

# Inside and outside the frame: landscape pictures and real debates in *The Untilled Field* (1903) and *The Lake* (1905)

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The titles of two books by George Moore, *The Untilled Field*<sup>1</sup> and *The Lake*,<sup>2</sup> convey visual images of countryside and suggest the material for landscape pictures. Moore even said of *The Lake*, 'it is my landscape book'.<sup>3</sup> For those familiar with the titles Moore had bestowed on his earlier books, ones like *Esther Waters*, *Evelyn Innes*, *Sister Teresa*, *Celibates*, and *A Drama in Muslin*, the choice of landscape connections must seem particularly noteworthy as it represents such a total departure from previous practice. The move appears all the more remarkable because the author, as the main promoter and interpreter of Impressionist painting in Britain, would have been perceived as favouring the uncertainties of Impressionism, with its evocative and ephemeral qualities, over the detailed and often didactic narrative nature of mid to late-Victorian landscape depictions. Moreover, it can be argued that linking the short story with landscape was not an obvious choice for the writer of fiction at the time, and definitely not one driven by popular demand. The combination of these factors – not to mention Moore's own political nature and leanings – raises the possibility, then, that the author has turned to landscape with a very definite purpose. This essay seeks to explore some of the varied vistas that are to be found in these two examples of George Moore's 'Irish' fiction. It will suggest that Moore aims to reclaim landscape from those who, either visually or verbally, annexed that genre to portray rural idylls, utopian dreams and dubious national constructs, and that he utilises landscape in a most imaginative way as an influential and flexible medium for presenting ideas.

Expectations and individual perceptions are central to the reactions to landscape, whether portrayed in visual or verbal media. Kenneth Clark is of the opinion that most Englishmen, if asked to depict beauty, would launch into a description of a scene that included a lake, mountain, white-washed cottages, gardens, a little harbour with red sails. Without explicitly deploring such preferences on the part of 'the average man', Clark records 'a complete divorce between popular and informed taste'.<sup>4</sup> Such predilections are not confined to Englishmen though, but are shared by thousands in several countries, as the geographically wide-ranging Melamid/Komar

1 George Moore, *The Untilled Field* (1902–3), (Gloucester, 1970). 2 George Moore, *The Lake* (1905), (Gerrards Cross, Bucks., 1980). 3 George Moore, *Letters 1895–1933 to Lady Cunard*, ed. Rupert Hart-Davis (London, 1957), p. 45. 4 Kenneth Clark, *Landscape into art* (London, 1976) p. 230.

investigations of the 1990s show.<sup>5</sup> However, while Clark leans towards the existence of common, innate and instinctive attraction to an identifiable pastoral perfection in landscape, Simon Schama is emphatic that culture and convention, rather than congenital partiality, dictate the choice of image and the framing of the design: 'Landscapes are culture before they are nature, constructs of the imagination projected onto wood and water and rock.'<sup>6</sup> Whether the reader is culturally aware or innocently instinctive, both of these beliefs are relevant for interpretations of what is framed by George Moore in his landscape picture gallery since they are equally reflective of the perennial popularity and attraction of landscape. Also germane to analysis of the Moore approach is the aesthetic idea that non-verbal images augment verbal ones, thus doubling the aesthetic force and ensuring delivery of the intended conceptual impact.<sup>7</sup> In an examination of the texts, it will be seen that Moore's painterly touch is much in evidence: the verbal accounts provide the outlines of recognisable scenes; any ideas that are not totally comprehended at first will be copperfastened in memory by the visual after-images that linger and penetrate the consciousness. For example, in looking at the mountains, cottages, lakes, woods and bogs in the two volumes, it becomes clear that the landscapes therein are not spaces intended for idle contemplation of the Romantic sublime or for luxuriating in nature;<sup>8</sup> neither does their presence aim to provide reassurance concerning controlled governance in the realm by showing a fixed and immutable hierarchical order appropriate to an Enlightenment age. It will be observed that the Moore landscape scenes – notwithstanding their beauty, balance and ornamental qualities in *The Lake*, and despite brevity and apparent simplicity in *The Untilled Field* – are structured and organised in order to stimulate thought and provoke vigorous discussion on the state of the world.

At a first glance, the landscapes in *The Untilled Field* seem hard to discern. Under that umbrella landscape title, the names of the individual short stories do not have any landscape or geographical links (see table 1). The nearest to such nomenclature is 'A Play-house in the Waste', first published as 'San nDiotramh Dubh' in *An tÚr-Ghort*, the shorter Irish-language version of the volume whose publication preceded *The Untilled Field*. The story called 'In the Clay' does not refer to agricultural land, nor even to graveyards, but to the modelling clay for a statue.

In addition, these stories – whether the 8 in *An tÚr-Ghort* or the 13 in *The Untilled Field* – are short. The tales move on through brief conversations, scraps of thought and a minimum of linking narrative; they are relatively shorn of description and such description as can be found is frequently of barrenness. For instance, in 'The

5 Malcolm Andrews, *Landscape and Western art* (Oxford, 1999), pp 20–1. In 1994, Alex Melamid and Vitaly Komar constructed paintings based on worldwide survey of popular preferences: the majority opted for landscape, with water, mountain and trees. The resulting composite images were published on the internet. 6 Simon Schama, *Landscape and memory* (New York, 1995), p. 61. 7 Benedetto Croce, *The aesthetic as the science of expression and of the linguistic in general*, trans. Colin Lyas (Cambridge, 1992), pp 105–8. 8 Kenneth Olwig, *Nature's ideological landscape* (London, 1984), pp 1–10, in particular.

Table 1: The story titles of *An tÚr-Ghort*, and the corresponding and additional titles in *The Untilled Field*

<i>An tÚr-Ghort</i> (1902)	<i>The Untilled Field</i> (1903)
	'In the Clay'
'Naomh Áitiúil'	'Some Parishioners'
'An Deoraí'	'The Exile'
'Galar Dúiche'	'Home sickness'
	'A Letter to Rome'
	'Julia Cahill's Curse'
'San nDiotramh Dubh'	'A Play-house in the Waste'
'An Gúna-Pósta'	'The Wedding Gown'
'Tóir Mhic Uí Dhíomasuigh'	'The Clerk's Quest'
'An Déirc'	'Alms-giving'
	'So on he fares'
'Tír Grádh'	'The Wild Goose'
	'The Way Back'

Exile', the elements of landscape description are few: the first one (in a story that runs to a mere 21 pages) relates to the priest's house: 'There were trees about the priest's house, and there were two rooms, on the right and left of the front door'.<sup>9</sup> In terms of traditional landscape painting, that would not even equate to a preliminary sketch. Some pages further on, there is a recreation of what were, and are, recognisable tourism poster-pictures of Connemara: 'The mare trotted gleefully; soft clouds curled over the low horizon far away, and the sky was blue overhead; and the poor country was very beautiful in the still autumn weather, only it was empty'. Those last four words mark the economic and social reality, the failure of the political system. The next few lines elaborate only briefly, but quite strikingly: 'The fences were gone, cattle strayed through the woods, the drains were choked with weeds, the stagnant water was spreading out into the fields'.<sup>10</sup> The contrast is set out between propaganda for tourists and the conditions on the ground, but it is only momentarily before the readers' eyes and then the text moves on. A point has been registered but not over-worked; two disparate pictures have been shown. There is a tinge of irony in the fact that, as an art expert would know, both the scene of neglect and decay, and that of the fluffy clouds, share some faint affinity with classical landscape paintings in that they are empty of humans. Their juxtaposition here removes any grounds for possible idyllic or Arcadian associations. The clear signal is that the deliberations arising from the landscapes of this story cannot be confined to the picturesque; they will inexorably involve political agendas and social problems, whether for landlord or tenant, ruler or colonized.

<sup>9</sup> Moore, 'The Exile', p. 4. <sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.



The next description in that same story, 'The Exile', is of arrival in town. This vista too provides a quick glance, but a suggestive one:

Very soon the town began, in broken pavements and dirty cottages; going up the hill there were some slated roofs, but there was no building of importance except the Church. At the end of the main street, where the trees began again, the convent stood in the middle of a large garden.<sup>11</sup>

Afterwards, in a story where people hardly ever talk, there is nothing that would normally evoke the word or the image of landscape; neither is there anything dramatic or sudden in the half-unfolding of tragic elements in the lives of the central characters. Yet, as Moore intended, the bare narrative and the small glimpses of terrain create an atmosphere and etch the memories; they carve out a space where social issues – though merely skimmed over in the text – are unavoidable, and the encouragement is towards reflection, cogitation and more complex reasoning. Moreover, the paltry few pictorial landscapes contained within the tale tell many other stories: there is the physical structure of the Irish town with the poor down at the edge in cottages, the church dominating the area, and the more solid and slated houses of the shopkeepers between them; the double-fronted house of the priest is not a usual structure but the existence of those 'two rooms, on the right and left of the front door' is a reminder that they were often used to accommodate the priest's unmarried sisters and relatives, and sometimes a housekeeper, whom he supported financially and who cared for him materially. The apparent comparative prosperity of the priest could often be accompanied by the relative poverty of others, whether financially or in their choices. The trees at his house, and at the convent, are indicative of the higher echelon of society from which their occupants come, and of a degree of prosperity. The fact that 'the nuns were doing well with their dairy and their laundry' marks the result of organized collective work, partly funded by the property of those who joined the congregation. The socio-economic reality is that the running of the convent farm, dairy and laundry depends on the practical knowledge of those from small farms and tenant holdings, rather than on the capacity of sisters from the slated houses. As Pat Phelan says about the nuns: 'I'm sure there isn't one of them could boil pig's food like Catherine herself', an opinion corroborated by the Reverend Mother who says to Catherine as she plans to leave the convent, 'we have got no one to take your place'.<sup>12</sup> Catherine then writes out farming instructions for another nun, although it is far from certain if a written guide will guarantee the same success.

Several social issues are discernable in those particular landscape frames from 'The Exile', and, in their entirety, the stories of *The Untilled Field* contain a veritable catalogue of rural Ireland's predicaments and afflictions at the end of the nineteenth century: the poor prices for cattle and pigs, and the sale of American bacon in a land that had its own; the state of the roads; depopulation and its consequences for

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 14–15. <sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 15; 17; 18.

marriage partners and care of the elderly; the generous, self-sacrificing gestures made, at enormous personal cost, to help others prosper; the hurtful badges and gradations of class and degree; the phenomenon of faraway hills that make the exile a perpetual wanderer, drawn by material necessity to America and by emotional bonds to return to Ireland, but never to settle in either place. In that last context, it is rather poignant that the titles for two of the stories in *The Untilled Field* are interchangeable: 'The Exile' could as easily be called 'Home Sickness'.<sup>13</sup> In the entire collection of stories, other potentially sad subject matter occurring outside the landscape frame includes, for instance, the made match, marriage for love or convenience, the fate of unmarried pregnant women, the murder of 'bastard' babies, the quirks of religious belief, fundraising for large churches in impoverished communities, excessive drinking, governmental insistence on follies as relief work, women considered as property. The stories lack traditional landscape mounting – the total number in the collection amounts to a mere handful – but the paucity of such pictures makes the few the more remarkable, outweighed as they are by the evidence of social malaise.

In the absence of numerous or detailed framed landscapes, it must be asked why 'The Exile' or any of the other tales should appear in a book bearing a landscape title. At least four possible reasons might be suggested: firstly, that the simple titles are alluring for a readership that believes itself secure in its understanding of such landscape concepts; secondly, that George Moore seeks to stimulate questioning and expansion of those popular viewpoints, his belief being that landscape should be more about the reality of living than about the picturesque because it is the people who should count. It must be the social ills rather than the identifiably Irish heather and the mountains in those barely-delineated landscapes that should remain more memorable for the reader. Thirdly, with the strong impetus in the volume towards forcing acknowledgment of compound human motivations and complex psychological features, the concept of landscape is to be expanded; it must include mindscapes or inscapes and mirror their different scenes. Fourthly, it seems that there is an invitation to readers to paint in landscapes, and to augment and decorate them themselves with their own ideas, knowledge and experiences. Whether in the local scene or in the mindscape, predetermined responses are to be queried and space provided for spontaneous, individual reactions. This is a new aesthetic wherein the author, by minimal reference, generates a myriad of reader responses. The result is that, in the ultimate liberalisation and democratisation of art, literature and thought by Moore, the untilled field of the overall title is to be worked by the reader. In literary terms, this is groundbreaking in more senses than one.

Cutting-edge originality is evident also in *The Lake*, a book that is recognised as the first English stream-of-consciousness novel.<sup>14</sup> The tale was originally intended as

<sup>13</sup> This same possibility occurs with the first and last stories in James Joyce's *Dubliners* some years later: 'The Sisters' and 'The Dead' could also exchange titles. It is recognized that Joyce took Moore's *The Untilled Field* as his structural model for *Dubliners*. <sup>14</sup> Adrian Frazier, *George Moore, 1852–1933* (New Haven & London, 2000), p. 347.



the last story in *The Untilled Field* but it contrasts markedly in style from the stories of that volume. It is not just that the characters' thoughts and speech are provided at greater length than in the brief sentences of the short stories, but rather that this book is crowded with landscape pictures, a striking aspect of which is their sensory quality. In this text, the abundance of visual, tactile and aural elements achieves an intensity that is comparable in force, if not in tone, to that generated by the stark and spare scenes of *The Untilled Field*. Moore's rendering of the storm in *The Lake* provides a multi-dimensional experience of colour, darkness, flashes, fauna and flora, pattering and thundering, and is reflective of the disparate elements in Father Gogarty's mood.<sup>15</sup> The aural constituents include the sounds that resonate for the reader from the page, whether of curlews, wind or lake water; they also arise in the arrangement of words on the page to create literary music. That latter quality is the extension of Moore's writing into another art form – verbal music in prose rather than in poetry, what is often referred to as the melodic line. This is landscape painting enhanced, a remarkable expansion of the artist's repertoire into *son et lumière* and beyond that into '*grain et parfum*', or touch and odour. These aspects of evocative landscapes in *The Lake* contribute significantly to enrichment of the text, as do the faint contemporary references that are delicately woven into both *The Untilled Field* and *The Lake*.

*The Lake* is the story of a priest's gradual realisation of how he had made the wrong choice in joining the clergy and of how he must escape from this position. The tale of this slow coming to terms with himself unfolds in stream of consciousness, internal monologue and in letters, interwoven with a succession of depictions of natural landscapes in all their variety and seasons. The early idea of landscape as locus amoenus (or pleasant place) can surely be applied to some of these drawings – so, too, would the later romantic notion of the sublime and wild landscape. The pictures of nature can act as mirror, or as counterpoint, to the states of mind and actions of Father Oliver Gogarty, the central character. There is implied contrast between Gogarty's cultivation of exotic garden flowers and the proliferation of natural species that flourished around the lake and on the hermit's island but, in an unspoken expansion of the concept in *Candide* of 'cultiver son jardin', the picture is complicated for the reader by the absence of any single, exact horticultural or moral prescription.<sup>16</sup> Symbolism abounds and the comparison is facilitated, but not forced, between on the one hand, the predictable course of the seasonal cycles, the close-up views of flora and fauna, and on the other hand Gogarty's jolting, shuddering journey of mind and soul down blind alleys of self-delusion to an ultimate greater awareness. Evident also, but again not obtrusive in its presentation, is the contrast between the solidity of rich visual images and the shakiness and volatility of the priest's psychological and rational processes: the episode of his hallucinations concerning Nora provides a good example of Moore's method in this regard.<sup>17</sup> When Gogarty finally decides to leave and to fake his own death by drowning, his gravitation is towards what he sees as natural, and his justification is expressed in the language of nature and

landscape pictures: the images are of the curlew, the 'old decrepit house' from which the shutters fell to look at 'splendid sun shining on hills and fields, wooded prospects with rivers winding through the great green expanses'; he will not resign himself 'to a frog-like acquiescence in the stagnant pool'.<sup>18</sup>

The lake of the story is not that 'stagnant pool'. It is the central, beautiful, natural feature of the countryside, first introduced as being 'like a mirror that somebody had breathed upon'. On each appearance, it adds to the wealth of imagery and, on occasion, its presentation has a musicality and sonority that is mesmerising: 'The ducks were talking in the reeds, the reeds themselves were talking, and the water lapping softly about the smooth limestone shingle'. The lake reflects the mood of the beholder as well as its physical surroundings: it was 'refined and wistful, with reflections of islands and reeds, mysteriously still. Rose-coloured clouds descended'. Despite several depictions of its loveliness and the predominance of those pictures, it becomes apparent that, for Oliver Gogarty, it is still an inland waterway and he was 'certain that if he had such a boat he would not be sailing her on a lake, but on the bright sea, out of sight of land'. Some islands on the lake have ruined castles, another was the site of a hermit's cell, and one will be his staging post when he 'ungirds' for his swim across the lake to a new life. As time progresses, Gogarty wonders if the lake reminds him of a shroud or a ghost, but then decides that 'Every man has a lake in his heart'; that phrase is repeated and somewhat elucidated finally as 'he listens to its monotonous whisper year by year, more and more attentive till at last he ungirds'.<sup>19</sup>

Landscape painting continued to interest the wider public at the beginning of the twentieth century, and indeed well beyond that date although, in part influenced by nineteenth-century developments in photography, the genre had diminished in importance and prestige in the eyes of artists and critics. That popular taste could well be part of the reason for Moore appearing to proffer landscape to his readers in these book titles, while ultimately delivering images and messages that the reading, looking public had not bargained for. Thus, the author could combine literary experiment with general reader appeal and reach a wider audience. In the landscape scenes of *The Lake*, in particular, the text displays some of the detail typical of the style of Victorian landscape artists; in *The Untilled Field*, the panoramas are suggested rather than executed. For the contemporary reader, there is also the comfort of recognising the familiar in items that are of their time and place in Ireland, with some confirming the modernity and others emphasising ancient heritage or links with Celtic myth and legend, subjects that were topical in the Celtic Revival period. In 'Home Sickness', Bryden looks 'at the old castles, remembering the prehistoric raiders',<sup>20</sup> in 'The Wild Goose', Ned mentions 'Finn McColl', and he and Ellen plan to see Tara, Clonmacnoise, Cashel and Glendalough. 'The Aran Islands tempted them, for there was Gaelic Ireland'<sup>21</sup> – the topicality and contested nature of that last assertion was picked up by James Joyce in 'The Dead'. Similarly, Father Moran's assertion that 'the

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 144; 145; 176. <sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 1; 25; 5; 35; 179. <sup>20</sup> Moore, *The Untilled Field*, p. 28.



questioning of any dogma would mean some slight subsidence from the idea of nationality'<sup>22</sup> is an echo of contemporary debate and dispute. In *The Lake*, Father Oliver's thoughts 'lingered in the seventh and eighth centuries, when the arts were fostered in monasteries – the arts of gold-work and illuminated missals – "Ireland's halcyon days":'<sup>23</sup> On the modern side, it emerges in both books that train services reach remote Connacht; it is 'as easy to go from London to Ireland as it is to go to Margate'; it seems simple also to travel to Antwerp, Munich, Rapallo and Cairo or Turkestan.<sup>24</sup> Market prices would be of concern to many and odd snippets are painted in on the varying prices of livestock, the yearly salary of a school teacher (£50), and the relatively high church fees demanded for conducting a marriage for a labourer – minimal information that enlivens the pictures.<sup>25</sup> The ubiquitous village gossip is drawn with an accuracy that makes the figure totally plausible for any age or place.<sup>26</sup>

There are other allusions with local and contemporary interest. Some relate to ecclesiastical quarrels and they surface in the comparisons made between Roman and Celtic Christianity in *The Lake*: 'Religion in Ireland in the seventh and eighth centuries was clearly a homely thing full of tender joy and hope, and the inspiration not only of poems, but of many churches and much ornament'. Here one finds hints of postulated ingredients for a national identity, and echoes of the support given by Moore's father to Archbishop McHale in his disagreements with Cardinal Cullen and John Henry Newman and the ultramontanes of the time;<sup>27</sup> there are also shades of interdenominational prejudice and bigotry, in particular over the baptism of a child when the adherents of the two main religions seek to claim it.<sup>28</sup> On the secular side, there is even a subtle nod in the direction of a controversial murder insinuated into *The Lake*; the death was that of Bridget Cleary, an alleged witch, in 1895. While the entire episode faded from view in the succeeding years, Bridget's name would have been very well-known a century ago. Moore's references to Bridget and his treatment of the tragedy seem to have gone entirely unnoticed then and since, even though the case of Bridget Cleary has once again become familiar in recent years.<sup>29</sup> Moore's attitude to the primitive happenings near Clonmel in Co. Tipperary can be deduced from the manner in which he links coopers with the past, a 'Bridget Cleary' cottage with Father Gogarty's unenlightened state, and then Gogarty's move away from it is made to coincide with the dawning of greater self-understanding, his 'liberation from prejudices and conventions'.<sup>30</sup> The cottage that is so much part of idealised and traditional landscape pictures is symbollic here of a dark past and suggestive of its lingering presence. Depicting the depopulation of the west and the collapse of abandoned cottages forms a part of George Moore's continuing riposte

21 Ibid., pp 150; 168. 22 Moore, *The Lake*, p. 47. 23 Ibid., p. 43. 24 Ibid., pp 76; 83–4; 97; 99; 133. 25 'The Exile', p.2; *The Lake*, pp 60–1; 168; 'Patchwork', p. 47. 26 Moore, *The Lake*, pp 20–2. 27 Ibid., pp 96–7. 28 Ibid., pp 69; 89; 98; 153–66; 168. 29 See, for example, Angela Bourke, *The burning of Bridget Cleary: a true story* (Dublin, 1999); Tom Mac Intyre, *What happened Bridgie Cleary* (Dublin, 1985); *Hidden History*, RTE 1 television, 1 November, 2005. 30 Moore, *The Lake*, pp 2; 14; 44–5; 53; 145; 172.



to travel writers of the nineteenth century, and such scenes appear also in *The Lake*; they are approached, however, with much more subtlety than Moore had achieved in 1887 in his polemical book, *Parnell and his Island*. While these and many other elements are in the texts, they are not in the foreground nor do they constitute any kind of dramatic backdrop for the numerous landscapes of *The Lake*; yet, neither can they be detached from the pictures. They are often not visually presented but they are factors and questions that are hinted at, triggered by images, and they will not go away.

George Moore's focus on Irish contexts does not preclude attention to the mode of expression, a matter that is vital for him as art critic, literary man and connoisseur of French artistic trends in word and paint. His artistic decisions in these books are simultaneously concerned with literary genres and with preferences and movements in visual art, both of which were contested spheres in the period. His engagement with those spheres is signalled in *The Lake* by, amongst many other devices, mention of 'Landor's *Hellenics*', a Rubens painting in Antwerp, Father Gogarty's musings on an unnamed woman who is instantly recognisable as George Eliot ('a learned woman, a learned philosophical writer and translator of exegetical works from the German') and a landscape scene (with wood gatherers) that is obviously reminiscent of a painting by Millet.<sup>31</sup> Indirect allusion to Millet recalls Moore's opinion that while the Frenchman was not 'a painter in any true sense of the word', he provided lessons for all on 'how to suggest rather than to point out, and how by a series of ellipses to lead the spectator to imagine what is not there'. Edgar Degas is praised in even more laudatory terms: 'in Degas the science of the drawing is hidden from us'.<sup>32</sup> Those are exactly the approaches taken by Moore, particularly in *The Lake*. In 1892, commenting on Corot's painting style, Moore had judged that 'it changed gradually, as nature changes, waxing like the moon from a thin, pure crescent to a full circle of light'.<sup>33</sup> It is no coincidence that such a description that could equally be applied to Father Gogarty's development in the novel and appropriately, on the night of his escape, there are two moon references in the text: 'A yellow disc appeared', and 'that great moon pouring silver down the lake'.<sup>34</sup> The recurrent intermingling of visual and sensory images in verbal portrayals of landscape and inscape will be an abiding concern for Moore, seen by him as a pattern originating with Cervantes and followed by Rousseau.<sup>35</sup>

In the case of *The Untilled Field*, the idea of a themed and unified collection of short stories was a literary innovation, as was the introduction of stream of consciousness and internal monologue into the English novel in *The Lake*. It is noteworthy that in each of these texts, Moore should decide on landscape as an instrument, and as an intrinsic part of his ongoing artistic developments and expansion of genre. On occa-

31 Ibid., pp 16; 77; 99; 105. 32 George Moore, *Modern painting* (New York, 1913), pp 71; 278. 33 Ibid., p. 75. The article on Corot had first appeared in August 1892 in *The Speaker* where Moore was art critic. 34 Moore, *The Lake*, pp 177–9. 35 George Moore, *Avowals* (London, 1919), p. 13.

sion, the landscape scenes of these texts evince a profusion of ingredients that would be in keeping with the crowded style of Victorian artists, and elsewhere readers are confronted by unembellished narrative; in both cases, a less than idyllic reality is evoked, the certainties of Victorian visual and verbal narratives are absent, and the elusiveness of agreed national identity is perceptible. The use and frequency of verbal paintings might differ in each book but, overall, the landscapes act as catalyst to the generation of imagined pictures by the readers, thus multiplying the images available. It could be said that, in two senses, Moore actually overlooks the mountains and the lakes of these stories: he takes a panoramic and bird's eye view of the Irish world, identifying the significant landmarks, physical features and fault lines, and sketches them in with minimalist pen strokes; downplaying the picturesque, he zooms in close to foreground the human situations. In each instance, his tactics highlight what he sees as crucial matters for debate, and the sensitivity of the topics for various different constituencies ensured that the subjects were not ignored by contemporaries: his landscapes and mindscapes inevitably become debating grounds for those issues. Had it been anyone other than Henry James who wrote that 'analogy between the art of the painter and the art of the novelist is, so far as I am able to see, complete', Moore might have concurred. However, in his view, the Jamesian verbal paintings lacked the political force that he sought to inject into *The Untilled Field*.<sup>36</sup> George Moore never mentions Horace either, but the Horatian dictum 'ut pictura poesis'<sup>37</sup> is also one that he could have fairly and proudly affixed to both 'landscape' texts. Moore took his own route with verbal landscape painting and developed a sophisticated technique that combined artistry with commitment, the medium with the message. Reflecting on landscape painting, Irish artist William Crozier, declares that, 'Landscape is not the subject; it is the vehicle through which I can express intangible things. Things which have no narrative. Loss, memory – all can be done through the language of landscape'.<sup>38</sup> Almost a century separates the Crozier interview from the first publication dates of *The Untilled Field* and *The Lake*, but his articulation of a landscape artist's attitude and practice would seem to coincide perfectly with Moore's innovatory literary methods of a hundred years ago.

<sup>36</sup> Henry James, 'The art of fiction', in *Partial Portraits* 1888 (New York: Haskell House, 1968), p. 378. <sup>37</sup> Horace, *Ars Poetica*, 361. Tr. 'as in painting, so also in prose'. <sup>38</sup> Brian McAvera, interview with Bill Crozier, 'Construction in colour and light' in *Irish Arts Review*, 20:1 (Spring 2003), 66.