God was the pursuer from whom there could be no escape, even when despair dictated a way out that looked, from the Catholic point of view, like damnation.
>
> (Longmans 1955, p. 8)

The character of Rose, who is in some ways too good to be true, is Greene's way of depicting how God cares for Pinkie. With her unfailing trust and absolute devotion to him she provides a mirror in which God's own faithfulness is reflected. Rose mentions the possibility of a child from her brief union with Pinkie and the priest sums up the whole situation. "'With your simplicity and his force... Make him a saint—to pray for his father.'" (Greene 1970, p. 247) This finally gives Rose the hope she has been looking for, the spiritual strength: "A sudden feeling of immense gratitude broke through the pain—it was as if she had been given the sight a long way off of life going on again." (Greene 1970, p. 247) Her influence upon him is to be one of example only and just how far she is successful in changing him in any way is not much developed in the novel, but we are left with the possibility that her prayers could yet help his ultimate destiny. Pinkie does appear to have some feelings of tenderness towards her but his more ruthless

instincts generally have the upper hand and any potential for good he may have is not revealed before the close of the book. This may be interpreted as another sign of the immaturity of the work (certainly in later works Greene was not one to neglect the possibility of developing the inner feelings of his main characters) or it may be seen as yet another indication that Greene is not sure of Pinkie's ultimate fate and wishes to preserve the ambiguity for fictional reasons.

Novels, though fictional, in some sense represent life and thus *Brighton Rock* and *Brideshead Revisited* provide the reader through the various Catholic characters with a range of possible views and ideas about Catholicism. None of them is quite agreed about every detail as is shown when the as yet unconverted Charles Ryder tries to get the Marchmains to explain the necessity for having a priest administer the Last Rites:

> Julia said: 'I wish you wouldn't start these religious arguments.'
> 'I didn't start it.'
> 'You don't convince anyone else and you don't really convince yourself.'
> 'I only want to know what these people believe. They say it's all based on logic.'
> 'If you'd let Bridey finish, he would have made it all quite logical.'
> 'There were four of you,' I said. 'Cara didn't know the first thing it was about, and may or may not have believed it; you knew a bit and didn't believe a word; Cordelia knew about as much and believed it madly; only poor Bridey knew and believed, and I thought he made a pretty poor show when it came to explaining. And people go round saying, "At least Catholics know what they believe." We had a fair cross-section tonight—'
>
> (Waugh 1962, pp. 314 5)

And yet certain central things are accepted and understood by all the protagonists. It is difficult to provide an inclusive list of what these might be but, for example, the idea that suicide is a particularly awful sin, that sex outside of marriage is wrong, that Heaven and Hell are real and that God is really and truly present in the Eucharist. Essentially, what a Catholic must believe is stated

within the Church's Articles of Faith; there are surprisingly few of them. Antonia White's heroine, Nanda, talks about these rudiments of her Faith in a manner fitting to the age where actual Church dogma is entwined with religious folklore and certain elements which are no more than social conditioning.

> Every human being tainted with original sin. Warped instincts and passions like the beasts. Baptism remits punishment due to original sin, but does not eradicate results...
>
> Take no thought for the morrow. God will provide. He sends little ones trooping down from heaven. Poverty does not matter. Saints came from large families. Essentials of life, Mass and the Sacraments are free to all. Wealth carries great responsibilities. Chokes spiritual growth. Rich and poor, however, a divine dispensation. Must not try to alter natural order of things. Abominations of socialism, freemasonry, etc. Trying to do God's work for Him. Women's votes unnecessary. Let her use her great influence in her own sphere. Modesty more effective than desire to shine. Our Lady had no vote and did not want one.
>
> (White 1978, pp. 129–32)

Greene portrays unusual Catholic figures in *Brighton Rock*, just as he does even more effectively in later books. Pinkie and Rose do have a certain amount in common especially as regards their religion. Both, from the limited information we have about their upbringing and family background, are largely unloved by anyone and neither has been very seriously instructed in the faith. But certain aspects have stuck. Pinkie's belief in Hell, for example, is unshakeable as is Rose's contrasting belief in Heaven.

> 'You a Roman?' the Boy asked.
>
> 'Yes,' Rose said.
>
> 'I'm one too,' the Boy said...
>
> ...'But you believe, don't you,' Rose implored him, 'you think it's true?'
>
> 'Of course it's true,' the Boy said. 'What else could there be?' he went scornfully on. 'Why,' he said, 'it's the only thing that fits. These atheists, they don't know nothing. Of course there's Hell. Flames and damnation,' he said with his eyes on the dark shifting water and the

> lightning and the lamps going out above the black struts of the Palace Pier, 'torments.'
>
> 'And Heaven too,' Rose said with anxiety while the rain fell interminably on.
>
> 'Oh, maybe,' the boy said, 'maybe.'
>
> (Greene 1970, p. 52)

They become extreme examples of Catholics because of Pinkie's criminal activities and the subsequent events which involve them both. They are unusual in that they are shown as thinking carefully and continually about everyday things in very specifically Catholic terms; something which may be a little odd as they do not actually practice their religion in any conventional way. Greene is more successful in his later novels in depicting characters at once unusual and yet thoroughly 'real'; Rose and Pinkie are convincing within the confines of the text but not capable of standing up alone without Greene's constant efforts. Waugh, on the other hand, has peopled *Brideshead Revisited* with lifelike characters who happen to be Catholics. His use of one central family and a variety of their contacts and acquaintances has allowed him to display much more variety of what Catholics are like. In particular, his use of a non-Catholic narrator to appear objective towards any religious aspects and to whom various theological points need to be explained is an adroit means of giving out any necessary information to a non-Catholic audience, and implicitly inviting the reader to a like conversion, without troubling the Catholic sections of his readership. Thus, Greene and Waugh have shown us two very distinct approaches to Catholicism as Catholics themselves and again through their fiction. Waugh's Catholicism is self-consciously traditional. The continuity of the Faith, its stability and its aesthetic appeal are highlighted in his fiction. He has a sense of order which Catholicism seems to guarantee, and a distaste for the modern. The attributes of religious art and the comforts of a beautiful ritual based on nineteenth-century tradition are not peripheral to his view of Catholicism but vital to it. He refers, for example, to the work of the Pre-Raphaelite painters:

> 'Julia,' I said later, when Brideshead had gone upstairs, 'have you ever seen a picture of Holman Hunt's called "The Awakened Conscience"?'
>
> 'No.'
>
> I had seen a copy of Pre-Raphaelitism in the library some days before; I found it again and read her Ruskin's description.
>
> (Waugh 1962, p. 276)

The whole ethos of the novel with God as a loving Father wanting to care for all the characters is reminiscent of another of Hunt's great works: *The Light of the World.* In *Brideshead Revisited*, the characters are not all theologically informed or even necessarily appreciative of the beauty of their religion but there is room for them as well as the better informed. Greene's Catholicism is somehow less palpable. He is much more concerned with the individual and his personal relationship with God, than with the beauty and suggestive power of ritual and worship. As a man Greene himself certainly had trouble in abiding by the Church's teaching (especially in the area of sexual morality)[42] and thus must often have been in what a traditional Catholic would consider to be a state of mortal sin. Clearly, Greene and Waugh, although agreed upon essentials (that is, neither openly opposed the basic dogma of the Church),[43] stand poles apart in religious ideology just as they are on the opposing right and left of the political spectrum. Both are utilising their religion in these two novels but in very different ways. Whereas Waugh seeks to reaffirm his belief and strengthen the pull of the Catholic Church, Greene seeks to push against it to the very limits of theological argument which is why it is necessary for him to depict such extremes of circumstance and behaviour in his characters. In terms of religious affiliation, Waugh would be described as essentially traditionalist and Greene as a liberal or progressive Catholic. Obviously, this picture of opposites is a simplified view but a valuable one nonetheless. Both authors lived to see the advent of the Second Vatican Council and if we look

[42]Shelden recounts numerous instances of sexual immorality throughout Greene's life.

[43]At least this was the case before the war. Later in life Greene appeared to believe very little actual dogma but he did not forgo his Catholicism.

at each as a representative of one side of the Church it can be shown how the Council affected and was in part brought about by the tension between these two factions. It is well known that traditionalists such as Waugh were deeply unhappy about the impact of Vatican II upon religious practices. Waugh was outspoken in his opposition. His biographer tells us:

> Evelyn made no secret of his contempt for the reform-movement in the Catholic Church in the post-war years. In consequence it is said and believed that in his last years he lost his faith
>
> (Sykes 1977, p. 449)

However, as Sykes says, "When the Second Vatican Council met, Evelyn was not averse to reform, and he made his views known." (Sykes 1977, p. 595) What he was particularly opposed to was the alteration of the Church's traditional liturgy which

> enabled an ordinary, sensual man (as opposed to a saint who is outside generalisation) to approach God and be aware of sanctity and the divine. To abolish all this for the sake of up-to-dateness seemed to him not only silly but dangerous.
>
> (Sykes 1977, p. 449)

What is less often reported is the disenchantment of the more liberal elements within the Church. Whereas the Traditionalists either did not want the Council to happen at all or wanted it to do nothing other than reaffirm traditional belief and teaching, the Progressives were, with hindsight never likely to be satisfied either. They wanted change to varying degrees and some at least were never likely to be content with the outcome however far the Council went in any scheme of changes. Thus, both sides in the matter were often left dissatisfied and at worst were alienated and disillusioned.

The next chapter is concerned with the Vatican Council itself and its relation to the two broad and opposing camps of Liberals and Traditionalists. The contemporary novelists who will be looked at later may be seen as fitting into one

or the other of these categories or sometimes even both at once. As with Greene and Waugh, the personal convictions of the authors can not be ignored and the varying natures of the fictional worlds they create raise the same problems as before. The Catholic milieu has altered significantly in many respects since their time. Catholics have, for instance, become more integrated into society so that it is common to find Catholics in all walks of life. Certainly Catholics are as likely to be educated as anyone else and thus more Catholic writers are likely to be cradle Catholics than converts as was the case in the first half of the century. The effect of this will be considered while looking at the different authors. In this introduction we have seen two novelists tackling a number of concerns in relation to their shared religion. Betrayal, Good and Evil as opposed to Right and Wrong, Justice, Sex, Death, Judgement (especially Hell) have been shown as central to both writers. Clearly such issues are not the sole preserve of the Catholic writer but those without a religious world view of any kind would be unlikely to involve themselves so persistently with so many of these interests and even if they did could not have the same approach as the Catholic writer. These concerns are largely shared by contemporary Catholic writers. Each individual naturally differs in what weight is given to which topic but aside from that this study will consider what (if any) the impact and effect of the Council has been on Catholic fiction. Greene's and Waugh's work prior to Vatican II gives us a means of comparison when we turn our attention to how a selection of writers have written and are writing in the aftermath of that upheaval and consider what bearing the Council itself may have upon their work.

The different aspects of religion as shown in these two novels of Greene and Waugh are important because they are shared by both writers. In the second half of this thesis we shall look at the way such pre-occupations have changed or remained the same for contemporary novelists who write in the different circumstances of the post-Vatican II Church. To help, it is now necessary to look in some detail at the Second Vatican Council itself.

Chapter Three: The Second Vatican Council

Vatican II was convened unexpectedly by Pope John XXIII in the apostolic constitution *Humanae salutis* (25 December 1961). It is an irony that this Council which, unlike Vatican I, stressed the role of bishops as a whole rather than the Pope alone and emphasised the role of the laity, was thought up entirely by the Pope and could not have happened without his central authority. Between 1962–65, cardinals, bishops and observers met for a number of sessions;[1] in total sixteen documents were produced: four constitutions, nine decrees and three declarations.

These are the bare facts of this Council of which Pope John said,

> We are going to shake off the dust that has collected on the throne of St. Peter since the time of Constantine, let in fresh air.

and which Archbishop Lefebvre[2] described as, "the worst tragedy that the Church has ever experienced." (Lefebvre 1976, pp. 107–12) Views differ greatly but no one doubts that the Second Vatican Council substantially changed the Catholic Church.

One important element of that change is the role of the theologian. Up to the 1950s or so, partly because of the judgement against Modernism by Pius X early in the century, a Catholic theologian was not looking to break new ground and would expect the theological landscape to look much the same throughout his

[1]The current Pope, John Paul II attended and spoke at the Council.

[2]Pope Paul VI suspended Lefebvre from his sacred duties in July 1976 for his refusal to accept Vatican II. He was later excommunicated by Pope John Paul II before his death in 1992.

career; but change was coming. The change appears to have been quite sudden; yet another symptom of the social upheavals which have defined the middle of this century and which are, partly responsible for the Council itself. By the mid-1960s, the situation had changed to the extent that those theologians, mostly French and German, who had been under a cloud since Pope Pius XII proscribed "new theology" in his encyclical *Humani Generis*[3] were much in demand.[4] Yves Congar, M.D. Chenu, Henri de Lubac and Karl Rahner came to dominate Catholic scholarship and, what is more, to be appreciated for their efforts. The essential difference they made to Catholic theology Peter Hebblethwaite,[5] himself an ex-Jesuit, encapsulates as a move from:

> the essentialist to the existentialist; from the juridical to the personalist; from the a-historical to the historical; from the exclusive to the inclusive; from deductive theology to inductive anthropology; from defensiveness to dialogue.
>
> (Hebblethwaite 1978, p. 103)

The alteration was considerable, thinkers who had been forbidden to teach or even to publish on occasion were now recognised in the highest ranks of the church hierarchy. However, the Council itself changed matters still further.

The Second Vatican Council then, has its place in Church history as a set of sixteen documents. However, this is not all that is meant when the Council is mentioned; it is also necessary to consider the official implementation of its reforms, the reception of both documents and reforms, and even the event of the Council itself. Essentially three divisions will be made: the facts of the Council, its fictional side or image, and its results.

---

[3]Published 1950.

[4]However, Pius XII was not simply a conservative. His *Divino Afflate Spiritu* (1943) accepted the new methods of Biblical scholarship which had earlier been proscribed. These profoundly changed the attitude of informed Catholics to the Scriptures and, in turn, were vindicated and affirmed by Vatican II. In essence, the Scriptures ceased, as a result, to be a defining point of opposition between Catholics and Protestants.

[5]He became editor of the Jesuit periodical *The Month* in 1965 and thus reported on the Council at the time. He resigned from the Jesuits in 1974 and is one of the people interviewed by Alice Thomas Ellis in *Serpent on the Rock*. He died in December 1994.

The Council as Fact

The Second Vatican Council is important as a part of world (and especially European) history. The decade of the 1960s is well-known as the time of sexual revolution and of many changing sociological and political attitudes. The Council must be remembered as having its place alongside these more secular changes for it arose out of the same climate. Thus, it is necessary to view the phenomenon of Vatican II as a part of the continuum of Western history. Nevertheless, it is also to be understood as part of the History of the Church. It is the most recent Council for us, but at the time Vatican I (1869–70) and the Council of Trent (1544 63) caused considerable upheaval. As Newman said after Vatican I "There has seldom been a Council without great confusion after it". (Alberigo, Pierre Jossua, and Komonchak 1987, p. 27) A Vatican Council, then, is not such an unheard of event but this one did have its differences. For the first time, thanks to the mass communications of the twentieth century, the meetings took place in a glare of publicity.[6]

Characters and issues were spotlighted and discussed by the media on an unprecedented scale which made it the best known Council and also increased its "fictional" side. In practice the documents it produced were lengthy; their total forming approximately a third of the text of the documents from all the Church Councils put together.

In chronological order the documents are as follows:

I *Sacrosanctum concilium* Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy
II *Inter mirifica* Decree on the means of social communication

[6]Jill Paton Walsh makes reference to this publicity in her 1986 novel, set in the 1950s:

> ... a Pope would be very foolhardy to call another. It would attract a huge amount of publicity; and if the bishops did disagree, it would be very hard to keep that secret as was done in the past.
>
> (Walsh 1986, p. 115)

III *Lumen Gentium*—Dogmatic constitution on the Church
IV *Orientalium Ecclesiarum*—Decree on the Catholic Eastern Churches
V *Unitatis redintegratio*—Decree on Ecumenism
VI *Christus Dominus*—Decree on the pastoral office of bishops in the church
VII *Perfectae caritatis*—Decree on the up-to-date renewal of religious life
VIII *Optatam totius* Decree on the training of priests
IX *Gravissimum educationis*—Declaration on Christian education
X *Nostra aetate*—Declaration on the relation of the Church to non-Christian organisations
XI *Dei verbum* Dogmatic constitution on divine revelation
XII *Apostolicam actuositatem*—Decree on the Apostolate of lay people
XIII *Dignitatis humanae*—Declaration on religious liberty
XIV *Ad gentes divinitus*—Decree on the Church's missionary activity
XV *Presbyterorum ordinis*—Decree on the ministry and life of priests
XVI *Gaudium et spes*—Pastoral constitution on the Church in the modern World.

The extensive length of what the Council actually said is not unconnected to its nature although in a great many ways it is not so much what was actually said that is important as the way in which it was perceived and received by the whole Church, from Cardinals and Bishops right through to every lay Catholic.

One thing that arises very clearly from the documents themselves, especially those concerning the Liturgy, is the need for a lot of work to be done of which the Council was only the beginning. Many post-conciliar documents have followed the Council and these in turn require time for assimilation. One aim, which has only recently reached fruition is the plan for a new Catechism.[7] The current Pontiff has published an unprecedented number of encyclicals[8] which also require time for dissemination to and absorption by the Faithful. With regard to the Catechism,

[7]The English language version of the Catechism was not published until 1994, a delay due in part to arguments over inclusive language and its desirability; the final translation does not employ inclusive language.

[8]The most recent include *Veritatis Splendor* (August 6th 1993), *Evangelicum Vitae* (25 March 1995) and *Ut Unum Sint* (25 May 1995). In addition to encyclicals, Pope John Paul has published other documents of topical interest such as his " 'Letter to Women' on the occasion of the Fourth World Conference on Women of the United Nations" (29 June 1995).

there is currently a demand for teaching material based on the new Catechism especially for Catholic schools, this being another part of its assimilation.[9]

It is helpful also to dwell a little on the changing nature of the Church itself. The decisions of such great Councils as Chalcedon and Trent shaped the life of the Church to the extent that these Councils are not mere past events but a fully integrated part of Catholic belief. It is the long term historical process that has brought this about, a process neither linear nor uniform. Hence, it is the post-conciliar period that is vital for assimilating all Councils' directives. Such a period can never really be said to be finished at any clearly defined point and with reference to Vatican II, we are still very much within that indefinite period of assimilation. This point has, in this country at least, been largely lost sight of. A mere ten years afterwards, Peter Hebblethwaite published his book which was "to chronicle and interpret what has happened in the Roman Catholic Church since the Second Vatican Council ended in 1965". (Hebblethwaite 1978, foreword) In its pages he makes it clear that a great process has been started but that the end, if indeed there should ever be one, is not in sight.[10] Some thirty years on as we now are although more 'progress' has been made it seems that the same conclusion is valid as liturgical change is still going on, whilst the wisdom of certain changes is openly disputed. Whether the church as a whole sees the 'process' as still relevant we shall turn to the authors of the period to discover.

Vatican II is, therefore, part of the whole historical process of Church development and yet there are certain factors which do set it apart from all its predecessors notwithstanding our dangerous historical proximity. As Hermann Pottmeyer says:

> whereas the two preceding Councils, Trent and Vatican I, had aimed

[9]For example, Fowler Wright as publishers of specifically religious books have translated (1995) a set of children's books based on the new catechism from the original Italian, other countries are still seeking materials to help teach Catholic youngsters in their native language.

[10]However, Hebblethwaite, very much a liberal, is not unbiased. During his life he frequently, with Gerard Noel, attacked John Paul in the pages of *The Catholic Herald* as well as in his own books.

> at restoring internal stability and establishing a dogmatic front, Vatican II sought to relax rigid fronts and achieve an opening. As experience has shown, however, such an attempt leads to instability. For this reason Vatican II has a place apart among the Councils.
>
> (Alberigo, Pierre Jossua, and Komonchak 1987, p. 27)

The last three Councils have all been convened in response to different crises and have in common that each has been,

> an attempt to give the Church new strength by taking the measures necessary to fulfil Christ's saving mission in a changing world.
>
> (Berglar 1994, p. 243)

The Council of Trent was a response to the threat of Protestantism and to that end it defined more clearly what the Catholic Faith is. Vatican I is often viewed as the Council that formalized the concept of papal infallibility but in fact it was concerned with responding to liberalism and incipient forms of "modernism". The Modernism referred to is different from the movements in Art and Literature[11] now termed 'Modernist' by historians although the two are not entirely separate.[12] A Catholic Modernist is defined by Reardon simply as "a reforming Catholic". (Reardon 1970, p. 36) Although the nature of these 'reforms' and their relation to orthodox belief is much disputed, in general, Modernism tried to find a niche half way between traditional Catholicism and liberal Protestantism. George Tyrrell(1861 1909),[13] a convert to Catholicism from the Church of Ireland, was probably the best-known advocate of Modernism. He was "Modernism's prophet, apostle, and most conspicuous martyr" (Reardon 1970, p. 37) and he was denounced as a heretic. He was dismissed from the Society of Jesus and suspended from administering the Sacraments in 1906. A year later he was excommunicated[14] and that same year Pope Pius X formally condemned

[11]In the case of the Arts "modern" refers particularly to new approaches to writing or painting, thus abstract painting is invariably dubbed "modernist".

[12]For more detail on Modernism see Reardon (1970).

[13]His *Autobiography and Life* arranged by M.D. Petre was published in 1912.

[14]He was however absolved on his deathbed.

Modernism.[15] Thereafter, those holding theological teaching responsibilities in the Church had to take the 'Anti-Modernist Oath'.

The more general movement referred to as Modernism (as revealed in the Arts) has been redefined in our post-modernist climate. The arrival of post-Modernism is a result of that period of upheaval and social change which occurred in the 1960s. From the point of view of postmodernism, modernism had been integrated by society and was thus no longer a distinct style of its own. Vatican II occurs at the bridge between modern and post-modern understanding. The errors of Modernism denounced by Pius X, like the errors of Liberalism listed by Pius IX almost fifty years earlier in the "syllabus of errors" (December 8, 1864) are seen to have persisted as a permanent threat to the Church.

> Essentially they are errors of subjectivism - ...enhanced by popular strains of relativism. ...Little by little, these errors have infiltrated the minds of millions of Christians of all denominations.
>
> (Berglar 1994, p. 244)

Post-modernism can be seen as an inevitable development building on Modernism, as Modernism was built on Liberalism. Vatican II may oppose it insofar as the Council reaffirms the spirit-led authority of the Church, yet the structure of Vatican II was itself what may be more generally termed "modern" in order to address an internal crisis and to appeal to the intellect of the faithful. The part played by theologians[16] became more prominent during and immediately after the Council.[17] The direction of theology was perceived to be different. No longer was a theologian simply passing on what he received, but he felt himself to have the power to effect change in the Church itself.[18] Influential thinkers could bring

[15]Reardon (1970, pp. 237–) includes the Papal condemnation in full.

[16]See p. 68 below.

[17]By the 1990s theologians are less important again. It is comparable to the rise and fall of other 'experts', for example, educationalists, who also gained prominence in the 60s and whose importance has declined by the 90s.

[18]Particularly in the immediate aftermath of Vatican II advocates of Liberation Theology felt empowered to achieve their particular aims.

about change simply by arguing for change. The atmosphere was one of openness and dialogue which led to a multiplicity of views and ideas being in existence at once. Official acceptance of an idea was no longer necessary for it to gain acceptance within the religious community. Whereas most of the clergy thought of the Council in terms of an arrival, the "majority of theologians took it as a point of departure" (Hebblethwaite 1978, p. 104) so certainty in theological terms seemed to belong to the past. Lay theologians were also encouraged to express themselves by the new atmosphere of openness. But of these, the well-known Marxist theorist Terry Eagleton wrote an article for *New Blackfriars* immediately after the Council to stress some of its shortcomings:

> it is possible to forget that while we as Catholics were plodding around in the wilderness of sacrament-as-thing and Latin in the Liturgy, the world had latched on to the language we have recently discovered and absorbed it naturally into its thinking
>
> (Hebblethwaite 1978, p. 104)

However, things have altered still more. With John Paul II as Pope, throughout the late 80s and early 90s there is an increasing move towards more orthodox theology and theologians. Particularly since the condemnation of Hans Kung[19] non-progressive theologians - and there are many more of them than there used to be closer to the Council - have gained prominence.[20] Moreover, the general direction of Vatican II is not strongly in favour of clerical theologians as a distinct species. It talks instead of 'the Church' and 'the People of God' and John Paul II himself relativises the demand for much other theology by providing his own. Theologians are not popular or well-known[21] among the laity and a stream of en-

[19]See p. 68 below, and Hebblethwaite (1980) *The New Inquisition?* London, Fount. Incidentally, Kung retired in January 1996.

[20]Within limits, that is, the vogue of the expert has still given way to the decline of the expert.

[21]Piers Paul Read is highly unusual in mentioning theologians in his work. *On the Third Day*, for example, makes reference to Teilhard de Chardin (Read 1990, p. 274), as if even his face is popularly known, whereas when Lodge mentions theologians in *Paradise News* he enacts the role of instructor, assuming they will not be familiar to his reader.

cyclicals from the Holy Office[22] helps to neutralise dissenting religious thought.[23]

The Council as Fiction

At least one of the aims of Vatican II was to restore the primacy of the Word of God whilst confirming a real involvement in human affairs. To this extent, the Second Vatican Council represents a recovery of directions which, although not abandoned by the Church, had been neglected, particularly since the Reformation, and which are profoundly embedded in Christian tradition.

Right from the very first Council,[24] that of Nicaea,[25] decisions have been distinguished as being either doctrinal or disciplinary, that is they are either concerned with the formulation of the Faith or with the establishment of certain types of organizational and behavioural criteria. A doctrinal decision has a certain obvious and immediate impact; for example, the doctrine of Papal Infallibility as stated by Vatican I or, in 1950, the declaration that the bodily Assumption of Our Lady into Heaven was an Article of Faith.[26] The current Pontiff has recently declared the impossibility of women ever being ordained as priests in a statement made "ex cathedra" which seems to make it an infallible statement.[27] This type of bald statement leaves little room for compromise; one must either accept or reject it. There was, for instance, some continuing opposition to Papal Infallibility after Vatican I, especially in Holland, but this group left the Church.

[22]Officially this is now called the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

[23]Cardinal Ratzinger as President of the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith plays an important role here. He is an important theologian in his own right and a fearless exponent of both orthodoxy and Vatican II.

[24]Held in A.D. 325 to discuss, amongst other things, fixing the date of Easter.

[25]Interestingly, Nicaea was also the setting for the seventh Council held in A.D. 787.

[26]It is worth noting that the acceptance and final ratifying of the doctrine of the Assumption as an Article of Faith was only the final stage of a long-term process; The Assumption of Our Lady has long been celebrated within the Catholic Church. The original idea dates from the third century (see H. Chadwick (1967) *Pelican History of the Church: The Early Church* Harmondsworth, Penguin, and has been liturgically celebrated since the fifth century. There was, therefore, already widespread if not absolute acceptance of the idea long before it became enshrined as a necessary part of belief.

[27]From the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, on the Feast of the Apostles SS. Simon and Jude, 28 October 1995.

The second type of statement from a Council is rather more problematic. A mere disciplinary decision is not central to personal faith, it is more like a recommendation than an order. It would, therefore, be possible to dissent from the Council's pronouncement without putting oneself outside the fold. Such decisions, like alterations in the wording or means of observing a particular Rite, are likely to be less specific and by their very nature require time for their introduction, application and full assimilation into the life of the Church. There would naturally be a degree of flexibility in such cases where possible. For example, Cardinal Heenan gained a Papal Indult, or licence, permitting existing retiring English Clergy to continue saying the Mass according to the Tridentine Rite, albeit in private, even after its abolition. The particular attachment to the Tridentine rite of Mass for English Catholics may be traced to the fact that English Catholicism since the Reformation has been based on it. Catholics were martyred for trying to maintain this form of the Mass in the past so it is perhaps not surprising that it came to be identified in the minds of many as being the only true Mass.[28] The actual Council documents are lengthy but make no central changes to the Church's teaching by being essentially "disciplinarian" in nature. However, the Council was called in a atmosphere of change and the general view of it is that it changed the Church substantially. How this attitude has occurred is an example of the Council's "fictional" side.

Christian belief always has a 'fictional' side in that, though based on history, it does not terminate in history. In this sense it is not 'factual' but a matter of faith. The term fiction, then, is used here to denote those aspects of the Council which are not simply factual. There are probably as many different views of Vatican II within the Church as there are different Catholics but broadly they can be summed up in three groups. Some ultra-traditionalists, groups like The

[28]In his original 'Act of Six Articles' Henry VIII made no change to doctrine and indeed he decreed death for anyone who questioned transubstantiation or clerical celibacy, (see F.E. Halliday (1964) *Concise History of Britain* London, Thames and Hudson, p. 89) but he did instigate the change from Latin to English.

Society of Pius X and Lefebvre and his followers, resisted and opposed any change whatever. To them the Church was and is constant, fixed and any change or "modernising" of religious practices was necessarily wrong. Their motives derive as much from an anti-liberal reading of French history as they do from religious doctrine. At the opposite end of the spectrum are the ultra-liberals. This is a group which broadly welcomed the Council as they wished the Church to "enter the Twentieth Century". Without change it seemed to them that the Church could no longer be a relevant voice in the World. Among these are "feminist Catholics" such as Rosemary Radford Reuther,[29] who campaign for change in the Church's stance on, for instance, female ordination as a first step in a complete change of ethos in the Church. However, the Council itself, with its 'no change' policy on central issues disappointed the most progressive elements and even more moderate members deplored what they saw (and still see) as the failure to put fully into practice the Council's message. Most modern theology in the sense of what is currently taught in seminaries and published via educational guides and biblical commentaries, is, broadly speaking, progressive, and some theologians, notably Kung, have left the Church[30] while others like Edward Schillebeeckx[31] remain within it. These two factions were clearly visible before the Council but the third group was not so defined. Whereas those adhering rigidly to pre-Vatican II ideas have come to a standstill since the Council, a new 'orthodox' group runs parallel to the liberalists with its own theologians which, putting it very simply can be aligned with Pope John Paul II.[32] Unlike the "ultra-traditionalists" they claim Vatican II for themselves as do the liberals, however, they also accept the whole mass of Papal pronouncements and pride themselves on being 'traditional'. This group boasts some great theologians and scholars notably Hans Urs von Balthasar

[29]See, for instance, *Catholic Times*, 26 February 1995
[30]See Hebblethwaite (1978, pp. 113 115).
[31]See Hebblethwaite (1978, p. 59).
[32]Cardinal Ratzinger is a good example of this third group.

who, shortly before he died, was made a cardinal by Pope John Paul II,[33] also the Jesuits Karl Rahner and Henri de Lubac.[34] There has been a perceptible increase in popularity for this line of thought over the last few years possibly because a considerable number of ordinary people who can not accept the Church's position (whether because it is too liberal or insufficiently progressive) have simply lapsed, or because of the inevitable movement to a synthesis of dialectically opposed positions.

Of course, the picture is much more complicated than that; Opus Dei, a group which declares its absolute allegiance to the Pope, seems to fall half way between the old traditionalists, who really have not accepted Vatican II at all, and the 'orthodox' view which we will consider to be that of the Pontiff. The Neo-catechumens are yet another group who can be roughly placed slightly further from the Pope than Opus Dei but not as far as the Society of Pius X. Thus, it will be seen that what the central messsage of Vatican II is, or whether it can be said to have a centre, is still a matter of great debate. The documents exist and are available to be read; the word of the Council is not a problem. The spirit however can only be gleaned from interpreting the words and viewing them within the whole framework of the Church and secular history which produced them.

A more moderate attitude, our fourth view, is characterised by ambivalence towards the Council. It includes a recognition that the Council itself has largely been buried under so many different views and interpretations of it. Good and bad things have emerged within Catholic practice as the objectives of the Council have been executed. Some of the strictures which have disappeared, such as a ban on Catholics attending any other Church service, even the funeral service of a friend or relation, will have been welcomed by all but the most fanatically conservative Catholic. However, the Council as a whole was to the most extreme

[33]This may be regarded as the Pope's quasi-political approval of von Balthasar's theology.
[34]All these men were active during the Council. See also p. 59 above.

traditionalists a complete mistake, again a difficult position to justify when for a Catholic the Council must be seen as the working of the Holy Spirit in the world. Lefebvre certainly took this extreme view whereas others claim that the Council itself is sound but its interpretation has gone awry. Berglar writes:

> The Council was, of course, permeated by the action of the Holy Spirit. Individual Council fathers might offer ill-advised opinions, but the decisions of the Council were guaranteed by the Holy Spirit.
>
> (Berglar 1994, p. 245)

Thus far this opinion is totally orthodox but the bias is then shown with reference to the interpretation.

> On the other hand, while the Council documents were necessarily safeguarded by the Holy Spirit, their interpretation was not. The novelty of this pastoral council was that it produced "open" documents, rather than statements... unscrupulous manipulators also set to work - and with considerable success.
>
> (Berglar 1994, pp. 245–6)

Other groups, as well as Opus Dei, and individuals oppose the interpretation from within their own stance. Although it would be wrong to assume that all Catholics are unhappy with the interpretation of the Council, it is clear that dissatisfaction is widespread. In particular, the way in which the liturgy has changed and is still being altered gives rise to much concern and strongly felt reaction.[35] Since the vernacular is now used almost to the exclusion of the Latin Rite, each country is enacting its own programme of liturgical change. It is harder to see the Church's liturgy as 'Universal' when not only can Catholics not necessarily recognise the Mass in a foreign country but sometimes they may be lost or out of sympathy at a Eucharistic celebration even in their own country.

[35]For example, a meeting of some 2000 orthodox Catholics at Westminster Central Hall on 4 May 1996, proposed and passed a statement of four resolutions which essentially request that the hierarchy of England and Wales follows the Vatican's teaching on liturgical and moral issues. To date, Cardinal Hume (who addressed the meeting) has "declined to associate himself with the four resolutions".

This has been a familiar problem to Anglicans: it is a new problem for Catholics. The stress on the vernacular alienated many Catholics in various countries. In Finland, a predominantly Lutheran country, there had been many conversions to Catholicism in the first half of the century. As a direct result of the Council a substantial number went back to the Lutheran church.[36]

However, alterations to liturgical practice which have in some cases led to the Mass being almost unrecognisable as such, can appear to be indicative of a change for change's sake policy.

> For the liturgy is made up of unchangeable elements divinely instituted, and of elements subject to change.
>
> (Flannery 1992, p. 9)

Apparently unwilling to recognise that any part of the liturgy could be "unchangeable", the most progressive elements within the Church are eager for yet more change; the problem of the Vatican Council is to them one of insufficient change. The documents themselves are open to interpretation and so they are interpreting with a rather free hand. The change from the use of Latin to the vernacular is probably the most immediately obvious change and one most visible to non-Catholics. This presents us with a possible fifth view: one from outside the Church. The Vatican Council to non-Catholics (if they have any knowledge of or interest in it at all) is generally seen as doing away with Latin and up-dating the Church in general terms. The importance of individual choice is sometimes also mentioned with an emphasis on personal conscience. Thus, the encyclical *Humanae Vitae* is often associated with the Council sometimes as if the two were the same and sometimes as if the encyclical somehow reversed the liberalising of the Council in the area of birth control. However, the two are quite separate, and, of the changes linked to the Council, liturgical change has been concentrated on in this thesis. This is partly because it is the most obvious form of change that

[36]Private communication from Fr. Manuel Prado, Doctor of Canon Law.

has occurred, especially to the laity, and also because the Council documents do focus on it a great deal. Certainly the majority of the post-conciliar documents are concerned with changes to the Liturgy.[37] With reference to the language it is important to note that although the Council documents do allow for the option of the vernacular in appropriate cases they by no means made it compulsory.

> The use of the Latin language, with due respect to particular law, is to be preserved in the Latin rites. But since the use of the vernacular, whether in the Mass, the administration of the sacraments, or in other parts of the liturgy, may frequently be of great advantage to the people, a wider use may be made of it,
>
> (Flannery 1992, p. 13)

Despite this cautious wording, in practice this actually led to Latin Masses (and the Tridentine Rite in particular) almost, but not quite, disappearing in England at least. This situation has now been somewhat reversed. Permission still needs to be sought from the local bishop but the Tridentine rite is more widely acceptable under the papacy of John Paul II[38] and the more modern Latin liturgy, itself a direct product of the Council, is celebrated very often.[39] Publicity for both the modern and the Tridentine rite is widespread. In the wake of the Second Vatican Council two organisations have formed and are particularly active. The Latin Mass Society aims primarily to retain the Tridentine rite of Mass and the Association for Latin Liturgy aims to use the New Latin Rite. In other countries differing patterns are found. From my own experience I know that the Tridentine rite is unheard of in Finland but the New Latin Rite is widely used.

[37]It is interesting that the new liturgy stems ultimately from a movement to restore early liturgical forms. Thus there is a conservative face to many liturgical innovations. Vatican II presents itself as both the restorer of tradition *and* the doorway to modern times and this helps to explain the disagreements between those different groups who claim the Council.

[38]The whole timescale of changes within the Polish Church — because of its relatively isolated position and continual struggle against communism — is different to that in Britain and the rest of Western Europe. His own background, quite naturally has an influence on the Pope's understanding of the Council.

[39]There are frequent Latin Masses celebrated in Westminster Cathedral for instance.

In Spain, however, informed opinion[40] has it that mention of a Latin liturgy is often considered to be tantamount to a display of support for Lefebvre. In Britain where these two groups have arisen, the first of them at least seems to receive widespread support; it publicises Tridentine Masses throughout Britain and such services are invariably well attended.

It should be stressed that these five positions as regards the Council are by no means complete nor are they mutually exclusive. This is particularly clear in Catholic fiction (as we shall see) where a character may opt for one stance or another either at different times or concurrently. Also, with reference to the final point of view attributed to those outside the Church, it is not exclusively the view of non-Catholics: there are a great many Catholics equally uninformed and sometimes even unaware of the existence of the Second Vatican Council. However, it is this difference between the documents themselves and what is actually happening in Catholic churches which takes us to the next section.

Results of The Council: Execution and Practice

Essentially, then, Vatican II makes no new statements about dogma, rather it utilises a new vocabulary which has dogmatic implications. Its decisions and writings are basically of a disciplinarian nature which can more appropriately be described as 'pastoral' in character; the whole Council has in fact often been referred to as the 'Pastoral Council'. In taking this route the Council, because of its place in history, has chosen between two possibilities: further development of established dogma or a renewal based on a dynamic of ideas and tendencies and it quite firmly chose the latter. At the time this 'liberating' approach to a previously conservative religion created a certain atmosphere of joyful hope in the prospect of a renewed Church but its negative side is more clearly seen today. The very idea of openness and a possibility of change within the Church was an

[40]For example, Fr. Manuel Prado, Doctor of Canon Law, from Bilbao, Northern Spain and currently at the Opus Dei Centre, Helsinki.

innovation which, perhaps inevitably, displeased certain sections from the outset and left others disappointed that the 'liberation' did not go far enough.[41] It is a simplification, to divide the Church at this time into liberal or progressive and conservative or traditional groups as has been done; nevertheless it is a necessary one. The very liberalism of the first set was an anathema to the latter. Considering Pope Pius X's condemnation of Modernism[42] and all that it stood for, to even contemplate the necessity for changes to up-date and modernise the Church, was a revolution in itself. The documents themselves say little or nothing to which dissent is possible but by their very nature (open, questioning, challenging, liberating and so forth) allow for a wide range of interpretations. So it is that the third way is emerging more strongly in the 1990s and apparently increasing in importance.[43] There is, as we have emphasised, a group of Catholics who claim the Council as their own as do the 'progressives' but who interpret it in a very different fashion and, by loyalty to the Pope. are essentially orthodox. The re-emergence of the *Catholic Times* newspaper[44] with its "Follow Peter" motto[45] is another indication of the growth and strength of this movement. Today the Council itself is most often seen as a distant event especially among the laity, a part of Church history no longer of immediate concern. Among other elements of the faithful, both religious and lay, there is hostility towards it, even those religious with the advantage of a rather more educated position as regards the documents themselves, are not infrequently almost as much at a loss as the rest of their flock. As Alberigo says "Vatican II seems...to have called forth a militant opposition but no convinced supporters." (Alberigo, Pierre Jossua, and Komonchak 1987, p. 2)

Initially, it seems that the prospect of questioning any religious matter was so

[41]Naturally, not everyone was dissatisfied with the Council yet disappointment was widespread.

[42]See p. 63 above.

[43]See p. 59 above.

[44]Another recent publication is the International Catholic Review *Communio*.

[45]First issue in 1993.

foreign to most Catholics that the problem was not too great. However, as the post-conciliar period has progressed, questioning and making varied interpretations has become not only possible but quite commonplace. The difficulties this raises have multiplied. The large numbers of theologians since the Council and their prominence are indicative of this[46] as are the increased numbers of various organisations within the Church.[47] Put simply, if every individual is encouraged to make his own interpretation and have his own ideas, then a consensus of opinion becomes increasingly difficult. This, after all, has always been the Church's criticism of Protestantism.[48] The conservative Catholic finds himself clinging to a position which will not necessarily be upheld by his local clergy. The options in practice seem to be to either: leave the Church altogether (unlikely for a truly traditional believer), or to shop around in search of a parish more congenial to his feelings. The progressive Catholic however, may find his local clergy to be too traditional and may lapse from the practice of his religion or find it necessary to look about him for a more 'liberal' parish. Obviously, at either end of the line from conservative to progressive Catholicism will be extremists who will be unable to find any individual church to satisfy them. They might try to campaign for change but this is not in keeping with the traditionalists' position, the liberals may however pursue this course with varying degrees of success. All this inevitably alters the character of 'Catholic Life' and we would expect to find it reflected in fiction. Pottmeyer calls Vatican II a reform Council saying that:

> it aimed rather at a renewal of the Church by concentrating on the heart of the Christian message and in this way serving the Church in its mission, which is to be a sign of salvation in the modern world.
>
> (Alberigo, Pierre Jossua, and Komonchak 1987, p. 37)

More traditional Catholics are often too quick in trying to forget or bypass the

[46]See p. 68 above.

[47]The Saint Vincent de Paul Society and the Knights of St. Columba both declare an increased interest in the 1990s from the young in particular.

[48]However, groups such as the National Association of Catholic Families boast many young members committed to orthodoxy.

changes brought about by the Council; an attitude which helps nobody. It is worth remembering, as is perhaps too often forgotten by the more liberal or progressive Catholics, that Vatican II retracted nothing that had been stated as dogma by either Trent or Vatican I; on that level it altered nothing.

Conclusion

As has been stated, we are too close to Vatican II to understand fully all that it has achieved, and if it is valid to speak of its failure so soon then this is perhaps chiefly a failure through interpretation which may yet be rectified. However, if seen as a renewing Council, as Pottmeyer has it, this it certainly has not been and it is difficult to see how it could in the immediate future succeed in being this when there is, and has been, so much dissent. This, of course, is to take a Western perspective. The Council's attitude to the liturgy (authorizing the use of the vernacular, for instance) was introduced to help the increasing importance of non-Western (for example, Asian and African) Catholics. In this respect the Church has been successful and has shed much of its exclusively European image. The greatest difficulties have been in those countries where European Catholicism was nurtured; that is, the West. It is, of course, necessary for the Faithful to believe that the Council itself was the working of the Spirit[49] and as such cannot simply be disregarded by the faithful as an error in itself. With so many reforms and changes, all of a specifically pastoral or disciplinary nature, almost every single one allowing a variety of interpretations, it is hardly surprising that there should be disenchantment with the actual results of the Council seen from so close a perspective. What has happened to the Catholic Church through Vatican II is the introduction of a new relationship between the Church and its environment. The Church's attitude towards modernity and Western democracies in particular had already been modified and in this respect the Council merely

[49]See p. 70, above.

ratified this approach and extended it by making openness to the world a central issue, acknowledging religious liberty for all religions and taking its proper place in history by acceptance of new technology and scientific changes.

In 1985 an Extraordinary Synod of Bishops met and made the most up-to-date contribution to the reception of Vatican II so far. Although there was widespread speculation that the Synod would reverse the changes following Vatican II the bishops essentially aimed at a call to unity. Avery Dulles concludes the outcome of the Synod by stating that:

> Vatican II is fundamentally self-consistent, stands in substantial continuity with earlier church teaching, and remains valid in its essentials for our own day.
>
> (Alberigo, Pierre Jossua, and Komonchak 1987, p. 350)

This is a fine statement but incompatible with Hebblethwaite's "Runaway Church" (Hebblethwaite 1978, foreword) ten years previously, and too neat not to imply a certain element of wishful thinking on Dulles' part.

We are now another ten years on and the situation is different again. The present Pope is crucial in terms of how the Council is regarded. He is interesting in that he is both an intellectual[50] and a deliberate devotee of popular devotions particularly to Mary.[51] Memories of the Fatima apparitions encouraged by the apparitions at Medjugorje[52] have revived the older sense of Catholic devotion. It is clear that the appeal of these things still persists within a generation not specifically brought up to accept them and John Paul II has encouraged this aspect of Catholic practice by his own example.

Clearly, Vatican II was highly innovatory in its approach, bringing a new open attitude, encouraging questioning and inviting dialogue. It is true that it did

[50]He wrote his 'teaching' thesis (see M. Malinski (1979) *Pope John Paul II* London, Burns and Oates, on Max Scheler.

[51]Following the assassination attempt on 13 May 1991 (13 May is the date of the first Fatima apparition) the Pope regards himself as saved by Our Lady.

[52]Since 24 June 1981 apparitions of Our Lady have been occuring to a number of seers in Medjugorje in former Yugoslavia on a daily basis.

not alter any essential tenets of Catholic belief, neither retracting any dogmatic pronouncements from previous Councils nor instituting any anew. Thus in effect nothing has changed and yet everything has. Interpretation of the Council (its general aims and its specific statements) has varied widely from one person to another and from nation to nation. In particular in the United States of America, Canada and Holland, alteration has been huge, more so than in Britain. Even in this country its assimilation has caused a great deal of confusion and discontent which can naturally be seen as reflected in some of the literature of the time. Whether those in the position of making the changes are simply drunk on the novelty of being able to 'do their own thing' and will *eventually reach equilibrium* with the passage of time has yet to be seen; likewise with those who would wish away the Council and all its works, whether they will reach a more proper acceptance with time, for all sides must realise that Vatican II is an essential part of Church history, it happened and must be accepted by the whole community of the Church. This process of acceptance in Britain, and specifically in England, in this difficult post-conciliar time is what this thesis aims to review through the writings of Catholic novelists.

Part Three :

Four Post-Vatican II Novelists

Chapter Four: MICHAEL CARSON

It is proposed to turn now to contemporary novels and to concentrate specifically on the work of four authors: Michael Carson, Alice Thomas Ellis, David Lodge and Brian Moore, although reference to the work of other writers will be made as appropriate. Unsurprisingly, many of the issues raised in the discussion of Greene and Waugh are still relevant to these writers. However, the treatment of the subject matter has changed and sometimes even the subject matter itself is fundamentally different. Some of these changes are consequent upon change in secular society: for example, England went from having the lowest divorce rate in Europe in the 1950s to having the highest in less than twenty years. The event of the Second Vatican Council is also clearly significant. The issue of betrayal, for example, is one which, although still pertinent, is quite turned on its head and the Council itself surely plays a considerable part in this. Issues such as Sex and Death are more problematic. Sex is generally treated in a more graphic manner while Death has less importance. To some degree the treatment of these topics has inevitably altered simply because of the passage of time and the different biographies of the authors but some things have not changed more than is natural with these provisions. Just how far the Council is directly responsible for these changes in both content and style will be investigated, and to do so we will first examine the work of each of the four novelists in relation to the issues raised in the section on Graham Greene and Evelyn Waugh.

Novels are fictions. They re-work previous fictional structures. They are never straightforward 'imitations of life'. Nevertheless, the emphasis of this thesis

is on the relation between history (influenced by Vatican II) and the Catholic life and attitudes represented, however fictionally, in recent works. Hence my interpretation will be 'old-fashioned' in that it concentrates on character, opinion and social setting. There is, perhaps, some special justification for this, apart from the narrow focus of this thesis, namely that modern British fiction has preserved a realist, non-experimental tradition of writing more than its American and Continental counterparts.[1] I shall presume, too that the novels discussed from hereon - unlike those of Greene and Waugh - are not necessarily familiar to the reader. I will have, therefore, to give more sense of the circumstances and development of plot and character than would be customary in a more formalist literary critique.

Michael Carson's first novel *Sucking Sherbet Lemons* (1988) is typical of Catholic novels written after the Vatican Council in that its main action is set before it. This is not surprising as most contemporary novelists (and three of the four being considered here) were born and brought up in the period between the Second World War and the 1960s.[2] Writers born in the sixties or later are rare although such as there are will be mentioned later[3] but we are necessarily concerned with Catholic writers who experienced Vatican II as young adults and have therefore seen for themselves both faces of the Church: pre-Vatican II structures and post-Vatican II experiment. Carson clearly draws on personal biography for much of his fiction and *Sucking Sherbet Lemons* is no exception. Its hero, Martin Benson, is a Catholic schoolboy growing up on Merseyside and attending a state Catholic boys Grammar school run by Christian Brothers.[4] His developing religious fervour and increasing interest in sex and awareness of his own sexuality form the central interest of this humorous novel. Sex and Religion, the problems that

[1]See, for instance, Raymond Tallis (1985) *In Defence of Realism* London, Arnold.

[2]Brian Moore is the exception here being even older. He was born in 1921.

[3]See p. 233, Chapter 7 below.

[4]The Christian Brothers were founded by the Irishman the Venerable Edmund Rice. He is due to be made Blessed on 6 October 1996.

these two elements cause when considered together as well as the humour that is often generated when two often divergent aspects of human nature are juxtaposed, are a common basis for many novelists.[5] The treatment of sex in the novel has become much more graphic since Greene and Waugh were first writing. This is essentially as a result of the social upheavals of the 1960s following as they did a change of attitude in the post-War generation. More specifically the *Lady Chatterley's Lover* trial in 1960, which finally allowed this previously banned text to be published, gave free rein to all writers. Thus, today there are very few if any sexual acts which cannot be written about (or described) in the fullest detail.[6] As David Lodge observes in *How Far Can You Go?*

> After the publication of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, Michael observed, the amount and variety of sexual intercourse in contemporary fiction increased dramatically.
>
> (Lodge 1980, p. 76)

But for Carson, writing in the 1980s and 1990s there is a more important legalisation. In 1967 homosexuality was legalised in England; an event which Carson notes, as we shall see later, for his hero Benson is a homosexual and also a Catholic. In Carson's first Benson novel the character struggles with his own nature doubly distressed by the social unacceptability of his sexual orientation and the religious implications. Although the narrative is related in the third person as if from without the novel, the effect is one of autobiography as it is ever Benson's viewpoint which is expounded. He reveals his character's curious mixture of piety and superstition, a combination Carson himself experienced as a child.

Benson operates on a non-secular value system which is shown even in his childish games. It is the possibility of an ultimate heavenly reward which concerns the young Benson. The view of Catholicism espoused by the central character

[5]It is necessary to remember that this area is not the sole preserve of Catholic novelists.
[6]This is in contrast with strict laws on visual portrayals of sex, at least in the U.K.

is essentially simple. He considers his soul to be clean and white (at least in his fantasies) — a popular archetype among Catholic children especially before Vatican II; the idea being that sins are little black spots of dirt which sully the pure whiteness of the perfect soul. In such a perspective, 'a mortal sin' would totally immerse the soul in filth. The only way to be sure of cleaning one's soul would be by going to Confession where the Sacrament could wipe away the sins committed. *The Penny Catechism* is much in evidence from the very earliest pages and by having his Benson character refer so often to it, Carson presents a very stereotypical form of pre-Vatican II Catholicism though not necessarily the only possible form. The little red book, *The Penny Catechism*, has been an important element in Catholic education during the twentieth-century. In a great many Catholic schools long passages from it were learned by heart by the pupils and this practice is shown in the novel. Since Vatican II its widespread usage has gradually decreased in most areas of education.

This is in part a product of changes in educational theory which in the 1960s and 1970s moved increasingly further away from more formal methods like rote learning and rebelled against the idea that children should be introduced to complex ideas, such as those contained in the catechism, at a tender age. In parallel with that, a renewed and expanding interest in the teaching of catechetics at around the same time also sought to alter methods of teaching the faith to Catholic children and this further helped the old-style catechism to fall into disuse. Carson's consciousness is formed therefore by certain key habits of devotion and by the rational dialectic of the catechism and the character of Benson reflects this form of belief.[7] The struggle between the two halves of self, as set out by Carson in the opening pages, sets the scene for the whole story, a comfortable life or a good one as a Catholic; there is no question that he could have both.[8]

[7]A new catechism based on different principles and of a more discursive character, the commissioning of which was one of the results of the Second Vatican Council, was published in Britain in 1994.

[8]A third option does not arise for Benson until *Yanking Up the Yo-Yo*. See p. 111 below.

Apart from his attendance at a Catholic school, his trips to Mass and other normal outward signs of Catholicism, Benson is also shown in private prayer. In his bedroom he has constructed a little altar with religious medals, candles and so forth and has decorated it with the silver and gold foil of chocolate wrappers. In conversation with friends whether Catholic or non-Catholic he does not hide his religious ideas but parades them. He is not unconvincing in any of this; one gets the impression that he is aware of the dichotomy of living in the secular world and yet following a religious way of life with its own rationale, ethic, and emotional patterns, and continually struggling to reconcile the two.

Carson's use of language is deliberately mundane so that one becomes immersed in the thoughts and feelings of the main character although the narrative is not in the first person. Benson easily bursts into a pious ejaculations such as, "Sweet Jesus, save me! Saint Maria Goretti, intercede for me!" (Carson 1989b, p. 24) and goes on to describe his friend Eric as an Occasion of Sin[9] to his face. When Eric tells him that he has called because Bruno wants a meeting in the garage Benson visualises his Statue of Saint Maria Goretti shedding tears and being treated as a miracle. Here is Benson's largest moral problem to date; he is a founder member of the Rude Club who meet to perform "irregular motions of the flesh"[10] and it is to a meeting of this club which he is being invited by Eric. Despite his lengthy protests it is clear that Benson cannot resist but he treats Eric to a little lecture on the nature of mortal sin and quotes the nine different

[9]Rachel Billington has written a novel with this title (1982) London, Hamish Hamilton, and explains it thus,

> The Catholic Church teaches that if you put yourself in a position where you know a sin is likely to follow than you have already sinned.
>
> (Billington 1982, p. 313)

She utilises Catholicism as a source of illicit excitement, being less explicit than Wendy Perriam (see p146 Chapter 5 below) but she is still sensationalist in her intent.

[10]A quotation from *The Penny Catechism* which takes the form of questions and answers. This quotation is in reference to what is forbidden by the ninth commandment (CTS 1971, p. 38).

ways by which we may share another's sin.[11] Considering the blackness of his soul Benson makes his way to the garage with "a feeling made up of intense excitement and deepest mourning." (Carson 1989b, p. 26). Benson's devotion to St. Maria Goretti is particularly significant. She was only twelve when she was stabbed to death by a would-be rapist, he threatened to kill her if she resisted him and resist she did so that she was effectively martyred for her virginity. Thus, she was a popular saint for young Catholics concerned with their own purity. In Benson's case her femininity is also appealing. What gives a further interest here is that she was one of the saints canonised by Pope Pius XII and her sainthood is now a matter of controversy.[12]

The gentler, feminine and particularly motherly side of Catholicism has an especial attraction for Benson. He is effeminate himself and because of his constant failure to become the "man" his father, teachers and society at large would have him be he moves closer to female values.[13] The Catholic devotion to the Virgin Mary and the Church being represented as the Mother Church reinforce all the factors of femininity, purity and motherly love. This alienation from a male-dominated world increases his homosexuality. In addition, the everyday treatment of Benson's piety adds to the humour. It is difficult to be fully objective but perhaps a non-Catholic would find Benson's religious references and

[11]Listed in the old Penny Catechism, and quoted by Benson as: "(1) By counsel, (2) By command, (3) By consent, (4) By provocation, (5) By praise or flattery, (6) By concealment, (7) By being a partner in the sin, (8) By silence, (9) By defending the ill done." (Carson 1989b, p. 25). Interestingly, the newer Catechism lists them as "by participating directly and voluntarily in them; by ordering, advising, praising or approving them; by not disclosing or not hindering them when we have an obligation to do so; by protecting evil-doers," which is only eight.

[12]Another saint popular with the young novices at St. Finbar's is St. Theresa of Lisieux (also known as The Little Flower). A nun, Theresa died in 1897 aged only twenty-four. Her recollections of her childhood she was ordered to write in 1885 and she later added an account of her later life. This book was published posthumously under the title *Histoire d'une âme* (The Story of a Soul) but it had been heavily edited. She was canonised in 1925 and in 1952 Ronald Knox restored the original manuscripts of her story to something like their original form and published them under the title *Autobiography of a Saint*.

[13]Both Piers Paul Read in *Monk Dawson* and Auberon Waugh in *The Foxglove Saga* make reference to the dangers of homosexual experiments by schoolboys. Whereas Read treats the matter seriously, Waugh seems to agree with Carson that homosexuals are born not made.

remarks irritatingly sentimental.[14] However, they undoubtedly strike a familiar chord with many Catholics of that generation able to recall their own childhood Faith.

What is most striking about the depiction of Benson's religious observances is the preoccupation with peripherals. His concern with statues and their decoration, incense and finery at Mass and weekly confession even when he can think of little or nothing to confess, indicate a tribal rather than a pondered religious belief. That is, he is caught up in the cultural practice of Catholicism to such a degree that he neglects the wider areas of the faith. Although to some extent this is usual and acceptable in a child who cannot be expected to have a very detailed knowledge of his religion Carson has particular reasons for drawing Benson in this way. He draws him as a pre-Vatican II Catholic and by later comparison with post-Vatican II Catholicism especially in the personae of Myvanwy and Sean,[15] Carson is presenting a strict, clear-cut division between the two. Obviously, there is no definite division between Catholicism before and after 1962,[16] but for the purposes of the novel, what are in reality only tendencies towards certain positions, are shown as rigid. Thus, the Myvanwy/Sean perspective more common since the 60s as opposed to the Benson attitude more widespread prior to it are depicted as two separate viewpoints on either side of the Vatican Council itself. The massive complexities of Catholicism as viewed by individual Catholics could hardly be encompassed simply and a certain fixing of the differences before and after makes for a less ambiguous story. But it is quite probable that the character of Benson stands for many people who did and perhaps still do envisage there to be a clear break between these two forms of Catholic practice. As if in acknowledgement of his oversimplification Carson provides through his character a feeling that his Catholicism has been particularly insular.

[14]Carson tries to make them humorous precisely to avoid this.
[15]See Carson (1992, pp. 54).
[16]As outlined in the previous chapter.

> The idea that just a few miles away from home, in the Catholic public schools and in the swanky south of England, people had been following a very different brand of Catholicism from the one promulgated at St Bede's and enshrined in his little red catechism did not please him at all. Rather it appalled him, made him feel hugely cheated.
>
> (Carson 1992, p. 82)

Brought up in Merseyside, Benson feels that the brand of Catholicism he once espoused is unique in being mostly Irish and rather out of key with other parts of England. This selective, tribal form of belief which balks at "the swanky south" he has not managed to develop into a more mature outlook and although the failure is Benson's own, Carson deliberately blends pre-Vatican II practice with the childish love of ritual and peripheral devotions and all which was neatly "enshrined" for Benson in his childhood. Although comfortable with his religion as a young teenager, Benson's developing sexuality has no place in his cosy picture of the world. As Carson himself has said

> while one of my themes is homosexuality, the other, and probably more important, is Catholicism. In fact, as you've probably noticed, the two are usually inextricably linked, busily copulating. Without the conflicts, guilts and frustration, I doubt that I would find much to write about re homosexuality. In my own case I often wonder whether without Catholicism there would be homosexuality.
>
> (Carson 1995a)

So in a sense the Church is responsible and, for Benson, his own family make his self-acceptance harder. In addition, his homosexuality was unacceptable in his[17] secular world as his father (a policeman) makes clear.

> '...In my line of work we get all sorts of bent people arrested and brought in and sent off to prison. They're pretty pathetic for the most part, these homos. If I thought my son was that way, well I...I don't know what I would do.'...

[17]As a working-class Merseyside Catholic homosexuality is unthinkable but even before the 1967 legislation, certain social environments were quite favourable towards homosexuals as we have seen. See above p. 24, Chapter 2.

> 'I'm not one of them, Dad,' he said.
> 'I hope not, son. If you were well, it would kill your mother.'
> (Carson 1989b, p. 221)

His mother does indeed die towards the end of the novel. There are small hints that she is unwell throughout the book and the connection with her son's sexual awakening is deliberate. She is rushed to hospital while Benson is at his first homosexual orgy. He does return in time to see his mother briefly but she is unconscious by this time following an operation and never regains consciousness. That the hero has in a way indeed killed his mother is clearly implied by this unhappy coincidence. The first indication that she is unwell occurs immediately after Benson's first genuine sexual congress. This association of death and sex has its forerunner, it seems, in the death of President Kennedy. Benson has arranged to meet Andy for the second time while the funeral procession is being broadcast on the television. Carson provides a witty repost to the famous question 'what were you doing when Kennedy was shot?' and goes on to spell out the link between the two.

> While the great of the world marched solemnly behind the dead President's coffin through the Washington streets, Benson rushed through his geography homework so that he could be out of the house by seven. ... He was not totally indifferent to these events; indeed, the death of the President had been one of the factors which had made the past week so spicy, had tinged it with an edge of unaccustomed drama and newness. Kennedy's death had been added to the exciting recipe,
> (Carson 1989b, pp. 212–3)

Just before his mother dies Benson tries to pray but feels that his prayers must be useless since he is in a state of mortal sin. His inability to pray increases his guilt and sense of responsibility for his mother's death. The blackness of his soul now compared to the soul-white apron of his role as the Catholic Grocer[18] strikes him and it is his love for his worldly mother, and by implication also

[18]See Carson (1989b, pp. 13–4).

the Mother Church, which causes him to repent of his impurity. His deep love and special closeness to his mother continue into the other novels, continually echoing his relationship with the Church as his mother. Mrs Benson is a Catholic but much less in awe of the cloth than his father and frequently critical of the excessive and peculiar Irishness of the Brothers at her son's school.[19] Moreover, she finds many reasons or excuses for his behaviour and points them out to his father: when he complains that he does not understand his son's behaviour she is able to put it all down to puberty or the absence of siblings; secular, rational and comforting explanations for irrational behaviour. She represents the loving aspects of Catholicism for her son. She softens the rigidity of the faith as represented by Martin's father, the Brothers and indeed by all male Catholic characters. In this first novel his mother is the only feminine Catholic perspective. It is a type of religion which Benson cannot wholly reject and will later be continued by other female characters. It also exists in direct opposition to the culturally insular Catholicism which his father encapsulates.

The form of the novel is constructed in direct relation to the changes in Benson's character. It is divided into three sections and each part depicts a separate phase of Benson's development. Therefore, moving from sections one to two, and from two to three, necessitates a certain rite of passage which is made successfully but not with ease. As Benson progresses from Wobbles[20] to Joachim[21] he casts off his identity by losing all the extra weight which has plagued him and made him a popular subject for taunts throughout his schooldays, and takes a new name as a novice of the Order. The other bug-bear of his life, bed-wetting (expressive of his immaturity and insecurity) he gradually conquers too. Initially, Brother Joachim is happy at the Order's Juniorate, having apparently conquered his sexual problems, as Carson puts it:

[19]In this she is also representative of a more English Catholicism comparable to that of Alice Thomas Ellis or David Lodge.

[20]The title of the first section.

[21]The title of the second section.

> best of all, since starting at St. Finbar's, he had not given way to one single sin against Holy Purity. It had not required any effort on his part. Purity had just happened. From his first hour in the building, feelings of awe at the surroundings and of the great step he would shortly be taking, managed what endless rounds of prayer and worry had been unable to do.
>
> (Carson 1989b, pp. 119–20)

But his freedom from sexual concerns does not last even here in the cloistered world of St Finbar's. It is his homosexuality, from which he thinks he can be free, which has, at least in part, brought him here to try his vocation. Carson has said,

> The old, light-weight, pithy, catechism of my childhood, planted all kinds of neuroses in many a young head. It was, I sometimes think, knowing much too soon about too many things, too many pitfalls along the path to righteousness. This knowledge was difficult to assimilate - people went very silent, even confessors. So, a theory of mine - and it's only that - is that Catholicism by the naming of endless 'sins' makes those sins inevitable.
>
> (Carson 1995a)

Benson is happy because he feels safe, he is protected from outside influence and temptation but he must face his sexuality not merely hide it and to this end his stay in the seminary is brought abruptly to a close. Essentially what accrues is that old Brother Michael frequently tempts Brother Joachim to meet him at the rubbish dump. Benson can guess all too well what he wants to go there for and although his old lusts are reawakened he steadfastly refuses to have anything to do with him. By talking to his confessor Father O'Callaghan — both within and without the Confessional — Joachim gains confidence and practical advice to counter Michael's frequent attacks and the "silly old fool" (Carson 1989b, p. 153) gradually pays less attention to him. It seems that the episode will pass but Joachim discovers that his friend Brother Ninian has actually been going with Brother Michael. Characteristically Benson exhorts him with prayers, reminders

of the vows they will shortly be taking and biblical references, but Ninian cannot see what all the fuss is about. Soon there is more fuss than any of them would have imagined when the novice Brother Henry, who, it soon transpires, was tempted to the rubbish dump with Brother Michael,[22] is found to have castrated himself, having taken the Bible all too literally:

> 'If thy right hand scandalise thee cut it off and cast it from thee. For it is better for one member to die than that the whole body be consumed in the everlasting fire.'
>
> (Carson 1989b, p. 165)

It is the resulting investigation into this tragi-comic affair which leads to Benson's departure from St. Finbar's. Already noted for his excessive zeal (the Joachim section opens with Brother Henry declaring "I'm going to be a saint before I'm thirty," (Carson 1989b, p. 103)) and desire for self-mortification, Brother Henry's actions are a terrible blow to the novice master who had hoped that, despite his excesses, Brother Henry might be a good candidate. Benson is questioned and in his first interview strenuously denies any impurity in his life. However, they have heard about the Rude Club[23] (presumably from Brother Ninian) so Joachim cannot possibly be believed. In his second interview we see the emergence of a higher purpose in Benson: he is willing to sacrifice himself albeit in a less dramatic manner than Brother Henry. Before this final session Benson meditates on the problem to himself.

> He knew too that the matter was not closed and that he too might well be sent away from St. Finbar's. The idea of leaving did not strike horror into him. It was only the thought of having to return to St. Bede's as a failure that gave him pause. It was obvious to him that the monastery was no place of escape. If he was a homo he would have to fight it here or there. Changing the geography would not change the problem.
>
> (Carson 1989b, p. 176)

[22]There is more than a hint here from Carson that many religious may be homosexual.
[23]See p. 84 above.

Having made his decision he is strong in doing what he sees as being right. Here for the first time Benson begins to show the strength that is within his character and it is no accident that this coincides with him losing or turning away from his religious Faith. It seems that he must betray God but even at this stage of his emotional development he is able to reject the Faith in which he has been brought up without necessarily rejecting all concepts of a Divine Creator. He spells this out to the Parish Priest shortly after he returns home from the seminary.

> '...what is it about hell that you find particularly difficult?'
> 'I cannot reconcile the God of Infinite Love and the God of Infinite Justice, Father.'
> ...'Your Catechism says: "They who die in mortal sin will go to hell for all eternity." That is clear enough.'
> 'Yes, but that's the problem.'
> The priest looked nonplussed.
> 'You see,' continued Benson. 'I see hell as a betrayal of the Love of God. It is my duty as a Christian to seek to make Christ my friend. But how can I do that in a proper spirit if He will turn His Face from me forever? We are told from our earliest days that we are prone to sin. But if we die in sin, that's it and He gives up our friendship and is content to live in the delights of heaven while I languish forever enduring horrible torments! I just can't accept that.'
>
> (Carson 1989b, pp. 209 10)

The priest's comments are such a blatant caricature of a pre-Vatican II mentality that he represents in convenient stereotype, the masculine uncaring Church which Benson is forced to reject. Benson rejects patriarchy in general and therefore particularly that element within the Church. However, he remains attached to the masculinised femininity of the Mother Church. He accepts the resultant effect of much personal pain and mortification in order to make his departure from the monastery harmless to others, particularly old Brother Michael. And yet Brother Michael's betrayal through silence is nothing compared to the way in which the Church has hurt him. Brother Michael represents the Church in a sense but he is also an individual and Benson is able to separate the sin from the sinner,

in his case all the more because Michael represents what Joachim could become were he to take his vows. Clearly the over-zealous Brother Henry is illustrative of the other extreme which Benson could be driven to within the Church. In this way Brother Michael through destroying Joachim is the Saviour of Moses.[24]

> So, when, a week later, he was called back to the Brothers' Feast Day Parlour and sat down next to Brother Michael, he was not afraid. When Novvy asked Brother Michael to repeat his accusation, he was not shocked when Brother Michael said it had been Joachim who had led him into sin at the rubbish dump. He rather almost felt that the old Brother was telling the truth. Then, when Novvy asked him, 'Is that true? Did you lead Brother Michael astray?' Joachim thought of Bruno, Eric and the man he had stared at in the toilet and answered, looking at Brother Michael: 'Yes, it is true. I am responsible. I tempted Brother Michael and he reluctantly gave in.' Brother Michael gazed at Joachim. He inhaled suddenly, startled, as if the inhalation might be his last. Joachim, looking at Brother Michael's old, tired face could imagine how the face would look on a pillow breathing its last breath. His mouth opened and closed like a goldfish in a bowl of water starved of oxygen. But Brother Michael did not say a word.
>
> (Carson 1989b, p. 177)

Faced with the choice between remaining true to his Faith or to an image of himself, Benson chooses to try the latter path. He rejects the dominant, masculine Catholicism which surrounds him as a betrayal of his own God-made nature as an effeminate, sensual man. The failure of his confessor Father O'Callaghan to speak for him when he was well aware of the whole history of Brother Joachim's difficulties with Brother Michael (and Carson is quick to point out that not all these discussions were within the confessional and therefore the priest was not bound to secrecy[25]) makes Father O'Callaghan a representative of the Church as a whole in a way that Brother Michael is not. Another representative priest who Benson holds responsible is his own parish priest. He knows from the Brothers

[24]The title of the third section.

[25]The absolute secrecy of the Confessional has long been popularised through films and other fiction so that Carson feels no need to spell out its relevance here.

the circumstances of Benson's departure from St. Finbar's and promises not to tell his parents. Very soon after this promise Benson's father tells his son that he knows what happened because the parish priest told him. To some extent Father O'Callaghan is representative of a post-Vatican II mentality in a pre-Vatican II world. He also serves as a reminder that different interpretations have always existed within Christianity and not just since Vatican II.

> 'Let me tell you, son, that a mortal sin is terribly difficult to commit. You've really got to get up early to commit one. You can't do it when you're all hot and bothered and it sounds to me like you were all hot and bothered this morning... for your penance say ten Hail Mary's. No, on second thoughts, don't say ten Hail Mary's. Instead, say a prayer of your own for me and Miss Harper (his housekeeper) and, for good measure, you can say one for all my friends in Afghanistan.
>
> (Carson 1989b, p. 153)

Similarly, he rebukes Joachim for his over legalistic concerns about sin, his description of the catechism's irregular motions of the flesh sounds a great deal less serious than Benson's,

> 'Well, that's usually how it is in matters of impurity. You want to. Then you don't want to and then before you know it there you are and Bob's your uncle it's all over and you feel dreadful... And you've come haring up here... because you think you've committed a mortal sin... '
>
> (Carson 1989b, p. 152)

In this way Father O'Callaghan is a forerunner of the opposing stereotype of post-Vatican II mentality represented by Sean and Myvanwy in *Stripping Penguins Bare* but he represents an essentially masculine church just as surely as the parish priest.[26] The priest's failure to help him makes Joachim unhappy but the absence of any bitterness shows that Benson maintains the more subtle Catholicism of his mother. It seems that this inbuilt religious feeling never really

[26]See Carson (1989b, pp. 209–10), and p. 92 above.

leaves Benson and this crucial confession in the first book of the Benson trilogy compares well with the final one in *Yanking Up the Yo-Yo*.[27] Journeying from Joachim in the second section to Moses in the final part Benson starts very much as a Joachim figure. He is still excessively pious in that he seeks to interpret everything in terms of a value system he has already largely rejected. He fears to abandon totally the religion which he still hopes may 'make a man out of him' unable or unwilling as he is to recognise the Church's impact on his homosexuality. Also it is understandable that he is not easily able to disconnect his mind from the concerns of the spiritual realm which have so pre-occupied him during his time as a novice. Gradually, however, he regains a sense of proportion and inevitably tends towards the opposite extreme. The major influence in this development is his friendship with Lawrence Clitherow who refers to Catholicism as the 'Myth of Rome' (Carson 1989b, p. 228) and generally speaks of religion, which has been the cornerstone of Benson's life so far, in terms which impress Benson greatly by appealing to his intellectual pretensions. The following extract comes immediately after Benson has refused to answer Brother Wood's repeated demands for a recitation of the four sins crying to Heaven for vengeance;[28] obediently providing the first three: wilful murder, oppression of the poor and defrauding labourers of their wages, Benson denies any knowledge of the final one, the sin of Sodom, even in the frightening face of severe corporal punishment. Elements of the martyr Joachim persist within the developing Moses persona.

> 'Well I have problems with hell.'
>
> 'That's a start, but is that the only thing you have problems with?'
>
> Benson thought hard. 'I have problems with the way, say, Brother Wood acts towards us.'
>
> 'I would agree,' conceded Clitherow. 'There is a yawning gap between the spirit of the Gospels and the spirit prevailing in this institution. The problem is you see, that Christianity just won't work. The Fathers of the Church realised that quite early on and they set

[27]See p. 109 below.

[28]Again, this is straight from *The Penny Catechism* p. 57.

> about making the whole thing more worldly and comprehensible. I've nothing against Jesus per se. Quite a decent sort of fellow. He'd obviously read his Aristotle. But all the rest? A distraction... You're homosexual, aren't you, Benson?'
>
> 'Who me?' asked Benson. 'How dare you!'
>
> 'Please don't be shy like that!... You are, aren't you?'
>
> 'I think I may be. Yes,' answered Benson after a pause.
>
> 'Good. That wasn't too difficult, was it? I am too, though I also have a fondness for women.'
>
> (Carson 1989b, pp. 228–9)

This could be Benson speaking of his own fondness for women which is crucially non-sexual. Benson moves towards self-acceptance by what seems the only route - via total rejection of the Church; a direction he pursues with characteristic zeal. Clitherow helps to bring him out but it is a process which has already started. Shortly after his ignominious departure from St, Finbar's, Benson meets a man only referred to as Andy and has his first true sexual experience with him in a cemetery. Andy has had his own share of problems with Catholicism too.

> 'I am a typical lapsed Catholic, dear. Well, perhaps not typical. I always think that "lapsed" is the wrong word for what happened to me. It makes you think that you just get too bloody lazy to do the necessary. But that's not how it was with me, dear. When I found out that I was a gay boy the whole bloody house of cards fell down. Yes, that's more how it is. I just collapsed. I'm a collapsed Catholic... trying to make the best I can by searching through the rubble for something to call my own'
>
> (Carson 1989b, p. 218)

Andy betrays Benson by his unwillingness to make any commitment[29] and by wishing to maintain only a very loose association with him which is based purely on sex. Clitherow's eventual betrayal, as seen in the sequel *Stripping Penguins Bare*, is more important and absolute but it is his specific betrayal and sad treatment through his experience as a novice in a religious order (capped by

[29]Carson is in favour of loyalty and monogamy even in this first novel. Later he stresses the importance of fidelity even more strongly.

the behaviour of the parish priest on his return) which is important here. The Brothers at his school as representatives of Catholicism certainly do not help him to maintain his faith. However, Benson did take the important step of going to try his vocation to the religious life. In doing so the reader is shown Benson's ability to perceive the wider world of Catholicism and is not unduly blinkered by the sometimes sadistic and cruel treatment of his school teachers. Again his mother's influence is to the fore and it is with attention to those aspects of Catholicism which, although very much pre-Vatican II, are more flexible than their male counterparts that the novel closes. Martin dances to a record given to him on his departure from the seminary by a visiting Brother, Brother De Porres. As Joachim he was inspired and moved by this saintly black man; as Benson he discovers his homosexual leanings towards black men in particular, but here he is at peace and full of love as he awaits the next developmental stage of his life.

> He danced for Mum and Brother O'Toole and Ninian and Novvy and Clitherow and Brother Michael and Bruno and Mrs Brown and Eric and for the calm wild creature he saw in the octagonal mirror who had not drawn the curtains and who, for the moment at least, did not care.
>
> (Carson 1989b, p. 256)

Benson has a full share of Catholic anxiety and guilt and the clumsiness of his early sexual experiments, although depicted humorously by Carson, reflects the sense of oppression. The encounters themselves may be superficial but the consequences could go very deep, in later novels where AIDS has become a reality the consequences are even more serious.[30] The connection between his sexual awakening and death (both his mother's and that of the American President) are made clear by Carson and the long term effects of the childhood Rude Club connect with his own feelings about Hell. Benson dreams of visiting Hell (having himself been saved) and meeting his childhood friends who claim to have been so

[30]See especially Carson (1995b, p. 229).

influenced by Benson that they were never able to make their lives good and so avoid this eternal punishment. These musings on the unacceptability of eternal damnation are developed more fully through Benson's relationship with Clitherow toward the end of the book.

After an interval during which he worked on other things, Carson returns to his Benson character in *Stripping Penguins Bare* (1991). In this sequel the hero finds himself away from home, a first year undergraduate at Aberystwyth University. Where *Sucking Sherbet Lemons* used the popular combination of sex and religion to provide the bedrock (with the less usual twist of homosexuality), here the embarrassments, trials and anxieties of undergraduate life are the supplement to the main character's moral and religious development. As the novel progresses the character of Benson develops as he manages to lose much of his adolescent anger with and antipathy towards his religion. The friends of his school days slip away. Not without pain the physically and intellectually superior Clitherow is shown to be very lacking in the sort of qualities that Benson possesses. Benson is still a misunderstood hero but the emphasis has changed and he is now to be persecuted not for his religious beliefs but for his sexual orientation. Whereas Clitherow with his desire to try everything and his outspoken opinions appears to be the more liberated of the two young men, it is really Benson, who disapproves of Clitherow's extravagant pot-smoking friends at Oxford, who is truly maturing. Clitherow suddenly becomes engaged to the daughter of a Conservative M.P. who is in favour of apartheid. The character of Amanda is used simply to show that Lawrence has abandoned all his principles whether religious, political, sexual or whatever. In this way Clitherow represents what Benson could have become had he refused to accept his homosexuality. Although disappointed, Benson is strong enough to manage without Clitherow who is obviously not Dearest Him.[31] He has become his own man at last in this scene towards the close of the book as has been already signalled by his attendance at Mass and taking of Communion

[31]The search for 'Dearest Him' is recurrent throughout Carson's novels. See also p. 107 below.

to please his father.

From the Catholic perspective which concerns us here, we find that Benson is now quite a hardened agnostic. He mocks the Church of his childhood in the early stages of the novel and his gradual acceptance of Catholicism as something he does not have to continually fight is the crux of his development. The reader is told that Benson has refused to join the University's Catholic Society. Mentioned almost in passing are Myvanwy Roberts and Sean O'Malley, it seems that they are there merely to provide a foil for Benson's protestations against the Church but later they become crucial to the Catholic elements of the novel. They are important as they provide a rare sight in contemporary fiction of progressive Catholics, for Myvanwy and Sean are of a new breed of Catholic altogether and one that Benson has never met before. It is after Vatican II and these two young people are full of enthusiasm for their faith, indeed Myvanwy is taking instruction to convert from her own Chapel upbringing. Even at an early stage Benson is forced to admire them but he is less than admiring about the new Catholic Church of which they speak.

> 'Martin, this is 1965.'
>
> 'Well, it may be 1965, but the Catholic Church won't change. It can't.'
>
> 'Why do you think that? Good Pope John opened all the windows.'
>
> 'Not possible,' said Benson with conviction. 'The Catholic Church will never be able to face the fact of two thousand years of error. I can hardly convince myself that there is no truth in every jot and tickle of it and I had only had seventeen years' indoctrination. But think of all those generations of Catholic Dead! They lie on top of us...of you...and it is bloody impossible to get out from under all those millions. "We did it, now you bloody well get on with it!" The Church will never admit to error. It is a hopelessly haunted house. Nothing left to do but just leave without baggage, lock the door and never go back.'
>
> (Carson 1992, pp. 80–1)

Carson has not written directly of the Second Vatican Council in his novels

but in correspondence he has said,

> Vatican II came at a crucial time for me and a part of me was appalled by it. Things that had been wrong were suddenly open to question. Of course, I was all in favour of freedom of conscience except that I did not have a conscience that could tackle it. I was very much 'in recovery' from my fundamentalist Catholic upbringing. The sudden opening of windows caused drafts [*sic.*] It did not bring me back to the Church. I remember thinking that the changes were still basically cosmetic and a cynical side felt that it was PR - they'd still threaten hell if they thought they could get away with it.
>
> (Carson 1995a)

By the time *Stripping Penguins Bare* is set, the post-conciliar period is just beginning.

> 'Well, if you went now you'd see some changes.' [said Sean]
>
> 'Cosmetic. Tell me, is it still a mortal sin to miss mass on Sunday?'
>
> 'No, I don't think so. The very concept of mortal sin has undergone vast changes.'
>
> 'And masturbation? Surely masturbation is a mortal sin?' Myvanwy giggled, but Benson ignored her.
>
> 'Personally, I don't think it ever was. A biological necessity. I'd say,' laughed Sean.
>
> 'Do you mean to say that you never thought masturbation was a sin?'
>
> 'Well, I would say that it is a failure of the ideal, but no, I never thought it was a mortal sin.'
>
> 'Well, I don't see how you can be head of the Catholic Society. You'll be telling me next that artificial methods of birth control are acceptable.'
>
> 'I really think it's up to individual couples. You see, Martin, it's all a matter of love. That's what morality comes down to.'
>
> (Carson 1992, pp. 81–2)

Confused to find himself defending a Church in which he has no belief and even using those religious ideas of mortal sin and so forth which repel him so much, Benson starts to waver. He takes extreme action because he feels the need to stand up for what he believes, however vague he is about what that actually entails and partly because he wants to jolt these two people out of their complacency.

> 'These are all fine words, Sean, and I suppose I agree with you. But what I cannot agree with is that the Catholic Church thinks that. It's either all or nothing.'
>
> 'What a little Jansenist[32] you are!'
>
> 'I am a little Agnostic!' snapped Benson. 'Also,' he added, aware that he was out to shock and stop Sean's sickly smile, 'also I am homosexual. There is no place for me in the Catholic Church.'
>
> (Carson 1992, p. 82)

Benson cannot even talk coherently about the changes brought about by the Council because he is still using a pre-Vatican II vocabulary and framework which are seemingly incompatible with the post-conciliar outlook embraced by Sean. Sean's view is of course a stereotype as is Martin's and as stereotypes they represent opposing extremes of Catholicism.

> But Benson was disappointed. The smile [Sean's] did not fade.
>
> 'Splendid! If that's what you are that is what you are. Don't you agree, Myvanwy?'
>
> Myvanwy nodded enthusiastically. 'Definitely,' she said. 'The Church is for everyone, Martin. Many mistakes have been made, but things are changing. Believe me.'
>
> Benson melted towards Sean somewhat. He wanted to say that he believed him, but the temptation to do so was interfered with by the memory of his years of agonising.
>
> (Carson 1992, p. 82)

Here again we find that emphasis on betrayal which we found in earlier Catholic writing but in different circumstances. The unswerving faith of Sean and Myvanwy has an appeal even for Benson. However, he is too much embedded in pre-Vatican II Catholicism. He rejected that at least partly because it seemed implicitly to reject him because of his homosexuality. Rather than being pleased by the apparent changes and radical review of things within Catholicism (as represented by Myvanwy and Sean) he is appalled that the rock of his rebellion has collapsed. He has become too accustomed to fighting against his religion to be pleased that the cause of his fight might have disappeared.[33]

[32]See p. 231, Chapter 7 below.

[33]He is comparable to Graham Greene in this.

As a homosexual Benson has become so accustomed to being outside the Church that the idea of there being a place for him inside it is shocking. He has associated himself with the Decadents[34] of the end of the last century and finds comfort in the total depravity of his sexual desires. To have to think that his sexuality is, after all, acceptable, is no longer an object for him and so he does not want the Church to change in such a way that his rebellion against his faith seems pointless. It is not only the new flexibility of the Church which causes difficulties, it is also that the Church has become less feminine- there is now less emphasis on devotions to Our Lady, for example. It has lost those features which caught his affection and, in a way, utilised his homosexuality. Such disaffection with changes in the Church as shown by Carson becomes a crucial factor in the works of other novelists and this will be one of the main contentions of this thesis. Where they stand to begin with, either in favour of or opposed to the "old-style", Church appears to be inconsequential, they all have objections to the alterations which actually take place.

Benson's main interest as an undergraduate is associated with his position as the vice-President of the Overseas Students' Society. His personal preference for coloured and black men has emerged in *Sucking Sherbet Lemons* and the balance between his genuine interest in the welfare of his overseas friends and his lustful hopes towards a number of them make it clear that he is rightly entitled *Vice*-President. The interplay between these two warring sides of Benson is similar to the religious and sexual antagonisms of the first novel. Religious scruples may have been largely put aside here but the same problems remain. The text makes explicit the two halves of the hero's character by running two opposing commentaries within Benson's mind which interrupt the story at particularly crucial moments: one is the sarcastic and ever disapproving voice of Brother Hooper from Benson's schooldays, and the other is Fyfe Robertson, a television celebrity, making a documentary about Benson. The critical view of Brother

[34]See p. 14, Chapter 2 above.

Hooper jockeys for position against the gushing secular praise of Mr Robertson but neither is ahead for long as these two opposites contradict and balance each other perfectly. Benson's involvement with the Overseas Students Society offers a fair amount of temptation but all his sexual encounters are in fact quite removed from that. Benson's closest friend at university is predictably a woman, Meryl. She is the stronger, dominant character but her femininity makes her acceptable to him. Thus, he is horrified when she turns to Catholicism. She does so at least partly because of the care and friendship she has received from Myvanwy.

> When I told Myvanwy I was pregnant she listened, then she hugged me. When I told her I was going to have an abortion, she did the same thing.
>
> (Carson 1992, p. 311)

Benson may have abandoned his religion but it still pursues him as he continues to lead a moral life with personal values which differ little in essentials from those of his Catholic childhood. Whereas in *Sucking Sherbet Lemons* the stress is on the outward signs of holiness (prayer, attendance at Mass, etc.) here he is shown more as a 'good citizen' helping and caring for others selflessly. Benson certainly suffers from a sense of 'once a Catholic always a Catholic' and his pious tendencies are transferred from God to 'the Wisdom and Spirit of the Universe'. The phrase is not his own, he has simply copied it from Meryl,[35] but it shows that he is still seeking something to believe in. Having rejected what is shown as the 'old-style, pre-Vatican II' church and being unimpressed by the appearance of the 'new-style, post-Vatican II' he settles for this vague term to tide him over until he should find whatever it is he seeks.

From the point of view of this thesis it would be interesting to see more of characters who embrace Vatican II like Sean and Myvanwy. David Lodge has some characters particularly in *How Far Can You Go?* which come close but none of

[35]And Meryl has lifted it from Wordsworth's *The Prelude* I, 428.

them go very far in terms of the progressive Catholicism of these two of whom we hear only a little. It is the very absence of such figures in contemporary Catholic novels, I would argue, which is the most telling. The figure of Meryl is important as she performs a similar function here to Lawrence Clitherow in *Sucking Sherbet Lemons* in that both lead and educate Benson. Clitherow, although effeminate he is still a man, helped him away from the Church but now Meryl, a rather masculine character yet crucially a woman, seems to be leading him back at least to an acceptance of Catholicism as a possibility. Meryl is the nearest thing to a modern Catholic we find here. Shortly before her move towards Catholicism she talks to Benson about Myvanwy and Sean.

> 'I envy them in a way,' Meryl said...'They're so certain about everything. And I've never seen them looking miserable, unless looking miserable is a part of a happening they're engaged in. Myvanwy lives on my floor at Ifor Evans. She's generous. Always ready to listen.'
>
> 'Yes, maybe,' replied Benson, 'but imagine what she would think of you if she knew.' [about the abortion]
>
> 'What would she think of me?'
>
> 'Well, I mean...' began Benson.
>
> 'Let me tell you, Martin, I'd rather have Myvanwy's judgement than yours any day of the week. I think she'd be quite understanding. She might well think I was a sinner. I don't mind that. I'd at least know where we stood...'
>
> (Carson 1992, pp. 225–6)

It is interesting to note that the certainty[36] of Catholicism, which seems to Benson to have been lost since the Council, is what attracts Meryl. It is reminiscent of Charles Ryder's complaint in *Brideshead Revisited* that Catholics are supposed to have fixed beliefs but do not really, rather they all are sure about different things. Sean and Myvanwy are certain of what their faith entails for all that this is quite different from Benson's picture of things. Benson feels betrayed by a Church he no longer believes in; what continues to pursue him is the memory

[36]See also p. 238, Chapter 7 below.

of his mother and an essential suspicion that there is still something, which he now thinks of as a kind of Universal Spirit and Wisdom. Yet having denied his Catholicism assiduously in the earlier part of *Stripping Penguins Bare* (although this suggests rather too much of an adolescent strong denial) he craves with Meryl some sort of certainty.

> 'I feel I am becoming a bit of a mess. I'm getting mixed up again. Before - of course I was mixed up then too - I thought I knew where I stood. There was an answer for everything. Usually they weren't answers that I liked much, but they were definite. Now everything is a question and when I try to answer I keep thinking of buts and howevers and anyways and on the other hands. I didn't know it would be like this.'
>
> 'I don't get you.'
>
> 'When I decided I didn't believe in the Church any more I thought it would all become so easy and straightforward. But it hasn't been. I feel that with every passing day I understand less and less about everything.'
>
> (Carson 1992, pp. 227–8)

Towards the end of the novel, Carson shows Benson's gradual acceptance of his Catholic background. His move towards this state has been depicted by his continual efforts to reconcile others with cultural differences which he personally could never see as a barrier. Martin Benson is becoming a secular humanist, indeed he is really a secular Catholic,[37] for the very idea of secular humanism for anyone other than a Catholic is a strange one.

In the final autobiographical novel, *Yanking Up the Yo-Yo* we see the character of Benson has completed the circle and Carson shows how a comfortable state of acceptance can be achieved. It is 1967 and Benson is in New York. The excessive piety of his childhood is gone as are the numerous ejaculations and references to Catholicism but yet there is an act of contrition by the twelfth page, something unthinkable in the defensively agnostic phase covered by *Stripping Penguins Bare*. Also there is none of the vague, liberalistic mention of Universal Spirits; Benson

[37]See p. 107 below.

speaks of and to God. Clearly, although not enacting a regular formal practice of his childhood religion, Benson is a Catholic and recognises himself as such. The change in British law may aid Benson in the acceptance of his homosexuality but it is significant that he is outside the country when the change takes place, as his sexual dilemmas are largely outside the law.

> Yes, now he was legal. Hurray. But the account of the debate in the House of Commons did not cheer him much, did not go any length towards banishing the bitter taste of the dinner conversation. He read what Roy Jenkins had said: *This is not a vote of confidence in, or congratulations for, homosexuality. Those who suffer from this disability carry a great weight of loneliness, guilt, shame and other difficulties. The crucial question we have to answer is whether, in addition to these other disadvantages, they should also be made subject to the full rigour of the criminal law.* Benson could not exactly decide why the speech so depressed him. True, he had had his share of loneliness, guilt and shame. Still had. But he no longer saw himself as having a disability.
>
> (Carson 1993, p. 45)

The idea we have in Greene's *Brighton Rock*, that Right and Wrong, and Good and Evil are not the same, is important here too.[38] It is of little importance whether or not homosexuality is legal in the secular world only whether it is or could be Right in a religious sense. However, the change in the Law which starts the story forms a secular counterpart to the religious blessing Benson receives via Patrick at the end of the novel. He meets other Catholics who reinforce his acceptance of himself and confirm his place within the Church, a process begun in the previous novel. He realises that he actually is a Catholic, it is simply a part of his being, rather than striving to be one. He no longer mistrusts and avoids Catholics rather he shows particular interest in them, even uses his Irish roots and education by Christian brothers to gain acceptance.[39] Now more relaxed about religion he is truly a secular Catholic or as Carson puts it a 'Christian

[38]See p. 30, Chapter 2 above.
[39]See Carson (1993, p. 151).

Gentleman'.[40] He is more concerned with secular ideas of what a man should be like as he finally realises that his religion and his sexuality are not mutually exclusive.

> In England they made you manly by forcing you to play rugby and criticising you every time you did something 'unmanly' - if commonsensical - like running away from the ball or throwing it up into the air in a panic as the pack of brutish forwards from the other team descended upon you like Viking hoards [*sic.*] But was not that mould into which they tried to force you perhaps a perversion of real manliness? It definitely, in Benson's opinion, conflicted with the notion of the Christian Gentleman. The Christian Gentleman was someone who never knowingly caused offence. Well, he had been caused great offence by all these manly antics while growing up. He could not imagine Christ would have come off very well on the rugby pitch at St Bede's. Still, maybe He would have if He had been in the mood He had been in when He expelled the traders from the Temple. If the PE master had been able to go over to Christ and say, 'Now when the whistle blows I want you to remember how manly you were when you expelled the traders from the Temple. Go and do likewise.' What would have happened then?
>
> (Carson 1993, pp. 169–70)

The idea of the 'Christian Gentleman'[41] or 'Secular Catholic' is important for the other novelists too. From his childish fantasies about Christ as Dearest Him which led him to try to make Jesus his friend as a Christian Brother, Benson can appreciate now the feminine quality of Catholicism as it stands against an aggressive masculinity in the world. The transvestite prostitute Virginia or Virgil Brown whom Benson befriends and finally helps to gain a job as a nurse thereby saving her/him from a life of crime is symbolic of all the confusions and problems redolent of sexuality. With a name symbolising purity and innocence Martin does not even realise that Virginia is genetically a man until they have been friends

[40]See below p. 107.

[41]Carson uses the term 'Christian Gentleman' although 'Secular Catholic' is often more appropriate to his own characters. Thus, both are used here almost interchangeably. This is not meant to imply that Catholicism is the only existing form of Christianity.

for some time. His acceptance of the fact that he is a prostitute and bisexual enables Benson to experience the whole spectrum of sexuality in a single person. Carson is writing of his own growing confidence when he has Benson view this positively and describe it as just a "part of life's rich pageant". (Carson 1993, p. 45) This more secular Benson is finally embracing the Christian idea that it is not for him to judge. This is clearly far removed from the young Benson of *Sucking Sherbet Lemons*.[42] Benson's quality as a Christ figure is first revealed here as his treatment of Virginia is reminiscent of the biblical story of Jesus saving the woman caught in adultery. The Church as a formative influence on his homosexuality has been considered before but here it is explicit as one of his sexual experiences occurs in a church with a priest. Initially recoiling from this event with the full weight of Catholic guilt, Benson at the end of the novel turns the situation round. Once again the Church is a refuge to him (when he hears of the tragic death of his friend Dexter) and he wishes to have a Mass said for the repose of his soul as this is the proper Catholic thing to do. He returns to the only church he is familiar with; the same one he had sex in with a priest. This is a revealing and yet intentional choice as he knows that he has to put things right there. The housekeeper greets him:

> ...once the heavy door had closed behind him, he started to bawl like a baby. She took him to her kitchen and held his hand until he had recovered. Then she made him a cup of tea.
>
> 'You know, this is the first proper teapot I've seen since I came here.'
>
> She nodded. 'Milk, Martin?'
>
> 'Yes, please. Thank you. In England we put it in before the tea. You put it in after.'
>
> 'That's right. You do it the Protestant way. As a girl I worked for a Protestant family near Sligo. They'd always insist on the milk going in first.'
>
> Benson tasted his tea. It took him straight home.
>
> 'It's lovely,' he said. 'Just right.'

[42]More anecdotes from the life of the young Benson are in some of Carson's short stories. See Carson (1994).

'There. You've learnt something. You can do it the Catholic way from now on.'

(Carson 1993, p. 293)

Benson discovers "the Catholic way" and accepts himself not in spite of but because of the Church which helped to make him. With Miss O'Neill's motherly affection and influence, Benson is encouraged to be reconciled with the Church and more importantly with the masculinity of the Catholicism.

Miss O'Neill nodded. 'Why don't you go and talk to Father Patrick, Martin?'

'But he's in confession.'

'So? When did you last go?'

'Er...'

(Carson 1993, p. 295)

Especially in post-Vatican II terminology, what is commonly referred to as Confession (customarily the Sacrament of Penance) is called the Sacrament of Reconciliation. The change of emphasis is significant. This scene is the climax of the entire novel and the grand finale to the whole of Martin Benson's story.

'Forgive me, Father, for I have sinned. It's been about three years since my last confession, Father. Father, it's hard for me to confess because I am not sure I believe. I am a homosexual and I don't think it's a sin.[43] But I have the feeling that I'm becoming shallow and rudderless. Last week I had sex with a man and caused him a lot of sorrow. I am sorry that I caused that man to be unhappy, Father. I am also lazy and too easily influenced by people. My motives are mixed. I worry about what people think of me all the time...and I don't know if I can love... Er... for these and all my other sins which I cannot now remember I humbly ask pardon from God. Penance and absolution from you, my Ghostly Father.'[44]

There was silence from the other side of the grille. Then a long sigh. 'It's Martin, isn't it?' said Father Patrick.

'Yes, Father. Miss O'Neill sent me. I came here to ask you to say a mass for a friend of mine who has died. His name is Dexter

[43]It is not a sin to be homosexual only to practice it.

[44]Benson is shown to be using a form of words within the Confessional that is very pre-Vatican II.

Bulkington. I wrote it down for Miss O'Neill. I've left the money with her. Er... I...'

'Of course, I'm very sorry to hear about your friend. I'll say the mass, Martin. And Martin, I'm sorry for what I did to you. I think you understand how it is. I've got a lot of things to sort out.'

Benson did understand. He understood all too well.

'You'd better be off, Martin. People will be thinking you're a mass-murderer.'

'That doesn't matter. What about my penance, Father?'

'Come and have a Guinness with me some time soon.'

'Right-ho,' said Benson. He bowed his head as the priest absolved him of his sins.

'Martin?' said Patrick.

'Yes. Father?'

'Patrick. Don't be too hard upon yourself, OK? It doesn't do any good. You should have learnt that by now. Go and find yourself a friend.'

'Yes, Fath... Patrick.'

(Carson 1993, pp. 294–5)

Father Patrick is another version of what Benson might have been and this enhances the ambiguity as to who is absolving whom. Certainly Benson's unspoken forgiveness and moreover his sympathy, love and understanding for Patrick's difficulties make Benson the more obvious candidate for Christ's representative. Because of his Christlike position here he can be shown to be in harmony with the Church and in a legalistic sense is in fact received back by his absolution. Patrick's "Go and find yourself a friend" neatly puts a seal upon his acceptance and so reunites homosexuality and Catholicism which Benson has seen as mutually exclusive for so long. Although strictly speaking it is important to remember the distinction between a priest as a man and the priest's sacramental function,[45] here Father Patrick gives these words in the confessional, although after the sacrament of reconciliation is complete, so Carson deliberately blurs the "official" stance of such instruction. However, his encouragement cancels out Benson's earlier disillusionment as experienced with Father O'Callaghan in *Sucking Sherbet Lemons*.

[45]As seen in Greene's and Waugh's novels.

The choice is no longer that of either a good life or a happy one, a third possibility presents itself.

> 'I wish I could stay, but how can I, Mr Fucci? I'm two years on with my degree. I don't know what my dad would say. And all my friends are there.'
>
> 'Not all your friends. What about us? Do you have anyone to worry about back there? ... Back in Italy we had a saying, "Home is where your worries are." Think about it, Martin. We all need someone to worry about.'
>
> 'I was worried about *you*.'
>
> 'That's a start. And you like the US, don't you?'
>
> 'Yes, I like it a lot. I'm very happy in my job. In a way I think nursing may suit me more than whatever I'm going to be fit for after the degree. I don't think I want to teach much and I can't think of anything else. I've been racking my brains like mad.'
>
> 'But doesn't your family want you to be happy?'
>
> He thought about that. That was a hard one. Probably they would prefer him to be good. But what did that mean?
>
> (Carson 1993, pp. 308–9)

If the completed circle[46] does not quite join up it is due only to the natural progression from youth to adulthood. The church Benson is now a part of has altered but Carson comments no more on the new-style, post-Vatican II church. Benson's own conscience tells him that homosexuality is not wrong and he believes he can be sexually active provided his relationships are not shallow and he is not promiscuous as he has been in the past. It is the maturing of his character's understanding of the Church which matters and that maturation is independent of the changes within the Church itself. It is important to remember that the post-Vatican II Church has not changed its position on homosexuality at all, and any and all homosexual acts are still expressly forbidden though homosexual "orientation" is, explicitly, not sinful. True, there are liberal Catholics who take Benson's idea that it is only the promiscuity of homosexuality which is objectionable but the official teaching is the same as ever.

[46]See above p. 105.

As we have seen,[47] official Church pronouncements have become increasingly common since the Council and particularly with the current Pontiff. These seem very much at odds with the initial 'liberal' climate after the Council and Carson shows his awareness of this. A recent example is *Veritatis Splendour* which while employing a sympathetic and understanding language and terminology is still insisting on the unalterable nature of truth and the objectivity of the Church's position. There may well be a large section of Catholics who actually follow a much more liberal interpretation of Catholic dogma, but the official stance remains the same.[48] Hornsby-Smith in his most recent sociological survey of Catholics and Catholic belief, while displaying a decrease in belief in Hell shows suprising uniformity: "five-sixths of the Catholics we interviewed claimed to attend Mass weekly". (Hornsby-Smith 1991, p. 130) On Papal authority, which is the concern here, he cites responses that span "the whole range from unconditional acceptance of the Pope's teaching to outright rejection." (Hornsby-Smith 1991, p. 130) but only a quarter were actually unwilling to accept the Pope's overall authority.

Carson has written three other novels which draw largely on his experiences as a teacher of English as a Foreign language, especially in the Middle East. *Friends and Infidels* (1989) is concerned with the political and moral position of colonials and other foreign workers in the imaginary Middle Eastern state of Ras Al Surra. Various different viewpoints are used to enhance the development of the plot which differs most from Carson's other novels in being less humorous. Catholicism does not overtly play a part and the only character with any clearly defined religious belief is the old nurse Mary-Anne Sissons.[49] Islam is the chief religion of the region and the other expatriates exhibit allegiance to no particular creed. It is the language employed by the author which really reveals the writer as a Catholic,

[47]See Chapter 3 above.

[48]There is a *sensus fidelium* which means that the Holy See could not indefinitely proclaim a Faith that most Catholics do not believe but there is plenty of room for the laity in particular to hold differing views.

[49]It is no accident that, for Carson, an absence of Catholicism equates with an absence of humour.

a trait common in supposedly 'non-Catholic' books by Catholics and particularly well revealed in Lodge's works. However, it is well-populated by people who are morally good, honest and willing to suffer for what they believe in. These characters are on the same moral level as Benson but without all the religious dilemmas. The problems of the Muslim boy Ibrahim reflect those of the adolescent Benson but the root of his difficulties is essentially the twentieth century itself. Peter Drury, the English teacher fulfils the role of the Christian gentleman of the Benson novels and the young nurse Joanna is the female equivalent. Both these young people are sexually pure (though largely by default) and thus sexual impurity is associated with evil especially in the character of Nicholson.

> He had received a conventional Church of England upbringing from doting middle-class parents, of whom he was the only child. He had sensed very early on that he was different. He listened to the fairy stories but knew they were lies, childish deceits. Of course he did not show the adults that he had tumbled to their wiles. It had been the same with religion. He had knelt in the boring pew between his parents and been absolutely certain that everything he heard and witnessed was plain untruth. As he grew he saw his contemporaries rejecting Christianity, but, and this had been incomprehensible to him, they hung on tenaciously to great swathes of the morality that went with it. Nicholson had not done this. He rejected such wet behaviour totally. After all, if one had thrown out the baby, why should one hang on to the bathwater - and, not only that, set up the bathwater as an icon?
>
> (Carson 1989a, pp. 132–3)

Here Carson depicts the perils of life without some sort of belief, but to exorcise this devil[50] the old matron Mary-Anne Sissons must lose her faith. At the death of Joanna which follows previous difficulties with her belief she reaches a climax.

> She knelt in an attitude of prayer but she was not praying. She was thinking: 'This is the moment I have come to Ras Al Surra for. This is the moment that I grow up! This is the moment I lose my faith.'
>
> (Carson 1989a, p. 250)

[50]See Carson (1989a, p. 258).

She too turns from religious ideas perceived as "childish deceits" in order to get rid of the Devil personified by Nicholson. The Islamic religion is represented as the "right" one here. Mary-Anne's Protestantism cannot help her when trouble comes but the Muslim characters are presented as finding great strength in their religion. For Ibrahim, who helps Mary-Anne to arrange Nicholson's death, justice is a part of his religion and so there is no conflict. Several of the Muslim characters are depicted at public and private prayer and the emphasis, fairly obviously transferred from Catholic sentiment, is on forgiveness.

> Perhaps he had sinned in his life, but God understood his sins - expected them almost - and would forgive him as long as he stayed faithful and submissive to Him until Death... He had sinned but he felt confident that Allah would forgive him.
>
> (Carson 1989a, p. 134)

Good and Evil are simply opposed so that Nicholson's sexual impurity, which is in fact homosexual, and his lack of religious belief lead him to rape Ibrahim, kill Joanna and destroy the Mosque. These crimes are all directly comparable and for any one of them he must be condemned according to Islamic principles. Significantly, the Secular but nonetheless Christian Gentleman figure of Peter Drury plays no part in Nicholson's destruction and so maintains his purity.

Homosexuality is still important to Carson and the main characters of *Coming Up Roses* (1990) are homosexuals. Betrayal of oneself and others is represented here by Hammond who, though homosexual himself, works for the intelligence service primarily as a agent to detect and root out homosexuality. In this respect, the importance of his relationship with Armitage whom he meets in Ras Al Surra, is that he learns to stand up for his own beliefs even, ultimately under pain of death.

This novel, like the Benson trio, is essentially humorous in order to make some important observations more palatable. Whereas in *Stripping Penguins Bare* much was revealed about the changes within the Church and the perceptions of

these changes from outside the Church through the dialogue of Benson with Sean and Myvanwy, here the main source of discussion is contained within the letters Higgins receives from his mother and his reaction to them. Higgins is Carson's most complete caricature so far and as such he provides a comic example of what religious extremism could lead to. Maternal influence is an important facet of Catholicism, as we have seen, and *Coming Up Roses* plays on this. When a form of Catholicism which concentrated on devotional acts, collecting holy medals and indulgences and all variety of cult devotions to Our Lady and various Saints was depicted in the Benson novels, especially in *Sucking Sherbet Lemons*, the results of such observances were portrayed as childish and largely negative. Certainly, such ritualistic observances which he enjoyed as a child were of no help to Benson as he matured and was faced with the fundamentals of his Faith. In *Coming Up Roses* however, it is precisely this almost primitive form of Catholic belief which triumphs. Already an important man in the 'Ministry for the Suppression of Vice and the Encouragement of Virtue' Abdul Wahhab Higgins is thirsty for more power and continual communications from his mother are barbs in his side.

> There were two letters...one, with an Irish stamp bearing a Castlebar postmark, addressed to REV. FR. PATRICK HIGGINS SJ (Society of Jesus) from a Mrs Norah Higgins.
>
> Abdul Wahhab Higgins scowled, reached for his paper-knife and sliced through the jugular vein of his mother's letter. He lifted out the three pieces of blue Basildon Bond it contained and read:
>
> 15 August (The Assumption!)
>
> Dear Patrick
>
> I know you don't like me calling you that, son, but sure it was the name I gave you and I'll never be able to get me tongue round Abdul Wahhab - and wouldn't if I could.
>
> You know I pray daily that you'll finally be able to conquer the devil that got into you all those years ago and give up the wicked heresy that the evil one had put in your way to make you lose your vocation and your soul. All the parishioners at Our Lady of Perpetual Succour remember you in their prayers. You are now mentioned at the end of

> every mass along with the lost souls in Russia.[51] I've come to dread the end of Sunday mass, son. I'm sure you can imagine the shame of a poor Catholic mother hearing her son mentioned like that. Still, Father McNally did ask me beforehand and I gave me consent. I just grip the rosary tight and offer it up.
>
> (Carson 1991, pp. 34–5)

With her emphasis on the devil and the surety that her son will lose his soul by embracing Islam, Mrs. Higgins provides another stereotype of the pre-Vatican II Church. Carson deliberately exaggerates her absurdity as she goes on to relate details of her visit to Knock:[52]

> I came back from Knock just the other day. Did you get me card? I know you always had a great devotion to the Sacred Heart, and the picture was so tastefully done that I knew you'd be thrilled to receive it. While at Knock I actually put my hand on to the footprint of the Holy Father. It's awful big feet he has![53] To do it I had to pay 50 pence to a Sister for the African missions, but, you know, Patrick, ever since I touched the footprint the arthritis in my right hand has improved no end! Oh, I can see you scoffing, don't you think I can't! Anyway, it's true. I hope to go back shortly to touch the footprint with my other hand.
>
> (Carson 1991, p. 35)

More to our purpose, the only mention of the Vatican Council is as a contributory factor in Higgins' conversion to Islam. The reasons he gives for rejecting Catholicism are succinct.

> I had long been dissatisfied with the Church of Rome. The honour given to graven images and the unfortunate results of the Vatican Council...
>
> (Carson 1991, p. 75)

[51]The tradition of offering prayers for the conversion of Russia was dropped in the 1960s.

[52]Knock is a shrine to Our Lady in Ireland.

[53]Incidentally, Lech Walesa in his autobiography, (1987) *A Path of Hope* London, Collins, also comments (p. 278) on the current Pontiff's large feet.

Although the cultish practices of his mother must surely be included under the first reason, it is the very orthodox Catholicism of his mother which ultimately brings him back. Possibly the only real problem with Catholicism then was the Council itself. Mrs Higgins is apparently waging her own holy war on her son as he wages war on the infidel in Ras Al Surra (primarily by demanding circumcision for all expatriate workers in the country). His mother's weapons are less dramatic but no less deadly to her son's peace of mind.

> He had long ago ceased writing, but his lack of response to his mother's missives only seemed to increase their volume. He shuddered as he remembered the daily trips to the censors to be hauled over the coals for being the recipient of rosaries, immaculate medals, our Lady of Lourdes musical boxes, Pope John Paul T-shirts, a glass statuette of St Maria Goretti, which, when the top was screwed off, proved to contain Irish Mist, Mass cards, Padre Pio devotional material, shares in Knock airport, *True Stories of 1001 Deathbed Conversions*, postcards, holy pictures, scapulars, and cribs made from Holy Land olive wood - it went on and on, like eternity.
>
> (Carson 1991, pp. 156–7)

This list of 'gifts' from Mrs. Higgins is reminiscent of a pre-Vatican II mentality which is shown to have persevered into the present, as John Paul[54] has only been the Pontiff since 16 October 1978 and the fame of Knock has followed his visit to the shrine. It is also indicative of Carson's own predilection for Catholicism's "tacky religious objects". (Carson 1995a) The letters take their toll and, in tears after reading one of them, Higgins finds himself involuntarily reciting the 'Hail Mary'. He flees from this scene of embarrassment

> as he ran and climbed stairs again and ran some more and descended stairs, lines came into his head from a poem he had often, when a priest, recommended to members of his flock tormented by doubts, and for all his movement away and away would not be dislodged:
> I fled Him, down the nights and down the days;
> I fled Him, down the arches of the years;

[54]Obviously John Paul II, as his predecessor John Paul I only lived 33 days after his election.

> I fled Him, down the labyrinthine ways
> Of my own mind; and in the midst of tears
> I hid from Him...[55]
>
> (Carson 1991, p. 197)

Higgins is finally arrested and deported for being a foreigner. His downfall is complete when he is revealed before the expatriates to be uncircumcised. His mother's piety is crucially connected to his exposure.

> And in an ancient church in the west of Ireland, a black-scarved old lady lights a candle and kneels in front of a statue of the Virgin. She clasps her hands, around which are knotted rosary beads, in front of her face and prays doggedly as the candle burns down and its flame burns heavenward, as straight as a stick - or a missile - in the still, cold air.
>
> (Carson 1991, p. 253)

The image here is no longer one of absurdity but of a moving religious archetype; an old mother kneeling before the eternal mother.

In the most recent of his novels about expatriates and the teaching of English, *Demolishing Babel* (1994), Carson's concern with Catholicism is limited but his anxiety about homosexuality or at least the practice of it is very important. There is much more to this novel but only a little of relevance to this discussion. Thus, we will concentrate on the aged character of Arthur Arthur, a practising homosexual who has recently lost his partner to AIDS. He fulfils the position of a secular Catholic or Christian gentleman, in that he repents his past conduct and seeks to do penance by accepting HIV as his cross and publicising his condition to help others. He also represents femininity at times better than the female characters; his effeminate nature is portrayed as an asset to his teaching and he is one of the best teachers at the language school "Demolish Babel". Finally plucking up the courage to have a test for the HI virus Arthur has little pity

[55]It is interesting to find Thompson's poem - a favourite with earlier Catholic writers as we noted in Chapter 2, p. 49 above - still quoted here.

for himself, only remorse for what he has done. Arthur was promiscuous but his late partner Harry was monogamous and so was assuredly infected by Arthur himself. Arthur's concern is now for others. Confirmed as HIV positive, Arthur accepts his 'punishment' and tries to make use of himself as a warning example. His subsequent selfless acceptance foreshadows the more explicit "martyrdom" of Casement in the next novel. Certain homosexual groups would find Carson's idea of punishment and his character's desire to warn others against what they are doing as insulting. However, what Carson seems to be advocating, through the character of Arthur Arthur, is fidelity among homosexuals and an end to promiscuity rather than an end to homosexual acts altogether.

> 'Stop it! Just stop it! Don't you see what you are doing? You're risking your own lives and the lives of the people you fuck about with! Hardly any of you are sober! Stop it! Learn from someone who knows, who has learned the hard way! ...I've got the virus! I didn't think it would happen to me but it has! Now stop what you're doing and go home. Sober up and find yourself a friend! I know why you're here! I *understand*! But you have to put life first! You have to put your brothers first! Stop killing one another! Stop it!'
>
> (Carson 1995b, p. 229)

Carson has said of the pre-Vatican II Church that it "sees no difference between a loving gay couple and a promiscuous, trick-a-night sort of chap." (Carson 1995a) He is beginning to protest at such injustice in *Demolishing Babel* but really tackles this point in *The Knight of the Flaming Heart*. He says of his relationship with Catholicism now, "It's a very mixed up relationship I have with it a distanced relationship too, because they will not accept the cast of my soul." (Carson 1995a)

Demolishing Babel only has one Catholic character, Molly. She is gentle and loving but so are a number of other characters; her religion is just another facet of her nature as it is to Carson. He says of his religion "it's much more meaningful to me than being, say, English - or Gay, for that matter." (Carson 1995a) He has

a weekly column in the recently revived *Catholic Times*[56] which prides itself on being an extremely orthodox Catholic newspaper. Many 'old-fashioned' elements of religious practice Carson likes, "I love nuns and missionary-boxes and Novenas and plaster statues of St Martin de Porres and *Faith of our fathers* and candles" (Carson 1995a), but he complains about those Catholics who

> keep telling noisy liberals to get out of the kitchen if they can't stand the heat. Well, this one can't stand the heat but chooses to remain in the kitchen - or, at least, the pantry. Being so deeply inculturated with Catholicism as I am there is really nowhere else to go.
>
> (Carson 1995a)

As so many of Carson's fictional characters feel so he himself feels and decides that "a cloud of unknowing is not a bad place to stand and mutter" (Carson 1995a) as the "Catholic Church is a place for sinners. Or should be." (Carson 1995a). His "cloud of unknowing" perhaps reflects the increased importance of negative mysticism in recent Catholicism; it is the opposite of the 'Catechism and Holy Medals' Catholicism of Carson's upbringing.

Published in May 1995, *The Knight of the Flaming Heart* brings together the idea of "a church for sinners" and homosexuality. It is quasi-historical in that it takes up the story of Roger Casement. Knighted by the British and later hanged for treason, he is seen as a hero for the Irish. However, to prevent public support at his trial the English published his diaries which exposed him as an active and promiscuous homosexual. Carson explains his intentions immediately on finishing the novel,

> it imagines Sir Roger coming back as an apparition in Ardfert, Kerry. Now this theme appealed because I see Casement as a gay hero. I also see him as a Great philanthropist - a sort of one-man 'Amnesty International'. To have him come back sets all sorts of cats among all sorts of pigeons. Would Casement be worried about the Diaries? Wouldn't he be far more concerned about Zaire and the behaviour of

[56]See p. 74, Chapter 3 above.

> the IRA? How would the Irish react? The Church? What about the souvenir shops?
>
> (Carson 1995a)

There is debate within the novel about whether or not the diaries are forgeries but Carson has his apparition claiming them categorically as his so that Casement's homosexuality is not in doubt for the purposes of the novel. The above comment effectively provides a brief summary of the plot.

Carson has moved here from the general idea of the Christian gentleman of secular Christianity to make him openly homosexual. The view that, being homosexual, one must live a life of celibacy is not debated, although promiscuity is again revealed as undesirable. A homosexual couple, Tim and Chris are shown in a favourable light because of their fidelity. Chris is dying of AIDS:

> 'We're back to the gay thing again,' he said. 'One thing that we as a group may - I only say *may* - be able to do is look at the way society works with a cold dispassionate eye. We do not quite get what is going on, what makes men seek empires and armaments and all the goodies for their tribe. We know that they do but we are distanced. We understand it - it's all around us - but we don't feel it. Our priorities, the cast of our minds, are different. Perhaps our loyalties are to those ideals which we can feel. Queen and Country don't stand much of a chance. And what does the family have to do with us? They throw us out... won't let us back in until we toe the line. But the struggles of the other underdogs perhaps do reach us and demand our loyalty...
>
> (Carson 1995c, p. 161)

Tim is pointing out the lack of belonging which homosexuals often experience and how this can actually be beneficial. Catholics in general and English Catholics in particular are often in the same position, they do not belong because theirs is not a "sensible"[57] religion; Carson is drawing parallels between the estrangement of Catholics[58] and the ostracising of homosexuals; he is also concerned with the

[57]See Chapter5, p. 137 below.

[58]As an Irish Nationalist, Roger Casement was tried for treason by the British.

alienation felt by expatriates. All of this he has felt himself, as has Sir Roger who spent many years of his life working for the benefit of the 'underdog' in Africa.[59] The many characters in *The Knight of the Flaming Heart* are given very even-handed treatment, to support the view that there is good and bad in everybody. The only exceptions are the clergy and even then only those fairly well-placed in the hierarchy are criticised for their "little faith". (Carson 1995c, p. 140) For the first time Carson writes explicitly about eternal life and gives his own view of how it might be through Casement back from the grave.

> I suppose you think that heaven starts right off. Hell too. No, we're all in limbo until the whole thing is finished. And when will that be? When will The End come? Well, I can't tell you that. Everything is finished only when the last creature comes from the earth, when everything has been evened out. Only then can final judgements be made. We, lost and saved and neither-up-nor-downs, ache for that time... You see those whose lives were writ large on the earth have the longest time to wait, the most miles to walk, papers to wade through, before their cases are settled. You can really guess the ones who are having the worst time. Then, when everything is settled all one has to do is wait for the Last Day. That wait, they tell me, is bearable, but only just. It's like pre-dinner drinks and an indefinitely postponed dinner. We know that something nice is being prepared behind the door but our stomachs groan and our brains ache with the waiting. We can watch those who still have to get everything sorted out carrying one more paper to one more angel to be added to one more scale. Don't ask me what's behind the door. I haven't yet experienced it, though I live in hope that this little trip will hasten the time.
>
> So I haven't come back to tell you about heaven - though I can speak fairly well on the subject of limbo.
>
> (Carson 1995c, pp. 111 112)

Carson's terminology reveals his pre-Vatican II roots. He is concerned with 'Hell', 'Heaven' and 'Limbo' although not in the most traditional terms. However,

[59]The preference for Black African men is illustrated again here as it was in the Benson trilogy.

even the most orthodox theologians have not always followed Augustine's teaching on Hell,[60] thus, Carson is more orthodox than he realises. What Casement describes is, it seems, the result of Carson's battle with the doctrine of hell which he has Benson struggle with in *Sucking Sherbet Lemons*. He also expresses doubts about Hell in the short story *Sheer Hell*.[61]

Carson, then, does not write directly about the event of the Second Vatican Council but its effects are clearly portrayed within his work. Essentially, writing as a cradle Catholic he is able to use his own biography as material for his fiction. It is the stress on homosexuality which makes him of particular interest, for whatever Myvanwy and Sean in *Stripping Penguins Bare* seem to imply in their vision of the all-encompassing and renewed Church, doctrinally nothing has changed as the following makes clear:

> The Church, obedient to the Lord who founded her and gave to her the sacramental life, celebrates the divine plan of the loving and life-giving union of men and women in the sacrament of marriage. It is only in the marital relationship that the use of the sexual faculty can be morally good. A person engaging in homosexual behaviour therefore acts immorally.
>
> (John Paul II 1986, §7)

This pastoral letter from 1986 restates the unchanged view of the Catholic Church that homosexuality as a phenomenon requires serious attention and that homosexual persons should have pastoral care and help but stresses that homosexual acts themselves are "intrinsically disordered".[62]

Aware of opposition to the strict teaching of the Church this letter refers to the dangers of an increasingly lax approach.

---

[60] References to Hell in recent Catholic hymnals have often been omitted.

[61] As yet unpublished.

[62] Stated in the 1975 "Declaration on Certain Questions concerning Sexual Ethics" and again in the pastoral letter "On the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons".

> ...increasing numbers of people today, even within the Church, are bringing enormous pressure to bear on the Church to accept the homosexual condition as though it were not disordered and to condone homosexual activity. Those within the Church who argue in this fashion often have close ties with those with similar views outside it. These latter groups are guided by a vision opposed to the truth about the human person, which is fully disclosed in the mystery of Christ. They reflect, even if not entirely consciously, a materialistic ideology which denies the transcendent nature of the human person as well as the supernatural vocation of every individual. The Church's ministers must ensure that homosexual persons in their care will not be misled by this point of view, so profoundly opposed to the teaching of the Church. But the risk is great and there are many who seek to create confusion regarding the Church's position, and then to use that confusion to their own advantage.
>
> (John Paul II 1986, §8)

Reference to homosexuality is made by all four writers to some degree but Carson treats it more fully than any of the others largely by virtue of making his central characters homosexual. Lodge is the only other writer to concentrate on any homosexual characters but he fails to confront the issue in relation to the Church, as we shall see later. Although John Paul's statement indicates no change it is clear that there has been a shift in focus about homosexuality. The statement makes clear that there is now a recognition of the special difficulties of homosexuals. This is similar to the position of the Church on contraception following *Humanae Vitae*, the official stance is unchanged but there is an acceptance of this issue as one of special relevance.

Chapter Five: Alice Thomas Ellis

Michael Carson writes chiefly from his own experience and thus a pre-Vatican II Church forms much of the substance of his fiction even though his first work was not published until 1988. Alice Thomas Ellis, on the other hand, is much concerned by the actual event of Vatican II. *The Sin Eater* (1977) is her first novel and she has said this of it in interview:

> Clare: What is it that propels you to write?
> Ellis: Oh, I got bad tempered, I got ratty... The first book... I was in a flaming rage with the Catholic Church that was what started that off.
> Clare: That was *The Sin Eater*?
> Ellis: Yes. I wanted to say some rude things about what they were doing to the Mass.
> Clare: The modernisation?
> Ellis: The modernisation, yes. I thought I can't just go about screaming about this so I wrapped it up in a book.
>
> (Ellis 1993)

Carson's and Ellis's methods of writing could scarcely be more different but they are both concerned with gender roles albeit from different stances. Sexual orientation is a recurring issue for Carson. His novels are essentially realist stories which have been examined as such. In the Benson trilogy in particular, we are presented with real people who do and say necessarily plausible things and if the reader is unable to believe what he reads then the novel must be unsuccessful. Ellis' novels are less straightforward and more post-modernist in style. Not all subjects are best approached within the framework of an illusion of everyday

reality, Ellis is much concerned with gender roles and role models espousing *a* feminism which is often in direct opposition to Feminism as a movement.

In *The Sin Eater*, Alice Thomas Ellis weaves a series of symbols which although capable of a realist reading are only fully understood as signs. One is not required to believe that its people actually behave as they do (although this element may be employed) but rather that their actions are metaphors for something else. In this way Ellis employs a form of writing which does not totally reject social realism but does not rely on it. Character is important to her mode of writing but plot is sidelined. It is interesting and I suspect not coincidental that well-known Feminist writers such as Angela Carter use a form of fantasy[1] writing which rejects social realism altogether. Consciously or not it seems Ellis is parodying Feminist views through her technique as well as her subject matter. Carter's mode of writing is sometimes called magic realism.[2] Rosemary Jackson provides a most accurate account of such fantasy narratives:

> They assert that what they are telling is real - relying on the conventions of realistic fiction to do so - and then they proceed to break that assumption of realism by introducing what, within these terms is manifestly unreal.
>
> (Jackson 1981, p. 34)

Emma Tenant is another fantastic writer in this context, as is Sara Maitland whom Flora Alexander links with Alice Thomas Ellis because they are both self-confessed Christian writers. However, for our purposes, Ellis's writing is quite distinct in being specifically Catholic and not simply more generally Christian and also for her very different stance on traditional feminism as upheld and supported by Maitland in common with Tenant and Carter. It is beyond the scope of this investigation to explore Christian feminist writing and writers but in looking at

[1]Fantasy in this context, it is important to realise, does not necessarily mean something escapist or whimsical but rather a mode of writing in which the unreal is used to express social and often psychological realities.

[2]The novels of Milan Kundera and Salman Rushdie provide good examples of magic realism.

Alice Thomas Ellis it is impossible to avoid the idea which seems to be widely held, particularly of women writers, and is expounded by Flora Alexander that the embracing of a definite religious belief is restrictive to a writer's capabilities:

> Alice Thomas Ellis shares a Christian faith with Sara Maitland,[3] but her outlook is in most respects quite different. Whereas Maitland combines Christianity with feminism, and is therefore anxious to revise, and to put into Christian thinking an awareness of women and their experience, Ellis is stoutly traditional in religion and also explicitly critical of feminism... In *Virgin Territory* Maitland demonstrates that *religious commitment need not be a straitjacket*, [my italics] and can indeed provide a standpoint from which most penetrating observations can be made.
>
> (Alexander 1989, p. 85)

Critics of Greene and Waugh would not perhaps find it so surprising that it might be possible to be a Catholic believer and yet be able to make "penetrating observations" from such a stance, indeed it has often been argued, and is a theory upheld by this work, that without his Catholic faith Greene's work in particular would not have been so resonant. His writings from *Brighton Rock* onwards are crucially based upon the framework of that system of belief. It is true that a recent biography of Greene is eager to play down the relevance of Catholicism in either his life or work. The view given is that he converted really only in order to marry his wife without believing a word of it but that he found it a useful prop for his writing.[4] However, such a playing down of the/any possible importance of religion is, I would argue, a contemporary fashion and stems from the fact that we are living not in the 'Age of Reason' but the age of 'Ostensible Reason'.[5] The importance of a spiritual realm to any person of real value is popularly considered unacceptable. Paradoxically, this ties into the current respectability of a Catholic background; indeed it is actually rather in vogue to have a Catholic

[3]Beryl Bainbridge is another Christian writer, her approach is again quite different. Although a Catholic like Ellis, she draws little upon her religion for her fiction.

[4]See pp. 123 128 in Michael Shelden's 1994 Biography.

[5]From p. 161 of John Wyndham (1981) *The Kraken Wakes* Harmondsworth, Penguin.

upbringing and no longer labels one as any sort of outsider.[6] This newly acquired respectability means that one can be baptised and brought up as a Catholic without being different in any important way. Even more recent, I would suggest is the idea that even if you still practise your religion you may yet be acceptable as it is after all not really any different from a 'sensible'[7] belief such as being 'C. of E.' in the respect that one is generally considered to be so unless otherwise stated. This level of acceptability has been and is being extended to members of the Catholic church in England but not, it seems, to other religions (Islam being the most obvious example). On the other hand, liberal, and especially feminist, opposition to John Paul II tells *against* this.[8]

Earlier Ellis was quoted saying that anger against features of the present Catholic Church inspired the writing of her first novel; Flora Alexander quotes another reason.

> She [Ellis] has said that she wrote her first novel as a reaction against the feminism of the mid-70s, 'because I was fed up with feminist whining and whingeing. I'm afraid there's no other word for it. I felt women did themselves no service by adopting such a Poor Me position. It seemed to me a travesty of womanhood. I wanted to show a woman who is very powerful, like so many of the women I know.'[9] The result of this impulse was *The Sin Eater*...
>
> (Alexander 1989, p. 85)

Alice Thomas Ellis' main characters, and certainly her best, are inevitably women. They are strong, powerful women, although as Alexander says:

---

[6]Perhaps particularly for women: popular writers such as Libby Purves and Mary Kenny both flaunt their Catholic upbringing and utilise it in their writing.

[7]See below, p. 137 for Ellis' thoughts on a 'sensible' religion.

[8]The popular view of modern Catholicism often expressed in the media typically portrays more liberal Catholics only and marginalises those who uphold John Paul II's teaching. William Oddie says: "those Catholics who thought highly of the Pope himself, were regarded by what passes in England for a Catholic élite as being distinctly weird, and certainly not to be taken seriously. Particularly to be slapped down was anyone who asked awkward questions about modernist developments, or was in anyway critical of attempts at what tended to be called 'renewal', but seemed to them more like destruction." (Oddie 1995, p. 16)

[9]Flora Alexander cites this as: p. 237 of Valerie Grove (1987) *The Compleat Woman* London. Chatto & Windus.

> Her [Ellis'] interest in power is selective, as she indicates by referring with disapproval to 'women wanting to be like men', but within the limits of traditional female roles she shows female characters who are strong-minded, clever and competent.
>
> (Alexander 1989, p. 88)

The above remark is precisely the kind of feminism Ellis is complaining about; the automatic assumption that "traditional female roles" are "limited", Ellis accuses feminists of having "fallen into that male model... accepting that men are running the world in the only possible fashion and so we are going to join them." (Ellis 1994, p. 110) It does not seem that opposition to changes in the Church and a distaste for feminism are by any means incompatible. It was not until the 1970s that the effects of the Vatican Council in terms of liturgical changes became really widespread in England at least and the apparent connection with the rise of feminism at this time seems sufficient to lay the blame at once upon the Church hierarchy and feminists. The issue (increasingly prominent since the Council) of 'inclusive' language, is much favoured by feminists and has penetrated the whole debate about liturgical change.[10]

[10]The publication of the new Catechism in English was delayed because of inclusive language and other issues of language are related to this. Many changes have occurred within the liturgy, one of the more notorious examples Ellis mentions is criticised here by Stuart Reid in the *Sunday Telegraph* of 27 February 1994:

> ... the elitist *pro multis* (for many) becomes, or became originally, the user-friendly 'for all men' - i.e. we may all be guilty, but we are all saved. Not only is 'all' for 'many' patent nonsense (since the part cannot equal the whole); it is also a departure from St Matthew and the explicit teaching of the Council of Trent, as well as from Cranmer's Prayer Book, the Alternative Service Book of 1980 (itself a spin-off from the Council), and the Puffin Children's Bible. Even the 'modern world' had rejected it. Soon after the mass appeared in English, sensitive priests noticed that Jesus was being made to use sexist language. Therefore, with arch self-righteousness, they adopted a more acceptable line: 'for all men *and women*'. Really hip priests made it 'for *all women* and men'. Now the text has been revised again, so that the words are simply 'for all'. No doubt this has gratified the animal rights activists, as well as the inclusive language people.
>
> (Ellis 1994, p. 216)

The role of the feminist movement within the Church since the Council is explored by David Lodge's in *How Far Can You Go?* Ellis speaks less directly of it through her novels, but in *Serpent on the Rock* (1994) she has plenty to say. Here she makes clear her feelings towards feminism as far as it relates to Christianity.

> Since meekness, compassion and humility have always been regarded as Christian virtues, I find it hard to reconcile this with the feminist view that the Church has, in the past, been overwhelmingly patriarchal and masculine. The sisterhood is scornful of the aforementioned virtues which could be seen as pertaining to what was once known as the gentle sex, preferring self-affirmation and empowerment. It is very confusing. Christ himself exemplified the gentler human traits, so if women now are contemptuous of them why do they want to be priests? It seems they want not to follow in Christ's footsteps but to usurp His position and restate the case. It grows increasingly clear that feminism and Christianity are incompatible. Not only do feminists find God the Father unappealing, they despise self-sacrifice and must therefore consider the Saviour of Mankind to be something of a wimp. Women are constantly being told to put themselves first. Even mothers are offered this advice. Happily not all of them take it, or the human race would grind swiftly to a halt.
>
> (Ellis 1994, p. 129)

Ellis is strangely close to Carson here in this preference for a "feminine" Catholicism. Although she is less strident in her fiction she makes the strength of femininity more compelling because of her gifts of dramatisation. In her novels we see that the title *The Sin Eater* refers to a superstition particularly prevalent in Wales.[11] Sin-eaters are defined as

> men, who, by partaking of food and drink (often a crust of bread and a pot of ale) in a death chamber, lift the burden of sin from the departed spirit and thus assure to it an 'ease and rest' hereafter
>
> (Ridgway 1950)

[11]Ellis has spent much of her life in North Wales and this novel, like many of her others, is set in Wales.

Certain aspects of *The Sin Eater* are typical of Ellis. Large narrative sections which could be accommodated in realist fiction but are just a little too emphatic to be read in this manner, allow the reader to be disconcerted by the inclusion of supernatural events without recoiling and rejecting them outright. In keeping with the novel's title, food imagery is used extensively and is explicit; this again is a frequent device. In perhaps her most vitriolic attack on the post-Vatican II Church the chief protagonist, Rose, herself a highly proficient cook, explains:

> 'The last time I went to Mass - and it *was* the last time - there was the P.P.[12] facing the congregation, standing behind his table and joining in the singing of the negro spirituals and the pop songs and Shall-we-gather-at-the-river. There has always been a hint of catering about the Mass, but previously the priest had the dignity of a master chef busying himself with his *specialité*. Now he seems like a singing waiter in charge of an inadequate buffet. One is tempted to stroll up and ask for a double martini and enquire who on earth forgot to put the doings on the canapés... Now the Church has lost its head, priests feel free to say what they think themselves, and they don't have any thoughts at all except for some rubbish about the brotherhood of man. They seem to regard Our Lord as a sort of beaten egg to bind us all together.' She began to make a mayonnaise, requesting the Holy Souls not to let it curdle.
>
> (Ellis 1986a, pp. 97–8)

In 1994 Ellis said of this

> These were more or less my sentiments in regard to the innovations, and I have since seen little reason to revise them.
>
> (Ellis 1994, p. 25)

Throughout *Serpent on the Rock* Ellis mingles references to food into the text as she does in her novels. This is certainly more than a subconscious preoccupation with the basics of survival, it is an intentional emphasis on things which really matter. However, Ellis is well aware of her foibles when she comments in the middle of a discussion about sex,

[12]Commonly used abbreviation for Parish Priest.

> Stuart was eating his chicken appreciatively. It was lemon-flavoured. We add the juice to the stock in which it is cooked and then scrape a little zest into the cream or yoghurt which finishes the dish.[13] I find food a more interesting topic than sex but dragged my mind back
>
> (Ellis 1994, p. 65)

Sex, which as we have seen inevitably becomes an issue with relation to Catholicism in the modern church, is in fact rather less important than food, man can after all live without the former but not, for very long, the latter. The Eucharist, though a marriage feast, relies on the more basic image of food and drink. Ellis herself stresses (as she has done in the guise of one or other of her characters in her novels) the relative unimportance of sex:

> I recalled an Irish priest who told me that his mother had said to him, 'The thing is, you'll never want for a loaf of bread or a jug of water', meaning that on the whole he was going to have a good life. She herself had had a hard life with dozens of children and not enough money and she certainly didn't idealise sex. People with dozens of children seldom do. She'd been with her husband long enough to get over any illusions about men, even that another man might be an improvement on him. Poverty doesn't leave time for romantic illusions. You have to get on with living. Apart from the fact that it's wonderful to give a son to the Church, I think she was simply delighted to think that her beloved child would have enough to eat and not at all concerned that he would have no sex life. Unbridled sexuality has ever been a sign of heathenism and decadence and does not recommend itself to harassed and hard-working mothers.
>
> (Ellis 1994, p. 66)

She concludes that it is a "modern" pre-occupation

> The twentieth century is obsessed with sex as was the nineteenth with death. George Orwell wrote, 'I really think that this modern habit of describing love-making in detail is something that future generations will look back on as we do on things like the death of little Nell' (*Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters*, vol 4).
>
> (Ellis 1994, p. 67)

[13]It will come as no surprise to learn that Alice Thomas Ellis has also published two cookery books under her married name.

The traditional role of the female to feed and nourish herself and her young is set up in direct opposition to the traditional male role of living for little other than sexual gratification. Examples from the animal kingdom are numerous and the term 'drone' is one that can be most aptly applied to the majority of Ellis' male characters. A constant regard for sex will do nothing to prolong life but food is the very key to life. Whereas sex may create new life, food is essential to life, yet food can be a double-edged sword in that it can also directly cause death through poisoning, thus Ellis has conceived the character of Rose. Reiterating her reasons for writing her first novel Ellis uses the character of Rose to express what she sees as the real dangers of the changes in religious practice. While it may be true that traditional female roles are limited and that cooking is a traditionally female accomplishment; the power of the provider of nourishment should not be underestimated. Another powerful female, this time in *The 27th Kingdom*, and another capable cook, contemplates this truth:

> ... the other most important thing to remember in life was the total inadvisability of insulting the cook. What could be more misguided and reckless? When you thought of the power wielded by the cook, it was tantamount to taunting the driver on a hairpin bend. Even for cooks without access to datura or chopped-up panthers' whiskers there were umpteen varieties of dubious fungi - to some of which there was absolutely no antidote. Once eaten, that was it. You were sick on the first day, better on the second and dead on the third.
>
> (Ellis 1982, p. 104)

What Ellis is opposed to within feminism is the insistence on fighting on male terms against men. She points out how feminists, on the lookout for every evidence of patriarchy, are particularly attracted to the field of religion which is something of a soft target to them.[14]

[14]See Chapter 5 *Serpent on the Rock*. For example: "Sensible females, being aware that they constitute the stronger sex, do not suffer the same impulse to cut a figure and make a mark but quietly get on with the business of progressing from the cradle to the grave without too much fuss or demanding to be 'visible' - a dangerous condition, inviting brickbats. Some of them used to be acutely aware that their first purpose was to seek God." (Ellis 1994, p. 94)

She believes that Feminism has had (and presumably still is having) a wholly detrimental effect on the Catholic Church in particular. From changes in nuns' habits, through inclusive language to women priests, Ellis violently objects to the idea of a feminist Christian. She comments that

> I heard with my own ears a woman stating that women should 'fast from the Sacraments' until they got their own way and were allowed into the priesthood, which reminded me of Lucifer's 'I will not serve.'
>
> (Ellis 1994, p. 122)

This goes further than most of her fiction. In fiction she is content to ridicule feminism but in this non-fiction text she attacks it as evil. Her novels need to be considered in the light of her position. Women are not merely different from men, nor is their occupation with children, cooking and general domesticity simply different from male preoccupations; on the contrary, Ellis is insisting, as do some feminists, that women are not equal but superior and what they traditionally do is much more important than any male roles. Indeed, she points out that, once a child has been conceived then the male is defunct and useless on a most primal level.[15]

However, she also says that there is no need for the female to crow about it. The character of Rose gives voice to Ellis' own views on the changes in the Church but she is not writing autobiography: Rose does not stand for Ellis. Indeed, by her own account Ellis was very distressed by the changes and felt deserted by her chosen religion;

> after this came the changes consequent upon the Second Vatican Council. I went into the church one day to find the congregation singing *Kumbaya*. I didn't go back there for years... I felt bereft and

[15]The Pope has often expressed his appreciation for mothers in a comparable way. For example: "the gift of motherhood is often penalised rather than rewarded, even though humanity owes its very survival to this gift. Certainly, much remains to be done to prevent discrimination against those who have chosen to be wives and mothers." (John Paul II 1995) The Pope's insistence on the priority of Mary to the male Apostolic Church (Vatican II declared her to be 'Mater Ecclesiae') can be seen as an authorising parallel to Ellis' viewpoint.

> consequently resentful. I was so annoyed that in 1977 I stirred out of my habitual indolence and wrote a book called *The Sin Eater*: I put it in the form of a novel, since novels give a better scope for ungoverned rage than more sober works and I had to do something rather than sink into despair. The heroine was not a nice woman, for I was fed up with women whining about their powerlessness. Women did the cooking, I reasoned, and thus held the power of life and death, apart from being the only people who could give birth. They were not the innocent, helpless victims that some claimed. For instance, my mother was the youngest of seven sisters and it would have been a rash man who attempted to oppress any one of them. Rose, as I called my creation, was a Roman Catholic who felt freed by the changes in the Church, not to express herself as a child of God liberated from the old constraints, but to behave as badly as she liked, given over to original sin.
>
> (Ellis 1994, p. 24)

Rose, then, freed from the restraints of the pre-Vatican II Church, can develop her evil inclinations. This brings to mind Greene's view that only a Catholic could be truly evil,[16] and it is tempting to add, a post-Vatican II Catholic even more so. Death pervades Ellis' work in general and nowhere more so than in *The Sin Eater* where the relation between death, food and sacrifice, continually evokes the sacrifice of the Mass. Reminiscences about local folklore echo the action of the novel but are not included as actual supernatural events which happen alongside the natural events as Ellis tends to do more readily in later works. In anticipating the death of the Captain, the death of the Church is clearly implicated. If it is not yet imminent it is at least a terminal illness. Death is the natural environment. Rose's sister-in-law Ermyn is unhappy with the situation but Rose seems quite comfortable and is admired by Ermyn who looks to her religion as the source of her tranquility. It is through their dialogues that much of the deeper meaning of the story is revealed. It is characteristic of Ellis that Rose's position as a traditional Catholic should be shown through her culinary activities.

[16]See Chapter 2, p. 26 above.

> As it was Friday, there was only lentil soup and bread and cheese for supper: very good lentil soup and very good cheese since Rose much preferred to honour the letter of the old law, rather than submit herself to the vague dispensations and ill-defined freedoms of the spirit of Vatican II.
>
> (Ellis 1986a, p. 92)

When Rose and Ermyn visit the local church their different views are made explicit:

> Inside, the church was as clean and clear as a blown egg.
>
> 'It's so peaceful,' said Ermyn.
>
> 'You needn't whisper,' said Rose contemptuously. 'There's no one here.' She detested protestantism, from the pneumatic sterility of Milton to the ankle socks and hairy calves of Peggy *parchedig*, the vicar's wife. She had been given this appellation, which meant 'reverend', because the village considered her to be minimally more of a man than her husband.
>
> 'Oh,' said Ermyn. Perhaps Rose was right. The church was very tidy; there was no sign of God. The reformers had settled here - clumsy, blind and flightless
>
> (Ellis 1986a, pp. 77–8)

The modernising of the Catholic church is criticised as a kind of Protestantism itself and the author shows her distaste for Anglican rites through the parodies of the bishop and his wife and their overbearing modernism.

> 'Ecumenism,' she [Ermyn] said. 'I wanted to ask what you thought about it?'
>
> 'That's a good subject,' said the bishop amiably. He rather prided himself on his way with lunatics.
>
> But Ermyn had forgotten what it meant. 'That is,' she said carefully, beginning again, 'I wanted to ask what you - how do you set about persuading young people, that is people *my* age, to go to church?'
>
> They were looking at her very oddly, but Ermyn was used to that. She waited for an answer.
>
> 'Well,' said the bishop, speaking in the strangulated patrician tones peculiar to the Established Church. 'That's a large subject.'
>
> 'I think,' said his wife, 'that what really brings them in is a really *smashing* liturgy.'

> 'Yes,' said the bishop, resigning himself to the edification of this odd girl. 'My wife is right. And, you know, we were the very first to have a beat group playing in our cathedral.'
>
> (Ellis 1986a, pp. 88–9)

Rose's harsh disgust is softened by Ermyn's more tentative approach: she thinks merely of "very tidy" where Rose condemns outright as "sterile". Later Rose provides an answer to Ermyn's question

> 'What *is* ecumenism?'... [17]
> 'It is as though a dying man were to tie himself to one already dead in the hope of setting in train a process of revitalisation.
>
> (Ellis 1986a, p. 159)

Since Vatican II, it has been unusual for English Catholics to use the anti-Protestant vocabulary customary before it. But Ellis deliberately keeps this perspective since, without it, her preferred image of Catholicism cannot be sustained. For example, we find this:

> 'Sensible religion is a contradiction in terms,' said Rose. 'Protestantism isn't a religion at all. It has merely elevated all the minor vices and weaknesses into major virtues - meanness and anal preoccupations into thrift and cleanliness, clannishness into respectability, xenophobia into loyalty. Concupiscence is justified by marriage, and arrogance by the claim that the Lord loves them. They justify their lack of culture, visual sense and imagination by decrying adornment, and they make up all those explicit flat-footed hymns because they have no feeling for the numinous - no belief in God, in fact.'
>
> (Ellis 1986a, p. 160)

This attack on Protestantism is the other side of a defence of pre-Vatican II Catholicism as we see in Ellis' non-fiction.

> 'Oh,' she said, 'my Dad was shattered by the changes. He's always saying the Latin had more meaning.' This reflects Janet's point of view: she holds that it's like opera - that as long as they're singing

[17]This is one of Ellis' criticisms of Catholicism since the Council. See below p. 140.

> in some foreign language you get carried away by the beauty of the music, but once you understand the words you can no longer suspend disbelief and quite often give way to hilarity. This view is not as trivial as some think; there are matters to which only one mode of expression is suited and which lose integrity in translation.[18]
>
> (Ellis 1994, p. 30)

This emphasis on aesthetic values reminds us of Waugh's attraction towards Catholicism and the distaste he felt for the reforms which followed the Council.[19] Aesthetic considerations are common to a number of authors, Ellis refers to them again in relation to nuns' clothing as will be seen. Not herself a Catholic but drawn towards it by Rose, Ermyn asks directly about conversion and finds that it is not only the Protestant Church which comes under fire from Rose.

> 'How do you become a Roman Catholic?'
> 'You don't,' said Rose without hesitation.
> Ermyn was unrebuffed. Like a drunk, she persisted. 'No, *how*?'
> 'Nobody does any more,'[20] said Rose.
> They must,' said Ermyn. 'They *must*.'
> ... Rose wasn't listening. 'You'd never get in,' she said, 'past the people falling over themselves to get out.'
>
> (Ellis 1986a, p. 95)

Rose's anger against the changes in the Church punctuates the text. Witnessing the tradition she cherishes disappearing she withdraws from the official Church and becomes preoccupied with death. In some ways Rose herself is a symbol of death through the link between her poisonous nature and her culinary occupations, but she is also a personification of the Church gone wild and a damning indictment of all that has happened in the Catholic Church since the Second Vatican Council. Invariably it is the young Ermyn "being unfamiliar with

[18]This is comparable to Miles' complaints about liturgical language in Lodge's *How Far Can You Go?* (p. 84).

[19]See Sykes *Evelyn Waugh* (p. 595).

[20]Notably, however, in the 1990s there have been a number of high-profile conversions (and many from ordinary laity) from the Church of England at least partly because of its recent decision to approve female ordination.

the current upheavals in the Roman Church" (Ellis 1986a, p. 49) who with her curious, questioning nature draws Rose out from introspection and so defers the obsession with death a little.

> 'They modernised it,' said Rose, taking up the thread. 'They fell victim to the municipal line of thought which goes: "That's beautiful. It must be old. We'd better knock it down."
>
> '... they're creeping up on transubstantiation, circling it with a net. It'll be the next to go, and then heigh ho for the gates of Hell.'
>
> (Ellis 1986a, pp. 95–6)

The intrinsic wrongness of modernisation is an extreme view but one Ellis is prone to as she, albeit apologetically, states, "I still think we should hang on to the old for as long as we can and seek to improve rather than destroy it. But then I think that about almost everything." (Ellis 1994, p. 31) She concedes to being "given to fits of misplaced aestheticism" (Ellis 1994, p. 33) but is adamant in attacking a policy of change for the sake of change.

> 'It is as though,' she went on, 'one's revered, dignified and darling old mother had slapped on a mini-skirt and fishnet tights and started ogling strangers. A kind of menopausal madness, a sudden yearning to be attractive to all. It is tragic and hilarious and awfully embarrassing. And of course, those who knew her before feel a great sense of betrayal and can't bring themselves to go and see her any more...'
>
> (Ellis 1986a, pp. 98–9)

It is interesting that Ellis here, like Carson, takes the image of 'Mother Church' with the utmost literalness. Catholicism invites this approach. Mary is the 'Mother of the Church',[21] the two ideas are connected and relevant to Carson's distinction between the female and male parts of the Church. Religion by its nature is something timeless which does not require alteration by man. Here then we find a new twist in the old Catholic theme. It is a surprising one. The Church itself has now become the betrayer, a position unthinkable before

[21]See p. 134 above.

Vatican II. Carson sometimes described a feeling of betrayal and never more so than when the Church which Benson feels forced to turn from itself changes. But he was not so outspoken in his views through his characters as Ellis is here. Ellis is traditional in that she adheres to the religious practices of the church she joined. It is her status as a convert which gives her a freedom to criticise which a traditional cradle-Catholic would find much harder to display.[22]

The clergy inevitably come in for criticism too, being viewed as supporters of the changes in the church. Rose's parish priest remains nameless and can therefore be seen as simply representing the clergy as a whole, a technique used by Greene at the end of *Brighton Rock* and Carson in the Benson trilogy.

> 'The P.P. comes in from time to time to rebuke me, but I take no notice,' said Rose complacently. 'I tell him I stand exactly where I always stood, while the Church has ebbed from me . I tell him I was a true obedient daughter of the Church but this is beyond a joke and I will not make a fool of myself because fools decree it should be so...'
>
> (Ellis 1986a, p. 97)

However, Ellis is careful not to parody the priest; respect for the clergy is after all an essential part of orthodox Catholicism.[23]

> 'To do him justice,' said Rose, 'He does still dress in the proper fashion. He hasn't taken to going round in jeans and a T-shirt and a little cross on a chain round his neck imploring people to call him Roger, and he hasn't left the church to marry and devote his life to rewriting theology to conform with his own lusts and itches, and drivel on about the self-transcending nature of sex, like all those treacherous jesuits mad with the radiant freedoms of contemporary thought.
>
> (Ellis 1986a, p. 98)

[22]As a convert, Ellis' slight remove from the Church gives her a literary advantage as it did Greene and Waugh.

[23]See p. 167 below. Ellis's article for *The Catholic Herald* 3 May 1996, was considered to be so offensive to the late Archbishop of Liverpool, Derek Worlock, that she was sacked from the paper. The editor, Christina Odone - who has supported Ellis against clerical opposition in the past (see p. 155 below) - resigned shortly afterwards.

In her other most explicitly Catholic book *The 27th Kingdom* (1982) Ellis is concerned with clerical figures even less. Here the central figure is a nun. Neither of these two books concentrates upon the clergy, they are minor characters as is often the case in Catholic fiction.[24] Indeed unless actually the central character — as with Chesterton's *Father Brown* — it is usual for priests and the like to be in the background. In *The 27th Kingdom* the clergy do not figure prominently — rather they are very minor characters to reflect Valentine (she is in fact better reflected by the laity especially those of evil or criminal design) — Valentine herself being a nun. For the purposes of this piece the clergy of the first chapter may be considered to include all members of religious life but it may be worth considering the absence of nuns in the work of Greene and Waugh. As we stated earlier, the main emphasis has always been on priests *as* priests although there are exceptions.[25] The emphasis on nuns is interesting. The novels *Brighton Rock* and *Brideshead Revisited* were considered as examples both of outstanding Catholic fiction but also as fairly typical ones with regard to the prevalent concerns of Catholics and Catholic writers, and yet scarcely a nun to be found. These two are characteristic of a general lack of nuns as major fictional characters and typical of their time. The change which means that nuns are prevalent and popular fictional characters is a result largely of social change and especially social development with regard to the position of women.[26] Even in the 1950s the image of woman was very much that of a wife and mother figure: she had the vote but still had little or no voice inside the World of Politics and Business. Recent change has been dramatic. Hence, in terms of Catholics writing in any way about their

[24]There are, however, notable exceptions. G. K. Chesterton's Father Brown stories, Greene's *Monsignor Quixote*, John Cornwell's *The Spoiled Priest* and some of Bruce Marshall's novels.

[25]Michael Carson's knowledge of the Christian Brothers (teachers not priests) is an exception and certain novelists, for example, Piers Paul Read are familiar with and make use of their particular knowledge of a religious community. Piers Paul Read, having been educated at Ampleforth by Benedictine monks, makes reference to this in many of his novels. The school and monastery in *Monk Dawson*, for example, are clearly based on Ampleforth Abbey itself.

[26]There has, of course, been an outpouring of quasi-fictional reminiscences by ex-nuns especially in the U.S.A. and related largely to the defence of lesbianism. Lodge makes oblique reference to this in *How Far Can You Go?* p. 141.

religion, nuns could no longer be ignored.[27] A certain class of writer has always used the figure of the nun for sensationalist purposes[28] but, these aside, there has been an increase in nuns as characters in more serious fiction. An even more basic explanation for the dramatic increase in nuns as characters despite the dramatic decline in actual nuns, is the increase in successful and/or published women writers. In the same way that Greene and Waugh used male figures for the major roles in their books because they were men themselves, female writers tend to chose female characters for the main parts as they are more likely to portray well members of their own sex. This seems to be a natural aspect of life and fiction. Thus, when looking to draw Church representatives a nun is a more likely choice as a dominant character for a female writer.

The only nuns in *The Sin Eater* are referred to obliquely as a means to protest against a less immediately pressing result of the Second Vatican Council, that of the habits of the religious. Again Ellis' grounds for objecting are largely aesthetic although the reference to sex is also interesting.[29]

> ... nuns were buying pencils. They wore short dresses and cardigans, and their colourless, unwholesome hair stuck angularly out beneath the table napkins they now wore instead of veils. Once when you went out you could hope to see at least a few beautiful people in ample shapely robes, veils lifting on the wind - real clothes, with the significance clothes should have: reassuring, decisive. Now nuns were the ugliest people on the street, ugly as unfed fledgling birds.
>
> 'It's because they think all beauty has sexual connotations,' said Rose. 'They say it's because the modern world demands a greater degree of practicality, but it's really the new puritanism which holds the Church in its clammy clutches. From a practical point of view it was in the Middle Ages that they should have had short skirts - all that muck on the road. *And*,' she added, 'I've seen a nun in lipstick. So the confusion in their poor minds is pitiable.'
>
> (Ellis 1986a, pp. 64–5)

[27]For example, in August, 1994, Karen Armstrong, an ex-nun, in conjunction with Channel 4, produced a documentary highly critical of the Church and current Pontiff.

[28]It goes back to Diderot's *La Religieuse* (1796) and Mrs. Radcliffe's *The Italian* (1796) which is largely concerned which the sensational appeal of Catholicism.

[29]See also *How Far Can You Go?* p. 93.

The narrator speaks to us directly here as well as through the medium of Rose. It is not surprising that these fictionalised comments are identical with the author speaking in her own voice.

> The trouble with nuns now is they look so scruffy, because they can't afford to have their hair done you see, and they go around in these horrible little frocks and their horrible little veils.
>
> (Ellis 1993)

As the only female writer among the four concentrated on here, it is useful to look at how some other female Catholic writers view the changes so important to Ellis and in particular their view of the changes relating to dress.

If we look at an older novelist, Rumer Godden, writing of nuns, we find that she writes from a different perspective of time and attitude. She wrote *In This House of Brede* (1969) in response to the wish of Dame[30] Felicitas Corrigan of Stanbrook Abbey, "that someone would write a book about nuns as they really are, not as the author wants them to be." (Godden 1991, preface) Before publication the book was approved by the nuns.[31]

> Lady Abbess, as we had agreed at the outset, appointed three of the Dames as 'devil's advocates' whose business it was to fault, challenge or endorse what I had written as need arose.
>
> (Godden 1991, preface)

This certainly makes it a unique novel and due to the circumstances of its production it is fair to interpret the views of its characters as applicable to real nuns; some of those at Stanbrook Abbey at least. Godden's view on apparel are stated at the outset and they are strikingly similar to Ellis' although more circumspectly expressed:

[30]Godden notes that: "Benedictine Nuns of the English congregation, if they belong to an enclosed or contemplative Order, are called Dame not the usual 'sister', while the Monks are called Dom. Some of these terminologies, for example, the distinction between 'mother' and 'sister' have been rejected by certain Orders as a direct result of Vatican II."

[31]Godden, herself, had written about nuns in her *Black Narcissus* (1946), and wrote *In This House of Brede* by way of an apology for her former treatment of the subject.

> Benedictine nuns have not modified their habits as many Orders have done, making their sisters look like dowdy Edwardian nurses, which is sad as nothing is more becoming to a woman than a wimple and veil and, too, every part of the habit has a meaning,
>
> (Godden 1991, preface)

The aesthetic appeal of the traditional nun's habit may seem superficial, but Godden shows there is a more important matter at stake. Again her view is the same as Ellis:

> 'Poor lambs!' said Lady Seaton, seeing a pair of visiting sisters come out of the Abbey front door in a high wind, trying with one hand to clutch their veils over untidy hair and keep their skirts down with the other, while sister Renata in her wimple and long skirt stood unruffled on the doorstep talking to them.
>
> 'But it is deeper than looks or even convenience.' Dame Agnes was deeply troubled. 'The habit, the veil, our cut hair under the cap, are meant for self-effacement - we need to be free of the preoccupations that plague other women, preoccupations with self - which was precisely why we did away with these time-consuming frills!
>
> (Godden 1991, p. 395)

Most of her novels concentrate on her life and experiences in India but the few of Rumer Godden's works that are concerned with Catholicism focus on the religious life. In *Five for Sorrow, Ten for Joy* (1979) she comments on the benefits of nuns' habits.[32] In *In This House of Brede*, the emphasis is on the dubious value of change following the Council with its "damaging storms". (Godden 1991, p. 391) It is particularly interesting that, unlike most Catholic writers, she makes reference to the Council's documents and intimates that the changes are not necessarily in accordance with what is written.

> They should read the Rule - and the Council documents that tell us to go back to our sources - but it seems they cannot read anymore, not with their minds.
>
> (Godden 1991, p. 394)

[32]For example, see Godden (1980, pp. 117 8).

Godden is clearly in accord with Ellis, too, on the superiority of women and the importance of their different way of looking at things.

> 'I don't like to see these,' Brother John had said, tapping the grille of the parlour. 'I look forward to the day when the bars will come down and you can mingle freely with your guests - perhaps even wear lay clothes as they do.'
>
> 'Just as we did a hundred years ago,' said the young councillor Dame Catherine Ismay.
>
> That took him aback.
>
> 'Didn't you know?' asked Dame Beatrice sweetly. 'When we first came to Brede that was how we had to live. We could not wear our habits, and were not allowed enclosure until 1880. We had to fight to get our grilles.'...
>
> 'Do you not believe in prayer?' asked Dame Colette.
>
> 'Of course - but if you are shut away it must be limited.'
>
> 'Or concentrated,' said Dame Catherine Ismay.
>
> (Godden 1991, p. 46)

Other female Catholic writers, even though not particularly concerned with the Council or the details of religious habits hold a similar view. The idea that nuns will somehow be emancipated by making their clothes more like those of the laity often seems to be a male-dominated idea. Antonia Fraser,[33] though little concerned with the intricacies of Catholicism in general, makes reference to nuns as freer than other women because, in "an age when many women are burning their bras... " (Fraser 1978, p. 43), nuns do not have any to burn. She makes reference to the way in which Vatican II has changed many things but the elements of the Church she stresses most are the cycle of feasts, the cults of saints and all the trappings of Carson's tribal Catholicism. Thus, Fraser accentuates what is comparatively long-established and neglects what is new.

A certain aura of mystery surrounds the life of nuns especially those in enclosed orders. Godden's *In This House of Brede* as we have seen was written largely as a reaction against the kind of sensationalist fiction about nuns which Wendy

[33]One of the daughters of the well-known Catholic peer The Earl of Longford. One of his other daughters, Rachel Billington, is also a novelist. See p. 84, Chapter 4.

Perriam plays upon to a degree in her *Devils, for a Change*. Perriam is typical in that she makes a subject out of an enclosed nun leaving her convent. The subsequent sexual evolution of this character is clearly designed for titillation but some of the things Perriam describes are revealing and reflect Ellis' and Godden's preferences. Although she sees the habit as a means of cutting nuns off from the real world, "sound-proofed, world-proofed" (Perriam 1990, p. 25) she still acknowledges that the changes were no help.

> She didn't like its clothes, the droopy dress which flopped around its calves, the shapeless navy cardigan. Why should any Order want to modernise? The habit gave you dignity, both physical and spiritual, had weight in every sense.
>
> (Perriam 1990, p. 61)

Being a nun is what makes the difference whatever the clothes so why not at least make them attractive?[34] Essentially, Wendy Perriam in *Devils, for a Change* and less overtly in a number of her other novels uses Catholicism to give a exotic texture to her writing. A woman having an illicit affair, for example in *Absinthe for Elevenses* (1980) makes more of a subject if she has religious scruples to wrestle with as well as secular morality. In this the idea that only a Catholic can be truly evil[35] is trivialised to the condition whereby only by being wicked can you enjoy yourself. Inevitably, the enjoyment is sexual and, for Perriam, sexual pleasure is incompatible with Catholicism, she is closest to Lodge in this, both of them appertain to D.H.Lawrence's view of sex and religion as opposite poles.[36] All of Perriam's novels are concerned with the sexual emancipation of women and the importance of epicurean existence. The Catholic Church is simplified as a wholly ascetic religion. Such sensationalist fiction is, of course, not unique to our age as we have seen; the main difference here is the explicit nature of modern sensationalist novels when compared with those of the 1930s and previously.

[34]Lodge discusses this in *How Far Can You Go?* pp. 94 5.
[35]See p. 135 above, and Chapter 2, p. 26.
[36]See, for example, pp. 70 72 of R. P. Draper (1969) *D. H. Lawrence* London, Routledge.

What is important about Perriam is that although largely antagonistic towards Catholicism she is also opposed to the changes heralded by the Council.

These women writers provide some context for Ellis' concerns and preferences. Returning to Ellis herself and *The 27th Kingdom*, the character of Valentine is obviously that of a living Saint. She is a miracle worker whose Mother Superior has sent her out into the heart of Chelsea to prove it or 'to try her vocation' as the pre-Vatican II phrase has it. Thus here we have the direct inclusion of the miraculous. Immediately there is a problem. That the miraculous is real and actually an everyday occurrence is a relevant aspect of Catholic belief. However, to one outside the Church and specifically of no religious belief whatever, there will be no appreciable difference between this and superstition and the paranormal. Thus the activities of the Seal People in *The Inn at the Edge of the World* (1990) would be on a par with Valentine's levitating.[37] However, although orthodox and popular Catholic belief is deeply concerned with miracles, more liberal Catholicism is not. Thus, an even larger sector of Ellis' audience may be sceptical of what she details and here her non-realist mode of writing helps.

Readers unfamiliar with religious beliefs and practices may be surprised at the Reverend Mother's treatment of Valentine, certainly she is less than direct:

> 'You must go,' she had said to Valentine. 'You have tested your vocation here, and for a while you must test it in the world.'
>
> She opened the drawer of her desk and looked at what it contained, wondering why she hadn't mentioned it to Valentine. It was, after all, the real reason for her decision. Then she wondered why people thought the conventual life so simple and straightforward. The problems of the world were as nothing compared with problems of the Enclosure.
>
> (Ellis 1982, pp. 12–3)

That perfect apple, picked from the very top of the tallest tree by Valentine, although none of the nuns actually saw her pick it, and its refusal to decay in a

[37]The ability to levitate is ascribed to a number of Saints in Eastern and Western Christianity. Perhaps the most famous and well-accorded example being St Joseph of Copertino (1603–1663).

natural way is a cause of unease and embarrassment for Reverend Mother and not for outward rejoicing and publicity. Like Carson, Ellis was herself once a novice in a religious order and she knows the type of scorn reserved for all signs of religious excess, including miracles.

> ... everyone was missing Valentine, and although Reverend mother knew that her nuns trusted her, she also knew that they didn't understand why she had sent Valentine away. She wasn't too clear about it herself. All she knew was that the Lord in his infinite subtlety had given her this apple as a sign, and that only when the beastly thing conformed to the laws of nature - which after all were God's laws - could Valentine come back. It was a reversal of the usual plot which decreed that heroines should go out searching for golden globes of this and that.
>
> How the vulgar loved portents, prodigies and the untoward. Only the religious knew how embarrassing they could be - and quite beside the point.
>
> (Ellis 1982, p. 87)

This comparatively minor miracle is not unusual in Reverend Mother's eyes, it is less spectacular than some of the more public miracles but anyone is free to believe or disbelieve as they see fit. The spectacular nature of the miracle and its "provability" are, as stated, "quite beside the point".

The use of narrator is strangely inconsistent here. The most important outcome of this continual narrative shift is to remind the reader of the omniscience (whether hidden or revealed) of the author. Thus we are reminded that as only the author knows all in the fiction, only God knows all in reality. With regard to her own novels Ellis is, in effect 'God'. Her non-naturalistic manipulation of character continually foregrounds her power - and accentuates her awareness of it - and mirrors that of God and His Creation.

Good and evil feature in both *The Sin Eater* and *The 27th Kingdom* as definite transcendent realities much as they do in the pre-Vatican II texts we have looked at. In the former they are less explicitly treated (although Ermyn's description of Rose as pure but similar to poison is revealing) but in the latter the author is

at pains to stress their actual existence. Or rather it is the existence of evil which needs to be proven.

> Clare: Do you have a sense of evil?
> Ellis: Oh, yes.
> Clare: Personal evil?
> Ellis: Well, not so much me, but I can smell it when it's around.
> (Ellis 1993)

Good is not usually disputed as a genuine force and here Valentine represents all which is good, but evil exists too and Ellis is at pains to explain how both are in fact necessary. It is a common twentieth-century objection to God's own existence, to point out the evil in the world; but without evil there would be no sure sense of God:

> Valentine was glad there was God. She knew there was, because she knew him well. And, anyway, if there was no God, this terrible world of pursued and pursuers would be Hell, and if there was Hell then there must be Heaven, since that was in the nature of things. And Heaven would have no purpose save as the residence of God...
> (Ellis 1982, p. 40)

Unlike those around her, Valentine too is aware of evil as a genuine force[38] but her attitude is unique among the characters illustrated:

> She had seen evil before. She didn't like it, but it neither alarmed or surprised her.
> (Ellis 1982, p. 60)

As with Greene it is the existence of Evil which makes 'Good' a powerful force rather than a sentimental value.

[38]In emphasising evil Ellis seems clearly to fit into the tradition of Greene but she also resembles another female writer, Muriel Spark. In her *Loitering with Intent*, Spark's character Fleur is aware of pure evil in the world "under the form of disease, injustice, fear, oppression or any other ill element that can afflict living creatures." (quoted in Woodman (1992, p. 119)).

In *The Sin Eater*, Death was the pursuit and here it is the world, the secular world, which necessarily incorporates death, which forms the pursuit. The nightmarish scenes of Pinkie 's final pursuit in *Brighton Rock* are echoed here but Greene's crucial dilemmas about the nature of Judgement and Heaven and Hell are softened and soothed away by Valentine's simple logic:

> ... in the course of whatever passes for time in Heaven and Hell, all would be resolved, since the good deserve that the bad should be forgiven, the nature of goodness being to love.
>
> (Ellis 1982, p. 49)

This attitude is reminiscent of Nanda Grey's solution to the whole problem of Hell as an Article of Faith; that is, although one must believe in Hell it is not necessary to believe there is anyone in it.[39] This rather simple view is far removed from the tortuous philosophising and agonising of writers like Greene and Waugh in the 30s, but by Vatican II such a view was gaining wider support finally leading David Lodge to comment, "At some point in the nineteen-sixties, Hell disappeared." (Lodge 1980, p. 113) In both these novels sex is relevant but treated in a rather reserved fashion. In fact, this is quite typical of her novels in general. Not for Ellis the graphic descriptions of sexual acts so used by other authors. Carson and Lodge are detailed but comparatively cold in what they describe whereas Perriam revels in the acts she depicts. Ellis almost seems old-fashioned in the way she avoids any direct representation of sexual congress except in the vaguest terms and in this respect is more like Brian Moore. Moore's interest in sex is as an expression of love and to this end he employs more detail than Ellis.[40] than the others who are more her contemporaries.

Ellis' other novels are less explicitly Catholic in tone and content and yet the feeling that this writer is a Catholic and a traditionalist one at that is unavoidable.

---

[39]See Chapter 2, p. 46 above.

[40]Sometimes, however, for example in *The Doctor's Wife*, Moore includes sexual detail unrelated to affection.

It would be difficult to classify her novels into clear groups but due to the sheer number of novels which concern us it is best to consider only a few at a time. *The Sin Eater* and *The 27th Kingdom* are the most obviously Catholic and the reference to an older mythology which underpins much of the former is developed more fully in *The Inn at the Edge of the World.* In *The 27th Kingdom* on the other hand, there is a strong sense of the past but it is essentially a historical past as is the case in *Unexplained Laughter* (1985). In both these texts, and especially in the latter, however, the play on coincidence and the possibility of supernatural events is emphasised.

I would argue that to a greater or lesser degree all of Ellis' novels involve a morality which can only really be derived from a Catholic standpoint.[41] This moral position is illustrated in *The Inn at the Edge of the World* by the emphasis on the meaninglessness of a Christmas without Christ. Essentially the novel concerns the adventures of a small group of people who gather to spend the festive season in a tiny hotel on an almost uninhabited Scottish island with the sole purpose of getting away from it all. True, they manage to leave the customary commercialism and social pressures of a typical English Christmas behind but they also omit any religious significance from the event. This is shown to be, simply, a mistake.

> Harry had no words of comfort. He would have said that the pointlessness existed because she had left Christ out of Christmas. She had had sufficient good sense and good taste to learn to eschew the bacchanalian excesses of the season, but not enough to realize what else she had sacrificed. You could say, thought Harry, that she had thrown out the Holy Child with the bath salts, bath oil, bath essence and bubbles which so often appeared as gifts, unknowingly symbolising the frankincense and myrrh...
>
> (Ellis 1991a, p. 119)

[41] I say a Catholic rather than a Christian standpoint because of the peculiar nature of English Catholicism. As a minority group, English Catholics operate in a manner very different from Catholics in Catholic countries, and different again from the established, Christian, Church of England.

Ellis again employs loyal myth and folklore to weave a modern-day story. Conventional Catholicism is no longer to the fore as in *The Sin Eater* but the morality and loyalty of the prominent characters are used as a substitute for actual formal religion.

Moral purity is highlighted in the unlikely character of the old soldier Harry. His purity is more traditional when contrasted with Rose's poisonous purity. The major female figure here is morally neutral and used to show the finer qualities of Harry and the more sinister ones of Jon. Allegorically both these men are shown as getting their just rewards and their rewards are as different as their characters although both emanate from the same source, death. Harry is a Christian although presumably not a Catholic. However, he fulfils the role of the Christian gentleman, almost as in Carson, quietly and without much apparent influence on other characters with the exception of the beautiful actress Jessica. He is writing a work on General Gordon whom he admires[42] and emulates as far as he can realistically find him worthy of admiration.

> ... 'More or less,' agreed Harry, wondering how the Victorians had so easily entertained the concept of the soldier as Christian gentleman, and whether Gordon had lived up to the ideal: on the evidence it seemed that he had. Harry, in his youth, had aspired to the same condition, but war had disillusioned him.
>
> (Ellis 1991a, p. 84)

Dialogue between Harry and Jessica provides most of the deeper concern of the novel even when, as in this case, that meaning is revealed to the reader through Harry's unspoken thoughts rather than his spoken ideas. There is, interestingly, a suggestion of the relevance of Gordon's own writings to Ellis' text. Preoccupation with death is to be found here too:

> ... a weary astonishment at being confined in so seemingly purposeless existence. His faith served only to illuminate and, to some extent,

[42]Ellis also admires Gordon; see *Serpent on the Rock* p. 133.

> define his bewilderment: faith revealed the presence of a window opening to freedom, but the window was barred - faith itself forming the defining grille.
>
> (Ellis 1991a, p. 9)

Harry awaits his own death as a release. This is an idea directly espoused by Ellis. She speaks of "going home", for although the actual dying may not be pleasant, death itself is, "...the last enemy. Once we've got past that then I think everything will be all right." (Ellis 1993)

The link between religious observance and food is mentioned briefly. Combined with incidental references to prayer, Mass attendance and so on they reveal this to be the work of a Catholic or at least a Christian writer in the same inevitable way that a writer reflects his gender, cultural background and historical position unless very careful and deliberately trying to do otherwise. As well as several references to the writings of General Gordon which Harry is reading, we are introduced to Jessica's current reading material, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*.[43] The importance of intertextual references is emphasised again here; not only does Helen Huntingdon (via Anne Brontë) lead to a view that Hell is not eternal but it seems Gordon held comparable views on this subject which he emphatically upheld.

> Imagine to yourself, what pleasure would it be to Him to burn us or to torture us? Can we believe any *human being* capable of creating us for such a purpose? Would it show His justice? He is righteous - no one will deny it. We credit God with attributes which are utterly hateful to the meanest of men. Looking at our darkness of vision, how can He be what we credit Him with? I quite wonder at the long time it has taken us to see that the general doctrine of the Church is so erroneous...
>
> (Ellis 1991a, p. 154)

Unexplained Laughter uses local folklore and mythology in a similar way to *The Sin Eater*, that is, less directly than *The Inn at the Edge of the World*,

[43]See Chapter 2, p. 45 above.

but is very much more like the rest of Ellis' novels in many ways. Death is emphasised here through the character of Angharad, the mentally handicapped child who directly narrates parts of the book. It is also implicit in the lives of all the people who live in the Welsh valley; they resent visitors as outsiders but without an injection of life-blood their community which is already dying will soon cease to be altogether. Interest in the old myths as in *The Sin Eater* and interest and involvement in traditional religious belief are shown as being complementary rather than mutually exclusive. The kinds of religious opinions expounded throughout *The Sin Eater* emerge again.

> 'You have a splendid opportunity to do something different and original. You can feed the hungry and comfort the oppressed and visit the sick and bury the dead. And give good counsel, and do it all with *feeling*, and people will be so amazed they'll positively flock to you...'
>
> (Ellis 1986b, p. 77)

This comes straight from the Scriptures via *The Penny Catechism* and is presumably described as something "different" because Beuno, despite his name,[44] is training to be an Anglican priest. Thus, there is further opportunity to criticise the Church of England in a comparable way to that taken in *The Sin Eater*. However, Lydia is also attacking Christianity as a whole for its failure to remain true to tradition and for recent changes in particular.

> 'Do you take the view that God exists?' asked Lydia. 'Or do you see him as an inconvenient remnant of outmoded superstition - a bit like a gallstone - of which we must all be purged before religion can take on its true form, that is, without him.'
>
> Beuno turned to look at her. 'They've all been thinking,' he said. 'I wish they wouldn't.'
>
> 'I thought it was good to think,' said Betty.
>
> 'There you are,' said Lydia. 'There's a limit to what you can think about God.'

[44]St. Beuno is a Celtic Saint. His name is given to the Jesuit retreat centre which once trained Gerard Manley Hopkins. Ellis is almost sure to be aware of this significance and to have chosen the name accordingly.

> Beuno agreed. 'It's when they think he's a gallstone they find it difficult.'
>
> 'Don't you mind being in a Church that doesn't believe in God?' asked Betty.
>
> 'It's only a few of them who don't believe,' explained Beuno. 'The academics. They get embarrassed at High Table if they think their peers imagine they do. They have to explain that although they're priests they're really not incredulous nitwits, and then they feel they have to go further and they end up writing books about it and yapping away on the television.' He added tranquilly: 'No one takes much notice of them.'
>
> (Ellis 1986b, p. 49)

We note here that it is not the ordinary lay member of the Church who is criticised but that searing sarcasm is reserved for the clergy alone. Ellis has moved from her careful 'fair treatment' of the clergy in *The Sin Eater* to a less generous position. More recently, as shown in *Serpent on the Rock* and in numerous interviews, she is highly critical of the present Church hierarchy without being opposed to the *idea* of hierarchy.[45] The specific issue of married clergy, unthinkable within the Catholic Church until the cult of change associated with Vatican II, is raised in the context of the incompatibility of marriage itself.

> 'Will you marry?' Lydia asked Beuno...
>
> 'I don't think so,' said Beuno. 'I want to comb God's hair. If I married I'd only end up cleaning his shoes. You can't love God and anyone else.'[46]
>
> 'I do so agree with you,' said Lydia relieved. There was something most unpleasing and incongruous about the idea of Beuno shackled to a wife.
>
> 'The Church has always had trouble with marriage,' said Beuno, 'trying to combine two mutually exclusive imperatives. The vicar's wife is usually a pain...
>
> (Ellis 1986b, p. 52)

[45]William Oddie in his article (Oddie 1995) describes how the current Church hierarchy has actually pressurised *The Catholic Herald*'s Editor Christina Odone to drop Alice Thomas Ellis's regular column because of her attacks on changes within the Church. Oddie, himself a convert, is appalled by the narrow-mindedness of the 'liberal' Catholics.

[46]See also Chapter 4 of *Serpent on the Rock* for more on the problems of married priests.

Both these books have another side which is the use of sex to create an atmosphere of distrust and betrayal. Sex is primarily used in this way in all of Ellis' novels, it is never depicted explicitly and whether homosexual or heterosexual, sex is the general reason for unhappiness. The most important outcome of all sexual relationships is misunderstanding. The intention here is to demonstrate the essential difference between men and women by showing them as alienated, almost as two different species. Ellis' own opinions are again being aired here and, again, the blame is laid at the door of the feminists:

> It is obvious when it comes to sex that instinct is not to be trusted. For one thing, men and women mean something different by the term and their instincts divide them... The proposition that women harbour desires and inclinations exactly similar to those of men is largely responsible for the present state of chaos.
>
> (Ellis 1994, p. 62)

She goes on to explain the natural desire of women towards motherhood and vents her anger on the feminists who have made the position of many women so much harder by undermining maternal instinct and belittling motherhood as a worthless occupation. Intellectually, however, the sexes are not always sundered in Ellis' fiction. In fact she provides numerous examples of platonic relationships between man and woman (for example: Jessica and Harry, Beuno and Lydia) which are successful and fulfilling because they are based essentially on intellectual rather than sexual attraction. That the sexes have different roles to perform is stated emphatically. Clearly, it is not the male gender which Ellis considers to be superior.

> 'A woman talking about hell fire would just sound like a fishwife. The priesthood needs men. There's little enough they're good for else. I think they should be left to get on with it. Women can be mothers, and men can be priests. I think that's fair. A lot of men are distraught at not being able to give birth and there's little to be done about that. It's ungrateful to want to be both.'
>
> (Ellis 1986b, p. 78)

This is precisely the kind of comment by which Ellis' novels have antagonised the feminists. Her approach is, for example, anathematic to that of Sarah Maitland.[47] Ellis is not isolated in her view, particularly as regards female ordination. It is often assumed that it is an issue with widespread support from women but this is not necessarily the case as we have already seen with regard to changes in nuns' habits.[48] A prominent speaker on women's issues in the Church, Nuala Scarisbrick has this to say

> the campaign for women's ordination is closely linked with pro-abortionism, and an uncritical acceptance of current secular sexual practices... the campaign... rests upon rejecting the authority of the Church, and is rooted in a hatred of men I find disturbing
>
> (Scarisbrick 1995, p. 2)

However, the constant implication that women are more powerful than men in reality as well as in Ellis' novels, is based on the simple fact that it is women not men who produce children. By being thus at least potentially the authors of life, any other power naturally pales into insignificance before this the greatest power of all. Continuing this line of reasoning, for Ellis, nuns are by no means inferior to priests, rather they perform a wholly different function, and to aspire to the priesthood a woman would have to aspire to gender roles created by men and would therefore make herself appear to be inferior by aspiring to be less than she should naturally be.

The remaining novels - *The Birds of the Air* (1980), *The Other Side of the Fire* (1983), *Pillars of Gold* (1992) and *The Summerhouse Trilogy* (1991)[49] - deal

[47]See above discussion p. 126 and for more detail see Chapter Four of Flora Alexander's *Contemporary Women Novelists*.

[48]See p. 143 above and subsequent pages.

[49]First published in three separate volumes as *The Clothes in the Wardrobe* (1987), *The Skeleton in the Cupboard* (1988) and *The Fly in the Ointment* (1989). It has most recently been adapted for television as *The Clothes in the Wardrobe* (1993). Each work although complete in its own right, fits well with the other two as all are accounts of the same events; it is the perspective which alters with each rendition.

more directly with mundane daily existence. The framework of reality which they create is exceedingly dull and clearly intended as illusory; the deeper meaning is more easily reached because the surface illusion is so transparent. All of these novels are essentially domestic and concern the interactions of a number of two-dimensional characters. That is, they seem lifeless and unreal as they are depicted in relation to each other and yet when the author takes us into the minds of each we are shown quite vividly an inner world which is real. Nevertheless, all the issues which concerned us previously are still here. The clergy are the most neglected element but then the novels in this group are not explicitly Catholic in content. The other issues associated with Catholic fiction are all to be found. The combinations of sex as a means of betrayal and death as the welcome pursuer are revealed here, as in Ellis' other novels, and this is characteristic. All these books make uncomplimentary comment on modern-day life in a way which is highlighted by the implication that all these daily things are actually of no importance because life is short and death is inevitable. To be enthusiastic about the modern post-Vatican II Church is to be enthusiastic about the Modern world in general, something Ellis is not.

Ellis has developed her postmodernist writing through writing about domesticity. The typical postmodern writer, a slippery term but useful to us, is one who takes a marginal stance to subvert society and all that is acceptable. Thus, it is part of the form to be anti-narrative, unstable and indeterminate. Many contemporary writers use this to highlight "radical" issues such as lesbianism, for example Jeannette Winterson, or the problems of ethnic minorities, for example Alice Walker. Ellis turns the tables by employing 'postmodernist' writing techniques herself. Those who are typically seen as culturally central - white, heterosexual women who are housewives, mothers, and generally religiously conservative - are perceived by Ellis to be oppressed and marginalised. She is not a fully fledged postmodernist but she does tend towards postmodernism.

The Birds of the Air in particular is the most obvious example of work directly representing the author's own experience. Death filled *The Sin Eater* as a symbol, here it is the subject of the book and mere earthly things are quite inconsequential in the face of eternity.

> My father died when I was twenty-six and took with him my fear of death. I watched him go.... God in His goodness permits us all to die. An evil being might have condemned some of us to live for ever, eternally separated.
>
> (Ellis 1994, p. 152)

This idea[50] encapsulates Ellis' work; the pursuer is death but not a death of fear and horror, death is simply the release from earthly life, this "vale of tears". In *Brighton Rock* Pinkie feared death and Waugh has Lord Marchmain struggling to stay alive because of his fear of death. In both cases, this is linked to their lack of grace. In Ellis, Heaven and Hell are logical opposites but with a steady reliance on the impossibility of eternal suffering the fear is removed from death. Suffering is in this earthly life. Within the domestic drama that the celebration of Christmas creates, the focus is on the recently bereaved Mary. Catholicism is ever-present in the background as a base for the story not a part of the text itself.

> Mary... wasn't an enthusiast. She was resigned to faith rather than a believer, having no doubts - no doubts, that is, as to the existence of God. Of his mood, his intentions, she wasn't sure. She saw no reason to suppose that he meant her well in the accepted meaning of that term. He didn't, as her mother did, wish her a nice house, a nice husband, nice children, a well-trained pet, happiness, longevity and a sherry in the evenings. Nor did she want any of these things. She sometimes thought he might have left her Robin, but that wasn't his way. Her anger stopped short of God and was sustained by her hatred of death and the little demons in whom she saw herself reflected...
>
> (Ellis 1983, p. 85)

[50]Ellis is not the only Catholic author to refer to death as a gift. On p. 48 of J.R.R. Tolkien (1977) *The Silmarillion* London, Unwin, it says of men: "Death is their fate, the gift of Illúvatar [God], which as Time wears even the Powers shall envy."

In a manner reminiscent of Greene[51] and more especially of Waugh, Ellis does not admit the possibility of doubting the existence of God. Of her own reception into the Church she states "after due time and instruction I became a Catholic because I no longer found it possible to disbelieve in God." (Ellis 1994, p. 20) She also says, "It will become apparent that I am no theologian, I am something quite different: a believer in God, a stubborn, simple soul" (Ellis 1994, p. 45) and quotes rabbi Ba'al Shem Tov's words to the learned man seeking to prove the existence of God, "You are brooding on whether God is: I am a fool and believe. " (Ellis 1994, p. 45) Her own biography[52] and the many ideas she tackles in *Serpent on the Rock*, emphasise her own traditional and orthodox position as a Catholic irrespective of the aftermath of the Second Vatican Council. The main character of *The Birds Of The Air*, death, is less a religious occasion than a pagan king, and as Mary says "Christ had no time for royalty". (Ellis 1983, p. 139) The Queen's Christmas speech opens up her train of thought

> Grinning death was the king of the world and the preferment he offered was a too great change of status, transformation. His favouritism was feared beyond all else and his touch shunned. Mary mistrusted monarchs, but most of all King Death who had left his great halls and, in a horrid parody of democracy, walked among his subjects choosing randomly whom he should elevate.
>
> (Ellis 1983, pp. 139–40)

People consider regal favours to be pleasant and it is normal to receive them gratefully. Mary's view of the world, while essentially turning everything most valued upsidedown, is presented to the reader as the most sane view in the book and constantly juxtaposed with the ideals and beliefs of other characters in order to emphasise this very point. The other point made bluntly in this novel, is that of the unrespectable nature of Catholicism. Again this is done by pillorying

[51]See Chapter 2, p. 53 above.

[52]See *Home Life* (a collection of her regular column for *The Spectator* published in a single volume by Duckworth, London, 1986) and (1990) *A Welsh Childhood* London, Michael Joseph.

Protestantism. Mary provokes her mother into impropriety by making a light-hearted religious comment which is unseemly to the very Protestant Mrs Marsh:

> 'Well, here's to God,' said Mary, creating a diversion and pouring herself a whisky.
>
> They stared at her uncomprehendingly.
>
> 'It's his birthday,' she said.
>
> Nearly everyone was shocked.
>
> Mrs Marsh felt a great desire to bang together the heads of her daughter and grandson. Christmas was bad enough without this sort of behaviour.
>
> 'I didn't notice you going to midnight Mass,' she said very crossly indeed. As a rule, she avoided all mention of Catholicism in public, considering it, even after her years of marriage to her dear John, not quite nice.
>
> (Ellis 1983, p. 138)

Even in a post-Vatican II environment it seems it is possible to consider Catholics as outsiders. Since the Council, Catholics are less obvious in their practices, for example, they no longer abstain from meat every Friday,[53] but Ellis by associating herself with old-fashioned Catholicism sees herself as marginalised as her use of postmodernist technique implies. Carson emphasises his position as 'outsider' by reference to the past in *The Knight of the Flaming Heart* and also by association with the unacceptable nature of homosexuality. Other novels he populates with foreigners and ex-patriates who, being either not English or at least not *properly* English, are not quite the thing. Ellis manipulates her Catholic characters as 'different' in various ways, most notably simply by thinking differently to most people. However, Rose in *The Sin Eater* is technically a foreigner, being Irish and married into a Welsh family and plays upon the difference whilst rather enjoying it. In *The 27th Kingdom* Valentine, being black, is more visibly different still, whereas here it is only Mary's proximity and approach to death which makes her different from her companions. Whether the feeling of

[53]The American hamburger chain 'McDonald's' invented the *filet-O-Fish* purely to provide a meal for their Catholic customers on Fridays (Bryson 1995, p. 405). See also p. 135 above.

'difference' and 'not belonging' is clearly defined by race or colour is immaterial because the feeling still remains. As mentioned earlier,[54] Catholicism may be seen by the 'tolerant' secular world to be an acceptable religion and certainly an acceptable background to have but Ellis wishes to show that it can not be both acceptable within secular society and have any genuine meaning and influence on the lives of believers. The two ideas are quite incompatible. Interestingly, this novel portrays all the very worst elements of a 'traditional' Christmas from which the characters of *The Inn at the Edge of the World* are trying to escape.

The Other Side of the Fire again has a basic background setting of Catholicism or, more specifically here, the kind of morality which a Catholic upbringing engenders. This is a theme that is repeated in all the novels of all the writers here and the main difference is how far they are aware of this influence rather than how great an effect it has. Catholicism is not directly referred to, as in *The Birds of the Air*, but still ideas such as being rewarded by God for being virtuous are ever- present. What does link these two novels is the infatuation of a woman with a homosexual man. In both cases the woman is entirely unsuspicious of the sexual orientation of the object of her desire (apparently the sexual innocence of both women is at least one explanation for this) whilst to everybody else of any consequence it is all too obvious. It seems that the character of homosexual man confuses the whole issue of gender roles within the text. However, I will not pretend that Ellis is aiming for any serious critique or attack on the nature of homosexuality, what is relevant is the comedy of situations created by women desiring the utterly unattainable. All she has to say about homosexuality is:

> Nor do I understand why so many people seem determined to define themselves by their sexual orientation. It seems unnecessarily limiting. When a person fixes you with a glance and says 'I'm gay/lesbian, you know', you think: So what, darling? Just don't eat with your mouth open.
>
> (Ellis 1994, p. 90)

[54]See above p. 127.

One of Ellis's most characteristic insistence is that sexuality is much more limiting than traditional female roles.[55] *Pillars of Gold*, beyond using a backdrop of Catholic morality, adds little to the points here under consideration and much the same is true of *The Summerhouse Trilogy*. The latter has been left till last although it is one of Ellis's earlier works. Indeed, I have not treated Alice Thomas Ellis's novels chronologically, but rather the progression has been from those most concerned with Catholicism to those least occupied by it. *The Summerhouse Trilogy* does not quite conform to this plan and it stands out as markedly different from Ellis's other novels (this is not to imply any great uniformity among the others either). The very structure is the most obvious reason for this. The three novels cover the same events but each gives a different perspective. This is a very self-conscious intertextual approach as it is impossible not to contemplate the other two novels when reading any one of the trio. This self-consciousness on the part of the author increases the self-consciousness of the reader and reading it becomes an enhanced, active process. The three main female characters each present their version of events. First, the bride-to-be, Margaret, then the mother of the groom, and finally Lili, whose actions are to form a strange and secular sacrifice, and to have a permanent effect on the lives of all those around her. Catholicism is still relevant here and all the themes especially of death, sacrifice and betrayal are included but sometimes with surprising results. Margaret is obviously a Catholic and in her account, *The Clothes in the Wardrobe*, refers to her religion at least twenty-five times. Her marriage would be a sacrifice but an unacceptable one for several reasons. She does not love Syl, the man she is engaged to and in secular terms this provides the most obvious objection to their marriage. More importantly she reveals that she has lost the only man she ever did love and that he did not and never would love her. And most important of all the Egyptian prince she had loved she had left another for.

[55]See (Alexander 1989, p. 88) and above, p. 129.

> 'I want to be a nun,' I said. I had wanted to be a nun before Nour had made me love him with his golden hair and his golden face and his golden eyes. I wondered how long it would be before I stopped loving him. I had loved God before Nour. I had been a vessel of pure water and I had been spilled. I had loved God more than I had loved Nour and I had betrayed him. I had rendered myself purposeless.
>
> (Ellis 1991b, pp. 107–8)

and later

> I had betrayed God for a blundering prince.
>
> (Ellis 1991b, p. 117)

It is the underlying desire to become a nun which is the most crucial impediment to Margaret's marriage to Syl and it is the one which is socially unacceptable. Margaret's and Syl's families are both Catholic; in the second book Mrs Munro proudly describes her family as Catholics who have survived the persecutions of the Reformation.[56] Mrs Munro has her suspicions about the unsuitability of the forthcoming marriage and they are essentially concerned with Margaret's character, a certain coolness and purity which she considers to be incompatible with marriage. Syl's mother knows nothing of Margaret's leanings towards the religious life but it is her narrative that provides both the view that men are infinitely inferior to women and also that the celibate state is superior to the married state.

> I had been bred to respect the priesthood and so I never said precisely what I felt - that it was all very fine and large for them, speaking from their superior position of celibacy:[57] it was we, poor foot-soldiers, who had to slog through the mire of matrimony.
>
> (Ellis 1991b, p. 165)

[56]That is, they are Recusants, as seen in *Brideshead Revisited*.

[57]This position, the superiority of celibacy to matrimony, is not unfamiliar pre-Vatican II. Since the Council, it has been customary to refer to the equality of married and celibate "vocations".

Mrs Munro's Catholicism is in keeping with her (the older) generation as she considers the dangers of mortal sin and sees Hell as a reality. Her own mother left her father and caused much consternation within the family

> It is the knowledge that somebody you love - one of you - might, by sin, separate herself from you for eternity that is a source of anguish... It was not because my mother had put her sisters in the awkward position of having to hold their heads high before the curious regard of the neighbours, when what they wanted to do was to clap their hands over their ears, close their eyes and pretend they were insensate that made one of my aunts weep silently in church and another take to saying Decades of the Rosary at peculiar moments. It was the fear that one of them was lost
>
> (Ellis 1991b, p. 163)

Margaret's mother, Monica, on the other hand is more conventional in her religious ideas. For, although a Catholic, she is concerned with the respectability of her religion. Margaret describes her as a "very English Catholic and opposed to religious excess in all its forms" (Ellis 1991b, p. 34) which is why she considers nuns to have "wasted lives". (Ellis 1991b, p. 33) She is Protestant within her Catholicism with her "conviction that normal people did not go to church unless compelled by the Sabbath." (Ellis 1991b, p. 103) Lili, who provides the third and final narrative, is not a Catholic but it is she who provides Margaret with an escape from a marriage which it is clear should never take place. Although she adheres to no religious belief, Lili is not afraid to be different and alienated; she would never embrace a "sensible" creed. Her sacrifice of self is unconventional, by having sexual congress with the groom on the very morning of the wedding in full view of many witnesses she sacrifices her friendships with the other women in the story and her own marriage. However, in her own account she is quick to play down the greatness of the sacrifice. Thus, Margaret is free to try her vocation and does finally take the veil. Ellis' sympathy with the exceptional as harbinger of religious and human fulfilment is clear here.

It is not only old Mrs Munro who fears damnation but also Margaret herself. Having betrayed God for Nour she feels that she is in a state of mortal sin and although aware that she should not in secular terms marry Syl, she alternately no longer cares what happens to her (once damned it is not possible to be more damned) and hopes to offer herself as a kind of human sacrifice to placate God. By the end of the drama, however, she has moved from "I greatly feared death, suspecting myself to be damned" (Ellis 1991b, p. 4) to "I was aware that I was forgiven, that I was free of hell." (Ellis 1991b, p. 125) Finally it is the all-encompassing nature of death which is so central to all of Alice Thomas Ellis' novels, as Margaret reflects:

> In the course of time I would die and then it would all be over
>
> (Ellis 1991b, p. 7)

Catholicism is a force in all Ellis' novels, even in the least overtly Catholic novels like *The Summerhouse Trilogy* we find it ingrained deep into the fabric of the story. Like Carson, Ellis shows herself to be a Catholic even when she is not writing about Catholicism directly. By Newman's definition this is bound to be the case for all the authors.[58] Carson has stated that Catholicism is the most important spur to his writing, Ellis claims it to be the reason she began to write and David Lodge acknowledges its effect on him also (as indeed he might, having quoted Newman's view in his own Master's thesis).[59] Feminism, in particular her opposition to all popular forms of it, is also central to Ellis' work. As we have seen, she has no doubt that the 'feminist movement' is largely to blame for the current status of women in society and for many of the current problems in the Catholic church. Nevertheless, she herself employs many of the modes of feminist writing: a preoccupation with aesthetics, the absence of central authority, the pre-eminence of feeling over thinking, and the importance of the unreal, irrational and

[58]See above, Chapter 2, p. 8.

[59]The title of Lodge's MA thesis was *Catholic Fiction Since The Oxford Movement.*

miraculous. However, her adherence to Catholicism and her total opposition to many traditional feminist issues: abortion, lesbianism and female empowerment, leave her comparatively isolated and outside the female canon which 'feminists' are constructing.

In comparison with Carson, Ellis is orthodox[60] in the sense that she clings to the past. She is not orthodox in that she can find no way to see Vatican II as a work of the Holy Spirit, and she is increasingly outspoken in her criticism of Church hierarchy[61] though not of the Pope. Her novels clearly reflect her own position as a Catholic which she has stated frequently in the media. Carson has expressed certain reservations about the effects of the Second Vatican Council and remains unorthodoxly 'orthodox'. That both these authors are still concerned Catholics is quite clear from their fictional and non-fictional writings. Now we will turn our attention to an author who by his own description is a less committed Catholic.

[60]In terms of Catholicism, current Orthodoxy is defined by an association with the position of the current Pontiff. See p. 68 above.

[61]Such criticism is a move from her careful respect for the Catholic clergy, as seen in *The Sin Eater* (see p. 140 above) but she tends to reserve criticism for her non-fiction anyway.

Chapter Six: DAVID LODGE

David Lodge has written and published ten novels to date. Unlike Carson and Ellis he began writing and publishing his novels before the Second Vatican Council. Thus the immediate effect of the Council on his writing can be considered, as it can with Brian Moore. Indeed, Vatican II with all its aftermath is the central topic of one of Lodge's novels. This work, *How Far Can You Go?* (1980), is explicitly Catholic in content as are three other novels written throughout his career: *The Picturegoers* (1960), *The British Museum is Falling Down* (1965) and *Paradise News* (1980). Lodge's most recent work, published while working on this thesis, will be referred to separately. It seems to herald a new direction in Lodge's fiction which is relevant in the light of it being thirty years now since the Council ended.

The remaining novels I wish to divide into specifically 'autobiographical' and those which could be categorised as 'campus' novels. The latter group comprises: *Changing Places* (1975), *Small World* (1984) and *Nice Work* (1988). In the former category are: *Ginger, You're Barmy* (1962) and *Out of the Shelter* (1970) although, as outlined by Paddy Bostock in his thesis (Bostock 1989), the "autobiographical" category could be extended to include all Lodge's novels at least as far as *Small World*. The extent to which Lodge is writing autobiography and has just one proto-character which he alters from one book to the next should be kept in mind looking at all ten works. The five novels listed above, are comparable to those of Ellis and Carson, where Catholicism is not the central topic, but one reaches the unavoidable conclusion that only a Catholic author could

have written them. It seems clear that a Catholic somehow reveals himself as such quite inadvertently through his writing. Lodge refers to this view quoting Newman[1] but his thesis goes on to hypothesise a more specific definition of a Catholic writer:

> By a Catholic novelist I mean one who regards himself as a member of the Roman Catholic Church, considers its philosophical and dogmatic system to be truth, and interprets life in the light of that system, however modified by his own personality and temperament ... a Catholic novelist need not necessarily be a model Catholic.
>
> (Lodge 1959, pp. 7–8)

No writer can fully escape any part of his own background (religious upbringing included[2]) when writing but, depending on the sort of writing, the intention of the author and the weight which that part of his make-up has in relation to any other aspects of his history, a writer may not reveal himself as Catholic any more than the colour of his skin or sexual orientation may be immediately obvious to the reader. However, Lodge is not one to seek to escape from his own background; he is far too self-conscious a writer for that and all of his novels proclaim him to be a Catholic. Catholicism, here, almost seems to be more a function of the writing than the person. For instance, asked how important Catholicism is to him as a writer, Lodge has said:

> I think it has been more important to me as a writer than as a person.
>
> (Lodge 1991c)

He goes on to explain his own Catholic background in a manner which provides an useful insight into his work.

---

[1]See Chapter 2, p. 8 above.

[2]Anthony Burgess is a famous example of someone technically a Catholic but non-practising. He makes use of Catholic themes, and Catholicism clearly has an importance in his fiction if not in his life. His (1962) *A Clockwork Orange* London, Heinemann, for example, has free will and its importance to Man as its central theme.

> I wasn't a typical English Catholic, who's probably a member of a large family, and I was an only child, and my father was not a Catholic, therefore, I was always a kind of marginal Catholic in a way. Catholicism came to me through education because I went to Catholic schools and of course Catholic schools have a way of imprinting Catholicism on the mind as "once a Catholic, always a Catholic" and so on. I mean, as a child, it satisfied the child's need for a kind of structure - it explained the universe, and it fascinated with its kind of elaborate rules and things about sin and so on.
>
> (Lodge 1991c)

The same point is emphasised when Lodge was asked if his religion had ever had any great hold or power over him:

> Absolutely not. I mean, I'm not really a naturally religious person at all in the spiritual sense, and to me it's always been a sort of intellectual system, and I've revised my own understanding of it quite a lot in the course of my life. So it's not really an emotional thing at all.
>
> (Lodge 1991c)

Lodge's own interest in Catholicism, then, is largely intellectual, or so he at least maintains.[3] This is helpful in evaluating his characters' approach to their religion which is often highly intellectualised. Here we see a big difference between Lodge and the previous two authors. Although very different from each other in almost every respect, Carson and Ellis share a great emotional attachment to their Catholicism. It is this deep involvement which unites Greene and Waugh and allows useful comparison to be drawn between them. In her love of the aesthetic, the ritual and the traditional practices Ellis is closer to Waugh who was similarly horrified by the liturgical changes which followed the Council.[4] Carson is also fond of certain old-fashioned aspects of Catholic practice[5] but in his many

[3]Lodge wishes to associate himself with writers like Burgess. However, it is improbable that he is as detached as he would like to appear.

[4]Evelyn Waugh died in 1966 shortly after hearing a private Tridentine Mass said by an old friend; Lodge (1980, p. 102) makes reference to this.

[5]See Chapter 4, p. 117 above.

reservations and doubts about his religion he is much closer to Greene who also aligned himself with a certain decadence. The changes heralded by the Council do not seem to have helped Carson and seem to have been of little interest to Greene. Lodge clearly does not identify with Catholicism in this deep subterranean way. He reaches the crux of the matter when asked if he is in any sense a believer:

> I don't think I'm emotionally touched. I would describe myself as an agnostic Catholic if that doesn't seem too paradoxical a phrase. That is, I regard myself as a Catholic, I continue to belong to a Catholic community. I am an agnostic in a sense that I don't know and I don't think it's possible to know with certainty what the, you know, what non-material truths the doctrines of Catholicism may turn out to refer to. My view is that Christianity, the language of traditional Christianity has to be interpreted metaphorically. I mean I no longer believe in it literally, so I would regard myself as a liberal, demythologised rather provisional kind of Catholic.
>
> (Lodge 1991c)

Perhaps it is his very lack of emotional involvement which allows him to use the Council in the way he does in *How Far Can You Go?* and, at least seem, to give a fairly balanced view of its impact. Vatican II is about the roots of Catholicism and, therefore, engages the roots of belief and strong reactions. Lodge is, self-confessedly, not a 'rooted' believer and so reacts more as an outsider might do. His apparent objectivity is in stark contrast to the others who all write about the event in retrospect. Ellis writes from anger, Moore with ridicule, and for Carson it is, by then, largely an irrelevance. It is no accident that the only convert to Catholicism among these four authors is also the most fervent and orthodox in upholding and defending her faith.[6]

Even in his non-Catholic novels Lodge exploits his own religion to good effect, as it enriches the stories he tells and specifically adds much humour to his work. Both the novels cited as essentially autobiographical have, naturally enough, Catholics as their central characters and substantial reference is made to

[6]However, this is not always the case, it is not true of Muriel Spark, for example.

the teachings and rites of the Catholic church. In *Ginger, You're Barmy* Lodge is writing autobiographically in that the plot centres around his experience of national service at an army base in North Yorkshire, Catterick. The place is real (the army still have a base there today) and details of life as a national serviceman are also taken from life but the plot is fictional. There are two main male characters whose relationship is immediately reminiscent of Charles Ryder and Sebastian Flyte although it is not Waugh but Greene to whom Lodge says he is indebted for the novel's structure.

> *Ginger, You're Barmy* was structurally derived (as I realized many years after writing it) from Greene's *The Quiet American*, and could be linked to Joyce only in the "scrupulous meanness" (his description of the style of *Dubliners*) with which it attempted to record the life of conscript soldiers in the British Army.
>
> (Lodge 1988b, p. 65)

To remove the story further from direct autobiography Lodge splits himself between two characters and is typically frank about his motives:

> The need for a fictional story was self-evident, since my own military experience was almost devoid of narrative interest. My response to the army shifted from an indignant moral resistance to its values... to a pragmatic determination to make myself as comfortable as possible... I split these reactions into two characters, and set them interacting. To heighten the contrast between them I gave the rebel an Irish Catholic republican background (and flaming red hair) and made the conforming pragmatist an agnostic.
>
> (Lodge 1982, pp. 223–4)

It is really only the narrator's agnosticism which separates him from his creator; Jonathan Browne is essentially Lodge without the Catholicism and Mike Brady has no similarity to Lodge at all save that they are both Catholics. Like Ryder in *Brideshead Revisited*, Browne, the educated agnostic, provides numerous opportunities for the Catholic Brady to explain Catholicism and its many nuances for the benefit of non-Catholic readers without seeming to be contrived.

Brady is an outsider, he does not belong, in a very primitive way. His Irish ancestry may be largely to blame but the emphasis is on how his Catholicism places him apart. Not that he flaunts his religion, it is not something he puts on but a part of himself although, unlike Sebastian, he does not struggle to lose it. That it is Brady's religion which sets him apart is shown by the character of Percy. This character plays only a small role in the novel but it is one which shapes the consequent development of Mike Brady. Percy is interesting in that he is, according to Lodge, an Old Catholic, the only one of this breed to be mentioned in Lodge's work. Mike explains this to Jonathan:

> they belonged to a small minority of English Catholics who had kept their Faith through the Penal days. I (Jonathan) gathered that they were a tightly-knit, conservative, clannish group, who regarded Irish and convert Catholics with rather more suspicion than they did Protestants.
>
> (Lodge 1982, p. 51)

The 'Old Catholic Church' is in fact a technical term which denotes the part of the Dutch[7] church which rejected Vatican I's teaching on infallibility.[8] Clearly, Lodge means something else by the term and his misleading use of the phrase points to the insularity of his own Catholicism. As a member of the English aristocracy, Percy is symbolic as a useless remnant of out-moded belief, he fails at every attempt, even when he finally dies he does so clumsily. Through him, Lodge shows a very different sort of picture of English aristocracy from that offered by Waugh, first through Lady Marchmain, but later even more effectively through Guy Crouchback in his *Sword of Honour* trilogy. Aristocratic Catholics still remain in England; worth mentioning here are Lord Longford's daughters, Antonia Fraser[9] and Rachel Billington. In *Ginger, You're Barmy* Lodge depicts

[7]The Dutch seem to have a tradition of unorthodoxy. In addition to the rejection of Papal infallibility, Holland became the home of the Jansenists in the early eighteenth century, and it is from the Bishop of the Netherlands that a 'New Catechism' was published (1965–1966) in the wake of the Second Vatican Council without the Holy See's approval.

[8]See Chapter 3, p. 66 above.

[9]See Chapter 5, p. 145 above.

a perceptible bond between Mike and Percy which emanates solely from their shared religion and it is one of those elements of Mike Brady's character which Jonathan Browne is forced to admire. The novel's central point is Jonathan's moral development. He does not actually embrace Catholicism like Charles Ryder but he comes to adopt a set of moral values closely corresponding to it, thanks to Brady's influence.

Lodge is more deliberately autobiographical in *Out of the Shelter* which he says is

> ... probably the most autobiographical of my novels, inasmuch as Timothy Young's early life, and the circumstances in which he comes to visit Heidelberg, correspond closely to my own. In Part I, I drew on my memories of the London Blitz of 1940: of being "evacuated" with my mother to the country... of growing up in the post-war austerity years... The adult relationships and intrigues in which Timothy becomes involved in Parts II and III are invented, but the context in which they unfold is based on personal experience and observation
>
> (Lodge 1985, p. 275)

Again the setting and to a large extent the characters are based on life but the plot is mostly fictional. In both these novels the issue of sex is the main one. That is heterosexual sex; homosexuality features in *Out of the Shelter* but only briefly as a behavioural aberration by a couple of minor characters. The clergy are largely absent from both novels but the usual concerns about death, heaven and hell, good and evil and so on, are present. With Lodge it seems that sex is a primary issue to him even in his earlier works. This pre-occupation continues through his other work so that problems with sexual behaviour seem to be the root of all dissatisfaction with the Catholic church in what are here termed his specifically Catholic novels. As John Burgess says

> Without our being aware of it, the sexuality debate has become the vehicle for getting at the most basic questions of faith. In many ways the debate about sexuality is not about sexuality at all but about what it means to be human before God. In fact sexuality, so powerful

> a part of our experience, appears to be real and relevant in a way that theological matters do not.
>
> (Ellis 1994, p. 63)

In the campus novels, both *Changing Places* and *Small World* have a number of Catholic characters and in these two and *Nice Work*, which has no Catholic characters at all, there is strong sense of a morality which is very much Christian morality with the distinct flavour of Catholicism. For example, sex leads to children (as a variation on the idea that one's sin is sure to find one out) and one-night stands are particularly prone to this, abortion is wrong in all cases, and use of contraception is dubious. Adultery is wrong but children conceived out of wedlock are blessings in their way. All his characters, Catholic and non-Catholic are judged by the same moral standards and rewarded and punished accordingly.

Bostock's view that all Lodge's novels are essentially autobiographical[10] is supported by the repeated use of a stock character which mirrors himself; that of the Catholic academic. This is the main character in both *Out of the Shelter* and *The Picturegoers* and it is split into two in *Ginger, You're Barmy*. In *Changing Places* there are two central academic characters, both Professors of English like Lodge himself, here the Catholicism is removed from the academics and distributed among a number of lesser characters with whom the main two interact in various moral situations. In *Small World* however, the two aspects are reunited and it is a Catholic academic, Persse McGarrigle, who fulfils the role of Percival in a pseudo-Grail legend Romance epic. Persse is an Irish Catholic -by which Lodge implies someone who does not question his faith as shown earlier by Mike Brady- but unlike Brady, Persse is respected for his beliefs even by ardent non-believers:

> "... it makes me mad to hear of girls getting knocked up in this day and age [said Morris Zapp]. You'd think that the guy, whoever he was, would have taken precautions."

[10]See above p. 168.

> "You can't obtain contraceptives in Ireland," said Persse. "It's against the law to sell them."
>
> "Is that right? I guess you'll be filling your suitcase with, what do they call them here, Durex, right?"
>
> "No," said Persse. "I believe in premarital chastity for both sexes."
>
> "Well, it's a nice idea, Percy, but if you want my opinion, I don't think it will catch on."
>
> (Lodge 1984, p. 34)

Small World is in some ways a sequel to *Changing Places*. Although its format is very different the characters are largely the same. Persse himself does not figure but his relations do. The continuity is more tenuous as regards *Nice Work*. Swallow and Zapp who were the protagonists of *Changing Places* and still important figures in *Small World* are thrown in here only for comic relief. They are precisely the same as they were in the earlier novels and therefore do not fit into the framework. They appear old and dated compared to the vibrant, feminist, Robyn, with her sexually ambiguous first name further stressed by her insistence on her title as Doctor rather than Miss or Ms. Lodge is using both men, but particularly Swallow, as a means of self-parody. He, too, is near retirement age and safe in his tenure. Swallow has little in common with new staff such as Robyn Penrose and accordingly Lodge displays little sympathy with her character; she is shown to be inferior to Wilcox whom she initially disdains.

Nice Work is the very first and so far the only one of Lodge's novels not to have any Catholic characters. It was almost certainly a deliberate attempt on Lodge's part to try to write a novel which was not so dependent on Catholicism for its humour if not for its whole plot. He talks of how he felt the form of the novel had to change.

> *Nice Work* has its comic and intertextual elements, but it is a more serious, realistic novel, and I was conscious that coincidence must be used more sparingly as a plot device, and more carefully disguised or justified.
>
> (Lodge 1992, p. 152)

Lodge compares *Nice Work* directly with *Small World*, his most intentionally comic novel, where he can justify the extensive use of coincidence as it is a means to an end. In fact, the whole structure of *Small World* is based on outrageous coincidence and entertaining parallels between events, places and people. Coincidence is vital to the determined intertextuality of the novel. Ever the self-conscious writer, Lodge has written about the tendency of authors "committed to documentary-style realism" (Lodge 1992, p. 99) (in which he clearly includes himself) to deny that the essential nature of literature is based on intertextuality. *Small World* is his advance into exploring intertextual techniques.

> I felt much less inhibited about exploiting coincidence in *Small World* (the very title of which foregrounds the phenomenon) than in, say, *Nice Work*. *Small World* is a comic novel, and audiences of comedy will accept an improbable coincidence for the sake of the fun it generates. In associating coincidence with "farce", James was no doubt thinking of French boulevard comedies at the turn of the century, by writers like Georges Feydeau, which all turn on sexually compromising situations, and *Small World* belongs to this tradition.
>
> (Lodge 1992, pp. 151–2)

Lodge is perhaps over cautious about use of coincidence, certainly he feels a need to justify his own techniques in his critical writing. He is correct that the serious nature of *Nice Work* does not lend itself to such a palimpsest effect and puts his emphasis on character. However, the gambit is only partially successful. As in *Ginger, You're Barmy* Lodge again divides his stock character (the Catholic academic) in two. Here he creates further distance between himself and his work by making the academic a woman (his first really detailed female character) and the Catholic actually a Protestant. But Vic Wilcox is Catholic in every way except actual baptised Faith. By way of a change from the familiar sex versus religion debate, here we are concerned with sex and work, for Vic Wilcox has his own personal Protestant work ethic:

> Lodge calls his novel *Nice Work*. 'If you can get it/ And you can get it if you try' - Tebbit's Bike - remains implicit. But 'it' is sex as well

> as work. This is a novel about mating... But they do not fuse. This sexual act is an episode for Penrose, a revelation for Wilcox.
>
> (Carter 1990, pp. 255 6)

Thus what is so crucial to one half of the Lodge character is of little consequence to the other. I would argue that this novel clearly reveals the dichotomy within the author between religious and intellectual life. Robyn and Vic discuss religion only once and only in a fleeting manner but it pinpoints precisely the inherent opposition of the two characters:

> 'Your universities may be the cathedrals of the modern age, but do you teach morality in them?'
>
> Robyn Penrose paused for thought. 'Not as such.'
>
> As if on cue, a church bell began to toll plangently in the distance.
>
> 'Do you go to church, then?' she asked.
>
> 'Me? No. Apart from the usual - weddings, funerals, christenings. What about you?'
>
> 'Not since I left school. I was rather pious at school. I was confirmed. That was just before I discovered sex. I think religion served the same psychological purpose - something very personal and private and rather intense. Do you believe in God?'
>
> 'What? Oh I don't know. Yes I suppose so, in a vague sort of way.'
>
> ... 'Basically, I suppose I think God is the ultimate floating signifier.'
>
> 'I'll buy that,' said Vic
>
> (Lodge 1988a, pp. 242–3)

The post-structuralist, Robyn, reveals her literary interests through her speech and in so doing identifies with Lodge the intrusive author. Her comments about sex as a substitute for religion imply that the two are somehow incompatible. This is a view popularly associated with Catholicism and often exploited by Lodge's characters. Brian Moore uses the same move from Religion to Sex in *The Temptation of Eileen Hughes*. In the novels dubbed as being specifically Catholic, problems with sex are paramount. Conventional feminism, which Lodge is so scathing about in *Nice Work*, is looked at much more sympathetically in *How Far Can*

You Go?. But now we turn to his first novel when feminism, as a movement was much less prominent.[11]

The Picturegoers provides a good introduction to his Catholic novels. His first novel, Lodge has described it as:

> an immature work, mostly written some years before it was published,[12] which I cannot read now without embarrassment.[13] There are several strands to the narrative, but the principal one concerns the conversion to Catholicism of a young student of secular, materialistic upbringing, as a result of lodging with a Catholic family, after having awakened in the eldest daughter desires that, wishing to try his vocation as a priest, he can no longer satisfy.
>
> (Lodge 1988b, p. 61)

He continues to state his indebtedness to Joyce[14] and also to Greene.[15] Joyce is also important in the conception of *The British Museum is Falling Down* and one of Lodge's choices for a suitable title was *Wombsday* which clearly owes much to Joyce's Bloomsday.[16] Not only is Lodge not attempting to avoid the effect of his Catholicism on his writing, he is acutely aware of his position as a Catholic author making a contribution to British Cultural life.

> ... it seems to me that at the present time the Catholic Church is making little or no distinctive contribution to our cultural life. It has not always been so.
>
> (Lodge 1988b, p. 32)

Lodge continues to enumerate the many Catholic figures who have contributed within the last one hundred and fifty years affirming that they "have made an impact out of all proportion to their actual numbers". The fact that the majority

[11]Lodge (1978, pp. 33 34) himself makes reference to the emergence of the women's movement and simultaneously parodies his own ignorance of it.

[12]This sets it well before Vatican II.

[13]It was out of print for many years and has only recently been republished.

[14]Joyce is an important influence for Moore too, see Chapter 7, p. 220 below.

[15]See Lodge (1988b, p. 65) for more detail.

[16]See Lodge (1981, afterword, p. 172) for more information on how the title was finally chosen.

of these artists were converts and that the church had an exotic appeal does not escape him and he refers to Brian Wicker's comments on being received into the Catholic Church.

> One was joining something which put a strange gulf between oneself and the world as one knew it... I discovered there were people round me who lived by *vows* (of poverty, celibacy, obedience) so strange and extraordinary that in meeting them I felt I was moving into another world. Until then I had thought only remote people of moral genius, like Tolstoy and Gandhi, lived by renunciations as total as that in the *modern* world. Now I found they existed in absurd places like Birmingham or Peckham Rye. One could actually meet them. What is more, the ordinary Catholic in the street lived a hidden life by which he shared, in his own way, that amazing world. For example, by being solemnly committed to attending Mass every Sunday without fail, whatever other so-called 'commitments' he might have; by not eating meat on Fridays, though the heavens fall; by actually *fasting* every so often...
>
> (Lodge 1988b, p. 34)

Lodge himself seems removed from such feelings about his faith. Obviously the fact that he is a cradle-Catholic makes it more likely that he is not going to be so moved by what must needs be so very familiar to him.[17] With his own admission of his unemotional relationship with religion it is easier to understand his position. Thus, within *The Picturegoers* and in later novels, especially those classed here as 'Catholic', Lodge is concerned with providing a portrayal of some sort of Catholic life. As a depiction of Catholic life pre-Vatican II this early novel is of great value. As Lodge succinctly describes it:

> The novel follows the fortunes of a number of characters whose only common link is that they attend the same cinema and/or Catholic church on the three weekends covered by the action
>
> (Lodge 1988b, p. 65)

[17]A recent convert, William Oddie, has similar feelings about the post-Vatican II church. He says that he finds "the Catholic Church *as it is* so deeply satisfying after modern Anglicanism" (Oddie 1995, p. 16) that he is not inclined to criticise it.

Lodge's eagerness to display his relation to other Catholic writers, such as Joyce highlights his self-awareness and consciousness of being part of that thread of literary history.

> In the way the narrative "cuts" from one character to another as they walk about the streets of the South London suburb where the action is set, often oblivious of each other's existence, but impinging directly or indirectly on each other's lives, and in the way the narrative discourse is focalized through these characters, and their consciousness rendered in an idiom appropriate to each - in all this I now perceive the model of the "Wandering Rocks" episode of *Ulysses*.
>
> (Lodge 1988b, p. 65)

The main family, the Mallorys, represents the family life that Angela in *How Far Can You Go?* idealised. With self-mockery Lodge shows how his view of the 'traditional Catholic family' has altered.

> While she had lived at home she had sentimentalised it, idealised it. The big, warm, happy Catholic family. The house full of noisy bustle and religious zeal. The boys cycling off early in the mornings to serve at Mass, priests and nuns dropping in at all hours, family feasts at Christmas and Easter. Now she saw it all differently, aware that her mother's part in all this had been a lifetime of drudgery, her father's a lifetime of worry. The family was like the shop - a tyrant that kept them slaving from morning till night, so that they never had a moment to themselves.
>
> (Lodge 1980, pp. 64–5)

What comes across most strongly in *The Picturegoers* is the unswerving sense that the Catholic church and its teaching is something irrevocably fixed, clearly defined and unquestionably right. One is reminded of Benson's outburst at the prospect of any alteration within the church.[18] Such change is unthinkable although with regard to the idea that it is clearly defined one must recollect Charles Ryder's speculation on this. And yet such change is but a few years away and

[18]See Chapter 4, p. 99 above.

is heralded by Lodge in his next 'Catholic' novel *The British Museum is Falling Down*.

The questions which concerned Greene and Waugh and their contemporaries are still to be found within *The Picturegoers*. These issues are not given the same weight but then this is not a 'weighty' novel. However, the clergy are represented in the character of Father Kipling to whom the characters accord the necessary respect for a man of the cloth. What is interesting here and separates this from Lodge's other novels, is his concentration on representing working-class Catholics (as the great majority of Catholics in England were at this time and are still by and large today).[19] Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited* by concentrating on the minority of old English Catholics avoids any necessity for any representations of this kind (the closest we get is Marchmain's mistress Cara) and, even in his low-life characters in *Brighton Rock*, Greene shows them as having a larger degree of insight than might realistically be compatible with their lack of education. Lodge is chiefly concerned with educated, and more specifically academic Catholics in his later novels (that is, precisely the type of Catholic he is himself) but here the only example is his doubting Thomas; Mark Underwood. True, he is one of the chief protagonists but it is not his education or academic aspirations which lead him to embrace the Catholic faith, rather it is through the intangible influence of the Mallory family, and specifically that of Clare Mallory, that he finally seems to answer their own prayers.

> Their communal prayers were conducted without fuss, and his own abstention was taken for granted, even by the young ones. Not that they didn't care. One night he had overheard one of the twins at her prayers say: '... and please let Mark be a Catholic like us.' He had been moved. It was difficult to react in any other way to a kid saying her prayers.
>
> (Lodge 1962, p. 47)

[19]In 1978 only 11% of the Catholic population were 'middle-class.' (Coleman and Swift 1992, p. 497)

The implication even in this first novel is that religion is a matter for the heart not the mind. By and large the other Catholic characters - the rest of the Mallory family, Bridget and Len - do not agonise over their religion but accept it as a part of themselves, but it is something for which Sundays are specially reserved. After having visited the local cinema, Father Kipling is so appalled by the sexual content of the films shown that he endeavours to dissuade his parishioners from frequenting such places by giving a homily on the matter at Sunday Mass. However, his efforts are largely wasted. Most of his parishioners are luke-warm about their religion in that they do not recognise its influence over their daily lives to a great extent. For all the characters it is the relationship between religion and sex which is the most important. Interestingly Lodge makes a fleeting reference to the idea of pursuit, as a popular one amongst Catholics. Brought up as a Catholic but feeling, like his creator, no emotional attachment to the religion of his youth, Mark Underwood

> deeply resented this tenuous claim Catholicism had upon him-the undeniable fact that he *had* been a Catholic, a fact from which his Catholic acquaintance derived an exasperating satisfaction. 'Oh, you'll come back in the end,' they would say confidently at the end of every inconclusive argument. God, in their view, seemed to be a sort of supernatural Mountie who always got His man.
>
> (Lodge 1962, p. 44)

Despite his scepticism, Underwood finds comfort in the Mallory household from the very beginning. Towards the family itself he is patronising when he first meets them, "Irish and Catholic, he decided, with a certain uneasiness. He eschewed Catholics on the whole", (Lodge 1962, p. 43) but is soon forced to respect them for "none of the family flaunted their religion in the eyes of strangers". (Lodge 1962, p. 47) Finally, of course, he embraces Catholicism himself and goes to try his vocation as a priest. In this emphasis on sex and religion Lodge has set the pattern for most of his subsequent fiction. *The Picturegoers* is a forerunner of *The British Museum is Falling Down*. The Mallory family is also the model for

the Kavanaghs in *Therapy* (Maureen is based on the character of Clare) and they represent most of the Catholic life styles inherent in Lodge's tales about Catholics in his later novels. It is the sexual implication of Clare's 'conversion' which is highlighted: at first anxious and repressed sexually, she blossoms into full desire precisely as Mark's interest wanes. Her religious education on such matters does not seem to have helped her.

> She had read books of course: pamphlets snatched hurriedly from a rack in some dim corner of a church, with titles like *Growing Up*, and *Holy Purity*, but they were all equally unhelpful. 'A good Catholic boy or girl should not indulge in passionate kissing' they said. But what *was* passionate kissing? She wanted to know if Mark should put his arms right round her, if their bodies should touch, and for precisely how long they should kiss... She just didn't know.
>
> (Lodge 1962, p. 61)

Lodge adheres to the comic incompatibility of sex and religion even in his very first novel. This rigidity becomes a pattern for his fiction. The two-way "conversion" process exemplified by Mark and Clare is secularised in *Changing Places* and one way and another, everything Lodge has written to date can be seen to have its beginning in *The Picturegoers*. The sexual content of *The Picturegoers* is more explicit than that of the 1930s novels it emulates, but this seems to be little more than a sign of the social changes which have taken place since the Second World War. For Lodge sex is always the problem and his novels appear to show an historical change in the Church on such matters. In *The Picturegoers* the authority of the Catholic Church is absolute. Only Mark offers any opposition to official Church teaching on such issues and then only early on in the story before he too comes under the authority of Catholicism. He is kicking against a certainty in a Greenean way. There is no indication that change, in the shape of a Vatican Council, is on the way. The apparent change in approach is a fine example of what I have described as the fictional side of the Vatican Council. *How Far Can You Go?* is the turning point with a liberal façade masking a church which is but

little affected by the Council, by *Paradise News* and more explicitly in *Therapy* even a good and pious Catholic is allowed a surprising amount of freedom and "personal choice" on sexual matters.

With relation to Lodge being a specifically "Catholic" author, a constant pattern emerges here with relation to his interest in the sexual, it is that sexual congress results in procreation and this especially when that congress occurs outside the bonds of marriage. If, exceptionally, procreation is not the result then Lodge does not leave his reader in any doubt as to the means of contraception used. I would suggest that this preoccupation with the intrinsic fecundity of sex almost to the exclusion of any element of pleasure is a specifically Catholic insistence. The view expounded by Jack Dominian[20] that this should be reversed as marriage, primarily, is about love is, perhaps, vaguely referred to by Lodge:

> 'Can't we bring the Mystical Body in somewhere?' 'Why?' Adam demanded ... It seems to me that we're concerned with the carnal body here.'
>
> (Lodge 1981, p. 61)

but he does not involve himself deeply with theology presumably because he considers human sexuality to be, properly, outside the province of religion.[21] Certainly it is a point developed much further in *The British Museum is Falling Down* where it forms the crux of the novel. In view of the time *The Picturegoers* is written (and apparently set) it is interesting as it seems wholly to neglect the whole possibility of change within the Church.[22] The changes within society are illustrated particularly by the explicit sexual and violent content of the films mentioned. The immodesty of women's clothing is also remarked upon more than once but these are secular problems and the Church is a bastion of unchanging

[20]He is a popular figure who has written extensively about sex and marriage. See, for example, his *Proposals for a New Sexual Ethic* (1977) and *Marriage, Faith and Love* (1981) both published in London by Dartman, Longman and Todd.

[21]Lodge is inconsistent here as to whether human sexuality is, or should be, outside the province of religion or not.

[22]See also p. 260, Chapter 8 below.

authority. No hint is made as to the need for or possibility of Catholicism changing or being modernised. One explanation for this, which seems to be borne out by the investigation into the reasons for the Council earlier,[23] is that the impetus came, not from the laity, but almost entirely from within. The only lay people (a very small minority) who seem to have an interest in such matters are highly educated and self-consciously articulate and represented in liberal publicationssuch as *Blackfriars* and *The Tablet*. Perhaps then, it is no accident that Lodge concentrates on this section of the Catholic community in his other two Catholic novels. However, as we shall see, when lower-class Catholics are mentioned it is with some sympathy that their author shows them to be lost, confused and above all left behind by all the changes which they could not and do not (any more than the Mallorys here) expect, want, or understand. When Michael argues with his father in *How Far Can You Go?* Michael wins by force of his intellect, his father's simple faith is no match for his theologically educated son:

> "Tell me what you do believe, then, son, about Holy Communion, if you don't believe in transubstantiation. What is it, if it isn't the changing of bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Our Lord, Jesus Christ?" He gave a reflex nod of the head at the Holy Name, and his wife followed suit.
>
> "Well..." said Michael, more hesitantly, "it's a commemoration."
>
> "Pah!" expostulated his father. "That's what Protestants say."
>
> "*Do this in memory of me*," Michael quoted.
>
> "*This is My Body, this is My Blood*," his father countered.
>
> "That's a metaphor," said Michael.
>
> "It's a plain statement of fact."
>
> "How could it be? A plain statement of fact would be, 'This bread is bread, this wine is wine.'" ...
>
> "Are you trying to tell me that what the Church has taught for centuries is wrong, then?"
>
> "Yes. No. Not exactly. Concepts change as knowledge changes. Once everyone believed the earth was flat. Only cranks believe that now."
>
> (Lodge 1980, pp. 135 6)

[23]See Chapter 3.

After the Council, for the working-class faithful, religion has become an intellectual matter rather than an emotional one. This reflects the whole problem of assimilating the works of Vatican II for the laity in particular. In England at least the majority of lay Catholics were simply unprepared for the changes which came from the Council, even those who welcomed them were taken by surprise. Almost immediately, the facts of the Council, or what the documents actually said were buried under a wealth of different interpretations.[24] At the time of the Council, the massive publicity did not help most Catholics to feel involved; it rather increased their alienation. It is difficult to see how anyone could expect the changes to be greeted with any enthusiasm by the mass congregations, rather the idea of a branch of Catholicism specially for the elite, those more educated Catholics 'in the know' seemed to be emerging.[25]

Although an early and immature example of Lodge's skill as an author, *The Picturegoers* is a useful portrait of Catholic life in England in the 1950s. The big issues of Greene and Waugh are not well-developed within its pages but all the lesser signs of Catholicism are present. Interestingly and in direct opposition to Waugh, Lodge has Underwood criticise the aesthetic appeal of Catholicism. This is this particular preserve of the cradle Catholic:

> The common mistake of outsiders, that Catholicism was a beautiful, solemn, dignified, aesthetic religion, But when you got inside you found it was ugly, crude, bourgeois. Typical Catholicism wasn't to be found in St. Peter's, or Chartres, but in some mean, low-roofed parish church, where hideous plaster saints simpered along the wall, and the bored congregation, pressed perspiration tight into the pews, rested their fat arses on the seats, rattled their beads, fumbled for their smallest change, and scolded their children.
>
> (Lodge 1962, p. 173)

[24]See Peter Hebblethwaite's *Runaway Church* for more on impressions ten years on. Also refer to Chapter 3 above.

[25]An example of this sort of Catholic is Margaret Hebblethwaite who describes herself as a 'Catholic feminist'. She is still to be found writing articles attacking the Pope on issues such as contraception and female ordination in the Press. For example, her article on the "Decline in Papal Authority" in *The Independent* 25 November 1995.

Yet he continues with a description of Catholicism that is reminiscent of Ellis' preoccupation with food and the sacramental nature of Catholicism.

> Yet in their presence God was made and eaten all day long, and for that reason those people could never be quite like other people, and that was Catholicism. [26]
>
> (Lodge 1962, p. 173)

Lodge later writes two books specifically and overtly Catholic in content. The first of these, *The British Museum is Falling Down*, was written as a sort of challenge to the yet to be issued papal encyclical *Humanae Vitae*. Thus it was written and set during the great birth control debate which took off in the early sixties in Britain. At first there was a general expectation that the Second Vatican Council would itself change the Church's teaching on such matters. That change was expected to come about is indicated by Lodge himself but also by studying the Catholic Press of the time and their treatment of the matter. Victoria and Gordon Gillick who married in 1967 and had ten children over the next twenty years, are a sort of real life Mallory family who happened to have come under the public's gaze in the 1980s because of their part in a campaign against prescribing contraceptives to under-age girls. Mrs. Gillick's account of the legal battles and their own family life[27] paints a picture of an underground Catholicism being carried on by the laity while the clergy earnestly debate the changing, changed and changeable church.

> Of course we were well aware of the debate in the mid Sixties, among the hot-blooded Catholic dons, as to whether or not it was nobler in the mind to suffer the slings and arrows of periodic abstinence, or to go all out for the Pill. Reading the Catholic press in those days, one could have been forgiven for thinking that the Holy See of Peter was situated somewhere amid the dusty cloisters of Oxford....

[26]Lodge is writing in the tradition of François Mauriac and George Bernanos here.

[27]The Gillicks are not the only lay Catholics to have challenged the new liberal Catholicism; see, for example, Cecilia Bevan's autobiography (1984) *Against All Advice* Wells, Parsonage Press, for another Mallory type family.

> Reading those old newspapers, I couldn't help noticing that ordinary Catholics were rather ill-represented in their columns, and generally it was a corps of elite intellectuals who were carrying the arguments against the Vatican [28]
>
> (Gillick 1989, p. 21)

That there could be ordinary Catholics who supported the Pope and, so far from opposing the Church's position on birth control, Catholics who welcomed a definite statement as a reaffirmation of their own beliefs, gives the lie to intellectual Catholics' obsession with matters sexual. For various reasons, a investigative committee was set up as a prelude to the encyclical *Humanae Vitae* and thus the entire issue was removed from the agenda of the Council itself. Writing in 1965[29] Lodge is highly topical. Characteristically frank about his intention he wrote:

> I wanted to write a comic (though not unserious) novel about the tribulations of married Catholics who tried to obey their Church's teaching on birth control.
>
> (Lodge 1988b, p. 65)

Lodge gives greater detail about his indebtedness to Joyce and also how he uses parodies of other novelists.[30] However, he also outlines his personal interest in the issue being treated.[31] In interview he has said that he "felt the sexual morality of Catholicism as repressive, both as an adolescent and as a young man." (Lodge 1991c)

Lodge frequently explains his methods and meanings in his non-fiction. In *Write On* he refers to Harold Bloom's sense of "belatedness" (Lodge 1988b, p. 66) and its relevance to his own fiction. In writing *How Far Can You Go?* however, Lodge himself seems secure in having a subject for his novel which is wholly new:

[28] And see the comments by William Oddie p. 128, Chapter 5 above.

[29] *Humanae Vitae* was published in 1968.

[30] For more detail see the chapter "My Joyce" in Lodge (1988b).

[31] In Lodge (1981, afterword, p. 164) and also in Lodge (1988b, p. 66), he again states his personal interest in birth control methods.

> None of these three writers (Greene, Spark[32]and Burgess) seems to have any enthusiasm for, or interest in, the practical effects of Vatican II on Catholic liturgy, devotional practice and general life-styles, both clerical and lay. Indeed, my own novel *How Far Can You Go?* (1980) is, to my knowledge, the first novel to deal directly with that phenomenon in an English context.
>
> (Lodge 1988b, p. 36)

While Lodge is probably right in asserting his novel to be the first, I trust it has been shown herein that it was certainly not the last. His eagerness to stress his primacy in this matter is an instance of his Catholicism being of primary importance to him as an author.[33] In fact, he seems to applaud the diminishing importance of Catholicism while admitting its past importance. Writing in 1980, he said:

> The fact is that contemporary Catholicism no longer constitutes the kind of unified, sharply defined challenge to secular or Protestant values that it once did, and thus no longer provides an organising principle or rallying-point for intellectual and artistic programmes. It is, I believe, a much more decent, humane, open-minded Christian community than it once was, but it is also rather blander, duller, and more amorphous. As a result of the upheaval of Vatican II, we now have a pluralistic kind of Church, which resembles Anglicanism much more than would have seemed possible twenty or thirty years ago, in which radicals and conservatives, demythologizing theologians and charismatics, can all find a corner to do their own thing with like-minded people - who may not be Catholics at all.[34]
>
> (Lodge 1988b, pp. 36–7)

Lodge, seems to accept that Vatican II has brought about a new Catholicism which is not conducive to creativity. By actually aligning it with Anglicanism he is siding with a liberal interpretation of the Council and its effects and apparently

[32]Flannery O'Connor detailing English Catholic novelists to a friend says simply they "are Waugh, Greene and Spark." (Fitzgerald 1979, p. 570)

[33]See above, p. 169.

[34]In saying this Lodge reveals himself as the precise antithesis of Alice Thomas Ellis; see especially p. 137, Chapter 5 above.

sees this as the only valid side. In 1980 this was probably quite realistic but things have changed again by the mid-1990s, a new Catholicism seems to be emerging.[35] It is a Catholicism which feels it has taken the Council to heart, often the interpretation is rather different from the apparently liberal Catholicism presented to the outside. The current pontiff is the central point of this Catholicism, thus the church hierarchy or religious educational establishment can, to a fair extent, be passed over in lieu of absolute allegiance to the Holy See.[36] For Catholics can and do, to some extent, choose where their basic allegiance lies.

If we return to *The British Museum is Falling Down*, for example, Adam Appleby represents Everyman (or at least every *Catholic* man) and the change from *The Picturegoers* is total. Whereas many different characters displayed varying levels of awareness about Catholicism and many issues were touched upon but not deeply developed, here we concentrate solely upon the Applebys and their particular problems with birth control. The only way in which *The Picturegoers* foreshadows this approach is in the unwillingness of the laity (as revealed when Father Kipling tries to discourage his parishioners from going to the cinema) to have their religion impinge very far on everyday life. Adam does not seem to have any other quarrel with his Catholic faith as is seen when his friend Pond tries to convince him of the infeasibility of the Trinity.[37]

Adam asserts that *that* belief gives him no trouble. Pond continues:

> 'Do you realize that the birth-rate figures show that England will be a predominantly Catholic country in three or four generations?' Do you want that?

[35]See above, Chapter 3, p. 68.

[36]This is the case even though Vatican II affirmed the traditional Catholic notion that the authority of bishops is intrinsic and does not derive from the Papacy.

[37]To demonstrate the Trinity, Lodge writes:

> He spooned some mustard on to his plate, and sprinkled it with pepper and salt. 'Three in one.' 'There!' cried Camel. It really tastes horrible, but it's true.'
>
> (Lodge 1981, p. 59)

> 'No,' said Adam fervently. 'But it won't happen because of the lapsation rate.'
>
> 'Lapsation?' Camel inquired. 'Falling off from the Church,' Adam explained.
>
> 'Why do so many fall off?'
>
> 'Not because of the doctrine of the Trinity,' said Adam. 'Because of birth control is my guess.'
>
> (Lodge 1981, p. 59)

Lodge's personal position on contraception is not in much doubt here. He is, nevertheless, flexible enough to point out the difficulties of the sexual relationship in more general terms and to face the fact that excessive fertility is not the only problem:

> ... either it's comic or tragic nobody's immune you see some couple going off to the Continent in their new sports car and envy them like hell next thing you find out they're dying to have a baby those who can't have them want them those who have them don't want them or not so many of them everyone has problems if you only knew Sally Pond was round the other day who'd have guessed she was frigid because of that man when she was nine can't do it unless she's had a couple of stiff drinks got completely stewed the other night she said and bit George in the leg now she's seeing a psychiatrist it makes you wonder if there's such a thing as a normal sexual relationship
>
> (Lodge 1981, p. 160)

The treatment of a single issue distances this work from those of the 1930s writers. More importantly it is an issue which had little place in their work. Two reasons for this suggest themselves and they are closely connected. The first is that at the time the subject of contraception was considered too indecorous to be proper subject matter for a novelist. Secondly, and going hand in hand with the first reason, is the very recent change in social attitudes towards contraception. It was not until 1930[38] that the bishops of the Church of England first gave approval

[38]The Lambeth Conference of 1931 officially ratified this decision.

for contraception, they then agreed only to allow the practice in cases of severe hardship,[39] a decision which was not made without vehement opposition.[40]

However, English society changed its view in a surprisingly short time so that by the time more effective methods of chemically and physically controlling fertility had been developed there was a newly educated populace ready and even eager to embrace such forms. Questioning certain aspects of belief and challenging them through fictional means is by no means unique and such a tendency caused Greene some trouble when the Vatican disapproved and banned his books, most notably *The Power and the Glory*.[41] The publication of *The British Museum is Falling Down* without any opposition or outcry from secular sources or the Church, indicates how things had changed since the 1930s, not only in social standards but in religious ones too. As Lodge himself has said,[42] in *How Far Can You Go?* he is writing directly about the changes resulting from the Second Vatican Council and thus this is the most pertinent of all his novels to this thesis. *The British Museum is Falling Down* is its natural predecessor expressing doubts about one aspect of the Church's teaching. *How Far Can You Go?* tackles the Catholic Church as a whole and is clearly mirroring reality for it was precisely this kind of questioning approach, initiated by Vatican II, which is being used as a basis for Lodge's fiction.

> The question in the title *How Far Can You Go?* applies to both the undermining of traditional religious belief by radical theology and the undermining of literary convention
>
> (Lodge 1992, p. 37)

Reality mixed with fiction has a two-edged effect first obvious in *The British Museum is Falling Down* and again in *How Far Can You Go?* In his critical

[39]In his *Bed and Board: Plain Talk about Marriage* (1965) Fr. Capon argues that it is difficult for someone who believes that the Church is guided by the Holy Spirit to say that the Church was wrong about contraception from the first century until 1930.

[40]The Anglican Bishop Gore and the writer Walter Lippmann were both opposed to contraception.

[41]See, for example, Shelden (1995, pp. 270 2).

[42]See above, p. 190.

writing Lodge has expressed his personal taste for realism and the sense that contemporary writers are expected to produce non-realist work if they are to be taken seriously.[43] Lodge's use of actual events tends to lend credibility to the 'realism' of his novels. He uses the real life tragedy of Aberfan[44] as well as reference to the publication of *Humanae Vitae* and, of course the Second Vatican Council itself. Lodge is, nevertheless, eager to experiment with novel form and fluctuates between realism and a more stylised writing. He places himself in the text initially as the intrusive author. He describes his ten main characters individually in a fictional manner but then recaps and draws the reader's attention to these ten with the symbolism of their names and an appropriate attribute for each one to aid memory:

> you can remind yourselves who they are. Ten characters is a lot to take in all at once, and soon there will be more, because we are going to follow their fortunes, in a manner of speaking, up to the present, and obviously they are not going to pair off with each other, that would be too neat, too implausible, so there will be other characters not yet invented, husbands and wives and lovers, not to mention parents and children, so it is important to get these ten straight now.
>
> (Lodge 1980, p. 14)

All of his main characters are representations of himself and simultaneously distanced from their author but they all resemble Lodge in that they are all Catholic academics.[45] Patricia Waugh has explained how this structural technique actually has a direct effect on the content.

> The author steps into the text and refers to himself in a list of characters, ... reminding the reader that he has labelled each character with a recognisable trait, so that their fortunes might more easily be followed. This reverses the effect of heightened credulity and authority usually attributed to this convention, and expresses formally some of

[43]See Lodge (1971).

[44]Some hundred and fifty school children and their teachers were buried alive under tons of mining waste on 21 October 1966 (see Lodge (1980, p. 106)).

[45]They are all 'academic' in that they are university educated.

> the doubts and concerns expressed thematically, in the text, about sexual morality and finally the Catholic Church itself.
>
> (Waugh 1984, p. 74)

He constructs the barrier between reality and fiction by utilizing Goffman's "breaking frame" effect (Lodge 1992, p. 11) thus betraying traditional realism by the exposure of its techniques and processes.

In the closing pages Lodge intrudes as a character in order to blur fiction and reality.

> I teach English literature at a redbrick university and write novels in my spare time, slowly and hustled by history. While I was writing this last chapter, Pope Paul VI died and Pope John Paul I was elected. Before I could type it up, Pope John Paul I had died and been succeeded by John Paul II, the first non-Italian pope for four hundred and fifty years:[46] a Pole, a poet, a philosopher, a linguist, an athlete, a man of the people, a man of destiny, dramatically chosen, instantly popular - but theologically conservative. A changing Church acclaims a Pope who evidently thinks that change has gone far enough. What will happen now? All bets are void, the future is uncertain, but it will be interesting to watch. Reader, farewell!
>
> (Lodge 1980, pp. 243-4)

Such a direct placing of the author within the text is quite deliberately and self-consciously done. Its most important purpose is to stress the realism of the entire story. Yes, the figures and events are creations of fiction but of a fiction very closely based on real events so that much of what we learn in the novel -as relates to the Second Vatican Council, papal encyclicals and so on- is actually fact. Several of his characters form a pressure group which mirrors groups which really existed at the time. This one Lodge calls 'Catholics for an Open Church' and uses the abbreviation COC, it cannot be coincidental that this acronym is also that of The Pill or, more properly, the 'Combined Oral Contraceptive'.

[46] In his *The Next Pope* Hebblethwaite details the events which led to a non-Italian being elected.

Even his extreme self-awareness is employed by Lodge as an aid to humour. When speaking within the novel of the papal encyclical *Humanae Vitae* he observes:

> The omniscience of novelists has its limits, and we shall not attempt to trace here the process... which finally produced that document. It is... difficult to enter the mind of a Pope
>
> (Lodge 1980, p. 114)

The irony is obvious and, clearly, patronising. Though "difficult" it is not such a mystery. An atheist would regard it in the same voice as Lodge here. Written after Vatican II *How Far Can You Go?* is set over a period of time which spans the Council. It clearly names some of the issues which preoccupied Greene and Waugh - with chapter titles such as 'How they lost their virginities', 'How they lost the fear of Hell' and 'How they dealt with love and death'; Lodge sets the stage for open discussion, in the approved contemporary manner of all such matters. He congratulates himself on the neatness of the section headings in relation to the title. "The verbal echoes were designed ... to introduce an element of "symmetry" into the semantic level of chapter-headings". (Lodge 1992, p. 168) Although he touches on all the pertinent issues, the importance equated to sexual matters again outweighs all the others. Having openly declared himself as an omniscient author, he uses his position to provide a full background to the text of Catholic dogma, tradition, and belief. Lodge is right in appreciating that such information is necessary for proper understanding of this book and endeavours to make his explanations amusing and light-hearted so that even readers fully *au fait* with Catholicism will not find his expositions tedious. But there is another reason for his careful explanations; in this way Lodge can promote his own bias under the cover of objectivity.

The clergy are separated into two types by Lodge's technique. The old-fashioned priests either have surnames only or, more commonly are just referred to by their position, "the Monsignor" or "our P.P." as appropriate. The younger

and invariably modern clergy have Christian names and more information about them is often provided. The main representative of the clergy is Austin Brierley (he is one of Lodge's original ten characters). He is a forerunner for Bernard in *Paradise News*. Originally a devout Catholic, Father Brierley is deeply affected by the changes in the Church around this time. He is an educated man and goes on a course to study modern theology in depth.

> Austin Brierley found that things had changed a lot since his seminary days, especially in the field of biblical commentary. It came as something of a shock to discover that views mentioned formerly only to be dismissed as the irresponsible speculations of German Protestants and Anglican divines... were now accepted as commonplace by many Catholic scholars in the field... Of course, the theologians... expressed themselves with elaborate caution in learned journals of tiny circulation, or exchanged ideas with like-minded scholars in private. It was understood that one did not flaunt the new ideas before the laity, or for that matter before the ordinary clergy, most of whom were deplorably ill-educated and still virtually fundamentalists when it came to the interpretation of the New Testament. The main thing was to get on quietly with the work of updating Catholic biblical scholarship while Rome was too preoccupied with pastoral and liturgical experiment to bother checking up on them.
>
> (Lodge 1980, pp. 88–90)

Austin feels it is essential that the laity are educated in such matters but his approach only serves to make him unpopular with clergy and laity alike. What Alice Thomas Ellis has to say about modern biblical scholarship is in opposition to Lodge, too, for it is clear that Lodge agrees with his character here. Talking of her hostess on a trip to Ireland she writes

> Since she was of an age to remember the old Mass I asked what she thought of the changes and she said she hadn't really minded. What *really* worried her and the old people was the question of Adam and Eve. There had been great distress when it was suggested that they were not actual historical figures. I wondered who had been silly enough to tell them this.
>
> (Ellis 1994, p. 34)

Compared to new trends in theology, the liturgical and pastoral changes are unimportant. However, as Lodge shows, it is all a question of how far you can go; controversy over small changes in a ritual or the language used may seem petty and trivial, being, as it were outside the main deposit of faith, but small things lead to big ones and, as Lodge points out, once you accept say the infancy stories of Jesus as symbolic fictions,[47] then why not treat the Resurrection in the same way? Some theologians,[48] of course, have done just this. Sure enough Austin goes so far with his new learning that he first leaves the priesthood and then the Church altogether. However, he retains an academic interest in Christianity as a whole. Another of the major characters, Ruth, becomes a nun and, like Austin is progressive in her outlook although her desire for change does not lead to a loss of faith. Like the priest, Ruth is shown as sincere and intelligent and her support for reform originates from her concern that her pupils (she is member of a teaching Order) are alienated by the habit and rule of life of that Order. But the problems of such sudden change are not ignored:

> The mood in the convent in those days was comparable to that of the French national Assembly in '89. The older generation was fearful and sometimes appalled at the rate of change; the younger and more progressive nuns were drunk on liberty, equality and sorority. They had been schooled in the novitiate to believe that the rules and restrictions of the Order were essential to the pursuit of holiness, necessary ways of subduing pride and crucifying the flesh. When word came from Rome that these rules might in many cases be the fossilized remains of obsolete manners and customs, the accumulated frustration of years exploded like a sudden release of compressed air.[49] Mother Superior escaped, by a narrow margin of votes, having her office abolished and replaced by a committee re-elected monthly. A proposal to allow smoking was defeated only on health grounds, and another to allow attendance at theatres and cinemas was approved. But, without doubt, the subject of the greatest contention, and of the most drawn-out debate, was the question of dress.
>
> (Lodge 1980, p. 93)

[47]See Lodge (1980, pp. 88 9).

[48]For example, Don Cupitt and, more publically, David Jenkins once the Anglican Bishop of Durham.

[49]See the discussion above in Chapter 5.

Clearly there is some relation between the comic exaggeration and comic 'fact'. Ruth eventually reaches the conclusion that there is a more fundamental reason for the barrier between her and her pupils than the way she is dressed but having embraced reform for this reason she still does not wish to retract the newly acquired "freedoms" even when it is clear they do not solve the problem.

Ellis is critical of changes in the habits of religious because nuns no longer look like nuns and their beauty is lost: even Lodge, through the character of Ruth, acknowledges the disadvantages of modern dress whilst theoretically in favour of it. Rumer Godden in *In This House Of Brede* has, as we saw, her nuns choosing not to change their attire, having had more than enough trouble with other changes resulting from the Council. Wendy Perriam, too, in *Devils, For A Change* which essentially protests about the restrictions of a nun's life, admits that traditional habits have their points.[50] It is surprising how so small an issue generates so much feeling and seems to represent much larger concerns.

Like Carson, Lodge is clearly in favour of reform in a general way. He is more straightforward, a liberal without nostalgia for past modes. And like Carson he is disappointed. Homosexuality is not a major concern for Lodge but he does refer to it through the character of Miles in *How Far Can You Go?*. Miles is a convert from the Church of England and Catholicism has a strong aesthetic appeal for him. He is depicted as a devout Catholic who slowly comes to realise that his homosexual inclinations are more than just a phase and that he will never be attracted to the opposite sex. His mental health suffers as a result and his faith cannot help him. There is no dogmatic change on sexual matters to help one of his sexual orientation[51] and the alterations within liturgical practice disgust him so much that he returns to the Church of England. In this way Lodge neatly avoids the need to face the problems of homosexuals within the Catholic

[50]See above Chapter 5, p. 144.

[51]This compares favourably with Carson's view of the problems of homosexuals, see Chapter 4 above.

Church. As an Anglican, Miles is apparently free to live with his new found partner. Miles is used to represent the traditional laity and his strong support for the Church's teaching on birth control lacks credibility precisely because of his sexuality. In fact, Miles is only really a concession to the idea that young people might object to the prospect of change and as a homosexual convert he is very much a marginalised character. Even within the text he is depicted as being on the fringes of his circle of acquaintances. Of all his characters, including the women to whom Lodge does not pretend to be very closely allied, Miles is the furthest removed. Lodge is closely identified with Michael when he says,

> Michael, observing from further off, realized for the first time that Miles was homosexual, something that had never occured to him in his innocent undergraduate days. What, he wondered, did a Catholic homosexual do? Sublimate, he supposed. It seemed rather hard. On the other hand it was difficult, not being homosexual oneself, to believe that what homosexuals did with each other would be difficult to give up.
>
> (Lodge 1980, pp. 70–1)

With the exception of Miles whose problems seem to be largely outside the scope of Catholicism and this novel, all the main characters in *How Far Can You Go?* are, broadly, in favour of change and greet the reforms which follow the Council with joy. For the more radical, there is not enough change, in any event none of the characters is really satisfied. Change on sexual matters is crucial to them all and although they come to the conclusion that they are now at liberty to follow their own consciences about matters such as birth control, in real terms the Council was careful to say nothing to justify change on such issues. Even the domain of conscience, though it needed to be informed, had its own acknowledged authority in the pre-Vatican II Church. Miles is betrayed by the Church's refusal to "accept the cast of his soul", as Carson would put it, but the Second Vatican Council has not altered anything there.[52] The other characters are betrayed or at

[52]See p. 123, Chapter 4 above.

least feel they are betrayed in a number of ways. Adrian feels he should somehow be rewarded for being a good Catholic;

> it seemed to him that God had always mocked his efforts. He had always tried to do his best, to do what was right, but always there was this bitter rebuff to his hopes and ambitions. Meanwhile other people, less good, less dutiful, indeed positively mischievous - fornicators, adulterers, unbelievers - prospered and enjoyed themselves. Of course all would get their just deserts in the next world, but he couldn't help feeling some resentment about the lack of justice in this one.
>
> (Lodge 1980, p. 52)

Dennis feels lost when his faith does not console and support him in the face of the double tragedy of having a Down's Syndrome daughter, Nicole, and another child being knocked down and killed by a car. Lodge is writing very much from his own experience here when he explains Dennis' gradual acceptance of his child's handicap and his realisation that "there was some meaning, some positive moral gain, in the experience of having Nicole". (Lodge 1980, p. 148) But for the purposes of his novel he finally shatters Dennis' faith by Anne's death.

> he could see no point whatsoever in losing Anne, nothing except sterile anguish and futile self-reproach.... if one thing was certain it was that Nicole had done nothing to deserve having Anne taken away from her, and would gain nothing from the experience.
>
> (Lodge 1980, p. 148)

Religion is commonly seen as a prop, a source of consolation, a means of gaining comfort when things go wrong and this is an idea Lodge is eager to dispel.[53] Lodge's characters are betrayed by their religion in that it fails to solve their earthly problems. The novel ends with all difficulties having been solved through secular means. If we consider Charles' and Julia's predicament in *Brideshead Revisited*, we perceive a big change in customary ideas. Lodge's Catholics, as

[53]Lodge (1995, p. 276) does this again.

post-Vatican II Catholics, can gain and have a right to expect happiness in this life whereas Waugh only holds out the possibility of a future reward for those who deny themselves and suffer in this world. For some of them this happiness must be outside the Church and the reasons are interesting. Either it has changed too far or it has not changed far enough or, and this seems to be the most revealing; because its changes are irrelevant.

The problems of the characters are mostly sexual ones and the issue of birth control continues to dominate here as it did in *The British Museum is Falling Down*. The characters finally resolve their difficulties themselves in a way quite unconnected to the Church by which Lodge emphasises his own conviction that such matters are, or should be, outside the scope of the Church's teaching. Nevertheless, Lodge is less 'secular' than this might imply. Sexual morality is still treated with importance and it is deliberately shown that the marriages which are most successful are those with the most traditional basis.[54]

Throughout this novel as with Lodge's other works, it is the young who are shown to be right, to be worth listening to and it is with them the reader is required to identify himself. To be more precise, Lodge requires that his readers associate with a character or characters of approximately the same age as himself. Thus, his most recent novel centres on his oldest character to date, the fifty-eight year old Lawrence Passmore and the novel before is based around Bernard in his forties and so on. In *How Far Can You Go* the older generation are shown as old fuddy-duddies who are treated sympathetically but their views are not worthy of serious consideration. Of all the young people, the side-lined character of Miles is the only one antagonistic to change and thus, in an apparently balanced and objective novel, it is important to observe that we do not actually receive a traditional and orthodox view of Catholicism from anyone who can be taken seriously.[55]

[54]For example, the only couple in *How Far Can You Go?* to actually get divorced is the only one to have had a registry office wedding.

[55]This may be linked to the fact that Lodge never refers to, perhaps has not read, those

As the time scale of the novel progresses through the 1950s to the 1970s, the characters are shown as maturing only after the Council. The concept of Pursuit disappears with the idea of Hell (Lodge 1980, p. 113) and guilt is something easily assuaged. Religion is secularised, it becomes something to do on Sunday morning rather than a complete way of life.[56] Several characters are converts to Catholicism but their reasoning is little explored. Two convert in order to marry and Miles, as we have seen, goes back to the Church of the England in a manner which similarly implies a frivolous attitude to conversion. All of them convert before the Council which brings to mind Ellis' view that following the Council nobody would become a Catholic.[57] Ruth is the only other convert within the central ten figures and as she is still a nun at the close of the novel perhaps Lodge is here conceding the possibility of a true vocation to the religious life. Having reduced religious belief to a Sunday thing, it loses its ability to help in the face of death. Several characters have to face the death of their parents as well as several deaths of children. The idea of eternity is some comfort as is the Catholic practice of offering prayers for the deceased, but there is no certainty for Lodge's characters. The implication is that they are all too educated to accept a religious belief without question and for Lodge, not himself formed by an intellectual Catholic education, as a convert would be likely to have been, it seems that an informed intellect and adherence to a religious belief are incompatible. This is in accordance with his own "academic" interest in his religion. It marks a change since *The Picturegoers* where religion is a matter for the heart.

Paradise News seems to be a typical post-Vatican II novel by a Catholic.

---

intellectually informed theologians (De Lubac and Karl Rahner) who embrace Vatican II and remain wholly orthodox.

[56]There was, however, a tendency towards this attitude even in *The Picturegoers*, see p. 183 above.

[57]See Chapter 5, p. 138 above. People have converted to Catholicism since the Council even in literature (for example, Meryl in Carson's *Stripping Penguins Bare*). The recent public phenomenon of conversions - for example, numerous members of the Anglican clergy, the Duchess of Kent and the two government ministers, Ann Widdecombe and John Gummer - has revived the 30s image of a Church making celebrated converts.

The central character, Bernard, is an ex-priest and, within his staunchly Catholic family, now the black sheep. In the course of the novel he is shown to be the most truly Christian of them all. He left the Church under a cloud and effectively ex-communicated himself as a result. His sister accuses him of thereby causing their mother's death. It is years before she is willing to speak to him again.

> Tess said: "When Mummy died, I said an unforgivable thing to you, Bernard, at the funeral."
>
> "You're forgiven."
>
> "I blamed you for Mummy's death. I shouldn't have. It was very wrong of me."
>
> "That's all right," he said. "You were upset. We were all upset..."
>
> (Lodge 1991b, p. 252)

In this, Bernard is comparable to Carson's Benson character. He fulfils all the requirements of the 'Christian gentleman' or secular humanist and is even able to support his move from Catholicism with theological argument. Older characters who are useful in showing how things were before the Council are, as in *How Far Can You Go?*, poorly educated and although sympathetically treated their opinions are not reliable. Bernard is a fictional demonstration of the way developments within theology have been a sort of internal revolution in the Church. Yet again in Lodge's post-Council books we find the assertion that, at least since the Council, no educated, thinking person is likely to remain faithful to the whole of Catholic teaching. For Bernard, too much knowledge has been his undoing and he finds he has slipped from belief into unbelief.

> All the radical demythologizing theology that I had spent most of my life resisting suddenly seemed self-evidently true. Christian orthodoxy was a mixture of myth and metaphysics that made no kind of sense in the modern, post-Enlightenment world except when understood historically and interpreted metaphorically.... I went back to the radical Anglican theologians, John Robinson, Maurice Wiles, Don Cupitt and Co., whom I used to deride in my Introduction to Theology lectures, and re-read them with more respect
>
> (Lodge 1991b, pp. 153–4)

Bernard is a Christian gentleman in much the same way that Carson's Benson character is. However, Bernard, largely because he actually was a priest, sees himself as absolutely outside the Catholic Church whereas Benson, at least by the end of *Yanking Up the Yo-Yo* is only on the edge of the Church he has been brought up in.[58] It is difficult to avoid a comparison between these characters and their creators. Certainly Carson is writing a mainly autobiographical trilogy with his Benson books. In my correspondence with him it is obvious that he is still concerned about Catholicism and that that concern is not merely academic. Lodge, on the other hand, as has been shown purports never to have had an emotional interest in his religion and maintains that his interest in Catholicism as subject matter for his novels has been almost entirely academic and intellectual throughout. It is hard to accept this as the case. Brian Moore is even more adamant about his disbelief but Lodge's deliberate distancing of self is suspect too. It is important to make our own judgements about these matters and not to rely over much upon what the author says.

Bernard is much less a characterisation of the author than his earlier characters but remembering Lodge's adherence to using his own experience for his fiction it seems fair to assume that although the characters themselves may not reflect their author; the situations these characters are placed in are often representative of those the writer himself has faced or has, at least, a personal interest in. Lodge tells, for example, of the research he had do into industry and industrial practices in order to write *Nice Work*:

> lately I have felt the need to... go out and research certain dimensions, notably *Nice Work*... the research actually gave more ideas.
>
> (Lodge 1991a)

a less scrupulous writer would have relied on his imagination but for Lodge absolute accuracy is part of the "integrity of writing". (Lodge 1991a) For example,

[58]This is not essential, Peter Hebblethwaite was laicized, as was the character of Tom in *How Far Can You Go?*.

Nice Work is set in 1986 which is dubbed 'Industry Year' in the novel: it was, of course, really 'Industry Year' and shadow schemes, such as the one Lodge hangs his plot upon, did exist. Another example of his precision is in *How Far Can You Go?* which opens on the feast of St. Valentine in 1952.[59] Lodge goes on to mention that it is a Thursday which the fourteenth of February was in 1952. Carson and Ellis are never so specific in their use of dates and where Brian Moore does use a specific date he gets it wrong.[60] For accuracy and realism within his characters Lodge uses himself a great deal.[61] In the character of Bernard, Lodge seems to be trying quite deliberately to distance himself from his creation by making the externals as different as possible, something he does to an even greater extent in *Therapy*. In *Paradise News* Lodge uses a variety of techniques to draw attention to the novel as a novel and simultaneously to highlight its realism without placing himself inside the text. Here he fulfils the role of omniscient author quite inconspicuously. What seems to make this novel typical of self consciously post-Vatican II novels in conjunction with the idea of secular humanism, is the ever present reference to a Catholicism now rooted firmly in the past. The iconographic almost tribal Catholic practice of devotions, Marian cults, incense, rosary beads, miraculous medals and the rest of the paraphernalia still appeals to authors writing in a post-Vatican II mode. It is the very mysticism and supernatural nature of such religious practices which have given a portion of the appeal of Catholicism to novelists and it is this portion which, although apparently no longer foregrounded, still makes Catholicism attractive as subject matter to Catholics and non-Catholics alike. By extensive reference to Bernard's early life, Lodge is able to utilise this earlier form of Catholic practice quite convincingly; we are not, after all really very far removed from the Council and the process of assimilation which is still going on forms a substantial part of

[59]This is not an important feast for Catholics, only for Lodge's novel.
[60]See Moore (1995, p. 146); 9 May 1989 was really a Tuesday.
[61]The most obvious exception to this is the character of Robyn Penrose in *Nice Work*.

Bernard's history. Like the characters of *How Far Can You Go?* Bernard has to reach a stage of saying enough is enough. However, he is one stage further on than any of that group of young Catholics as, for him, once one alteration is made the whole pack of cards has to come tumbling down so that he is left with nothing to stand on. In the years immediately after the Council, Lodge, through his characters, decides that one can go so far and no further and just how far that is depends on the individual. The result may be staying within the Church or not. But for Bernard in this novel, and he is more conversant with the relevant theology than any earlier characters, the outcome is that once questioning occurs the result must be a loss of faith, the very act of asking for proof, for rational argument, negates the existence of faith without which there is no belief.

> You don't have to go very deep into the philosophy of religion to discover that it is impossible to either prove or disprove the truth of any religious proposition. For rationalists, materialists, logical positivists, etc., that is a sufficient reason for dismissing the entire subject from serious consideration. But to believers a non-disprovable God is almost as good as a provable God, and is self-evidently better than no God at all, since without God there is no encouraging answer to the perennial problems of evil, misfortune and death. ...
>
> So everything depends upon belief. Grant the existence of a personal God, the Father, and the whole body of Catholic doctrine hangs together reasonably well. Grant that, and you can bat all day. Grant that, and you can afford to have a few mental reservations about the odd doctrine - the existence of Hell, say, or the Assumption of the Virgin Mary - without feeling insecure in your faith. And that was what I did, precisely - I took my belief for granted. I didn't seriously question it, or closely examine it. It defined me. It explained why I was who I was, doing what I did, teaching theology to seminarians. I didn't discover that my belief had gone until I left the seminary.
>
> (Lodge 1991b, pp. 149-50)

Looking forward, Lodge has, it would seem, nothing further to say about Catholicism but by looking into the past, including the past of his characters, he is able to utilise his own religion as material for his fiction. The theologian Bernard is able to make more extensive reference to modern theologians and

directions in contemporary scholarship than Lodge's other characters. By the end of the novel Bernard has performed the task for which he was invented by bringing together his father and estranged aunt before her death. He receives his reward for this in the shape of Yolande Miller so clearly does not have to wait for any heavenly reward. More reliable than this is his theological position towards the close of the story. Lodge quotes from one of Bernard's lectures at great length noting his amusement at the discomfiture of two Anglican nuns and displaying his new-found comfort with his teaching for we know his previous "jokes" have all been laboriously constructed.

> ... Pure Myth. But on what grounds does Christ the King separate the sheep from the goats? Not, as you might expect, fervency of religious faith, or orthodoxy of religious doctrine, or regularity of worship, or observance of the Commandments, or indeed anything 'religious' at all.
>
> > Then the King will say to those on his right hand, 'Come, you whom my Father has blessed, take for your heritage the kingdom prepared for you since the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food; I was thirsty and you gave me drink; I was a stranger and you made me welcome; naked and you clothed me, sick and you visited me, in prison and you came to see me.' Then the virtuous will say to him in reply, 'Lord when did we see you hungry and feed you; or thirsty and give you drink? When did we see you a stranger and make you welcome; naked and clothe you; sick or in prison and go to see you?' And the King will answer, 'I tell you solemnly, insofar as you did this to the least of these brothers of mine, you did it to me.'
>
> The virtuous seem quite surprised to be saved, or to be saved for *this* reason, doing good in an unselfish but pragmatic and essentially this-worldly sort of way. It's as if Jesus left this essentially humanist message knowing that one day all the supernatural mythology in which it was wrapped would have to be discarded."
>
> Bernard caught the eye of one of the nuns, and essayed an impromptu joke: "It's almost as if someone tipped him off."
>
> (Lodge 1991b, p. 283)

Catholicism here seems to be just a matter of academic interest now and, by lecturing in theology, a way of making a living. Bernard has completed the 'how far can you go?' process and thrown out the whole idea of organised religion to settle for Dietrich Bonhoeffer's 'religionless Christianity'.[62]

Lodge's most recent work shows that his inclination to play with the structure of the novel has not left him. His experiments with form have produced the complex parody and pastiche which forms *The British Museum is Falling Down*. This is both experimental and realist, as Robert Burden puts it:

> One may question the rationale behind the parodies/... they do tend generally to serve the realistic intent: they are, that is, caused by plot situations, and are part of the protagonist's plausible response to life-hence they are contained. Parody hence does not subvert the novel's realism; it becomes a function of its critical impact.
>
> (Burden 1979, p. 143)

Lodge has progressed from using the novels of writers he admires as models for his structure, to encompassing other literary forms. Thus, *How Far Can You Go?* uses a supposed transcript from a television programme, *Paradise News* uses a series of postcards (more reminiscent of D.M.Thomas' *The White Hotel* than anything else) and Bernard's diary. Lodge as an advocate of realist novels cannot experiment too far but is eager to manipulate the novel's format as much as possible within the bounds of realism. This trend continues in his latest novel. Earlier there was the allegorical, modern-day Grail legend arrangement of *Small World*, which allowed realism to emerge by use of a clearly defined mode of writing. Reference to and association with the Grail legend, especially as re-interpreted by Jessie Weston, are made frequently in the novel itself. Not only is the Grail a modern one for the romantic hero but there is a more secular sort of quest for many of the other characters.

[62]See p. 122 of Bonhoeffer (1954) *Prisoner for God* New York, Macmillan.

> The point about quests is that they never end. Persse (equals Percival, equals Parsifal, equals Perseus, equals Pierce) McGarrigle searches for his beloved, his sexual grail. But his search entwines with others' search for the UNESCO chair of Literary Criticism.
>
> (Carter 1990, p. 17)

The quest for promotion and better pay is 'realistic' in the old sense.

Lodge's most recently published novel *Therapy* (1995) seems to mark a change in direction. In *Paradise News* he is still using ideas of Catholicism, and by having his Christian gentleman highly conversant with theology he is also using intellectual and academic characters as he has done so often before. In *Therapy* he tries to move away and has a deliberately unacademic central character, Lawrence Passmore, and it is his wife who is the academic. Lodge is referring to his own work with a self-conscious interest in intertextuality as he develops a passing reference to Kierkegaard in *Paradise News* into an obsession. The combination of a non educated hero and his passion for the life and works of a Danish existen-'alist is difficult to reconcile. Passmore's own life is supposed to be a mirror of Kierkegaard's experiences. Lodge is writing about Passmore as a satire on Kierkegaard but has to keep explaining about Kierkegaard's life. The effect is rather laboured[63] and it is with apparent relief that Passmore suddenly remembers his first love and Lodge makes a lengthy reminiscence about Maureen the Catholic schoolgirl. These form the remainder of the text. The manipulation of the form in the first part of the story is abandoned in the latter half. The two parts of the novel are so starkly contrasted that it seems likely that Lodge has combined two quite separate novels.[64] The first part is an experiment and an unsuccessful one at that. It seems fitting that it is not until Lodge returns to his usual preoccupations with Catholicism, especially Catholic upbringing and its relation to sex, that he is able to write convincingly. He wants to play 'how

[63]As Anthony Quinn, reviewing the book for *The Independent* details.

[64]There are clues to link the two parts but these only serve to reinforce the idea that Lodge combined two novels.

far can you go?' with novel structure but finds he cannot abandon Catholicism completely. It is the essential resource of his fiction. Passmore is *Nice Work*'s Vic Wilcox but with less education and greater worldly success. Although his background is drawn as completely secular, Lawrence retains a vital sense of Christian morality. Thus, he gives to various charities in a carefully thought out way and is faithful to his wife, although this is unique behaviour within his social circle, and so on. When we finally discover the secret of his past it is impossible not to give credit to the devout Catholic Maureen for shaping the young Lawrence's moral development. His eventual reconciliation with Maureen provides the therapy he needs.

In some ways this is Lodge's least Catholic novel and yet it is his detailed descriptions of Catholic practice and belief in the last third of the book which provide the main interest. He has used the normal and still effective technique of a non-Catholic narrator to convey the salient points which might be misunderstood by a non-Catholic. Of course, with his narrator in his late fifties, a childhood memory necessarily involves the pre-Vatican II forms of worship. He tries to give an outsider's view of Benediction, a ceremony often considered old-fashioned since the Council although undergoing a modest revival within the Church in the 1990s.[65]

> Suddenly there was a clamour of high-pitched bells, and I peeped through the doorway, looking down the aisle to the altar. It was quite a sight, ablaze with dozens of tall, thin lighted candles. The priest, dressed in a heavy embroidered robe of white and gold, was holding up something that flashed and glinted with reflected light, a white disc in a golden case, with golden rays sticking out all round it like a sunburst. He held the base of the thing wrapped in an embroidered scarf he had round his shoulders, as if it were too hot to touch, or radioactive. All the people, and there were a surprising number of them, were kneeling with their heads bowed. Maureen explained to me in due course that the white disc was a consecrated host, and

[65]For example, it is certainly popular within organisations such as Opus Dei which is a rapidly expanding group within the Church.

> that they believed it was the real body and blood of Jesus, but to me the whole business seemed more pagan than Christian. The singing sounded queer too. Instead of the rousing hymns I was used to at school ("To be a Pilgrim" was my favourite) they were singing slow, dirge-like anthems that I couldn't comprehend because they were in Latin, never my best subject. I had to admit, though, that there was a kind of atmosphere about the service that you didn't get in the school chapel.
>
> What I liked about Catholics from the beginning was that there was nothing holier than thou about them. When the congregation came pouring out of the church, they might have been coming out of the pictures, or even a pub, the way they greeted each other and joked and chatted and even offered each other cigarettes.
>
> (Lodge 1995, pp. 232–3)

He is not particularly complimentary about the forms used but obviously likes the people themselves. In this way we are reminded of Mark in *The Picturegoers* and, were this a pre-Council novel, I daresay Passmore would have converted and got his girl in the first place. Here, now that Catholicism has been demythologised for Lodge, he only half gets her in a partially satisfactory way once the secular success of his life is over. This final section is like *How Far Can You Go?* all over again and the conclusions are the same as those of *Paradise News*. All certainty has gone, the Church has betrayed its followers but the more intelligent do not care. The fear of hell which Lodge identifies with the divine pursuit of man has also disappeared and clergy have lost importance as the structure of their religion has crumbled. The basics of life, sex and death, are still important but religion is not required to provide an explanation for these unknowns, and a general Christian morality is recognised as useful and worth maintaining even without Christianity itself.[66]

Obsession with matters sexual seems to date Lodge and places him very firmly as a writer who grew up before the social changes of the 1960s. Like his *How Far Can You Go?* characters he had to have his 1960s "a little late". (Lodge 1980, p. 143) The social revolution and its accompanying 'revolution' within the

[66]See Chapter 7, p. 246 below.

Church as symbolised by the Council, coincide for Lodge with a personal but not dramatic crisis of Faith. Thus, this is the case for many of the characters he draws and explains why his central character(s) must also be his own age. Having experienced a belated liberation, he is still celebrating it in later life. Still describing himself as a Catholic, Lodge acknowledges his need for belief. In this he is strangely reminiscent of the Protestant Daniel Defoe who also suffered from a crisis in his faith. *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) suggests a creeping secularisation of the world and the problems of being an outsider. Defoe was a dissenter and dissent in the earlier eighteenth century was a complicated business, differing forms of dissent being in some ways comparable to the differences between various strands of Catholicism before and after the Council. There is, too, something culturally Protestant about Lodge's assumption that he can and should always make up his own mind about belief.

Lodge has described how he felt like an outsider in the Church sometimes and certainly his childhood, in direct contrast to Carson's, for example, is not what is generally thought of as being typically Catholic. However, the three novelists we have looked at here have all had very different backgrounds although all are 'English' Catholics. We now turn to an author who may seem not to fit into this group but is in fact necessary as a balance to the others.

Chapter Seven: BRIAN MOORE

Born in 1921, Brian Moore is considerably older than the other three novelists. This is important as he fills the gap between the trio considered here and novelists such as Greene and Waugh. He also provides a necessary contrast to their work as he is Irish by birth (born in Belfast) and currently lives abroad. He is now an American citizen. Thus, he allows us to look at nationalistic matters from a new perspective being, as it were "the man from nowhere." (Moore 1993)

He is, by his own admission, the least Catholic in a sliding scale from Ellis, through Carson to Lodge and finally Moore. Thus the whole range of explicit religious commitment is covered by these four writers. He has written extensively and we shall have to select those novels most relevant to our concerns. Indeed, Moore has written so widely that all the issues from the Greene and Waugh section can be found somewhere in his fiction along with much else. His eighteen[1] published novels to date span four decades and resist any attempt to classify them in simple groups.

Brian Moore is the last of the contemporary authors to be viewed here. I shall take a roughly chronological look at his fiction but intend to concentrate on shared forms and concerns within his works.

We will look first at his earlier novels. Here comparisons may be drawn between Moore's work and those of the nineteen-thirties writers as well as David Lodge's pre-Council novel *The Picturegoers*.

[1]In common with his publishers I have not included *The Revolution Script*. Published in 1971 by McClelland and Stewart, Toronto, it is currently out of print. It is not a novel in the sense of the others, rather, it is reportage given a fictional treatment.

The first two, *The Lonely Passion of Judith Hearne* (1955) and *The Feast of Lupercal* (1958) are both set in Northern Ireland and deal with the concerns and difficulties of a single central character. Both characters are middle-aged but in their approach to much of life; the questioning of everything and seeking for an ultimate purpose, they seem much younger.

Judith Hearne is a poor, middle-aged spinster. She clings to her religion and, as the novel progresses, increasingly to drink. Alcohol is only a representative vice. It stands for all that it worldly and, therefore, evil, just as Miss Hearne represents Catholics (and particularly female Catholics) as a whole. This central character is echoed by the other characters even minor ones glimpsed only in passing. All share the same solitude against which they erect barriers of self-deception to make the futility of existence tolerable. In the climax to the novel, Judith Hearne's confidence in the divine is finally shattered and she physically assaults the tabernacle on the altar in a blaze of fury. The lack of response from God diminishes Him.

> Believe. They believe. United: there is comfort in being a nun. One of many. They watch the altar. What would they say, holy nuns, if I told them I went up there, I struck at that golden door? In god's house I defied God. And nothing happened. I am here.
>
> (Moore 1965, p. 185)

The tabernacle has been a central feature of most Catholic churches since the Council of Trent and of particular importance in English and Irish Catholicism.[2] Since Vatican II it continues but its position has been downgraded so that the tabernacle is usually separated from the altar and often positioned in a side-chapel. Hence, this direct association of God with the tabernacle is symptomatic of pre-Vatican II Catholicism.[3] Judith Hearne lives on despite her attack on

[2]Waugh (1962, p. 331), closes *Brideshead Revisited* with reference to the centrality of the tabernacle.

[3]Interestingly, Ellis (1994, plate 15), complains about a hideous sculpture placed in the middle of the altar of Armagh cathedral. According to Oddie (1995, p. 16) it *is* a tabernacle as its central position might seem to indicate, however, it is apparently unrecognisable as such.

"God's house" and so, character of fiction that she is, her reality is superior to that of God.

In *The Lonely Passion of Judith Hearne* Moore refers obliquely to the Passion of Christ. First he shows religious belief as the only certainty, then he strips it away and reveals that the only certainty is man's inherent aloneness. This is a realist novel in two ways; first in that it follows the assumptions of "Realist Fiction" from Zola onwards that only the "real" may be shown, but secondly that it celebrates those lives which seek only to live in reality and nowhere else. Thus, Moore uses his form to reject what is not real, particularly anything in the divine realm. Judith Hearne reaches maturity for Moore when she demands visible proof of God's presence. She has therefore lost her faith but accepted reality, faith is futile and it is childish to hide behind superstition. By the end of the novel she is no longer fooling herself that all her sufferings and good works will be rewarded. True, much of her life has been wasted in following something she has now exposed as empty, but this, for Moore, is better than finding consolation in what is false.

Moore's own understanding of Catholicism is based largely on his childhood. This is apparent in his novels. He writes of his memories of Catholic practice rather than definable facts. Catholicism represents a safe haven for him as it does for Carson, but, whereas Carson still cherishes this encompassing belief, Moore strives to overcome it and throw it off with the other trappings of childhood.

A self-professed non-believer, Moore has spoken of his family life:

> Moore: I was brought up in a very religious family and I wasn't religious....
>
> Interviewer: I can't somehow believe that there wasn't a period of your life when you didn't believe because you write so convincingly.
>
> Moore: No that's the odd thing I never did. I was consumed with guilt... I was always feeling guilty ... and that I wasn't like my brothers and sisters and the people around me, I was totally different. That surfaced in my teens and early twenties as a great hostility to Catholicism.
>
> (Moore 1993)

This hostility Moore either still felt or remembered well enough to use in his early novels. By later works he is more objective and rational about religious belief and, of course the "belief " itself has changed too. However, he is not as rational and straightforward a 'non-believer' as he would like us to believe. His concern with "guilt" is a very Catholic concern. He can no more escape the religion of his youth than his characters can.

In *The Lonely Passion of Judith Hearne* Moore has put himself into his character to a larger degree than is immediately evident. He has jokingly commented on the advantage, as a man, of writing about a woman for a main character.

> Some of my books were with female protagonists. I loved that because if there's one thing when you write about a female protagonist; you may be writing autobiography but nobody's going to say you are.
>
> (Moore 1993)

Moore uses his own experience but also writes much more widely than that. Carson and Lodge adhere much more closely to what they know as does Ellis although in a post-modernist form which at times undermines her subject matter. If we recall David Lodge's *The Picturegoers*, belief and certainty go together. The novel as a whole provides a base of certainty for Underwood to grow towards as Clare Mallory moves away from it. Moore is very different here, the certainty of Judith Hearne takes her from a definite belief in Catholicism at the beginning of the text to a definite rejection of it by the end. Her belief (as defined by the very absence of religious belief) in nothing is as certain as her previous belief in God. Here we have identified the loss of certainty with post-Vatican II novels in England but in those it is a lack of certainty about what the Church and/or Catholicism really is any more.

Moore with his doubting, questioning, Catholic characters reflects those of Waugh and Greene. Greene in particular is emulated by Brian Moore (Greene described Moore as his "favourite living novelist" (Moore 1993)) but there is an important difference between them; many of Greene's characters doubt, but the

divine realm invoked in that fictional world they inhabit is still a certainty. This reveals a fundamental difference between Greene and Moore and also reflects the different times in which they were writing. Moore goes a stage further than Greene, he asserts that there is no divine realm and the one to which his characters refer is only a fiction. For Moore, religious belief is just another fiction and one which he finds less credible than the novel. The 'fiction' which is Catholicism Moore sees as peopled by insubstantial characters who are not sufficiently convincing to suspend our disbelief. Moore sets up his fiction to be more real and believable than any religion. Of course, although it is possible to feel more 'convinced' by Moore's fiction than by Catholicism, we cannot actually believe in it precisely because it is fiction he writes. Moore hereby uses the argument that if you cannot really believe his fiction then why believe the much less convincing 'world' of Catholicism? In these early novels especially he builds up a fictional divine realm which he then destroys within the text making all matters religious apparently of less importance than a novel. He is, in this way, writing a very definite sort of religious fiction, one which is so vehemently opposed to Catholic belief that he wishes to displace the belief *by* the fiction. This is why it is so important for him to reveal the falsity of what is to him that fiction above. In this way Moore seeks to convert us to an active agnosticism, to cease to suspend our disbelief about all matters religious.

Diarmuid Devine, the schoolmaster hero of *The Feast of Lupercal*, is not particularly interested in religion. He is a Catholic essentially because he was born one. His certainty is more apathetic than Judith Hearne's. Catholicism is a feature of social life for him. In this way it seems to mirror Northern Ireland at the time, as Seamus Heaney asserts of Moore:

> For a Northern Irish Catholic to turn upon Catholicism is perceived by the Catholics as not just an attack on doctrine but as a betrayal of their own political and cultural loyalty to the idea of Ireland.
>
> (Moore 1993)

This socially normative Catholicism holds little problem for Devine until he falls for a young Protestant girl. All the barriers which emerge are as would be expected and in this case religious difference is simply a further complication. This couple symbolise all the traditional problems of star-crossed lovers but innovatively because of certain opposites.

For example, Devine is older yet is much less mature and appears much less sexually experienced. In fact she, too, is a virgin but no one actually believes this, not even her lover, because she is a Protestant and known to have been attached to a married man. Traditional stereotypes are reversed, however, as she is a Southern Protestant whereas he is an Ulster Catholic. In this sense both are rebels against and outcasts from their own background. Judith Hearne followed her faith until it led her to a breakdown but Diarmuid Devine is shown to be caught in a similar position without any active involvement in Catholicism. He lives in a Catholic environment and it is this which entraps him.

Moore, despite his protestations, makes use of his own biography here, as Heaney has described it:

> Moore as a creature lived the den life of Irish Catholicism in the intensified conditions of a ghetto Belfast Catholicism. Even though it was a middle-class background it was nevertheless ... not a Unionist protestant, British background. He, of course, rebelled against that, he took it on and quelled it in himself and that Odyssey or pilgrimage or self-challenge, to go from the sacred world to the profane world, that's the challenge of a whole generation.
>
> (Moore 1993)

Heaney is implying an even closer connection to the character of Devine in that both are rebels but Moore succeeds where his character does not.

To be Catholic or Protestant is an unchangeable definition of what you are in the 1950s Belfast depicted in *The Feast of Lupercal*. It is a definition comparable to that of apartheid. You can not change your religion or race and the two can not mix, especially not sexually. As a master in a select boys school, Devine is well

isolated from the Protestant side of Northern Ireland until he ventures outside in his interest in Una. She is the only one who can make him mature. Una comes from outside, not only outside his religion but she is treated as a foreigner because she is from Dublin. Even though this is Northern Ireland, technically a part of Britain, we have the idea that here it is non-Catholics who are the foreigners, the outsiders. As a Catholic born and brought up in Belfast himself, this is presumably the side of Northern Ireland that Brian Moore knew and any Ulster Protestant writer could most likely show the precise opposite. And so there is a contrast with any Catholic in England where Catholics have been marginalised since the Reformation and have only been accepted, still with residual suspicion, in the last two or three decades.

Moore seems at least partly aware that he is rebelling against his background. What is important is that he is rebelling against the norm — that is Catholicism he is not an outsider simply by virtue of being a Catholic as the mainland writers generally find themselves to be. Unlike the fictions from England, Irish works do not depend upon conversion to Catholicism. Instead, Moore makes himself an outsider thereby moving a little closer to the other authors' condition. He is looking back to a golden past but, manifestly, it is not that of Greene and Waugh. Moore is more Irish than British, it is the generation of James Joyce which inspires him and his 'theology' which he embraces. Moore is open about this.

> When I was very young ... Joyce became my big literary figure... Joyce and those people have a certain religion of art and they ... when you're nineteen or twenty you can believe it. That ... that became a substitute for me because I wanted some purpose in my life and I know that writing novels is not a purpose.
>
> (Moore 1993)

Through Devine, Moore shows that escape from Catholicism is possible but that to attain anything worth having he must suffer. That suffering is not of itself portrayed as a good thing as our other Catholic writers might well show it, for

Moore wants to show it is just another part of the repressive nature of Irish Catholicism. Yet he is drawn to suffering in his writing and what he actually writes gives a clearer indication of the importance of Catholicism than any attitudes he claims to have. He aims to show that Irish Catholicism is a straitjacket which can be escaped by emigration. Joyce's sojourns in Paris and Trieste are exemplary. It is reasonable to assume Moore felt this way himself when he made his permanent home abroad. He is advertising his anti-Catholic stance more forcefully here. He never stands outside his text to offer judgement and explanation of Catholicism (this is at least partly because he is not aiming specifically at a non-Catholic, English audience as the other writers are) nor, as we have seen, does he ever identify his own experiences with those of his creation. Moore invariably places some distance between himself and his characters, sometimes by writing about women or by writing about the very old and so on, so that he can remain aloof from them. Yet he is also able to draw them very close to him whenever it suits him. He can embody his 'religious' stance much more subtly by letting his characters speak for themselves. He is doing this here in these very early works and it is an element which is present in all his writing though perhaps less consciously in many of the later novels.

There is a sense in the earlier novels that Moore himself has not "escaped" far enough or at least not for long enough when he writes them. In this respect Moore's own biography is important to his writing, and the Council itself is of little significance. For the English, Catholic belief before the Council is generally represented as considerable. This changed with the Vatican Council but Moore suggests that in Ireland at least there was always a climate of doubt (as with Joyce at the turn of the century). However, like Joyce, Moore remains preoccupied with Catholicism in his writing and irrespective of their personal views it is central to their work. This is another instance of Irish Catholicism being quite distinct from English Catholicism.

Moore's solution is emigration. He applies it to many characters in his sub-

sequent novels but for Judith Hearne there was no actual escape from the reality of man's suffering, she was too old and staid. Moore wants to show that anyone like her deserved punishment for her thoughtless belief for so many years. All those people represented through this character are of another generation, the generation of Greene and Waugh in fact, and he can prophesy little hope but offer the comfort of a 'real' revelation that there is no ultimate purpose. Meaning, he suggests, is to be found only in the here and now. In *The Feast Of Lupercal*, Devine has more chance. He is educated and not afraid to think for himself. What he does fear is condemnation by his peers. He understands, too, that any action - as opposed to just thinking - will expose him to ridicule and censure. He is not put in an easy position. Moore, here as elsewhere, places characters in difficult if not impossible situations in order to create interesting fiction. Una drives Devine to action but the consequences for her as an outsider, a position she accepts with little difficulty because she has scant regard for the opinions of others, are negligible; he is the one in danger of losing his job and respectability so ultimately he lets them both down. Like Judith Hearne, Devine has had his eyes opened to the way things are. In his case this is the suffocating bigotry of the Catholicism espoused by his fellows in middle-class Northen Ireland. He can no longer pretend that he is unaware of the society he lives in, but there is nothing else for him to do except carry on living his life as before because he was not strong enough.

Here we have the first clear indication from Moore that apathy about Catholicism is insufficient; one needs, it seems, to take a definite stand against it. The ending of *The Lonely Passion of Judith Hearne* is such that life could be tolerable for the characters who, at least, are no longer duped by false promises. In *The Feast of Lupercal* however, Devine has more difficulty in struggling to feel that it is better to have loved and lost than never to have loved, not least because with a little more daring on his part he might not have lost. Yet Devine's escape route was too uncertain; Devine and Una part mainly because he could not break

away from the repression of his surroundings. He is shown as having the possibility of gaining worldly pleasure whereas Una, as a Protestant, is shown as much more free-thinking and independent of Devine himself, only her youth prevents her from achieving full independence. For Devine, it is a tribal thing; he has to leave, or rather be excommunicated from the tribe, to win Una; being an outcast is the price of his freedom and it is not one he will pay.

Moore's first two novels are linked by their concern with being trapped by circumstances, particularly religious bonds and nationalistic boundaries. Moore himself emigrated to Canada in 1948 and before then worked widely in Europe for the British government. The problem of 'no future' for the young Irish and especially young Catholic Irish in Belfast is something which still forms a substantial part of Irish writing today.[4] An expatriate himself, Moore understandably uses this in a number of his novels and many of his characters are Irish immigrants in Canada and the United States. Indeed, of the next five published books, only one is not set in America and so we will look at this one first.

The Emperor of Ice-Cream (1965) is a novel concerned with the Second World War and takes a peculiarly Irish look at it. Although published as Vatican II was ending, the Council has no place here, this is a book based firmly on events a quarter of a century earlier albeit with the hindsight of the 1960s. It is not dissimilar to the first two novels with the addition of direct political comment. Moore shows religious and political strife as inseparable and as little more than petty bigotry. Thus it is not only religious ideology which must be overcome but political beliefs too. At this time Catholicism and Fascism were still connected in some minds, Greene was, as we saw, quite unusual and often regarded with suspicion for his left-wing stance on matters political. Piers Paul Read is a modern, less liberal counterpart of Greene. Like Greene he appears to be drawn towards the left[5] and draws upon socialist ideology in his fiction. It is no longer unusual

[4]As depicted in the teenage novels of Joan Lingard, for example.

[5]Piers Paul Read is more cynical than Greene, however, and although he portrays a number

to combine left-wing politics with Catholicism. However it is almost invariably a liberal form of Catholicism. Piers Paul Read is unusual in being essentially traditional in his religious views whilst politically liberal.[6] Moore, however, is not explicit about his political sympathies and at the time of writing he is not so circumstanced as Greene was. In his descriptions of Irish sympathies towards Hitler he describes no more than the truth: when Gavin takes a job in a First Aid Party to help the war effort, he is ridiculed for his lack of patriotism; his domineering father's favourite subject being the English repression of the Irish,

> the German jackboot isn't half as hard as the heel of John Bull. All this guff about Hitler being a menace to civilisation is sheer English hypocrisy. The things we've seen *them* do.
>
> (Moore 1994a, p. 36)

While his family flees the city, Gavin remains to save lives and even volunteer for extra hard duties. He has rejected God and right-wing politics and become a war hero rather than a martyr.

Through his main character's inner struggles with himself (his white and black angels) his internal development echoes his external actions. Increasingly the white angel which had seemed synonymous with a Catholic Guardian Angel, becomes more secular whilst remaining moral, throughout the black angel is selfish, immoral and in favour only of Evil. At first, all that is Good is both white and Catholic but eventually the Catholic side of things subsides into unimportance to allow the possibility of Good existing without reference to a religious world view. However, Moore's image model remains Catholic at least as a reference point. This is exemplified by Gavin's refusal to kneel when the chaplain leads the

---

of left-wing characters frequently their beliefs are shown to be lacking either in conviction or realism.

[6]In his *The Free Frenchman* (1986) Read draws attention to the dilemma of French Catholics during the Second World War because of the communist associations of the Resistance and he illustrates this by extensive reference to the Spanish civil war. *A Married Man* (1979) is set in 1973 and based around the winter of discontent. Again he examines Catholicism and Socialism as potentially complementary ideologies.

prayers after the bombing. Moore uses Gavin's girlfriend to act as a measure of the acceptability of this behaviour. She is unimpressed by what she sees as his childish refusal to conform but when she later discovers that he has been working as a volunteer to coffin the many dead, a job most of the medical personnel refused to face, she is full of admiration for him and his opposition to religious ritual becomes a thing to be respected. Paradoxically, he is now a Christian gentleman. His father's new appreciation of him is the most relevant. Throughout, there has been a Freudian power struggle between these two. The advent of the war in Belfast is the sign that Gavin's father's old world has collapsed, but Gavin's world has not because he has not been clinging to the empty rituals of a false religion. Moore shows us how father and son have reversed their roles:

> A new voice, a cold grown-up voice within him said: 'No.' His father was the child now; his father's world was dead. He looked over at the wireless set, remembering his father, ear cocked for England's troubles, pleased at news of other, faraway disasters. Forget that, the grown-up voice said. He heeded that voice, heeded it as he had never heeded the childish voices of his angels. Black Angel, White Angel: they had gone forever. His father was crying. The voice would tell him what to do. From now on, he would know these things.
>
> (Moore 1994a, p. 252)

He knows he has reached his goal when the voices of his two opposing angels are replaced by a single certainty. It is "grown-up" but also a "cold" voice because he has reached the truth, as did Judith Hearne, and it is a cold and comfortless one; but for Moore it is better to be aware of cold reality than ensnared by false comforts. The single voice is concerned with what is "Right;" Good and Evil are no longer relevant.[7] In his inclination towards a basic Irish asceticism — one that he shares with Samuel Beckett Moore emphasises the difference between him and English Catholic authors.

Although very different in content, the four expatriate novels are linked by a

[7]See Chapter 2 p. 30 above.

shared expression of contempt for Ireland and its Catholicism. The chief characters have all left Ireland with a clearly expressed desire for escape. Their situations and happiness in America vary widely but none regret their departure save when it is not sufficiently complete or successful. The 'once a Catholic, always a Catholic' idea is prevalent here and shown by the characters' actions but the position is ambiguous. In *The Luck of Ginger Coffey* (1960), of the place he always affectionately describes as "home", he also has this to say:

> Coffey's father, a solicitor, had been buried in the brown habit[8] of a Dominican Tertiary. Enough said. His elder brother Tom was a missionary priest in Africa. And yet neither Coffey nor Veronica were what Dublin people called pi-odious. Far from it. In fact 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. Bloody well go, or else, tinker, tailor, soldier, sailor, rich man, poor man, you were made to suffer in a worldly sense. Here, he was free...
>
> (Moore 1994b, p. 24)

What Ginger feels is essentially true of Moore's expatriates in general. These characters then, are people who want to be able to claim their Irish heritage as a prize but want to escape the consequences of the Catholicism which is so much a part of their own Irishness. All these novels involve Irish men and women who have fled their old life for a better one in the New World yet something links them still to their old world.

Moore's own nationalism, or lack of it, is important here. Now living in Malibu, California, he declares that he is "at home everywhere and nowhere". (Moore 1993) But he recognises his own attachment to his background too

> All my life ever since I left Ireland and went to America ...went abroad, I have come back to Europe every single year for at least a

[8]Moore's knowledge of Catholicism is limited. A Franciscan or Carmelite tertiary could have been buried in brown but a Dominican tertiary would have been buried in white. Since Vatican II, it has become forbidden to be buried in a third order habit and even the term 'third order' has been abandoned because it implies that tertiaries are somehow less important than the religious. Hence the term 'Secular Franciscan Order', for example.

> month, usually two or three months, because I've tried to keep my foot in both places. I wouldn't like to live all my life in America at all and for some reason I think that's made me into a special sort of writer. I'm not ... Americans don't think of me as an American writer and never will.
>
> (Moore 1993)

Moore is writing about a pursuit which no quantity of miles can shake off; nationality and religion are borne within, not attributes which may be discarded. He speaks of his Catholicism as part of his past but his writing continually shows it as of great importance to him still.

> I opened a letter from my mother, a letter which carried me back, not to the Ireland she wrote of, but to Home, that Moscow of my mind, forever shut in from the rest of the world; forever shut out.
>
> (Moore 1992a, p. 7)

Brendan in *An Answer from Limbo* (1963) finds himself in a similar position to Gavin in *The Feast of Lupercal*, in that he has changed places with his parents and must be grown-up for them, the implication is that a belief in Catholicism is only suitable in childhood and thus Gavin's and Brendan's parents never really mature because of their faith.

What makes Moore quite different from every other Catholic writer we have looked at is that he continually shows us people who can not simply run from their religion but who still refuse it however it pursues them. Thus Ginger refuses to be saved by any Agency other than self, and is reminiscent of Péguy's[9] deliberate attempt to remain in a permanent state of mortal sin in order to avoid salvation. Brendan, too, finally has the courage of his convictions to face up to his selfishness. Before emigrating he spoke to his friend Ormsby about this:

> '... I know my writing's the important thing. I'll be perfectly willing to sacrifice anybody or anything for the sake of my work. You'll see.'

[9]See Chapter 2, p. 37 above.

> There are moments in conversations when the truth comes in like death: the friendship does not recover. This, Ormsby remembered, was one. 'Yes, Brendan,' he said. 'I believe you. You'll sacrifice other people all right. But will you sacrifice yourself?'
>
> (Moore 1992a, pp. 22–3)

So it seems he must sacrifice every human feeling to gain worldly success, finally he resolves to do this to his detriment. He is a modern Faust, willing to sell his soul to the Devil in order to achieve his aims; but he is safe in the certainty of having no soul and, believing that there is no devil, has nothing to lose.

Both Carson and Ellis have exposed the hypocrisy of maintaining a system of moral behaviour based on a religious belief when that religious belief has been discarded. Brendan is the first blatant example we have here of what happens when logic dictates action. For example, his mother finally dies alone because he cannot be bothered to keep in touch with her even after he has transported her, for his own selfish reasons, to the far side of the Atlantic where she has no other connections. We cannot sympathise with this. Moore is doing more than simply showing what happens when a figure rejects the religion of his youth. He is drawing a most unflattering portrait of the United States[10] and Canada. For although we respond with anger to Brendan's treatment of his mother, his American wife's attitude to her and everything else is also clearly based on self. Yet it is difficult to condemn her because she has never been exposed to any pertinent examples of selflessness. Brendan's neglect of his mother represents the worst he could do precisely because she is that very example of selflessness. She is a Madonna figure for him, and, although one of four children, he is the only surviving male and the only child in any position to support his aging parent. For a Catholic at least, to reject and ill-treat the Madonna is abominable. At the end he realises that by sacrificing everyone around him to gain worldly success he

[10]Another Catholic writer, Gabrielle Donnolly, also does this in her (1988) *Faulty Ground* London, Victor Gollancz. Although her main characters are somewhat critical of Catholicism, its moral values are upheld against the superficiality and immorality of the United States.

has actually betrayed himself, worldly advantage might be his but he has denied his humanity to achieve it and thereby forfeited any hope of happiness: "I have altered beyond all self-recognition. I have lost and sacrificed myself." (Moore 1992a, p. 284)

Moore is not advocating the complete abandonment of moral behaviour; certain family ties still remain and should be respected if for no other reason than that true selfishness is really acting selflessly towards others to gain their affections. The character of Brendan shows how rejecting Catholic belief in particular can have unexpected consequences. Although logically convinced in his agnosticism, Brendan is quite convinced of his guilt regarding his mother and, like Judas, assumes he cannot possibly be forgiven so that he effectively damns himself.[11] Whereas Ginger was not very successful in America and Brendan only reasonably so, in *I Am Mary Dunne* (1968) Moore's heroine has made it. She gained secular success though marriage, specifically her third marriage[12] yet she is tormented by her Irish Catholic past. Although the pursuit of the past is largely in her mind, she can not easily escape her Catholic conditioning.[13] Fergus is also haunted but more overtly.

The initial realism of *Fergus* (1971) soon begins to break down as the eponymous hero is visited by more and more ghosts. Initially, it is set in a specific time and place and the first supernatural appearance is a jolt to the reader.

> Fergus took a piece of Kleenex from his pajama pocket, wiped his eyes, then blew his nose. When he had finished, he looked across the room. His father was sitting on the yellow sofa. He was dressed as Fergus remembered him. Fergus was afraid. He looked away as a child looks away when it sees something which upsets it. Then, uneasily, he looked back at the yellow sofa. His father was still there.
>
> (Moore 1995, pp. 1–2)

[11]It is interesting to compare this to the New Catechism on self-damnation, "By rejecting grace in this life, one already judges oneself , receives according to one's works, and can even condemn oneself for all eternity by rejecting the Spirit of love." (CTS 1994, §679)

[12]This character has been divorced twice. In Ireland divorce remained illegal until 1995.

[13]See p. 250 below.

The elemental descriptive detail here contrasts with the character's initial determination to show that he is dreaming or hallucinating but he is already disturbed by fears for his sanity and feels helpless.

> He went to the yellow sofa and picked up the phone receiver, reassured momentarily by the familiar dial tone. He did not know why he had picked up the phone. There was no point in dialing for help. *Operator, send the police. I have ghosts in the house.* They would send men with a straitjacket if they sent anyone at all. As he stood with the receiver to his ear, he got the idea that his mother had come up behind him and, guiltily, jammed the receiver back on its hook.
>
> (Moore 1995, p. 5)

Guilt is almost the first reaction and it is guilt that remains throughout. The rest of the action apparently continues to be normal for a time to the extent that real characters interact with the main character in between interludes with the ghosts and then at the same time. More ghosts flit in and out and not all of them are of dead people. With the advent of more than one ghost of the same person, but seen at different times, the hero's sense of reality collapses altogether and the text disintegrates. Moore retains a sense of place for his central character but little else and the final push to nudge Fergus into passive acquiescence of his situation is the inclusion in his "hallucinations" of ghosts, spirits or shades of people he does not even know. Fergus then ceases to think he has gone mad, as the reader is equally sure that this character has gone out of his mind; his guilt has overwhelmed him.

As more characters are added the novel comes to rely more and more on narration for its substance and less on description, this has the effect of transmitting the diminishing reality of the hero's predicament to the reader and gives a sense of passing from consciousness into unconsciousness and a nightmare world. The culmination of the hero's testing is a Kafkaesque trial, but Fergus is given a final chance to make a decent life for himself on two levels: these mysterious shades offer him that chance and he finds himself back in his body as well as his mind and recovering from a heart attack as the novel ends.

Fergus is a lapsed Catholic. Clearly, the guilt exhibited is stereotypically Catholic in that it is essentially a sexual guilt. It is as if no other sort of wrongdoing is possible or at least of no consequence. A particular concern for the family is typical of Moore and in this way Fergus is another illustration of a refugee from Ireland and Catholicism neglecting his relations in the process. This tribal, insular Catholicism is quintessentially Irish. It is the cult-related Catholicism depicted by Carson and mocked by Lodge as that of the lower classes.

Moore is the one non-English Catholic writer that we have considered and so we see that each of the other writers has some comment to pass on 'Irish Catholics'. In this it is useful to compare the views of the insider Moore to those three outside Irish Catholicism. Carson makes reference to a rather politicised approach to Catholicism as revealed by the Brothers at Benson's school and later the same character on the other side of the Atlantic feels quite at home in an Irish pub. (Carson 1993, p. 151) Lodge makes a number of patronising references to the rather blinkered approach of Irish Catholics, usually priests, which is also tainted with politics and is encapsulated by the Applebys' parish priest in *The British Museum is Falling Down*:

> Father Finbar's ideas about the Catholic Faith were very much formed by his upbringing in Tipperary, and he seemed to regard the London parish in which he worked as a piece of the Old Country which had broken off in a storm and floated across the sea until it lodged itself in the Thames Basin. The parish was indeed at least half-populated by Irish, but this was not, in Adam and Barbara's eyes, an adequate excuse for nostalgic allusions to 'Back Home' in sermons, or the sanctioning of collections in the church porch for the dependants of IRA prisoners. As to the liturgical reform and the education of the laity, Father Finbar's rosary beads rattled indignantly in his pocket at the very mention of such schemes, and he would, Adam suspected, chain up all the missals in the parish at the drop of a biretta.
>
> (Lodge 1981, p. 29)

Lodge associates Irish Catholicism specifically with Jansenism[14] thereby indicat-

[14]Named after its founder Cornelius Jansen (1585–1638), Jansenism was a school of theology

ing that Irish Catholicism is quite different from English Catholicism. However he also defines English Catholicism as little more than a variation on Irish Catholicism.

> "In penal days, Irish priests used to be trained in France, by the Jansenists, so that over-scrupulous, puritanical kind of Catholicism[15] got into their bloodstream - and ours too, because, let's face it, English Catholicism is largely Irish Catholicism."[16]
>
> (Lodge 1980, p. 40)

In *Serpent on the Rock*, Alice Thomas Ellis probably provides the most up-to-date example of how Irish Catholics differ in their whole approach to religion: she writes of various interviews with Catholics in Ireland and remarks on the different kind of response she gets. She reaches the conclusion that it is a particularly Irish form of Catholicism which is present. Staying in a small hotel she approaches her hostess

> I collared her between the kitchen and the horses and asked what her views were on the present state of the Church. She said that she couldn't claim that hers was a really staunch Catholic household and I asked what she meant. Did they miss Mass or Holy Days of Obligation? 'Dear God, no.' she said, shocked. She meant they didn't go every day to church and very seldom twice.
>
> (Ellis 1994, p. 29)

This Catholic lady's very unwillingness to give an opinion and her idea of what is a proper Catholic background is not what one would expect in England. Ellis, as one would imagine, meets a wide variety of people and opinions.

---

which, although strongly anti-Protestant, resembled Calvinism and was condemned by the Vatican. Lodge's point, presumably, is the joyless and moralistic character of Irish Catholicism.

[15]English Catholics today have a more middle class image largely because of Cardinal Hume and his upper middle class origins. See also Tony Castle's 1986 biography *Basil Hume: A Portrait* London, Collins. Hume was at Ampleforth as, incidentally was Piers Paul Read, see p. 141, Chapter 5 above.

[16]See p. 182, Chapter 6 above.

> I wondered if I had learned anything. Perhaps only what I knew already - that there was confusion in the Church and great differences of opinion, attitude and approach, combined with a widespread disinclination to admit that this was so.
>
> (Ellis 1994, p. 42)

For Ellis one priest's view seems to sum up an Irish Catholicism which is different from the English sort.

> I asked my usual question ...'What do you think about the state of the Church?' He regarded me calmly and asked me what I meant. Well,' I said carefully, 'is it not in some confusion?' 'Not really,' he said, 'not for me. I follow what the Pope says because he is the Vicar of Christ.' I found this novel, since most people in England, Catholics especially, are ambivalent in their attitudes to the Pontiff. 'We preach the word of God,' he said. 'After that it's for the people to make their own response. I don't know why they worry so much about the Church - we're only passing through. It's Christ's Church and eternal.
>
> (Ellis 1994, p. 36)

It is clear that by "changes in the Church" Ellis is referring specifically to Vatican II and the post-conciliar changes. Obviously this is only based on her personal observation but hers are not unusual findings. Michael Carson evokes the same kind of Ireland, steeped in Catholicism, in *The Knight of the Flaming Heart*, and the same sort of feeling is not uncommon in Irish contemporary Irish writers such as Joseph O'Connor and Roddy Doyle.[17]

We can say that Irish Catholicism, although it has a strong influence on English Catholicism, is not indistinguishable from it. The proximity of England and Ireland and, more importantly the large scale immigrations of Irish Catholics to England may give the impression that Irish Catholicism has taken over Catholic England but it seems more realistic to see the whole Irish element as adding another flavour to a small but definite tradition of English Catholicism intent

[17]Both O'Connor, born in 1963, and Doyle, born in 1958, grew up after the Council.

on maintaining and enlarging its own sense of its history and character. In this way Irish Catholicism has affected English Catholics in the same way that Polish migrations to England have added another variant. Irish Catholicism has, in fact almost certainly had a greater influence on American Catholics than English ones who had already a long history of the faith.

In the perspective of the Council we should remember that two of these expatriate novels, *The Luck of Ginger Coffey* and *An Answer from Limbo*, were published before the Council and the other pair, *I am Mary Dunne* and *Fergus*, after it. Within the perspective of Brian Moore's novels, the actual Council is relatively unimportant, the changes in his writing which it contributed to are more easily seen by looking at those novels before and after *Catholics*. *Catholics* is the crucial text and without specifically mentioning the Second Vatican Council it is clear that it was this Council which was its inspiration.

Catholics (1972) is by far the shortest of Moore's novels. In it he creates a fictional world set after a mythical Vatican IV. The Catholic church has changed a great deal although it is only the end of the twentieth century. The implied reason is that once a process of change began with the Second Vatican Council, a rollercoaster has been started to alter the Church beyond recognition. Not only is Christian disunity a thing of the past with the new 'Ecumen Brotherhood' but we are told that "interpenetration between Christian and Buddhist faiths is on the verge of reality". (Moore 1972, p. 44)

A small monastic community which still says the Mass in Latin[18] comes to the attention of the Vatican and an envoy, "James Kinsella. Catholic priest [as he calls himself] in the Ecumenical manner" (Moore 1972, p. 12) has been dispatched by the Father General of his order to put a stop to all the old-fashioned rituals which once stood for orthodoxy and now represent heresy. The old monks still

[18]It is a myth, although an understandable one, that Latin Masses belong exclusively to a pre-Vatican II era. The change from Latin to English is one of the most notable outcomes of the Council but, although it did allow for the use of the vernacular it neither authorized nor envisaged the disappearance of the Latin Rite. See also Chapter 3, p. 72 above.

have a solid belief which the modern form of Catholicism as shown by Moore has abandoned. As it is put to Kinsella, "people don't want truth or social justice, they don't want this ecumenical tolerance. They want certainties." (Moore 1972, p. 13) Moore attacks the changes and ridicules the idea which spawned them with as much vitriol as even Alice Thomas Ellis could wish to see. He is very much an Irishman angry at seeing his cultural past destroyed. In his descriptions of how more traditional or old-fashioned Catholics feel betrayed by the Church it is sometimes difficult to believe that the author, though a writer of fiction, could write so effectively without feeling the same himself. Using hyperbolic language, a letter from Rome informs the Abbot:

> While the needs of your particular congregation might seem to be served by retention of the Latin Mass, nevertheless, as Father Kinsella will explain to you, your actions in continuing to employ the older form are, at this time, particularly susceptible to misinterpretation elsewhere as a deliberate contravention of the spirit of *aggiornamento*.[19] Such an interpretation can and will be made, not only within the councils of the Church itself, but within the larger councils of the ecumenical movement.
>
> (Moore 1972, p. 43)

Other rituals including private confessions and the recitation of the Rosary are also targeted. The Rosary became less popular immediately after Vatican II but has increased in popularity in more recent years. The current Pontiff frequently emphasises his own devotion to the Virgin Mary[20] and recitation of the Rosary has become more widespread, presumably as a result. Private confessions are still the norm in most parts of the world but when the idea of having a general service of reconciliation was first begun, informed opinion[21] states that a number of Catholics, clergy included, thought that this meant the end for private confessions, with

[19]This term was used by Pope John XXIII and fixes the novel as close to the Council. It is not a term used nowadays.

[20]See p. 77, Chapter 3 above.

[21]For example, Fr. Manual Prado, Doctor of Canon Law at the Opus Dei Centre, Helsinki.

a fairly even split between those who were pleased and displeased at such a turn of events. Certainly, following Vatican II a public Service of Reconciliation with General Absolution became quite common and, for some, replaced private confessions. However, the Rubric was always that a private confession should be made of those things absolved in a general reconciliation but this was not universally understood. Even where there is no question of private confessions having been abolished or 'replaced' there has been a general decline in the number of people making regular confessions and a decline in frequency. The times advertised as set aside for confessions have decreased so that in some parishes this sacrament is available by appointment only.[22]

> 'I know it must be difficult. But the retention of private confessions would be a serious mistake. The idea of Catholics confesssing their sins in private to a priest has been distasteful to other groups within the Ecumen brotherhood.'
>
> (Moore 1972, p. 64)

In the novel, private confessions have become "distasteful" essentially because they might be unacceptable to other religious groups. Political motives are what impel Kinsella to act; he is not shown as having any actual belief, certainly he never prays and Moore describes his actions on going to bed and on rising. He turns down an opportunity to say his daily Mass and is shown thinking in secular terms of power only. He is disapproving of the confessions and observes other faults in the monks' religious practices.

> All stood. All prayed: 'Bless us, O Lord, and these Thy gifts, which, of Thy bounty, we are about to receive, through Christ, Our Lord, Amen.' Not, Kinsella noted, the approved Ecumenical[23] grace standard in all other monasteries of the Order. Afterwards, in continuing anachronism, all made the Sign of the Cross.
>
> (Moore 1972, p. 58)

[22]Prior to the Council every Church was supposed to have a 'Confession' bell which might be used at any time in order to summon a priest to hear one's confession. Both Carson (1989, p. 56), and Lodge (1980, pp. 32 33) make reference to this.

[23]These words are an ancient formula used by Catholics and Anglicans.

Moore is again relying on his childhood memories of Catholicism. Monks do not use this form of Blessing before meals,[24] rather it is one learnt in childhood and widely used in Catholic schools so Moore would have used it himself. Monks use a more elaborate form and Moore evidently does not know this. Kinsella is a well-travelled highly educated young priest who constantly operates by working out psychological approaches to what is to him 'the problem'. He is career-minded and secular in his approach to Religion. The monks, on the other hand are little-educated, plain-spoken men with a deep faith and as such their arguments are compelling. Brother Manus is the chief mouthpiece for the complaints and he encapsulates almost everything that has been said by those displeased by the changes to the Mass which followed Vatican II. Kinsella represents a form of Catholicism which does not really exist (at least not yet) but Moore suggests that it is only a matter of time because of the nature of the changes begun by the Council.[25] The monks on the other hand are intended to show a solid front of pre Vatican II Catholicism as if there was unity on all matters.

Problems implicit in this view have been looked at before; the idea that pre-Vatican II and post-Vatican II Catholicism are two distinct entities which can be compared and contrasted has been used before by Carson in particular. Ellis largely avoided the problem by looking at how things seem to certain parts of a largely uninformed laity. Lodge is a little more subtle and admits that such simplifications are precisely that, therefore, he tries to write a fiction which seems to show different perspectives and, naturally only shows those which best suit his purpose. Clearly, Moore intends his small community of monks to represent 'old Catholicism' but it is acceptable precisely because they are only a small group of men. After the Council he does not attempt to show any one position, only

[24]Although popularly referred to as "Grace" it is properly 'Blessing' *before* meals and 'Grace' afterwards.

[25]In this he is in accord with Alice Thomas Ellis although she represents the other extreme of Catholic belief. Recently she has been very critical of the English hierarchy for behaving in what seems a very similar manner to the character of Kinsella in *Catholics*.

a scattering pattern as of waves from a single source passing through a narrow slit. The monks may be following a defunct religious belief but, unlike Waugh's aristocracy, for this small community there is a certainty and a consensus about what they believe. Brother Manus speaks for them:

> '... we went on saying the Mass ... the way we had always said it, the way we had been brought up to say it. The Mass! The Mass in Latin, the priest with his back turned to the congregation because both he and the congregation faced the altar where God was. Offering up the daily sacrifice of the Mass *to God*. Changing bread and wine into the body and blood of Jesus Christ the way Jesus told his disciples to do it at the Last Supper. "This is my body and this is my blood. Do ye this in commemoration of me." God sent His Son to redeem us. His Son came down into the world and was crucified for our sins and the Mass is the commemoration of that crucifixion, of that sacrifice of the body and blood of Jesus Christ for our sins. It is priest and people praying to God, assisting in a miracle whereby Jesus Christ again comes down among us, body and blood in the form of the bread and wine there on the altar. And the Mass was said in Latin because Latin was the language of the Church and the Church was one and universal and a Catholic could go into any Church in the world, here or in Timbuktu, or in China, and hear the same Mass, the only Mass there was, the Latin Mass. And if the Mass was in Latin and the people did not speak Latin, that was part of the mystery of it, for the Mass was not talking to your neighbour, it was talking to God. Almighty God! And we did it that way for nearly two thousand years...'
>
> (Moore 1972, pp. 46 7)

Obedience cannot be ignored and as traditional Catholics, the monks cannot but accede to the order from the Holy See. The deciding factor is the abbot who has already lost his faith or perhaps never really had it. He can not and does not approve of modernisation but as he has reached the conclusion that the faith is not true anyway he finally concedes defeat and promises to acquiesce to the authority of Rome. The feeling Moore evinces is that the Catholic Church as it once was had a certain history and tradition to be proud of. However, once the official Church has chosen to reject its own history, Moore suggests that there is no point in clinging to what is past. He claims that he does not believe and sees

modern Catholicism as completely devoid of any meaning or purpose but if he really does not believe in Catholicism anyway it is hard to understand why he is so concerned about all the changes. Before the Council (the second in history and the fourth in this novel) Catholicism had some historical interest and some beauty in its rituals as well as offering support to a number of people who followed it by providing them with certainties even if false. To attempt to maintain a form of religion without any of these things when there is no God is, to Moore, the height of folly and bad taste. Moore's own response to it implies that the religion of his childhood is not of so little consequence to him now as he wishes to believe it is. The theological climax for the abbot comes when Kinsella denies the truth of transubstantiation and he denies it with all the authority of Rome.

> '...the Mass, for instance. What is the Mass to you?'
>
> Kinsella looked at the Abbot, as the Abbot stared out at the evening sky. Now was the time for the truth, if only a cautious part of the truth. 'I suppose, the Mass to me, as to most Catholics in the world today, is a symbolic act. I do not believe that the bread and wine on the altar is changed into the body and blood of Christ, except in a purely symbolic manner. Therefore, I do not in the old sense, think of God as actually being present there in the tabernacle.' ...He had been about to add that today's best thinking saw the disappearance of the church building as a place of worship in favour of a more generalised community concept, a group that gathered in a meeting to celebrate God-in-others. But decided that, perhaps, the Abbot was not ready for that step.
>
> (Moore 1972, pp. 67-8)

The abbot may only have been wavering before but if this is the "official" line and what he has been doubting is now declared "out-of date" by the powers that be, then there is nothing left for him either to believe or to doubt. We are reminded of Michael's argument with his father in *How Far Can You Go?*[26] Catholics, especially since the Middle Ages and more especially since the Council of Trent, have

[26]See Chapter 6, p. 186 above.

emphasised the centrality of transubstantiation[27] and have defined their Eucharistic belief against Protestantism, in terms of it. It marks an important difference between Catholicism and many other Christian Churches[28] which usually teach that the bread and wine are only symbols for Christ's body and blood.

Moore tries to move away from the religion of his childhood. His comments in interview show that he thinks he has achieved such a move but his fiction indicates that Catholicism is as important as ever. Like Carson, Moore is involved with his own childhood religion and the lack of maturity he shows towards religious matters only highlights his childlike attitude. Moore still makes reference in all his writing to a system of values very like those of the Catholic Church which he says he cannot accept. He certainly does not advocate a switch to Anglicanism, being inclined to follow his hero Joyce on this matter.[29]

Some of Moore's later novels are also set outside Ireland, although interestingly none is set entirely in mainland England. *Lies of Silence* (1990) is closest being set in Northern Ireland and England. It deals directly with the IRA (*The Doctor's Wife* makes no more than oblique reference to it) and is his only novel to do so.[30] Thus it is placed in a very specific time and yet maintains a certain timelessness. This novel is perhaps the best example of Moore's practice which is to deal with a certain thing once and once only in his fiction although the same themes frequently arise in a whole breadth of his work. He postulates the dilemma of a hotel manager forced to carry a bomb to his hotel with his wife held hostage by the terrorists. Moore further muddies the waters by having the Manager on the brink of leaving his wife for his mistress. The plot is closely based on real events which have

[27]This is linked to the importance of the tabernacle which Moore used in *The Lonely Passion of Judith Hearne*, see p. 215 above.

[28]But not all. The Orthodox Churches and some High Anglicans share with Catholics a belief in the substantial presence in the Eucharist.

[29]Joyce is reputed to have said when asked if he might embrace any other religion, "I have lost my faith not my self-respect." He rejected Catholicism at an early age whilst continuing to draw upon it for his fiction. He was buried without religious rites. See Ellmann (1982).

[30]It is reminiscent of Bernard MacLaverty's (1983) *Cal* London, Jonathan Cape, in that both examine and criticise *both* sides in the 'Troubles'.

happened in Belfast over the last twenty years or so but the main emphasis is on the irrelevance of any religious affiliation. Religious difference may have led to such a state of affairs in the province but in our modern rationalistic age, such views cannot be sustained so the violence now is being perpetrated by warmongers and politicians. The Catholicism of Judith Hearne has led to this terrible violence which is as senseless as the religion itself. Religion then is not merely a harmless prop to the weak who are afraid to live in a meaningless universe[31] but an actively destructive force.

In the earlier novels it seems that Moore wants to make himself out to be actively opposed to Catholicism but with the passage of time and his own spatial distance from Ireland the position has changed. The Council is relevant here also. Moore was part of a generation kicking against the pre-Council Catholic Church.[32] In the aftermath of the Council Moore has lost his way in a sense because there is no longer perceived to be a certainty for him to protest against. Carson, Ellis and Lodge all rail against the changes themselves to some degree, although only Ellis was enthusiastic about the state of things beforehand. As a committed non believer, it is difficult for Moore to object to alterations because they cannot matter in something that has no foundation in the first place. This is the essential problem in *Catholics*; if it is not true then the changes are irrelevant. It is important that, although for this writer the changes are not wrong as such, they are still not right either.

Graham Greene comes again to mind when looking at Moore. After the Council, Greene's fictional interests led him further away from Catholicism as a source. He did not cease altogether to use it, instead he merged it with politics which is something Moore also does particularly in *No Other Life* (1993). Piers Paul Read

[31]See also Gleick (1994, p. 438), where Richard Feynman, a celebrated theoretical physicist and Nobel Laureate is quoted, saying, "I don't feel frightened by not knowing things, by being lost in a mysterious universe without any purpose, which is the way it really is as far as I can tell. It doesn't frighten me."

[32]See p. 219 above.

has already been mentioned as a modern-day Greene. He is interesting because he brings Catholicism and politics together in a more mundane environment.[33] For example, in *Monk Dawson* the central figure's concerns revolve around his belief that Catholicism should be an earthly source of help to the poor and disadvantaged in British society. It is not quite Liberation Theology[34] but the parallels are there.[35]

Moore has shown his position as both Irish and non-Irish writer. He has a depth of knowledge of and feeling for the Irish way of life which no outsider could easily assume but he is able also to preserve a detachment in keeping with his present remove from Irish society. This enables him to view political motivation from a safe distance and write about it in more general terms. Thus, in *Lies of Silence* he can describe impartially the response of different groups: the Police who are weary and pessimistic, the manager who just wants a quiet life, his wife who wants self publicity and to expose the terrorists, and even the terrorists themselves who are simply obeying orders to avoid being victimised. The effect is to increase its immediacy rather than dimming it because the appeal and relevance is universal rather than specific to say, Northern Ireland or the Soviet bloc countries.

It is not until his most recent novels that Moore comes to use a priest or religious for the main focus. It has become more usual for him to employ characters who maintain a similar religious viewpoint to his own. Some of these characters even find themselves betrayed by a Church they do not believe in.[36] By choosing female characters, as he does in a number of texts, Moore is able to maintain an illusion of distance. He likes to adopt a feminist stance, which is unusual in a male writer.

---

[33]This is comparable to Lodge's description of his own work in relation to that of Greene. (Lodge 1988, p. 33).

[34]Piers Paul Read fits the definition of 'Orthodox Catholic' discussed in Chapter 3 and for this reason alone would not be a supporter of Liberation Theology.

[35]Similarly in *A Married Man* as mentioned above, p. 224.

[36]This is immediately comparable to Carson's Benson character, see Chapter 4.

Moore is accomplished at bringing the reader into a close identification with his chief protagonist. A female character is often the central one as in *The Lonely Passion of Judith Hearne*. *I am Mary Dunne* builds on the character of Judith Hearne and shows Moore as a feminist writer. By that I mean simply someone who writes from a female viewpoint about matters of particular interest to women. Moore seems to be experimenting here. Mary Dunne is seeking to escape the pursuit of her past. This includes an escape from her family, Ireland, Catholicism and herself. In the novel pre-menstrual tension makes her mentally unstable. This is a subject rarely made explicit before Moore's time of writing (1968). He must be aware that his masculinity helps to give such a "feminine" subject credibility. Mary Dunne's general wish to escape has been covered in Moore's other works but her desire to escape from her gender is new. She does not have the strength of an Ellis heroine, she belongs to a patriarchal society and feels repressed by it; she is closer to Carson's heroes who feel disadvantaged by the heterosexuality of society. However, Mary Dunne recognises that this is largely her own fault for taking on the roles expected of her. She has attained her enviable social status by marriage:

> I hate being a woman, I hate this sickening female role playing. I mean the silly degradation of playing pander and whore in the presentation of my face and figure in a man's world. I sweat with shame when I think of the uncounted hours of poking about in dress shops, the Narcissus hours in front of mirrors, the bovine hours under hair driers and for what? So that men will say in the street, ' I want to fuck you, baby,' so that men will marry me and *keep* me and let's not go into that if I don't want the dooms in spades.
>
> (Moore 1992b, pp. 31–2)

This sort of interior monologue interspersed with extracts of events from her past and present life forms the novel. Its whole subject and form suggest interior knowledge and understanding of women. Moore (1993) speaks of his own childhood as one surrounded by strong women. He has a clear sense that in a traditional Irish community, it was the women rather than the men who had the real power. In

this sense he agrees with Ellis and, even, with Carson. Dunne has rejected this tribal cultural life and has unwittingly lost her female power by setting herself outside traditional society. This is a recurring problem in feminist ideology. Women were not powerless as long as they remained in traditional roles in society but continued those traditions by staying in them. Moore's novel dramatises this double bind. *The Doctor's Wife* (1976) takes a more actively obvious feminist stance. Again the main protagonist, Sheila Redden, is a woman who feels that she has been reliant on men all her life and now she seeks escape. The desire to leave her husband is more acceptable than her additional intention to abandon her son. But both are men and she must cut all ties with them in order to develop herself. They represent a masculine world where women are cared for but considered inherently inferior to their male masters. After years of serving and caring for her two men Sheila Redden flies in the face of all convention to make a fresh start. The trigger here is a lover she takes in Paris who implores her to come to America and start a new life with him. Thus, she is shown to revenge womankind on mankind in a primal way. This done, she gives him up without explanation and lives alone. The male need for sex is portrayed as a great weakness. She uses her lover for sexual pleasure but when her husband forces himself upon her as his conjugal right, he thinks he has won but really he has just thrown away the very last chance of keeping her. She has come of age and 'come out' just as completely as a homosexual might, but she 'comes out' about her self, she is a person not merely a woman. Most interestingly, the male characters in the novel constantly explain Sheila Redden's behaviour in terms of mental instability and even the possibility of gynaecological illness. To them the concept of her simply being sick of the male gender is incomprehensible. This feminist approach is striking in a male writer but feminists have not deployed Moore for their purposes.

The Temptation of Eileen Hughes (1981) retains the feminist sense of *The Lonely Passion of Judith Hearne* and *I Am Mary Dunne* whilst returning to greater emphasis on religious matters. It is the most explicit example of Moore

offering alternatives to religion as a reason for existence. In this novel, Eileen is purity and innocence personified and she is adored obsessively, albeit unknown to her, by her employer. As long as she is unaware of his feelings for her she remains a symbol of this purity but, once he confesses his obsession to her, she is being tested. She represents the inner strength of woman which is possible in a more traditional environment. He represents Mammon to the extent that Moore uses such terms to describe this character. (Moore 1981, p. 111) He is a failed religious who has inherited a fortune through his father's business, she is a simple girl with a sick and poverty-stricken mother to support. He is offering her anything she wants (including a better flat for her mother) in return for nothing except that he might adore her from a distance. She is his substitute for religion. He draws further religious parallels from the situation.

> ...he drank again. "I was thinking of something I read once. Love is a religion whose God is fallible ...dear Eileen, I was wrong, it's me's the fallible one, not you you're perfect. I should have resisted temptation this afternoon. It's funny the parallels between religion and love. They even have the same deadly sins. It was the sin of pride that did me in today. Wanting to impress you. Bringing you to London was another sin, the sin of gluttony I suppose.
>
> (Moore 1981, p. 75)

He is equating his love for her with the love of God for His creation.

> Desire isn't love. Desire is something you can control. ...But love isn't like that. When you fall in love with someone, really fall in love, it's a sort of miracle, it's almost religious. The person you love is perfect. As God is perfect. It's ...I never felt this way about anyone or anything before. It's as though nothing will happen in my life that *will have any importance from now* on, compared to this feeling I have for you. It fills me. It leaves no room for anything or anyone else. It's all I have.
>
> (Moore 1981, p. 76)

He has replaced love of God with love of one of His creatures. She, nominally a Catholic, has no adherence to any religious belief. However, her morality is

still strong. She successfully resists McAuley's offers and escapes him for some principle of Right which, being a simple soul, she does not have to explain. Moore again stresses the place and importance of morality and emphasises that it is not the preserve of organised religion. Through the character of McAuley, Moore also strongly implies that those who tend towards religious belief are unbalanced in some way, McAuley has simply replaced one form of mania for another: we learn in the course of the novel that he once entered a Benedictine monastery as a lay brother and had a nervous breakdown after he left. In his obsession with Eileen he is exhibiting the same personality weakness which is euphemistically ascribed to him being "very intense". (Moore 1981, p. 94) His eventual suicide has none of the glamour that a Greene character's might, it is truly pointless as he has thrown away his only life. The power of the female over the male is shown here more evidently than in *The Doctor's Wife*. There she was merely able to escape him but here Eileen has ultimate power over life and death by her very refusal to accept the powerwielder's position.

Although notable for never going over the same ground twice, Brian Moore has evident pre occupations but his situations do change dramatically. Eileen Hughes, still only a young girl, is the strongest female character Moore has invented so far. Indeed, it is rather because she is a young girl that she has such strength. Although ostensibly 'anti-Catholic' this emphasis on the power of a young girl can also bear a Catholic interpretation. The traditional Catholic reverence for virginity and the importance of the cult of Mary and the prominence of Bernadette of Lourdes, Thérèse of Lisieux and other young maiden saints, may show that Moore is being more Catholic than he realises. The older generation, for Moore, are generally those hidebound by religious belief whether they are genuine believers or only Irish men and women caught up in a cultural Catholicism. The young. on the other hand, as a result of the general social changes of the sixties and to an extent the Second Vatican Council, have a power denied to their elders. Judith Hearne was barely able to consider a reason for living without

her religion, Mary Dunne lives out a religion-free existence still troubled by her religious past but the youngest of the three, Eileen Hughes, is able to make her own decisions without guilt. She stands in a similar position to Gavin at the end of *The Emperor of Ice-Cream* but, as a 1980s female, she did not have such a struggle to reach it.

For McAuley, meeting Eileen was a religious experience. In *The Great Victorian Collection* (1975) and *The Mangan Inheritance* (1979) Moore is also writing about secular religious experiences. This is comparable to the idea of a Christian Gentleman or Secular Catholic character,[37] Moore is extrapolating and describing secular religious events and miracles. In the case of *The Mangan Inheritance*, concerned with an expatriate poet returning to Ireland in search of his ancestral doppelganger, it is just conceivable that what happens is a series of bizarre coincidences but the inclination is to attribute events to some higher force such as Chance or Fate. Moore uses close attention to practical detail to emphasise the realism of what he is writing. He intends the reader to read on a realist level and therefore to be jolted by what takes place. In *The Great Victorian Collection* the events are much stranger. A man's dream of a collection of great Victorian artefacts comes real. The possibility of his mental instability is explored as is the idea that what is being described is only an unusual phenomenon that science has yet to explain fully. These narrative devices allow the reader to maintain a common-sense interpretation of what he reads while being surprised and engrossed by what he is reading. Maloney in *The Great Victorian Collection* cannot escape this secular miracle, the collection itself, and his suicide is as inevitable as that of McAuley.

In *The Mangan Inheritance* Moore is beginning to experiment with an individual's control over his destiny. James Mangan thinks that he is in pursuit of his history but it soon emerges that his past is pursuing him and threatening to

[37]See the discussion of the characters of Benson in Chapter 4, and Bernard in *Paradise News* in Chapter 6.

engulf him. As the novel closes there is a sense that Mangan has won against supernatural events and beaten the ghosts of his past which pursue him. He has free will but barely enough to exercise it and there is still some doubt as to whether he is quite sane. *Cold Heaven* (1983) is similar to these two 1970s novels in being concerned very much with the miraculous and it follows *The Mangan Inheritance* in espousing personal autonomy. It is like its immediate predecessor; it, too, has a central female character with whom the reader closely associates himself from the outset. There is no occasion to doubt Marie Davenport's mental stability save her experience of these visions. She has a vision of the Virgin Mary; once in waking life and repeatedly in her dreams. She does not doubt what she has seen but is angry that she was "forced" to see it at all and consistently refuses to acknowledge her belief. If it were not for her husband's bizarre "illness" following an accident in which he was apparently killed, she would not have anything to do with these apparitions at all. *The Great Victorian Collection* is a still more secular manifestation of the miraculous and Catholicism itself is not directly an issue. But in *Cold Heaven*, Catholicism is more sinister, or a least it is so perceived by Marie.

In addition, there is the problem of the reliability of characterisation. We feel compelled to believe in the main character but Moore has to go to great lengths, describing Marie's feelings and explaining her past life in order that we do not simply dismiss her testimony as that of an unreliable character. Paradoxically we are less likely to do so because it is clear that some of the other characters do precisely that. Powerful male characters, such as her husband, the local priest and even her own lover, are inclined to dismiss her as unreliable because she is a woman. Thus, the reader wants to agree with Marie and yet this requires acceptance of the impossible. Moore denies his characters the religious assumptions that would make this possible. What is being stressed here is the essential nature of Faith.

Catholic dogma categorises Faith as a theological virtue.

> The theological virtues...are infused by God into the souls of the faithful to make them capable of acting as his children and of meriting eternal life. They are the pledge of the presence and action of the Holy Spirit in the faculties of the human being. There are three theological virtues: faith, hope and charity.
>
> (CTS 1994, §1813)

Thus, it is a virtue which comes only from God, it can not be gained by Man by anything he does, only God can bestow it. For the believer this great gift from God is a reason for joy.

> Faith is the theological virtue by which we believe in God and believe all that he has said and revealed to us, and that the Holy Church proposes for our belief, because he is truth itself. By faith 'man freely commits his entire self to God.' For this reason the believer seeks to know and do God's will.
>
> (CTS 1994, §1814)

For Moore this is a kind of trick. If Faith comes from God then He can ensure belief in Him. But, through the character of Marie Davenport, Moore shows it is possible to refuse God's gift and so exercise free will, another gift from God but one granted to all. Moore's attachment to Catholic matters is revealed again by his interest in such religious complexities. To a believer it seems impossible that one would not believe given all the evidence Mrs Davenport is provided with. Yet the New Testament says "If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced if some one should rise from the dead,"[38] and the miracle of Fatima in October 1917[39] did not convince all the 70,000 people who witnessed it. The point here is more than whether Marie has the gift of Faith or whether she has sufficient reason to believe. She is directly challenging God. She does not doubt the veracity of her experience but is angry because she believes that her free will is being manipulated. Having had a vision and been entrusted to

[38]The parable of Lazarus and Dives, Luke xvi, 19 31.

[39]See, for example, Rev. V. Montes de Oca (1945) *More About Fatima* .

tell the priests, she exercises her free will in refusing to do so. This is a very Catholic subject. When her husband is wandering around in a zombie-like state she feels sure that only God could have done this and believes that he is doing it through the ministers of the Catholic Church. She then see-saws between fear of the Church and anger at her impotence against such an institution backed up, as she believes by God himself. Marie is willing to be martyred for her agnosticism.[40] She is pursued quite relentlessly but simply refuses to give in. It is therefore a fine example of the exercising of free will (Marie does triumph by helping another more receptive candidate to experience the vision, and denying that she saw or heard anything this time, she is finally free to pursue her life and adulterous love affair unmolested). She refuses to accept the gift of Faith or at least she refuses to act upon it.[41] Although apparently in opposition to Catholicism, Moore remains within Catholic assumptions about free will, Faith and so on. On a surface level he seems to attack Catholicism but by failing to modify Catholic assumptions he emerges as more Catholic than he probably intends. He illustrates that Faith is essential and that there can be no positive proof that God exists or that one religion or another is right.

As shown, Moore consciously takes an anti-Catholic stance and he often attacks the Church within his novels albeit while adhering to a Catholic framework. Some of his more recent works have even described the situation of practising Catholics very sympathetically. Coming from a large Catholic family, Moore is one of nine children and has a sister who is a nun. Therefore, it is reasonable to suppose that he is writing of what he knows even if he does not accept it personally. However, he makes errors when writing about Catholicism[42] although he is

[40]See also Walsh (1994), the character Palinor is, in effect, martyred, when put to death for refusing to give up his unbelief.

[41]Another example of this is to be found in Anne Redmon's (1974) *Emily Stone* London, Secker and Warburg, in which the heroine refuses to be converted despite her conviction that Catholicism is Right.

[42]See p. 226 and p. 236 above.

in a position to know. Essentially he is playing with what he takes Catholicism to be. Partly, this is a distortion because his understanding of Catholicism stems wholly from his childhood and partly it is a deliberate misrepresentation to better suit his fiction. It is often hard to believe all he says about his own attitudes[43] which contrast so starkly with Michael Carson who admits his personal and emotional involvement. Alice Thomas Ellis agrees with Carson here. For them both, religious belief is a matter of feeling. Moore is closer to Lodge. Ellis and Carson are involved with differences of gender and highlight these differences in their work whereas Moore and Lodge are more concerned with traditional sexual roles and have a more rationalistic approach. Moore and Lodge both align themselves with a non-emotional sort of religion. The main difference being that Lodge accords himself a belief of sorts while Moore distances himself from it.

Moore has recently written a number of novels with priests in central roles. *The Colour Of Blood* (1987) is set in a fictional eastern state under communist rule which the reader quickly identifies with Poland, in his own words Moore describes this as "the novel I have always wanted to write about Ireland." (Massie 1990, p. 32)

For once, Moore writes of a main character who does have faith, or at least the appearance of it. It is a political thriller concerning a Cardinal who is betrayed both by the established church and by some of the laity. The fate of this individual depends largely on the reader's viewpoint: a believer will be inclined to perceive him as a martyr for his faith, a non-believer may pity him as a puppet of the politicians or a pawn of the people. However the personal perspective is not really relevant to Moore's purpose here. He concentrates on one individual who is pure of heart and sincere to show how he can still be manipulated. He may even be implying that the clergy can be manipulated by warmongers precisely because of their guileless disposition. Certainly the politically naïve Cardinal is continually shown as unwilling to think ill of anyone without concrete proof. Moore seems to

[43]See p. 255 below.

want his readers to associate political innocence with the Church. In doing this he is not clearing the Church of guilt with regard to political violence, rather the opposite, he wants to blame that very innocence for causing so much harm. By displacing the action to an imaginary communist regime, Moore puts himself at liberty to be more condemnatory of the Church, particularly the Irish Catholic Church.

What does emerge in *The Colour of Blood* which Moore perhaps never intended, is a fine role-model of Catholic behaviour in the character of Cardinal Bem. Bem is constantly considering and reconsidering his behaviour in the light of his faith and trying to be as Christ-like as possible. He is truly humble despite his episcopal rank and attracts admiration for his constancy. Moore shows him, in a continuously sympathetic light:

> He knelt at the prie-dieu and bowed his head. Examination of conscience. I lack all charity. Tonight, I was arrogant in my dealings with Henry Krasnoy. Also, I allowed myself to enter into collusion with Father Malik by my spiteful, malicious remark. I led him to mock one of Your Archbishops. And Joseph? Did I accept Your will? Should I not rejoice that Joseph has gone to meet You? Also, I should remember that two men, not one, died tonight because of me. That man who tried to kill me: grant him peace, O Lord. I am Your servant, created by You. All that I have I have through You and from You. Nothing is my own, I must do everything for You and only for You. Tonight at the meeting I was obsessed by politics. I thought of the danger to our nation. I did not think of the sufferings we cause You by our actions. My fault, my most grievous fault.
>
> (Moore 1988, p. 23)

Bem's predecessor in this is the character of Brother Manus in *Catholics*. Again there is a taste, I think, of Moore denying his religious background rather too strongly to be believed. As a writer at least he seems to place himself outside the whole dilemma of faith and doubt, in this sense he is very much the omniscient author. However, in the light of his insistence on his own non-belief one gets the feeling he is trying so hard to be a non-Catholic that he stands out

as an anti-Catholic, and therefore nearly a Catholic, instead. In *The Colour of Blood* itself there is nothing to indicate that the author is anything other than a Catholic believer himself, it is only through his other works and familiarity with his biography that we know this to be the case.

Black Robe (1985) precedes *The Colour of Blood* and is a different portrayal of the clergy. It is a historical tale based on fact which is narrated in a matter-of-fact way. There is, interestingly, a connection with Greene here as Moore states that it is from reading Greene that he first became interested in the history of the Jesuits in North America on which this novel is based. In his note on the text Moore provides a sign of both his strong concern for morality and also his distaste for organised religion.

> A voice speaks to us directly from the seventeenth century, the voice of a conscience that, I fear, we no longer possess.... From the works of anthropologists and historians who have established many facts about Indian behaviour not known to the early Jesuits, I was made doubly aware of the strange and gripping tragedy that occurred when the Indian belief in a world of night and in the power of dreams clashed with the Jesuits' preachments of Christianity and a paradise after death. This novel is an attempt to show that each of these beliefs inspired in the other fear, hostility, and despair, which would result in the destruction and abandonment of the Jesuit missions, and the conquest of the Huron people by the Iroquois, their deadly enemy.
>
> (Moore 1987, pp. 7 9)

The latter part of this extract provides a partial answer to his religious opposition in that religion like different cultures, emphasises difference and provides a breeding ground for strife. The whole novel is a play on the doubts possible for a Catholic. Fr. Laforgue is placed in the most inhospitable situation possible so that his adherence to his religious practices can be made to seem ridiculous. Conversely, depending upon the reader's viewpoint, he appears to be a true martyr to his Faith.[44]

[44]In this Laforgue is a predecessor of Bem in *The Colour of Blood*, both may be seen as martyr or fool depending upon the reader's viewpoint.

Doubt is an important element in all the novels and it is the central point in the clergy novels. It is exemplified in *No Other Life* about which Moore has spoken at some length in interview. This is also his first novel to be deeply concerned with Liberation Theology[45] The political potential of religion is important for Moore, as we have seen he claims to be not interested in religion as far as it relates to another world for as he has been asserting throughout his fiction, "there is no other life". (Moore 1993) This is described as "that quiet but deadly sentence" (Moore 1994c, p. 96), a phrase which again implies some quasi-Catholic assumptions. However, a religion which might be immediately concerned with improving the lot of people in this life may have its value for Moore, as with Hartmann[46] in *Catholics*. Still it is clear that such intentions would be of greater worth if not brought about by religion. It is in *No Other Life* that there occurs a notable bit of autobiography. It occurs when Fr. Paul Michel's mother is dying.

> 'Father Demarais has given me the last rites. So I know it's over. Paul, I'm afraid.' She began to weep. 'Don't be afraid,' I told her. 'No one wants to die, but no one is more ready for death than you are. Soon you will be in heaven.' When I said that, she lifted her head and stared at me. Her face was the face of a stranger, frightened, despairing. 'No, Paul, no!' Was there some sin, real or imagined, which made her think this? 'Why, *Maman*?' ...'There is no one watching over us. Last week when I knew I was dying, I saw the truth. Paul, I have prayed all my life. I believed in God, in the Church, I believed I had a soul that was immortal. But I have no soul. When we die, there is nothing... There is no other life,' my mother said.
>
> (Moore 1994c, pp. 72–3)

It causes the narrator to begin to doubt as his mother doubted at the very end of her life,

> She had been as certain in her unbelief as, all her life, she had been certain in belief. In the darkness and silence of that night before her

[45]See above p. 64, Chapter 3. Liberation Theology is commonly referred to as the "fundamental option for the poor". (Smith 1990, p. 108).

[46]See Moore (1972, p. 67), where the necessity of disposing of God before Christianity can be a viable force is outlined.

> funeral, a sad and terrible question crept into my mind. Why did God fail her at the end?
>
> (Moore 1994c, p. 75)

And from Moore in interview we have:

> Interviewer: I wonder, has that ever happened to a Catholic you knew?
>
> Moore: It happened to me. It's the one event of the story which I took completely autobiographically. My mother died in the late fifties and she was Irish and Catholic, extremely Catholic and I wasn't... I was sitting with her and she said pretty much the things said in the novel.
>
> (Moore 1993)

The chief problem for the reader here is the status of these remarks. Through his fiction, it does seem as if Moore is trying a little too hard to deny his affiliation to Catholicism, there is more than a whiff of a Freudian "strong denial". Certainly Moore's own sister is unable to believe that such a deathbed scene could have occurred in reality but neither is she surprised that her brother should have employed such as a device, as she says:

> When I read that scene I thought, 'here goes his imagination again' and as he would like it to have been because there was no way my mother had any doubts on her death bed... she told me that she was ready to die and not to pray for her to get better.
>
> (Moore 1993)

Either Moore or his sister is telling the truth; they cannot both be. It is quite possible that Moore is constructing a biographical basis against faith just as he does in his novels. In other words, this death-bed conversion to atheism maybe as fictional as the death-bed repentance of Lord Marchmain.[47] The graphic martyrdom of *Black Robe* is implicit here in *No Other Life*. Jeannot has given his life to save the poor of his country and almost succeeded. That he failed is

[47]See Waugh (1962, p. 321) and p. 43, Chapter 2.

shown as the fault of his religion although without his status as priest the poor would not have had faith in him and called him their Messiah:

> I looked at the ground, anonymous as the unmarked graves of peasants who had died a hundred years ago. Jeannot, his incantory voice for ever silent, Jeannot who had passed into legend. If only he *were* the Messiah, if only the gravestone could be rolled back. But I stood on this earth and he lay beneath it, his frail body returning, ashes to ashes, dust to dust. I knelt down by the unmarked grave but not to pray. I touched the muddied earth in a useless caress as though, somehow, he would know that I had come here. I wept but my tears could not help him. There is no other life.
>
> (Moore 1994c, p. 215)

Moore is expounding the pointlessness of existence, the futility of trying to do anything because this is all there is. Again, without at least a residual belief in immortality this would not be possible. The lack of belief is dramatised as such only by incorporating the very Christian view which it rejects.

The Statement (1995) is also concerned with the clergy. Here the Catholic church as a whole is being criticised for its political incorrectness. Moore castigates the Church for seeing itself as above the Law and therefore harbouring a Nazi accused (in the 1990s) of war crimes. Moore is involved in conspiracy theory here and, as we have seen, willing to fictionalise the Catholic Church to suit his fiction. Overall it is an astonishingly virulent anti-Catholic piece.[48] He goes just one stage further from political naïveté among priests, as depicted in *The Colour of Blood*, to postulate active political manipulation using Catholicism as a shield.[49] Brossard's apparent conversion to Catholicism which appears superficial to the reader is shown as convincing some priests that he is truly repentant whereas others choose to believe him because they do not want to have to admit publically past mistakes. Thus, the possible political benefits of Catholicism as

[48]Although Moore is never straightforward about this and continually puts across both sides of the issue to promote an apparent balance.

[49]Clerical figures are shown as politically motivated here in a way which is anathematic to Bem in *The Colour of Blood*.

shown in *No Other Life* are weighed against the political damage and corruption achievable by the Church and strongly implied by Moore. The outcome for Moore is a further reason for condemning the Church and its works. How far this condemnation corresponds to the origin of his interest in Catholicism, which occasions his best writing, is another matter.

Part Four :

Conclusion

Chapter Eight: CONCLUSION

Graham Greene and Evelyn Waugh provide a basic view of Catholicism before the Second Vatican Council. The fact that they are so different in everything but their shared religion supports the view that they give a valid idea of what ' Catholicism' meant at the time for, although there was no single form of Catholicism prior to the Council and a huge diversity after it, the consensus of belief before it does seem to be easier to define. The following discussion of the Council[1] raised the problem of its subjective meaning and that it is open to many varied interpretations. This needs to be considered when looking at the literature concerned with the Council.

Greene and Waugh represent the opposite poles of Catholic belief in the first half of the century and are also the most well-known Catholic novelists of the time. It is important to remember, however, that they are only examples of a genre and that there were many other Catholic novelists writing at the same time. What all the writers considered during this period do have in common is that they are all converts to Catholicism.[2] This was the norm at the time but in the case of the contemporary authors of the later chapters, it has become unusual not to have been born a Catholic.[3] It is misleading to draw a rigid 'pre- and post-'Council division between the two groups of novelists and, as has been noted, Brian Moore is much older than the other three. As stated at the

[1]In addition, the changing role of the Catholic theologian required some explanation which only a closer look at the Council could provide.

[2]Antonia White is mentioned in this section more than once at least partly because, having become a Catholic at the age of seven (when her father did) she can almost be classed as a cradle Catholic.

[3]Alice Thomas Ellis being the only convert in this group.

outset, the four authors selected are intended to represent the broad spectrum of post-Vatican II Catholic belief. The issues of the first chapter seen through the second chapter are considered with relation to the four authors and their novels. Moore's age makes him a link to the past, in addition both he and David Lodge published fiction before the Council. These early novels, like those of Greene and Waugh, give no indication that an event such as a Vatican Council was either likely or imminent.[4] It is generally recorded that Pope John XXIII, in calling a Vatican Council took everyone including the rest of the Church hierarchy — by surprise. He was thought to be a 'caretaker' pope only, but proved to be responsible for the greatest upheaval within the Church this century.[5]

The concerns of the first chapter still persist by and large in the work of the contemporary authors but with important differences. The clergy as written about by Greene and Waugh become more important as individuals rather than mere representations of the clergy, and nuns (again mostly on an individual basis) have become an important subject for more recent novels. This increase in interest in nuns in particular, is partly explained by the gender of the writer — it is natural that Alice Thomas Ellis should chose to write more about nuns — and also as a result of the growing movement for Women's liberation. Thus a general expression of interest in matters female is more popular. Nuns also appear to

[4]What seems to hold true for all Catholic fiction at the time is summed up by Jill Paton Walsh writing about the 1950s:

> Theoretically, if another Council were ever called... Everybody laughed. Councils of the Church struck them, like inquisitions, heretic trials, or selling indulgences, as the sort of thing that had been put far behind. 'Surely there couldn't be another Council?' said Paul....They weighed the prospect, everyone of them finding it fanciful. Had an angel in glory appeared to them and told them that Hubert was prophesying they wouldn't have believed it. You might as well have told them they would live to see the Vatican proscribing the Latin Mass.
>
> (Walsh 1986, pp. 115–6)

[5]See, for example, S. C. Lorit (1966) *Everybody's Pope: The Life of Pope John XXIII* New York, New City Press.

exist in direct opposition to ideas such as 'female equality'.[6] What comes out most strongly especially through Ellis' writing is an idea of *a* feminism which is strong, maternal and quite unlike typical 'secular' feminism. Rather it corresponds closely to Carson's perception of the motherly[7] Church which is the aspect of Catholicism which attracted and continues to attract him through many doubts and disagreements with the paternalistic face of the Catholic Church. Lodge and Moore have a very limited interest in the motherly face of Catholicism. Carson utilises the comparison of the maternal and paternal dimensions and how they relate, interact and contradict as far as he sees it. For Ellis, there is no contradiction, the Church exists as a coherent whole with feminine and masculine aspects in harmony, at least they were until the advent of Vatican II. The other point about nuns is that they raise the issue of habits. Apparently trivial, this one aspect of reform which followed the Council has aroused widespread interest[8] and, within the fiction which comments on it, unanimous opposition — even liberals like Lodge and non-practising Catholics like Moore are opposed or critical of the 'modernisation of dress' and its results.

This criticism of the Church indicates that the whole idea of betrayal has been turned on its head. The fixed and inalterable Church before the Council has now altered and become the betrayer itself instead of the pursuer. Pursuit of Man by God is not an issue in the face of the supremacy of 'personal conscience'. In Lodge in particular we have a feeling that his characters are seeking a God less clearly defined than before (a comparison of Lodge's later work with his only pre-Vatican II novel confirms this) a situation they feel uncomfortable with at the very least.

The very fact that the Council happened is, however, a sign of the Church's ab-

[6]As we have seen it is not nearly as simple as this: liberated and feminist nuns do exist in life (for example, Karen Armstrong, see p. 142, Chapter 5) and in fiction, Lodge and Perriam both have liberated nuns as characters, see above p. 146, Chapter 5 and p. 198, Chapter 6.

[7]See p. 85, Chapter 4 above.

[8]Even writers little concerned with Catholicism in general, such as Antonia Fraser, seem to have been concerned with this aspect of the changes. See p. 145, Chapter 5.

ility to operate in the twentieth-century. Following Vatican I, Newman's thoughts helped to canvas the view that the Church maintained its integrity by development. Vatican II has functioned as a dramatisation of the life of the Church and in conjunction with the media interest in John XXIII and the media and political interest in John Paul II has helped to keep the Church in view. It is important that the Church *had* a Vatican Council rather than just stumbling into the changes that have occurred with the last few decades of this century. In this the Catholic Church is very different from the Church of England. The Second Vatican Council provided a valid breeding ground for change and a concrete focus for our contemporary novelists.

What emerges from Carson and Lodge in just a few of their characters is the idea of a new and more liberal Catholicism in the wake of the Council. Its representatives have all the certainty of their pre-Vatican II ancestors yet we are frustratingly not privy to their actual beliefs except in the vaguest terms. What is much more common and particularly prevalent within the media is the idea of a new Catholicism which is amorphous, all-encompassing and very much akin to a more general Christianity. This is what Lodge talks about in *Write On* but the other authors do not depict it as such. Ellis and Moore[9] both want nothing to do with changes, they want the old ways or nothing. Carson would like change but sees the changes which have been wrought as, at best, trivial or, more likely, irrelevant. Lodge is the only one who comes close to applauding the changes heralded by the Council[10] and even he is cynical about the good done.

The sexual issue has been magnified since Greene and Waugh but this is largely at least a by-product of our sexually explicit age.[11] It is associated with the relative absence of death and the after-life as subjects. This lack may be

[9]His acclaimed anti-Catholic stance notwithstanding.

[10]Piers Paul Read is an example of a cautious orthodox conservative who accepts the Council although he is critical of the way it has been interpreted.

[11]Certainly its importance in literature is an indication of the altered society producing it and the ease with which sexual matters can be discussed, particularly in the wake of the *Lady Chatterley* trial and the legalisation of homosexuality.

indicative of a shift away from specific details of belief but also is related to the juxtaposition of what John Paul II has called 'The Culture of Life versus the Culture of Death'.[12] This is because, with increased concern about sex come more specific issues to do with it: contraception, abortion,[13] promiscuity, marital fidelity and divorce. For each of these four writers sex has a different place. Carson is concerned almost solely with one aspect, that of homosexuality, Lodge is constantly writing about its relation and (to him) apparent incompatibility with religion with special regard to contraception.[14] Ellis on the other hand laughs at the obsession with sex as an irrelevance and for Moore it is of small importance except as an expression of love which is of paramount importance to him.

Issues like contraception and abortion are topical, they were simply not applicable back in the 30s and 40s. The appearance of these subjects within fiction is a clear case of the relevance they have in real life. Suicide is little utilised in contemporary Catholic fiction, it has been replaced by more up-to-date subjects. Most recently and particularly within the Catholic Press, euthanasia has become a matter of heated debate. In a society which is advocating the acceptability of "assisted suicide" the drama of more conventional suicide is diminished. Traditionally the Church has a definite position on euthanasia as it does on the other matters and thus, we might expect to find fiction which deals with it emerging in the foreseeable future.[15]

All the writers studied here consider themselves and are generally viewed as essentially realist. As stated, I belief that fiction mirrors life and can therefore provide insights into reality often unplanned by the author. As far as novelists as a group are ever representative of a community, I believe the works of these

[12]See, for example, Pope John Paul II (1995) *The Gospel of Life* London, Fount.

[13]Abortion is now seen as a vital election issue in the United States of America.

[14]However, Lodge who favours contraception whilst opposing abortion acknowledges that the two are linked which is a very Catholic view.

[15]By this I mean fiction which apportions serious thought and due weight to such matters, poor fiction which seeks only to sensationalise high-profile moral dilemmas probably already abounds whereas good, serious fiction worthy of study is always rarer and takes time to reach fruition.

four provide a valid although by no means an exclusive or complete — view of Catholics and Catholic communities in Britain. Incidental references to articles and news items in the press have been included in order to emphasis this validity.

Lodge[16] implies that the day of the specifically 'Catholic novelist' is past he also suggests that this is probably a good thing.[17] I beg to differ. As I hope to have demonstrated there are in fact a large number of Catholics writing and many are concerned enough to be writing about their Catholicism and not merely using it as a backdrop to their fiction.

However, the four writers studied here (and their contemporaries) are unusual in that they exist in a kind of bubble. In the same way that Greene and Waugh could only be writing in the flurry of what Newman called 'The Second Spring' of Catholicism following the high profile conversions from the Oxford Movement and between the two World Wars; Carson, Ellis, Lodge and even Moore are all writing about their religion as people who have experienced it before the Council, lived through the Council and are now living in the aftermath.[18] In addition, the first three were all young adults when the Council occurred, not yet settled into a way of life or rigid within their belief. Carson was turning from his religion when suddenly, as it were, it moved away from him, Ellis had but recently converted to something she perceived as unchanging and eternal before the Council altered it and Lodge was apparently[19] involved with those educated academic Catholics who had been agitating for change and were eager for the revolution of the Council and of whom he writes.[20] As such these writers hold a position with regard to

[16]See Lodge (1988, p. 37).

[17]See p. 190, Chapter 6 above.

[18]Both Greene and Waugh, of course, lived through the Council too. Waugh's unhappiness with it is well-known (see, for example, Sykes (1977, p. 595)); although Greene seems to have passed little enough comment upon it, the indications are that he was as little satisfied as any of our writers.

[19]It seems clear from *How Far Can You Go?* that Lodge himself was a member or at least associated with a group of liberal-thinking, educated Catholics who broadly welcomed the Council and were later dissatisfied with it for a variety of reasons. He fictionalised this group as the COC 'Catholics for an Open Church'.

[20]Particularly, in *How Far Can You Go?*

their religion which is unique and will not occur again and is therefore worthy of consideration. It is particularly for them that the Council is important. The evidence for this, is, of course somewhat limited. However, I believe it is just starting to emerge. The succeeding generation of Catholic novelists[21] have barely started to published work at all. We cannot really look ahead but from the little evidence, the novels of Joseph O'Connor and Roddy Doyle, for example, it seems that this sort of writing will not be seen again. Yet I would still say that they are specifically Catholic writers. The peculiar nature of Irish Catholic writing and its relation to English Catholicism has been looked at through Moore, unfortunately I am unaware of any new Catholic novelists appearing who are specifically English. Still, O'Connor and Doyle evoke a Catholicism which is strangely unchanged by the Council they both utilise images of a Catholic past which is reminiscent of Moore's and Carson's childhood memories.[22] Thus it seems that the Catholicism of the past persists, at least within Literature. Its place within the fabric of society has altered but little there has been a huge upheaval — a religious earthquake, some things have gone forever but everything has settled down again to be remarkably similar to how it was [23] and the only people who are particularly perturbed are those who remember the upheaval itself.

The Council, or at least its immediate impact, is considered to be over. Modern,young Catholic writers are not concerned with it, perhaps because their imagination was not formed by a decisive change in Catholic practice. Within the Church, as we saw in the Vatican II chapter, there is a form of Catholicism emerging which pronounces certainty and orthodoxy[24] in a 'pre-Vatican II' way whilst embracing a certain interpretation of the Documents of the Council in line with the views of the current Pope. What is clear, in the West at least, is that this

[21] By which I mean those who have grown up in the post-Vatican II environment.

[22] And more especially the cultural Catholicism typical of Moore.

[23] Given Lodge's obsession with sex it is interesting to compare this with how he describes one couple's personal sexual revolution. "In due course their erotic life became as habitual as before, if more subtly textured."(Lodge 1980, p. 153).

[24] In that it is loyal to the Pope, see p. 69, Chapter 3 above.

section of the Catholic community is largely motivated by the laity and carries many young members. Writing in 1986, Lodge could not be expected to envisage this form of Catholicism enduring, his liberal Catholics in *How Far Can You Go?* could not translate into the next generation. They, like the staunch traditionalists who rejected the Council and all its works, had to change or to fade. Lodge is partly aware of this and as such provides examples of the answer or a least a semi-answer lapsing. However, by lapsing from complete practice of the Faith, because lapsed or lukewarm Catholics do not transfer their beliefs to their children, that broad-minded all embracing Catholicism — unable to flourish under the Pontificate of John Paul II has withered. Whilst inclined to this form of Catholicism himself, Lodge seems to acknowledge that it is only the more traditional or orthodox Catholics who are sufficiently concerned not just to lapse from their religion if it does not suit them. Therefore the Church remains and, we may hazard, will remain essentially Traditional in terms of the Council.

There has been a period of adjustment, to a degree it still is a period of adjustment (certainly for the hierarchy) and in the West widespread changes have been introduced. However, some of these changes are reverting back gradually, more reasonably and realistically to an earlier form and in other areas a synthesis of old and new is being built.

It has been said that in a way nothing was changed by Vatican II whilst on another level everything has changed. Both these statements are true. Dogmatically nothing has altered but the structures, assumptions and idioms of Catholic life have profoundly altered.

The good of the Council (as orthodox Catholics see it) perseveres but so does a great deal that preceded it and was thought to have gone.[25] Largely this is due to the persona of the current Pope. We saw the increased prominence of theologians

[25]The Tridentine Mass is a case in point having seen a great revival in recent years. Also a number of Marian devotions and other cultish practices seem to be experiencing increased popularity.

within the Church around the time of the Council. The current Pope is a highly intelligent and theologically educated man himself and the wealth of encyclicals, letters and statements which have issued from the Vatican under his auspices provides a theological base of its own thereby making an equivalent claim to that of more professional theologians. Incidentally, in this way the Pope is able to reach the People directly and without relying on the clergy to disseminate his thoughts and ideas.[26] Certainly it is this aspect of his pontificate which has empowered the laity to be more independent from the hierarchy.[27] Yet while widely seen as a 'conservative' Pope, John Paul is a strong advocate of Ecumenism, continually promoting dialogue with other religions,[28] and frequently speaks out to defend the poor and disadvantaged thereby closely aligning himself with ideas typically associated with political liberals.

The novels of these four, spanning the Council and written by people uniquely concerned with that Council and its results will not be seen again. But even these four by the nature of their most recent publications, have expressed their own feeling that the Council is over. They can not totally except the changes. Lodge approaches closest to the idea that it did some good but even he — working

[26]This begs the question, what if there had been a liberal Pontiff following the Council? It is impossible to say but of course for the faithful it is the working of the Spirit that this man was selected just as it was the Spirit who caused the Council. Thus all is as it should be, as Cardinal Ratzinger said in 1984:

> The Christian knows that history is already saved, and therefore the outcome in the end will be positive. But we do not know through what circumstances and reverses we shall arrive at that great finale. We know that the 'powers of darkness' will not prevail over the Church, but we do not know under what conditions that will transpire.
>
> (Gillick 1989, p. 315)

[27]It is interesting how the hierarchy whilst apparently taking Vatican II to heart *imposed* its changes upon the laity in a rather 'pre-Vatican II' manner. The Pope's direct reaching to the faithful has provided the opportunity for the People of God to by-pass the clergy and have their own important role to play in a distinctly 'post-Vatican II' manner. On the other hand and paradoxically, the authority and importance of the bishops' collegiality was a particular insistence of Vatican II, see above p. 191, Chapter 6.

[28]He is particularly hopeful that closer links can be forged with the Orthodox Church.

almost exclusively on an intellectual level which is often regarded as incompatible with deeper religious feeling sees many problems. Thus these four writers from their divergent positions converge as being opposed to the Council and for all their many differences they are united in dissatisfaction with Vatican II.

What really shows this is the comparatively new attitude of these authors. Carson, Lodge and Moore have all published novels quite recently[29] which seem to herald a new type of writing. Catholicism is still referred to but it is 'old' Catholicism that is evoked and modern Catholicism plays little part. Carson's *The Knight of the Flaming Heart* evokes a very Irish Catholicism which, at least popularly, is seen as having altered least in the wake of the Council. He also looks back romantically to an old Irish hero in order to wrestle with homosexuality again. In *Therapy* Lodge has to dredge up childhood memories of an ageing character to write comfortably about the faith. Passmore's memories are acceptable precisely because they are concerned with a pre-Council Catholicism. However, towards the end of the novel Lodge returns to the present and is unable to depict any kind of active Catholicism, what he does represent is a hollow shell, his characters have lost the kernel of faith. In *The Statement* Moore is referring to a distant Catholicism to turn over connections about links with Catholicism and Fascism. All three are using history to revive Catholicism as subject matter, Carson uses Irish History, Moore a more general European history and Lodge the personal history of a character, but for them all, present day Catholicism plays little part. Ellis also has shown her sense that the Council is over and done with. She did so more directly by publishing a non-fiction study of her feelings as regards her religion.[30] She is writing of her own personal history and no longer only through character.

The 'new Catholics' which seemed to be heralded by Carson's Myvanwy and Sean, for all their certainty, may be just a flash in the pan, as Lodge's 'COC'

[29]That is while this work has been in progress.
[30]This is *Serpent on the Rock*, first published in 1994.

group seem to have been; being based more in fiction than in fact, they could not persevere. Alternatively they could well be heralds of the renewed interest in the Charismatic movement.[31] There are still Catholics in British culture and a number of them are still committed to the practice of their faith. Thus, it is not unreasonable to find evidence of them in fiction.

The Vatican Council has changed the face of the Catholic Church but the fabric seems less altered than it at first appeared. Certainty about Catholicism, even while challenging it, was characteristic of pre-Vatican II novels and I would suggest that a similar certainty is re-asserting itself in Catholic fiction today. For the period spanned by the Council and its post-conciliar changes however, certainty was temporarily lost, providing rich grounds for writing about and especially criticising the Church. However, a largely pre-Vatican II view of Catholicism persists both in reality and in fiction so that the Catholic fiction of the next century may well be closer to that of the beginning of the twentieth century than of the end.

Maybe the Golden Age of Greene and Waugh is past but while there are still Catholics to write books, especially in a largely secular environment, there will still be English Catholic novels.

[31] Ellis makes reference to this in *Serpent on the Rock* and Lodge refers to it through the character of Ruth in *How Far Can You Go?*.

Bibliography

Primary Vatican II and context sources

Alberigo, G., Pierre Jossua, J., and Komonchak, J. A., editors (1987). *The Reception of Vatican II.* Washington, D.C., The Catholic University of America Press. Translated by Matthew J. O'Connell. Originally published by L'Editions du Cerf as *La Réception de Vatican II*, ed. G. Alberigo and J.-P. Jossua, Paris, 1985.

CTS (1971). *The Penny Catechism.* London, Catholic Truth Society.

—— (1994). *The Catechism of the Catholic Church.* London, Geoffrey Chapman.

Flannery, A., editor (1992). *The Documents of Vatican II.* Dublin, Dominican Publications. First published 1975, this edition published in one volume.

Horgan, J., editor (1972). *Humanae Vitae and the Bishops: The Encyclical and the Statements of the National Hierarchies.* Dublin, Irish University Press.

John Paul II (1986). *Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the pastoral care of homosexual persons.* Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. London, Catholic Truth Society.

Secondary Vatican II sources

Beck, G. A., editor (1950). *The English Catholics: 1850 1950.* London, Burns and Oates. Essays published to commemorate the centenary of the restoration of the Hierarchy in England and Wales.

Berglar, P. (1994). *Opus Dei.* Princeton, NJ, Scepter Publishers. German original 1983, Otto Müller Verlag, Salzburg.

Bossy, J. (1975). *The English Catholic Community 1570 1850.* London, Darton, Longman and Todd.

Bull, G. (1966). *Vatican Politics: at the Second Vatican Council 1962–5.* Oxford, Oxford University Press.

Caird, G. B. (1967). *Our Dialogue with Rome.* London, Oxford University Press. The Congregational Lectures 1966.

Chadwick, H. (1967). *Pelican History of the Church: The Early Church.* Harmondsworth, England, Penguin Books Ltd.

Crichton, J. D. (1977). *The Once and Future Liturgy.* Dublin, Veritas.

Ehrlich, R. J. (1965). *Rome Opponent or Partner?* Cambridge, Lutterworth Press.

Frossard, A. (1984). *Be Not Afraid: in conversation with John Paul II.* London, Bodley Head. First published 1982. Translated from the original French by J. R. Foster.

Hastings, A., editor (1977). *Bishops and Writers.* Wheathampstead, Anthony Clarke.

Hebblethwaite, P. (1978). *The Runaway Church.* London, Fount. Originally published by *Collins* in 1975, the revised edition for Fount contains a new chapter.

—— (1980). *The New Inquisition?* London, Fount.

—— (1995). *The Next Pope: An Enquiry.* London, Fount.

Hornsby-Smith, M. P. (1987). *Roman Catholics in England.* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

—— (1989). *The Changing Parish: A study of parishes, priests and parishioners after Vatican II.* London, Routledge.

—— (1991). *Roman Catholic Beliefs in England: Customary Catholicism and transformation of religious authority.* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

John Paul II (1995a). *The Gospel of Life: A Message of Hope.* London, Fount. First published in 1995 by The Incorporated Catholic Truth Society.

Ker, I. (1995). 'The Significance of Newman's Conversion'. *Communio: International Catholic Review*, Fall:433 445.

Lefebvre, M. (1976). *J'accuse le concile.* Martigny. Cited in (Alberigo et al., 1987).

Lindbeck, G. A. (1970). *The Future of Roman Catholic Theology.* London, S.P.C.K.

Marty, M. E. and Peerman, D. G., editors (1984). *A Handbook of Christian Theologians.* Cambridge, Lutterworth Press. Extended version of Abingdon Press 1965 edition.

Norman, E. (1985). *Roman Catholics in England: From the Elizabethan Settlement to the Second Vatican Council.* Oxford, Oxford University Press.

Reardon, B. M. G., editor (1970). *Roman Catholic Modernism.* London, Black. With introduction by the editor.

Schillebeeckx, E. (1968). *The Eucharist.* London, Sheed and Ward Ltd.

Scott, G. (1967). *The R.C.'s. A report on Roman Catholics in Britain today.* London, Hutchinson.

Swanson, R. N. (1993). *Catholic England. Faith Religion and Observance before the Reformation.* Manchester, Manchester University Press.

Verheul, A. (1972). *Introduction to the Liturgy.* Wheathampstead, Anthony Clarke. First published by Burns and Oates 1968.

von Balthasar, H. U. (1984). *The Glory of the Lord: a Theological Aesthetics*, volume II. Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark. Translated from the original German edition (Einsiedeln 1962, Second Edition 1969).

Watkins, E. I. (1957). *Roman Catholicism in England from the Reformation to 1950.* Oxford, Oxford University Press.

Wicker, B. (24 February 1979). 'Adult Education'. *The Tablet.*

Main authors

Carson, M. (1989a). *Friends and Infidels.* Ealing, London, Black Swan Books. First published Gollancz.

(1989b). *Sucking Sherbert Lemons.* Ealing, London, Black Swan Books. First published 1988 Gollancz.

—— (1991). *Coming Up Roses.* Ealing, London, Black Swan Books. First published 1990 Gollancz.

—— (1992). *Stripping Penguins Bare.* Ealing, London, Black Swan Books. First published 1991 Gollancz.

—— (1993). *Yanking Up the Yo-Yo.* Ealing, London, Black Swan Books. First published 1992 Gollancz.

—— (1994). *Serving Suggestions.* Ealing, London, Black Swan Books. First published 1993 by Gollancz.

—— (1994 1995a). Private communication.

—— (1995b). *Demolishing Babel.* Ealing, London, Black Swan Books. First published by Doubleday 1994.

—— (1995c). *The Knight of the Flaming Heart.* Ealing, London, Doubleday.

Ellis, A. T. (1982). *The 27th Kingdom.* Harmondsworth, England, Penguin Books Ltd.

—— (1983). *The Birds Of The Air.* Harmondsworth, England, Penguin Books Ltd. First published by Duckworth 1980.

—— (1985). *The Other Side of the Fire.* London, Penguin. First published by Duckworth 1983.

—— (1986a). *Home Life.* London, Duckworth. A Collection of her regular column for 'The Spectator'.

—— (1986b). *The Sin Eater.* Harmondsworth, England, Penguin Books Ltd. First published by Duckworth 1977.

—— (1986c). *Unexplained Laughter.* Harmondsworth, England, Penguin Books Ltd. First published by Duckworth 1985.

—— (1991a). *The Inn At The Edge Of The World.* Harmondsworth, England, Penguin Books Ltd. First published by Viking 1990.

—— (1991b). *The Summerhouse Trilogy.* Harmondsworth, England, Penguin Books Ltd. Originally published as three separate volumes by Duckworth: *The Clothes in the Wardrobe* (1987), *The Skeleton in the Cupboard* (1988), and *The Fly in the Ointment*(1989).

—— (1992). *A Welsh Childhood.* London, Penguin. First published by Michael Joseph 1990.

—— (1993a). Interview with Dr. Anthony Clare, from Radio 4's *In the Psychiatrist's Chair* series.

—— (1993b). *Pillars of Gold.* Harmondsworth, England, Penguin Books Ltd. First published 1992 by Viking.

—— (1994a). *The Evening of Adam.* London, Viking.

(1994b). *Serpent on the Rock.* London, Hodder and Stoughton Ltd.

Ellis, A. T. and Pitt-Aikens, T. (1988). *Secrets of Strangers.* London, Penguin. First published by Duckworth 1986.

Greene, G. (1936). *A Gun For Sale.* London, Heineman & Bodley Head.

—— (1950). *The Heart of the Matter.* London, Reprint Society. First published 1948.

—— (1962). *The Power and the Glory.* London, Penguin. First published by Heinemann 1940.

—— (1970a). *Brighton Rock.* Harmondsworth, England, Penguin Books Ltd. First published 1938 by Heinemann.

—— (1970b). *Collected Essays.* London, Penguin. First published by Bodley Head 1969.

—— (1971a). *The End of the Affair.* Harmondsworth, England, Penguin Books Ltd. First published 1951.

—— (1971b). *A Sort of Life.* London, Bodley Head.

—— (1974a). *The Honorary Consul.* London, Penguin. First published by Bodley Head 1973.

—— (1974b). *The Quiet American.* London, Penguin. First published by Heinemann 1955.

—— (1978). *Journey Without Maps.* Harmondsworth, England, Penguin Books Ltd. First published 1936.

—— (1983). *Monsignor Quixote.* London, Penguin. First published by Bodley Head 1982.

Lodge, D. (1959). 'Catholic Fiction Since The Oxford Movement'. Master's thesis, University College, London.

—— (1962). *The Picturegoers.* London, Pan.

—— (1966). *Graham Greene.* Washington, Columbia University Press.

—— (1971). *The Novelist at The Crossroads.* London, Routledge.

—— (1977). *The Modes of Modern Writing.* London, Edward Arnold.

—— (1978). *Changing Places.* Harmondsworth, England, Penguin Books Ltd.

—— (1980). *How Far Can You Go?* Harmondsworth, England, Penguin Books Ltd.

(1981). *The British Museum is Falling Down.* Harmondsworth, England, Penguin Books Ltd.

(1982). *Ginger, You're Barmy.* Harmondsworth, England, Penguin Books Ltd.

(1984). *Small World.* Harmondsworth, England, Penguin Books Ltd.

(1985). *Out of the Shelter.* Harmondsworth, England, Penguin Books Ltd.

—— (1986). *Working with Structuralism.* London, Ark. First published 1981.

—— (1988a). *Nice Work.* Harmondsworth, England, Penguin Books Ltd.

—— (1988b). *Write On.* Harmondsworth, England, Penguin Books Ltd.

—— (1990). *After Bakhtin.* London, Routledge.

—— (1991a). Transcribed from readings by the author at the Brighton Festival.

—— (1991b). *Paradise News.* London, Martin Secker & Warburg Ltd.

—— (1991c). 'The South Bank Show'. In conversation with Melvyn Bragg.

—— (1992). *The Art of Fiction.* Harmondsworth, England, Penguin Books Ltd.

—— (1995). *Therapy.* London, Martin Secker & Warburg Ltd.

Moore, B. (1965). *The Lonely Passion of Judith Hearne.* London, Granada. First published 1955 by Andre Deutsch.

—— (1971). *The Revolution Script.* Toronto, McClelland and Stewart.

—— (1972). *Catholics.* London, Vintage. First published in 1972 by Jonathan Cape.

—— (1975). *The Great Victorian Collection.* Toronto, McClelland and Stewart.

—— (1979). *The Mangan Inheritance.* London, Jonathan Cape.

—— (1981). *The Temptation of Eileen Hughes.* Toronto, McClelland and Stewart.

—— (1985). *Cold Heaven.* London, Triad/Panther. First published 1983 by Jonathan Cape.

—— (1987). *Black Robe.* London, Paladin. First published 1985 by Jonathan Cape.

—— (1988a). *The Colour of Blood.* London, Paladin. First published 1987 by Jonathan Cape.

—— (1988b). *The Doctor's Wife.* London, Paladin. First published 1976 by Jonathan Cape.

—— (1991). *Lies of Silence.* London, Arrow. First published 1990 by Bloomsbury.

(1992a). *Answer from Limbo.* London, Paladin. First published 1963 by Deutsch.

(1992b). *I am Mary Dunne.* London, Vintage. First published 1968 by Jonathan Cape.

—— (1993). *The Man from God Knows Where*, in BBC2's *Bookmark* series.

—— (1994a). *The Emperor of Ice-Cream.* London, Flamingo. First published 1965 by Deutsch.

—— (1994b). *The Feast of Lupercal.* London, Flamingo. First published 1958 by Deutsch.

—— (1994c). *The Luck of Ginger Coffey.* London, Flamingo. First published 1960 by Little, Brown and Co., Canada.

—— (1994d). *No Other Life.* London, Flamingo. First published 1993 by Bloomsbury.

—— (1995a). *Fergus.* London, Flamingo. First published 1971 by Jonathan Cape.

—— (1995b). *The Statement.* London, Bloomsbury.

Waugh, E. (1938). *Vile Bodies.* Harmondsworth, England, Penguin Books Ltd. First published 1930 by Chapman and Hall.

—— (1949). Come Inside. In O'Brien, J. A., editor, *The Road To Damascus*, pages 10 16.

—— (1962). *Brideshead Revisited.* Harmondsworth, England, Penguin Books Ltd. First published 1945 by Chapman and Hall.

Secondary sources

Alexander, F. (1989). *Contemporary Women Novelists.* London, Arnold.

Bergonzi, B. (1981). *The Roman Persuasion.* London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson.

Billington, R. (1982). *Occasion of Sin.* London, Hamish Hamilton.

Bostock, P. (1989). *Poststructuralism, Postmodernism and British Academy Attitudes.* PhD thesis, North London Polytechnic.

Bradbury, M., editor (1990). *The Novel Today.* London, Fontana.

Brontë, A. (1979). *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall.* Harmondsworth, England, Penguin Books Ltd. First published in 1848.

Burden, R. (1979). 'The Novel Interrogates Itself: Parody as Self-Consciousness in contemporary English Fiction'. In Bradbury, M. and Palmer, D., editors, *The Contemporary English Novel*, number 18 in Stratford-upon-Avon studies. London, Edward Arnold.

Carter, I. (1990). *Ancient Cultures of Conceit.* London, Routledge.

Chitham, E., editor (1979). *The Poems of Anne Brontë: a new text and commentary.* London, Macmillan.

Donnelly, G. (1990). *Faulty Ground.* Harmondsworth, England, Penguin Books Ltd. First published by Victor Gollancz 1988.

Eliot, T. (1974). *The Cocktail Party.* London, Faber. First published 1950.

Fraser, A. (1978). *Quiet as a Nun.* London, Book Club Associates. First published by The Chaucer Press, Suffolk, 1977.

Godden, R. (1980). *Five for Sorrow, Ten for Joy.* London, Futura. First published by Macmillan London, 1979.

—— (1991). *In This House Of Brede.* London, Pan. First published by Macmillan & Co. Ltd, 1969. Pan edition contains a preface from 1991.

Inchbald, E. (1967). *A Simple Story.* Oxford, Oxford University Press. First published 1791.

Jackson, R. (1981). *Fantasy: the Literature of Subversion.* New Accents Series. London, Methuen.

Lingard, J. (1972). *Across the Barricades.* London, Hamish Hamilton.

Longmans, F. W. (1955). *Graham Greene.* London, Longman.

Marshall, B. (1931). *Father Malachy's Miracle.* London, Heinemann.

Massie, A. (1990). *The Novel Today.* Harlow, Longman.

McEwan, N. (1988). *Graham Greene.* London, Macmillan.

Newman, J. (1976). The Idea of a University Defined and Illustrated. Oxford. Originally published in 1873.

O'Brien, C. C. (1963). *Maria Cross: Imaginative Patterns in a Group of Catholic Writers.* Wheathampstead, Anthony Clarke Books. First published by Chatto and Windus 1954.

Oddie, W. (1995). 'A House Divided'. *The Oldie*, December issue 81:pp16–17.

Perriam, W. (1990). *Devils, For A Change.* London, Paladin. First published 1989 by Grafton.

—— (1991a). *Absinthe for Elevenses.* London, Paladin. First published 1980 by Michael Joseph.

Pryce-Jones, D. (1963). *Graham Greene.* London, Oliver and Boyd.

Read, P. P. (1968). *The Junkers.* London, Martin Secker & Warburg Ltd.

—— (1969). *Monk Dawson.* London, Martin Secker & Warburg Ltd.

(1971). *The Professor's Daughter.* London, Martin Secker & Warburg Ltd.

—— (1973 . *The Upstart.* London, Martin Secker & Warburg Ltd.

—— (1974). *Game in Heaven with Tussy Marx.* London, Martin Secker & Warburg Ltd. First published 1966 by Weidenfeld and Nicholson.

—— (1979). *A Married Man.* London, Martin Secker & Warburg Ltd.

—— (1986). *The Free Frenchman.* London, Martin Secker & Warburg Ltd.

—— (1988). *A Season in the West.* London, Martin Secker & Warburg Ltd.

—— (1990). *On the Third Day.* London, Martin Secker & Warburg Ltd.

Salvatore, A. T. (1988). *Greene and Kierkegaard: The Discourse of Belief.* Alabama, University of Alabama Press.

Shapiro, C., editor (1965). *Contemporary British Novelists.* New York, USA, Arcturus Books.

Shelden, M. (1995). *Graham Greene, The Man Within.* London, Minerva.

Sherry, N. (1990). *The Life of Graham Greene: Volume One.* Harmondsworth, England, Penguin Books Ltd. First published 1989 by Jonathan Cape.

—— (1992). *The Mystery That Was Graham Greene.* Trinity University San Antonio Texas, Georgetown College.

—— (1994). *The Life of Graham Greene: Volume Two.* London, Jonathan Cape.

Spark, M. (1981). *Loitering with Intent.* London, Bodley Head.

Stratford, P. (1964). *Faith and Fiction: the creative process in Greene and Mauriac.* Paris, University of Notre Dame Press.

Sykes, C. (1977). *Evelyn Waugh.* Harmondsworth, England, Penguin Books Ltd. First published 1975 by Collins.

Thompson, F. (1952). 'The Hound of Heaven'. In Beard, P., editor, *Selected Poems of Francis Thompson.* London, Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd. 'The Hound of Heaven' first published 1893.

Tolkien, J. (1985). *The Silmarillion.* London, Unwin Paperbacks. First published by George Allen & Unwin 1977; first published in Unwin Paperbacks 1983.

Walsh, J. P. (1986). *Lapsing.* London, Weidenfeld and Nicholson.

—— (1994). *Knowledge of Angels.* Ealing, London, Black Swan Books.

Waugh, A. (1984a). *The Foxglove Saga.* London, Robin Clark. First published 1960 by Chapman and Hall.

Waugh, P. (1984b). *Metafiction.* London, Methuen.

White, A. (1978). *Frost In May.* London, Virago. First published 1933.

Woodman, T. (1992). *Faithful Fictions.* Milton Keynes, Open University Press.

Miscellaneous

Attwater, D. (1983). *The Penguin Dictionary of Saints.* Harmondsworth, England, Penguin Books Ltd.

Austen, J. (1983). *Mansfield Park.* Glasgow, Fontana. First published 1813.

Benkovitz, M. J. (1977). *Frederick Rolfe: Baron Corvo.* London, Hamish Hamilton.

Benson, R. H. (1912). *Come Rack, Come Rope.* London, Hutchinson.

—— (1915). *Loneliness.* London, Hutchinson.

Berkouwer, G. C. (1965). *The Second Vatican Council and the New Catholicism.* USA, Eerdmans. Translated by Lewis B. Smedes.

Bevan, C. (1984). *Against All Advice.* Wells, Parsonage Press.

Billington, R. (1994). *The Great Umbilical.* London, Hutchinson.

Blatty, W. (1971). *The Exorcist.* New York, Harper and Row.

Bonhoeffer, D. (1954). *Prisoner for God.* New York, Macmillan. British ed. entitled *Letters and Papers from Prison.*

Bryson, B. (1995). *Made in America.* London, Minerva. First published by Secker and Warburg, 1994.

Burgess, A. (1969). *Tremor of Intent.* Harmondsworth, England, Penguin Books Ltd. First published by Heinemann 1966.

—— (1972). *A Clockwork Orange.* Harmondsworth, England, Penguin Books Ltd. First published by Heinemann 1962.

—— (1981). *Earthly Powers.* Harmondsworth, England, Penguin Books Ltd. First published by Hutchinson and Co. 1980.

Capon, R. F. (1965). *Bed and Board: Plain Talk about Marriage.* New York, Simon and Schuster.

Castle, T. (1986). *Basil Hume: A Portrait.* London, William Collins.

Chateaubriand, Francois Rene, v. d. *Le Genie Du Christianisme; Suivi De La Defense Du Genie Du Christianisme Et De La Lettre A M. de Fontanes.* Paris. Publisher and year not given.

Chesterton, G. K. (1981). *The Penguin Complete Father Brown.* Harmondsworth, England, Penguin Books Ltd. First published as The Father Brown Stories by Cassell 1929.

Coates, J. (1984). *Chesterton and the Edwardian Cultural Crisis.* Hull, University of Hull Press.

Coleman, D. and Swift, J. (1992). *The British Population: Patterns, Trends and Processes.* Oxford, Oxford University Press.

Cornwell, J. (1969). *The Spoiled Priest.* London, Longman.

—— (1992). *Powers of Darkness, Powers of Light.* Harmondsworth, England, Penguin Books Ltd. First published 1991 by Viking.

Craigie, P. (1897). *The School for Saints.* London, Unwin. Written under the pseudonym John Oliver Hobbes.

—— (1900). *Robert Orange.* London, Unwin. Written under the pseudonym John Oliver Hobbes.

de Oca, V. M. (1946). *More about Fatima.* Dublin, M. H. Gill and Son, Ltd.

Defoe, D. (1962). *Robinson Crusoe.* London, Dent. First published 1719.

Dominian, J. (1977). *Proposals for a New Sexual Ethic.* London, Darton, Longman and Todd.

—— (1981). *Marriage, Faith and Love.* London, Darton, Longman and Todd.

Doyle, R. (1993). *The Barrytown Trilogy.* London, Minerva. First published as a trilogy in 1992. It comprises *The Commitments* (1988), *The Snapper* (1990) and *The Van* (1991).

—— (1994). *Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha.* London, Minerva. First published 1993 by Secker and Warburg.

Draper, R. P. (1969). *D. H. Lawrence.* London, Routledge. From the Profiles in Literature Series.

Ellmann, R. (1982). *James Joyce.* Oxford, Oxford University Press. First published 1959.

Falconi, C. (1964). *Pope John and his Council: A diary of the Second Vatican Council Sept-Dec 1962.* London, Weidenfeld and Nicholson. Translated from the Italian by Muriel Grindrod.

F.E.Halliday (1974). *A Concise History of England.* London, Thames and Hudson. First published in 1964.

Fitzgerald, F. S. (1950). *The Great Gatsby.* Harmondsworth, England, Penguin Books Ltd. Originally published in 1925.

Fitzgerald, S., editor (1979). *The Habit of Being: Letters of Flannery O'Connor.* New York, Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Gillick, V. (1989). *A Mother's Tale.* London, Hodder & Stoughton.

Gleick, J. (1994). *Genius.* London, Abacus. First published by Little, Brown and Company, London, 1992.

Godwin, W. (1982). *The Adventures of Caleb Williams.* Oxford, Oxford University Press. First published 1794.

Harthill, R. (1989). *Writers Revealed.* London, BBC Books.

John Paul II (1995b). 'Letter to Women'. Released on 10 July 1995.

Johnstone, R. (1982). *The Will to Believe: Novelists of the 1930s.* Oxford, OUP.

Kundera, M. (1985). *The Unbearable Lightness of Being.* London, Faber.

Laverty, B. M. (1983). *Cal.* London, Jonathan Cape.

Leatherbarrow, J. S. (1947). *The Lancashire Elizabethan Recusants.* Manchester, Manchester University Press.

Lewis, M. G. (1959). *The Monk.* New York, Grove Press. First published in 1796.

Lorit, S. C. (1966). *Everybody's Pope: The Life of John XXIII.* New York, New City Press.

Malinski, M. (1979). *Pope John Paul II: The Life of my friend Karol Wojtyla.* London, Burns and Oates. Translated by P. S. Falla.

Moorman, J. (1967). *Vatican Observed: An Anglican Impression.* London, Darton, Longman and Todd. Author was Bishop of Ripon at the time.

Muggeridge, M. (1978). *In A Valley Of This Restless Mind.* London, Collins. First published by Routledge, 1938.

O'Brien, E. (1970). *A Pagan Place.* Harmondsworth, England, Penguin Books Ltd.

O'Connor, J. (1992a). *Cowboys and Indians.* London, Flamingo. First published in 1991.

—— (1992b). *True Believers.* London, Flamingo. First published in 1991.

O'Donoghue, J. (1990). *'A Critical Study' Brian Moore.* London, Macmillan.

O'Neill, J. M. (1989). *Canon Bang Bang.* London, Hodder and Stoughton.

Perriam, W. (1986). *The Stillness, The Dancing.* Harmondsworth, England, Penguin Books Ltd. First published 1985 by Michael Joseph.

—— (1991b). *Fifty Minute Hour.* London, Paladin. First published 1990 by Grafton Books.

—— (1992a). *Bird Inside.* London, Harper-Collins.

—— (1992b). *Cuckoo.* London, Paladin. First published 1981 by Michael Joseph.

—— (1993a). *After Purple.* London, Flamingo. First published 1982 by Michael Joseph.

—— (1993b). *Born of Woman.* London, Flamingo. First published 1983 by Penguin.

—— (1994). *Breaking and Entering.* London, Harper-Collins.

Radcliffe, M. A. (1980). *The Mysteries of Udolfo.* Oxford, Oxford University Press. First published 1794.

Redmon, A. (1974). *Emily Stone.* London, Martin Secker & Warburg Ltd.

—— (1979). *Music and Silence.* London, Martin Secker & Warburg Ltd.

Ridgway, A., editor (1949 1950). *Everyman's Encyclopaedia.* London, Dent.

Roberts, W. (1963). *A Bibliography of D. H. Lawrence.* London, Rupert Hart-Davis.

Rolfe, F. (1963). *Hadrian the Seventh.* Harmondsworth, England, Penguin Books Ltd. First published in 1904 by Chatto and Windus.

Rushdie, S. (1982). *Midnight's Children.* London, Picador. First published 1981 by Jonathan Cape.

—— (1989). *The Satanic Verses.* Harmondsworth, Viking.

Scarisbrick, N. (18 June, 1995). 'One Rainy Day In Leamington Spa'. *The Catholic Times.*

Scott, M. (1989). *The Struggle for the Soul of the French Novel: French Catholic and Realist Novelists 1850 1970.* London, Macmillan.

Shelley, M. (1969). *Frankenstein: or The Modern Prometheus.* London, Oxford University Press. Originally published 1818.

Smith, A. (1990). *Journeying with God: Paradigms of Power and Powerlessness.* London, Sheed and Ward.

Spark, M. (1977). *Memento Mori.* Harmondsworth, England, Penguin Books Ltd. First published by Macmillan 1959.

Spilka, M. (1955). *The Love Ethic of D. H. Lawrence.* Bloomington, Indiana University Press.

Stoker, B. (1979). *Dracula.* Harmondsworth, England, Penguin Books Ltd. First published 1897.

Symons, A. (1952). *The Quest for Corvo: An Experiment in Biography.* London, Folio Society. Originally published in 1934.

Tallis, R. (1985). *In Defence of Realism.* London, Edward Arnold.

Thomas, D. (1981). *The White Hotel.* London, Gollancz.

Trollope, A. (1984). *Barchester Towers.* Oxford, Oxford University Press. Originally published in 1857.

—— (1985). *The Warden.* Oxford, Oxford University Press. Originally published in 1855.

Walesa, L. (1987). *A Path of Hope.* London, Collins. An autobiography.

Walker, A. (1983). *The Color Purple.* London, Womens Press.

—— (1989). *The Temple of my Familiar.* New York, Harcourt, Brace and Jovanovich.

Ward, J. M. (1899). *One Poor Scruple.* London, Longman.

Waugh, E. (1965). *Sword of Honour.* Harmondsworth, England, Penguin Books Ltd. This trilogy was originally published as *Men at Arms* (1952), *Officers and Gentlemen* (1955) and *Unconditional Surrender* (1961).

Wilde, O. (1974). *The Picture of Dorian Gray.* Oxford, Oxford University Press. Originally published in Lippincott's Magazine in 1890.

Winterson, J. (1985). *Oranges Are Not The Only Fruit.* London, Pandora.

—— (1988). *The Passion.* Harmondsworth, England, Penguin Books Ltd. First published 1987 by Bloomsbury.

Wiseman, C. (1854). *Fabiola.* London, Burns and Lambert.

Wordsworth, W. and Yarker, P. M. (1968). *The Prelude; or, Growth of a Poet's Mind: Books I IV.* London, Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Wyndham, J. (1981). *The Kraken Wakes.* Harmondsworth, England, Penguin Books Ltd. First published by Michael Joseph 1953.