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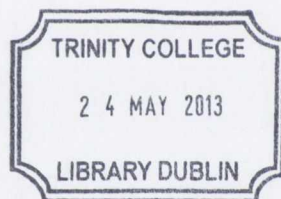
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***'Exogamous Brides':
Representations of Inter-faith Relationships in Irish
Fiction***

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A thesis submitted to the School of English at Trinity College, University of Dublin, in
the fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

2012

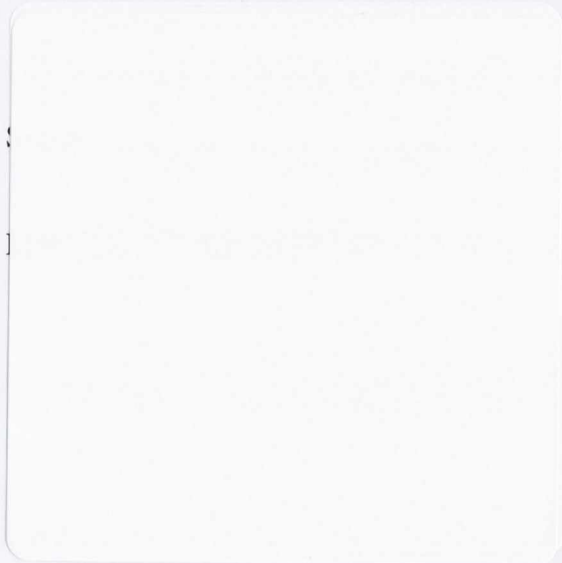


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Summary

'Exogamous Brides': Representations of Inter-faith Relationships in Irish Fiction

This study offers a comprehensive assessment of how a broad range of Irish novelists depicted mixed marriages or inter-faith relationships from the 1860s to the 1960s, and argues that heterogeneous depictions of these relationships cannot be interpreted solely as national allegories or metaphors for conciliation or lack of conciliation between the Protestant and Catholic communities. To establish the complexity of the issue with which the writers were engaging, the study gives extensive treatment to the theological, historical and sociological contexts of inter-faith relationships and mixed marriages in Ireland.

To this end, the introduction to the thesis is divided into four sections. The first addresses theological contexts, beginning with references to mixed marriages in the Bible and continuing to explore the implications of the mid-sixteenth century Council of Trent and the *Ne temere* decree of 1908. The second section establishes the historical and political contexts to inter-faith relationships. By identifying a number of seminal events in Irish history, such as the Desmond Rebellion in 1579 or the Ulster Rebellion in 1641, the introduction also shows how marriages between Catholics and Protestants constituted politically transgressive acts. I also examine a series of disputes, most of which came before the Irish courts during the period with which the thesis is concerned, and where the religious upbringing of children of these marriages was the core issue.

The first chapter addresses representations of these relationships in late nineteenth and early twentieth century novels by both Protestant and Catholic writers. The Protestant writers of the period tended to use the inter-faith relationships in their narratives to emphasise the importance of economic well-being, while the didactic novels by Catholic writers used the romance-across-the-divide tradition to promote Catholicism. In the narratives I explore in the following chapter, which were written in the second decade of the twentieth century, inter-faith relationships are set against the campaign for

the third Home Rule bill, and their relatively happy endings can be interpreted as metaphors for conciliation between warring Protestant and Catholic communities. However, it is clear that two novels written by Catholic writers also offer a swingeing critique of Catholic dogma. The third chapter focuses on ways in which both Protestant and Catholic female writers depicted inter-faith relationships during the years of the Free State. The Protestant writer depicts her Protestant protagonist as caught in the double-bind of conservative Free State civil law and Catholic dogma, as he is locked in an unhappy marriage with a Catholic, whilst the Catholic writer is shown to be equally scathing of Free State conservatism, as her Catholic protagonist is locked in an unhappy marriage with a theosophist and cannot access contraception.

Three writers examined in the fourth chapter also offer severe fictional indictments of the Catholic Church, as that Church whether through dogma or just sheer oppressiveness is clearly depicted as the agency of destruction in the relationships. Sexual encounters between Catholics and Protestants in the novels explored in the final chapter can be interpreted as forms of political engagement. However, these encounters are often represented as violent attacks by Protestant men on Catholic women, and may thus be read as crude metaphors for conquest and colonisation.

In conclusion, this thesis will offer a balanced and comprehensive evaluation of the ways in which writers of Irish fiction have engaged with the issue of mixed marriages or inter-faith relationships between Catholics and Protestants in Ireland. It will also establish the long historical and theological roots of the problems associated with these relationships.

Acknowledgements

I wish to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. Brian Cliff for his patience, good humour and diligent assessment of my work. I also wish to thank the Irish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences (IRCHSS) for the funding they provided for my research. I am also indebted to the School of Medicine, Trinity College for granting ethical approval for this project. For taking time to discuss my research with me, my thanks to Gerald Dawe, Dr. Margaret Mac Curtain, Brian Donnelly, Alan Tilson, Professor Andrew Carpenter, Dr. Donald Caird, Rev. Andrew Smith, Rev. Alastair Graham, Monsignor Alex Stenson and Fr. Aidan Lehane C.S.Sp., sadly now deceased. Thanks to Avril Patterson whose friendship and support over the years has been invaluable. Thanks also to Noelle Dowling of the Dublin Diocesan Archives. I owe a special debt of gratitude to Dr. Daithí Ó Corráin and Mr. Justice Gerald Hogan for reviewing my analysis of the factual dispute cases, and also to Guy Woodward for reading and commenting on successive chapters.

My thanks to my precious daughters Ruth and Jodie. I also offer my heartfelt gratitude to my soul-mate and friend Mariea – for her insight, enthusiasm and words of encouragement. Let the four of us now take to the seas.

‘You feel mighty free and easy and comfortable on a raft’

– Mark Twain, *Huckleberry Finn*

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my mother Eleanor, a Catholic, and to my father, John, who was born and raised as a Presbyterian and is sadly now deceased.

A cobble thrown a hundred years ago
Keeps coming at me, the first stone
Aimed at a great-grandmother's turncoat brow.
The pony jerks and the riot's on.
She crouched low in the trap
Running the gauntlet that first Sunday
Down the brae to Mass at a panicked gallop.
He whips on through the town to cries of 'Lundy!'

Call her 'The Convert'. 'The Exogamous Bride'.
Anyhow, it is a genre piece
Inherited on my mother's side
And mine to dispose with now she's gone.
Instead of silver and Victorian lace,
The exonerating, exonerated stone.

Seamus Heaney, 'Clearances', *The Haw Lantern* (1987)

Introduction

At Kilmurry, Co. Cork in 1911, Jonathan Shorten, a Protestant who had married a Catholic, Mary Brady, some years previously, suffered the brunt of local sectarian animosities when he refused to raise their children as Catholics in accordance with Catholic teaching. A report in the London *Daily Express* put it succinctly: 'Mr. Shorten's persecution had been the outcome of a mixed marriage'.¹ One local man was charged with throwing stones at Shorten and taken to court, and on giving evidence a Detective Inspector Walsh warned with masterful understatement that, 'You had better keep away from that dangerous subject. Religious matters in Ireland have caused a lot of trouble in the country'.²

Events took a bizarre twist when one of the Shorten children, a boy of six or seven years, died unexpectedly. Since the local undertaker did not have a suitable coffin, Shorten was obliged to walk the forty or so miles to Cork city in order to purchase one. When he returned home some days later he discovered that his wife had interred their son in Kilmurry Catholic graveyard. Not to be outdone, under the cover of darkness and unbeknownst to his wife, Shorten exhumed his son's remains by lamplight and re-interred them in the Protestant graveyard at Kilbohane, after which he 'placed the empty coffin in the grave from which he had transferred his child'.³

Shorten's stratagem was uncovered, however, after the death of his wife two years later, when, as her grave was being dug, the same undertaker discovered the 'missing corpse'. This scandal coupled with the fact that Shorten's children were being educated at Kilmurry Protestant school against their mother's wishes led to a 'reign of terror' against him, culminating in the 'mysterious abduction' of his two eldest children, Sophia and Flossie.⁴ The abduction of the children was reported to the local police,

¹ 'Boycotting in Co.Cork. Alarming State of Affairs. Two Girls Abducted. Labourers Cottage Burned. Outrage at Protestant Church', *Daily Express*, 4 October 1911, p. 4.

² 'Amusing Proceedings', *Southern Star*, 25 November 1911, p. 6.

³ 'Boycott of Protestant Farmers. McCann Case Recalled. Extraordinary State of Affairs in Co.Cork.', *Irish Times*, 7 October 1911, p. 12

⁴ *Ibid.*, 'Kilmurry Scandal. Important Development. Another Outrage', *Cork Constitution*, 17 October 1911, p. 5.

while the Catholic community led by the parish priest, Rev. Canon O'Mahony, denied any involvement or wrongdoing. Rumour had it that they were spirited away to the home of their maternal grandmother after their mother's death. Shorten told a special correspondent to the *Irish Times*, who was dispatched to establish the true facts, that his wife's family made 'the most determined efforts to induce the two eldest girls to forsake Protestantism'.⁵

Canon O'Mahony, who by his own admission was 'entirely opposed to mixed marriages', convened a special meeting to discuss the issue, at which he denounced Shorten by arguing that even though he had supposedly converted to Catholicism prior to his marriage, he was merely 'masquerading as a Catholic' and had never attended mass or received the sacraments.⁶ Notably, however, O'Mahony pointed out that Shorten's marriage was still valid in the eyes of the Catholic Church.⁷ He also claimed at the meeting that Shorten was overheard saying to his wife, 'I turned my coat with you, but I did not turn the lining of it'.⁸ Quite extraordinarily though, the Census of Ireland for 1911 which was completed and signed by Jonathan Shorten on 2 April 1911 records his religion, and the religion of his wife and of all his children (including Sophia and Flossie) as Church of Ireland.⁹

O'Mahony then aligned the issue with local unionist opposition to Home Rule by castigating both Shorten and those opposed to Home Rule in the same speech. Following the desecration of the local Protestant Church, O'Mahony argued that this had in fact been carried out by unionists themselves in an attempt to emphasise to members of the Eighty Club the dire consequences of Home Rule on Irish Protestants.¹⁰ Responding to the allegation that some members of the Catholic community had abducted the Shorten children and desecrated the church, O'Mahony told the meeting:

⁵ 'Alleged McCann Case in the South. Religion of Two Children. Facts of the Case' *Irish Times*, 21 October 1911, p. 14.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ 'Unionist Tactics. Kilmurry "Outrages". Indignation Meeting. Eloquent Refutation by Very Rev Canon O'Mahony', *Cork Examiner*, 9 October 1911. p.4. Obviously Shorten's marriage had been conducted in accordance with canonical form and this will be discussed later.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ 'Jonathan Shorten', Census of Ireland, 1911

<www.census.nationalarchives.ie/pages/1911/cork/greenville/knocknaneirk/423728/ [accessed 25 September 2009]

¹⁰ The Eighty Club was aligned to the British Liberal Party and a deputation toured Ireland in 1911 to determine the general mood of the people regarding Home Rule. According to the *Irish Times* a contingent of unionist farmers made a presentation to the Club in Cork in October 1911.

All this system of calumny and slander has been used for the purpose of defeating Home Rule. Unionism has already a discreditable history in this country, and when the Irish people shall have obtained legislative independence, and when the history of the times shall be written, then it shall be held that in waging this last campaign against Irish rights, Unionism has sought to be advanced by the ignoble tactics of slander and misrepresentation (cheers).¹¹

The meeting ended on a somewhat lighter note as Mrs. Brady, Shorten's Catholic mother-in-law, was called to the platform by O'Mahony to confirm for the audience that the children had *not* in fact been kidnapped:

'Did you abduct them,' the chairman asked. 'I did.' She replied. The Very Rev Chairman – 'You don't understand the meaning of the word'.¹²

This case has received scant critical attention, yet it is remarkably similar to the McCann case in Belfast in 1911 and the infamous Fethard-on-Sea boycott in 1957.¹³ The case also encapsulates several issues which were often central to mixed marriage disputes and which will be addressed in this thesis: the blurred lines between history or politics and religion; the concern with the religious upbringing of the children; the active or overbearing role of the Catholic priest; and the division of a co-existing Protestant and Catholic community.

* * * * *

Mixed marriages or inter-faith relationships have long been a vexed issue in Ireland. On the question of Catholic Church objections to such unions, Owen Dudley Edwards argues convincingly: 'What was involved here was the proclamation of religious *apartheid*. It was part of a world-wide policy on the part of the Roman Catholic authorities, but it was imposed most stringently in Ireland or by Irish clerics abroad [...] the outlawry of mixed marriages, then, was a social matter of critical significance in the

¹¹ *Cork Examiner*, 9 October 1911, p. 4.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ I discuss the McCann case later, but in this thesis I have decided to focus mainly on lesser known cases.

building of the religious ghetto walls'.¹⁴ These are strong words indeed, but they do contain central truths that have implications for any prohibitor of mixed marriages, whether on religious or political grounds. These relationships were also discouraged by the Protestant Churches.¹⁵ The views of one Rev. J.C. Robb who was speaking at a youth conference in Dublin in 1943 were outlined in the *Irish Times*:

Mr. Robb said he did not preach against mixed marriages because of any bitterness against the Catholic Church; but the two faiths were so different and so irreconcilable, and the Catholic preaching was so distinct and so hard, that it was impossible for a Protestant to marry a Roman Catholic and have a lasting happy marriage.¹⁶

While these marriages have been frowned upon by both Churches, however, but what makes the situation in Ireland more fraught is the fact that Church condemnation of them is coupled with a troubled historical backdrop.¹⁷ In effect, conquest and colonisation and the English Reformation established religion as a political identity whereby Protestantism became associated with a colonising alien force, while Catholicism became a symbol of dispossession. The problems surrounding mixed marriages in Ireland, therefore, stem not only from theological objections, but also from perceived political affiliations. Indeed, because religion and politics in Ireland are, more often than not, inextricably bound up together, inter-faith relationships often concurrently transgress religious and political lines.

Some qualification is necessary here. The perception of mixed marriages as political transgressions has been more pronounced at different times and places. For instance, such views might be more prevalent in Northern Ireland during the Troubles or indeed

¹⁴ Owen Dudley Edwards, *The Sins of our Fathers: Roots of Conflict in Northern Ireland* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1970), p. 193, p. 196.

¹⁵ When I refer to Protestants or the Protestant Church in this thesis, I am referring to members of the Reformed Church or the Reformed Church. Generally, due to the limited scope of this thesis, I have not differentiated between different Protestant denominations.

¹⁶ 'Mixed Marriages Condemned', *Irish Times*, 1 November 1943, p. 3.

¹⁷ In an interview with me on 12 March 2012, historian Margaret Mac Curtain described the difficulties surrounding mixed marriages in Ireland in the past as a form of 'warfare' or a 'pitched battle'. In fact, to this day they are still a contentious issue particularly in rural areas. In February 2012 in Co. Carlow two men, George Rothwell, a Protestant and Michael Jordan, a Catholic who was married to Rothwell's Protestant sister, died in tragic circumstances. While I am not suggesting that their deaths were connected to Jordan's mixed marriage, it is notable that many people on various national media channels made this connection.

in West Cork during the War of Independence. As a religious transgression, on the other hand, a mixed marriage might be more divisive in mid-twentieth century rural Ireland when the Catholic Church was at the height of its powers. Such relationships can also be seen to transgress class lines, which, in turn, may also arise from religious and political divisions. The most obvious example that comes to mind of a marriage that would transgress religious, political and class boundaries might be if Catholic peasant servant girl from a nationalist background marries her Protestant employer, who owns a large estate and also happens to support the union with Britain.

It follows that those Irish fiction writers who depicted inter-faith relationships or mixed marriages were dealing with a complex and divisive issue. In order to establish the theological, political and sociological context to their novels, this introduction is divided into four sections. The first section explores the theological dilemmas associated with mixed marriages, ranging from references in the Bible to the Catholic *Ne temere* decree of the twentieth century. The second section outlines the historical or political backdrop from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, when Ireland was ethnically divided by way of various conquests and colonisations, to the mid-nineteenth century, when the national identities of Protestants and Catholics hardened and became more conspicuous. The third section examines a series of mixed marriage disputes, most of which came before the Irish courts, involving the religious upbringing of children and demonstrates not only the tension between Church and state over this issue, but also how these relationships affected the lives of ordinary people. The final section discusses the romance-across-the-divide tradition in fiction, and briefly outlines the novels which are analysed in the main body of the thesis. One of the strengths of this study is the fact that the novels dealt with are generally non-canonical, and have been selected less through literary merit than to afford a balanced and comprehensive evaluation of how Irish writers have engaged with the issue.

I

The Catholic Church and Mixed Marriage: A Theological Perspective

It is clear that the Catholic Church discouraged or legislated against mixed marriages from the Council of Trent through to the *Ne temere* decree of 1908, and it is also clear that the Bible was the source for some of its doctrine. Trent's *Tametsi* decree insisted that all marriages involving Catholics were subject to a canonical form, that is, they had to be celebrated before a priest and two witnesses. This decree obviously impinged on Protestants marrying Catholics. The Council of Trent also recognised the sacramental nature of marriage. Given the fact that the Catholic and Protestant Churches differ fundamentally in terms of sacraments, this meant that mixed marriages were rendered even more problematic. In Ireland, Cardinal Cullen's Synod of Thurles had an anti-Protestant colouring and reaffirmed the Catholic Church's disapproval of mixed marriages. Indeed, it is probable that the hardened attitude of the Catholic Church to these marriages in Ireland in the latter part of the nineteenth century was largely attributable to Cullen's flagrant anti-Protestantism.¹⁸ The Catholic *Ne temere* decree came into effect at Easter 1908, and became something of a *bête noire* for Protestants. Though often misinterpreted in terms of the religious upbringing of children of mixed marriages, many in the Reformed Church felt with some justification, that this decree represented an attempt by the Catholic Church to legislate for Protestants. I will also discuss the thorny area of dispensations for mixed marriages and the religious upbringing of children of those marriages. In socio/religious terms, the Catholic Church's insistence that the children of mixed marriages should be brought up in that faith became, perhaps, the most enduring bone of contention between Catholic and Protestant communities.

Catholic Church condemnation of mixed marriages has long roots indeed. The *Catholic Encyclopaedia* explains:

The opposition of the Church to such unions is, however very ancient, [sic] and early councils, [sic] legislated against marriages of this

¹⁸ I discuss this matter in more detail in Chapter One.

character. Such enactments are found in the fourth century Councils of Elvira and of Laodicea. The General Council of Chalcedon [451 AD] prohibits such unions especially between members of the lower ecclesiastical grades and heretical women.¹⁹

In fact, the divisiveness surrounding mixed marriages can be traced back to the Old Testament. In Genesis 24.3 the elderly Abraham says to his chief, 'I want you to swear by the Lord, the God of heaven and the God of earth that you will not get a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites'.²⁰ Similarly, Deuteronomy 7.1-7 forbids marriage between Israelites and Canaanites, amongst others:

When the Lord your God brings you into the land you are entering to possess and drives out before you many nations – the Hittites, Girgashites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites, seven nations larger and stronger than you – and when the Lord your God has delivered them over to you and you have defeated them, then you must destroy them totally. Make no treaty with them, and show them no mercy. Do not intermarry with them. Do not give your daughters to their sons or take their daughters for your sons, for they will turn your sons away from following me to serve other gods.

This passage is notable for a number of reasons. It is very much concerned with conquest and colonisation and in this regard anticipates the patterns of Irish history. Following conquest, the passage promotes endogamy and suggests that a mixed marriage in such circumstances would transgress ethnic lines. It also raises the issue of the danger to the religion of somebody entering such a marriage. The passage is also notable for the furore that was created when Cardinal Logue famously quoted it in a Lenten Pastoral of 1911 when he was addressing the *Ne temere* decree. He concluded by remarking, 'Even in the Old Law, these marriages were expressly forbidden by God Himself', but was taken to task, however, by Rev. C.K. Irwin in the *Ulster Gazette* for using the Bible to defend the contentious decree.²¹

¹⁹ 'Mixed Marriage', *Catholic Encyclopaedia*, <<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09698a.htm>> [accessed 13 June 2012]

²⁰ All Bible quotations are from New International Version.

²¹ 'Lenten Pastorals. Cardinal Logue and the "Ne Temere" Decree', *Irish Times*, 4 March 2011, p.5. Andrew Scholes, *The Church of Ireland and the third Home Rule Bill* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2010), p. 2.

There are also examples of mixed marriage censure in the New Testament. In II Corinthians 6.14-15, St Paul advises against unions with non-believers or infidels, warning: 'Do not be yoked together with unbelievers [...] What does a believer have in common with a non-believer?' The requirement later introduced by the Catholic Church, whereby the Catholic in a mixed marriage would seek the conversion of his or her non-Catholic partner, may also have its origins in the Bible; in I Peter 3.1 wives are advised to make believers out of their non-believing husbands: 'Wives [...] if any of them [husbands] do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behaviour of their wives'.

The Reformation of the sixteenth century divided Christians into Catholic and Protestant communities, meaning that 'mixed religion' was now officially an impediment to marriage.²² At the Council of Trent in 1563 – part of the Catholic Church's rear-guard action against it – the Church sought to bring uniformity to marriage and to put an end to clandestine marriages, asserting 'the church's right to define the impediments that made a marriage invalid'.²³ It is arguable that what was laid down at Trent in relation to marriage sowed the seeds for future Protestant dissent in this area. In this regard, John Fulton has argued that because the Council was convened specifically for anti-Protestant action 'the legislation on marriage was to have anti-Protestant implications',²⁴ while Margaret Mac Curtain makes the point that what passed at Trent, from a Catholic perspective, would remain very much in-situ up to the present day.²⁵ Essentially, the Council's decree *Tametsi* – a forerunner to *Ne temere* – insisted that all Catholics should marry before a Catholic priest and two witnesses. This meant that *all* marriages involving at least one Catholic were henceforth subject to this canonical form, which in a sense encroached on the rights of Protestants in mixed marriages: if those marriages were not celebrated in accordance with *Tametsi* they were deemed illicit and invalid by the Catholic Church.²⁶ However, in 1785 Pius VI declared mixed marriages in Ireland to be exempt from this canonical form, largely because the

²² Margaret Mac Curtain, 'Marriage in Tudor Ireland' in *Marriage in Ireland*, ed. by Art Cosgrove (Dublin: College Press Ltd, 1985), pp. 51-66 (p. 54).

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 63.

²⁴ John Fulton, *The Tragedy of Belief: Division, Politics and Religion in Ireland* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), p. 205.

²⁵ Mac Curtain, p. 54.

²⁶ Fulton, p. 205.

Catholic Church wished to avoid conflict with civil law.²⁷ In essence, *Ne temere* in 1908 lifted this exemption and declared that all marriages from that point onwards, mixed or otherwise, were subject to the canonical form in order to be valid. What is perhaps most significant about *Tametsi* is that it threw Church and state into direct conflict regarding marriages since 'it was now possible for a marriage to be declared valid by the state and invalid by the church'.²⁸

Another innovation at Trent was the fact that marriage was solemnly recognised as one of the seven sacraments instituted by Christ.²⁹ This would prove to be a serious flashpoint between Catholics and Protestants in terms of mixed marriage since both religions differ fundamentally in this area. *The Catholic Encyclopaedia* outlines that Church's difficulties:

As Christ raised wedlock to the dignity of a Sacrament, a marriage between a Catholic and a non-Catholic was rightly looked upon as degrading the holy character of matrimony, involving as it did a communion in sacred things with those outside the fold. The Apostle St. Paul insists strongly on Christian marriage being a symbol of the union between Christ and His Church, and hence sacred. The very intimacy of the union necessarily established between those joined in wedlock requires a concordance above all in their religious sentiments. Holding this doctrine, it was but natural and logical for the Church to do all in her power to hinder her children from contracting marriage with those outside her pale, who did not recognize the sacramental character of the union on which they were entering.³⁰

However, while the Catholic Church had grave difficulty with administering a sacrament to a heretic or an infidel, this problem was overcome by the 'cautiones' or promises sought from the non-Catholic partner, as I shall discuss later.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 209.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 211.

²⁹ E. Schillebeeckx, *Marriage: Secular Reality and Saving Mystery. 2 Marriage in the History of the Church*, trans. N.D. Smith, (London: Sheed and Ward, 1965), p.168.

³⁰ 'Mixed Marriage', *Catholic Encyclopaedia*.

If *Tametsi* had an anti-Protestant colouring, so too had the Synod of Thurles in 1850, convened by Cardinal Paul Cullen. Up to the mid nineteenth-century there had been a lack of uniformity among Catholic bishops in Ireland in relation to the dispensation required for a mixed marriage. To remedy this, at Thurles Cullen insisted that all mixed marriages required a Papal dispensation. However, while he set out to make these as difficult as possible, bishops continued to issue dispensations on a local basis.³¹

The Synod also reaffirmed the Catholic Church's disapproval of mixed marriages by reminding the laity of the form such marriage ceremonies should take: the priest was not to wear vestments; the ceremony could not be conducted in the main part of the church; and no prayers were to be said.³² Moreover, the ceremony could only take place during certain daylight hours while the door to the church had to remain open. Many of these strictures remained in place until the 1970s. It should also be noted here that Cullen was simply reaffirming the dictates set out in 'Exsequendo nunc' of Pius VI in 1782 in relation to the celebration of mixed marriages. Apart from the conditions I have already noted, Pius VI also insisted that the couple should not be blessed by the priest, who, in fact, was only there as a witness to the canonical form being observed.³³

As already noted, the widely misunderstood *Ne temere* decree which came into effect at Easter in 1908 removed the exemption from the canonical form for those entering mixed marriages, by declaring that *all* marriages involving a Catholic must be celebrated before a priest and two witnesses. However, historians and various commentators consistently misread *Ne temere*, becoming preoccupied with the notion that the decree was primarily concerned with the raising of children in the Catholic faith. Thomas Bartlett, for example, in his otherwise fine work, *Ireland: A History* (2010) states, 'This [*Ne temere*] had directed that the children in a 'mixed marriage', i.e. a union between a Catholic and a Protestant, must be brought up as Catholics'.³⁴ Similarly, Claire Mitchell writes that, 'the infamous 1908 *Ne temere* decree [...]

³¹ Patrick J. Corish, *The Irish Catholic Experience: A Historical Survey* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1985), p. 221.

³² J. Hogan, 'Mixed Marriages' *The Irish Ecclesiastical Record*, 1 (1881) 692-698 p. 694.

³³ Alasdair Heron, *Two Churches, One Love: Interchurch Marriage between Protestants and Roman Catholics* (Dublin: APCK, 1977), p. 40.

³⁴ Thomas Bartlett, *Ireland: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 373.

instructed that the children of a mixed religion marriage must be brought up as Catholics'.³⁵

Ne temere was not in fact directly concerned with the religious upbringing of children, but with the *validity* of marriages involving Catholics.³⁶ Quite extraordinarily, in light of both such declarations by historians and the fact that so much political capital has been garnered over the issue (as by unionists in the run up to the third Home Rule Bill) there is no mention in the decree of the religious upbringing of children as Catholics or any other faith for that matter.

Notwithstanding misinterpretations, *Ne temere* was a blunt instrument and Protestants had just cause to be concerned. In practice it meant that whenever a Catholic married a non-Catholic, the marriage would not be valid in the eyes of the Roman Church unless it was witnessed by a priest and two others.³⁷ The decree runs to over two thousand words, and mixed marriages are only mentioned in one paragraph:

XI. (2) The same laws are binding on all Catholics, as above, if they contract betrothal or marriage with non-Catholics, baptised or unbaptized, – even after a dispensation has been obtained from the impediment of *mixtae religionis* or *disparitatis cultus*, – unless it may have been otherwise decreed by the Holy See for any particular place or country.³⁸

The devil here is in the detail. Implicit in this section is the fact that a Protestant in a mixed marriage with a Catholic must adhere to Catholic dogma. With some justification, most Protestants interpreted this as the Catholic Church legislating for

³⁵ Claire Mitchell, *Religion, Identity and Politics in Northern Ireland: Boundaries of Belonging and Belief* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), p. 16.

³⁶ This was pointed out to me by Monsignor Alex Stenson in an interview on 9 October 2009. Monsignor Stenson was Chancellor of the Dublin diocese in the 1960s and had responsibility for granting dispensations for mixed marriages.

³⁷ Eoin de Bhaldraithe, 'Mixed Marriages and Irish Politics: The Effect of *Ne temere*', *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review*, 77, (1988) 284-299 (p. 289.)

³⁸ 'The New Legislation of the Catholic Church on the Betrothals & Marriage Decree of the Sacred Congregation of the Council, approved and confirmed by His Holiness Pope Pius X', Authorised Translation, 1907, (Dublin: Browne and Nolan, Limited) p. 7.

them. If, historically, Protestant anger in the past has been largely directed towards the issue of the religious upbringing of children, it was this paragraph that should have caused most concern. The issue was raised only weeks after the decree's promulgation in 1908 at the General Synod of the Church of Ireland. A resolution was passed whereby *Ne temere* was judged to be 'an encroachment upon the laws of the United Kingdom, which permit and recognise marriages celebrated according to the laws of our Church'. A Dr Tristram speaking in favour of the resolution outlined his concerns and argued that it was the Synod's duty to protest against an attitude on the part of the Church of Rome which would render illegitimate in the eyes of the great majority of the Irish people the children of Protestants who happened to marry Roman Catholics. In no country in Europe would a decree of this kind be tolerated without protest from the civil power.³⁹

Ne temere remained prominent in the Protestant sub-conscious. An indication of its persistent ability to rouse Protestant ire may be found in the *Church of Ireland Gazette* of 25 March 1965, in which the editor was forthright in his views: 'The *Ne temere* decree stands as an absolute barrier to the fellowship and the social intercourse that, in our view, must be the precursors of any kind of more formal unity'.⁴⁰

There has been much debate and speculation concerning the effect that the decree had on Protestant numbers in the newly independent southern state. Dr Donald Caird, retired Church of Ireland Archbishop of Dublin, went so far as to say that the decree was directly responsible for a forty per cent decline in the southern Protestant community.⁴¹ While such claims need to be treated with a degree of caution, owing to other factors such as emigration, there is no doubt, as Daithí Ó Corráin has noted, that *Ne temere* 'poisoned inter-church relations'.⁴² The decree undoubtedly had other implications which were hardly intended by its architects: it was afforded a political traction that it might not otherwise have had, given that the timing of its promulgation coincided with the campaign for the third Home Rule Bill. As such, the decree provided unionists with considerable political capital as 'proof' of what might lie in store for Ulster Protestants

³⁹ 'Mixed Marriages and the Papal Decree', *Church of Ireland Gazette*, 1 May 1908, p. 385.

⁴⁰ *Church of Ireland Gazette*, 25 March 1965. Cited in Michael Hurley, 'Mixed Marriages' *The Furrow*, 17, (May, 1966) 279-287, (p.279) <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27659156> [accessed 17 October 2010]

⁴¹ Dr Donald Caird made this claim to me in an interview in Dun Laoghaire, Co. Dublin, in May 2009.

⁴² Daithí Ó Corráin, *Rendering to God and Caesar: The Irish churches and the two states in Ireland, 1949-73* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), p. 184.

should self-government become a reality. Furthermore, the decree heightened a siege mentality among Protestants which, in turn, would have a negative impact on the prospects for reconciliation, particularly in Northern Ireland. In 1911 Rev. J.A.F. Gregg highlighted what he saw as the inherent dangers in the decree for Protestant children of mixed marriages. Notably, he also demonstrated how the lines between religion and politics could become extremely blurred:

Mixed marriages tend to rob us of our next generation, and we need to band ourselves together to stop the leakage [...] It [*Ne temere*] is a wanton attack upon Irish unity, and can only make Protestants more irreconcilable to the idea of Home Rule than ever [...] It will close up our ranks, it will enable us to see that Rome today is the same that Rome ever was, that no terms are possible with Rome, but that resistance in God's name, and in the name of conscience and liberty – resistance is the duty of us all.⁴³

While concern with *Ne temere* among Protestants has centred on the religious upbringing of children, it is important to stress that this Catholic requirement pre-dates the decree by at least one hundred and sixty years, and is probably more historic. The requirement is rooted in the Catholic Church's fundamental objection to these unions which are regarded as 'a danger of perversion for the Catholic party and the children'.⁴⁴ Canon Law 1060 states:

The church everywhere most severely forbids the contracting of marriage between two baptised persons of whom one is a Catholic whereas the other is a member of a heretical or schismatical sect; and if there is a danger of perversion for the Catholic party and the children, the marriage is forbidden by the divine law itself.⁴⁵

The concern for the children of these unions has a long history even though misinterpretations of *Ne temere* moved the issue centre-stage in the early to mid-

⁴³ Rev. J.A.F. Gregg, 'The Ne Temere Decree. A Lecture Delivered before the Members of the Church of Ireland Cork Young Men's Association on March 17th 1911' (Dublin: Association for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1911), pp. 22-24.

⁴⁴ Brian O'Higgins, 'Mixed Marriages: The "Cautiones"', *The Irish Theological Quarterly*, XLI (1974), 204-221, p. 216.

⁴⁵ *Canon Law: A Text and Commentary*, ed. by T. Lincoln Bouscaren, S.J. et al., (Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1963), p. 522.

twentieth century. The Council of Chalcedon in 451 AD, for example, referred to the consequences for the children of mixed marriages: 'if they have already had their children baptized among the heretics, [they] must bring them into the communion of the Catholic Church'.⁴⁶

Oliver P. Rafferty has identified the earliest papal encyclical which deals with the religious upbringing of children of mixed marriages as 'Exsequendo nunc' of Pope Pius VI in 1782.⁴⁷ However, Pope Benedict XIV in his encyclical 'Magna Nobis' promulgated on June 29, 1748 stated clearly that, 'children of both sexes born of the union must be educated in the sanctity of the Catholic religion'.⁴⁸ In this encyclical Benedict also insisted that the Catholic should seek the conversion of the non-Catholic partner. By contrast, Alasdair Heron traces the requirement that children of mixed marriages should be raised as Catholics back to the sixteenth century and the Reformation: 'After the Reformation, the Roman Catholic Church demanded that both parents in the interchurch marriage should promise that the children would be baptised and brought up as Roman Catholics'.⁴⁹

Canon law recognises two kinds of impediment to mixed marriages, and to make such marriages valid in the eyes of the Catholic Church a dispensation from these impediments must be obtained. In order to obtain a dispensation the conditions require that both parties promise to raise any children of the marriage as Catholics, and that the Catholic in the marriage should seek the conversion of the non-Catholic. The first impediment is *disparitus cultus* (disparity of cult), that is to say the marriage between a Catholic and a non-Christian. The second is *mixtae religionis* (mixed religion), where the non-Catholic is a baptised Christian.⁵⁰ The conditions laid down in order to obtain a dispensation for a mixed marriage as laid down in a Rescript to Cardinal de Frankenberg, Primate of Belgium, in the middle of the eighteenth century were similarly laid down in Ireland and other Catholic countries up to Vatican II in the mid-1960s. These were the conditions:

⁴⁶ O'Higgins, p. 211.

⁴⁷ Rafferty, Oliver P. *Catholicism in Ulster 1603-1983: An Interpretative History* (London: Hurst, 1994), p. 140.

⁴⁸ 'Pope Benedict XIV', *Encyclicals on Line*: <<http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Ben14/b14magna.htm>>

⁴⁹ Heron, p. 39.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

- (1) The marriage must be celebrated before the parish priest and two witnesses; but the parish priest must not assist thereat (a) in a sacred place, (b) nor clothed in any sacred vestment, (c) nor is he to read any prayers of the Church, (d) nor in any way to bless the contracting parties.
- (2) The non-Catholic party must give a written promise, on oath, before witnesses, to allow the Catholic party to exercise her or his religion freely, and to bring up in that faith all their offspring.
- (3) The Catholic party must, in like manner, promise to labour efficaciously in order to bring about the conversion of the non-Catholic.⁵¹

However, even if the promises were freely offered this did not guarantee a dispensation. First and foremost the priest was bound 'to dissuade from their purpose a Catholic parishioner, or penitent, who seems inclined to contract marriage with a Protestant'.⁵² Moreover, being granted a dispensation from the Church did not mean even tacit approval for the mixed marriage. A Rev. Louis Ryan preaching in St. Saviour's church, Dublin in 1937 left his congregation in no doubt regarding the Church's position on these marriages, if indeed a dispensation was forthcoming:

Many of the children of the Church received a dispensation, but when it was granted the Church did not conceal her displeasure. It was symbolised in the gloom with which she surrounded such a union. The contracting parties were not allowed to marry in the church, not even in the sacristy. The Holy Sacrifice was not offered, no candle burned as an emblem of faith, and the priest was divested of every insignia of his sacred office. The evils of mixed marriage were too great, too fearful for words to express.⁵³

In sum, the contentiousness surrounding mixed marriages can be traced back to the Bible. The Reformation meant that 'mixed religion' was an impediment to marriages involving Catholics, following which The Council of Trent established marriage as a sacrament and also insisted thereafter that all marriages involving a Catholic should be before a priest and two witnesses. While mixed marriages were later released from this

⁵¹ 'Mixed Marriage' *Irish Ecclesiastical Record: A Monthly Journal under Episcopal Sanction*, I, (1880) 692-698, (1880) pp. 693-694

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 693.

⁵³ 'Mixed Marriage Dangers: Church's Attitude', *Irish Independent*, 20 December, 1937, p. 7.

canonical form, *Ne temere* removed this exemption in 1908. By this decree the Catholic Church was, inadvertently or otherwise, legislating for Protestants in mixed marriages. While the insistence of the Catholic Church that the children of mixed marriages be raised as Catholics pre-dates *Ne temere*, this requirement was reaffirmed by the conditions required by the Catholic Church in order to obtain a dispensation.

FORMS OF PROMISE TO BE MADE IN
CASES OF MIXED MARRIAGE IN THE
ARCHDIOCESE OF DUBLIN

The Catholic Partner :
I, the undersigned, do hereby solemnly promise and engage that all the children, of both sexes, who may be born of my marriage with N.N., shall be baptised in the Catholic Church, that is, the Holy, Roman, Catholic and Apostolic Church, and shall be carefully brought up in the knowledge and practice of the Catholic Religion.

The Non-Catholic Partner :
I, the undersigned, do hereby solemnly promise and engage that I shall not in any way impede N.N., my future husband/wife, in the fulfilment of his/her obligation to secure that all children, of both sexes, who may be born of his/her marriage with me, be baptised in the Catholic Church, that is, the Holy, Roman, Catholic and Apostolic Church, and be carefully brought up in the knowledge and practice of the Catholic Religion.
I also solemnly promise and engage that I shall not interfere with the religious belief of the said N.N., nor with his/her full and perfect liberty to fulfil all his/her duties as a Catholic.

1. In each case the relevant promise is to be *written out in full*—not merely signed—by the party concerned.
2. Each promise is to carry the signature and the address, of the party, and the date on which it is signed.
3. The signature of each party is to be made in the presence of two witnesses (one at least of whom is to be a priest), each of whom will countersign the document, and indicate status or occupation.

April, 1966.

Fig 1. These instructions were issued by Archbishop McQuaid to the Catholic clergy in 1966, (from the papers of Fr. Aidan Lehane C.S.Sp.).

If much of this discussion has emphasised Catholic dogma, it is because the Catholic Church has consistently defined and dominated the institution of marriage in Ireland. The Catholic Church was the majority Church in Ireland, and its disapproval of mixed marriages was grounded in its solemn belief that it was the *one true Church* and that nobody outside that Church could be saved.⁵⁴ To put this more bluntly, if a Catholic in a

⁵⁴ Heron, p. 41.

mixed marriage veered towards the Protestant faith (instead of seeking the conversion of the non-Catholic) and if the children of that marriage were raised as Protestants, Catholic teaching would indicate that the entire household faced eternal damnation. Finally, the fact that the Catholic Church was more pro-active in its denouncements or frustration of these marriages than the Protestant Churches in Ireland, will become more apparent as I examine both the factual disputes and works of fiction.

II

The Political Backdrop to Inter-faith relationships

If those who entered mixed marriages or inter-faith relationships transgressed theological lines, they also crossed political boundaries. As Joseph Ruane has argued, 'The conflict between Protestant and Catholic had a clear theological base; but it derived further intensity from its relationship to social, structural and political differences'.⁵⁵ The ethnic or political divide between Catholics and Protestants in Ireland can be traced primarily to the reformation and to the schemes of conquest and colonisation of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Historians continue to debate the origins of sectarianism in Ireland, but the reformation in Europe and later in Britain clearly bred the fundamental religious bitterness that fuelled such tensions.⁵⁶ Conquest and colonisation, on the other hand, created an enduring distinction between 'settlers' and 'natives' which in turn was bound up with religion, as 'settlers' were generally identified as Protestant, and 'natives' were identified as Catholic. Against such a backdrop it is hardly surprising that marriages between members of these groupings would often be divisive and problematic. Writing on the uses of history among Ulster Protestants, Anthony Buckley has argued:

Commemorations of historical events [...] can provide a focus for ethnic allegiance. Thus they form part of the interactive process whereby ethnic boundaries are daily defined and recreated. The

⁵⁵ Joseph Ruane and Jennifer Todd, *The Dynamics of Conflict in Northern Ireland: power, conflict and emancipation*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) p. 23.

⁵⁶ Alan Ford, 'Living together, living apart: sectarianism in early modern Ireland', in *The Origins of Sectarianism in Early Modern Ireland*, ed. by Alan Ford and John McCafferty, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 1-23 (p.6).

definition of Ulster's ethnicities is complex, but it includes descent and religious 'belief'. Of these, the first is the more important. It depends largely on what is called 'endogamy' – the rule which forbids intermarriage between the two sides [...] Intellectually [endogamy] gives substance to the idea that modern Protestants and Catholics are lineal descendants of, respectively, the seventeenth-century 'planters' and 'Gaels'.⁵⁷

This section briefly examines a number of historical or political events that occurred between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries which polarised the Protestant and Catholic communities. These include the Desmond Rebellion of 1579 which was fought along distinct sectarian lines; the Ulster Plantation in the early seventeenth century, which saw Catholic 'natives' lose their lands to Protestant 'settlers'; the Ulster Rebellion of 1641, which was a flagrantly sectarian affair that saw Catholics savagely avenge the perceived wrongs committed against them by Protestants; the arrival of Cromwell in Ireland in 1649 on a revenge mission which became emblematic of the suppression and dispossession of Catholics; the Penal Laws introduced during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which were designed to eradicate the Catholic religion in Ireland, and significantly, included a law banning intermarriage between Protestants and Catholics; and the 1798 rebellion which, though not the intention of its architects, was ultimately associated with violent sectarianism.

The division of Ireland into two separate and mutually antagonistic Protestant and Catholic communities came about in the mid-nineteenth century.⁵⁸ In part this resulted from the historical events outlined here, but it was the campaign for emancipation and the repeal of the union on the Catholic side, and Orangeism, evangelicalism, and the defence of the union on the Protestant side, that finally established two distinct communities with robust political identities at a national level. This brief survey does not attempt to offer a definitive account of the development of the political division between Catholics and Protestants from the sixteenth century, but seeks to draw

⁵⁷ Anthony Buckley, 'Uses of History among Ulster Protestants' in *The Poet's Place: Ulster literature and society: Essays in honour of John Hewitt, 1907-87* (Belfast: Institute of Irish Studies, 1991), pp. 259-270, (pp. 260-261).

⁵⁸ Ruane, p. 33.

attention to some seminal moments in Irish history to illustrate how both communities became divided along political lines.

From the Desmond Rebellion of 1579 which preceded the Munster Plantation, it became evident that the conflict between Ireland and England had taken on a religious dimension. Gerald Fitzgerald Desmond (the Earl of Desmond) led a series of rebellions against Queen Elizabeth I, but was imprisoned for six years in England when he failed to abide by an agreement to end a territorial feud between himself and Thomas, the 10th Earl of Ormonde. Meanwhile, the installation of a president in Munster by the English government was interpreted by Desmond's cousin, James Fitzmaurice Fitzgerald, as the prelude to a conquest. In response, Fitzmaurice invaded Ireland with an army comprised of Italian and Spanish soldiers, crucially backed by the Pope and the Catholic, King Philip II of Spain. Clearly, hostilities between the Irish and the English here take on an overtly religious dimension; nowhere was this more evident than in the early stages of battle when Fitzgerald, in association with his cousin Desmond, 'unfurled a papal banner which proclaimed a religious war'.⁵⁹

Land and religion were the primary factors which lay behind this rebellion, which turned out to be a long-lasting and brutal conflict, and resulted in defeat for the Irish. Ciaran Brady has described the rebels' perceptions of the English at this time: 'The English were land grabbers [...] The English were Protestants who would stamp out the old folk ways of the ordinary people with the same ruthlessness as they suppressed the teachings of the priests'.⁶⁰ English perceptions of the Irish were equally bitter and coloured by religious persuasion. They had long felt that the Irish were barbarians; that the Irish clung to their Catholic faith in the face of the European and English reformations was further evidence of their barbaric nature. This tumultuous period, however, marked a new departure. From this point conflict between the Irish and the English was defined by religious affiliations. Thomas Bartlett describes it succinctly:

⁵⁹ Bartlett, p. 92.

⁶⁰ Ciaran Brady, 'Faction and the Origins of the Desmond Rebellion of 1579', *Irish Historical Studies*, 22.8 (1981) <www.jstor.org/stable/30006729> [accessed 20 July 2012] (p. 305).

By the 1570s loyal and disloyal had become equated with Protestant and Catholic, a division in no way foreseen in the 1540s, but one that was to persist, by and large, for the next five hundred years.⁶¹

The Plantation of Ulster which began in the early 1600s was altogether more ambitious than previous plantations such as Leix-Offaly or Munster. Its architects planned to confiscate vast tracts of land from the Irish, allocating these tracts overwhelmingly to English and Scottish settlers, with 'deserving Irish' receiving some poorer land. They also intended to create a new English and Protestant society within Ireland. Despite these grand designs the Plantation was not nearly as successful as had been envisaged, in that many settlers did not take up the offer of land. Worse, it proved a fertile breeding ground among the disgruntled Irish for 'visceral hatred, on religious, ethnic and social grounds of the new settlers'.⁶² Conversely, the need of the population of landlords and settlers to defend its new territory gave it a sense of solidarity.⁶³ The result was an inauspicious dawn to a 'new society'. Catholics were embittered by the loss of their lands, while Protestants in many instances adopted a siege mentality. The Ulster Plantation became permanently etched in the memories of the Irish people as a paradigm for dispossession and this, of course, would only accentuate the divide between the Protestant and Catholic communities.⁶⁴

While the roots of the Ulster Rebellion of 1641 are complex, to a large degree, it constituted a rebellion against the Plantation. Sudden and vicious assaults by Catholics on Protestant settlers, which began in Ulster and spread to other provinces, reflect the deep resentment felt by the natives who had been gradually eased off their lands to make way for British tenants.⁶⁵ Whatever its cause, the Rebellion was a seminal moment in terms of the future relationship between Catholics and Protestants in Ireland. As Richard English has argued convincingly: 'the events of 1641 forcibly strengthened religious division as the key, contemporary fault-line in Irish political life'.⁶⁶ Accounts and estimates of the death toll have varied wildly, but it is fair to say that the casualties,

⁶¹ Bartlett, p. 83.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 104.

⁶³ D. George Boyce, *Nationalism in Ireland* (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 72.

⁶⁴ The Ulster Plantation is discussed in more detail in Chapter Five.

⁶⁵ Nicholas Canny, *From Reformation to Restoration: Ireland 1534-1660* (Dublin: Helicon Limited, 1987), pp. 208-209.

⁶⁶ Richard English, *Irish Freedom: The History of Nationalism in Ireland* (London: Macmillan, 2006), p. 60.

whether by way of direct assault, disease or hypothermia (many Protestants were stripped and turned out of their homes) ran into thousands. The most enduring legacy of the rebellion, perhaps, is that it appears to have become permanently etched in the Protestant psyche and as such caused permanent damage to relations between Catholics and Protestants. As David Dickson has observed:

Relations between the denominations were irreversibly affected by the tensions of the previous quarter-century, in particular by the now unwavering Protestant belief that the 1641 rising had been a religiously motivated massacre, an attempted genocide of non-Catholics.⁶⁷

The religious dimension to the insurrection was significant. Many local priests perturbed by the violence attempted to exercise some restraint on the rebels, directing that the settlers should be given an opportunity to convert to Catholicism and should only be expelled if the offer was rejected. As Nicholas Canny has argued, 'the expulsion of Protestant settlers could be viewed as a cleansing of the community of heretical pollution'.⁶⁸ The religious involvement of the Old English is also significant. The Old English were Catholic, who considered themselves to be Irish but retained an allegiance to Britain. However, their English origin suggests that the bonds of common religion, rather than nationality, helped cement their alliance with the Irish in 1641. Moreover, they frequently intermarried with the native Irish which was obviously made easier by their common religion. R.F. Foster has argued that: 'Most importantly, an exclusive religious identification was also taking over: a symbolic conjunction came about of Old English and Old Irish against the Protestant threat'.⁶⁹

Oliver Cromwell arrived in Ireland in 1649 with a large well-equipped army and proceeded to exact retribution on the Catholic population. There were various elements to Cromwell's strategy, but the central aim of his mission was 'to bring Ireland to a true state of anglicised protestant civility'.⁷⁰ Much of what Cromwell set out to achieve, such as the confiscation of Catholic lands, had been done before by way of plantation; this mission differed in that it also encompassed a direct and indiscriminate attack on Catholics and Catholicism on a massive scale. The onslaught took various forms and it

⁶⁷ David Dickson, *New Foundations: Ireland 1660-1800* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2000) p.4.

⁶⁸ Canny, p.209.

⁶⁹ Foster, R.F. *Modern Ireland: 1600-1972* (London: Penguin Group, 1989), p.89.

⁷⁰ Canny, p. 218.

was the Protestant population that was the main beneficiary: an all-Protestant parliament was formed; Catholics were driven out of towns and boroughs and dispossessed of their lands; and the Catholic religion was directly targeted. The Adventurers' Act (1642) and the Act of Settlement (1657) saw an enormous amount of land transferred out of Catholic ownership, while those Catholic priests who escaped death or exile were permitted to stay only on condition they agreed to abandon all priestly functions.⁷¹ A determined, if unsuccessful, Protestant evangelisation effort was also undertaken. It must be noted that political violence between Catholics and Protestants abounded in early and mid-seventeenth century Europe, but Cromwell's time in Ireland is synonymous with persecution and the repercussions reverberate to this day, especially in Northern Ireland.⁷² That Catholics were murdered, had their lands confiscated and their Church attacked, and that Protestants were often the beneficiaries, only served to deepen the divide between both communities.

If 1641 is etched in the memories of many Protestants so too is the Battle of the Boyne in 1690, albeit for more celebratory reasons. Victory for the forces led by William of Orange over the Catholic Jacobites led by King James, was a defining moment for Irish Protestants. As soon as Catholic James became king he set about improving conditions for Catholics in both Ireland and England thereby reversing, much to the alarm of Protestants, many of the injustices meted out to Catholics over the previous decades. The Dutch King, William was preoccupied with threats and tensions on the continent but was compelled to bring an army to Ireland when James had arrived there with a French force. The sides came face to face on the banks of the Boyne river on 1 July 1690, on which day the Jacobites eventually fell to a larger, better trained and better equipped Williamite army. J.C. Beckett has outlined the significance of the victory for Protestants:

The result meant that in future the protestant minority would rule Ireland. The power of the Roman Catholic nobility and gentry, which had survived the Elizabethan conquest and had not been wholly

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 222.

⁷² English, p. 63.

extinguished even by the Cromwellian settlement, was now to be finally overthrown.⁷³

The Protestant minority was now the ruling class in Ireland and it was determined to buttress its ascendancy and to prevent any future Catholic rebellions or truculence. Within a decade of the Battle of the Boyne the era of the penal laws or 'popery code' began. It has been a matter of some debate whether or not many of these laws were in fact enforced, but there is no doubt that the architects of the laws were making a concerted effort to keep Catholics in a state of permanent subjection. The laws prevented Catholics from purchasing an interest in land, or acquiring land from a Protestant by way of inheritance or marriage, and Catholic landlords were prevented from bequeathing their land by will. Catholics were not allowed to send their children to be educated abroad, and before voting at parliamentary elections they were compelled to take an oath of allegiance.⁷⁴

The Penal code also extended to mixed marriages. However, Patrick J. Corish is careful to point out that the full text of the relevant statutes reveals that the motive behind the legislation had more to do with the safeguarding of property rather than religious bigotry. Similarly, an act of 1697 (9 Wm III, c.3) established that if a Protestant woman with an estate valued five hundred pounds or more, were to marry a man without having obtained a legal certificate that he was a Protestant, then the officiating minister, whether he were a Catholic priest or Protestant minister, should be fined twenty pounds and imprisoned for a year.⁷⁵ Mixed marriages were illegal, and Catholic priests found performing such marriages were deemed guilty of a felony and faced a sentence of death.⁷⁶ This penalty of death was removed in 1833 (3 & 4 Wm IV, c.103) but mixed marriages celebrated by a Catholic priest remained illegal in civil law.⁷⁷ A mixed marriage could be civilly valid if performed in a Protestant church, by a Protestant

⁷³ J.C.Beckett, *The Making of Modern Ireland: 1603-1923* (London: Faber and Faber, 1966, this edn., 1981), p. 146.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 158.

⁷⁵ Patrick J. Corish, 'Catholic marriage under the penal code', in *Marriage in Ireland*, ed. by Art Cosgrove (Dublin: College Press, 1985), pp. 67-77 (p. 71).

⁷⁶ 'Penal Laws', *Catholic Encyclopaedia* <<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11611c.htm>> [accessed 12 October 2010]

⁷⁷ Corish, p. 75.

minister, but many Catholics, perhaps unsurprisingly, were 'unwilling to legalise their marriage with Protestants'.⁷⁸

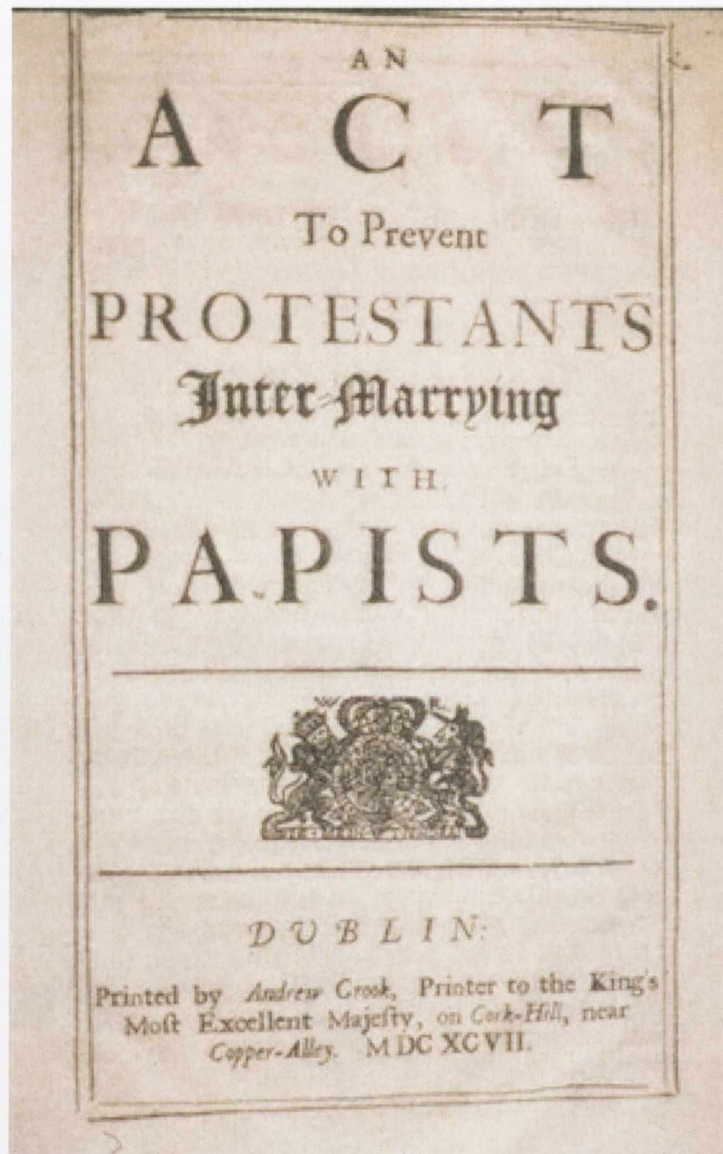


Fig. II. The Penal code outlawing mixed marriages

The lengthy period in which the aforementioned penal statute prohibiting a Catholic priest from celebrating a mixed marriage was in force is further evidence of the growing tension between the Catholic Church and the state, since the Church was reluctant to

⁷⁸ Fulton, p. 210.

accept civil legislation regarding marriage.⁷⁹ Civil law in relation to mixed marriages changed from January 1871 onwards. After that date a mixed marriage before a Catholic priest in a Catholic church became valid and lawful subject to certain conditions such as publication and due notice.

Eighteenth-century Ireland was a profoundly sectarian state and was made more so by the 1798 rebellion and its aftermath.⁸⁰ Wolfe Tone envisaged the United Irishmen as a force which would unify all denominations in Ireland in order to achieve his main objective of a complete separation from Britain. Instead, as J.C. Beckett has observed, 'it proved to be a struggle of Irishmen against Irishmen'.⁸¹ This assertion can be further qualified by the fact that much of the rebellion was taken up by pitched battles between Irish Catholics and Irish Protestants.

As the leaders of the rebellion sought to attract recruits to their new 'non-sectarian' movement they were, paradoxically, aided by the heightening sectarian tensions in Ulster. In what became known as the Battle of the Diamond in Co. Armagh in 1795, Catholic Defenders were completely overcome by the Protestant Peep o' Day boys, resulting in the establishment of an 'Orange society' (a precursor to the Orange Order) to protect the interests of Protestants. In the months that followed, Catholics were routinely terrorised leading many to join the ranks of the Defenders who, in turn, would form an alliance with the United Irishmen. It was an inauspicious start to revolution.

The insurrection itself failed but crucially the memory of the sectarian atrocities that occurred during this period has endured. Catholic clergy in places such as Wexford assumed leadership roles which gave the rebellion a further and distinctly religious hue, as rebels often under their command saw Protestants as the enemy. As J.C. Beckett has noted, many Protestants were 'attacked, plundered and even slaughtered, simply for being Protestants'.⁸² While much has been written on the make-up of the United Irishmen and the failure of the rebellion, perhaps its most enduring legacy is the propagandist sectarian narrative which was embedded into the Protestant psyche in the subsequent years. Spurious accounts of Catholic atrocities were planted in newspapers,

⁷⁹ Corish, p. 220.

⁸⁰ Bartlett, p. 226.

⁸¹ Beckett, pp. 266-267.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 263.

and Richard Musgrave's 1801 history of 1798 even traced the rebellion back to the Vatican.⁸³ Kevin Whelan has argued: 'By so doing, the revolutionary movement could be stripped of its ostensibly secular mask, revealing instead its real (and ghastly) popish face'.⁸⁴ Animosities were further inflamed at this time, and given the fact that for many Protestants 1798 evoked memories of 1641, relations between both communities in its aftermath became, if anything, even more strained.

Following the Act of Union in 1800, Daniel O'Connell's successful campaign for Catholic emancipation was fought unashamedly along sectarian lines. By harnessing the Catholic population, O'Connell not only secured the long awaited emancipation in 1829, but in doing so demonstrated the power of the Catholic nation.⁸⁵ It would prove to be the thin end of a wedge for Protestants, as emancipation would eventually lead to a gradual diminishment of the power they had enjoyed over the previous centuries. The campaign for Catholic emancipation centred around the demand for the right of Catholics to participate in government, but the struggle also constituted a monumental struggle between two power blocs. And while in this instance Catholics were victorious and left the battlefield with a more robust and cohesive political identity, both sides were scarred and more polarised by the long drawn out encounter.

As Alvin Jackson has argued in relation to O'Connell's influence on the Irish Tories, the campaign for emancipation had a decisive role in the creation of its counterpart, providing 'a paradigm [and] a model for [O'Connell's] opponents to copy and adapt'.⁸⁶ In the decades after the Act of Union a politicised Protestant equivalent to O'Connell's Catholic organization was established and driven to a large degree by the charismatic leader Reverend Henry Cooke.⁸⁷ Cooke's effort to create a united political front by forming alliances between the main Protestant denominations was not an unqualified success, but in terms of creating a wider and more solid Protestant identity, his contribution was of enduring importance.

⁸³ Bartlett, p. 255.

⁸⁴ Kevin Whelan, *The Tree of Liberty: Radicalism, Catholicism and the Construction of Irish Identity 1760-1830* (Cork: Cork University Press in association with Field Day, 1996), p. 133.

⁸⁵ Boyce, p. 138.

⁸⁶ Alvin Jackson, *Ireland 1798-1998: Politics and War* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 1998, this edn., 2003), p. 59.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 64.

If Catholicism was irrevocably bound up in national politics after Catholic emancipation so too was Protestantism, driven largely by a need to defend the Union. Its efforts in this regard were galvanised by the Orange Order and evangelicalism. The Orange Order had its genesis in the aftermath of the Battle of the Diamond and ultimately became a nationwide organisation. While some therefore associated it with a more radical or aggressive defence of Protestantism or the union, the ultimate success of the Order lay in the fact that it appealed to Protestants of all denominations and as such was a unifying force. This was particularly apparent from the Protestant campaign against Home Rule. Evangelicalism also helped to unify Protestants of different denominations by establishing a shared spiritual language. In a broader sense, Alvin Jackson has described how this 'shared spirituality' underpinned overtures to the Anglican Tory Establishment in Britain, while 'a robust evangelicalism shunted the Conservative party towards a more thoroughly Protestant, indeed anti-Catholic posture'.⁸⁸ O'Connell's campaign for the repeal of the Union also had a unifying effect on Protestants. While most Protestants had been opposed to the Union, preferring to govern themselves, by the 1840s they were its defenders and advocates.⁸⁹ The mid nineteenth century saw the growth of a more unified response by Protestant unionists to the challenges posed by a resurgent and also more cohesive Catholic class.

This section has demonstrated through a series of historical events how religious division was a 'key fault line in Irish political life'. Many of these events remain prominent in the culture of both Catholic and Protestant communities, especially in Northern Ireland. Commemorations of events such as the Battle of the Boyne and the 1798 Rising serve both as a celebration of dead heroes but also as a means of emphasising a community's distinct cultural or political identity. As long as both communities retain this strong sense of history, inter-faith relationships or mixed marriages between Catholics and Protestants are likely to remain politically transgressive.

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 67.

⁸⁹ English, p. 131.

III

Church and State and Unhappy Marriages

‘In a mixed marriage – when a Protestant married a Roman Catholic – the marriage took place only on the condition that they should be married by a Roman Catholic priest. The Protestant was expected to give an undertaking that every individual child of the marriage should be brought up as a Roman Catholic. It was immoral; it was traffic in human souls, and some people seemed quite prepared to sell the souls of the unborn children’. – Most Rev. Dr Gregg, Church of Ireland, Archbishop of Dublin.⁹⁰

This section examines the fraught relationship between the Catholic Church and state in terms of mixed marriages and establishes that it was the state rather than the Church that was the final authority in such matters.⁹¹ In the event of a dispute regarding the religious upbringing of children, the Catholic Church and the state held potentially conflicting positions: civil law dictated that the father had the absolute right to decide on the religious upbringing and education of his children (a relic of English statute law), while the Catholic Church insisted that children of mixed marriages should be brought up in the Catholic faith, irrespective of the faith to which either parent belonged.

If, as already noted, historians and commentators have tended to focus on *Ne temere* as the single most important factor in the religious upbringing of children, in this section I offer a more balanced appraisal, examining a number of often lesser known cases of troubled inter-faith relationships to illustrate the tension between the sacramental and the civil dimensions to marriage. The civil position of ‘paternal supremacy’ guaranteeing the absolute rights of the father was finally dispensed of in Ireland in a judgement in the *Tilson* case of 1950, by an interpretation of the relevant articles of the

⁹⁰ Most Rev. Dr. Gregg, ‘Mixed Marriages: A Menace to the Church’, *Irish Times* 10 November 1926, p. 5.

⁹¹ In the cases dealt with before 1922, ‘the state’ refers to the British state under which Ireland was governed; thereafter ‘the state’ refers to Southern Ireland after 1922.

1937 Constitution. In this regard, particular attention is drawn to the notion that southern Ireland after partition was heavily Catholicised and whether in fact the judicial interpretation of the Constitution supported that claim. Following partition, the southern state took on a heavily Catholic ethos, and in that context the judicial interpretation of the Constitution came under considerable strain. Tom Inglis has described how the relationship between Church and state changed before and after partition:

The history of church-state relations in Ireland is peculiar, since it first involves the struggle of a majority Catholic Church in the hostile environment of a British Protestant state and then, after Independence the struggle for survival of Protestant minority churches in the hostile environment of a Catholic state.⁹²

This section also has an important sociological dimension. The factual cases examined here demonstrate how these marriages affected the lives of ordinary citizens in Ireland. Many people involved were torn between civil law and directions from their respective Churches, with their children invariably at the centre of the dispute. Jack White has argued convincingly:

There is no single cause that contributes so much to the embitterment of inter-faith relations as the rule of the Roman Catholic Church concerning mixed marriages. In any circle of Protestants, of any age-group, in any part of the country, this is the first reason that will be advanced to justify segregation in education and in social activities. Protestant parents do not want their children to mix with Catholics because they may marry Catholics; and if they marry Catholics, then the Church will insist on an undertaking that the children of the marriage shall be brought up Catholics.⁹³

During the nineteenth century, where there was no dispute, in most cases boys were raised in the religion of their father and girls in the religion of their mother. This practise was known as the 'Palatine Pact', and while Anne Clare argues that it had no

⁹² Tom Inglis, 'Understanding Religion and Politics' in *Religion and Politics: East-West Contrasts from Contemporary Europe*. ed by Tom Inglis, and others, (Dublin: UCD Press, 2000), 1-14 (p. 9).

⁹³ Jack White, *Minority Report: The Protestant Community in the Irish Republic* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1975), p. 129.

papal approval and was 'in fact' vetoed by Pope Leo XIII, Raymond M. Lees believes that its origins may lie in rights of inheritance where property ownership would remain within the religious group.⁹⁴ Owen Dudley Edwards, on the other hand, points out that the practice may in fact be linked to homogamous marriage:

It was a tradition that acknowledged that the male partner in such marriages was usually Protestant. Where even the memory of a caste system exists, there is something of a taboo against women of the upper caste marrying men of the lower. Nonetheless, it was a tradition that exhibited confidence and realism. It recognised that the chief force for religious instruction in a home was likely to be the mother, and it allowed for the possibility of the Protestant boys, grown to manhood, voluntarily adopting the mother's religion.⁹⁵

The first part of this section examines three cases that came before the courts prior to the formation of the Free State. Although the *Ussher* case of 1910 is out of step chronologically with the other two cases discussed in this section it exemplifies how Church and state could be at odds over the *validity* of a mixed marriage.⁹⁶ This case concerned a clandestine marriage in Co. Galway and brought Church and state into direct conflict since civil law contravened the relevant articles of the Council of Trent. The *Meades* (1871) and *Grey* (1902) mixed marriage cases occurred in the aftermath of the disestablishment of the Church of Ireland, when those in mixed marriages were exempted from the strictures of the Council of Trent. Both cases illustrate the unyielding nature of 'paternal supremacy'. The second part of this section examines the *McCann* case (1911) which occurred in the immediate aftermath of the promulgation of *Ne temere*, when tensions in Belfast were running high over the prospect of the introduction of Home Rule. Notwithstanding my earlier comments regarding misinterpretations of this decree, *McCann* offered unionists a timely reminder of what life might hold for them should self-government become a reality. Moreover, for fear that the outcry surrounding this case might endanger Home Rule, the British legislators amended the Government of Ireland Act to limit the powers of future Irish governments

⁹⁴ White, p. 130; Anne Clare, *Unlikely Rebels: The Gifford Girls and the Fight for Irish Freedom* (Cork: Mercier Press, 2011), p. 308n; Raymond M. Lee, 'Intermarriage, Conflict and Social Control in Ireland: The Decree *Ne Temere*', *The Economic and Social Review*, vol. 17, no. 1 (October 1985), 11-27 (p. 15)

⁹⁵ Edwards, p. 190. Homogamous marriage is marriage between people with similar backgrounds such as religion, class, etc.

⁹⁶ The other cases discussed occurred prior to this case.

in relation to marriage law. The final part of this section deals with the *Frost* (1945), *Tilson* (1950), and *May* (1952) cases which are examined against the context of the 1937 Constitution. Prior to 1937, Irish people remained reliant on English statute law or on the directives of their own Churches regarding marriage, but the Constitution finally dispensed with 'paternal supremacy' and in so doing indirectly offered Irish women an enhanced status in society. However, it also raised concerns, particularly among the Protestant community, that the Catholic Church had undue influence on the operations of the state.

* * * *

The relationship between civil and canon law with regard to marriage in Ireland was tested in a number of cases that came before the courts. As already outlined, the Council of Trent in 1587 promulgated the *Tametsi* decree in an attempt to banish clandestine marriage by insisting that there should be one priest and two witnesses present at the ceremony. However, nearly three hundred and fifty years later in 1910, the question of clandestinity, validity and the number of witnesses was central to a dispute arising from a mixed marriage that came before the Irish courts. The *Ussher* case in Galway pitted canon law against civil law, since the courts had to decide if a marriage between two Catholics solemnised by a Catholic priest but with only *one* witness was civilly valid.

In theory, this was an all-Catholic marriage. William Arland Ussher converted from Protestantism to Catholicism, albeit in unusual circumstances, and then married the Catholic Mary Caulfield before Rev. Joseph Fahy a local Catholic parish priest. Ussher later took a civil action to obtain a declaration that his marriage to Caulfield was null and void since it had not been performed in accordance with the regulations of the Catholic Church as set out in *Tametsi*. In other words, his case was taken on the basis of an irregularity of canonical form.⁹⁷ Thus, he argued that the validity of the marriage depended on whether it was considered to be so by the Catholic Church. The couple cohabited after the marriage and Mary Caulfield gave birth to a baby daughter one year

⁹⁷ As discussed in the second section, *Tametsi* directed that couples should marry before a priest and two witnesses. This was the canonical form.

later. It was claimed by her defence that should the marriage be declared unlawful, 'the child would be bastardized and the mother degraded'.⁹⁸

The court was told that Ussher's determination to have a clandestine marriage was based on the fact that he was soon to inherit part of his father's estate, and that his conversion to Catholicism or his marriage to a Catholic might jeopardise his inheritance.⁹⁹ He originally put the idea to the local parish priest, Father Fahy who insisted that there should be two witnesses to the ceremony, in accordance with the decrees *Tametsi* and *Ne temere*. However, it appears that the priest later acceded to Ussher's request. On the night of April 24th 1910 (a Sunday), Fahy secretly went to Ussher's home and was taken to an unused bedroom upstairs where the priest 'performed the ceremony of receiving the petitioner [Ussher] into the Catholic Church'.¹⁰⁰ Shortly afterwards, Ussher brought his intended wife and Agnes Kavanagh, a cook at the household who had agreed to act as witness, to another room where they were married by Fahy 'in accordance with the rituals of the Catholic Church, but in the presence of only one witness'.¹⁰¹

The basis for Ussher's case was that because 'there were no statutory provisions regulating the religious ceremony between Roman Catholics, the test of legal validity was its celebration in accordance with the law for the time being of the Roman Catholic Church'.¹⁰² Given that civil law regarding marriage had been written by and for Protestants, the validity of such law for Catholics was determined by canon law, in this case, as the counsel for Ussher argued, the validity was determined by the Council of Trent and *Ne Temere*, which superseded civil law. This interpretation was countered by Counsel for Mary Caulfield who claimed that *Tametsi* and *Ne temere* should be ignored by the civil court:

⁹⁸ *The Irish Reports published under the Control of the Incorporated Council of Law Reporting for Ireland, containing Reports of Cases Argued and Determined by The Court of Appeal, The High Court of Justice, the Court for Crown Cases Reserved, in Ireland and the Irish Land Commission, Vol.II*, ed. by William Green, (Dublin: E. Ponsonby Ltd., 1912), p. 449.

⁹⁹ 'Midnight Marriage Case', *Irish Times and Daily Advertiser*, 19 December 1911, p.10. (This case appears to have been only reported in the *Irish Times*; it was not reported in the *Church of Ireland Gazette*, for example).

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.* Fahy claimed that he brought holy water with him to Ussher's house and baptised him there. As Ussher was to convert to Catholicism, this was carried out *sub conditione* i.e. in case there was a doubt regarding the validity of any previous baptism.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² *Irish Reports* (1912) p. 455.

The law by which the validity of the alleged marriage is to be tested is not the marriage law of the Roman Catholic Church, but the Common Law of England and Ireland as same existed and was administered down to the time of the Reformation, that, so far as the marriages of Roman Catholics *inter se* are concerned, their legality continues to be governed by the same law as before the Reformation.¹⁰³

In the absence of statute law governing Catholic marriages, Caulfield was able to argue that even if a marriage ceremony had been conducted without one of its canonically required witnesses, it remained valid in civil law.

In reaching his verdict, the judge had to take a number of issues into account: whether the absence of one witness would nullify the marriage, as laid down by the Catholic Church, and whether the petitioner's claim that his marriage was conditional on it being a Catholic marriage in the strict theological sense. He also had to consider the claim by the petitioner that he had been a Protestant within the twelve months prior to the marriage (Act 19 Geo. II, c 143 'declared a marriage by a 'Popish priest' of a 'Papist' and a person who professed himself to be a Protestant within twelve months before the proposed marriage, or of two Protestants, to be null and void').¹⁰⁴

The judge drew heavily on a previous case, *Beamish v. Beamish* in Co. Cork in 1861. Here a Rev. Samuel Beamish had conducted a marriage between himself and Isabella Beamish without any witnesses, save a servant-girl who was passing the window and briefly observed the ceremony. In that case the court held that while the marriage was irregular it was also valid, since under common law witnesses were necessary as proof rather than validity. On that basis, and despite the ordinances of Trent, the judge decided that the petitioner's marriage had not been invalidated by the absence of one witness. 'There is not a suggestion', he explained 'that in pre-Reformation times either in Common law or Church Law a witness to marriage was essential to its validity'.¹⁰⁵ He ruled that although there had been a change to the 'National Church' at the time of the Reformation, the same common law applied to marriage and was therefore unaffected by the Council of Trent.

¹⁰³ Ibid., p. 456.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 470.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 458, p. 460, p. 463.

The judge also cited *Ne temere*, which had been promulgated only three years previously in 1908, and which similarly required two witnesses. However, as with the ordinances of Trent, the judge decided that *Ne temere* had no standing in common law, and indeed the Court of Appeal was later told that in accordance with ‘Canon 8 of the decree *Ne Temere*, where the authorised priest cannot be had [...] there may be a valid marriage by the parties declaring their consent in the presence of two witnesses, without a priest’.¹⁰⁶

The petitioner’s claim that the marriage was conditional was largely based on the phrase which the couple repeated after the priest at the marriage ceremony – ‘if Holy Church will it permit’. This was summarily dismissed by the judge, however. He argued that even if Ussher wanted a ‘perfect ecclesiastical marriage’ the failure of this had been entirely of his own doing, as his own actions had invalidated the marriage in the eyes of the Church. He had been told prior to the marriage by Fahy that two witnesses were required and then had provided only one.¹⁰⁷ Ussher’s claim that his own Protestantism within the twelve months prior to his marriage had invalidated the marriage was also dismissed. The judge stated that the Act which made that stipulation, a relic of the seventeenth century Penal laws, had been repealed in 1870 and could therefore have no bearing on the present case.

The judge ultimately ruled that the marriage of William Ussher and Mary Caulfield was ‘a valid legal marriage’. What is noteworthy is that the court ruled that neither *Tametsi* or *Ne temere* had standing in civil or common law. The court decided that two people had willingly entered a contract to marry and had done so before a priest, and that this constituted a legal marriage.

Four decades previously the *Meades* case came before the courts in 1871, in the immediate aftermath of the disestablishment of the Anglican Church of Ireland, which supposedly set all religious denominations in Ireland on an equal footing by placing them all in the category of voluntary non-state bodies. As I have already discussed, mixed marriages during this period were regarded as valid as they had been exempted

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 475. Although this case was appealed the Court of Appeal upheld the original judgements.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 468-469.

from the rigours of the decree *Tametsi*. This was re-affirmed in 1887, when the Archbishop of Dublin obtained a declaration from the Holy See to the effect that mixed marriages were valid whether or not *Tametsi* had been promulgated in a particular province.¹⁰⁸ However, while these marriages were now regarded as valid and legal on a civil basis, the Catholic Church insisted that any children of them should be baptised and raised as Catholics. The courts had little regard for Catholic dogma, and enforced the right of 'paternal supremacy': the absolute right of the father to determine the religious upbringing of his children.

In 1859 Robert Meade, a Protestant, married Alice Ronayne, a Catholic.¹⁰⁹ Eight years later Alice Ronayne died, and a dispute arose over the religious upbringing of the children of the marriage – they had up to the time of their mother's death been raised as Catholics. The sister of the deceased, Mary Ronayne, also a Catholic, took an action at the Court of Chancery in Dublin in order to ensure that the children continue their Catholic upbringing and that the father be restrained from 'interfering with religion or the religious education of the minors'.¹¹⁰ It appears that the dispute arose after the death of his Catholic wife, when Meade formed a relationship with 'a Protestant lady who was animated by strong religious zeal' and then decided that he wished to raise his children as Protestants, appointing a Protestant governess to this end.¹¹¹ Crucially, the court heard that prior to their marriage he had promised to raise his children as Catholics when 'required to do so by the officiating clergyman', consistent with my earlier argument that this Catholic requirement pre-dated *Ne temere*.¹¹²

While the judge was well aware that 'paternal supremacy' regarding the religious upbringing of children was enshrined in civil law, and that the wishes of the father should normally be granted, he was also very mindful of the welfare of the children. In arriving at his decision he took into account the rights of the father and the question of whether a sudden change of religious faith would be in the best interest of the children. In any event, he concluded that 'the authority of the father to guide and govern the

¹⁰⁸ T.P. Cunningham, 'Mixed Marriages in Ireland before *Ne Temere* Decree', *The Irish Ecclesiastical Record*. Vol.CI, 53-56 (p. 55).

¹⁰⁹ 'Court of Chancery: In, re, Meades Minors', *Irish Times and Daily Advertiser*, 13 January 1871, p.4.

¹¹⁰ *Irish Reports*, ed. by John William Carlton, (1870-71) Vol.V, p. 98.

¹¹¹ 'Law Intelligence, Court of Chancery', *Irish Times and Daily Advertiser*, 24 December 1870, p.2. This was outlined in court by Isaac Butt, Counsel for Mary Ronayne.

¹¹² *Irish Reports*, (1870-71) Vol.V., p. 107.

education of his child is a very sacred thing, bestowed by the almighty, and to be sustained to the uttermost by human law'.¹¹³ Despite his assertion of paternal supremacy, his choice of words suggests that it was not only the Catholic Church that relied on the sacred.

As in previous cases, the judge took time to interview the children at the centre of the *Meades* case. He ascertained from them that even though their 'Catholic convictions had been shaken' by their recent introduction to Protestantism they now 'had learnt something of both [religions], but had confident belief in neither'.¹¹⁴ The children also expressed a desire to continue with their Protestant upbringing and the judge ultimately dismissed the petition, and the children continued to be raised in the religion of their father.

The significance of the ruling in the *Meades* case lies in the fact that paternal supremacy, and by extension, civil law, held sway even though the children had been raised as Catholics for many of their formative years. The ruling was based primarily on the rights of the father, which were enshrined in civil law with the proviso that the children's welfare, if raised as Protestants, would not be compromised. In relation to the promise that Meade made to the officiating clergyman at his wedding regarding the Catholic education of the children, the judge said that (while Meade undoubtedly made this promise) 'that engagement was not of binding force in law'.¹¹⁵

While the court also turned to paternal supremacy in the *Grey* case in 1902, circumstances were markedly different in that both Charlotte Callan and Henry Grey, who married in 1886, were Protestants. There were six children of the marriage: three daughters and three sons. Henry Grey died intestate in 1900 and his wife, unable to provide for the upkeep of the girls, placed them in a Protestant orphanage in Harold's Cross in Dublin. In November 1901, Callan entered an inter-faith relationship which resulted in her conversion to Catholicism and marriage to a Catholic. Shortly after the marriage she decided to remove her three daughters from the Protestant orphanage where they had lived for nearly two years, and to raise them as Catholics. The court had

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 103.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 116-117.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 111.

to decide if she was within her rights, as the only surviving parent, to change the religious upbringing of her children. Lord Chief Justice O'Brien put it succinctly:

Can a mother, who had three children by a husband who was a Protestant, and who after his death, whilst she herself was a Protestant, placed them in a Protestant orphanage where they were well cared, now that she has, on a second marriage, become a Catholic, insist on these children, all of whom are of tender years, being restored to her by writ of *habeas corpus*, when the Court to which she applies for that writ is satisfied that she intends to bring them up in a faith different from that in which their father lived and died? That is the question we have to decide.¹¹⁶

The paternal relatives of the children gave evidence to the effect that their father was a devout member of the Church of Ireland and would be incensed at the notion that the children should be raised as Catholics. They also suggested that had Grey foreseen his wife's attempts to raise them as Catholics, 'he would have endeavoured, so far as in his power lay, to safeguard his children from any attempt to change their faith'.¹¹⁷ The management of the Protestant orphanage where the children resided also gave evidence to the effect that the children were content there and did not wish to leave.

In reaching his verdict the judge described the case as 'painful' and noted the 'weight of the arguments in support of the mother's application – mother's love, the sacredness of the home, [...] and the mother's rights as guardian by nature and statute'.¹¹⁸ The judge also pointed out that the mother had already 'committed a breach of marital trust' when she raised her three sons as Catholics after she had met her second husband.¹¹⁹ However, his judgment centred on whether the father had 'abdicated or forfeited his right to have the children brought up in his religion';¹²⁰ he decided that the father had not and that 'the law, whose ministers we are, makes no hesitation: it adopts for the children the religion of the father'.¹²¹ While the judge ordered that the children remain in the orphanage and continue with their Protestant upbringing, he also offered a

¹¹⁶ *Irish Reports*, ed., by William Green, (1902) Vol. II, pp.686-687.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 685-686.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 694.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰ 'Religion of Children: Important Judgement', *Irish Times and Daily Advertiser*, 16 May, 1902, p.3.

¹²¹ *Irish Reports* (1902) Vol.II, p. 687.

defence of paternal supremacy, stating that regardless of the merits or demerits of this, a court could not stand accused of favouring one faith over another. This was of particular importance in a country where sectarianism was an issue:

In every country where sectarian divisions exist, it is essential that there should be a settled and intelligible rule as to the religion of the offspring of the wedlock; and, that rule be in the abstract right or wrong, it is better that there should be some rule than none at all [...] a lay tribunal does not and cannot distinguish and adjudge between the claims of the various Churches as leaders of divine truth [...] but it has an objective rule – the male parent’s professed religion – it can decide securely and without appearance of bias.¹²²

The cases of *Ussher*, *Meades* and *Grey* clearly demonstrate how civil law superseded canon law. ‘Paternal supremacy’ was enshrined in civil law. Even in cases where the children of the marriage were being raised in a faith other than that favoured by the father for a considerable number of years [*Meades*], the courts still decided that the father had the sole right in determining the religious upbringing of his children. Furthermore, in the *Meades* case the promise given to the Catholic Church was deemed not to be legally binding, whilst in the *Ussher* case both the relevant ordinances of *Tametsi* and *Ne temere* were dismissed by the court. These rulings are of particular relevance to the *Frost* and *Tilson* cases which I will turn to later, where *Ne temere* in particular was re-examined in the context of the revised Constitution of the Free State.

Coda

With regards to the *Ussher* case, neither the parish priest Father Fahy nor the bishop Dr Gilmartin (who also gave evidence) emerged from the court with much credit given the vagueness of their evidence. The comments of the Chief Secretary of Ireland Augustine Birrell in a letter to John Dillon dated 19 December 1911 are noteworthy in this regard, however, given the way in which he voices concern that the divergent views of Church and state regarding marriage law might somehow upset the plan for self-government. Clearly referring to *Ussher* he wrote: ‘That is an odd marriage [sic] case in Galway.

¹²² Ibid., p. 695.

Yours is a very funny Church. What was the Bishop about? It would be an odd thing if the marriage laws upset Home Rule'.¹²³ And it is on that note that we turn to the *McCann* case which was played out in Belfast when the fires and passions surrounding Home Rule were burning brightly.

* * * *

While superficially the *McCann* case arose from a domestic row between a couple in a mixed marriage, albeit with the significant involvement of a local Catholic priest, it is important to discuss the case in the context of the campaign for the third Home Rule Bill. The dispute was played out in Belfast, also the epicentre of resistance to Home Rule; as Thomas Bartlett argues, 'it was Belfast's commercial wealth and Belfast's muscle that saw off the threat of the imposition of Home Rule for all Ireland'.¹²⁴ Moreover, the case came to light in 1911 as the Home Rule resistance campaign by Protestant unionists grew in momentum, culminating less than a year later with the mass signings of the Solemn League and Covenant and then the formation of the Ulster Volunteer force.

The eventual introduction of the third Home Rule Bill had its roots in the 'People's Budget' of 1909 and the subsequent Parliament Act of 1911. The rejection of this controversial budget by the House of Lords threw Britain into a constitutional crisis which resulted in two general elections – neither of which delivered an overall majority for either the Conservative or Liberal party. While the 'People's Budget' was eventually passed and the subsequent Parliament act severely curtailed the power of the House of Lords, the important point is that throughout this crisis the Liberal Party depended on the support of the Irish Parliamentary Party, whose main aim was to achieve Home Rule for Ireland. After the death of Gladstone the Liberal Party no longer considered Home Rule a priority, but following the passing of the Parliament Act the reward the Irish Party received, or demanded, was the introduction of the third Home Rule bill.¹²⁵ The Parliament Act ensured that self-government for Ireland could be forced through the

¹²³ Letter from Augustine Birrell to John Dillon, 19 December 1911, John Dillon Papers, Trinity College, Dublin, 6798/182

¹²⁴ Bartlett, p. 336.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 367.

House of Commons, which for some Protestant unionists was justification in itself for their own extreme and violent response.

Concurrent with these developments two decrees were promulgated by the Catholic Church: the little known *Quantavis diligentia* decree and, of course, *Ne temere*.¹²⁶ While *Quantavis diligentia* may not have attracted the same public attention or scrutiny as *Ne temere*, it is noteworthy in that it granted Catholic clerics, from a canonical perspective, impunity from civil law. In effect, it ensured that anybody who brought a Catholic priest before a criminal or civil court without permission from the Church would incur excommunication.¹²⁷ From a political perspective, the timing of *Quantavis diligentia* could not have been worse, as its promulgation added weight to the Unionist perception of a Catholic Church which was above civil law and which would enjoy undue influence over a new Irish government. The English *Daily Express* of 26 December 1911 outlined the perceived dangers:

We are sure that Roman Catholics will recognise that a document which appears to menace the supremacy of the British Crown as the fountain of justice according to the system in force since the Reformation, cannot be passed over unnoticed or unopposed [...] let us assume that the Home Rule Bill is driven through the breach in the Constitution wall created by the Parliament Act, and that it becomes law without an appeal to arms – both very wide assumptions. In the New Ireland a Catholic priest goes into a shop, orders some goods, and does not pay for them. He cannot be sued without permission having first been obtained from his superiors.¹²⁸

The promulgation of *Ne temere* may not constitute a seminal moment in Irish history, but its impact at this particular juncture should not be underestimated. As Desmond Bowen has argued: ‘the *Ne Temere* decree put an end to the era when the Irish Protestants had been content to sit back and watch the government’s attempts to kill

¹²⁶ ‘Quantavis diligentia’ *Catholic Encyclopaedia* <<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/050678a.htm>> [Accessed 10 May 2010]. This decree was promulgated on 11 October 1911.

¹²⁷ ‘The Church of Ireland and Home Rule’, *The Irish Church Quarterly*, Vol. V, No. 18, (1912) 97-116, p. 105. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/30067219>> [accessed 19 May 2010]

¹²⁸ Walsh, William, J. (Archbishop of Dublin), ‘The Motu Proprio *Quantavis Diligentia* and its Critics’ (Dublin: Brown and Nolan Limited, 1912), p. 80.

Home Rule by kindness, following the failure of the second Home Rule Bill'.¹²⁹ There is a degree of overstatement here, but at a time when the streets of Belfast were echoing with the popular catch-cry that 'Home Rule meant Rome Rule', the *McCann* case clearly had the potential to become the 'smoking gun' that Ulster Unionists had been looking for. If the *Ne temere* decree was theological, the *McCann* case ensured its political impact as it provided Protestant unionists with hard evidence of what life would be like for them in the event of Home Rule. J.J. Lee suggests that, 'This case, skilfully exploited by unionist propagandists, proved to the Protestant in the street how the papal viper could wriggle its way into the nuptial bed'.¹³⁰ One further important point should be made in relation to *Ne temere*; the decree broke new ground since it applied retrospectively. Couples that had been contented in their mixed marriages could stand accused by the Catholic Church as being unmarried or having an illegal marriage.¹³¹

The fact that *Ne temere* and the *McCann* case gained such notoriety is undoubtedly due to the time and place in which events unfolded; as already noted, the decree was promulgated at a time of high tension between Protestants and Catholics, while the *McCann* affair came to prominence two years later in the Belfast hot-bed of anti-Home Rule fervour. A sermon delivered at the Knox Club in Edinburgh in 1910 by William Corkey, the minister of the Presbyterian church attended by Agnes McCann, is illustrative of the anti-Catholic heat generated by *Ne temere*:

It was 'a danger to the Commonwealth, because it strikes at the home'; it challenged 'the supremacy of British law'; it meant 'that the Church of Rome can absolve a man from the solemn marriage vow'; it showed 'that Rome is still prepared to inflict cruel punishment on any members of the Protestant Church over whom she gets any power'; it was 'a proselytising instrument to help in the reconquest of Britain for Rome'.¹³²

¹²⁹ Desmond Bowen, *History and the Shaping of Irish Protestantism: Irish Studies*, Vol. 4. Series ed., Robert Mahoney (New York: Peter Lang, 1995), p. 373.

¹³⁰ J.J. Lee, *Ireland: 1912-1985, Politics and Society*, 11th edn. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 11.

¹³¹ Fulton, p. 212.

¹³² Alan Megahey, *The Irish Protestant Churches in the Twentieth Century* (London: Macmillan Press Ltd., 2000), p. 26.

This notion of reconquest lay at the heart of much of the opposition towards Home Rule. As Bartlett argues convincingly, 'Ulster Unionism was about maintaining the seventeenth-century plantation, and Unionists believed that Home Rule was about undoing it; that is why Home Rule had to be resisted whatever the cost'.¹³³ Prime Minister Asquith would eventually intervene to defuse the *Ne temere/McCann* controversy with an amendment to the Government of Ireland Bill addressing mixed marriages.¹³⁴ Whilst unionists were not assuaged by this fig leaf, it was a clear indication of how seriously the British government took the furore surrounding the issue.

Agnes McCann, a Presbyterian, married Alexander McCann, a Catholic, in May 1908 – one month after the promulgation of the *Ne temere* decree. Under the conditions laid down by *Ne temere*, the couple should have married before a Catholic priest and two witnesses, and in accordance with Catholic teaching should also have agreed to raise the children as Catholics. Instead, the wedding was performed by a Presbyterian minister, and both husband and wife agreed thereafter to practice their own respective faiths.

It appears that their marriage was a relatively happy one, though a report in the *Belfast Evening Telegraph* suggests that at this early stage Agnes McCann was a target of local sectarianism, noting that she 'had been subjected to much annoyance owing to the fact that she retained her Protestant principles and on one occasion her windows were broken'.¹³⁵ The McCanns had two children; allegedly, after the birth of the second the local Catholic priest visited Agnes and told her that her marriage was invalid as it had not been conducted in accordance with *Ne temere*. As a consequence, he claimed that she was 'living in sin' and that her children were illegitimate. He later urged her to re-marry in a Catholic church before a Catholic priest.

Agnes McCann was now under considerable pressure from her husband and his Church, but she maintained her position by arguing that she was content in her own faith and that she was satisfied that she was legally married. Under civil law, and taking the judgement in *Ussher* into account, she was correct in her belief. However, it appears that life in the McCann household became intolerable, borne out by a letter written by

¹³³ Bartlett, p. 338.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 373.

¹³⁵ 'Mixed Marriages: The McCann Case', *Belfast Evening Telegraph*, 16 February 1911, p. 7.

Alexander McCann which John Dillon, the Irish Nationalist MP and former leader of the United Irish League, read to the British House of Commons in February 1911. In this letter, McCann claimed that his wife 'cooked meat for him on Fridays, put the clock back and made him late for mass, ridiculed the priest and religions, cursed the Pope and sang hymns all day'.¹³⁶ The situation deteriorated even further when soon afterwards on the premise that she was not his 'proper wife' Alexander McCann removed the children from the family home along with the furniture and his wife's personal belongings.

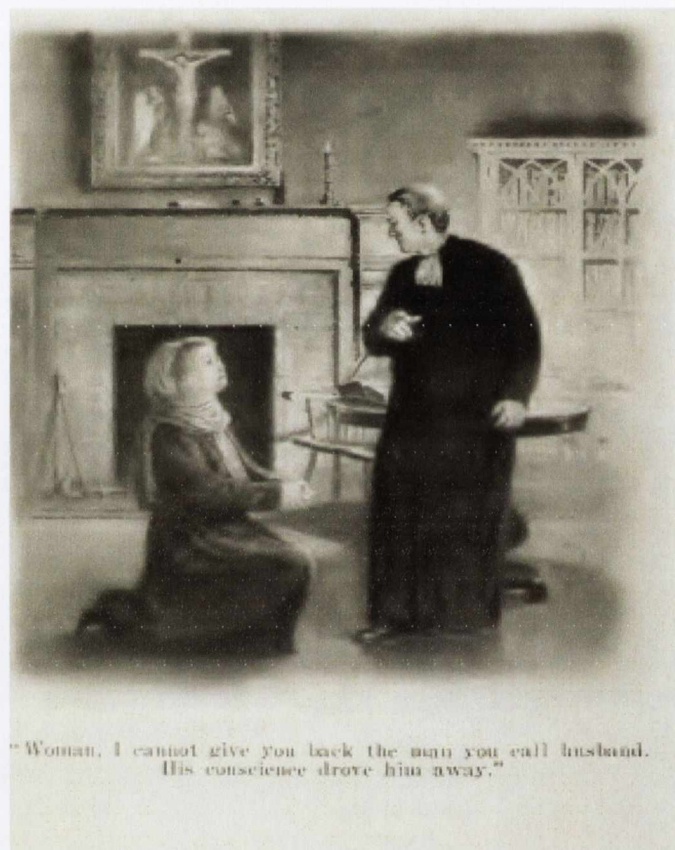


Fig.III. The plot of this 1912 novel, *The Lad Felix: A Tragedy of the Ne Temere* by Henry Milner (not dealt with in this thesis) is closely aligned with events in the McCann case of Belfast in 1911. As *Ne temere* was applied retrospectively, the Catholic protagonist leaves his wife after he is informed by his local priest that his marriage is invalid.

The *Irish Times*, which had a distinctly Protestant orientation at the time, argued with some force that Agnes McCann lost her home, her clothing and her children because her marriage did not conform with the recently promulgated Catholic dogma.¹³⁷ A later

¹³⁶ 'Mixed Marriages: Mr. Dillon on the McCann Home Life', *Irish Times*, 8 February 1911, p. 8.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

editorial warned that the affair could be a harbinger for what might follow under self-government:

An Irish parliament, if it comes into existence, will be a predominately Roman Catholic Parliament. If the decree *Ne Temere* is to over-rule British law in Ireland to-day, will not the authority behind this Decree dictate and overrule the Irish law of an Irish Parliament?¹³⁸

The case was promptly elevated from the domestic realm to the political stage. Andrew Scholes argues that 'it was not until the McCann case of November 1910 that *Ne Temere* became a prominent issue in Irish politics'.¹³⁹ The matter was first raised in the House of Commons by J.H. Campbell, Unionist MP for the Dublin University constituency. Acknowledging Agnes McCann's claim that she had enjoyed a happy marriage until 'a Roman Catholic priest interposed and informed her that her marriage was illegal',¹⁴⁰ he drew especial attention to the recently promulgated *Ne temere* decree, and the fact that, as he understood it, the Roman Catholic Church had the right to declare illegal *any* marriage which was not celebrated in accordance with Catholic guidelines. Campbell concluded that the case strengthened the resolve of Loyalists and Protestants to retain their religious and civil freedom under an Imperial Parliament.¹⁴¹ In the House of Lords, the Earl of Donoughmore adopted a similar line of reasoning on 7 February 1911, arguing that *Ne temere* was an attempt by the Catholic Church to assert its right to legislate for its own people. In his view this raised the spectre of Roman Catholics not recognising civil law. Donoughmore summed up the *McCann* case thus: 'a husband deserts his wife because the marriage is invalid, but the children are secured because the marriage is legal'.¹⁴²

The response of the members of the nationalist Irish party was not as clear-cut. Scholes has outlined the difficult nature of their position: 'On the one hand, it [the Irish Party] had to deny that home rule would mean Rome rule, while, on the other, it had to avoid

¹³⁸ Editorial Article – No Title, *Irish Times*, 1 March 1911, p. 6.

¹³⁹ Andrew Scholes. *The Church of Ireland and the Third Home Rule Bill* (Irish Academic Press, 2010), p. 19.

¹⁴⁰ *Belfast Evening Telegraph*. February 8th, 1911. (Letter from Agnes McCann to Lord Lieutenant)

¹⁴¹ 'Mixed Marriages in Ireland – House of Commons Debate, 7 February 1911' *Hansard*, 1-33 (pp. 1-7) <http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/lords/1911/fab/28/marriage-law-the-ne-temere-decree> [accessed 20 May 2010]

¹⁴² 'Mixed Marriages: Ne Temere Decree: Debate in the House of Lords: The McCann Case', *Irish Times* 1 March 1911, p. 7.

offending those senior members of the Catholic clergy who were less than 100 per cent enthusiastic about the Party'.¹⁴³ John Dillon's speech to the House of Commons on the *McCann* case on 7 February 1911 bears out Scholes' argument. In this speech he attempted to allay the fears of Protestants by assuring them that, should Home Rule be passed, marriage laws in Ireland (that is, the old English statutes) would not be altered or aligned with Catholic dogma. Crucially, however, he qualified this position by stating: 'no power and no civil government could say that a man bound to a church should cease to give conscientious obedience to the law of that church'.¹⁴⁴ Dillon thereby attempted to appease Protestants while simultaneously keeping the Catholic hierarchy on side.

John Redmond, leader of the Irish Parliamentary Party, chose to address the issue in an article entitled 'Does Home rule mean Rome rule?' in *Reynold's Newspaper* – a copy of which was received in advance of publication by the *Belfast Evening Telegraph*. Redmond dismissed the notion that an Irish Parliament could have its policies dictated by the Holy See, citing previous unsuccessful attempts by the Catholic Church to persuade people to abandon the Plan of Campaign.¹⁴⁵ Turning to the *McCann* case, he adopted a similar line to Devlin and Dillon before him, dismissing the affair as 'a miserable domestic dispute' which was exploited by opponents of Home Rule. He also observed that 'if it [dictation of civil law by the Church] occurred at all' it had been in October 1910 under an Imperial government, meaning that the affair had nothing to do with an independent Ireland.¹⁴⁶

Redmond, however, was mindful of the danger posed to achieving Home Rule by growing unionist fears of an overly powerful Catholic Church. In a letter to John Dillon on 5 January 1912 he expressed his concern with *Quantavis Diligentia*, writing that, 'the way in which it now stands is thoroughly unsatisfactory [...] I confess I am uneasy about this'. Calling for clarification from the Vatican he added, 'any document to emanate from the Catholic members of the Party should be most carefully drawn'. In a

¹⁴³ A.C. Hepburn. *Catholic Belfast and Nationalist Ireland in the era of Joe Devlin, 1871-1934* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 131.

¹⁴⁴ Hansard, [accessed 20 May 2010]

¹⁴⁵ "Does Home Rule Mean Rome Rule?' Mr Redmond Says Not. Explaining Away McCann Case: Effect of Ne Temere Decree', *Belfast Evening Telegraph*, 24 February 1911. p. 7. The Plan of Campaign was a scheme introduced by nationalist agrarians to secure lower rents for tenants.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

letter to Dr O'Donnell, Bishop of Raphoe, Redmond dismissed the Catholic Church's proposed amendments to the Home Rule Bill: 'I have gone carefully through the suggested amendments which you sent to us, and I am sorry that there is a preliminary and fatal objection to anything being done in the direction you choose [...] it would create a storm round our heads and would in all probability wreck the Home Rule Bill'.¹⁴⁷ Redmond was undoubtedly caught in a politically difficult position and was careful not to be seen to be bending his knee to the Catholic hierarchy.

The *McCann* case also re-ignited concerns about *Ne temere* among Reformed Church leaders and had the effect of uniting other Protestant denominations on the issue.¹⁴⁸ The Presbyterian Church of which Agnes McCann was a member discussed the case at its General Assembly in 1911, and issued a unanimous call for the withdrawal of *Ne temere*.¹⁴⁹ The Church of Ireland Bishop of Down, C.F. D'Arcy argued that in the event of Home Rule being granted the Catholic Church would be 'able to enforce laws without deference to the authority of the state'.¹⁵⁰ Evoking the stereotype of the servile Catholic, D'Arcy argued that despite the well-intentioned promises regarding marriage laws, decisions would ultimately be taken in Rome. He also claimed that while Irish Unionists had no fear of Church dogmas per se, their problem lay with a Roman Church that 'still formally claims the power to control states, to depose princes [...] to extirpate heresy'.¹⁵¹

The Church of Ireland rector Dudley Fletcher was equally scathing. He argued that it was incomprehensible that a marriage between a Catholic and a Protestant before a Protestant clergyman and witnessed by the 'best man' and congregation should be declared invalid. His views support Andrew Scholes's argument regarding the united front shown by all Protestants in relation to the affair:

Let Protestants stand shoulder to shoulder in defence of their hearths
and their homes. Our Presbyterian brethren in Ulster have entered into

¹⁴⁷ Letter to John Dillon and Letter to Dr. O'Donnell, Bishop of Raphoe, John Dillon Papers, Trinity College, Dublin. 6748/483-503.

¹⁴⁸ Scholes, pp. 19-21.

¹⁴⁹ Ian Ellis, *Vision and Reality: A Survey of Twentieth Century Irish Inter-Church Relations* (Belfast: The Institute of Irish Studies, Queen's University, 1992), p. 5.

¹⁵⁰ Rev. C.F. D'Arcy, 'The Religious Difficulty under Home Rule', *Against Home Rule: The Case for the Union*, ed. by S. Rosenbaum (London: Kennikat Press, 1912), p. 207.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 206.

this contest with their characteristic calm but grim determination. Let them be assured that in this and every struggle in which they may engage for God, for country, and for freedom, their fellow Protestants of all denominations will be with them ‘heart, pocket, and hand’.¹⁵²

Cardinal Logue, the Catholic Primate of All Ireland, responded to Protestant fears in a reply to Redmond’s article in *Reynold’s Newspaper*, complaining, somewhat ambiguously, that: ‘It does not sound very complimentary to the Holy See [...] if Home Rule be granted, it will mean freedom for Irish Protestants and forge shackles for Irish Catholics’.¹⁵³ In his 1911 Lenten Pastoral, delivered at a time when the *McCann* case was uppermost in people’s minds, Logue described a grim future for those considering an inter-faith marriage, evoking ‘a world of misery, regret, blank hopelessness and ruin; temporal and spiritual’. Overriding much of the political debate surrounding the McCann case, Logue also affirmed the supremacy of religious affiliation:

The civil power may attempt, by penal enactments and disabilities, to impede the execution of these laws [Canon Laws]; but, even in the face of penalties and disabilities, Catholics will obey them. Irish Catholics will maintain their allegiance to the Head of the Church, under whatsoever rule they may live, and whatsoever enactments rulers may sanction to detach them from their obedience.¹⁵⁴

Crucially and perhaps unintentionally, Logue then hinted that there might be a purpose other than validity to *Ne temere*: ‘If the Decree *Ne Temere* attains one objective, which no doubt, were among those chiefly intended by the Holy Father, that is the cessation or decrease of mixed marriages’.¹⁵⁵ Logue’s statement appears to undermine the Catholic Church’s long held assertion that *Ne temere* was about validity alone. In fact, sociologist, Raymond M. Lee supports this position: ‘*Ne temere* did not directly concern itself with any aspect of the church law other than validity’.¹⁵⁶ However, as Daithí Ó Corráin has observed, the *Codex Inuris Canonici* of 1918 (into which *Ne temere* was incorporated), ‘disapproved of mixed marriages and tried to prevent them, but ensured

¹⁵² Dudley Fletcher, ‘Rome and Marriage: An Examination of the Recent Papal Decree, “Ne Temere”’ (Dublin: Church of Ireland Printing and Publishing Co., Ltd., 1911), pp. 8-9

¹⁵³ Hepburn, p. 131.

¹⁵⁴ ‘Lenten Pastorals: Cardinal Logue and the “Ne Temere” Decree’ *Irish Times*, 4 March 1911, p. 5.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.* (Italics mine)

¹⁵⁶ Lee, R, p. 13.

they would be strictly controlled should they occur'.¹⁵⁷ With this argument in mind, it is probable that the views expressed in Logue's Lenten Pastoral enjoyed some support from within the Catholic Church.

The furore surrounding the *McCann* case and the promulgation of *Ne Temere* provoked genuine fears in unionist circles that in the event of Home Rule the power of the Catholic Church would be more than ecclesiastical or spiritual. These fears were well-founded: in 1893, prior to the unsuccessful passage of the second Home Rule Bill, an amendment was proposed by Sir F. Powell MP, which would prevent a future Irish parliament having power over marriage laws. The reasoning behind the amendment was outlined in a footnote in the Protestant 'Irish Church Quarterly':

It was pointed that under a Parliament dominated by Roman Catholic influence those laws would be interfered with, and that mixed marriages, which were common in Ulster, and to which Roman Catholic authority was opposed, would be forbidden or repudiated.¹⁵⁸

What is noteworthy is that the amendment was defeated by John Redmond and the Irish Nationalist Party, who strongly opposed it.¹⁵⁹ It was hardly surprising, therefore, that there was so much scepticism of nationalists and their perceived links with the Catholic Church when the campaign for the third Home Rule Bill was gathering pace. Those politicians in favour of self-government became increasingly concerned that the affair might scupper their plans and this is clearly evident in a letter from the Chief Secretary of Ireland, Augustine Birrell to John Dillon on 15 January, 1912:

These Papal Decrees seem inexplicable. Perfectly harmless in themselves *bombinans in vacuo*, to issue them now in Ireland, looks like malice, but probably is only stupidity – but mischievous(?) stupidity most effectively displayed. I am perfectly certain that unless withdrawn or otherwise effectively dealt with it will be absolutely necessary to introduce into the Home Rule Bill words especially

¹⁵⁷ Ó Corráin, p. 184.

¹⁵⁸ 'The Church of Ireland and Home Rule', *Irish Church Quarterly*. Vol.5, No.18 (1912), 97-116, (p. 103.)

<<http://www.jstor.org/stable/30067219>> [accessed 22 May 2012]

¹⁵⁹ Sinclair, Thomas, Rt. Hon., 'The Position of Ulster', *Against Home Rule: The Case for the Union*. Ed. S.Rosenbaum (New York: Kennikat Press, 1970), p. 175.

designated to the Marriage Laws and Papal Bulls [...] I can see in my mind's eye, the government being beaten in the present House of Commons on a Protestant amendment to that effect.¹⁶⁰

Birrell's observations and fears were not misplaced. Thomas Bartlett argues that the decree 'elicited that rarity from Asquith – a concession' and, as already noted, an amendment was added to the third Home Rule Bill which limited the powers of the Irish parliament in relation to *Ne temere* and *Quantavis diligentia*.¹⁶¹ Asquith's administration clearly felt the need to quell Unionist fears that Irish nationalist politicians at some point in the future might fall under the influence of the Catholic hierarchy. The amendment to the Government of Ireland Bill read as follows:

In the exercise of their power to make laws under this Act the Irish Parliament shall not make a law so as either directly or indirectly to establish or endow any religion, or prohibit the free exercise thereof, or give a preference, privilege, or advantage, or impose any disability or disadvantage, on account of religious belief or religious or ecclesiastical status, or make any religious belief or religious ceremony a condition of the validity of any marriage.¹⁶²

Asquith spelled out the rationale behind the amendment on the floor of the House of Commons:

These words, as the House will see, are chosen specially to exclude the possibility – I have never thought it myself even a possibility – of legislation on the part of this new Irish Parliament to make any attempt to give effect to either of those recent Papal pronouncements which go by the name of the *Ne Temere* and *Motu Proprio* [*Quantavis diligentia*] decrees; in other words, to establish any privileged status of clerical persons before the tribunals of this country, or in any way to interfere with the validity of mixed marriages between persons of different religious beliefs.¹⁶³

¹⁶⁰ Letter from Augustine Birrell to John Dillon, John Dillon Papers, Trinity College, Dublin. 6799/182a

¹⁶¹ Bartlett, p. 373.

¹⁶² Redmond, John. *The Home Rule Bill* (London: Cassell and Company Limited, 1912), p. 107.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*

It could be argued (as Redmond, Dillon and Devlin did) that the *McCann* case was merely a domestic dispute, hijacked by unionists for political capital. The timing and location of this dispute ensured that its impact was considerable, however, given that passions were running high in Ulster over the Home Rule campaign, and that the affair came to light in the immediate aftermath of the promulgation of two contentious Catholic decrees. The debate surrounding *Ne temere*, and to a lesser extent *Quantavis diligentia*, placed the relationship between Church and state regarding matrimonial affairs firmly in the spotlight. While the case united all Protestant denominations in condemnation, it was also a rare example of the British State intervening to negate possible future impacts of Catholic Church dogma.¹⁶⁴

Between the *McCann* and *Frost* cases, the worst fears of unionists were realised, as an independent Irish Free State was formed in 1922. The context for disputes relating to mixed marriages had been thoroughly reconfigured, as we turn to the *Frost* and *Tilson* cases.

* * * *

The 1937 Constitution had a hugely significant impact on the course of these disputes. In cases involving the religious upbringing of children the courts had relied, as I have discussed, on the principle of 'paternal supremacy', but this was to change with the *Tilson* judgement in 1950. Here, with reference to Article 42.1 of the Constitution in particular, the state gave backing to the signed pre-nuptial agreement which was required by the Catholic Church in a mixed marriage so that a dispensation might be obtained to overcome the impediment of *mixta religionis*. This has been interpreted in several ways. Many southern Protestants at the time and some historians of the period have seized on this judgement as proof that the newly independent state was dominated by the Catholic Church. The lawyer Gerald Hogan, however, has argued that *Tilson* showed merely that 'paternal supremacy' was at odds with the relevant Article of the Constitution.¹⁶⁵ Just as some unionists used *McCann* to highlight the dangers of Home

¹⁶⁴ Bew, Paul. *Ideology and the Irish Question: Ulster Unionism and Ulster Nationalism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), p. 34

¹⁶⁵ Keogh, Dermot & McCarthy, Andrew J. *The Making of the Irish Constitution 1937: Bunreacht na hEireann*. (Cork: Mercier Press, 2007), p. 21.

Rule, others drew on *Tilson* to support their claims that the 1937 Constitution was inherently Catholic in outlook.

Marianne Elliot has observed that, 'The *Tilson* case was a reminder, if Protestants needed one, of the way in which Catholic mores pervaded Irish public life', whilst Patrick Corish argues that the Constitution was grounded in Catholic moral viewpoints which 'had crystallised as 'Catholic social thought' or 'Catholic social teaching'.¹⁶⁶ Similarly, David Fitzpatrick claims that much of 'de Valera's new constitution [...] had been drafted by Jesuits and other clerical advisers'.¹⁶⁷ Gerald Hogan, however, argues very convincingly that the Constitution may not have been as catholicised as many historians would like to think. Acknowledging that the Constitution was 'influenced to some extent by Catholic teaching and doctrine', he dismisses many of the claims made by historians – particularly those made by R.F. Foster in his work *Modern Ireland: 1600-1972*.¹⁶⁸

Hogan challenges Foster's argument in relation to the five Articles that were concerned with 'rights' that (according to Foster) 'were influenced by papal encyclicals and current Catholic social teaching'.¹⁶⁹ In Hogan's estimation, Foster chooses to ignore 'the inherent value of the rights actually protected by the Constitution as distinct from its philosophical source or inspiration'.¹⁷⁰ On the often quoted 'special position of the Catholic Church', which was enshrined in the Constitution and later removed, Hogan notes that there is nothing unique about this, in that countries such as Poland (Catholic), Spain (Catholic), Greece (Greek Orthodox) and Norway (Lutheran) all chose to insert similar references in their constitutions. Hogan concludes that the 'absence of any detailed and legal commentary regarding the drafting of the Constitution itself has handicapped fair historical evaluation' and that too little attention has been paid to the input of constitutional experts such as John Hearne and Maurice Moynihan.¹⁷¹ Moreover, he stresses that Foster and others have tended to focus on 'easy targets' such

¹⁶⁶ Marianne Elliot, *When God Took Sides: Religion and Identity in Ireland – Unfinished History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 230-1; Patrick Corish, *The Irish Catholic Experience: A Historical Survey* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1985), p. 247.

¹⁶⁷ David Fitzpatrick, *The Two Irelands 1912-1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 230

¹⁶⁸ Gerald Hogan, 'de Valera, The Constitution and the Irish Historians', *The Irish Jurist* Vol. XL (Dublin: Thomson Round Hall in association with the School of Law, UCD, 2005) pp. 292-296.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 297. (From Foster's *Modern Ireland*, p. 544.)

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 306.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 316, p. 319.

as 'special position' and 'women in the home' clauses, whilst ignoring many of the positive aspects of the same constitution.¹⁷² Hogan's grasp of jurisprudence should not be lightly dismissed, as he argues:

I think you will find that the average litigant could not give two straws as to whether the constitutional right in question was inspired by the writings of Thomas Aquinas on the one hand or by Thomas Paine on the other. They are only concerned with whether these guarantees are likely to be of practical assistance to them.¹⁷³

Despite Hogan's forensic analysis, the observation of Paul Blanshard, quoted in J.H. Whyte's seminal work *Church and State in Modern Ireland: 1923-1970* (1971), still resonates: 'It [*Tilson*] remained a prime example for those who wished to argue that Ireland is a clerically-dominated state'.¹⁷⁴

As the *Frost* case of 1945 was also heard against the 1937 constitution, it is useful to briefly look at this case before discussing *Tilson*. As in the cases I have already examined, the judgement in this case cemented 'paternal supremacy' over pre-nuptial agreements. Moreover, in the aftermath of this particular judgement those Protestants in mixed marriages or those contemplating marriage to Catholics understandably felt that they had little to fear from the same constitution.

On 21 June 1930 Charles Frost, a Protestant, married Margaret Frost, a Catholic, in a Catholic church in Dublin.¹⁷⁵ Prior to the marriage, and in accordance with the requirements for obtaining a dispensation, Charles Frost signed an undertaking whereby the children of the marriage would be brought up in the Catholic faith. The marriage was not a happy one, however. Discontent seems to have arisen largely from the fact that while their children were baptised as Catholics, Charles Frost insisted on raising or educating them as Protestants. While Margaret Frost appears to have complied reluctantly with her husband's wishes, the couple finally decided to separate in 1940, after ten years of marriage. As part of the separation agreement she was given custody

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Ibid., pp. 306-307

¹⁷⁴ J.H. Whyte, *Church and State in Modern Ireland: 1913-1970* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan; London: Macmillan, 1971), p. 171. (From Paul Blanshard *The Irish and Catholic Power: An American Interpretation* (Boston: The Beacon Press, 1953), pp. 165-166).

¹⁷⁵ Margaret Frost's maiden name is not disclosed in *Irish Reports*. She is referred to as 'the prosecutrix'.

of the three youngest children, whilst he placed the three elder children in the Protestant home known as the 'Bird's Nest' in Dun Laoghaire, Co. Dublin.¹⁷⁶ Margaret Frost later claimed that this decision had been taken without her consent. Shortly afterwards she fell upon hard times, and was forced to hand over the three youngest children to her husband, who placed them with their siblings in the 'Bird's Nest'. A year later Charles Frost died, and his widow then set about recovering her children and raising them as Catholics, by way of an order for *habeas corpus* from the High Court. The year was 1945 – eight years after the Irish Constitution was drawn up.

In his will, Charles Frost directed that his children should be brought up in the Church of Ireland.¹⁷⁷ The question before the court was whether his widow had the right to raise the children now as Catholics. The court decided that the two youngest children were too young to have fixed religious views and should be returned to their mother. Notwithstanding the fact that the court recognised the rights of the father, it decided that Margaret Frost had the right, because of their age, to dictate their religious faith. The court decided that the older children should remain in the Protestant home and continue their upbringing as Protestants.¹⁷⁸ In relation to the Catholic pre-nuptial promise, Judge Davitt observed that Frost had 'given the undertaking required, observed it for a period and then refused to abide by it'.¹⁷⁹ Crucially, while he recognised that Frost had entered into a signed pre-nuptial agreement, the judge found that this had no legal basis. Instead he based his judgement on the absolute rights of the father, and stated that the children in question should be raised in the faith of the deceased father, as Charles Frost had set out in his will.

In an effort to overturn that decision, Margaret Frost appealed to the Supreme Court where her counsel evoked Articles 41.1 and 42.1 of the constitution. Article 41.1 states: 'the State recognises the Family as the natural primary and fundamental unit group of Society' while 42.1 states that 'The State acknowledges that primary and natural

¹⁷⁶ Protestant-run orphanages at Grand Canal Street, Dublin and Dun Laoghaire were also known as Mrs. Smyly's Homes. In fact, the term 'Bird's nest' entered the vernacular and was even verbalised. If Catholic children had been 'bird's nested' [term often used by Catholic priests] it usually meant that there had been attempts to proselytize them.

¹⁷⁷ *The Irish Reports*, ed. by G.L.Dobbyn (1947), pp. 3-7

¹⁷⁸ 'High Court Decision Regarding Custody of Children', *Irish Times*, 27 October 1945, p. 1.

¹⁷⁹ *Irish Reports*, (1947), p. 12.

educator of the child is the Family'.¹⁸⁰ In other words, counsel contended that the family, comprised of both parents and children, was a unit and that any decision regarding the education of the children should be a joint decision. Her counsel claimed that Charles Frost did not have the right to solely decide on the religious upbringing of the children.

The Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, Mr. Justice Murnaghan, did not agree. While he acknowledged that severe criticism by Frost's counsel of her husband's decision to 'break the undertaking which he had signed prior to his marriage' was justified, he also stated that it 'not deprive him [the father] of his legal right to determine the religion of the children'.¹⁸¹ His final decision was unambiguous: 'the rule which the Courts have consistently followed in this country [...] is that the father has the legal right, and when that right has been exercised by him, the children must be educated in the religion he has chosen'.¹⁸² The Supreme Court ruled that common law – inherited from Britain – ensured the absolute right of the father to determine the religion of his children and that this was not unconstitutional. In relation to the signed pre-nuptial agreement, the court was of the opinion that as both parents agreed subsequent to the marriage that their children would be raised as Protestants, it was not necessary to consider the validity of that marriage, since both parents had reneged on the promise given to the Catholic Church that their children would be raised as Catholics. Notably, the Supreme Court ordered that *all* of the children, including the two youngest who had been earlier returned to their mother by the High Court, should continue with their Protestant upbringing in 'Mrs. Smyly's Homes'.¹⁸³ This judgement meant that 'paternal supremacy' was not nullified in Irish civil law by the 1937 Constitution. To put this more bluntly, in southern Ireland in 1945, even though her husband was deceased, a mother was denied the right to raise her own children due to a relic of British law. The judgement also 'caused deep resentment in Catholic circles' largely because the Catholic 'promises' had been ignored by the court.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 28.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., p. 26.

¹⁸² Ibid., pp. 28-29.

¹⁸³ 'Court Refuses Mother's Claim to Children. Father's Right to Determine Religion Upheld', *Irish Times*, 21 December 1945, p. 1.

¹⁸⁴ Jean Blanchard, *The Church in Contemporary Ireland* (Dublin: Clonmore & Reynolds Ltd., 1963), p. 65.

Protestant relief in the immediate aftermath of the *Frost* case was short-lived; five years later the High Court and Supreme Court decided in the *Tilson* case that pre-nuptial agreements were legally binding. The judgement sparked outrage in Protestant circles, with the editorial in the *Irish Times* claiming that ‘issues of weighty and far reaching moment have been raised by the judgement delivered by the President of the High Court in the *Tilson* case’.¹⁸⁵ Paternal supremacy, if nothing else, ensured that the courts were unbiased in their judgements, but a cursory glance at *Tilson* judgements suggests that this judicial impartiality appeared to have evaporated.

In 1941 Ernest Tilson, a Protestant, married Mary Barnes, a Catholic, in a Catholic church in Dublin. She was pregnant at the time and it would appear from his sworn affidavits that they ‘both earnestly desired to get married’.¹⁸⁶ Tilson then set about obtaining the necessary dispensation and after his application was refused he took the ‘unusual move’ of seeking an interview with the parish priest. The priest was later to recall that Tilson gave him ‘every assurance that he would do all in his power to safeguard the religion of Miss Barnes and to raise the children of the marriage as Catholics’.¹⁸⁷ To this end, two weeks before his marriage and before ‘two witnesses of the Catholic Church’, Tilson wrote out and signed a promise that he would baptise and educate any children of the marriage as Catholics. A dispensation was eventually granted and the marriage took place on 10 December 1941.

Four boys were born of the Tilson marriage, and were baptised and educated initially in Catholic schools. The union was not a happy one, however; affidavits from both parties, sworn before the case reached the High Court, form a litany of claim and counter-claim consistent with marital breakdown. Tilson’s decision to remove the three oldest children from the family home and place them in the Protestant ‘Bird’s Nest’ home prompted his wife to seek an order of *habeas corpus* from the High Court to secure the return of the children.¹⁸⁸ Tilson’s decision to raise his children as Protestants was in direct

¹⁸⁵ ‘Ne Temere’, *Irish Times*, 29 July 1950, p.7. The propensity of the media to associate *Ne temere* with the religious upbringing of children is clearly evident here since the title of this editorial, which addresses the *Tilson* judgement is ‘Ne Temere’.

¹⁸⁶ Sworn affidavit by Ernest Tilson. National Archives, Dublin. HC/1950 State Side/7.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid. Sworn affidavit by Father Brendan Harley.

¹⁸⁸ In an interview with Alan Tilson, second eldest son of Ernest and Mary Tilson, he recalled how his father came home while their mother was at work and announced: ‘C’mon, we’re going to Smyly’s’. He took the children first to the Protestant ‘Bird’s Nest’ in Grand Canal street, and later to the ‘Bird’s Nest’ in Dun Laoghaire. Alan felt that his father’s actions were pre-meditated. [Interview 26 July 2011]

contravention to the agreement he had signed prior to his marriage and it was this undertaking, which he had freely given, that would have such a critical bearing on the outcome of the court hearing. The case set both Church and state on a direct collision course, and the court had to decide between the civil position which the father enjoyed in relation to paternal supremacy and which had been confirmed by the *Frost* judgement, and the promise that Tilson had given to the Catholic Church. The court had to decide if 'paternal supremacy' was at odds with Article 42.1 of the Constitution and if the pre-nuptial promise was legally binding.¹⁸⁹

Justice Duffy, President of the High Court, highlighted in his judgement Articles 41, 42 and 44 of the Constitution and their emphasis on the family, education, and religion. Article 42.1 was key to the final outcome of the case:

The State acknowledges that the primary and natural educator of the child is the family and guarantees to respect the inalienable right and duty of parents to provide, according to their means, for the religious and moral, intellectual, physical and social education of their children.¹⁹⁰

Duffy ruled that the pre-nuptial agreement signed by Tilson, far from being in conflict with the constitution, was 'consonant with its spirit and purpose and tends directly' to safeguard marriage, the harmony of the family, and the 'innate and imprescriptible right of the child to religious education'.¹⁹¹ He also ruled that the same agreement had 'crystallised' the rights of children under the Constitution. In relation to the absolute right of the father, upheld in the *Frost* case, Duffy stated that it was a 'Victorian conceit' with 'no place in a jurisprudence moulded to fit the Constitution of Ireland'.¹⁹² It was this last observation that would prove so crucial when Tilson appealed to the Supreme Court after Duffy ordered that the children be returned to their mother and continue with their Catholic education.

¹⁸⁹ Gerald Hogan, 'A Fresh Look at *Tilson's Case*', *The Irish Jurist* Vol. XXXIII. 1998, p. 313.

¹⁹⁰ J.M.Kelly; with G.W.Hogan and G.Whyte, *The Irish Constitution*. 4th Edition. (Dublin: Lexis Nexis, 2003), p. 18.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, pp. 18-19.

Regardless of the ruling itself, the language used by Justice Duffy in the High Court when delivering his judgement was ill-chosen, and may well have contributed to the ways in which historians have consistently mis-interpreted the *Tilson* case. Marianne Elliot and others have focussed on Duffy's ruling in the High Court instead of the definitive ruling of the Supreme Court. *Tilson* had decided to marry Mary Barnes after she became pregnant out of wedlock: Duffy ruled that *Tilson* had acted 'very properly' in this regard, adding that mixed marriages should be 'sternly discouraged'. He also noted that the *Tilson* children, 'have a good mother who will fulfil the ante-nuptial agreement and continue to bring up her Catholic children as good Catholics'.¹⁹³ The biographer of the then Archbishop of Dublin John Charles McQuaid, John Cooney has, contentiously, claimed that McQuaid made direct representations to Justice Duffy regarding the case. To support this, he quotes from a letter to McQuaid from Joe Walshe, Ambassador to the Holy See, in which Walshe writes that, 'I can echo your Grace's expression of relief at the Gavan Duffy decision – and I am above all delighted that it was brought about by your patient and consistent work'.¹⁹⁴

Adding to Protestant consternation, it appears that Duffy considered referring to Canon law when he observed, 'Perhaps the relevant Canons were part of the old Canon law and possibly the constitutional recognition of the special position of the Catholic Church would authorise the Courts to take judicial notice of Canon Law'. Remarking on 'the special position of the Catholic Church' Duffy was undoubtedly straying deep into Canonical waters, but as Jean Blanchard concludes 'he mercifully did not quite take that step'.¹⁹⁵ Again showing how historians themselves have become caught up in the fervour surrounding the *Tilson* judgement, Marianne Elliot has argued that: 'In the *Tilson* case he [Duffy] ruled in favour of the Catholic mother, citing the special position of the Catholic Church in the constitution, which in his interpretation required judicial notice of canon law'.¹⁹⁶ Elliot's interpretation is factually incorrect; Duffy, although obviously tempted, did *not* take notice of Canon law. In her account, Elliot also fails to

¹⁹³ *The Irish Reports*, Ed. by R.A. Harrison, (1951) p. 23.

¹⁹⁴ Cooney, John. *John Charles McQuaid: Ruler of Catholic Ireland* (Dublin: O'Brien Press, 1999), p. 245.

¹⁹⁵ Blanchard, p. 65.

¹⁹⁶ Elliot, *When God took Sides*, p. 231. Elliot in this instance misreads J.H. Whyte in *Church and State in Modern Ireland*. On the Courts taking judicial notice of Canon law, Whyte states, 'he [Duffy] did not pursue that line of thought', p. 169.

make any reference to the all-important Supreme Court judgement. However, Duffy's Catholic bias *was* clearly illustrated when he applied the constitution to the case:

We are a people of deep religious convictions. Accordingly, our fundamental law deliberately establishes a Christian constitution; the indifferentism of our decadent era is utterly rejected by us [...] thus religion holds in the Constitution the place of honour which the community has always accorded to it in public opinion. The right of the Catholic Church to guard the faith of its children, the great majority, is registered in our fundamental document.¹⁹⁷

While upholding the decision of the High Court, the Supreme Court judiciously put some clear water between the Catholic Church and the state by avoiding Duffy's overtly Catholic references. It also recognised the validity of the pre-nuptial agreement, and held that parents under the Constitution as part of the family had 'a joint power and duty in respect of the religious education of their children'.¹⁹⁸ By extension, neither parent would have the right to dissolve an established contract. Referring to Article 4 (the family as educator), the Supreme Court reached the same conclusion as the High Court: the promise that Ernest Tilson signed two weeks prior to his marriage, so that he would be granted a dispensation, was enforceable in Irish law. Regarding the absolute right of the father, Mr. Justice Murnaghan argued that it was 'an archaic law of England, rapidly disintegrating under modern conditions, and need not be a guide for the fundamental principles of a modern state'.¹⁹⁹ Justice Black, a Protestant was the only judge to deliver a dissenting judgement; mindful perhaps of the Catholic bias shown by Justice Duffy, Black asked wryly, 'whether the court would have ruled the same way had the mixed marriage promises favoured the Protestant party?'²⁰⁰

Protestant outrage at the judgement was predictable since many Protestants believed erroneously that the judgement was based on Article 44.2 (the special position of the Catholic Church) rather than Article 42.1 (the primary and natural educator of the child is *the family*). Even the editor of the *Irish Times* got carried away in the swell of

¹⁹⁷ *The Irish Reports* (1951), pp. 13-14.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

¹⁹⁹ 'Pre-Marriage Pact and enforceable contract', *The Irish Catholic*, August 10th, 1950, Vol. LXIII, No., 15, pp. 1-2. The case was covered extensively in this Catholic newspaper.

²⁰⁰ Kurt Bowen, *Protestants in a Catholic State: Ireland's Privileged Minority* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1983), p. 43.

'Catholic State' fervour, writing in an editorial that: 'it is difficult to avoid the impression that the philosophy underlying Irish jurisprudence is tending, slowly but surely, to be informed by the principles of the Roman Catholic Church'.²⁰¹ Protestant outrage was also understandable, given the fact that the case tended to confirm their perception that the Catholic Church had an inordinate input into the Constitution and the running of the State.

Leaving aside the possible influence of the Church on the writing of the Constitution, the document itself clearly states that the family, rather than the father alone, should decide on the religious upbringing of the children. As Hogan observes:

It might well be argued that if the State did not give legal effect to a solemn pledge, freely given, that the children of the marriage would be reared, according to the precepts of a particular church this would amount to an unconstitutional interference with the guarantee of religious freedom contained in Article 44.2.1□.²⁰²

Finally, while the *Tilson* judgement created a furore among the Protestant community in Ireland, it was not precedential from a legal perspective: the civil courts in *Ramon v Ramon* in New York in 1942 gave state backing to the same pre-nuptial agreement. James E. Carty argues: '*Ramon v Ramon* is the leading decision holding an ante-nuptial contract for the religious education of children enforceable'.²⁰³ The judge in *Ramon v Ramon* was also of the opinion, as Hogan is regarding *Tilson*, that it might be unconstitutional *not* to enforce a pre-nuptial agreement as this might undermine a citizen's right to religious freedom.²⁰⁴ Seven years later the judgement in the *Tilson* case was reaffirmed in the High Court on another decision arising from a mixed marriage. Delivering judgement, the President of the High Court referred to Justice Murnaghan's earlier interpretation of Article 42.1, and decided that there was a 'joint power and duty' regarding the education of children established by the *Tilson* case. On that basis he ruled

²⁰¹ 'Ne Temere', *Irish Times*, 7 August, 1951, p.7. Again the title of this editorial is 'Ne temere' when, in fact, the decree had nothing to do with the judgement in the case.

²⁰² Hogan, 'A Fresh Look', pp. 330-331.

²⁰³ James E. Carty, 'The Enforceability of Antenuptial Agreements for the Religious Instruction of Children', *Duke Bar Journal*, Vol.2, No.1, (1951) 70-89, p. 81, <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/1370792>> [accessed 16 December 2010]

²⁰⁴ Walter G. Gans, 'Enforceability of Antenuptial Agreements Providing for the Religious Education of Children', *Journal of Family Law*, Vol.71, (1961) 227-240, p. 239, <<http://heinonline.org>> [accessed 12 January 2011]

that the father did not have the sole right to decide on the religious upbringing of his children.²⁰⁵

Conclusion

This section has illustrated the often fraught relationship between Church and state over the issue of mixed marriages. The divisive nature of the cases I have examined may be traced to the fact that all (with the exception of *Ussher*) were concerned with the religious upbringing of children. The inherited convention of paternal supremacy was enshrined in civil law and it took a particular interpretation of the Constitution to finally dispense with it in the *Tilson* case of 1950. The injustice of paternal supremacy has a parallel in the insistence of the Catholic Church that all children of mixed marriages should be raised in that faith, raising an awkward question for the Catholic Church: if that Church regarded the family as sacrosanct, seeing fit to embed this within the constitution, how many families were broken up as a direct result of the conditions set out so that a dispensation might be granted?

The Church's dogged insistence that both parties in a mixed marriage observe its canonical form (one Catholic priest and two witnesses) and that any children of the marriage should be raised as Catholics, despite the damage that it might inflict on family life, is indefensible. Moreover, on a macro level, the conditions associated with *Ne temere* poisoned ecumenical relations, and 'remained *the* point of contention beyond the Second Vatican Council'.²⁰⁶ While the Constitution sounded the death-knell for paternal supremacy there was no similar line drawn by the Catholic Church under *Ne temere*, as *Matrimonia Mixta* (1970) still required the Catholic partners *to do all in their power* to raise the children of the mixed marriage as Catholics.

Parallel systems of governance inevitably resulted in conflict between Church and state, but despite the best efforts of the Church, authority ultimately lay with the civil power. From *Meades* in 1870 to *Frost* in 1945 Irish courts relied on civil law and generally upheld paternal supremacy, unless there was a danger to the welfare of the children.

²⁰⁵ 'Five Children to be brought up as Roman Catholics – High Court Ruling', *Irish Times*, 13 June 1957, p. 9.

²⁰⁶ Ó Corráin, p. 184.

Thereafter, the state relied on the Constitution as exemplified in *Tilson* in 1950. Moreover, in *Ussher* in 1910 the state dismissed *Tametsi* and *Ne temere* in favour of civil law, and in *McCann* in 1911 the British state intervened by way of an amendment to the Government of Ireland Act to curb the possible influence of the Catholic Church in Ireland.

Notwithstanding mis-interpretations by historians, the *Tilson* case made a decisive impact on relations between Church and state, setting these power blocs on a direct collision course. On that note, Hogan argues that the Supreme Court should have taken the opportunity to emphasise the fact that it was the Catholic Church and not the state that insisted on pre-nuptial undertakings in mixed marriages.²⁰⁷ Superficially, the judgement confirmed many Protestant perceptions that the Catholic Church enjoyed a privileged position within the state, but, as Gerald Hogan has pointed out, the courts were in truth relying on the wording of the relevant articles of the Constitution (41.1 – the family unit and 42.1 – the family as educator). It is unfortunate, however, that *Tilson* is best remembered, even among eminent historians, for Justice Duffy's choice of language, and considered a prime example of state backing for a Catholic decree. I use the word unfortunate because the true legacy of the judgement has not been acknowledged, given that it secured greater rights for Irish women at a time when these were badly needed.²⁰⁸ In other words, after *Tilson* women enjoyed equal rights with their husbands in determining the religious upbringing or education of their children. What the Constitution gave with one hand it took back with the other, of course, given that the same Constitution placed the woman in a subservient role within the home.²⁰⁹ That said, the benefits of this new and official recognition of the role of women by the courts and by extension the State undoubtedly permeated into broader spheres of Irish life.²¹⁰

In this as in many other conflicts between Church and state however, perception has been just as important as evidence. While the *Tilson* judgement brought down the final curtain on the absolute right of the father in determining the religious upbringing of his

²⁰⁷ Hogan 'A fresh look', p. 330.

²⁰⁸ Kennedy, Finola. *Cottage to Creche: Family Change in Ireland* (Dublin: Institute of Public Administration, 2001), pp. 92-94

²⁰⁹ Articles 41.2.1&2 of the 1937 Irish Constitution see the role of women as being in the home.

²¹⁰ Kennedy, pp. 92-94.

children, the perception among most Protestants in its aftermath was that the state, of which they too were citizens, favoured Catholics over Protestants. On the other hand, many Catholics basked in their perception that their best interests were being served by a close relationship between Church and state.

Coda

On 26 July 2010 I interviewed Alan Tilson, second oldest child of Mary and Ernest Tilson, at his home in Donnybrook in Dublin. He informed me that after the Supreme Court judgement he and his siblings returned to their mother, as directed by the court, and continued with their Catholic upbringing and education to adulthood. On his parents' separation, he recalled that his maternal grandmother, a devout Catholic, had grave difficulties at all times with the fact that her daughter had married a Protestant and this may have contributed to his parents' marital problems. He also holds fond memories of the 'Bird's Nest' and of the care he and his siblings received there. He described to me how years later his father's sister (now deceased) told him that during the High Court and Supreme Court hearings, a group of Catholics used to gather in the evenings near his paternal grandparents' home at Chapel Street, Oldcastle, Co. Meath and recite the rosary for successful outcomes to the cases. Quite extraordinarily, his parents re-united in the mid-1960s and spent the rest of their days together, first in London and later in Dublin until their deaths in Dublin in the 1990s.

IV

The Literary Response

Because the novels analysed in this thesis are informed by these theological, historical or sociological contexts, their heterogeneous representations of inter-faith relationships cannot be interpreted solely as national allegories or as metaphors for conciliation (or lack of conciliation) between the Protestant and the Catholic communities. Novels such as Patrick MacGill's *Helen Spenser* (1937) or Peadar O'Donnell's *The Knife* (1930) are explicitly allegorical, however, and the successful outcomes to the relationships can be read as metaphors for a form of conciliation between two warring communities.

Conversely, in the hands of other writers the romance-across-the-divide is a blunt instrument. For instance, in Mrs. J. Sadlier's *Bessy Conway or The Irish Girl in America* (1862) or Dillon O'Brien's *Frank Blake* (1876) the inter-faith relationships and subsequent religious conversions serve as crude devices to promote Catholicism while denigrating Protestantism. On the other hand, writers such as Brian Moore or Anne Crone use the tradition to draw attention to what they see as an overly powerful Catholic Church. Representations of the complexities associated with these relationships can also be found in novels such as Norah Hoult's *Holy Ireland* (1935) or Temple Lane's *The Trains go South* (1938). By depicting mixed marriages within the Free State, these novels illustrate how disparate cultures or value systems present insurmountable barriers between the Protestant and Catholic communities.

All that said, many writers dealt with here tread a fine line between the socio-religious or historical contexts and their fictional narrative accounts. In addressing this, Joe Cleary has provided a useful framework through his analysis of the romance-across-the-divide tradition in Northern Irish fiction. He draws on Doris Sommer's *Foundational Fictions: The National Romances of Latin America* (1991) and Nancy Armstrong's *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel* (1987). Writing about romantic fiction in Latin America, Doris Sommer argues:

The local romances did more than entertain readers with compensations for spotty national history. They developed a narrative formula for resolving continuing conflicts, a postepic conciliatory genre that consolidated survivors by recognising former enemies as allies.²¹¹

Sommer has argued that the romance-across-the-divide tradition in Latin American fiction is used as a means of imaginatively unifying newly independent states made up of economically and ethnically diverse populations.²¹² To put this another way:

Erotic passion was less the socially corrosive excess that was subject to discipline in some model novels from Europe, and more the opportunity (rhetorical or

²¹¹ Doris Sommer, *Foundational Fictions: The National Romances of Latin America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1947, this edn. 1991), p. 12.

²¹² Anna Barnard, 'Forms of Memory: Partition as a Literary Paradigm', *Journal of Comparative Poetics*, 30 (Cairo: University of Cairo Press, 2110) <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27929845> [accessed 12 April 2012] (p. 16.)

otherwise) to bind together heterodox constituencies: competing regions, economic interests, races religions.²¹³

Joe Cleary also draws on the work Nancy Armstrong as an essential counterpart and complement to Sommer's writings.²¹⁴ Armstrong has observed that from its inception the British novel endeavoured to detach the language of sexuality from that of politics, thereby helping to usher in a whole new mode of middle-class power. Her theoretical paradigm suggests that, from within the domestic realm and through interpersonal relationships, women exercised considerable influence on institutional or political power. Cleary argues that Northern Irish romances cannot be simply explained in Sommer's or Armstrong's terms, however. Due to the unique nature of the Northern Ireland situation or in 'the absence of any agreed-upon state order that might frame a political solution acceptable to both sides, the utopian impulse of the romance mode (Sommer's model) must give way to a 'realism' (of the kind described by Armstrong)',²¹⁵

In the novels addressed in this thesis, where writers have depicted the union of two lovers from opposite sides of the political/religious divide as a metaphor for conciliation between factious communities their representations might be seen to correspond with Sommer's allegorical mode. However, to borrow Cleary's terminology, the fictional romances addressed here are often compelled to 'give way' to mundane issues such as *Ne temere* or the religious upbringing of the children of the romantic union. In other words, if the Northern Irish situation has 'stimulated a curious hybrid of the romance-across-the-divide'²¹⁶ somewhere between Sommer's allegorical romance and Armstrong's 'realism', something similar happens in this thesis as the 'reality' of inter-faith relationships in Ireland 'combines or overlaps'²¹⁷ with the fictional depictions of the lovers. For instance, against the backdrop of the contentious Home Rule campaign, the 'happy endings' of Jeremiah O'Donovan's *Waiting* (1914) or M.E. Francis's *Dark Rosaleen* (1917) can be seen as metaphors for unifying nationalists and unionists. However, both novels also explicitly deal with the infamous *Ne temere* decree and its

²¹³ Sommer, p. 14.

²¹⁴ Joe Cleary, *Literature, Partition and the Nation-State: Culture and Conflict in Ireland, Israel and Palestine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p.114.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 115.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 114.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*

perceived negative impacts on the Protestant community. What emerges is a 'curious hybrid' between a domestic romance and a searing critique of Catholic Church dogma. To put all this another way, very often the fictional narratives dealt with in this thesis are a 'strange amalgam of allegorical romance' and critiques of various socio-religious issues.

A further issue arises in terms of the relationships between sociological contexts and literary representations. It is often unclear whether writers who conjure ill-conceived or idealistic allegories are ascribing crude metaphors to further their own political agendas or are merely out of touch with contemporaneous reality. Some novels such as Jack Wilson's *Dark Eden* (1969) have flagrant allegorical intent depicting the Protestant colonisers in a plantation setting as rapists, while other writers such as Gerald O'Donovan, Norah Hoult and Temple Lane are clearly better aware of the sensitivities involved. Their works may be allegorical to some degree, but they are also at pains to emphasise how inter-faith relationships affect the personal lives of ordinary people. By contrast, writers such as Sadlier and O'Brien ignore such sensitivities and use the romance-across-the-divide tradition to further what are in effect proselytization agendas.

The first chapter of this thesis analyses Protestant and Catholic narratives of the latter part of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Novels by Protestant writers, L.T. Meade's *The O'Donnells of Inchfawn* (1887) and Shan F. Bullock's *Dan the Dollar* (1906) centre around romances across the divide, which are used to draw attention to questions of economic or material well-being. From a theological perspective, the impediments to mixed marriage of 'Disparity of Cult' and 'Mixed Religion' discussed earlier are relevant to the final outcome of the inter-faith relationship in *Dan the Dollar*. By contrast the novels by Catholic writers addressed in this chapter, *Frank Blake* and *Bessy Conway*, may be considered works of popular fiction, but use the romance-across-the divide to promote Catholicism. Here, the Catholic Church is depicted as the one true Church while the Reformed Church is represented as deficient or flawed. These novels are sentimental and didactic, but also reflect a hubristic or triumphalist mood which can be associated with a resurgent Catholic Church under Cardinal Paul Cullen.

The three novels examined in Chapter Two – Gerald O'Donovan's *Waiting* (1914), Frank Frankfort Moore's *The Ulsterman: A Story of Today* (1914) and M. E. Francis's *Dark Rosaleen* (1917) – are explicitly political since they are set against the campaign for the third Home Rule Bill. In all three novels the inter-faith relationships are seen to end in some degree of success, suggesting they can be interpreted as metaphors for some form of political conciliation. However, both *Waiting* and *Dark Rosaleen* also have a theological dimension. In *Waiting* the plot hinges on the inter-faith couple's quest for a dispensation (which is not forthcoming), while M.E. Francis deals explicitly with the notoriously divisive issue of the religious upbringing of mixed marriages. In fact, her Protestant protagonist simply refuses to honour his pledge to the Catholic Church to raise his children as Catholics.

Moore's novel, by contrast, is written from an unashamedly pro-Orange and unionist perspective and promotes a more belligerent offensive against the threat of Home Rule. If the fact that this protagonist's two sons eventually enter successful marriages with Catholics points to a political conciliation, particularly given that the endogamous relationships in the novel come to nothing, there is a caveat in the novel's conclusion when the sons' marriages can only be successfully realised in exile.

The third chapter examines how women writers address the romance across the divide during the Free State years. To put their depictions into sharper relief, there is a brief analysis of two flagrantly allegorical novels of male writers from this time, *The Knife* by Peadar O'Donnell and *Helen Spenser* by Patrick MacGill. The women writers' novels, Norah Hoult's *Holy Ireland* and Temple Lane's *The Trains go South*, explore ways in which the romances across the divide highlight the Catholic ethos or insularity of the Free State. Hoult's novel, which is written from a Catholic perspective, has a relationship between a Catholic girl and a Protestant/theosophist as its centre-piece, and is largely inspired by the author's own personal experience. Lane, on the other hand, uses the inter-faith relationship in her novel to draw attention to the plight of the Protestant minority in the Free State. Written from a Protestant perspective, it centres on a Protestant man who is locked in an unhappy relationship with a Catholic because of her Church's direction on divorce and because of the Free State's ban of it.

The fourth chapter explores Ulster novels – Brian Moore’s *The Feast of Lupercal* (1958), Anne Crone’s *Bridie Steen* (1949) and Joseph Tomelty’s *Red Is the Port Light* (1948) – written at a time when the Catholic Church was arguably at the height of its powers in Ireland. Consequently, that Church is depicted as the agency of destruction in the inter-faith relationships. The Catholic protagonist in Moore’s novel is depicted as a pathetic figure who eventually buckles under the pressure exerted on him by the Catholic Church, because he is in a relationship with a Protestant. She, in turn, is depicted as an independent free spirit who eventually takes flight to London to escape the suffocating atmosphere of what is, in effect, a closed Catholic community. The romance in Anne Crone’s *Bridie Steen* transgresses political, religious and class lines. Bridie, the Catholic protagonist, forms a relationship with a well-off Protestant whose grandmother persistently reminds him of the loyalty he should show to his Church and to his forefathers who arrived in Ulster at the time of the Plantation. Ultimately, though, Bridie bows to the pressure exerted by her bigoted Catholic aunt and by her Church and decides against the union. Joseph Tomelty’s *Red Is the Port Light* differs from these two novels in that the plot centres on a Catholic woman and Protestant man who have been happily married for many years. This relationship, however, is blighted by Catholic Church dogma: on her death-bed, the Catholic protagonist insists on the conversion of her Protestant husband.

The final chapter also examines Ulster novels, all published during the 1960s and all of which are set at seminal moments in the province’s history: Anthony C. West’s *The Ferret Fancier: A Novel* (1963), in the immediate aftermath of partition; Jack Wilson’s *Dark Eden*, in the early years of the Ulster Plantation; and Maurice Leitch’s *Poor Lazarus* (1969), immediately prior to the outbreak of the Troubles. Each novel foregrounds explicit and often violent sexual encounters between the Catholic and Protestant protagonists in the inter-faith relationships which can be read as metaphors for political disharmony. When asked about the ‘stunted, twisted sexuality’ in his novels, and whether this was ‘a particularly Irish problem’, Leitch replied:

Yes, there’s no doubt about that. It’s a fear of the sensual in any shape or form, which obviously comes from the church whether it’s the

Protestant tradition or the repressive Catholic tradition. There's no doubt about that.²¹⁸

Leitch's views are applicable to any of the three novels discussed in this chapter, but I will argue that depictions of sexuality in the novels more closely reflect the theories of Simone de Beauvoir, Julia Benda and Andrea Dworkin.

The period under consideration in this thesis – from the 1860s to the 1960s – was a time of enormous political and social upheaval in Ireland, encompassing partition, the formation of a Free State and a six-county Northern Ireland, and the establishment of the Republic of Ireland in 1948. This same period saw the disestablishment of the Church of Ireland, while the Catholic Church enjoyed a resurgence that would endure throughout much of the twentieth century. All of this involved a considerable reorientation on the part of the Protestant and Catholic communities, depending on which side of the border they lived. Both communities, however, remained essentially endogamous, with exogamy more the exception than the norm. Mindful of the complexities surrounding inter-faith relationships in these circumstances, the following chapters will explore how writers of Irish fiction have engaged with this thorny and sensitive issue.

²¹⁸ Julia Carlson interview, *Banned in Ireland: Censorship and the Irish Writer*, ed, for Article 19 by Julia Carlson (London: Routledge, 1990, pp. 99-108).

Chapter One

Romantic melodrama: Representations of inter-faith relationships in Catholic and Protestant narratives from 1860 to 1906.

This chapter will examine romance-across-the-divide narratives from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, a time when the political landscape of Ireland underwent enormous change. Over a period of fifty years the land wars and various land acts saw more and more property move from Protestant into Catholic ownership; the Protestant Church of Ireland was dis-established; and the embryonic Home Rule campaign gathered a momentum which would eventually see it signed into law in 1914. Concurrent with these political changes, Irish Catholicism was transformed under the leadership of Cardinal Paul Cullen, as many new churches were constructed, priestly vocations increased, the Church gained new powers in schools and universities, and spiritual renewal was encouraged by what became known as 'devotional revolution'.¹ In effect, if political change was undermining the Protestant Ascendancy, so too was a resurgent and reinvigorated Catholic Church.

Two Protestant novels, *Dan the Dollar* by Shan F. Bullock, and *The O'Donnells of Inchfawn* by Elizabeth Smith (pseudonymously writing as L.T. Meade), draw attention to material or economic well-being in their depictions of inter-faith relationships, thereby reflecting the pressing concerns of many Protestants in Ulster at the turn of the century regarding the perceived threat posed to their economy by the prospect of Home Rule. In Bullock's novel, the faith of his Catholic protagonist is tested as she is forced to choose between a materially better life with a Protestant or a poorer life alone but within her own faith. That this Irish peasant places her soul above worldly matters suggests that *Dan the Dollar* is grounded in Revival fiction. In *The O'Donnells of Inchfawn*, by contrast, financial security and material well-being take precedence over

¹ Emmet Larkin, 'The Devotional Revolution in Ireland' 1850-75', *The American Historical Review*, 77, No.3(1972) 625-652 <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/1870344>> [accessed 7 November 2011]

religious or racial difference. Despite the novel's backdrop of bitter sectarian conflict, the Irish and English protagonists in the relationship set political differences to one side and work together for the betterment of the impoverished peasants, although their departure to South America with a large group of these peasants is clearly problematic from a post-colonial perspective.

Two Catholic novels, *Frank Blake* by Dillon O'Brien and *Bessy Conway; or, The Irish Girl in America* by Mrs J. Sadlier, show no such concerns about economic well-being, and instead use the inter-faith relationships as devices to promote the notion that the Catholic Church was indeed the 'one true Church'. These didactic and sentimental novels also prescribe conversions to Catholicism by the Protestant in the relationship as necessary for a happy and contented life, and attempt to suggest that there is something lacking or unwholesome in the Reformed Church. So much so, Protestants in the novels are depicted almost as provisional figures, as though they are waiting for opportunities to convert to Catholicism. While some might argue that Catholic preoccupation in the novels with conversion may be a response to Protestant proselytization efforts, the self-approving mood in which they are undoubtedly written suggests a perception of religious superiority. This, in turn, perhaps reflects the rising status of the Catholic Church during and after the reign of Cardinal Paul Cullen. Finally, it should be noted that while *Bessy Conway* and *Frank Blake* belong to the genre of popular fiction and do not have outstanding literary merit, they were nonetheless written for a vast readership and should be assessed more in social rather than in literary terms.²

Shan Bullock was born into a Protestant farming family at Inisherk, in Co. Fermanagh, in 1865 and died in Surrey in 1935, having lived and worked in England for much of his adult life.³ Bullock's writings were influenced not only by his liberal Anglicanism, which he adopted after abandoning the evangelical Protestantism of his upbringing, but also by the fact that he was reared on a 'sectarian fault line' giving him an insight into

²John Wilson Foster, 'The Irish Renaissance, 1890-1940: prose in English', *The Cambridge History of Irish Literature*, ed. by Margaret Kelleher and Philip O'Leary, 2 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), II, pp. 113-118. Foster argues that many late nineteenth century popular fictions were 'sidelined' by 'Revivalism and Modernism', which, in turn, is the reason why they have received so little critical attention

³Patrick Maume, 'Bullock, Shan Fadh (John William)', *Dictionary of Irish Biography*, ed. by James McGuire and James Quinn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), <<http://dib.cambridge.org/viewReadPage.do?articleId=a1115>> [accessed 16 Jan 2012]

the concerns and characteristics of the Catholic community.⁴ Of considerable relevance to the main theme of *Dan the Dollar*, Bullock's autobiography *After Sixty Years* (1931) recalls his childhood awareness of the differences between the Protestant and Catholic communities:

It would always be the barefooted, ragged Catholic, with his hair through his cap and only a bit of oaten bread in his pocket, that I was drawn to for play or company. He was of another breed than ours, had softer ways and speech, better manners somehow, knew more about the country and its life and the things that mattered.⁵

Protestants, by contrast, are remembered as putting industry and economic endeavour before all else:

Work is in our blood. We like to live well and we have pride in ourselves and our houses and farms [...] What you and I strive after, money, power and all the rest, means little to him [a local Catholic], and the majesty and the dominion of the British Empire never stirs his blood.⁶

Dan the Dollar, set in rural Ulster in the latter part of the nineteenth century is informed by such personal experiences, but accommodates both Protestants and Catholics under the same roof. As Benedict Kiely argues: '[*Dan the Dollar*] was illustrative of the divided life of Ulster [...] and of the universal sympathies of Shan Bullock, that the Ruddy household should be part Catholic and Protestant'.⁷ The action of the novel unfolds around a twenty-six acre peasant holding at Shrule, Co. Fermanagh which is farmed by Felix Ruddy, his wife Sarah, and two children adopted from distant relatives, Phelim and Mary. Mary, however, is a devout Catholic. Both parents are Protestants although Felix, a product of a mixed marriage, is indifferent about his religion. In this carefully constructed novel, characters are delineated according to their spiritual or material leanings; Protestants such as Dan and Sarah are worldly, whilst Catholics such as Mary or the pseudo-Catholic Felix are associated with spirituality.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Shan F. Bullock, *After Sixty Years* (London: Marston & Co., Ltd, 1931), pp. 32-33.

⁶ Ibid., p. 127. In this instance Bullock is recalling a local Protestant's comments in relation to Catholics.

⁷ Benedict Kiely, 'Orange Lily in a Green Garden: Shan F. Bullock', in *A Raid into Dark Corners and other Essays* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1999), pp. 215-231 (p. 229).

As the family run into financial difficulties and slip nearer to the clutches of the local money-lender, salvation is suddenly at hand, as Dan, the only son of Felix and Sarah, who emigrated to America some twenty years earlier, makes a surprise return. Raised in his mother's faith as a Protestant he has adapted seamlessly to the Protestant American work ethic and returns to lavish his wealth on his family and the local community, giving rise to the nickname from which the novel takes its title. At Dan's behest, but with the notable exception of Phelim, the family later move to the much grander Springfield Estate, living with considerable extravagance. While many, including Felix and Phelim, are sceptical of this largesse, events take a dramatic turn when Dan learns from America that his business there has collapsed. Meanwhile, he has fallen in love with his Catholic step-sister Mary, who must now decide between her continued enjoyment of a materialistic lifestyle with Dan, and her Catholic faith. Ultimately, she decides that her allegiance lies with the Catholic Church and agrees to marry Phelim. Springfield is then sold, and the Ruddy family return to their peasant holding, as Dan, still a disciple of materialism, returns alone to America to begin afresh.

John Wilson Foster argues that the primary theme of *Dan the Dollar* (like that of Bullock's other novels *The Squireen* (1903) and *The Loughsiders* (1904)), is 'simply stated': 'The chief character, through arrogance, insistence and a penchant for intrigue, manages to alienate the spirit of the land and the people around him'.⁸ Dan clearly alienates those around him through his ostentatiousness, but I would contend that the narrative of *Dan the Dollar* depends more on the moral dilemma faced by Mary. Ultimately she chooses spirituality over materialism, a decision informed by her own Catholicism.

Despite Felix's professed apathy for religion, Bullock's depiction of his character is clearly aligned more with the stereotype of the feckless Catholic than the hardworking Protestant, although this is complicated by the fact that he is the product of a mixed marriage. As such he was raised 'with the father of us, thinking one way and the mother thinking another' and is seen as something of a 'half-breed' or, 'a bad Protestant'.⁹ The liminal status of Felix allows Bullock to explore supposed spiritual characteristics and

⁸ John Wilson Foster, *Forces and Themes in Ulster Fiction* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan Ltd., 1974), pp. 29-30.

⁹ Shan F. Bullock, *Dan the Dollar* (Maunsel & Co., Ltd, 1906), p. 82. The notion that the product of a mixed marriage is a 'half-breed' comes up again in Chapter Six.

qualities of both Catholics and Protestants. Felix is everything that the stereotypically industrious and efficient Ulster Protestant is not. In the opening pages of the novel, he takes apples to market in order to sell them, but although he and his family are on the verge of destitution, gives them away for nothing. We also see him wandering around his small holding using 'indifferent methods to make it fruitful' with 'the air of one who slept in his clothes, who walked without knowing or caring that he wore them'.¹⁰ Crucially, however, Felix is portrayed, despite his ineffectiveness, as being happy and contented with his lot, and as such may be aligned with recurring peasant figures of the Revival whose, 'primal innocence' is 'miraculously preserved from the contaminating influences of civilisation'.¹¹

Such qualities are reflected by Felix's son, Phelim, who spends his days recounting tales of Finn Mac Cool, dreaming of fairies and ancient Ireland and playing his fiddle. Phelim is representative of a romantic, if idealised, ancient Gaelic past which was the wellspring of the Revival and was explored by scholars such as John O'Donovan, Eugene O'Curry or Sir Samuel Ferguson.¹² The narrator describes Phelim's disposition as 'the magician himself [...] this uncouth Phelim of the dreamy eyes [...] His hands were rough and clumsy. He was only a rustic fellow. All he knew were old stories and songs, the lore of field and hearth'.¹³ The revivalist rejection of materialism for a more spiritual life is epitomised by Phelim's refusal to give up his simple lifestyle on the peasant holding when the Ruddy family decides to move to the grander Springfield estate.

Industrious, unashamedly materialistic and a practising Protestant, Mary's foster mother Sarah is the antithesis of Felix and Phelim. Her ability to drive a hard bargain is clearly demonstrated in the early pages of the novel. Although in dire need of money, she refuses to sell the family's cow to a dealer because his offer is not high enough:

'Seven-ten is my price,' responded the dealer.

'Not a farthing more.'

'Eight's the money,' said Sarah. 'Not a penny less.'

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 33 p. 7.

¹¹ F.S.L. Lyons, *Ireland since the Famine* (London: Fontana Press, 1963, repr., 1985), p. 235.

¹² Bullock, *Dan*, p. 225.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

'Arrah, nonsense,' thundered Red-beard. 'Is it quarrel over ten shillings! Arrah quit. Come. Split the difference, and seven fifteen is the price of the cow.'
'Eight is the money,' said Sarah, her face like granite for hardness.¹⁴

When Mary seeks Sarah's counsel regarding her marriage to Dan, her response is noteworthy; although she opines that it is better for Protestants and Catholics to remain apart – 'the Irish ones anyway' – she compares this possible mixed marriage unfavourably with her own marriage to a 'bad' Protestant.¹⁵ Ultimately, however, she feels that economic necessity should take precedence over religious difference:

I'm a Protestant myself and, so far as I can see, it is surely better for Protestants and Catholics, the Irish ones anyway, to keep their own sides of the road [...] I think if it was my own case I'd feed my hunger no matter what was against me. I did something of the kind, I suppose, when I married what they call a bad Protestant, and I was blamed too, still I didn't care and I haven't lived to regret what I did [...] I would only say that in my opinion, God never meant us to starve our hunger.¹⁶

Bullock also conflates Protestantism with materialism in his depiction of Dan. In turn, the contrast between Catholic and Protestant values is dramatised and highlighted when a clearly perplexed Dan questions Mary:

'How is it, Mary,' he said, 'that your people care so little for the good things of the world? The Protestants do, but your people don't.'¹⁷

Having apparently inherited his mother's materialistic leanings and Protestant work ethic, Dan is a prodigal son in reverse, a self-made man returning home exuding self-confidence and denigrating everything Irish. His profiteering in America appears, paradoxically, to have stripped him of all religious belief, and the narrator observes with some moral disapproval that: 'Clearly Dan had learnt much in America, and had forgotten much there'.¹⁸ Dan is shown to be a slave to materialism, apparently incapable of recognising or acknowledging a spiritual dimension to life, to the extent

¹⁴ Ibid., pp. 14-15.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 239.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 139.

¹⁷ Ibid., pp. 217-218.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 91.

that he deems the religious difference that lies between him and Mary as inconsequential: 'And you don't think I care a brass farthing that you're a Catholic. If you were a Hindoo [sic] it would be just the same to me'.¹⁹ In response, the narrator indicts Dan with 'scoffing' at religion, denying God and feeding 'his body at the cost of his soul'.²⁰ What irks Dan most is what he perceives as Catholic indifference to progress and the consequent near-permanent state of lassitude or inertia. Bullock responds to the revivalists' rejection of industrialisation, but excludes Sarah from his diatribe:

So marked and transformed, Dan had come back to a country, or a part of it, where the conditions of life were not in harmony with his ideas and practices [...] little was right in this God-forsaken country. Most of the people were lazy and thriftless. Where were the factories? See the comfortless homes, the sleepy towns. See the wretched farms, undrained, half-tilled; see the neglected children, the careworn women [...] Excepting Sarah, and perhaps Mary the saint, nobody worked and nobody cared. Phelim was a dreamy good-for-nothing. Felix had the instincts and capacity of a bird, a dear old man that Sarah kept from being a tramp. The servant was a slut. The workmen had to be driven like niggers. Nothing was right.²¹

While Bullock indicts the evils of materialism, Mary's rejection of Dan is not a straightforward affair. In effect, she is torn between her love for Dan and desire for financial security, and her devout and unquestioning loyalty to the Catholic Church. In terms of her faith she is portrayed as being devout and unquestioning. As the narrator explains, she 'fasted and did penance, prayed to the Virgin and the saints, confessed to a priest' and 'knelt to idols'.²² However, Bullock also highlights her human instincts or qualities as he draws attention to aspects of Dan's character which she finds attractive and appealing:

He is 'generous and thoughtful', has given her 'many pleasures', and has 'taught her much'; 'she felt pleasure in his talk' and he 'was

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 233.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 230.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 122.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 229.

masterful in his ways'; 'always giving, always helping', 'he was like the earth at springtime and harvest, prodigal with gifts'.²³

Repeatedly, however, Mary returns to the religious division between them, and also her obligations to her Church:

I'm a Catholic' [...] He was a Protestant [...] No, no. The devil tempting her gave her such thoughts. She must resist them [...] She must obey the Church [...] marrying him would involve her in far worse, would put her in opposition to the strict rule of the Church, would deprive her of the sanction of religion and imperil her soul before God.²⁴

As Marianne Elliot points out, Mary 'was convinced that her religion was at peril if she married a Protestant'.²⁵ Ultimately, she turns to her local parish priest, described as a 'kindly old man, full of experience and compassion' but who forthrightly outlines the uncompromising position of the Church on mixed marriages:

The Church by every means in its power, discouraged mixed marriages. They were unwise, they usually led to unhappiness and ended miserably; and if, as appeared to be now the case, the other party was also of a *godless disposition*, then union with him must almost inevitably be disastrous.²⁶

Bullock's representation of Dan's hostile reaction to the bad news draws on the Protestant stereotype of priest-ridden Catholic Ireland, where people live in fear of an overbearing Church, as he lays the blame for Mary's rejection at the door of the institution:

Confound the Church! What right has it to interfere? Doesn't it get enough from people without meddling in their private affairs? [...] These damnation [sic] priests! They push in their black faces

²³ Ibid., pp. 230-231.

²⁴ Ibid., pp. 228-232.

²⁵ Marianne Elliot, *The Catholics of Ulster: A History* (London: Allen Lane, 2000), p. 340.

²⁶ Bullock, *Dan*, p. 234. (Italics mine), also see discussion below.

everywhere. They're the curse of this country [...] Ah, these infernal black-faced priests!²⁷

Bullock's moral outlook is, on the face of it, straightforward: the novel's Catholic protagonist is faced with a decision between materialism and spirituality, and ultimately chooses the latter path by marrying Phelim and rejecting Dan. Bullock seems to have intended *Dan the Dollar* to be a moral tale with a balanced representation of both communities, underlined by the unusual circumstances of Protestants and Catholics living under the same roof, in either the peasant cottage or in Springfield. Nevertheless, Catholic bigotry or indeed undue influence by the Catholic Church ultimately plays a significant part in the novel.

Mary's rejection of Dan is perhaps less important than her willingness, by the novel's end, to marry Phelim. While my consideration of her decision may appear somewhat pedantic, it is nonetheless worth examining in the light of the Catholic priest's unambiguous condemnation of her proposal to marry a Protestant. Mary, as a devout Catholic who follows the doctrine of the Church to the letter, unsurprisingly accepts the advice of the priest on this matter. However, Bullock also makes clear that Mary has as much of an issue with Dan's Protestantism as his materialism, since she is prepared to marry the unashamed *non-Catholic* Phelim, of a kind who, as noted, the local priest would refer to as 'of a godless disposition'. Her decision to marry Phelim, a non-Catholic or non-believer, is thus in direct contravention of the teaching of her own Church which she holds so dear. As discussed in the main introduction, under Canon Law both possible marriages would be equally frowned upon and would require dispensations; in the case of Mary's marriage to the Protestant Dan, on the grounds of *disparity of religion*, and in the case of the non-believer Phelim, on the grounds of *disparity of cult*.

Bullock uses the proposed mixed marriage as a lens through which to examine the conflict between Protestant materialism and Catholic spiritualism. The novel ends with the Ruddy family's return to a simple and frugal existence at their peasant cabin, suggesting that Bullock wishes to advocate an outright rejection of capitalist culture. This is further reinforced by the narrator when he explains, 'save for the memory of him

²⁷ Ibid., pp. 241-244.

[...] it was almost as though Dan had never been'.²⁸ However, while Mary can apparently look forward to her life with Phelim, the reader is left with the nagging sense that Mary's future has been decided by the Catholic Church, bringing to mind the well-worn stereotype of the enslaved and priest-ridden Catholic. As Marianne Elliot observes of Mary, 'she was utterly guided by and uncritical of the priests'.²⁹ Notwithstanding the fact that Mary apparently marries Phelim – a non-believer – it is fair to say that her decision to reject Dan is informed more by her attachment to the Catholic Church than by his brazen materialism. Conversely, while Dan departs Ireland to resume his pursuit of worldly goods, he can, nonetheless, consider himself free.

The novel *The O'Donnells of Inchfawn*, written by the Protestant writer Elizabeth Smith and published under the pseudonym L.T. Meade, is similarly concerned with economic and material well-being. The daughter of a Church of Ireland Rector, Meade was born in Bandon, Co. Cork in 1844, and while her first novel *Ashton-Morton* (1886) was published anonymously, she later became one of the most prolific English-language writers of the period, producing over three hundred books before her death in 1914, which included five volumes of science fiction and six volumes of crime fiction in collaboration with Robert Eustace. She is probably better known for her fictions for an adolescent female audience, and is said to have influenced better known writers such as Angela Brazil and Enid Blyton.³⁰

In *The O'Donnells of Inchfawn*, Meade inverts the notion of forced Catholic dispossession by the Protestant English. Instead, dispossession is welcomed as a matter of necessity by the Irish, who are shown to be inefficient, lackadaisical and prodigal. The English, on the other hand, see it as a case of selfless humanitarianism and an opportunity to advance Ireland's development. In fact, Meade's representation brings to mind Rudyard Kipling's views on Britain's colonial relationship with India: 'He was certain that to be ruled by Britain was India's right; to rule India was Britain's duty'.³¹

²⁸ Bullock, *Dan*, pp. 265-266.

²⁹ Elliot, p. 340.

³⁰ Jessica March, 'Meade, L. T. Elizabeth Thomasina Toulmin Smith', *Dictionary of Irish Biography* <<http://dib.cambridge.org/viewReadPage.do?articleId=a8138>> [accessed 10 February 2012]

³¹ Ashis Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self under Colonialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), p. 64.

Two relationships of note in the novel can be seen to promote Meade's ideas of commercial betterment: that between Catholic Fergus and his Protestant wife Ellen and that between their daughter, also named Ellen, and a Protestant Englishman, Philip Arundel. Through the parents' relationship Meade emphasises the religious and political difference but also strives to show how Protestants and Catholics can form successful commercial partnerships. Meade's treatment of the relationship between Arundel and Ellen similarly foregrounds the problems arising from racial difference, and also seeks to demonstrate how the Irish and the English can work together successfully. While the novel has all the hallmarks of a Victorian romance (Ellen falls ill after Arundel is kidnapped, only to make a speedy recovery when he is released), it also suggests a highly partisan solution to the economic woes of nineteenth-century Ireland. Meade's solutions – greater agrarian efficiency, lower rents and, indeed, outright emigration – are presented strictly on English terms. *The O'Donnells of Inchfawn* can thus be read as a model for a more diplomatic and convivial, yet ultimately paternalistic, form of colonisation.

Set in 1870s Co. Donegal, the action of the novel centres around the estate of Inchfawn, which has been in Catholic ownership for generations and is presently in the hands of the feckless Fergus O'Donnell. When his Protestant wife, Ellen, falls ill and dies, the running of the estate is taken over by Fergus and his equally feckless sister, Bridget. Without Ellen's astute guidance, Inchfawn falls quickly into decline. In order to address the problem, Fergus strikes a deal with a local Protestant speculator, Brownlow. Brownlow agrees to lend him fifteen thousand pounds in order to arrest the degeneration of the estate, with the condition that, if after eight years the money was not repaid, Brownlow would assume ownership of the estate.

The novel opens as a writ is being served on O'Donnell's daughter, Ellen for possession of the estate, following her father's failure to make the agreed payment to Brownlow. Meanwhile, Philip Arundel, a friend of Ellen's brother and an English Protestant, arrives. Dismayed by the living conditions of the local peasants, he vows to help them and to aid the O'Donnells in their plight. Despite Arundel's efforts, the O'Donnells lose their holding to Brownlow and relocate to a small cottage, and Arundel is kidnapped by local Fenians who despise both his Englishness and his Protestantism. After Arundel's release is finally secured, he and Ellen, with whom he has fallen in love, along with a

large group of Irish peasants set sail for a better life in South America. Meanwhile, for those remaining, Inchfawn, which has been acquired from Brownlow by a generous and wealthy Englishwoman, Miss Ellershee, is sub-divided and leased to the Irish peasants at favourable terms. This conclusion, in fact, is common to many works of popular fiction during this period in that it is 'informed by Victorian feminine philanthropy'.³²

If the novel describes a civilising and modernising mission to Ireland by English Protestants, Meade's promotion of these ideas is predicated on the inter-faith marriage between Fergus and his Protestant wife. Meade uses the relationship – a contrived mismatch – to demonstrate how, despite their religious or political differences, co-operation between Protestants and Catholics can lead to economic and material success. She is at pains, however, to outline clearly how Mrs. O'Donnell is seen as an outsider who has not been accepted into the Catholic community:

He [Fergus] had brought into the wild highlands of Donegal a foreign bride [...] a very fair young lady, whom the people gave no welcome to, because she was, as they expressed it, a foreigner [...] She came from no further off than the brave old town of Derry, and although of undoubted English extraction, her people had lived on Irish soil since before the days of the famous siege. But between the wild people of the mountainous county of Donegal and the civilised inhabitants of the Protestant town of Derry there was a great gulf fixed. Ellen Grey was a Protestant, and she came of a Protestant race, and the proud Macnaughtens said she would bring no good to Inchfawn.³³

Mrs. O'Donnell has an acute sense of the history of her ancestors and wishes that the boundaries between Protestants and Catholics should remain in place. The narrator outlines her background before her marriage to Fergus:

Ellen learned tolerance from her mother, who, coming from the extremely Protestant town of Derry, found herself planted in the midst of an altogether Roman Catholic population. And yet Mrs. O'Donnell might well have been bigoted, for she came of a race who fought for

³² March, p. 118.

³³ L.T. Meade, *The O'Donnells of Inchfawn* (London: Hatchards, 1887), p. 6.

their religion with tears and blood. She was sprung from those brave people who thought liberty worth starvation, and whose heroism is world famed.³⁴

The historical and political differences between Mrs. O'Donnell and her husband extend into the social or domestic sphere. She is organised and astute, and is shown to be much more intuitive and a better estate manager. He, on the other hand, is an 'impulsive and warm-hearted' man who refuses to press his tenants for rent and who accepts in lieu 'bags of potatoes and stacks of turf'.³⁵ Meade fails to afford Fergus the same sense of history or depth of character as his wife, and he limps through the novel concerned only with day to day financial matters. The narrator sums up his general disposition: 'He was an easy-going man, and as long as the old place held together somehow he would never press a poor person'.³⁶ Mrs. O'Donnell's proficiency, however, is further underlined by the fact that the Inchfawn estate is lost by the family after her illness, when Fergus's sister assumes the management role. The narrator puts it succinctly: 'the little barriers which Mrs. O'Donnell had put up between her husband and absolute ruin were ruthlessly pulled down'.³⁷

Crucial to Meade's representation is the idea that the inter-faith relationship is commercially successful; while Inchfawn may not be a standard-bearer for economic excellence, as long as Mrs. O'Donnell is alive she staves off destitution and guarantees that the estate remains in O'Donnell ownership. After her untimely death, when the estate is controlled solely by Catholics, it enters a period of terminal decline and is eventually lost to Brownlow. Thereafter, when it is again under Protestant control, the turnaround in its fortunes is not only dramatic but can be read as symbolic of the Plantation of Ulster:

The estate was turning out more profitable than he had dared to hope; not an inch of ground was allowed to lie fallow; already two model dairy farms had been started, where, in O'Donnell's time, where about twenty small holdings had literally produced no rent. Yes, the place was gay and prosperous; even as a mercantile enterprise it had turned out

³⁴ Ibid., p. 16.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 12.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid., pp. 7-8. As noted these 'barriers' were pulled down by Fergus's Catholic sister.

successful [...] And those English visitors who came over in the autumn returned to their more favoured land with exclamations of wonder and rapture. In particular, they admired the model farms which were exclusively managed by English people, and were constructed, so to speak, out of nothing.³⁸

With the O'Donnells now consigned to a humble cottage and the local Irish peasants still struggling to survive, assistance comes by way of English intervention in the person of the amicable Philip Arundel. Meade is careful to qualify this depiction: it is significant that whilst the civilising and philanthropic effort is spearheaded by an English Protestant, he is assisted in his endeavour by O'Donnell's daughter, Ellen. So preoccupied is Meade by ideas of economic progress that there is little or no indication from the author as to Ellen's religion, which is somewhat odd given Meade's heavy emphasis on that of her parents. The relationship of Arundel and Ellen, however, mirrors the inter-faith relationship of Mrs. O'Donnell and Fergus in that it brings economic success.

Arundel, having enjoyed a classically English upper class education at Rugby and Cambridge, comes to Inchfawn at the invitation of Ellen's brother Geoffrey. His arrival is heralded by the narrator's grandiose claim that 'it was his first visit to one of the most complex and most perplexing nations in the world'.³⁹ Arundel is clearly 'other' in that he is despised by many of the local Irish, who refer to him as 'a black-hearted foreigner', a 'black-hearted Englishman' and a 'black heretic'.⁴⁰ However, Arundel is more concerned with the poverty and backwardness of the Irish and expresses his shock at what he sees, with a large measure of condescension: 'The house is poor and decayed, and the place is going to ruin everywhere, and people have little or no self-respect. There is an abundance of heart here, but no self-control, and yet how lovable they all are'.⁴¹

By contrast, Ellen was born and raised on the Catholic estate of Inchfawn and is seen throughout the novel to be strongly empathetic towards the native peasants. Her

³⁸ Ibid., pp. 141-142.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 75.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 137. p. 240.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 75.

education, unlike that of her brother or Arundel, 'was left more absolutely to nature; her father forbade school to her, nor would he hear of an English governess coming to Inchfawn. Ellen got her education principally from the mountains and the lake'.⁴²

The union of Arundel and Ellen can be construed as a metaphor for economic cooperation between Ireland and Britain. This is made clear when, after her father warns her to 'look to your own nation to satisfy you to your heart's core', the narrator outlines, in politically loaded terms, the reasons behind Ellen's attraction for Arundel: Perhaps of all the O'Donnell's Ellen was the one most essentially Irish, most essentially patriotic and enthusiastic; she was the sort of woman who could have laid down her life in the cause she loved; and yet now, of all the O'Donnell's, she was the one following the laws of common sense, the only one who was tempering her mercy with a little justice. In short, the Irish heart of Ellen had gone over, without her being aware of it, to the Englishman.⁴³

Together they form a secret society to promote new farming methodologies and to distribute food and clothing to the peasants, paid for with funds raised in London from upper-class benefactors. The narrator outlines the society's aims, which reflect the Protestant values of individual endeavour and industry:

He and Ellen were the founders and organisers of a new secret society. This society, unlike any other of its kind, was to inculcate order, self-restraint, and contentment. It was to make a discontented people content by the simple means of giving them abundance to do, and the necessary materials for earning, if they chose to be industrious, a comfortable living.⁴⁴

The endeavour results in a more contented peasantry and the retrieval, albeit on English terms, of Inchfawn. To this end, Arundel's wealthy high society friend in London, Miss Ellershee purchases the estate and sub-divides it, granting more favourable conditions and lower rents.

⁴² Ibid., pp. 15-16.

⁴³ Ibid., pp. 276-277.

⁴⁴ Ibid., pp. 228-229

Whilst the novel ends happily, as Arundel and Ellen depart for South America with eight hundred peasants, and Inchfawn is divided into smaller holdings and leased to the remaining peasants, Meade's overall representation is problematic. Although she attempts to provide a realistic depiction of the agrarian unrest and sectarianism prevalent in late nineteenth-century rural Ireland, the novel ultimately founders as a result of her thinly veiled partisan attitude. Whilst the author's design may be altruistic, if somewhat idealist, the novel nevertheless promotes a benign view of colonialism, in which English intervention in Irish affairs is shown to be an absolute necessity. If her inclusion of the commercially successful inter-faith and inter-racial relationships underlines the importance that she places on the need for collaborative effort, it should be remembered that in the novel this is seen to be directed from England.

In contrast with the approaches of Bullock and Meade, Catholic romance-across-the-divide novels of this period are more concerned with the conversions of Protestants than with material or economic well-being. While the issue of conversion or proselytization was extremely contentious at the time for both Churches, the Catholic Church also believed that it was the 'one true Church'. In this regard, Cardinal Paul Cullen issued a poster evidently for posting up in chapels and churches warning Catholics against proselytization in the Protestant run Adelaide hospital: 'we cannot but pray for the conversion of Protestants and all who are unhappily out of the one true Church'.⁴⁵ The power and influence of the Catholic Church in Ireland grew enormously over the second half of the nineteenth century, and its renewed strength and confidence at this time can largely be attributed to Cullen's leadership. His negative influence in terms of Protestant/Catholic integration should not be underestimated, however. Colin Barr argues unequivocally that, 'It was his consistent aim to keep catholics and protestants [sic] apart in institutional settings, whether in school, university, hospital, prison, the workhouse, or indeed in marriage'.⁴⁶ Profoundly anti-Protestant, as Archbishop of Armagh, he convened, as already noted, the Synod of Thurles in 1850 – the first such meeting in Ireland since 1666 – which, amongst other things, strongly condemned

⁴⁵ Peadar Mac Suibhne, *Paul Cullen and his Contemporaries*, (Naas: Leinster Leader Ltd, 1977), Vol. V of V, p. 300. The half-torn poster was apparently entitled, '[Warning] against the Proselytization of [Patients] in the Adelaide Hospital, Peter Street, Dublin].

⁴⁶ Colin Barr, 'Cullen, Paul', *Dictionary of Irish Biography*, <<http://dib.cambridge.org/viewReadPage.do?articleId=a2281>> [accessed 20 February 2012]

mixed marriages.⁴⁷ His clear belief in the superiority of the Catholic Church is also evident in a letter he wrote from Rome in 1841 to a Father Mathew in Ireland, who had apparently been 'entertaining sentiments too liberal to Protestants in the matter of religion':

We should entertain most expansive sentiments of charity towards Protestants but at the same time we should let them know that there is but one true Church and that they are strayed sheep from the one fold. We should let them know this; otherwise we might lull them into a false security in their errors and by doing so we should really violate charity.⁴⁸

The two novels which I will discuss in the second half of this chapter reflect Catholic self-confidence at this time and echo Cullen's attitude, similarly suggesting that the Catholic Church is the one true Church and written with the clear assumption that the return of Protestants to the fold is only a matter of time.

Mary Anne Sadlier was born in Cootehill, County Cavan, in 1820. After her father's death in 1844 she emigrated to New York City and began writing, later becoming a leading figure in conservative Catholic circles, and earning a reputation as a writer of fiction and poetry supporting the Catholic faith. As Thomas Brown argues, 'although she distrusted literature, believing it subversive of morality, she defended her use of the novel as being the best means of helping young Irish Catholics resist the temptations of American Protestant culture'. Before her death in 1903 she wrote nearly sixty books, and in 1895 received the University of Notre Dame's Laetare Medal for her efforts on behalf of the Catholic faith.⁴⁹

Bessy Conway, or The Irish Girl in America, belongs to a sub-genre of popular fiction – the 'problem novel'.⁵⁰ Concerned with 'the awful depth of corruption weltering below the surface' in Protestant America and 'the utter forgetfulness of things spiritual' the author is forthright regarding her purpose:

⁴⁷ Rafferty, p. 139.

⁴⁸ Corish, *Irish Catholic Experience*, p. 218.

⁴⁹ Thomas N. Brown, 'Sadlier, Mary Anne Madden' *Notable American Women 1607-1950: A Biographical Dictionary*, ed. by Edward T. James and others, 3 vols (Mass: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1971), III, pp. 219-220.

⁵⁰ John Wilson Foster, *The Cambridge History of Irish Literature*, Vol. II, p. 115.

The object of the book is plain enough [...] It is simply an attempt to point out to *Irish Girls in America* [sic] [...] that there is no class more exposed to evil influences than the Irish Catholic girls who earn a precarious living at service in America.⁵¹

The novel is set during the period of the Great Famine in rural Tipperary and in New York. Bessy, the Catholic protagonist, is the daughter of an Irish peasant farmer who decides, through economic necessity, to emigrate to America. On board ship she meets the Protestant son of her father's landlord, Henry Herbert, who has followed her out of love. While Bessy herself enjoys a successful career in America as a household maid, many of her fellow compatriots fall upon hard times: Ned Finigan [sic] turns to drink, beats his wife and dies during an attack of delirium tremens; Mary Murphy is apparently consumed by American materialism and then enters an unsuccessful marriage with the violent Luky Mulligan, who also beats her; whilst Bessy's friend, 'Sally' marries an unemployed drunkard and is forced to beg in order to feed their child. Herbert, whose advances are rejected by Bessy, falls into a life of drunkenness and debauchery. However, after he is rescued from assailants by some kindly Catholics, he undergoes a complete change in personality and converts to Catholicism. The novel ends as Bessy, who has returned to Ireland just in time to save her family from eviction, decides to marry the newly converted Herbert.

Bessy is the quintessential heroine of sentimental romantic fiction. She strikes out for America on her own, makes good after various trials, and then returns to her homeland just in time to get married and to rescue her aged, impoverished parents from their landlord. However, if Sadlier's plot is notable only for its banality and her characters for their lack of depth, the novel does address social ills such as alcoholism, domestic violence, and an over-reliance on materialism. It also addresses the 'problem' of mixed marriages.

The novel offers an entirely negative portrayal of Protestantism and Protestant America as Sadlier appears to lay the blame for much of the misfortune that befalls the Irish in America at the door of Protestantism. For instance, commenting on the 'half-heathen

⁵¹ Mrs. J. Sadlier, *Bessy Conway or The Irish Girl in America* (New York: D. & J. Sadlier & Co., 1862, repr. 1879), p. i, p. iv.

state' of many Irish girls, Bessy declares, 'it's because they're mostly among Protestants'.⁵² Similarly she warns, 'they [Irish girls] could fall in with Protestants or Jews, and everything that way'.⁵³ Whilst Liz Szabo has observed that, 'Sadlier's social critique of Americans and Protestants is direct and unalloyed', there is scant evidence in the novel (apart from the fact that Herbert encourages Ned Finigan to drink which leads to his downfall) of how Protestants are the cause of Catholic misfortune.⁵⁴ Related to this flagrant anti-Protestant bias is the fact that Herbert's conversion from Protestantism and the couple's departure from America are shown to be necessary in order to achieve happiness. Thus, in contrast to the aforementioned social ills – for which Sadlier does not offer any solutions – the problem of Herbert's and Bessy's mixed marriage is solved in a glib and unconvincing narrative twist, through a simple conversion and a return to the native soil. Before addressing their mixed marriage, it is useful therefore, to look briefly at Sadlier's representation of some of the other social problems which beset Irish Catholic immigrants in America.

Three all-Catholic marriages are shown to be beset with problems: Ned Finigan and his wife Ally; Finigan's sister-in-law Mary Murphy and her husband, Luky Mulligan; and 'Sally', a domestic servant who marries 'Jim'. In each of these patriarchal Irish Catholic families, the patriarch is portrayed as a drunk, a wife-beater, or both.

Ned Finegan's early years in America are apparently very successful. With his wife he establishes a small liquor store, but soon builds up the business to become a profitable bar in central New York. Their enterprise begins to falter, however, when he starts to drink too much, eventually turning into a 'hardened, inveterate drunkard'. The couple then separate, and Ally sells the bar while Ned dies 'a dreadful death of *delirium tremens*' whereby it took 'four men to hold him in the bed'.⁵⁵

Shortly after the marriage of Luky Mulligan and Mary Murphy, Luky abandons his wife and crippled daughter, when he enlists in the army and is sent to Mexico. Mary and

⁵² Ibid., pp. 211-212

⁵³ Ibid., p. 295.

⁵⁴ Liz Szabo, "My Heart Bleeds to Tell it": Women, Domesticity and the American Ideal in Mary Anne Sadlier's 'Romance of Irish Immigration', University of Virginia, 1996, <<http://xroads.virginia.edu/~hyper/SADLIER/Intro.htm>> [accessed 16 January 2012]

⁵⁵ Sadlier, p. 283.

their child live in 'the height of wretchedness' and she turns to alcohol.⁵⁶ When Mary one day leaves their tenement house in order to buy food, her daughter dies in a fire that engulfs the building in her mother's absence. Mary ends her days in Blackwell's Island, an institution for prisoners not 'entitled to States [sic] Prison'.⁵⁷

After 'Sally' loses her job as a domestic servant because she was socialising and dressing inappropriately in American fashion wear, she then marries 'Jim' who has an aversion for work and a drink problem. While 'Jim' is biddable as long as 'Sally' earns enough to sate his alcoholism, he turns to domestic violence as soon as ill-health forces her to rest:

He first applied his foot and gave her a kick which almost threw her to the ground, then, before she recovered her balance, followed it up with a blow that would certainly have left its mark had it reached its destination. But the uplifted arm was caught by an M.P. passing at the moment, and the valorous Jim was hauled away to the lodging provided by the State for such contumacious lieges [...] Jim's brutal assault, coming at that moment, completely paralysed her.⁵⁸

The opposing religious backgrounds and characters of Bessy and Herbert make a successful marriage very unlikely. It is important to note that Herbert's personality changes utterly when he arrives in America and apparently falls under its influences. There, forever drunk, he becomes a Satan-like figure, and a constant source of temptation for Bessy. He realises that Bessy and other Catholics in New York see him in this light: 'she flies at me as though I was a serpent – and others view me through an even darker medium'.⁵⁹ Their relationship also transgresses class boundaries. This is evident in the opening pages of the novel, when the couple meet on board ship, and the trepidation of her Catholic friends is fuelled as much by his status as the landlord's son as by his Protestantism. Later, Bessy is shown to be acutely aware of the social division between the couple:

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 282.

⁵⁷ Ibid., pp. 282-283.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 228.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 147.

This was a severe trial for Bessy [...] Then did the voice of the tempter whisper within her [...] Nonsense! Bessy sure you're no wife for the likes of *him* – it's the devil that's putting such notions in your head! Wouldn't you be a nice daughter-in-law for a grand lady like Mrs. Herbert, and sure you wouldn't know what to do or how to act, if you were brought home to the big house [...] and another thing, he's not the right sort, and it wouldn't be for the good of your soul.⁶⁰

In a similar vein, Herbert's parents are not only disgusted by the fact that he absconded with two hundred pounds, but also at the notion that he may have married below himself in America. His mother makes their feelings known in a letter from home, here commented upon by Herbert:

But oh! Henry! Henry! There's worse than all that said of you here – there is, eh? – can it be true that you took Denis Conway's daughter off with you? – some say you married her, but oh! surely, surely you would not disgrace your family by such a step!' [Herbert:] Ha! Ha! Ha! That is so like her – disobedience, robbery, and all other sins possible and impossible laid to my charge are honourable and meritorious acts when compared with a plebeian marriage! – that alone would entail disgrace.⁶¹

Bessy, on the other hand, is depicted as a saintly figure who follows the teachings of her Church to the letter and manages to resist all temptations. Interestingly, while she is portrayed as subservient in her role as a housemaid throughout the novel, she is ascribed some agency or power only in terms of her religious faith: when one of her Protestant employers asks her to join her family for prayers, Bessy, fearing proselytization, refuses and quits her position.

There is no romantic interaction between the couple prior to their marriage, suggesting that it is Herbert's conversion alone that makes the marriage possible. The conversion is inspired by the charitable acts of two Catholics who come to his assistance after he is assaulted, and by the Catholic Sisters at the hospital where he recuperates. Crucially,

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 138.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 168.

his conversion occurs in Bessy's absence as she has returned to Ireland to assist her parents. Apparently through divine intervention, Herbert recognises his 'wickedness' and the 'wonderful ways of God' and returns to the Catholic faith 'like the prodigal of old'.⁶² After Herbert and Bessy's marriage the couple move into the 'elegant dwelling' of his parents, who have conveniently died, and where the 'long years of happiness glided by so smoothly'.⁶³ Moreover, the tenants on the estate are now required only to pay nominal rents while the marriage as the narrator points out was 'the making' of the extended Conway family.⁶⁴

The language used by Herbert after his conversion, however, emphasises the idea that the Catholic Church is 'the one true Church'. With reference to those who assisted him, Herbert somewhat cloyingly asks 'why it was *only* within the Catholic Church that such sublime charity was found'; on his conversion he remarks 'I had made up my mind to seek salvation *in that Church where alone it can be found*'; and after his conversion the narrator comments 'now that Herbert had converted from his evil ways'.⁶⁵ Herbert's conversion and their return to Ireland is the fulcrum on which the novel turns. After representations of a series of ruinations in America which, to borrow John Wilson Foster terminology, 'stretch to capacity the term 'problem novel'' the now all-Catholic couple are granted a happy ending.⁶⁶

Frank Blake by Dillon O'Brien is a similarly didactic and pro-Catholic novel, promoting the idea that only an all-Catholic marriage can bring true happiness. The novel is set against a background of nineteenth-century agrarian unrest, as the narrator observes:

At the time I write of, Ireland was torn with religious feuds [...] To be sure, the catholics outnumbered the protestants [sic] ten to one, but the latter were the dominant party, had the government and a large per cent

⁶² Ibid., p. 306.

⁶³ Ibid., p. 316.

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 315.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 310, p.314. (italics mine)

⁶⁶ Foster, *Cambridge History of Irish Literature*, II, p. 118.

of the wealth at their back, and represented conquest, while the Catholics represent defeat.⁶⁷

As with *Bessy Conway* the novel is concerned with the inter-faith relationship as a religious rather than a political transgression. Remarkably, and in sharp contrast with Sadlier's presentation of Bessy and Herbert, the couple in this relationship are entirely indifferent about their religious disparity. Instead, it is the Catholic Church that prompts the Protestant, who readily accedes, to convert to Catholicism which allows the marriage to proceed. Protestantism is thus shown to be weak or enfeebled, while Catholicism is depicted, by way of a formidable Jesuit, as strong and alluring.

Dillon O'Brien was born in Kilmore, Co. Roscommon in 1817, into a prosperous landowning Catholic family. He was educated initially at St. Stanislaus College, Tullybeg and later at the Jesuit Clongowes Wood College in Co. Kildare. The O'Brien family was financially ruined during the famine by their generosity towards their Catholic tenants. This situation in turn prompted O'Brien and his wife to emigrate to America sometime after 1850. After a spell in Detroit, the family moved to Madeline Island on Lake Superior where O'Brien wrote his first novel. In 1863 they moved to St Paul where he edited the Catholic weekly newspaper, the *Northwestern Chronicle*. He died in St Paul in 1882.⁶⁸

The novel is set in the seaside village of Renville (probably now Renvyle) in Connemara, and describes the courtship between the devoutly Catholic Lieutenant Frank Blake, in charge of the local coastguard, and Susan Howard, daughter of the local Church of Ireland rector. The couple are hopelessly in love, and show little regard for the religious divide that lies between them. Susan, however, has another suitor – the treacherous villain Robert Eyre, the son of local absentee landlord Lord Eyrecourt, who is eventually murdered on his own estate. Frank is framed for this crime and after some months in prison awaiting trial is saved from the hangman's noose by a local labourer, Willie Joyce, who has found the real murderer in New York and extracted a written confession from him before his death. Susan, meanwhile, is divinely inspired by the courage and dignity which Frank maintains in prison and, it must be added, by a Jesuit

⁶⁷ O'Brien, Dillon. *Frank Blake* (St. Paul, MN: The Pioneer-Press Company, 1876), p. 220.

⁶⁸ Loeber, Rolf, and Loeber, Magda, *A Guide to Irish Fiction: 1650-1900* (Dublin: Four Courts Press Ltd., 2006), p. 990.

priest who regularly visits him. Crucially though, she alone decides to convert to Catholicism, which supposedly paves the way for a happy marriage and a long life with Frank.

The Protestants in the novel are shown to have a lukewarm attachment to their religion, aiding Susan's conversion to Catholicism. In the opening pages, the narrator outlines the rector's background and subtly, yet pointedly alludes to a perceived inherent weakness in the Reformed Church:

Rev. Francis Howard had entered the English church without much of a vocation. And this forcing him to adopt a profession, which of all others should be a voluntary choice, had an injurious effect upon him, which time lessened, but did not efface. All his life he felt keenly that he was in a false position, and this knowledge brought on periods of deep melancholy [...] his duties were almost nominal, for there were only four or five protestant families in his parish, and they were not very regular in their attendance at church, and never troubled the rector for spiritual advice.⁶⁹

Susan's conversion is further expedited by the Rector's accommodating nature – his only concern being that the couple have the means to live comfortably after their marriage. While his comments on his daughter's eventual conversion could be read as a critique of Catholicism apparent denial of individual freedom, it is much more likely, in the context of Frank's ordeal in prison, to be intended as an endorsement of Catholicism:

No human being, Susan, has the right to control the actions of another come to the full use of reason, [sic] in matters of religion. You are free, my child, to do as you please. If catholicity can bring to you the strength, resignation and comfort it has given to Frank Blake, I will bless it.⁷⁰

As noted in the main introduction to this thesis, the sacraments are a fundamental difference between Catholic and Protestant religions and the narrator points out to Frank

⁶⁹ O'Brien, pp. 43-44.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 217.

as he lies incarcerated in prison, that St. Ledger the Jesuit priest, 'could offer the benign consolations, the strengthening, life-giving sacraments of the church they both believed in' – the unspoken implication being that the Protestant Church could not offer such consolations.⁷¹ Furthermore, the Rector hearing of his daughter's conversion, not only offers an endorsement of the Catholic Church, but admits that it might offer more emotional support than the Protestant religious institutions:

[the Jesuit] has but done his duty by one of his one creed [...] overwhelmed with great sorrow, I deemed it probable that you would turn for relief, to the catholic church, that seems to have more room, if I can so term it, for the emotions of the soul, than our church.⁷²

The Catholic Church, as it appears in the novel, is far more formidable. Father Trestnan is an old friend of the Rector, but does not hesitate in drawing attention to the difficulties which may arise with the proposed mixed marriage:

'There is danger of those young people falling in love'. [Trestnan to the rector]
'How danger? Is not Mr. Blake what he appears?'
'Yes,' answered the priest. 'He is just what he looks, a noble young fellow. But, Mr. Howard, he has nothing but his commission, and he is of a different creed from you'.
'I shall never control or influence my child's affections'.⁷³

Susan is similarly deeply influenced by St. Ledger, whom she meets on her frequent visits to Frank's prison cell. A spiritual, even Christ-like figure, he transcends the hardships that afflict the impoverished during the typhus epidemic which is sweeping through the community, and from which he is apparently immune. The narrator is at pains to emphasise his almost divine qualities: he acts as 'physician, counsellor and priest', was 'no longer dressed as a worldling, but in his black robe, with a crucifix suspended from its cord', and had 'magnetism which charmed'.⁷⁴ The Jesuit priest, as a representative of the Church at large, appears in the novel as a saviour with power and influence, who not only comes to Frank's assistance in his hour of need, but who also

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid., p. 60.

⁷⁴ Ibid., pp. 207, p. 235.

wields influence over an unsuspecting Protestant. He thus stands in sharp contrast to the timidity and indifference of the Protestant rector and by extension, Protestantism.

Crucially, religious difference is not an issue for Frank and Susan, and by their own admission they have never discussed it. The narrator puts it succinctly: 'In these days of courtship they never spoke of religion because they were so much in love'.⁷⁵ Like her father, Susan is depicted as having an almost indifferent attitude to religion. Frank, on the other hand, while raised as a Catholic is so possessed by his love for her that he has disregarded or forgotten his faith. However, the couple's apathetic attitude to religious faith is challenged by the Jesuit priest, St. Ledger, who reawakens Frank's Catholicism, which, he tells Susan, gives him the strength to cope with the stresses of being wrongly incarcerated.

Susan appears to fall under the spell of the priest. The narrator points out that 'the peculiar circumstances' in which she 'was placed', 'undoubtedly made her susceptible to religious influences'.⁷⁶ She then apparently reaches her own conclusion. That night she prays to the Blessed Virgin and then miraculously makes her decision known to her father the following day, as she tells him: 'Dear father, I am a catholic at heart, let me be one by profession'.⁷⁷ Her conversion, like that of *Bessy Conway*, paves the way for a happy and contented future.

Given O'Brien's depiction of the historical context against which this romance plays out, the happy conclusion to *Frank Blake* could be interpreted as an optimistic indication of the possibility of peace between the Catholic and Protestant communities. However, O'Brien's consistent efforts to promote Catholicism are considerably more transparent, as throughout the novel he uses the inter-faith relationship of Frank and Susan to emphasise the supposed strengths of the Catholic Church and highlight the perceived weaknesses of the Reformed Church.

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 213.

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 211.

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 217.

Conclusion

Each of the authors in the four novels discussed deploys the romance-across-the-divide tradition in different ways. *Dan the Dollar* is a flawed moral tale. Bullock's Catholic protagonist chooses her faith over materialism but her decision is heavily coloured by the fact that her suitor is Protestant. This is emphasised in the closing pages when she is seen to be looking forward to a happy life with a non-believer. L.T.Meade in *The O'Donnells of Inchfawn* represents the native Irish as willing participants in what amounts to forms of colonisation: firstly, by way of the economic benefits that the English bring to Ireland, and secondly, through the shared colonising mission to South America with the English. The inter-faith and inter-racial relationships in the novel are a crude device in the hands of the author as she uses them to promote the benefits of colonisation – which she sees as being primarily economic. All that said, both Protestant writers, in whatever form, share a concern over economic or material well-being.

The couples in the inter-faith relationships in the Catholic novels of Sadlier and O'Brien look forward to happy futures together. These endings, however, cannot be interpreted as metaphors for a form of conciliation between the Protestant and Catholic communities. Both novels are primarily concerned with the conversions of the Protestants in the inter-faith relationships, and by extension, with promoting Catholicism. Moreover, the reader is left with a nagging sense that there is something disingenuous about each of the authors' representations: in *Bessy Conway*, Sadlier offers no solution to the social problems which Irish emigrants face, yet in terms of mixed marriages she offers a ready answer by way of conversion; in *Frank Blake*, the religious divide is not an issue for the couple in the relationship, yet Dillon still insists on what is in effect an unnecessary conversion by the Protestant to Catholicism. Each of the novelists also represents the conversions as an entirely one-sided affair, as it is the Protestant who must convert in order to guarantee happiness. In such a way, the Catholic novels are narrow and exclusive, and not only offer a reflection of late nineteenth century Catholic hubris and triumphalism, but also underline the belief of some that the Catholic Church was indeed the 'one true Church'.

Chapter Two

'That black villain of a Protestant is after runnin' away with the girl'¹: Representations of Inter-faith Relationships during the campaign for the Third Home Rule Bill.

As noted in my discussion of the *McCann* case in the introduction to this thesis, the campaign for the third Home Rule bill was an often bitter and fractious affair where the tense atmosphere and deep scepticism among Protestant unionists, particularly in Belfast, was exacerbated by the promulgation of *Ne temere* by the Catholic Church. The timing of this decree could hardly have been worse in that it offered Unionists, whether there was a firm basis for their perceptions or not, evidence of what life might be like under a nationalist government. R.F. Foster points out that “‘Unionist Ireland’ increasingly meant Protestant Ulster’ but there was also deep antipathy among unionists in the south of Ireland towards Home Rule.² To southern unionists, Home Rule threatened not only their livelihoods and standards of living, but also their very identity. Following the passing of the bill by the British House of Commons in 1912, many felt that they had no choice but to leave Ireland, rather than running the risk of being subsumed in what they feared would be a society dominated by the Catholic Church. Notwithstanding southern Unionist antipathy, the greatest resistance to Home Rule emanated from Ulster and especially Belfast, where the Orange Order, by way of its classless ethos, offered a more united front against Home Rule. This ‘Orange’ response eventually manifested itself in the Ulster Volunteer Force, and the unified Protestant resistance to Home Rule was finally cemented beyond all doubt when in 1912 two hundred and fifty thousand signed the Solemn League and Covenant.³

For nationalists, Home Rule was the grand prize for which they had had waited so long. The roots of the campaign can be traced back well beyond the 1880s, but the origins of

¹M.E. Francis, *Dark Rosaleen: A Story of Ireland Today* (New York: Kenedy, 1917), p. 187.

²R.F. Foster, p. 466.

³Ibid.

what came to pass as the Third Home Rule Bill in May 1914 can be traced back to Isaac Butt and then later to Gladstone's 'conversion' or even his supposed 'betrayal' of Unionists.⁴ The thirty year nationalist journey to Home Rule was not without its setbacks, however. Charles Stewart Parnell, leader of the Irish Parliamentary Party and 'uncrowned king of Ireland' was to suffer a spectacular fall from grace after his affair with Kitty O'Shea. In the aftermath of these revelations the party was badly splintered and lost the support of the Catholic Church, but nationalists regrouped under John Redmond and the Home Rule mission was put back on track. While the idea of self-government was broadly welcomed by nationalists, some were concerned for their economic futures should Home Rule become a reality. In this regard, the contrast between Ulster's industrial might and the relative economic backwardness of the rest of the country was particularly striking. In any event, and though suspended due to the outbreak of World War I, Home Rule passed into law in September 1914.

A close reading of the third Home Rule bill, officially known as the Government of Ireland Act 1912, reveals that it offered a very limited autonomy from Britain. Despite this, the unionist response eventually culminated in the importation of twenty five thousand rifles and three million rounds of ammunition leading R.F. Foster to comment that 'the Ulster perception of Home Rule may seem ludicrously extreme in retrospect'.⁵ For their part, Nationalists formed the Irish Volunteers and also imported weapons – albeit out-of-date ones.⁶ These responses raise the question of how a relatively innocuous bill could bring Ireland to the precipice of civil war, to which historian Thomas Bartlett offers a plausible answer: 'the very term Home Rule [...] was deemed by the vast majority of Ulster Protestants to be quite simply an engine for their destruction that must be resisted at any price'.⁷ Conversely, though nationalist grievances were perhaps even more deep-rooted, they were not prepared to give up the fight easily, particularly in light of the fact that they had for once the British establishment on side and were within sight of their holy grail. In sum, and although there were exceptions, the idea of Home Rule was hugely divisive in that it pitted nationalist against unionist and Catholic against Protestant. It is against this schismatic

⁴ Bartlett, p. 322. Bartlett points out that it was Gladstone's son, Herbert, who disclosed to the press that his father had become a convert to Home Rule.

⁵ Foster, R.F. p. 467, p. 470.

⁶ Bartlett, p. 372.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 373.

backdrop that the three novels with which this chapter is concerned, Gerald O'Donovan's *Waiting*, Frank Frankfort Moore's *The Ulsterman: A Story of Today* and Mary Blundell's (pseud. M.E.Francis) *Dark Rosaleen* frame inter-faith relationships or mixed marriages.

Each of the novels is informed by the idyll *or* scourge of Home Rule while two, *Waiting* and *Dark Rosaleen* deal explicitly with *Ne temere* or the religious upbringing of children of mixed marriages. Against the backdrop of Home Rule, the inter-faith relationships in the novels end happily or in some form of union, suggesting that, post self-government, Catholics and Protestants may also achieve some measure of conciliation. However, these 'conciliations' are all qualified to some degree, showing how the writers are hesitant to subscribe fully to an ideal of peaceful co-existence. As Joe Cleary has observed in relation to 'Troubles' fiction and partition, such fictional narratives, 'disclose some dream or other of reconciling the divided communities they depict, and that dream inevitably resurrects, directly or otherwise, questions of state'.⁸

There are two essential aspects to O'Donovan's representation of mixed marriage in *Waiting* and both are intrinsically connected. Firstly, the novel is written from a Catholic perspective by an ex-Catholic priest, and in this sense offers an insider's guide to early twentieth-century Church attitudes towards mixed marriage. In theological terms, the novel is a searing critique of *Ne temere* and of the power vested in individual priests. From this perspective the novel is about a Protestant and a Catholic getting married and living together in deference to Canon Law.

Secondly, the novel is deeply informed by the Home Rule movement which O'Donovan not only conflates or aligns with the co-operative movement and modernity but also with his own pluralist views which he is keen to promote. Furthermore, if the theological aspect of the novel is informed by the author's own experience, it is entirely possible that the novel is also informed by the *McCann* case – so central to Home Rule. A product of the contemporary political milieu and O'Donovan's own pluralist vision, the mixed marriage in the novel can be read as this pluralism in practice and by extension, as a conciliation between two warring communities.

⁸ Joe Cleary, *Literature, Partition*, pp. 109-110.

All that said, the Catholic Church is clearly represented as the villain in both the novel's political and personal spheres; O'Donovan sees the Church as having a destructive influence on various cultural or economic initiatives, which he associates with Home Rule, and which bring people together from both Protestant and Catholic communities. The Church is also the single biggest obstacle to the union of Catholic and Protestant in terms of the proposed mixed marriage. Undoubtedly drawing on O'Donovan's own personal experiences at the hands of an autocratic bishop of Clonfert, Thomas O'Dea,⁹ clerical control in the novel is primarily ascribed to the crudely caricatured Father Mahon:

[Mahon's] ideal was a Church ruling with uncontrolled power over all the nations of the earth. He knew little of popes or of the nations of the earth, and the little he learned from books he afterwards forgot, but he clung fast to his belief in power. [...] With priests and bishops like himself the Church would again rule the world. [...] He proved by irrefragable logic that the priest was higher than the Blessed Virgin, in a sense greater than Christ Himself, since he created Him anew daily in the mass.¹⁰

Gerald O'Donovan (Jeremiah) was born on July 15th 1871 in Co. Down. At the age of eighteen he entered the seminary at Maynooth and after his ordination he was appointed as curate to a parish in Co. Galway. Regarded by many as a 'modernist', he became involved in the Gaelic League, and was a keen supporter of the Irish Revival and the co-operative movement. However, he left the priesthood in 1904 and later married Beryl Verscholye – a daughter of an Irish Protestant colonel – in what was a mixed marriage. James Murphy argues that his departure from the priesthood may have been linked to a difficult relationship he had with the local bishop, who had earlier disciplined him at Maynooth for reading unsatisfactory books.¹¹ Counting Edward Martyn and George Moore among his friends, he began to write fiction and his first novel *Father Ralph* (1913) became a best-seller. The following year *Waiting* was published.

⁹ James H. Murphy, 'O'Donovan, Gerald (Jeremiah)', *Dictionary of Irish Biography*, <<http://dib.cambridge.org/viewReadPage.do?articleId=a6713>> [Accessed 15 Nov 2010]

¹⁰ Gerald O'Donovan, *Waiting* (London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1914), pp. 131-132.

¹¹ Murphy, *Dictionary of Irish Biography*.

The novel is set in a Catholic community in rural southern Ireland in the immediate aftermath of the promulgation of the Catholic *Ne temere* decree and, as already noted, against the backdrop of impending Home Rule. This was also a period of 'moral force Unionism' which was, in effect, a series of 'ameliorative measures which were designed to kill Home Rule with kindness'.¹² The protagonist, Maurice Blake is of a Catholic peasant family and eventually, with the help of his father's financial contribution to the Catholic Church, is appointed by the parish priest as principal teacher in the local primary school. His co-protagonist Alice Barton, a Protestant, also has a third-level qualification and she visits the area as part of a co-operative educational initiative aimed at rural farmers. However, much to the horror and annoyance of the local parish priest, the couple fall in love and plan to marry. As a result, Maurice loses his job at the behest of the despotic Mahon, and in defiance of the Catholic Church Maurice and Alice marry in a Dublin registry office, having been unable to secure the necessary dispensation. Disillusioned and intent on bringing about change, Maurice returns to his community and puts himself forward as a candidate in a local election only to be defeated by the candidate backed by the Catholic Church, Timmins. By the novel's end Maurice's mixed marriage appears to be successful, but his defiance of the Church costs him dearly in that both his political and teaching careers lie in tatters. The novel concludes as the stoical couple wait for their dream of a new and non-sectarian Ireland to be realised under Home Rule.

Throughout the novel there is clear sense that Home Rule is viewed by most nationalists as a panacea for all of Ireland's problems, and, to this end, some of O'Donovan's minor characters display a clear hankering for self-government:

If only once we could get Home Rule everything'd be right. The schools'd be taken out of the hands of the Father Mahons. There'd be no more breeding of bad will between Protestants and Catholics. No man'd be down on another because of a difference of religion.¹³

However, this idealistic notion is qualified by Maurice when he poses the question: 'We shout for freedom and the right to manage our own affairs, for Parliament. What are we

¹² J.J. Lee, *The Modernisation of Irish Society, 1848-1918* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan Ltd., 1979), p. 123.

¹³ O'Donovan. p. 266.

prepared to do with this power when we get it?’¹⁴ Rather than simply equating self-government with Catholic nationalism, Maurice’s vision promotes a pluralist society with a strong and vibrant economy, and crucially, includes the Protestant community. Maurice’s sentiments towards Home Rule bear all the hallmarks of O’Donovan’s own views given that the writer himself, ‘was concerned that Home Rule should not be seen as an end but as a beginning’.¹⁵

As noted, O’Donovan conflates Home Rule with various modernising or cultural initiatives. However, his treatment of the Church’s attitude to these initiatives is closely linked to Maurice’s and Alice’s impending mixed marriage, which provides an illustration in microcosm of both Catholic and Protestant communities. The Catholic Church is represented as intent on keeping both communities apart, whether by way of stymieing cultural or economic initiatives or simply by obstructing the marriage. Before Mahon learns of the inter-faith relationship, for example, he looks upon Alice’s role as leader of the poultry production course with deep suspicion prompting him to proclaim, ‘This is the thin end of the wedge to get education out of the hands of the Church. It’s rank atheism to bring a Protestant woman to teach anything in a Catholic parish like this’.¹⁶ Such a portrayal suggests that the Catholic Church is sceptical not only of mixed marriages, but is also fearful of Ireland’s embryonic modernity, lest either should undermine its power or control. This notion is further reinforced by the autocratic Mahon:

I’m in two minds about this co-operation. On the one hand, it makes the people better off. On the other hand, it gives them airs of being able to do things without the help of their parish priest. It’d be better for the Church any day that they’d be living in muck than have that kind of independence [...] I’ll have no truck with the Irish language [...] its leading to all kinds of divilry.¹⁷

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 328

¹⁵ Catherine Candy, *Priestly Fictions. Popular Irish Novelists of the Early 20th Century* (Dublin: Wolfhound Press Ltd., 1995), p. 117.

¹⁶ O’Donovan, p. 145.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 143

Mahon's fears of losing control are worth considering in light of Liam Kennedy's study 'The Early Response of the Irish Catholic Clergy to the Co-Operative Movement'¹⁸. Kennedy concludes that the reaction of the Catholic Church was varied in that some clergymen gave conditional or outright support while others 'stood coldly aloof from co-operation'.¹⁹ In effect, while many priests saw merit in any initiative that would bring economic benefit to their local communities, others were suspicious of the movements often because of their non-sectarian character – an aspect, incidentally, that Horace Plunkett, a cooperative pioneer, was keen to promote. O'Donovan's portrayal of clerical attitudes in *Waiting* tends to reflect Kennedy's findings. While some priests in the novel are involved in various cultural initiatives, such as the local Feis Ceoil which promotes Irish music and dancing, through his representation of Mahon and to a lesser extent the local bishop, O'Donovan is clearly critical of clerical obstruction. This is particularly evident in Maurice's curt response to a question posed by Alice in relation to clerical support for the co-operative movement: 'he [the local bishop] did his best to kill it'.²⁰

Moreover, Kennedy's speculation about whether the co-operative movements would have been more successful in attracting more local clergymen had they adopted a more sectarian character is paralleled by Maurice's comment that: 'a great thing about these new movements is that they're drawing Protestants and Catholics together'.²¹ Essentially, Mahon's deep reservations with regard to the co-operative movement are given added weight by the fact that Maurice is in an intimate relationship with a Protestant who is herself part of this movement, a relationship that provides compelling evidence for the priest of the potential dangers for Catholics becoming involved in modernising or cultural initiatives.

O'Donovan promotes a vision of post-Home Rule Ireland as a pluralist society where both Protestants and Catholics would benefit from economic and cultural initiatives. To this end, Alice is shown to endorse Maurice's pluralist views:

¹⁸ Liam Kennedy, 'The Early Response of the Irish Catholic Clergy to the Co-Operative Movement', *Irish Historical Studies*, 21 (1978) 55-74, <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/30005377>> [accessed 1 Dec 2010]

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 70

²⁰ O'Donovan, p. 179

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 197

You've [Maurice] worked hard for a great ideal and now you'll see the fruit – not a Catholic Ireland nor a Protestant Ireland, but an Ireland to which all men, no matter what their creed, can give their best service without fear of being victimised in the name of religion.²²

Moreover, as a Protestant Alice is also shown to have a deep love of Ireland which, interestingly, she shares with her mother. O'Donovan rightly acknowledges the significant impact of many Protestants on the course of Irish nationalism; in the novel we see Alice embracing Irish culture by reading folklore and learning the Irish language, prompting her uncle to remark 'You'll be a regular Fenian before you're ended'.²³

The depiction of Alice's nationalism loses some credibility, however, when O'Donovan portrays her as a mawkish Kathleen Ni Houlihan figure. Through this transformation of a liberal Protestant career woman into an icon of the Irish Literary Revival, O'Donovan crudely signals an end to an ancient Gaelic Ireland and heralds a youthful, non-sectarian post-Home Rule Ireland. Ni Houlihan initially appears in Maurice's dreams as an old and decrepit figure, who then morphs into his Protestant lover:

Then there was only the old woman, the Ireland of the sad songs, sitting by a fireless hearth, her head bent on her knees. Soon a fire glowed, the bent shoulders straightened, the scant grey locks changed to a ruddy brown. She turned her face towards him, and he felt no surprise that the dream woman was Alice Barton.....²⁴

Despite his deployment of such trite symbolism, O'Donovan is well aware of the obstacles that must be overcome if Catholics and Protestants are to integrate successfully, and Protestants in the novel are clearly regarded as 'other'. This 'otherness' is registered in the mundaneness of Protestant 'clipped hedges' or in the fact that 'they' go to church on Sundays while Catholics go to mass. It is also described in the attitudes of most Catholics towards Protestants in the novel. O'Driscoll, the kindly and retired school principal explains to Maurice: 'That'd be the very girl for you to

²² Ibid., p. 320

²³ Ibid., p. 156

²⁴ Ibid., p. 88

marry, only it's the pity of the world she's a Protestant',²⁵ whilst Maurice, at one point recalls one of the rhymes of his childhood:

Proddy, Woddy, green guts
Never says a prayer.
Catch him by the hind leg
And fling him down the stair.²⁶

He also remembers a childhood perception he had of Protestants as a 'black, scowling people, with a look in their eyes of the hell to which they were certainly speeding'.²⁷ Even Alice, for her part, is aware of her 'otherness': 'All the same, there is something – I can't explain it – some feeling that I am different and wrong'.²⁸

Alice's 'otherness' does not impede their determination to get married. Rather, it is the Catholic Church that presents the main obstacle to the union in the persons of Mahon and the local bishop. Theologically, as discussed in the main introduction to this thesis, Maurice, as a Catholic, requires a dispensation from the impediment of *mixta religionis* to marry Alice a baptised non-Catholic. However, Raymond Lee explains that, 'although the 'mixed religion' impediment in itself would not render a marriage invalid, a priest would not perform such a marriage until a dispensation from the impediment had been granted, and this a bishop would not do until the promises had been given'.²⁹ If and when a dispensation was granted the couple were then bound by *Ne temere* to marry before a Catholic priest and two witnesses. This is Maurice's bind; in order to be granted a dispensation he must promise, with his Protestant fiancée, to raise the children of the marriage as Catholics and also to seek her conversion to the Catholic Church. Indeed, it is suggested by his friends, Father Malone and Driscoll that Alice's conversion would be a ready solution to the problem. However, this proposition is summarily dismissed by Maurice who respects her religion and will not contemplate

²⁵ Ibid., p. 186.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 180.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 181.

²⁹ Lee, Raymond, M. 'Intermarriage, Conflict and Social Control in Ireland: The Decree "*Ne temere*". *The Economic and Social Review*. Vol. 17, 1. (October 1985), 11-27, p. 16

asking her to convert. Driscoll, for his part, concedes: 'She's not the stamp of woman to play pitch and toss with her religion – and I'd think little of her if she was'.³⁰

O'Donovan's treatment of *Ne temere* and his Catholic protagonist's quest for a dispensation not only demonstrates his own knowledge of Canon law but also it foregrounds the uncompromising attitude of the Catholic Church regarding such matters. Maurice is summoned to a meeting with the local bishop who attempts to resolve the matter by suggesting that he 'give up the idea' of marrying Alice. In return, he promises that Maurice's teaching position will be re-instated. The bishop's assertion that 'in a well-ordered state education would be entirely in the hands of – of the hierarchy'³¹ draws a response from Maurice that sums up his dilemma: 'He [Mahon] dismissed me from a secular, undenominational [sic] school, not for any lack of fitness or qualification, but because I asked for a dispensation to marry a Protestant'.³² The bishop then outlines the official position of the Catholic Church in relation to Maurice's imminent marriage which also reflects the author's knowledge of Canon law:

When a Catholic marries a Protestant there is necessarily, at the very least, a certain amount of toleration of heresy. Now we may tolerate heresy from motives of expediency – the difficulty of doing otherwise, the greater good of the Church, and other reasons – but the toleration that marriage involves, no matter how strictly the Church hedges it round with precautions [...] Believe me, Mr Blake – and this is why our Holy Church discourages mixed marriages – it saps the very bases of morality and religion [...] Like a good Catholic make a willing sacrifice of the temporal to the eternal [...] A teacher in a Catholic school! [...] You surely see now that it is impossible that Father Mahon could allow you to marry out of the faith.³³

As noted, when *Ne temere* was promulgated in 1908 much of the resentment unsurprisingly came from the Protestant community. It is therefore no accident that

³⁰ O'Donovan, p. 187.

³¹ Ibid., p. 255.

³² Ibid., p. 258.

³³ Ibid., p. 259.

O'Donovan deploys Protestant characters, in this case Alice's uncle and aunt, John and Mrs. Crawford, to spell out the conditions laid down by the Catholic Church. Initially, they are shocked by the revelation that their niece is about to marry a Catholic, although the blow is softened by her promise that she has no intention of converting to the Catholic faith. The thorny issue of the religious upbringing of the children of the marriage is raised by Mrs Crawford, who assumes that the couple will follow convention established by the Palatine Pact by raising the girls in the mother's faith and the boys in their father's. This notion is summarily dismissed by John Crawford, however, who has extensive knowledge of the problems facing any couple intent on a mixed marriage following the marriage of his cousin to a Catholic:

I read the paper that my cousin Richard was made to sign by the parish priest, and sorra [sic] word of it I liked – that he'd be married in a Catholic chapel, *and that every one of the children, be they boys or girls, 'd [sic] be brought up Papists.* And if that wasn't enough, the woman he wanted to marry had to take her book oath, besides, that she'd make every endeavour to turn Richard into a Catholic.³⁴

It is significant that the Protestant John Crawford is able to outline with some accuracy the requirements laid down by the Catholic Church in order to obtain a dispensation. Crawford's views also give voice to those of generations of Protestants who regarded *Ne temere* and the associated promises as an infringement of their own civil or religious rights.

Mahon who 'hates Protestants like poison and mixed marriages like hell itself'³⁵ adopts a more belligerent attitude when dealing with the issue. He refuses to grant Maurice a dispensation because he believes that by entering into a mixed marriage as principal of the local school he would be setting a bad example to the young people of the parish. Subsequently, he employs the services of a fire and brimstone preacher, Father Benignus both to condemn Maurice's marriage and to terrorise any parishioner that might be tempted to engage in a similar relationship. Mahon also alludes to the most contentious element of *Ne temere*, discussed in the main introduction, whereby *all*

³⁴ Ibid., p. 230. (italics mine)

³⁵ Ibid., p. 188.

marriages involving Catholics must take place before a Catholic priest in order to be considered valid:

You see how this beautiful *Ne temere* decree simplifies matters. A marriage of a Catholic, say, with a Protestant in a registry office, that used to be a valid marriage, though it was always damnable, *is no longer valid* [...] Every Catholic man married to a Protestant woman in a registry office is no more married in the sight of God than the cats prowling round the streets at night [...] What is that man? A traitor to his religion and to his Church. Every day that he persists in his sin, in his crime, he plants a crown of thorns on the head of his God. Look at our Divine Lord writhing there on the cross.³⁶

With seemingly little chance of being granted a dispensation, Maurice and Alice proceed with a civil marriage in a registry office, after Maurice's desperate attempt to secure a dispensation in Dublin founders when he discovers that the Catholic hierarchy in the metropolis have closed ranks with their rural brethren. After the civil marriage, however, another priest, Father Malone, puts it to Maurice that a dispensation might be forthcoming if the couple would agree to re-marry in a Catholic church before a Catholic priest. Failing that, he warns that since the couple are not married, in the eyes of the Catholic Church they are living in sin. O'Donovan's portrayal of the Church's attitude to mixed marriage in the immediate aftermath of the promulgation of *Ne temere* can be seen to reflect the position adopted by the cleric at the centre of the *McCann* case.

In writing the novel, O'Donovan undoubtedly draws on his personal experiences as a curate in a rural parish in Ireland in the early twentieth century, but it is entirely plausible that his novel is also informed by the *McCann* case – which occurred just three years before the novel's publication in 1914. For example, Dudley Fletcher, Rector of Coolbanagher argued in 1911 that 'Mrs. McCann's marriage took place in May 1908. If it had taken place one month earlier, Rome declares that it would have been absolutely indissoluble, except by death'.³⁷ An echo of this may be found in

³⁶ Ibid., pp. 364-366. (italics mine)

³⁷ Dudley Fletcher, 'Rome and Marriage: A Warning' (Dublin: Church of Ireland Printing Co., Ltd., 1936), p. 6.

Waiting, when Maurice, bemoaning the bad timing of his marriage, remarks that, 'Some Roman lawyer made it the law of God here a couple of years ago. Up to then my marriage would have been valid'.³⁸ Moreover, a central theme of the *McCann* case was the fear among Protestant unionists that Canon law might supersede civil law. Duffy, Maurice's election agent, in *Waiting*, argues that 'we've got to show [...] that the law of the land can't be overridden by a Roman decree about which we were never consulted'.³⁹ In a similar vein Maurice points out, as many did in relation to the *McCann* case: 'The law of the land says I'm married. The Church says I am not'.⁴⁰ Finally, there is arguably a direct reference in the novel to the *McCann* case. When Mahon condemns Maurice's and Alice's mixed marriage before his fellow priests, one of them then asks, 'Do you remember that time, [...] when we had to denounce that scandal up in the North?'.⁴¹

On a basic level, *Waiting* is about a Catholic who breaks with tradition and marries a Protestant, and in this sense O'Donovan undoubtedly draws on his priestly experience and theological insight to offer a critique of the Catholic Church and its attitude towards mixed marriage. However, O'Donovan also uses the novel to promote a vision of a post-Home Rule Ireland which is modern and industrious, where women are educated and employed and which is above all non-sectarian. With this backdrop in mind, it is impossible therefore not to read the union of the Catholic Maurice and the Protestant Alice as emblematic of the possible conciliation between Catholic nationalists and Protestant unionists. Against this, the Catholic Church is ultimately depicted as a destructive force, harmful to the marriage itself and to the prospects of a modern non-sectarian Ireland. O'Donovan's vision is qualified by the conclusion of the novel, when despite the fact that the couple are living together with their young daughter there is a gnawing sense that their earlier buoyant spirit and enthusiasm have given way to a degree of remorse and regret – as though 'the happily ever after' paragraph cannot be attached until Home Rule is conceded'.⁴² Or indeed, until the Catholic Church shows a less hardened attitude towards mixed marriages.

³⁸ O'Donovan, p. 346.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 336

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 333

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 351

⁴² Candy, p. 117.

Waiting is set in the relative calm of southern Ireland in the early part of the twentieth century, but *The Ulsterman: A Story of Today* by contrast is set close to Belfast which was the white-hot cauldron of resistance to Home Rule. Whilst most Catholics in O'Donovan's novel saw Home Rule as a panacea for Ireland's problems, the Protestant unionists in Moore's narrative regard self-government as abhorrent and see the Orange Order as the last line of defence. Significantly, however, both novels promote economic modernity as an answer to Ireland's travails.

This is an unashamedly loyalist, pro-Orange, anti-Home Rule and anti-Catholic novel which foregrounds the perceived economic collapse of Ulster should self-government become a reality, and yet, Patrick Maume points out that *The Ulsterman* was 'not universally welcomed by Unionists'.⁴³ The reasons for this may be discerned in Moore's contradictory depiction of 'the Ulsterman' and also in his representation of the personal romances in the novel. Although Moore portrays 'the Ulsterman' as hardworking and industrious, solely responsible for the economic success of the province and with a responsibility to protect Ulster from Home Rule – even if that means resorting to violence – he also, and somewhat bizarrely, portrays the same 'Ulsterman' as lacking any moral compass in conducting his business or personal relationships. Moore constructs his 'Ulsterman' as a paradigm of excellence and defender of the Union and then almost simultaneously deconstructs it. The implication of this somewhat contradictory representation is that beneath the Orange unionist bravado of the novel there is an inferred acknowledgment that Home Rule when passed will turn the world of the 'Ulsterman' upside down.

Notwithstanding this anomalous representation Moore's equally perplexing depictions of the inter-faith relationships in the novel undoubtedly irked some unionists. What is most remarkable about this novel is how the ending enacts, almost inexplicably, a conciliation between Protestants and Catholics when both sons of the Orange protagonist, James Alexander, decide to marry Catholics. These relationships provide a positive and conciliatory conclusion, absurd in a novel which is so unashamedly loyalist. Moreover, what is particularly odd about the ending is that the rules of the

⁴³ Maume, Patrick, 'Ulstermen of Letters: The Unionism of Frank Frankfort Moore, Shan Bullock and St. John Ervine' in *Unionism in Modern Ireland*, ed. by Richard English and Graham Walker (London: Macmillan, 1996), pp.63-80 (p. 65).

Orange Order forbid membership to any man who is married to a Catholic and 'prescribe expulsion for any existing member who intermarries'.⁴⁴ If *The Ulsterman* is largely concerned with presenting the reasons why there should not be a united Ireland, Moore's purpose is undone to a large degree with these late-blooming and successful relationships between Catholics and Protestants, which point to the possibility of a limited or qualified conciliation between political adversaries. Joe Cleary has observed a similar parallel in St. John Ervine's play *Mixed Marriage* (1911):

From Rainey's [the Protestant Orangeman] own perspective the proposed mixed marriage between Hugh and Nora is objectionable because, in the first instance, it violates the social segregation between Catholics and Protestants that he upholds and, in the second instance, by relaxing such boundaries it prefigures an assimilation of the two communities that might ultimately pave the way for a united Ireland.⁴⁵

Frank Frankfort Moore, a Presbyterian and staunch unionist, was born in Limerick in 1855, but later moved with his family to Belfast.⁴⁶ He originally had ambitions to become a poet, but financial realities saw him turn his attention to journalism and later to fiction writing. His newspaper career took him to India and South Africa and he eventually rose to the position of assistant editor with the *Belfast News Letter*.⁴⁷ As an author he was prolific, writing numerous anti-Home Rule satires, novels, poetry collections and historical works.⁴⁸

The protagonist of *The Ulsterman*, James Alexander, is a zealous Orangeman, originally from a working-class background and now the owner of a successful mill employing local Protestants only. As a self-made businessman he is obsessed with the qualities that make up the 'Ulsterman' and lives in fear and dread of being governed by nationalists should Home Rule be passed. Throughout the novel he advocates a belligerent response to this threat by way of the Orange Order or the Ulster Volunteers.

⁴⁴ Tony Grey, *The Orange Order* (London: Bodley Head, 1972), p. 195.

⁴⁵ Joe Cleary, *Outrageous Fortune: Capital and Culture in Modern Ireland* (Dublin: Field Day Publications with the Keough-Naughton Institute of Irish Studies at the University of Notre Dame, 2007), p. 239.

⁴⁶ Nicholas Allen, 'Moore, Frank Frankfort', *Dictionary of Irish Biography*, <<http://dib.cambridge.org.elib.tcd.ie/quicksearch.do?jsessionid=34793635114BD2904A8E54F102DE2792#>> [accessed 10 Nov 2010]

⁴⁷ Maume, Patrick, 'Ulstermen of Letters' p. 64.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 64-65.

Alexander's self-image as morally upright takes a battering, however, when his brother Richard returns from Australia to Ulster. It transpires that Richard had originally owned the mill which James now runs and had faced bankruptcy some thirty years previously. In order to avoid financial ruin, Richard devised a scheme whereby the shares of the company would be temporarily transferred into James's name, thus releasing him of the obligation to pay off his creditors. His strategy rebounded on him, however, when James later decided not to uphold his end of the bargain by refusing to return the shares. Richard can be seen as having acted purely out of self-interest by devising a scheme to defraud his creditors, whilst James in turn obtained the mill from his brother by deceit.

Such commercial chicanery, and the Protestant resistance to Home Rule form the backdrop to a number of romantic relationships. On the one hand, there are the endogamous all-Protestant relationships between Alexander's daughters, Helen and Annie and William Kinghan and Charliss Drennan. There is another all-Protestant relationship between Kinghan and wealthy Ninna Thornton. These relationships come to nothing or end in failure. There are also exogamous romantic relationships between Alexander's son Edward and a Catholic girl, Kate Power, and between his other son James, and another Catholic girl, Sarah, whom he covertly married some years previously. Although Edward is himself a member of the Orange Order and is aware that the relationship will be deeply problematic for his father when he finds out, he too agrees to marry his Catholic girlfriend. In the novel's unlikely conclusion these mixed marriages appear successful, and Edward and James Jnr. and their wives then accept Richard's invitation to abandon Home Rule resistance and Ulster capitalism and to return with him to live in Australia.

The opening chapters of *The Ulsterman* read as an encomium on the Ulster Protestant and serve to highlight the cultural and political divide between the Protestant and Catholic communities. The inter-faith relationships thereby enact a political as well as a religious transgression. Throughout the novel, Moore is at pains to foreground the notion that the Protestant 'Ulsterman' is himself alone responsible for the province's economic success, and repeatedly emphasises that this success would be jeopardised by the introduction of Home Rule. The narrator's promulgations are unambiguous: 'The Protestant people of Ulster form, perhaps, the strongest and ablest community in the

world [...] are a people of determination and of vigour and of religion'.⁴⁹ He also describes his countrymen as, 'stubborn, unmalleable and full of belief in themselves'.⁵⁰ This insistence of the uniqueness of the Ulsterman is not without foundation. A.T.Q. Stewart attributes the Ulsterman's obstinacy, directness and self-reliance to the frontier tradition which was derived from the Ulster Plantation and their 'Scots covenanting' past.⁵¹ Thomas Bartlett, on the other hand, argues that features such as a perceived unique dialect or topography special to Ulster serve to underpin the province's 'declared and imagined political distance from other people on the island'.⁵² In this way, Moore's representation of 'the Ulsterman' serves to establish latitude between Protestant unionists and Catholic nationalists.

Moore is also keen to promote an active 'Orange' response to the notion of Home Rule. Throughout the novel, Orangemen are seen cultivating their own separate identity, thereby underlining their perceived distinctiveness to Ulster Catholics. Nowhere is this better demonstrated than in Moore's portrayal of the annual Twelfth of July parade, followed the day after with a 'sham fight at the village of Scarva',⁵³ the highlight of which sees the Irish being swept into the imaginary Boyne to the strains of 'Rule, Britannia'.⁵⁴ However, the most powerful means the Orangemen in the novel have of preserving their uniqueness is a dogged determination not to integrate with Catholics. As the narrator explains:

Not the smallest change has taken place in the spirit of these men; the three centuries that have passed have not made them any more Irish than the original colonists from England and Scotland who crossed the Channel to drive out the Irish from Ulster.⁵⁵

Reinforcing the separateness between Catholic and Protestant, the narrator also offers a grim exposition of Catholicism:

⁴⁹ Frank Frankfort Moore, *The Ulsterman: A Story of Today* (London: Hutchinson, 1914), p. 124

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 184

⁵¹ Stewart, A.T.Q., *The Ulster Crisis* (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1967), p. 43

⁵² Bartlett, p. 341

⁵³ Moore, pp. 133-34

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 134

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

From these statistics it will be understood that the people of Arderry are on the side of religion – provided it is the Protestant religion. There is not one of them that does not hold that every other religion that is or that has been in the world is vile – but the vilest of all is the Roman Catholic belief. There is not one of them that does not hold that if Romanism is a religion at all, it is one which is professed by Satan, and that its doctrines have been formulated by him for the undoing of mankind, a crisis which can only be averted by the efforts of the Orange Institution.⁵⁶

Protestant vitriol towards Catholics in the novel also draws on the land wars which saw a return of land from Protestant to Catholic ownership. Specifically, Alexander recalls the Plan of Campaign which achieved lower rents for Catholic tenants and which many Protestant Unionists regarded as further undermining their standing in Ireland:

All that I'd like see done is for every Protestant employer of labour of any sort in Ulster to dismiss every Catholic in his employment [...] Let them carry that plan of campaign in Ulster and they'll very soon make short work of Home Rule.⁵⁷

In reality the Orange Order established not only a militant cutting edge which had previously been lacking, but also united all classes of Protestants against what they saw as 'an apocalypse on a biblical scale'.⁵⁸ F.S.L. Lyons puts it succinctly:

It was hard for those outside Ireland to realise the intensity and the passion of the Unionist cry 'Home Rule means Rome Rule'. There was a burst of activity to resist Home Rule and one of the ways it manifested itself was through the Orange Order.⁵⁹

Reflecting this analysis, *The Ulsterman* shows how the loyalist armed response to Home Rule was organised through the Orange Order and the Ulster Volunteers. In the novel, the Orange Order is shown to be the last line of defence against Home Rule and also the last line of defence for unionists should Home Rule be granted. As Alexander's wife

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 13

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 178.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 373.

⁵⁹ Lyons, p. 290.

says: 'Isn't it [the Orange Order] the only protection that we'd have again them [sic] Nationalists if they get their blessed Parliament?'⁶⁰ Moore also captures the fervour which the Orange Order added to the anti-Home Rule movement, as the narrator expounds his authoritative definition of Orangeism, describing its roots, and its relevance to current political circumstances:

Orangeism is a religious belief adapted to the needs (assumed) of a great community that exists under extraordinary conditions in the North of Ireland, and its doctrines are preached with reasonable fervour and with a sense of conviction by its ministers of their wisdom and of their responsibility to maintain and to advance the welfare of their adherents. There is no mistaking the note of sincerity that rings through an anniversary sermon in the North of Ireland. It is the bugle note of the Scots Covenanters that reached the soul of the people whose descendants crossed the narrow water and founded the plantation of Ulster.⁶¹

Apart from a brief reference to Ireland's agrarian history, Catholic characters in the novel are flimsy and stereotyped. Noting their Celtic antecedents, the narrator condescendingly points out that Catholics in general have more bookshops and are more artistic than their Protestant counterparts.⁶² An exception to this stereotyped view is provided by the Catholic Power family. While this representation is more substantive, it is also self-serving in that Moore uses their anti-Home Rule sentiments as supporting evidence of the possible economic folly of self-government. Whilst Protestant William Kinghan adopts a traditional outlook by automatically associating Catholicism with nationalism when he comments, 'they [Powers] are the only Catholics and Home Rulers in our neighbourhood [...] any person might live for years in Ulster without setting eyes on a Home Ruler',⁶³ it later transpires that the same family have grave reservations about the prospect of Home Rule, as Power articulates: 'I'm thinking that it will be no place for me or mine when this Home Rule Bill becomes law'.⁶⁴ Clear similarities between the Catholic Powers and Protestant Alexanders can be discerned in the novel;

⁶⁰ Moore, p. 35.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

⁶² *Ibid.*, pp. 191-192.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 81.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 158.

both families are in the milling business and have enjoyed significant economic success as part of the Union, so much so, that whilst the Powers do not share James Alexander's bellicose and hostile attitude to Home Rule, they do believe that nationalist self-government could jeopardise their business and standard of living. Moore's representation, while further strengthening the case against Home Rule, also reflects the fact that many Catholics in Ulster were not in favour of severing their ties with Britain.

Moore's pre-occupation with the virtues of 'the Ulsterman', the importance he grants to the separateness of Protestant unionist identity, the significance he places on the Orange Order as source of resistance to Home Rule and his abhorrence of Catholics, all militate against inter-faith relationships in the novel. Whilst the representations of these lack the depth and texture of his evocations of Home Rule resistance, they are nonetheless intriguing when set against the political milieu. Essentially, there are three portrayals of note: the inter-faith relationship between Richard Alexander and a Catholic woman thirty years earlier; the endogamous all-Protestant relationships; and the mixed marriages of James Alexander's sons.

Moore's brief depiction of Richard's dalliance clearly demonstrates the author's acute awareness of how divisive such relationships actually were. We learn that Richard chose to end that relationship largely due to intense pressure from within the Ulster Protestant community. He succinctly outlines his rationale to Edward (who, as noted, is also in an inter-faith relationship):

I fell in love with her. She was a Catholic, and I gave her up. That's all [...] I suppose you fancy you know what a struggle it was. You know nothing about it. The stronger a man is, the worse the struggle is. It was like tearing the heart out of my body and tramping on it. That's what it meant to be living among a pack o' bigots. She was a Catholic and I had to give her up, and I've never had a day's happiness since [...] you're old enough to know what it means to a chap who has been a strong Protestant and an Orangeman to marry a Catholic in these parts.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 169.

William Kinghan is Moore's quintessential Ulster unionist. He has developed 'many of the qualities of an Ulsterman' is 'determined to get on',⁶⁶ can trace his ancestry back to the Plantation and is preparing to run as an anti-Home Rule candidate in the forthcoming election. Like many Protestants of the time he believes that the anti-Home Rule campaign, of which he is part, would unite all Protestant denominations in Ulster.⁶⁷ However, like his fellow unionists, Alexander and Richard, he is shown to be morally suspect and is in simultaneous relationships with two Protestant girls: with Alexander's daughter Helen, whom he does not love but whom he is prepared to marry for money, and with wealthy Ninna Thornton. As Patrick Maume notes, Kinghan is an ambitious lawyer-politician who 'courts two wealthy girls simultaneously while avoiding breach of promise'.⁶⁸ Kinghan's avowal that 'a prudent marriage is everything, but a mixed marriage is seldom other than a failure'⁶⁹ clearly demonstrates his ambivalent position; he appears to believe that an endogamous but deceitful marriage to a Protestant would be better any day than a marriage to a Catholic.

Neither relationship is successful. Kinghan feels that he is truly in love with Ninna Thornton and she, in turn, pens a letter to him accepting his proposal of marriage, but which she does not post. The relationship comes to an abrupt end shortly afterwards, when she has a 'warning' nightmare involving him which leads her to tear up the letter and to end the relationship. The end of Kinghan's relationship with Alexander's daughter Helen is not as dramatic and appears to be by mutual consent. Crucially though, as they part Kinghan advises her never to marry a Catholic and then quotes Kipling to again highlight, as though it were necessary, the divide between both communities: 'East is East and West is West'.⁷⁰

Alexander's oldest daughter Susan followed convention and is also in an endogamous all-Protestant relationship. However, the marriage is childless implying a sense of sterility or suggesting that the future of the Protestant community may be in some doubt. Moreover, this marriage is shown to be terminally damaged by a lack of trust when Susan wrongly accuses her husband of fathering a child by another woman.

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 55.

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 61.

⁶⁸ Maume, p. 65.

⁶⁹ Moore, p.85.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 323.

James Alexander's younger son, Edward, has been raised as an Ulster unionist, has signed the Solemn League and Covenant⁷¹ and is an active member of the local branch of the Ulster Volunteers. These actions mean he is clearly an improbable candidate for a mixed marriage with a Catholic. Yet despite this background, Edward rejects convention and forms a relationship with Kate Power. The illogicality of the union is foregrounded when Edward misses an important Orange commemoration parade because he had taken the afternoon off to be with his fiancée. This is further underlined when he admits to his clearly shocked father that his interest in the Volunteers 'got a bit lukewarm'⁷² after he and Kate had formed a relationship.

Kinghan and Helen, true to Ulster capitalist stereotype, assess the fall-out from this relationship in material terms. Kinghan is vehemently against the marriage and bases his arguments on the adverse monetary effect such a union would eventually have on the couple. In this regard, he is convinced that the couple will be left penniless when James Alexander alters his will on learning of the relationship. This line of reasoning is further underpinned by Helen: 'If Edward were to marry her or any Catholic, father would turn him out of the house'.⁷³ Their fears are confirmed when, having discovered the proposed marriage, Alexander promises to throw his son out of the family home and out of his business. His final sentiments regarding his son's relationship are unequivocal, as he states that, 'as sure as there's a heaven above us, the day ye marry a Papish woman, that day ye're no son o' mine'.⁷⁴

In a final and dramatic twist, it transpires that Alexander's oldest son, James, has clandestinely married a Catholic in Belfast some years previously. While the details in the narrative are sketchy it appears that when he was supposedly visiting Belfast on business trips, he was in fact staying with his Catholic wife. Moore chooses not to explore this relationship at any length, suggesting that there is some purpose behind its inclusion.

⁷¹ Lee, p. 135. The Solemn League and Covenant was signed by a quarter of a million Protestants who pledged to resist Home Rule by any means.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 294.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 81.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 296.

In this and other ways, *The Ulsterman* is an ambiguous novel. Moore sets out to portray 'the Ulsterman' as a paradigm of commercial excellence and a defender of the province, only to portray him ultimately as someone with low standards and questionable morals. He emphasises the superiority of the Ulster Protestant and his disdain of Catholics and need for separate communities, only to have the sons of his Protestant protagonist marry Catholics. These contradictory representations may well constitute a tacit acknowledgement on Moore's part that Home Rule is inevitable, and will, in turn, bring about an entire re-drawing of the social, economic and political order. In other words, *The Ulsterman* is ultimately about a total collapse of the world as the Protestant unionist knows it. J.J. Lee has argued that: 'it was not equality, but superiority, the Orangeman claimed as his birthright. And home rule [...] certainly threatened a fatal blow at the master-race syndrome'.⁷⁵ It is entirely plausible therefore, that in *The Ulsterman*, Moore foresees the end of his 'master-race', as the economy collapses under a Catholic nationalist government and as Protestants intermarry with Catholics. The fact that the endogamous Protestant relationships in the novel come to nothing or are childless is also surely a gesture towards an ending of sorts for unionists.

Conversely, Moore's representations of the successful mixed marriages point to a conciliation between the Catholic and Protestant communities. This, however, is heavily qualified by the decision of both couples to live out their lives in Australia, implying, of course, that the sectarian divisions in Ulster will remain entrenched and that the only possibility for a happy life is in exile. The fact, that Alexander, Kinghan and Helen maintain their bigotry and espouse endogamy to the very end suggests that integration between the Catholic and Protestant communities in Ulster is unlikely. Despite this, a brighter future apparently lies ahead for the mixed marriage couples and as Richard, who appears to have learned from his own inter-faith relationship, puts it to them, 'And then come till me [sic], and I'll lairn [sic] you how to live *in another land* in peace with your neighbours, Catholics and Protestants alike'.⁷⁶

Dark Rosaleen is a pro-Catholic novel, informed by many of the issues already discussed in *Waiting* and *The Ulsterman*. The prospect of Home Rule provides a political backdrop with Ulster Protestants shown to being vehemently opposed to it.

⁷⁵ Lee, p. 134.

⁷⁶ Moore, p. 170 (*Italics mine*).

Catholic attitudes towards Home Rule are shown to be more ambiguous, however; some regard it as a new beginning, while others are decidedly indifferent. As in *The Ulsterman*, some Ulster Catholics appear reluctant to embrace self-government, as they too are enjoying the economic benefits of being under British rule. Francis also establishes a North/South dichotomy by situating the novel between Catholic Connemara and a staunchly Protestant area of Derry. Whilst Connemara is represented as a tranquil apolitical space, Derry is shown to be bitterly divided along religious and political lines.

It is against these conflicting attitudes and starkly contrasting settings that Francis frames the mixed marriage of Norah and Hector. Norah is a devout Catholic from Connemara who has never encountered sectarianism while her husband Hector has roots in Belfast, and becomes deeply absorbed and implicated in the political history of Ulster Protestants. However, although their diverse backgrounds stretch their relationship to breaking point in Francis's novel, it is the Catholic Church's unyielding position on dispensations for mixed marriages that finally drives the couple apart. In this sense, *Dark Rosaleen* draws attention to the reality of mixed marriage, but it should also be viewed in the political context against which Francis manifestly frames the novel – particularly in light of the fact that there is a conciliation between Catholic and Protestant at its conclusion. *Dark Rosaleen* addresses the Catholic Church's diktats in relation to mixed marriages in considerable detail, but the novel is crudely allegorical.

Mary Blundell (pseud M.E. Francis) was born in Dublin in 1859 into a wealthy middle-class Catholic family. She became interested in writing at an early age, and her first novel *A Daughter of the Soil* was serialised by the *London Times* in 1895. After moving to Brussels for a number of years, she eventually settled in England, where, following the death of her husband she began to write in earnest. She died in Wales in 1930. Frances Clarke's observation that her work 'is often coloured by a marked religious tone' is certainly true of her novel *Dark Rosaleen* which was published in 1915.⁷⁷

⁷⁷ Frances Clarke, 'Blundell, Mary, M.E. Francis Sweetman' *Dictionary of Irish Biography* <<http://dib.cambridge.org.elib.tcd.ie/viewReadPage.do?articleId=a0751>> [Accessed 15 November 2010]

Like *Waiting* and *The Ulsterman* the novel is set in the immediate aftermath of the promulgation of *Ne temere* and in the period leading up to the introduction of the third Home Rule Bill. It is divided into three sections. The first section deals with Hector's formative years in Connemara as part of a Catholic community. The son of the only Protestants in the novel, he is raised almost as a foster son of the Catholic Burke family. However, his acceptance of a horse ride from the local parish priest eventually leads his staunch Presbyterian father to take him to Belfast, to begin a new life as he believes that their religion is under threat in such a Catholic environment.

The second section sees Hector, now a successful engineer in a factory in Derry, returning to visit the Burke family some thirteen years later, and discovering that his childhood friend Pat has become a priest. Hector is attracted to Pat's sister Norah, and forms a relationship with her. However, the courting couple are disgraced when a day trip goes disastrously wrong after a storm blows up, leaving them stranded together for days on one of the Aran Islands. To avoid further scandal, they decide to get married. A dispensation is granted by the Catholic Church and Hector signs the declaration promising not to interfere with Norah's religion and also promising to raise any children of the marriage as Catholics.

The final section of the novel is set in the heavily Protestant district of Derry where the couple live together as husband and wife. It also becomes apparent that Hector has become a member of the Orange Order. While there is constant tension in the house as both parties attempt to remain true to their respective religious traditions, the final breaking of the marriage is brought about by Hector's revocation of the pledges he made to the Catholic Church prior to his marriage, and he steadfastly refuses to raise his son as a Catholic. On the advice of her brother Pat, Norah flees with her baby to her parents' home in Connemara while her husband is marching in the Twelfth of July Orange parade. What follows is a heavy mixture of melodrama and clichéd farce; christening the baby into the Catholic Church is given top priority and as Father Pat baptises him on the roof of the Connemara bothy, with water taken from a gutter which he has blessed, he is shot by a furious Hector who has arrived from Derry with an army of Ulster Volunteers. Notwithstanding their untimely deaths, the novel ends on a hopeful note as both dying men join hands in an act of reconciliation and the bloodied

but unharmed baby, presumably representing Ireland, is placed between Protestant and Catholic.

Significantly, Francis draws attention to Hector's and Norah's relationship in the context of Home Rule, when, a woman that Norah meets in Derry sums up the union: 'It's a quare thing for a Catholic girl to be gettin' married to a Protestant these times, when they're up again' each other more than ever they were before'.⁷⁸ The marriage can be seen as representative of the polarised positions of Protestant unionists and Catholic nationalists in relation to self-government in the novel, where Catholics are shown to be either in favour of or indifferent towards Home Rule, while Protestants remain vehemently opposed to the idea.

Hector's brother-in-law, Father Pat sees Home Rule as a panacea for Ireland's problems and as an opportunity for a new beginning: 'We hope we will get our religious rights as well as our liberty under Home Rule [...] We want the Irish race to stand united and take its place among the nations'.⁷⁹ Conversely, the peasants of Connemara are depicted as being quite indifferent to the prospect of self-government, as is outlined by the novel's narrator:

Norah was not so unsophisticated but that she, too, had heard of Home Rule, and though at Cloon-na-hinch people were more interested in buying up their holdings and wondering about the potato crop or the fishing.⁸⁰

If Ulster Protestants are concerned at the possible negative impact of Home Rule on the economy, Francis's representation of southern Catholics suggests that they have no such concerns:

The Western peasant [...] is a spiritually-minded person – the prospect of that other world towards which he is journeying is so perpetually

⁷⁸ Francis., p. 267.

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 335.

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 268.

present that in truth, it often seems to him scarcely worthwhile [sic] to better his conditions in this.⁸¹

As a centre of Protestant resistance towards Home Rule, Derry is shown to be deeply divided along sectarian lines, divisions and spelt out to Norah by the slogans daubed on its walls: 'No Popery'⁸² [...] 'No Home Rule. To Hell with the Pope'⁸³. It is in Derry, and not the South, that Norah faces sectarian hatred for the first time in her life:

It was not exactly anger, or suspicion, or contempt, yet it partook oddly of all three, and to it was added something else, which she could scarcely define, but which was, in fact, hatred – the terrible force which ruled supreme amid both sections in the North, taking the form of creed-hatred on the one side, and of race-hatred on the other.⁸⁴

As in *The Ulsterman*, Ulster Protestant resistance to Home Rule is portrayed as being grounded in a fear of a decline in the province's economy should self-government be introduced. As Hector takes Norah on a tour of the factory in which he works, a worker remarks: 'A fella told me the other day in the street he'd very likely be havin' my job when this factory was taken over by Catholics, after Home Rule was passed'.⁸⁵ In a heated debate with Father Pat on the merits of self-government, Hector expresses a similar concern: 'The one thing you are working for is to put an end to the prosperity that's in the country now'.⁸⁶ In turn, and like Moore, the narrator attributes this prosperity and economic success to 'the spirit of the North' which, in reality is little more than commercial ruthlessness: 'A hardy, far seeing, indomitable spirit resolutely bent on its own ends, determined to uphold its own ideal, scorning weaklings and backsliders, pitilessly bearing down on all opposition'.⁸⁷

If Catholics are shown to be generally indifferent to Home Rule, they show no such nonchalance regarding Protestants in the rural Connemara community where Hector and his family are regarded as 'other'. This is evident when the narrator refers to Hector's

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 313.

⁸² Ibid., p. 264.

⁸³ Ibid., p. 267.

⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 264

⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 294

⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 335.

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 310.

father as the 'solitary specimen'⁸⁸ of Protestantism while Hector himself is regarded as a 'sheep outside the fold'.⁸⁹ Hector's family depart Connemara because his father believes that the family's Protestantism is under threat in such a predominantly Catholic community: 'I'm movin' up wonder for the sake of our releegion. Releegion is the one thing that matters in this world and the next, and we're no getting' the chance of practisin' it here'.⁹⁰ The narrator offers a different explanation, stating that, 'the whole trouble had arisen from the fact of [Hector's father] having to extract Hector's promise not only to shun priests, but to avoid the company of Catholics',⁹¹ and pointing to the perceived unwillingness of the only Protestants in the community to integrate with their Catholic neighbours.

When Hector returns to Connemara his 'religion' takes on a hardened political edge as though he has been indoctrinated by his years in Ulster. He is now aware of the heroic deeds of his forefathers who crossed from Scotland generations before, and also recalls the feats of William of Orange at the Battle of the Boyne. In a similar way to James Alexander in *The Ulsterman*, he is unafraid of pursuing a belligerent response to the prospect of self-government. Claiming the identity of 'an Orangeman', he promises that if the need arises he will 'take up arms against the nationalists'.⁹²

Francis's representation of Catholicism is much more benign and does not encompass political or material concerns. The people of Connemara are portrayed as God-fearing and peaceable, assiduously following their religion by way of weekly attendance at mass, confessions, Holy Communion, rosaries and house stations. Later in the Protestant district of Derry, Norah is seen to determinedly seek out a Catholic Church in which to worship. She is constantly concerned with the Blessed Virgin, Holy Communion and her obligation to attend mass every Sunday. If Francis emphasises the political dimensions to Protestantism, Catholicism appears in the novel as an entirely spiritual affair, albeit based on ritual.

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 15.

⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 119.

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 118.

⁹¹ Ibid., p. 91.

⁹² Ibid., p. 337.

Francis foregrounds this contrast when the couple attempt to live together under the same roof. Tensions arise initially with Hector's insistence that he will never again enter a Catholic Church and are further inflamed when some bigoted Protestant neighbours hurl stones through the window at Norah as she worships before an improvised altar. However, their relationship reaches breaking point over the issue of symbols associated with their respective religious traditions. Now obsessed with Ulster Protestant history, Hector demands pride of place for the pictures of his father, the Battle of the Boyne, and William of Orange. Norah, on the other hand, and to Hector's dismay, insists on praying before a statue of the Blessed Virgin which is situated between two candlesticks and a pair of vases. Eventually, Hector breaks his wife's statue, with Norah burning the picture of her father-in-law in retaliation.

The novel's juxtaposition of tranquil Connemara with the vitriolic sectarianism of Derry and emphasis on Home Rule and religious difference would seem to promote a negative outlook for the mixed marriage. However, and like O'Donovan, political issues are temporarily suspended when Francis draws attention to Catholic Church diktats to mixed marriages through references to the required dispensation, the *Ne temere* decree and the declaration Hector was obliged to sign in relation to the religious upbringing of his children. Strikingly, her depiction of this process is consistent with the claims of many in the Protestant Church that its members often signed this declaration under duress. Moreover, the role of Norah in the union is reduced almost to that of innocent bystander as Francis focuses largely on the Protestant difficulties with the mixed marriage. In this regard, the Catholics of Connemara appear in the novel to be living in an almost hermetically sealed commune, shielded not only from sectarianism but also from the evils of mixed marriage:

She had never heard the warnings and arguments against mixed marriages which are customary in other parts of Ireland, for the simple reason that in the neighbourhood of her home all professed the same faith. The reading of the 'Ne Temere' decree, and any subsequent allusion to the matter in the bishop's pastorals, had passed unheeded over the heads of a congregation whom it did not concern.⁹³

⁹³ Ibid., p. 206.

Like Maurice in *Waiting*, Hector throws himself at the mercy of the priests in a vain effort to reach a compromise regarding the conditions laid down by that Church. However, before this inquisition takes place he is adamant, despite promptings from others such as Norah's mother, that he will not convert to the Catholic faith. When asked before marrying Norah about the religious upbringing of any children of the marriage he evokes the 'Palatine Pact', meaning that he wishes any sons of the marriage to be raised in his faith and any daughters in that of his wife. As they subsequently have a son, Hector insists on raising him as a Protestant, thereby contravening the pledge given by him to the Catholic Church in order to be granted a dispensation.

In *Dark Rosaleen* the Church is seen to adopt an uncompromising attitude in terms of Hector's application for a dispensation so that he can marry Norah, and the Catholic clerics echo the insularity of the Connemara community in their bemusement at a possible mixed marriage: 'They're all of the one faith here. I don't need to be troublin' my head as a rule about mixed marriages'.⁹⁴ Yet despite Hector's best efforts, the Church is in no mood to compromise and after sitting 'in judgement upon him' Father Casey magnanimously declares:

I think you'd be justified in applying for dispensation, particularly as this young fellow says he is willing to do what is right. You will have to give the required pledges [...] you'll have to promise in writing that you will never interfere with the free exercise of your wife's religion and that the children you may have will be baptised and brought up in the Catholic faith!⁹⁵

Despite Hector's remonstrations over what part he perceives as the flagrant injustice of the condition relating to the religious upbringing of his children, the word of the Church is final. Significantly, the clerics also allude to the issue which caused enormous grief to Protestants following the promulgation of *Ne temere*, whereby the Catholic Church stipulated that *all* marriages had to be celebrated before a Catholic priest and two witnesses in order to be deemed valid:

⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 237.

⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 238.

‘That’s the law of the Church’ he said ‘and it cannot under any circumstances be broken’ [...] Unless you conform to the rules that the Church has laid down, your marriage with Norah Burke, *the only marriage that we can recognise*, cannot take place.⁹⁶

Hector finds himself battling single-handedly against the might of the Catholic Church, and, in order to gain a dispensation so that he can marry Norah, eventually succumbs to ‘an enforced submission to the decrees of a Church in which he did not believe’.⁹⁷ Whilst Maurice and Alice in *Waiting* fail to get a dispensation because they will not agree to the conditions laid down by the Catholic Church, Hector is granted one because he consents to the same conditions.

However, shortly after the birth of his son, Hector has grave misgivings about the promise made regarding his son’s baptism and religious upbringing and decides to postpone the baptism until the boy is old enough to decide for himself. Somewhat cloyingly, the narrator outlines his rationale:

Was he Hector, to have no rights where the child was concerned? [...] Was he to submit without a qualm to see his own child taught doctrines, which he condemned, and initiated into practices which he held to be idolatrous?⁹⁸

That said, Hector is also apparently aware of his legal rights in terms of the religious upbringing of his son when he asserts ‘the law ‘ud be on my side’.⁹⁹ This, of course, constitutes a discreet reference by the author to ‘paternal supremacy’, discussed in the main introduction of this thesis.

That *Dark Rosaleen* is a pro-Catholic novel is clearly apparent by the novel’s end as Hector, up to this point the most self-possessed character, becomes assimilated into the Catholic faith. In the final death-scene he apparently converts to Catholicism as he holds the hand of the dying priest: ‘He [Hector] realised for the first time the sublimity

⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 239. (Italics mine)

⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 243.

⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 347.

⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 350.

of that faith in which Pat had laid down his life'.¹⁰⁰ Moreover, he appears grateful when Father Pat, now portrayed as a Christ-figure from a crucifixion scene, somewhat condescendingly forgives him his sins: '*Ego te absolvo*'.¹⁰¹ To borrow Doris Sommer's terminology, Father Pat as a Christ-figure is 'someone who can wipe the slate of history clean'.¹⁰²

From a political perspective, Francis in *Dark Rosaleen* frames the mixed marriage against Home Rule and the diametrical opposites of sectarian Derry and peaceful Connemara which points to an unhappy union. The novel is also deeply concerned with *Ne temere* and the reality of mixed marriages, hardly surprising given the 'marked religious tone' of the author's works and the fact that the novel was published just a number of years after the decree's promulgation. While it might be tempting to read the novel as a purely pro-Catholic treatise on mixed marriage, sight should not be lost of the political backdrop and the fact that the novel ends in reconciliation. However, this in turn should be tempered by the fact that in the final dramatic scene Francis neatly effaces the bitter sectarianism that is so prominent throughout the novel and enacts a victory for Catholicism over Protestantism.

Conclusion

From a theological perspective, two of the novels discussed, *Waiting* and *Dark Rosaleen* deal explicitly with *Ne temere* which given its timing was intrinsically linked by many to Home Rule. In *Waiting* O'Donovan's concern is primarily with the Church's refusal to grant the dispensation necessary for a mixed marriage. Though he touches upon the thorny issue of the religious upbringing of children through a Protestant character, his protagonists refuse to agree to the requirements laid down by the Catholic Church in order to be granted a dispensation. Francis, on the other hand, goes straight to the heart of the discord in relation to mixed marriages, arising from the religious upbringing of children. Her Protestant protagonist refuses to honour the earlier pledge given by him to the Catholic Church, consistent with many of the factual cases already discussed, most notably *Tilson*. Whilst O'Donovan is unforgiving in his

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 369.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p. 371.

¹⁰² Sommer, p. 108.

representation of the Catholic Church and its attitude to mixed marriage, Francis's novel is faithful to the idea of the Catholic Church as 'the one true Church'.

All three novels frame mixed marriages against the prospect of Home Rule being introduced in Ireland. Given that debate over self-government tended to divide along religious lines, as Catholic nationalists *generally* supported the notion of self-government while Protestant unionists opposed it, it is fair to say that each romance-across-the-divide is politically as well as religiously transgressive.

In this sense *Waiting* is an unambiguous narrative. O'Donovan promotes a post-Home Rule vision of a modern, industrious and non-sectarian Ireland. Crucially, his Protestant protagonist, Alice Barton is symbolic of that ideal not only in marrying a Catholic but also in seeking to re-define the role of women in the emergent state in that she is educated, employed and independent-minded. O'Donovan is heavily critical of the Catholic Church as the main impediment towards achieving his goal. Given the way in which political debates unfolded over the following decades this representation is probably misguided. Although the Church maintained an unyielding position on mixed marriages until the 1970s, it adopted no such hard lines with regard to the nation's politics. The fact Catholic and Protestant are living together in a *qualified* contentment by the novel's end suggests some form of conciliation – O'Donovan's implication being that a reformed or re-invented Catholic Church could aid the emergence of a non-sectarian Ireland.

Of the three novels discussed, *The Ulsterman* is the most unlikely champion of peace and harmony between the communities. Written entirely from a Protestant unionist perspective, Moore offers a testimonial to the merits of the Ulster Protestant denounces Home Rule and then hails the Orange Order and the Ulster Volunteers as sources of resistance to this. The fact that there are successful mixed marriages in such a pro-unionist novel could signify the collapse of the world as the unionist knows it, or paradoxically, perhaps offers the strongest gesture, among the novels analysed, towards peace and conciliation. However, if indeed the novel points to conciliation, there is a weighty qualification in that Moore clearly suggests that Protestant and Catholic can only enjoy a harmonious relationship in exile. The implication here is that sectarianism

is so deeply engrained that more cordial relations between the two groupings within Ulster are impossible.

M.E. Francis's *Dark Rosaleen* establishes a North/South dichotomy to illustrate the heavily divergent views of Catholics and Protestants towards Home Rule. She portrays Ulster as a hub of ruthless industry and bitter sectarianism, while southern Ireland remains unspoilt and is seen to be enjoying its innocence. By extension, Hector grows increasingly influenced by the deeds of his Protestant forefathers, while his Catholic wife remains apolitical and ultimately retreats to the South. However, by the novel's end Catholic and Protestant join hands in a conspicuous act of reconciliation. This crude allegory is also deeply qualified given that the reconciliation is grounded entirely on Catholic terms and that Hector recants all his previous beliefs and values.

All three novels undoubtedly point to some form of reconciliation between the Catholic nationalist and the Protestant unionist communities, but the qualified nature of their conclusions clearly suggests that such an outcome would be far from straightforward. As Doris Sommer has observed of Latin American fiction, 'The predictable happy ending [...] has some interesting twists that indicate how elusive, and how fragile, a prize of national solidarity would be'.¹⁰³

¹⁰³ Ibid., p. 225.

Chapter Three

'Mixed Seed Means a Mixed Crop'¹: Representations of inter-faith relationships by Free State women writers.

The formation of the twenty-six county Free State marked the end, for the time being at least, of the conflict between Britain and Ireland. However, a divisive and bloody civil war followed between pro and anti-Treaty factions, the consequences of which have reverberated through Irish politics right up to the twenty-first century. As R.F. Foster argues, 'the civil war created a caesura across Irish history, separating parties, interests and even families, and creating the rationale for the political divisions that endured'.² Following the end of the Civil War attention in the South turned to nation-building, as the leaders of the emergent state sought to create a distinct national identity, in part to show the rest of the world that Ireland was finally independent and sovereign. It quickly became apparent, however, that the new state was to be Catholic and conservative in ethos, and that the Church was to play a significant role in the establishment of this new identity. As Ronan Fanning argues:

Though the treaty remained the 'dream that went bust', though the island remained partitioned and the republic a mirage, there remained Catholic ideals to bind together a riven nation. Catholicism, always central to so much of Irish nationalist ideology, thus took on additional significance in the search for national identity.³

While the influence of the Catholic Church in state affairs has been frequently overstated, there is no doubt that successive Free State governments at the time had Catholic leanings. The tone of political discourse at the time can be gauged by a statement of W.T. Cosgrave's in a Dail divorce debate of February 1925: 'I am right in saying that the majority of people in this country regard the bond of marriage as a

¹ MacGill, Patrick, *Helen Spenser* (London: Herbert Jenkins Ltd., 1937), p. 55.

² Foster, R.F., p. 511.

³ Fanning, Ronan, *Independent Ireland* (Dublin: Helicon Limited, 1983), p. 59.

sacramental bond which is incapable of being dissolved. I, personally, hold that view'.⁴ A more extreme instance of his Catholic and conservative outlook was his proposal that an upper house should be established consisting of a 'theological board which would decide whether any legislation was contrary to faith or morals, and that the pope might be assured that no laws contrary to Church teaching would be enacted'.⁵

The conservative ethos of the Free State was not entirely Church or state driven, and should be seen in the context of a pan-European return to traditional Christian values in the aftermath of the Great War. However, what emerged in Ireland after 1922 was an ethos shared between Church and state, that was both Catholic and conservative and which, in turn, alienated and marginalised a significant proportion of the Protestant minority, which felt that a foreign value system was being imposed on it. As J.J. Lee has observed, 'It is true that the 1922 Free State constitution had no sectarian bias. Nevertheless, the Catholic archbishop of Dublin insisted to Cosgrave that the Catholic Church had not merely the right, but the duty, to control Protestant consciences'.⁶ In the decades after 1922 the numbers of southern Protestants declined sharply. Although some historians have ascribed this decline to factors as various as the promulgation of *Ne temere*, emigration, relocation within the armed services or the effects of the First World War, some Protestants undoubtedly left for mainland Britain or Northern Ireland because they did not share Catholic values and wished to preserve their own cultural identity.

This chapter will examine depictions of inter-faith relationships by women writers during the years of the Free State. To this end, I will analyse Norah Hoult's *Holy Ireland* and Temple Lane's *The Trains go South*. However, in order to bring these representations into sharper relief, I will also briefly examine two works by male writers also written during this period: *The Knife* by Peadar O'Donnell and *Helen Spenser* by Patrick MacGill. The inter-faith relationships in these novels play out against the revolutionary backdrop of early twentieth-century Ireland. In effect, they are depicted

⁴ 'No Divorce in Free State', *Irish Times*, 21 February 1925.

⁵ Laffan, Michael. *The Partition of Ireland: 1911-1922* (Dublin Historical Association, 1983, repr. 1987) p. 117.

⁶ Lee, J.J. *Ireland 1912-1985: Politics and Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989, repr. 2006) p. 77.

through a narrow political prism and as such, their happy endings can be interpreted as basic metaphors for conciliation between political adversaries.

Hoult and Lane, on the other hand, use domestic settings and show no such narrow vision or constraint. They address the relationships more in terms of their human or social impacts and as such deliver a stinging rebuke of Free State values. Hoult's Catholic protagonist, Margaret, turns her back on Church and state by marrying a Protestant theosophist, but crucially is deeply unhappy in this marriage. In *The Trains go South*, Lane is clearly scornful of the conservatism and moral values of the Free State, and questions whether full integration would ever be possible between what she sees as the disparate cultures of southern Catholics and Protestants. Her Protestant protagonist, Vandeleur, remains trapped in a mixed marriage with a Catholic woman as a result of the Free State ban on divorce.

Peadar O'Donnell, writer, socialist and I.R.A. member, was born in Co. Donegal in 1893 and died in Dublin in 1986. Jailed for his part in the Civil War he began to write fiction, much of which was informed by his own experiences as a republican activist.⁷ *The Knife* is set in east Donegal between 1913 and 1923 and as such spans a fraught period in Irish history encompassing the 1916 Rising, the War of Independence and the Civil War. The novel opens in a planter district as the Catholic nationalist Godfrey Dhu family has just acquired some Protestant land, using money inherited from a relative in Australia. The narrator states that, 'it was part of the Orangemen's religion that the possession of soil must remain solid',⁸ establishing a conflict between planter and native over which the eventually successful inter-faith relationship in the novel is designed to prevail.

During the War of Independence the Catholic protagonist Knife and his sister Nuala become heavily involved in armed resistance to British rule. Nuala is a stereotypical red-haired Irish rebel who sings Fenian songs, loves Ireland and hates Britain in equal measure, and who is courted by Catholic James Burns and Protestant Sam Rowan. Eventually, Nuala rejects the determined advances of Burns and settles on Rowan. The

⁷ Fearghal McGarry, 'O'Donnell, Peadar', *Dictionary of Irish Biography* <<http://dib.cambridge.org.elib.tcd.ie/quicksearch.do#>> [accessed 12 march 2012]

⁸ O'Donnell, Peadar. *The Knife*, (London: Jonathan Cape Ltd., 1930, repr., Dublin: Irish Humanities Centre, 1980), p. 24.

novel concludes with Rowan freeing Knife from jail, where he had been imprisoned by Free State forces during the Civil War.

This act of political co-operation mirrors the successful inter-faith relationship between Nuala and Rowan, as strife between Protestants and Catholics in the opening pages of the novel is replaced by harmony and co-operation between both communities by the novel's end. Moreover, the fact that Catholic and Protestant insurgents work together towards this conclusion suggests an optimistic faith on O'Donnell's part in the possibility of a unified offensive against Britain.

Patrick MacGill was born in Co. Donegal in 1890 and died in Florida in 1963. He is best known as a writer of fiction which articulates his concern for the poor and dispossessed and his 'hatred of gombeenism and churchmen who he considered greedy and uncaring'.⁹ Heavily informed by the Irish revolutionary period of the early twentieth century, *Helen Spenser* is, therefore, atypical of his oeuvre. The novel is set in a County Donegal village around the time of the 1916 Rising which has two bitterly divided Protestant and Catholic communities, each with an acute sense of history and the wrongs perpetuated against them. Commenting on the friendship of two local girls, one of whom is Catholic and the other Protestant, the narrator emphasises this division between the two groupings:

Outsiders in religious persuasion and belief, one was not a fit companion for the other. Though both girls, of similar age, had community in years, that did not matter in Carra, where religion not your own was something like an infection, a disease, or pestilence that blighted by touch and breath.¹⁰

This division is something that many are keen to preserve. Mrs. Firth, deaconess of the local Church of Ireland, spends her days prowling the local laneways to ensure that no Protestant forms a personal alliance with a Catholic. It is against this backdrop that MacGill depicts an inter-faith relationship between the Protestant, Helen Spenser, and Catholic, Conn O'Donnell.

⁹ Frank Galligan, 'MacGill, Patrick', *Dictionary of Irish Biography*, <<http://dib.cambridge.org/viewReadPage.do?articleId=a5212>> [accessed 12 March 2012]

¹⁰ MacGill. p. 112.

Spenser and O'Donnell have sharply contrasting family backgrounds. Helen's family is reviled by many in the locality due to the fact that her grandfather Sam was a notorious rent-collector for an absentee landlord, and used both whip and pistol to extract rents from Catholic tenants. Conn is training to be a priest and harbours, unbeknownst to Helen, ambitions not only to convert her to Catholicism, but also to see her become a nun. The Easter Rising, however, brings the couple closer together. As Conn decides that he would better serve his country as a volunteer than as a priest, he leaves for Dublin and takes an active part in the siege at the GPO, for which he is arrested and later released. Helen, discovering that one of her forefathers fought alongside Catholic King James at the Battle of the Boyne, develops nationalist sympathies and pledges support for the Irish volunteers. With the War of Independence raging, the novel ends as the clearly in love couple stand together and Conn gives a signal to his fellow volunteers to blow up a platoon of British soldiers.

This is not a well written novel. Oscillating between melodrama and farce, it also contains several overwrought descriptions of an idyllic countryside, clearly intended to evoke a pastoral golden age before British imperial rule defiled the landscape. The portrayal of the inter-faith relationship is crudely allegorical; the fact that Helen remains true to her religion to the end suggests, like *The Knife*, that the Protestant and Catholic communities might conceivably join forces to face the common enemy. Although MacGill gestures to a more pluralist Irish society, the expulsion of the foreign power and the reclaiming of full sovereignty is seen as the grand prize.

'A mixed marriage means trouble for all'¹¹

The narrative of *Holy Ireland*¹² focuses on the marriage of Margaret O'Neill, a Catholic and Clem Woods, a Protestant, who later converts to theosophy. The novel shows this marriage to be fundamentally at odds with two crucial ideological pillars of the emergent Free State: Catholicism and nationalism. Through her marriage, which in effect is an act of rebellion, Margaret both abandons what is depicted as an invasive and tyrannical Church and turns her back on Irish nationalism. R.F. Foster has observed that

¹¹ Norah Hoult, *Holy Ireland* (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1935, this edn, Arlen House), p. 118.

¹² Benedict Kiely claims that *Holy Ireland* was banned in 1934 (*Irish Independent* review Jan 11, 1986). However, I could not find *Holy Ireland* on the official register of Prohibited Publications.

‘what matters most about the atmosphere and mentality of the twenty-six-county Ireland in the 1920s is that the dominant pre-occupation of the regime was self-definition from Britain’.¹³ So, if we take the interconnectedness of Catholicism and national identity as a given, the implicit suggestion in Hoult’s representation is that the mixed marriage undermines the state’s aspirations for ‘self-definition’.

The conception of mixed marriage as a rebellious act appears to be grounded in Hoult’s apprehension of the role of women in the Free State and in a belief that its population has lost its ability to think independently or critically. Margaret is ultimately deeply unhappy as a wife and mother, and Hoult offers a harsh critique of slavish devotion to *any* creed, whether Catholicism or theosophy. Further, that Clem, the Protestant protagonist, morphs into a conservative patriarch, like his Catholic father-in-law suggests that he too, has become a casualty. Thus, people of all faiths are shown to be victims as products of Free State values and culture.

The novel can be read in two parts. Through her portrayal of the Catholic O’Neill household Hoult draws attention, not only to the theocratic and insular dimensions of the Free State but also to the way in which Catholicism and nationalism have been bound together in the formation of a unique political or cultural identity. The second part of the novel deals with Margaret’s life in her new home as she and her husband convert to theosophy. What transpires there for Margaret is a life of misery and despair. While the first part of the novel illustrates the notion of an overbearing Catholic Church and the ‘Catholicised’ Free State, Hoult undercuts these perceptions in the second half by offering a grim study of theosophy. In effect, we see how Margaret divests herself of Catholicism only to find herself no better off as a theosophist.

Norah Hoult was born 20 September 1898 in Dublin, daughter of Powis Hoult and Margaret Hoult. She spent much of her life living between Ireland and England and wrote such novels as *Poor Women!* (1928), *There were no Windows* (1944) or short story collections such as *Cocktail Bar* (1950). She died in Dublin in 1984.¹⁴ Writing on autobiography and the Irish novel, Eve Patten has argued that ‘during the Irish Literary

¹³ Foster, R.F. p. 516

¹⁴ Nicholas Allen, ‘Hoult, Eleanor Lucy (‘Norah’)’ *Dictionary of Irish Biography*, <<http://dib.cambridge.org/viewReadPage.do?articleId=a4110>> [accessed 8 September 2011]

Revival and in the post-Revival period [...] the distinction between fact and fiction was frequently blurred as the novel was drawn into the shaping culture of a new nation conceived in deeply personal terms'.¹⁵ This argument is of clear relevance to *Holy Ireland* which draws heavily on the author's own personal experiences and family history. Hoult's mother was a Catholic who married a Protestant in a registrar's office on the Dublin quays on the morning of her twenty-first birthday, and as a consequence of this perceived transgression was forced by her father to leave home. The protagonists of *Holy Ireland*, Margaret and Clem, are based on Hoult's parents, as confirmed by Hoult herself in a 1984 preface to the novel: 'I was very shocked to learn that my grandfather's house was locked against my mother who had eloped as far as the registrar's office on the quays, on the morning of her 21st birthday, to wed a faithful and non-Catholic suitor'.¹⁶ Fact and fiction are further blurred by the Hoult family entry in the 1901 Irish national census. On the Household Return Form, her mother's name is entered as 'Margaret', while her parents' religion is entered as 'Theosophist'.¹⁷ Hoult, herself recalled that her parents' marriage and grandfather's subsequent hostile reaction was 'all good copy, something to be written about'.¹⁸

Hoult's depiction of the Catholic O'Neill family at the heart of the novel is uncompromising. Margaret's father Patrick, as head of the household, is shown to be paternalistic, nationalistic, devoutly Catholic and bigoted. Relentlessly imposing puritanical Catholicism on his children, he attempts to terrify them with threats of eternal damnation should they deviate from its tenets. The household descends into crisis when Margaret's father discovers that she has been surreptitiously dating Protestant, Clem Woods. Patrick responds by locking up his daughter for eighteen months until she reaches the age of twenty one. More as an act of rebellion than of romantic love, on attaining that age Margaret elopes with Clem, marries him at a Dublin registrar's office, and converts to his faith.

¹⁵ Eve Patten, 'Life Purified and Reprojected': Autobiography and the Modern Irish Novel' in *Modern Irish Autobiography: Self, Nation and Society*, ed., by Liam Harte (Hampshire & New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), pp. 51-69 (p. 52).

¹⁶ Hoult, 'Preface' *Holy Ireland*.

¹⁷ 'Norah Hoult', Census of Ireland, 1901 <www.census.nationalarchives.ie> [accessed 8 September 2011]

¹⁸ Hoult, 'Preface'.

The climax of the novel occurs several years later when Margaret, now a theosophist like her husband, confronts her father on his deathbed after he has put a proposal together with the aim of securing her return to the Catholic fold. In a scene of high drama and emotion, he demands that his daughter re-convert to her own faith in return for five thousand pounds. She refuses to accede to his scheme, prompting him to order his own wife, Margaret's mother, to get down on her knees and beg their daughter's conversion. The upshot sees a distraught Margaret running from the house and returning to her husband. She does not return to a life of bliss, however; in her own home she endures a dull marriage, a third unwanted pregnancy, and a distinct lack of enthusiasm for her adopted faith.

The O'Neill family home can be viewed as the 'Catholic' Free State in microcosm. Moreover, this slavishly Catholic backdrop underlines the fact that Margaret's relationship is transgressive in religious terms. As head of the household Patrick uses Catholic ritual to exert control over his family, in a way analogous to Moran in John McGahern's *Amongst Women* (1991), published over half a century later. The lives of the O'Neill's revolve around the rosary, confession, mass on Sundays and on holy days of obligation, Church missions and devotions. Free State Catholicism is represented as more than belief in and worship of God but as something that permeates and dominates every aspect of private and public life. Derek Hand has attributed this to the novel's contemporaneous significance, observing that: 'This legalistic approach to sacred rituals is another aspect of the bureaucratisation of Irish life in the post-revolutionary state-building years, deadening ardour and feeling, making even the spiritual routine'.¹⁹

The conservatism and insularity of the Free State is also reflected in the O'Neill household. Patrick's hatred of books, for instance, (he even blames reading for his daughter's relationship with a Protestant) gestures towards the rigorous censorship of publications and films pursued by the authorities south of the border following partition, whilst the desire to escape the suffocating atmosphere of the Free State can be discerned in Margaret's propensity for opening windows, while her mother, who is apparently as enslaved as her husband, insists on closing them.

¹⁹ Hand, p. 171

Patrick's main objections to his daughter's marriage result from his servile adherence to Catholic doctrine and ritual. Confronting his daughter, he evokes images not only of a Church under attack during the Penal times but also of a pitiable individual under the unyielding cosh of the Church:

Your forebears went to mass when it was proscribed, they walked barefoot miles over hard country to be present at the Sacrifice knowing well what would happen them if they were discovered [...] God help you: ideas and notions that have been put into your head [...] and who are you to set yourself up against the commandments of God and of His Holy Church? Who are you to blaspheme and doubt? Nothing but a young girl led astray.²⁰

Another perspective is provided by the narrator, however, who contrasts such unquestioning devotion to the Church with Margaret's ability to interrogate its dictats. This, in turn, evokes images of a bigoted God who exacts retribution on iconoclasts:

She had turned her back on the God of the Holy Roman and Apostolic Church. Nothing any more could make her accept that God, the God that was slobbered over and caressed and cajoled by dirty smelly old beggars, the God that sent Protestants to hell and burnt them for ever, the God that might even send His own chosen Catholics to hell if they neglected their religious duties, and directed no fire-guard of prayers and devotions, no barricade of religious offerings, against the Judgement Day.²¹

From a theological perspective, Hoult also alludes to the fact that the Catholic Church did not recognise civil marriages or indeed, marriages not celebrated according to its own ordinances, as I discussed in detail in the main introduction to this thesis. Patrick outlines the official position of the Church to one of his other daughters:

Because your sister that has this day run away from her home and from her faith to make a *mock marriage, a marriage that's no marriage.*

²⁰ Hoult., p. 378.

²¹ Ibid., p. 180.

Because in an hour or two, if she's not one already, she'll be no better than a harlot. Because she's damned her soul in all eternity.²²

Metaphorically speaking, Margaret does indeed burn in hell for her decision to leave the Catholic Church and to wed a Protestant in a registry office. As she reaches her twenty-first birthday, Patrick decides to buy her a fur muff in the hope that an expensive gift might bring about a change of heart. However, when he learns that she has in fact followed through with her 'mock marriage' earlier the same day, he despairingly tosses it into the fire. The ensuing high drama of 'scorching smell and sizzling sound' not only mimics the fires of hell but also plays on the fear which the Catholic Church inscribed in the minds of many of its followers, particularly in the early part of the twentieth century. The scene is also symbolic of a youthful life extinguished by an overbearing Church:

He took up the poker, and rammed the fur in harder and harder. 'Just as that muff, that bit of fur was once a bright squirrel running up trees, is burning now, so will your sister that was burn in the tortures of hell for what she done this day. With one difference – that she'll go on burning for ever and ever'.²³

As noted in the introduction, Hoult's novel illustrates how firmly Catholic and nationalist concerns were bound together, with serious repercussions for mixed marriage, the suggestion being that for a Catholic to marry a Protestant would somehow undermine or jeopardize Ireland's self-definition from Britain. Hoult leaves the reader in no doubt as to the closeness of the relationship between Catholicism and nationalism: Patrick is described as 'a good Home Ruler' whose bedroom is adorned with a statue of the Sacred Heart, with alongside it, 'a picture of the bearded Parnell flanked by a coloured representation of the young Robert Emmet'.²⁴ Elsewhere, the revered Father O'Flanagan expresses his horror at the thought of young Irishmen 'fighting for British imperialism' in the Boer War before making it known that he supports Griffith on the side of the Boers.²⁵ Even the pathetic and impoverished 'old servant' Mrs Mooney who

²² *Ibid.*, p. 310. (Italics mine).

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 310.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 200.

is dying from TB, is at once both deeply nationalistic and religious: 'She was very dirty. But she was very religious, and she was very patriotic too. She had pictures of all the Fenians, and the grand new one of O'Donovan Rossa'.²⁶

Mixed marriage as political transgression may also be read from Patrick's oft-expressed equation of ethnicity with religion. For instance, he continually refers to Clem as a Protestant *Englishman*, and in a manner not dissimilar to Joyce's Citizen warns:

By God, I'll go and find that *English* seducer; Cromwell's gets! I'll knock blazes out of him. I'll slash him to ribbons [...] By God [...] that Protestant bastard. Where's my stick? I'll break every bone in his body this time. [...] I'll murder him, the bloody seducer.²⁷

Elsewhere in the novel Margaret clearly refers to Patrick's ethnic objections to her husband, 'It was not only Clem being a Protestant he minded.....the awful things he said the other evening showed that there was more to it than that'.²⁸ The Protestants in the novel have equally stereotypical views of Catholics, again underlining the notion that Margaret is not just transgressing a religious boundary. According to theosophist 'Mr Russell' who visits their home after their marriage, (presumably as allusion to George Russell) 'Patrick [...] the name used as a symbol of the Irish countryman' is 'backward and sunk in ignorance [...] a primitive economic caveman' who 'doesn't read and doesn't know how to sign his name'.²⁹

The sense of cultural separation is further emphasised by a tale Patrick enjoys telling his family concerning a Colonel Barry, of English extraction, from whom he buys cattle and who by all accounts is a kind hearted landlord. Unhappy with the living condition of his tenants, Barry built each of them a cottage with a toilet. It later transpired, to Barry's horror, that the toilets were being used by the Irish tenants as henhouses – save for one tenant who uses it for its correct purpose. This, in turn, led the local Catholics to exclaim when they met this tenant: 'There goes John Reynolds who dungs through a hole in a board like any Protestant'.³⁰ Patrick's tale is significant, since it not only

²⁶ Ibid., p. 70.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 137, p.304. (Italics mine).

²⁸ Ibid., p. 147.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 314.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 343.

reinforces stereotypical perceptions of Catholics as uncivilised and Protestants as respectable and conformist, but also indicates an Irish acceptance of these stereotypes. Hoult appears to suggest that gaining an identity separate from that of Britain has involved accepting some unpalatable stereotypes, but that this is a price that the Catholic Irish are prepared to pay. Accordingly, Patrick's rejection of his daughter's suitor, while motivated to some degree on religious grounds is also associated with what he sees as Clem's Englishness. It is clear that marrying such a man might be seen to seriously undermine, as already noted, Ireland's 'self-definition from Britain'.

If the wedding of Margaret and Clem transgresses political and religious boundaries, a further dimension is added to the novel by Hoult's depiction of married life thereafter. Crucially, and like Patrick, Clem develops into a conservative patriarch with a blind devotion to his own creed. Moreover, the depiction of their life together calls into question the criticisms of the 'Catholicised' Free State by showing that theosophy has an equally damaging impact on its adherents. Or to put this more bluntly, if over-zealous Catholicism or indeed narrow nationalism is not conducive to a happy mixed marriage then neither is a blind adherence to theosophy.

Hoult draws a number of parallels between life as a Catholic and life as a theosophist to underline what she sees as the pointlessness of a slavish devotion to either creed: where Patrick continually disparages Protestantism, Clem lays the blame for the trouble surrounding his relationship with Margaret at the door of the Catholic Church: 'I'm beginning to think that Roman Catholicism is a serious curse in this country [...] My objection to Catholicism is not that it is a religion, but that it is all swallowed so unquestioningly by the people of this country';³¹ where Patrick's and Margaret's life once revolved around mass, devotions and rosaries, Clem's is taken up with society meetings, in which Margaret is obliged to partake; where the O'Neill family abstained from meat on Fridays, Clem's family are, to Margaret's dismay, vegetarian; the visits to the O'Neill household by the local priest are echoed by visits from theosophy society members; and with wicked irony, the ten commandments, so much part of life in the O'Neill family household, are counterpointed by the 'TEN OBSTACLES (SANYOJANAS) IN THE PATH' [sic].³²

³¹ Ibid., p. 68.

³² Ibid., p. 348.

Margaret's formative years in the O'Neill household find their echo in the latter part of the novel, showing her life in a non-Catholic household and showing it be equally grim. If the Catholic Church had earlier starved Margaret of the freedom to live her life as she chooses, she also starves, literally and metaphorically, at the hands of the theosophists. Margaret is undoubtedly the strongest character in the novel, given her rebellion against the Church and her father, but in the closing sections she appears to be wasting away, obliged to conform with the demands of her husband's new creed. Clearly malnourished as she tries to conjure up new vegetarian dishes using turnips, potatoes or pastry, the tedium of enforced devotion to the Catholic Church is replaced by 'babies and shopping and shopping and babies'³³ and an endless cycle of irritating visits from society members where conversations were not allowed to become 'over-domesticated and trivial'. Through this depiction of theosophist home life, Hoult also questions the role of women in the Free State, as she alludes to the problems surrounding access to abortion and contraception. With an unwanted third pregnancy, Margaret speculates at a shop counter if enough Beecham Pills 'would stop the baby coming?',³⁴ and later wonders why Clem will not use contraception:

When was she going to get up on high land by herself feeling that her body was her own, part of her, and not weighed down, heavy and unresponsive? Two September children; this would be September, too, about the 20th the doctor had said. It was either August 21st or August 22ndwould she have another the September after? Would it always go on.... couldn't he try and somehow prevent....?³⁵

By the novel's end, as Margaret lives behind the façade of a happy nuclear family with house, employed husband and two children, she is clearly as enslaved or entrapped in the theosophist home as she was in the Catholic one. Through her depiction of the mixed marriage Hoult allows her protagonist to sever her ties with the Catholic and nationalist ethic of the Free State and to begin a new life by way of her marriage to a 'Protestant Englishman'. That life in this environment is equally oppressive and miserable suggests that Hoult is, in fact, questioning Free State values as much as the

³³ Ibid., p. 316.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 317.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 323.

role of the Catholic Church. And this critique is emphasised as Margaret is portrayed as having no desire to take up the role that the Free State has assigned to her as a wife and mother.

Holy Ireland offers a savage critique of the values or culture of the Free State in which both Catholics *and* Protestants are ultimately portrayed as victims. Despite his domineering exterior, in the final analysis Patrick can be seen as a tragic victim of a Church and a state that promised so much to him throughout his life and ultimately delivered so little. This is sadly evident in the closing pages when, surrounded by Catholic iconography and nationalist images once so close to his heart, he dies a sad and lonely death. In this regard, and also because he evokes a degree of sympathy towards the end of the novel, he can, as already noted, be compared to McGahern's Moran. Margaret's husband, Clem, is also a victim of rigid adherence to doctrine, which in turn questions the position of the individual in the Free State. His life, despite the promises of theosophy, is one of poverty, hunger and drudgery. Margaret, too, is a victim. Although, she demonstrates courage in escaping her tyrannical father and the influence of the Catholic Church, she quickly falls foul of the theosophist's narrow doctrines and outlook.

*'A mixed marriage is a very sad thing'*³⁶

Terence Brown has argued that:

The establishment of the Irish Free State found Protestant Ireland in the twenty-six counties ideologically, politically and emotionally unprepared for the uncharted waters of the new separatist seas, where they comprised what was seen by many of their nationalist fellow citizens as an ethnic minority.³⁷

Temple Lane's novel *The Trains go South* reflects this argument. Written from a Protestant perspective, the novel focuses on the plight of a Protestant nationalist who finds himself estranged and disorientated in the Free State. The narrative concentrates

³⁶ Temple Lane, *The Trains go South* (London: Jarolds, 1938), p. 255.

³⁷ Terence Brown, *Ireland: A Social and Cultural History 1922-2002* (London: Harper Perennial, 1981, repr., 2004), p. 95.

on cultural rather than religious differences: the Catholic bourgeoisie in the Free State appear nationalist, materialistic and morally suspect whilst Protestant characters, although morally upright, are either nationalist inclusivists or separatists. Lane is hugely sympathetic to the treatment of the Protestant minority by what she perceives to be an inept Free State government, and is concerned that an uninvited Catholic ethos is being imposed upon them. As Lynn Doyle writes in the introduction to the novel, 'She writes as one who believes that England's former government saved Ireland from herself, and is not convinced that Ireland's self-government is a national blessing'.

The marriage between a righteous Protestant, Vandeleur, and a shady, Catholic, Tessie is the novel's cynosure. Both are broadly nationalist in outlook, and their marriage fuses the two disparate cultures of the Free State in what turns out, unsurprisingly, to be an unhappy union with no chance of complete separation. This is due to the fact that the new government has banned divorce, leaving Vandeleur in a permanent bondage with Free State culture or values. Lane's metaphor is both profound and pessimistic; the imposition of the materialistic and conservative ethos of the Catholic majority has meant that Protestants are forced to refashion or relinquish their own culture. This view is further promoted by Lane's depiction of another mixed marriage in the novel, between a Catholic, Felix, and a Protestant, Helen. In this relationship, Felix is shown to be stridently assertive in his beliefs, while Helen, significantly, plays a subservient and almost silent role.

Mary Isabel Leslie (pseud. 'Temple Lane') was born 19 April 1899 in Dublin, one of two daughters of the Rev. John Herbert Leslie, a Church of Ireland clergyman. She spent many of her formative years living in Co Tipperary but was educated in England and later at Trinity College Dublin.³⁸ She published several works of fiction including two volumes of poetry and counted among her friends Austin Clarke and Elizabeth Bowen. She subsequently, perhaps, became best known for her poem 'The Fairy Tree', which was sung and recorded by the late Count John McCormack. Her father's position in the Church prompted her to use a pseudonym and to this end 'Temple Lane' was chosen as it was the name of a street near her publishers. She obtained a D.Litt from

³⁸ Frances Clarke, 'Leslie, Mary Isabel ('Temple Lane') *Dictionary of Irish Biography* <<http://dib.cambridge.org/viewReadPage.do?articleId=a4806>> [Accessed 14 September 2011]

Trinity College and for a time was a lecturer there in English literature.³⁹ She died in Dublin in 1978 and is buried at Lismore Cathedral, Co. Waterford.

The Trains go South is set in southern Ireland in the years immediately after the formation of the Free State. John McClenaghan is a renowned Dublin-based Protestant doctor who has just rented a holiday home in Co. Cork from a Protestant nationalist landlord, Hugh Vandeleur. The novel opens as McClenaghan's daughter, Ursula, travels south by train to the holiday home, encountering by chance two Catholic men en route, cattle dealer Mr. Deegan and bookmaker Jimmy Finnegan. It later transpires that Vandeleur is locked in an unhappy mixed marriage with Finnegan's sister, Tessie, and that when he attempted to end their engagement prior to their marriage she threatened him with a 'breach of promise' law-suit. Their subsequent marriage has floundered and Vandeleur has committed to an over-generous settlement with Tessie which he later regrets. He later falls in love with Ursula, but their relationship reaches a dead end due to the Free State ban on divorce. It also transpires that McClenaghan's Protestant sister Helen had caused shock and consternation among her family and the Protestant community when, some years earlier, she eloped and married a Catholic, Felix O'Harrigan. The novel concludes as Vandeleur cuts a sad and lonely figure, still trapped in his marriage to Tessie.

The title of *The Trains go South* has clear geo-political implications. In its opening pages Lane highlights the Catholic/Protestant divide within the emergent state, as Protestant Ursula feels compelled to seek out a different carriage to the one which is occupied by Deegan and Finnegan – archetypes of the Free State Catholic bourgeoisie. The narrator regards Catholics with an intensely jaundiced eye, and referring to the remaining Catholic passengers, he explains:

These five were of the same breed, and understood each other's phraseology. These were the people whose relatives or representatives governed the country; who had fixed within the state the customs barrier against outside trade, the indissolubility of marriage even for

³⁹ 'Obituary' *Irish Times*, 20 February 1978, p. 11.

those who did not share their religious beliefs, and the censorship of books.⁴⁰

As the train moves *south* Lane's representation captures many common perceptions associated with the Free State: that the government of the Free State had a decidedly Catholic ethos; that economic policies were adding to the state's insularity; and that the state's overly conservative policies were impinging on the rights of southern Protestants.

In this vein, Finnegan and his sister Tessie are presented as both materialistic and immoral. In his profession as a bookmaker, Finnegan is seen as carousing blithely with his newly found wealth: 'times had changed for the better for him. And if the fathers of families pawned the clothes off their children's backs to put money on a horse, wasn't there the Saint Vincent de Paul?'⁴¹ Lane also draws attention to what she sees as Catholic hypocrisy, as Finnegan is also seen to operate an illicit library, where he charges local Catholics to borrow banned books. This is further underlined with savage irony when Deegan and Finnegan bemoan the moralistic and conservative Free State:

There was no longer any question of going for a bit of a walk, with kisses and playin' around at the side of the lane. You could be run in for that, like some chap the other day. As Deegan had said to him not long ago, it drove the whole lot indoors: and so it did, with the new laws and the moral way the country was being run: although 'moral' is an imported word and comes hard to any Irishman's tongue. But everyone knows that no Irishman would have any badness in him at all, except for the foreigners.⁴²

Finnegan's sister Tessie is also shown to be acquisitive and materialist, and could be read as a descendant of Thady Quirk's scheming son Jason in Maria Edgeworth's *Castle Rackrent* (1800). Although she runs a farm and a guest-house, and enjoys substantial financial support from her husband, she plots to deceive local farmers by selling sick cattle at an auction which she herself organises. Her ruse is successful, bringing to mind

⁴⁰ Lane, p. 11.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 42.

⁴² Ibid., p. 43.

Yeats' sentiments in relation to Free State Ireland, 'a little greasy huckstering nation groping for halfpence in the greasy till....by the light of a holy candle'.⁴³

Lane's portrayal of the Protestant minority community is altogether more nuanced and benign. Protestants in the novel are divided into two sub-groupings. Protestant nationalists such as Vandeleur or Ursula consider themselves truly Irish, and long for full integration between both communities. On the other hand, unionist characters like John McClenaghan and his wife or Nello are separatists, and seek to ensure that the boundaries between both communities are maintained.

Both groupings face slow strangulation and extinction, but the Protestant nationalists are shown to be the greater loss to Ireland:

Power was daily slipping further from him and from his kind. The laws governing the books he should read, the domestic ties which he must preserve, might be Ireland's revenge for the Penal Laws. But, his type once destroyed, the country would be the poorer.⁴⁴

Of the ascendancy class which has been dispossessed by way of the Wyndham Act, Vandeleur has taken to living in a more modest abode while collecting rent from his heavily mortgaged properties. He is represented as a decent and honest fellow with a genuine love of Ireland and its people. Crucially, this is partly explained by the fact that he regards himself as a blood descendant of the native Irish through intermarriage: 'He was heir to the blood, not only of the English 'colonists' but of the more ancient native families which had intermarried with these'.⁴⁵ In fact, Lane is referring to the Old English, many of whom intermarried with the native Irish and who would have a genuine interest in Ireland and share, to a large degree, the same cultural heritage.

Vandeleur's tolerance and good nature are counter-pointed by his bigoted cousin Nello and the conservative and inward-looking Protestant John McClenaghan who, by his own admission, has spent his life cocooned in his highly successful medical practice at

⁴³ Eoin Burke, 'Poetic Outrage: Aspects of Social Criticism in Modern Irish Poetry', in *A Small Nation's Contribution to the World: Essays on Anglo-Irish Literature and Language*, ed. by Donald E. Morse and others (Debrecen: Lajos Kossuth University, 1993) pp. 88-106 (p. 90).

⁴⁴ Lane, p. 126.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 126.

Fitzwilliam Square. Nello is representative of a privileged Protestant class who are bitter and resentful of Catholics particularly after the formation of the Free State. The narrator puts it succinctly: 'She saw the perfervid patriotism of the younger Gaels as the cloak of self-interest: she despised the very race amongst which she was an alien sojourner, and failed to see that there was nothing elevating in contempt'.⁴⁶

For his part, McClenaghan detests the idea of mixed marriage and stresses the importance of 'the selectiveness of breeding'.⁴⁷ His abhorrence of Felix's and Helen's marriage – a deliberate mis-match by Lane of a member of a deeply entrenched Protestant family with an 'avowed' Catholic republican – underlines the importance of endogamy to Protestants as they attempt to preserve their identity and also emphasises the divisive effects of mixed marriages on immediate families. In her seminal work *Prejudice and Tolerance in Ulster*, Rosemary Harris stresses the impact of mixed marriages on kinship:

Most important was the fact that tensions were set up between [the husband in a mixed marriage] and his kinsfolk, especially between them and his wife, that put all normal kin-based contacts between them out of the question.⁴⁸

In the eyes of McClenaghan, his sister, Helen 'did not behave like a Protestant',⁴⁹ when she married a Catholic. As a consequence she was thereafter outcast by her immediate family, leading the couple to live firstly in Canada and then in London. Although Helen or Felix as characters are not developed to any great extent by Lane, their relationship, nonetheless, emphasises a difference in culture or outlook between Catholics and Protestants. Catholic Felix is uncouth and leads a double life in that he is both a respected London journalist and also a bearer of dark and extreme Irish republican ideals; by contrast, his Protestant wife is educated, reserved and more pertinently, obsequious to him.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 86.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 56.

⁴⁸ Rosemary Harris, *Prejudice and Tolerance in Ulster: A Study of Neighbours and 'Strangers' in Border County* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1972), p. 143.

⁴⁹ Lane, p. 148.

Vandeleur did not regard his marriage to Tessie as a giant leap as 'he was inclined to believe that religious divergence was not a serious matter'.⁵⁰ He viewed the religious divide as superfluous, since he shared a nationalist outlook with his partner. Crucially though, there is a clear sense that Vandeleur regarded his marriage as essential from a communal integration point of view and as such would be to the betterment of a Protestant community that was at once declining and in a state of paralysis. The narrator explains his reasoning: 'with her he might find, after all, some corrective to the inertia and brainlessness which has set in amongst his own class in the south'.⁵¹ Or put this another way, Vandeleur's decision to marry Tessie was grounded in a belief that Protestants might have a brighter future in the Free State were they to intermarry with Catholics.

In any event, the marriage fails and Vandeleur's entrapment in it is the defining metaphor of the novel. Vandeleur is left in a Free State double-bind; the law of the land will not allow him to divorce his wife and the law of her Church will not countenance it either. The narrator outlines his predicament: 'Emotion having once betrayed him, and its aftermath fastening him forever in a bondage cemented by the laws of the country and of his wife's religion'.⁵² Essentially, Lane represents the Church and state position on divorce as in unison which further emphasises the notion of a catholicised Free State: 'His English lawyers told him, as they had told him before, that while he kept any domicile in Ireland he had no legal release. Teresa's spiritual directors decreed for him neither religious release nor legal'.⁵³ Tessie, for her part, summarily dismisses his yearning for a civil dissolution the marriage by referring to divorce simply as 'pagan wickedness'.⁵⁴

Through this unhappy marriage and Vandeleur's dilemma, Lane interrogates the relationship between southern Protestants and the Free State. In effect, Partition itself left many Protestants south of the border in an unlikely and forced marriage with Catholics which was further strained by conflicting attitudes to issues like divorce. In 1925 both houses of the Oireachtas amended Standing Orders so as to prevent the

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 55.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 55.

⁵² Ibid., p. 56.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 242.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 141.

introduction of Bills of Divorce after the formation of the Free State.⁵⁵ While many Protestants were undoubtedly as conservative in relation to such matters as Catholics, they justifiably felt that a Catholic moral code was being imposed on them. Essentially, some government decisions clearly encouraged and reinforced the divisions between the communities. In this regard, the views of Trinity College TD Professor Thrift's views on divorce in the Free State are noteworthy: 'the government were [sic] raising further barriers between minority and majority as well as hardening the partitionist divide between north and south'.⁵⁶ In Lane's novel, both parties in the marriage who are representative in part of their wider communities have conflicting views on divorce. Moreover, that Vandeleur is effectively trapped in it mirrors the relationship which many southern Protestants had with the Free State.

Under the conditions associated with obtaining a dispensation for a mixed marriage Gay, the daughter of Vandeleur and Tessie, is raised and educated in the Catholic religion of her mother. If writers discussed in the previous chapter including O'Donovan and Francis were heavy-handed in their treatment of this issue, focusing on the overbearing nature of the Church and fears of a loss of Protestant identity, Lane's engagement with it is more nuanced. Vandeleur's sense of loss, having been excluded from his daughter's life as a result of her religion, is acute and painful. The point is forcefully made by the narrator who observes that 'their shared religion [Gay and her mother] bound them in a common tie, setting them apart from him'⁵⁷ and this is further underlined in a conversation between Vandeleur and McClenaghan:

'My daughter has had the most rigid continuity in her religious education, but all from her mother's side, of course'.

'I don't want to become personal, but that seems to me to be the saddest case of all'.⁵⁸

Apart from this brief depiction of the issue of the religious upbringing of children of mixed marriages, in *The Trains go South* Lane places most emphasises on what she

⁵⁵ G.W. Hogan, 'Law and Religion: Church – State Relations in Ireland from Independence to the Present Day', *The American Journal of Comparative Law*, 35, No.1, (1987) 47-96, p. 51.
<<http://www.jstor.org/stable/840163>> [accessed 14 March 2012]

⁵⁶ Fanning, p. 56.

⁵⁷ Lane, p. 251.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 152.

perceives as a cultural difference between Catholics and Protestants within the Free State. She suggests that the cultural divide between Catholics and Protestants may be more entrenched and may run deeper than the religious divide. Catholics are shown to be unsavoury by-products of the new state while Protestants, on the other hand, are morally upright. The unhappy marriage at the novel's centre not only reflects the uneasy relationship between Catholics and Protestants, but there is also an implicit suggestion that as Vandeleur is trapped in it, Protestants will have no choice but to adapt to a culture which many of them find alien.

Conclusion

The novels by Peadar O'Donnell and Patrick MacGill that I briefly examined at the beginning of this chapter foreground the political implications of inter-faith relationships. Located in the recent past, both *The Knife* and *Helen Spenser* promote the possibility of peace and reconciliation between the Protestant and Catholic communities in Ireland by using mixed marriages as rudimentary metaphors.

The fiction of Hoult and Lane, by contrast, uses mixed marriages to advance a swingeing critique of Free State Ireland. Hoult interrogates unquestioning adherence to any creed, whilst depicting the emergent state as conservative, oppressively Catholic and pre-occupied with the notion of establishing a unique identity. The marriage in *Holy Ireland* is a threat to all three of these supposed values or aspirations; it questions conservatism; it flies in the face of the Catholic Church; and threatens the creation of a separate identity to Britain. Moreover, Hoult also suggests that it matters not who you marry if the basic values or principles of the state come up short. Margaret condemns herself by marriage itself, the implication of this being that had she married a Catholic within the Free State the novel might have had a similar ending.

Lane sees the formation of the Free State as sounding the death knell for the Protestant minority, and as an obstacle rather than a catalyst for better communal relations. In *The Trains go South*, questionable morals or values and the conservatism of southern Catholics are blamed for the failure of the marriage and Vandeleur's unhappiness. In effect, the marriage in the novel is used to underline what R.F.Foster refers to as the

'cultural chauvinism and insularity of the Free State'.⁵⁹ Crucially though, the fact that Protestant Vandeleur remains trapped in this marriage suggests that the political architecture of Free State has yet to recognise other cultures or values.

⁵⁹ Foster, R.F., p. 535.

Chapter Four

'Catholics shouldn't go out with Protestant Girls':¹

The Catholic Church as the agency of destruction in the inter-faith romance.

The architects of Partition in 1922 effectively created a sectarian state in Northern Ireland by establishing a Unionist government, and ensuring that Protestants held a majority over Catholics. However, while the island was divided politically, the main Churches regarded it as a united entity and continued to function on an all-Ireland basis. There are twenty-six Catholic dioceses within the whole island² some of which even straddle both sides of the border, and the Catholic Primate of All Ireland sits in Armagh in Northern Ireland, as does the head of the episcopal Church of Ireland.³

During the period dealt with in this chapter – the 1940s and 1950s – the Catholic Church was at the zenith of its powers and deeply permeated all aspects of the lives of its laity. Catholics were obliged to attend the holy sacrifice of the mass every Sunday and on Holy days of obligation; they also attended other forms of worship such as parish missions, pilgrimages, processions, benediction, Forty Hours Novenas, and the Stations of the Cross in large numbers.⁴ South of the border, the Catholic Church's involvement in state matters such as censorship, education, hospitals and health, and various controversies such as the Mother and Child scheme is well known and has been extensively documented. It also impinged on state matters in Northern Ireland and, as in the South, was particularly active in the area of education where it established and controlled numerous schools and colleges. Daithí Ó Corráin has argued that 'a catholic ethos was the *sine qua non* of a "proper education"' at this time, and has observed that

¹ Brian Moore, *The Feast of Lupercal* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1958) p. 92.

² Tom Inglis, *Moral Monopoly: The Catholic Church in Modern Irish Society* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan Ltd., 1987), p. 34.

³ Richard Rose, *Governing Without Consensus: An Irish perspective* (London: Faber and Faber, 1971) p. 249.

⁴ Louise Fuller, *Irish Catholicism since 1950: The Undoing of a Culture* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 2002), p. 20.

'given the polarised nature of society in Northern Ireland, school ethos had even greater import as a means of sustaining a community that was both Catholic and nationalist'.⁵ In Northern Ireland the Church was also heavily involved in the running of hospitals and various social justice initiatives such as housing or civil rights.⁶ The Catholic Church wielded huge influence North and South of the border in both state affairs and personal religious worship. As Rev. M. O'Halloran, administrator of City Quay parish, Dublin, succinctly described the state of Irish Catholicism in the early 1950s, 'we are living in an atmosphere steeped in the faith'.⁷ Moreover, in terms of mixed marriages during this period, the Catholic Church was unequivocal in its promotion of endogamy:

The clergy will, therefore, in accordance with the mind of the Church, exercise a particular vigilance in this matter. They will instruct the faithful concerning the dangers of mixed marriages, and strive, in all prudence and clarity, to ensure that Catholics marry Catholics.⁸

In the three novels analysed in this chapter, Brian Moore's *The Feast of Lupercal*, Anne Crone's *Bridie Steen* and *Red Is the Port Light* by Joseph Tomelty the Protestant and Catholic communities are shown to be both deeply divided and endogamous, though not hermetically sealed. This is evident from the fact that the protagonists show a willingness, however ephemeral, to form a personal relationship with a religious 'other'. All three narratives are set in Northern Ireland against a background of sectarian strife and political tension, but my intention here is to examine these relationships in terms of religious rather than political transgressions. It should also be noted, however, that 'religion' as it appears in these novels can be seen to encompass personal devotion, collective conscience, identity or stereotype.

Each of the novels emphasises the oppressive power of the Catholic Church particularly in terms of mixed marriages and, in turn, depicts that Church as the primary agency of destruction in the relationships. This could be seen as somewhat evasive on the part of the authors, given that the Protestant Churches held equally contemptuous views of inter-faith personal relationships. Nevertheless, the Catholic Church, saw itself as the

⁵ Ó Corráin, p. 122.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 135-145.

⁷ Fuller, p. 19.

⁸ 'Instruction Concerning Mixed Marriages'. Issued by John Charles McQuaid, Archbishop of Dublin, Primate of Ireland, 20th day of April, 1966. This document is marked: 'Confidential: for the Clergy only'

moral guardian of all of Ireland, and regarded mixed marriages as an attack on the family which it considered to be the bedrock of Irish society. In particular, Moore's depiction of this Catholic power and of that Church's determination to protect its reputation while 'avoiding scandal' has contemporary relevance.⁹

Another subtle but potent agency of destruction which is represented in the novels is that of *habitus* – that is, the collective religious consciousness of both communities.¹⁰ Given Northern Ireland's chequered history it is arguable that *habitus* is more pronounced there than in the southern state. *Habitus* is best described as a member of either community 'feeling like' a Catholic or a Protestant.¹¹ Though unseen, this 'collective consciousness' can create perhaps the strongest barrier between communities, and its manifestation is evident in the texts when some characters look upon those of different religious persuasion as 'other'. While *habitus* can be enhanced through Church doctrine, it is also indirectly inherited through families and social groupings, as may be discerned from the high value that some characters in the texts place upon the specific religious grouping of their ancestors. It is, perhaps, this 'collective consciousness' more than anything else that renders mixed relationships such a complex issue. In the three novels discussed in this chapter, we see how the minds of the Catholic laity have been influenced and moulded since childhood by the Church, resulting in innately negative perceptions of inter-faith relationships arising from the incompatibility of these relationships with Church teaching and the sense that these will compromise religious and social identity in some way.

The novels show how Protestants in particular look to religion more as an identity than as a spiritual belief system. If they do not practise their faith with the same fervour as Catholics, their Protestantism remains hugely important to them. This suggests, perhaps accurately, an increased sense of Protestant vulnerability after Partition and the

⁹ The report into allegations and suspicions of child sexual abuse in the Archdiocese of Dublin in 2009 states: 'The Dublin Archdiocese's preoccupations in dealing with cases of child sexual abuse, at least until the mid-1990s, were the maintenance of secrecy, the avoidance of scandal, the protection of the reputation of the Church, and the preservation of its assets. All other considerations, including the welfare of children and justice for victims, were subordinated to these priorities', *Commission of Investigation: Report into the Catholic Archdiocese of Dublin*, Part 1, p. 4.

¹⁰ Pierre Bourdieu, 'Legitimation and Structured Interests in Weber's Sociology of Religion', in *Max Weber, Rationality and Modernity*, ed. by Sam Whimster and Scott Lash (London: Allen and Unwin, 1987), pp. 112-136.

¹¹ Tom Inglis, 'Religion, identity, state and society' in *The Cambridge companion to modern Irish culture*, ed. by Joe Cleary and Claire Connolly (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 59-77 (p. 70).

formation of the Free State. In each of the novels, significantly, it is a Protestant character who is seen to ascend to a position above bigotry, or to recognise the futility of sectarianism, perhaps reflecting common stereotypes whereby Catholics were often regarded as troublesome and uneducated. Conversely, the Catholic community in *The Feast of Lupercal* regard the only female Protestant character as a moral degenerate. It is also noteworthy that Moore and Tomelty (both Catholic writers) fail to make a distinction between different varieties of Protestantism whilst Crone, a Protestant author, differentiates between Protestants and non-conformists.

Finally, the three novels are infused with a pervasive and visual Catholicism, represented by symbols, iconography, and sacraments. This panoply in itself goes some way towards uniting the Catholic communities in the novels whilst simultaneously isolating Protestant groupings. In *Bridie Steen* in particular, these symbols are seen to offer comfort to some Catholics but repulse most Protestants. The ubiquity of these symbols in the three novels is represented as a form of self-indulgence on the part of the Catholic community, strengthening the Catholic *habitus* and accentuating sectarian divisions, depicting Catholicism as based more on routine and practice than on spiritual conviction. Above all else, Catholics are represented in the narratives as following unquestionably the doctrine of a power-wielding Church.

Brian Moore's pessimistic and somewhat bitter novel *The Feast of Lupercal* is set in 1950s Belfast in an intensely Catholic community, with the staunchly Catholic Ardcath College at its centre. This is significant in that it was largely through the Catholic controlled educational system that the Catholic establishment tightened its grip on Irish society. Diarmuid Devine is a stereotypical middle-class teacher at Ardcath who meets a young and ebullient Protestant, Una Clarke. She has had an affair with a married man in Dublin, and is sent by her aunt to what she perceives to be the sanctuary of Belfast, in order to take up a nursing position at the Protestant Memorial hospital. Devine, despite his misgivings with regards to her Protestantism and her affair, falls in love with Una and intends to marry her. Plans begin to unravel after a disastrous night at Devine's flat, when he proves to be impotent and Clarke gets drunk. Although his impotency can be traced to Catholic Church attitudes towards sexuality in the 1950s, Devine is ultimately faced with the choice between his love for Clarke and preserving the name of the Church. He takes the side of the Church, and she departs for London. This is not

Moore's best novel – it fails to offer a balanced representation of both communities and some of the characters, like Tim Heron are underdeveloped – but *The Feast of Lupercal* is largely well written and highlights the oppressive nature of 1950s Irish Catholicism.

The Catholic *habitus* or collective religious consciousness is clearly demonstrated at the engagement party at the beginning of the novel. Ominously, the narrator remarks that the windows on the street 'thrust up and repel the stranger'.¹² The Catholic community appears in the novel as a detached social entity within an overwhelmingly Protestant city. The insularity of this community is reinforced by the fact that everybody present at the party is Catholic, apart from Una Clarke who is regarded as other. The host, her bigoted uncle Heron, bemoans the fact that none of the clergy have graced the occasion but is later appeased by the arrival of Father Alphonsus McSwiney (Ardcath's official representative), Father Rowe (the Heron family's parish priest), and Father Fulham. Meanwhile, the old spinsters pride themselves on the fact that they are familiar with the religious genealogy of all those present. There is a clear sense that Clarke is an intruder; she is not just the only Protestant at this parochial social gathering, she has not even been invited. The change in narrative style from free indirect discourse to a more authoritative voice illuminates Devine's view of Protestants:

For in Devine's world, Protestants were the hostile establishment, leaders with the Scots and English surnames, hard blunt businessmen who asked you what school you went to and, on hearing your answer, refused the job. He feared them as a Spanish Protestant might fear cardinals: their power was great, their intolerance absolute. To them, Catholics were a hated minority, a minority who threatened their rule.¹³

The reference to *Spanish* Protestants is noteworthy as they were the minority grouping in a largely Catholic country during the Spanish Inquisition – the opposite of the situation in Belfast. Moore appears to suggest that wielding power is not exclusive to Catholics or Protestants. While Protestants hold the majority in Belfast, the situation is reversed at the house party, where Catholics hold the majority. In this instance, Clarke is paralleled with a *Spanish* Protestant.

¹² Moore, p. 22.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

By emphasising Clarke's position as an outsider in this society, Moore is, in fact, gesturing towards an unlikely or unsuccessful mixed marriage. He achieves this by staging a play within the novel, where the theatre company, like the engagement party, acts as a microcosm of the Belfast Catholic community. As Devine is aware of Clarke's acting ambitions he invites her to join the cast. However, Father McSwiney, who had effectively forced him to accept the position as director, confirms that the company is a 'Catholic group' and that Fergus Deegan 'will help with the hall. He's a big man in the Knights'.¹⁴ As if attempting to break free from the shackles of his faith, Devine suggests that they put on Synge's *Well of the Saints* rather than the kitchen comedy, *Mulligan's Will*, favoured by the Church. The Catholic Church, unsurprisingly, prevails. During rehearsals, when Devine stands in temporarily for the lead actor, they confirm, in character, their love for one another:

'I love you, Louis, I love you, she whispered [...]

'I love you. Yes, that's the line'.

'I love you, she said. I want to marry you, so I do'.¹⁵

Clarke is later summarily dismissed from the company by the Catholic production committee because she was 'mixed up with a married man in Dublin' and 'there was something about her being a Protestant'.¹⁶ In Synge's *The Well of the Saints*, the blind man, Martin, has two illusions: that he and Mary make a handsome couple and that the world is full of wonder and delight. Reflecting Synge's play, Devine and Clarke declare their love for one another, and Devine at least, for his part, intends marrying her. However, his desire for a long and happy relationship, albeit with a Protestant woman, is exposed as a fleeting illusion. As the gift of sight shatters the dreams of Martin and Mary, the insularity of Catholic Belfast shatters those of Clarke and Devine. Clarke's dismissal suggests that an inter-faith relationship which may result in a mixed marriage is not acceptable to the entire community. This is underpinned by the fact that the theatre company comprises both Church and laity.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 44.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 69.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 98.

Many of the minor characters also regard Clarke as 'other', emphasising the Catholic *habitus* and underlining the demarcation between both communities. The church sexton, who admits Clarke and Devine to his Church so that they can rehearse the aforementioned play, also regards Protestants as other and makes reference to the fact that there is little integration between the communities: 'He thought, as he sometimes did, of the work a sexton would have in a prod church. It must be a part-time job with *them*. But he had never known a Protestant well enough to ask [...] nor', the narrator remarks acidly 'would he'.¹⁷ Furthermore, Devine's colleague Tim Moloney and Tusker, a student at Ardcath College, not only stereotype Protestants but repeatedly associate Protestant women with immorality: 'Hot stuff [...] I had a friend up in Dublin used to take her sister out. He had a rare time of it [...] Protestant and hot stuff [...] hot stuff Protestant'.¹⁸ This conflation of immorality with religion underpins Tom Inglis's argument that: 'Religious identity was maintained and developed not just by different practices and beliefs, but by constituting the other as *morally inferior*'.¹⁹

Despite his indoctrination, Devine transgresses the religious divide by falling in love with a Protestant. Ironically, this stems from Catholic teaching. Although this novel is set in Northern Ireland, some idea of the Church's high regard for marriage and by extension, the family can be gleaned from the fact that it used some influence to have their importance enshrined in the Irish Constitution of 1937. From the outset, Devine appears to be obsessed with marriage, often referring to the marriage of his parents or sister. Indeed, a photograph of his parents' wedding which hangs in his flat, acts as a constant reminder. Whilst the Catholic Church emphasised the importance of marriage, it was marriage on the Church's terms. Moore's depiction of the tedium of the stereotypical middle-class engagement party serves to underline the type of marriage most favoured by the Church. Devine's transgressive relationship is motivated by a combination of the values promoted by his Church and his own natural instinct to procreate. Lust, however, does not enter the equation, and Devine ultimately appears as a pathetic figure at the hands of a powerful monolithic Church.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 67 (Italics mine)

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 51

¹⁹ Inglis, *Moral Monopoly*, p. 70. (Italics mine)

Devine is deeply uncomfortable with the fact that Clarke has had an affair with a married man, and his discomfort is intrinsically linked to his Catholicism. At one point he, like his colleague Tim Moloney and his student Tusker before him, conflates her perceived immorality with her Protestantism when he thinks: 'Protestant Girl. Fast'.²⁰ Devine is compelled to make her apparent misdemeanour more acceptable to him and his best effort is to conclude that her *southern* Protestantism is less extreme than Ulster Protestantism:

Mr. Devine had heard it said, of course, that Ulster Protestants were atypical: in England, and even in Dublin, things were not quite so bad. There, Protestants were unbigoted pagans, enjoying a freedom which Catholics would never tolerate. To this world, to this pagan Protestantism [...] Una Clarke, must surely belong. It changed everything [...] Among people like that an affair with a married man was possible.²¹

Devine thus recognises her freedom as a Protestant and his lack of freedom as a Catholic. Overcompensating for this awareness, he later asserts: 'I'm pretty free dammit all, I'm quite a heretic in many ways. You'd be surprised how many Catholics are'.²² Here and elsewhere, Devine, in order to impress Clarke feels compelled to exhibit bravado. This only serves to underline the fact that Devine is very self-consciously Catholic, however.

Clarke's attitude towards her own faith stands in sharp contrast to Devine's attitude to Catholicism. Through her carefree attitude to life which is free from religious hang-ups, Moore shows her to be above sectarianism. Denis Sampson highlights some of Moore's own comments regarding Protestantism and Catholicism and the question of free will rather than God's will. According to Sampson, Moore argued that Protestants born under Reformation ideals felt that they had a duty to act for themselves, whereas Catholics were born with the belief that an external force would control their destinies, so they are unwilling to act themselves.²³ The truth of these ideological differences is confirmed by Clarke 'We're completely different types. I want to fight against what life

²⁰ Moore, p. 51.

²¹ Ibid., p. 37.

²² Ibid., p. 138.

²³ Denis Sampson, *The Chameleon Novelist* (Dublin: Marino Books, 1998), p. 108.

is doing to me, and you're afraid to'.²⁴ While Devine lives in fear of his Church and is unable to act for himself, Clarke is a vivacious risk-taker whose ambitions, regardless of the fact that she has been sent to Belfast to take up a conventional position as a trainee nurse, lie in an acting career. The narrator's description of her as, 'wild and unfinished' and 'rebellious' are in stark contrast to Diarmuid Devine, B.A. who is dressed in 'old flannels' with his 'father's watch chain in his waistcoat'.²⁵ Furthermore, Clarke is well aware of the restrictions placed on Devine by his Catholicism: 'They [Catholics] don't seem free to me. They have to believe in certain things or suffer the consequences'.²⁶ Clarke ultimately decides to leave Belfast for the freedom of London because she is tired of 'weak-kneed whiners';²⁷ this weariness may be traced to Devine's Catholicism.

Whether Catholic or Protestant, educational institutions in Ireland wielded enormous power and influence with regards to the faith or beliefs of their members. In *The Feast of Lupercal* the Catholic establishment is represented by Ardcath College, and is seen to exert a huge impact on Devine's future. Father McSwiney puts it succinctly: 'Ardcath was not an English school, thank God, it was Irish and Catholic'.²⁸ Devine, as an employee of the College, is aware of the risk that he is taking by dating a Protestant girl: 'If he married her, he would lose all chances of advancement. They might even ask him to resign'.²⁹ His fate, however, is sealed when he is put on trial by the clerics at the college. The Catholic establishment, as represented by the president, Dr Keogh, and the dean of discipline, Father McSwiney, do not openly condemn Devine's relationship with a Protestant, since their primary concern is with protecting the image and reputation of the Church (it should be pointed out that 'avoiding scandal' is actually enshrined in Canon Law).³⁰ Furthermore, by ascribing the defining moment in Devine's future to a trial within an Irish and Catholic educational establishment, Moore gestures towards the control that this Church enjoys over a significant element of education in Ireland.

²⁴ Moore, p. 189.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 57.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 137.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 136.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 198.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 111.

³⁰ *Canon Law: A Text and Commentary*, Ed., by T.Lincoln Bouscaren and others (Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1963), p. 688.

Related to this is the internal power struggle among the clerics within Ardcath. Whilst McSwiney is anxious to take over as president, the much older incumbent, Keogh, is equally determined to hold on to his position. The status quo is clearly maintained by the outcome of the trial: Devine, under severe pressure from the authorities, protects the Church's reputation by agreeing to return to his job under the pretence that nothing untoward has happened, while the old order, as represented by Keogh, maintains its position of power.³¹

If the direct intervention of the clerics at the trial effectively seals Devine's fate, the actions and attitudes of the laity also conspire against the success of the inter-faith relationship. In this regard, Jo O'Donoghue has argued that 'All the Catholics, not just the timorous Devine, allow themselves to be bullied by the powerful men in soutanes [...] Devine is completely denied the right to follow his own personal belief in loving Una Clarke'.³² This assertion is only partly true. The pressure exerted on Devine to give up his Protestant girlfriend is a collective Catholic effort, which underlines the power of the Catholic Church as an organisation: his Catholic landlady threatens to evict him; his Catholic colleague, Heron is incensed by the relationship; and the students at the Catholic college write lewd rhymes about the relationship on the walls of the toilets. Through their *habitus*, they are complicit with the 'powerful men in soutanes' in the bullying of Clarke and Devine.

Devine accepts the sentence handed down by the clerics and his own mindset undeniably contributes to this acceptance. In keeping with Catholic teaching in 1950s Ireland, Devine sees sex as sinful, and regards Clarke's affair and her drunkenness as 'mortal sins'. His flat is adorned with holy pictures, one of which is of the Divine Infant of Prague. The description of his sexual advance is platitudinous: 'He made a pilgrimage towards her', while the eyes of the Virgin and Child look down upon him with 'reproach for human waywardness'.³³ Moore is clearly at pains, almost to the detriment of his work, to underscore the effect that an overbearing and oppressive Church has on the mind of his protagonist. Devine's indoctrination makes a relationship

³¹ Even though Keogh is elderly and clearly out of touch with the demands of his role as Ardcath's president, his preference is for personal scholarship and revising 'a history of diocesan organisations'. That Moore represents the Catholic Church as unwilling to execute change has undoubtedly contemporary significance.

³² Jo O'Donoghue, *Brian Moore: A Critical Study* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1990), p. 59.

³³ Moore, p. 144.

with Una impossible, as both are adulterous sinners and she is a Protestant. The fact that Devine, despite his promise, refuses to turn up at the railway station in order to say goodbye to Clarke, as she knew he would not, bears testimony to this. Both, rather depressingly, realise that Devine is a life-long slave to Catholicism.

Although the novel is set entirely in a Catholic community in Belfast, Moore foregrounds the inherent difficulties faced by both Catholics and Protestants in inter-faith relationships. That the Catholic Church does not overtly condemn the possible mixed marriage should not be taken as anything close to a tacit approval. As a force in the novel the Church is oppressive and enduring, and is seen to exert its will on all Catholics in Belfast. The insularity of that community is seen as a defining factor in preventing Clarke from forming a successful relationship with Devine. Unsurprisingly, she departs for London and life returns to normal both in the community and at Ardcath College. By setting the novel in an entirely Catholic community and by restoring the status quo, Moore suggests that this community will remain an endogamous one for the foreseeable future.

Anne Crone's novel *Bridie Steen* is set in the border county of Fermanagh in post-Partition Northern Ireland. As in *The Feast of Luperca*, Catholicism, more than Protestantism, is shown to exert a destructive influence on an inter-faith relationship. A religious *habitus* is once more clearly evident for both Catholics and Protestants. In Moore's novel this manifests itself in the insularity of the Catholic community and in Ardcath College, but in *Bridie Steen* a Catholic *habitus* may be observed in spiritual practice, iconography and the indoctrination of the titular protagonist. Protestants in the novel demonstrate a strong sense of cultural identity through their historical links to the Ulster Plantation. The character of Alicia, who represents the non-conformist Protestant community in the novel, repeatedly affirms the significance of her ancestors landing in Ulster in the 1600s. This novel reinforces the notion that for Catholics religious faith is concerned with the adherence to Church teaching and practices such as mass-going and receiving the sacraments, whilst Protestants, though observant of Church teaching, place a greater value on religion as a means of identity.

Bridie, the Catholic protagonist, is herself of a mixed marriage and has the Protestant 'drop'; her father was the son of a middle-class Protestant, while her mother was a

Catholic maid who died in childbirth. As laid down by the Catholic Church she is raised by her Catholic aunt, the bigoted Rose Anne. Later, Bridie falls in love with her second cousin, William Henry, a Protestant. They decide to marry, but matters are frustrated by the insistence of Bridie's paternal grandmother, Alicia Musgrave, that she convert to Protestantism. Bridie is torn between 'desire' and 'conscience'; she is in love with her fiancé, but her Catholic conscience ultimately prevents her going through with the marriage.³⁴

Crone offers a more symmetrical representation of both communities than Moore. Bridie's aunt, the Catholic bigot Rose Anne, is balanced by her equally bigoted Protestant grandmother, Alicia. The unseen parish priest, who ultimately enjoys a pivotal role in the destruction of the relationship, is similarly balanced by the more visible but less influential Protestant minister, Mr. Archer. Even the symbols of the respective faiths are represented equally: Bridie is fixated with her beads and constantly turns to them for comfort, whilst the Bible, though old and dusty and little used, is a powerful and enduring symbol for the Protestant community. As Bridie clearly represents the Irish female working-class Catholic of the 1940s and William Henry, the industrious middle-class Protestant community, the relationship transgresses class as well as religious divides.

The religious *habitus* in the novel is broadly demonstrated through the use of stereotypes which not only underline class difference but also foreground the schismatic nature of inter-faith relationships. Interestingly, Marianne Elliot has argued that, 'Protestant culture had subsumed Elizabethan stereotypes of the Irish and transposed them to the Catholics'.³⁵ She has also argued that communities can strengthen their collective consciousness by looking at each other in terms of such deep-rooted stereotypes, often part of an ancestral inheritance, rather than constituting a reaction to a particular event or person at a particular time.³⁶ Rosemary Harris, on the other hand, in her sociological study found that these stereotypes were clearly rooted in historical fact – as Protestants tended to assume that Catholics were poor, and Catholics often assumed

³⁴ Anne Crone, *Bridie Steen* (London: William Heinemann Ltd, 1949), p. 232.

³⁵ Marianne Elliot, *The Catholics of Ulster: A History* (London: Allen Lane, 2000), p. 361.

³⁶ Elliot, *When God took Sides*, p. 14.

that Protestants were prosperous.³⁷ In *Bridie Steen*, Catholics are represented as being from the lower classes – uneducated, impoverished and living in fear of the local priest. Protestants, by contrast, are seen as educated and part of a prosperous middle-class. With reference to the common stereotype of Catholics being slovenly, Bridie’s ‘neat’ Protestant employer observes, ‘the awkward-looking way with her’.³⁸ Similarly, the references in *The Feast of Lupercal* to Catholics as ‘priest-ridden’ and ‘raised in ignorance like sheep’ are mirrored in Crone’s novel by Alicia’s words to Bridie: ‘We Protestants judge for ourselves and act accordingly. You are not free’.³⁹ The fact that *both* communities use stereotypes emphasises the fact that the difficulties associated with mixed marriage are not unique to either group.

Bridie may be seen as a stereotypical Irish Catholic of the 1940s and is certainly compatible with deValera’s reflections on ‘comely maidens’ and the rural idyll.⁴⁰ A servant in a Protestant household, impoverished and uneducated, she is nevertheless good-humoured and enjoys the outdoor life – the bog being a particularly favoured refuge. We never see her dancing at a crossroads, but she is God-fearing and idealistic, having little interest in material considerations.

William Henry, on the other hand, is Bridie’s antithesis. With a higher social standing in the community, he is employed as the manager of the local store and is a stereotypical Protestant, financially astute with a reputation for reliability and hard work. He obtains perhaps the greatest symbol of progress and modernity when he purchases a motor car. This portrayal is entirely at odds with his Catholic partner.

While the focal point of the narrative is the relationship between Bridie and William Henry, the mutual distrust of the Catholic and Protestant communities provides much of the drama in the novel. In her study Rosemary Harris sets out her reasons for focusing on close communal relationships:

In dealing with contacts between Protestants and Catholics we are dealing with that type of situation, found in certain racially and

³⁷ Harris, p. 149.

³⁸ Crone, p. 51.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 230.

⁴⁰ Diarmaid Ferriter, *The Transformation of Ireland 1900-2000* (London: Profile Books Ltd., 2004, repr., 2005), pp. 362-365.

ethnically divided societies, in which members of different groups have close relationships whilst remaining essentially separate [...] It seems to me that to understand this apparent paradox of intermingled yet separate populations it is essential to look closely at the patterns of interaction of individuals.⁴¹

Crone's novel reflects this theoretical framework. Bridie and William Henry's relationship upsets social or religious decorum, and this disruption radiates through the wider community. As a result it is often minor or peripheral characters who reveal most about wider issues such as sectarianism, cultural identity, or exogamy. This is particularly evident in the highly charged attitudes of a relatively minor Protestant character, Jerem, towards Catholics, Partition and the Free State. Jerem is representative, like John McClenaghan in *The Trains go South*, of those Protestants who considered themselves Irish, but whose allegiances lay with the British Crown; Jerem opposes Home Rule, and has served with the British forces in India and in the Great War.⁴² We also learn that during the Anglo-Irish war he patrolled the local roads in order to protect his fellow Protestants. Through this minor character, Crone suggests how the Protestant community turned in on itself prior to Partition, because of what they perceived as a threat from Catholics and a Catholic government. In such a vein, the critique of the Free State offered by the narrator of *Bridie Steen* echoes *The Trains go South*:

He [Jerem] would paint with indescribable vividness the plight of the Irish Protestant encircled by foes [...] As for the Irish Free State, which had emerged from those troublous times, Jerem could only show his contempt for it in no stronger way than by completely ignoring it. From its creation, the Ireland which lay girdled in blue mountains a few miles beyond the lough no longer existed for him. He had turned his back upon it [...] When directly questioned on the subject, he always answered that he 'had never put a foot across the Border and never would.'⁴³

⁴¹ Harris, p. ix.

⁴² Crone, p. 54.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp. 54-55.

Jerem's diatribe highlights the ways in which the border as a political construct divided communities and strained already fragile relationships on the ground, as some members of the Protestant community developed a siege mentality. Under these circumstances, communal integration or indeed, inter-faith relationships would be difficult, if not impossible. It is also noteworthy that Jerem paraphrases a Catholic priest to make a chilling observation with regards to their power – one with its own contemporary echoes: 'Give me the first seven years,' says the priest, 'and afterwards you can do what you like; the child belongs to me'.⁴⁴ Here Crone gestures towards Bridie's eventual capitulation at the hands of the Church.

The apparently cordial relationships in the novel between the rural Protestant and Catholic communities mask bitter sectarian undercurrents. At the outset, Crone's narrator is at pains to establish a community in which, as in Harris's framework, two groups co-exist, but share a deep unease when faced with one another's presence. The shift from free indirect discourse suggests that this is Crone's own view of the social milieu:

There were two kinds of people, Catholic and Protestants. They were people who lived close to one another, worked together, whose children learned and played together. Yet naturally, there flowed between them a river of darkness [...] The men whom Bridie watched cutting the turf in the bog were Protestants [...] Beneath her liking for these good-natured farmers, there existed in her a consciousness that she was born to shun them. She had already divined that to abhor Protestantism was as essential a part of the religion taught her as the telling of her beads. The Protestants, on their side, were united in defence of their creed. They were aloof.⁴⁵

The use of the word 'naturally' shows how deeply the divisions between the two communities have become entrenched, despite their overt cordiality. Bridie's 'consciousness that she was born to shun them' exemplifies her Catholic *habitus*. Even before the direct intervention of Rose Anne or the priest, she exhibits this when she

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 78.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 5.

remarks: 'There's no joining together for Protestants and Catholics'.⁴⁶ Bridie has a predisposition against mixed marriages, and like Moore, Crone shows that the religious divide is deeply engrained in both groups.

The Catholic and Protestant communities in *Bridie Steen* also reflect sociologist, Edward Moxon-Brown's argument which identifies endogamy as an important factor in maintaining communal boundaries.⁴⁷ For Alicia, Bridie's Protestant grandmother, it was bad enough for her son to marry a servant, but much worse that she was Catholic. Alicia, whose own family clearly advocated endogamy, regards Bridie's imminent marriage as an opportunity to bring a Catholic back into the Protestant fold. After the death of her first love Harry Musgrave, a Protestant whom she intended to marry, Alicia agreed to an arranged marriage with another Protestant. Related to this are her firm ties to the Ulster Plantation, to which she repeatedly alludes. The Musgraves, Alicia's ancestors, were Dissenters who arrived in Ulster at the time of the Plantation and 'rooted themselves in Fermanagh soil'.⁴⁸ The fact that the Protestant community in the novel is so intent on endogamy also suggests an awareness of their vulnerability. Many of those who arrived in Ulster, like those who arrived in New England, saw themselves as a chosen people and believed in the purity of their race.⁴⁹ In the eyes of a non-conformist like Alicia, a mixed marriage might somehow dilute this purity.

This vulnerability, as previously noted, was often due to the Catholic dictates in relation to mixed marriages, to which Mr. Archer, the Protestant minister, makes a thinly veiled reference. With one eye on the southern state, he encapsulates the perceived difficulties the Protestant community harbours with regard to those marriages. Alicia bemoans the fact that 'the hall used to be full' and that the 'old people have all died off', to which the minister responds solemnly that the problem is worse in the South, 'due to intermarriage'.⁵⁰

Like Una Clarke, William Henry's role appears to transcend the sectarian divide. Aware of Alicia's concerns, he nevertheless tries to convince Bridie that they can both live

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 220.

⁴⁷ Edward Moxon-Browne, *Nation, Class and Creed in Northern Ireland* (Aldershot: Gower, 1983) p. 129.

⁴⁸ Crone, p. 109.

⁴⁹ Elliot, *When God took Sides*, p. 121.

⁵⁰ Crone, pp. 194-195.

together as Catholic and Protestant (she does not share his idealism). William Henry's elevated position is underlined towards the end of the novel where Crone, despite the death of her protagonist, appears to offer a fleeting ray of hope to a divided community:

He turned with a passion swift as the lightning-flash and spoke such words as made all the men, Protestant and Catholic, look directly into his eyes [...] 'Cursed be our religion!' he cried. 'We fight about God and we have never known Him! We are poor mockeries of men with little jealous minds' [...] But helpless, each in his station doomed to play the part destiny and the social order had ordained for him.⁵¹

Bridie's Catholic stepmother Rose Anne, does not share this open-mindedness. She is responsible for Bridie's upbringing and for her indoctrination at the hands of her Church. The Catholic domestic backdrop of Rose Anne's house resembles Devine's flat in *The Feast of Lupercal*, being adorned with, 'the outer symbols of her faith': 'coloured prints of the Crucifixion', holy pictures and 'the little statue of the Virgin and Child'.⁵² Rose Anne, who wears holy medals and scapulars around her neck, continually attributes trivial happenings in her daily life to the 'beneficence or displeasure' of saints: if she finds something that she had lost, she thanks Saint Anthony, and if the potato crop fails she accepts that Saint Teresa is angry.⁵³ Crone here implies that Catholic religion is based on fatalism rather than true belief or spirituality. Furthermore, and again like Moore, she suggests Catholics have a blind and unquestioning devotion to their Church.

The role that Rose Anne plays in Bridie's eventual capitulation is significant. In Rose Anne's eyes, Bridie's mother committed a grave sin by marrying a Protestant and went on to serve a lengthy sentence in purgatory. From childhood, Bridie was made to associate sin with mixed marriage. Tom Inglis has emphasised the significance of the role of the mother in promoting Irish Catholicism.⁵⁴ The home was her powerbase, from which she prescribed Catholic dogma on behalf of the Church to husband, sons and daughters. The Irish mother can be seen, Inglis suggests, as an arm of the Church, a view reflected in Crone's novel as Rose Anne spends almost the entire novel in a

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 328.

⁵² Ibid., p. 10.

⁵³ Ibid., pp. 8-9.

⁵⁴ Inglis, *Moral Monopoly*. p. 188.

Catholic convent. Her role in *Bridie Steen*, although she is Bridie's aunt, is that of *mother*. Book-ending the novel, Rose Anne is responsible for Bridie's upbringing at the outset, and re-emerges at the end to remind her niece of her Catholic obligations regarding marriage to a Protestant. As I have already observed, Rose Anne as Bridie's guardian is obliged to raise her as a Catholic in keeping with Church dogma.

Rose Anne is balanced by Alicia, whose convictions are equally entrenched. Perhaps with the aim of impartiality, Crone is more concerned than Moore with how indoctrination can also play a role in the Protestant Church. Alicia's father attempted to indoctrinate her, albeit without success, by sending her to 'the hall' to be 'christianised'[sic].⁵⁵ By her own admission she absorbed an eclectic mix of scriptural facts but left with little religious understanding. Yet her Bible – a cornerstone of the Protestant faith – is hugely important to her. Essentially, Crone here distinguishes between non-conformists, regarded as 'Bible people', and mainstream Protestants such as Anglicans, who based their faith on reason, tradition and scripture.⁵⁶ For Alicia, the Bible undoubtedly has religious significance, but its real value may lie in its connections to the Reformation and subsequent notions of non-conformists as a chosen people. What is noteworthy about this is that she conflates her Bible, which has been in her family for generations, with her identity. She spells it out to Bridie:

It's the family Bible [...] Do you see those names? My father traced the family back and wrote in the names with their dates as far as he could make them out [...] He heard Wesley preach five miles from here and was converted. The Musgraves have been Nonconformists since then [...] I want you to honour this book, [...] not only because it is the word of God, but because it has belonged to the family so long. You are one of the family.⁵⁷

For Alicia, the Bible is not only the Word of God, but also reaffirms her status, albeit as a settler, within Ulster. However, as the novel is set in the 1940s – the era of Vatican I -

⁵⁵ Crone, p. 107.

⁵⁶ Interview with Rev. Andrew Smith, Presbyterian Minister at Dun Laoghaire, Co. Dublin [5 May 2009]

⁵⁷ Crone, pp. 133-134.

Bridie is perhaps understandably repulsed by ‘a bogey book which spelled doom and destruction to Catholics’.⁵⁸ Crone here underlines the power of the Catholic Church in establishing perceptions of its adherents: the Bible earned ‘bogey book’ status among Catholics after the Reformation when some believed that copies in the vernacular might undermine the authority of the Church.

Alicia’s conflation of the Bible with her ancestry and her identity renders her *habitus* more powerful. Her father’s inscription of the Musgrave family tree in the Bible, which for non-conformists is the only source of God’s authority, constitutes a serious attempt to secure the elevated status of the family, whilst the reference to Wesley is a misappropriation, given that Wesley’s primary concern was with the word of God and the spiritual well-being of people. For Alicia, however, the Bible is also a means to an end as she attempts to convert Bridie. Furthermore, and by her own admission, she is not a regular church-goer. This somewhat ambiguous relationship to her faith underlines the robustness of her *habitus*, as it reaffirms the notion that her Protestantism is grounded in more than just religious practice. It is described by the narrator in strikingly Bourdieu-like terms:

Alicia was not pious. She rarely gave a thought to religious matters, and her visits to the Nonconformist hall were irregular. But, apart from church-going, doctrine or Bible, for her, as for all the Musgraves who had gone before her, Protestantism stood, a simple, accepted necessity, interwoven with the pattern of her life. It was as invisible as the air, yet as all important. Without it you did not breathe. Without it you were not free.⁵⁹

There are a number of plausible reasons why Alicia insists that Bridie convert to Protestantism if she is to marry William Henry. She places great importance on property, and a conversion would leave her with a clear conscience so that she could bequeath her lands to a Protestant. Anti-popery is also an important factor; Alicia fears that some day, after her death, somebody might bring ‘plaster images and crucifixes’ to her farm. She also has a dread that Catholics might live on her estates in the future: ‘But the Musgraves wouldn’t rather have you, Bridie, if you weren’t a Protestant. Their

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 134.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 124.

home has always been Protestant. They would rise from their graves to curse me if I let in Rome'.⁶⁰ In these ways the character of Alicia reflects Marianne Elliott's observation: 'Anti-Popery became a defining principle of British and Irish Protestant identity, a mode of thought and key organizational principle over centuries'.⁶¹ Alicia's over-zealous attachment to her land is undoubtedly connected to her perhaps tenuous hold on her lands as a settler. In ascribing such importance to her family history, she is undoubtedly aware of the questionable circumstances surrounding the procurement of their land holdings during the Ulster Plantation.

Alicia's death paves the way for Bridie's marriage, and both Bridie and William Henry plan a trip to Belfast after the event. However, Rose Anne returns and spells out to Bridie the danger of marrying a Protestant: 'You would be mad to marry him, because no mixed marriage ever comes to good and he'd make your children Protestants'.⁶² Rose Anne's remarks are interesting. If the couple were to follow Catholic Church teaching, as already noted, the offspring of the marriage should be raised as Catholics. More likely however, is that Crone is referring to paternal supremacy which I discussed in detail in the main introduction. As such, under civil law William Henry, as father, would be legally entitled to raise any of his children in his own Protestant faith.

After her departure, Bridie is terrified by memories of saints, her crucifix, her confirmation and purgatory. Her fears are then fully crystallised by the arrival of the parish priest: 'But the thought of the priest would not be stifled. Her awe of him was part of her flesh and blood and bones, something that she had acquired as she had acquired the teeth in her head, *deeper even than love*'.⁶³ The narrator reaffirms Bridie's Catholic *habitus*; crucially more powerful than love, it is something that has been instilled in her since childbirth and extends beyond the confession box or pulpit. This also reflects the use of the word 'naturally', which, as I have suggested, indicates a deeply entrenched and long-held predisposition towards Catholicism. Despite her best efforts, and her wish to marry William Henry, she cannot abandon her Catholicism. In this struggle, she exemplifies the synthesis of blind reverence and fear that made up the mindset of many Irish Catholics.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 267.

⁶¹ Elliot, pp. 91-92

⁶² Crone, p. 231.

⁶³ Ibid., p. 323. (*Italics mine*).

Bridie's escape to the bog where her body is found the following day echoes the notion of the bog as a repository of Ireland's pre-Christian, pre-sectarian past. Before her journey there, the narrator refers to her as an 'Irish peasant' and a 'passionate, irreconcilable Celt' and to the 'peace' of the bog.⁶⁴ In the closing pages, Crone re-casts Bridie as a symbol of a vanished age and creates for her a non-sectarian space or somewhere that is free from religious constructs. Although Bridie's life has been blighted by the Catholic Church, her corpse and the bog in which it lies can be seen as metaphors for something greater or more enduring than local sectarian animosities.

Like Moore's Devine, Bridie follows her instincts and crosses the religious divide, only for her love to be frustrated by her innate predisposition against mixed marriages and her fear of the Church. Moreover, as in *The Feast of Lupercal*, the Catholic Church does not overtly condemn the inter-faith relationship; Bridie's Catholic conscience and Catholic upbringing ultimately prevent her from marrying a Protestant.

If Bridie's life is blighted by the perceived sins of her mother and father, the same can be said of the Catholic protagonist, Stephen Durnan, in Joseph Tomelty's *Red Is the Port Light*. Here again the Catholic Church is shown to have a corrosive effect on an inter-faith relationship. The mixed marriage in the novel, between Protestant Robert and Catholic Susan, is happy and enduring until she becomes ill and insists on the religious conversion of her husband. Their relationship is mirrored by another in the novel, between Stephen, a lapsed Catholic, and Winnie Norton who is a Catholic with psychopathic tendencies. Winnie takes to wandering the fields alone, eating yellow herbs and indulging in lengthy periods of silence. The relationship ends when Stephen strangles her in the kitchen of their home. These parallel plots sit uneasily together, and the narrative is arguably made up of two novels: this story of Stephen and Winnie, and that of Robert and Susan King, who have been long and happily married and whose marriage is now thrown into crisis by her illness and religious doctrine. However, the melodrama of Stephen's and Winnie's relationship also highlights some important elements of the more conventional relationship of Robert and Susan.

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 326.

Tomelty foregrounds issues which have been already discussed in the novels of Moore and Crone: the Catholic *habitus* is clearly evident. Like *The Feast of Lupercal* the narrative is based entirely in a Catholic community, with Robert an outsider. Catholicism, is again represented by symbols, iconography and sacraments. Finally, both Catholics and Protestants are seen to look at one another through stereotype. As in *The Feast of Lupercal* and *Bridie Steen*, the stereotype of the poor and enslaved Catholic is prominent, but in this novel it is voiced by the lapsed Catholic Stephen:

That was the curse of the poor, this stupid fatalism. They took no action or say in the making of their own lives. Everything was directed by God. God's will was strong and there was no moving against it. If God willed they lived in poverty, they did so. If God willed they should be dirty, they made no effort to clean themselves.⁶⁵

Catholicism in *Red Is the Port Light* is rendered in explicit terms. The reader is introduced to Susan as she is returning with a borrowed crucifix to Stephen's cottage. In an echo of Bridie's dilemma in *Bridie Steen*, Stephen is haunted by the fact that he was born out of wedlock (a sin in the eyes of his Church) and by the Catholicism instilled in him as a child. Like Moore and Crone, Tomelty is at pains to emphasise the influence that the Catholic Church exerts on childhood: 'He saw Christ, the Christ he knew from the pictures in his school book [...] Christ had a whip in His hand and was lashing out, stinging Durnan's ankles'.⁶⁶ By his own admission, Stephen has had 'a life unlived' at the hands of the Church and a God who, like those of Bridie and Devine, is patriarchal and unmerciful. In another echo of *Bridie Steen*, Stephen expresses a deep fear of the afterlife following his mother's death:

Frightened in hell, where'd she'd burn because of her bastard [...] Plant a flower where the wind is strong and it won't grow; yet the human soul lives on. Put it where you like, whip it, torture it, crush it, bend it, starve it; do anything you like with it, then tell it, God created it to burn in hell for all eternity, because it did all the things He made it do.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Joseph Tomelty, *Red Is the Port Light* (London: Cape, 1948, repr. Belfast: Lagan Press, 1997), p. 153.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 209.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 23-24.

The depiction of Catholic influence on childhood and fear in all three novels illustrates the extent of the Church stranglehold over the laity. Such representations undoubtedly have contemporary significance.

The presence of the minor character Fenner, Stephen's shipmate, also serves to amplify the Catholic *habitus*. His manly and adventurous occupation as a deck-hand on board a merchant ship in hazardous seas is at odds with his background as organist with his local church. Though he claims to have lost his faith, at sea he somewhat oddly plays a Gregorian hymn, 'Orbis Factor', on his concertina. Furthermore, as many Catholics might, he makes a confession when he fears that the ship is about to flounder: 'Sacred Heart of Jesus, have mercy on me. Have pity on me a sinner...[...] Dear Jesus I believe in thee. Sweet Jesus, have mercy on me, a sinner...'.⁶⁸

Catholic iconography is pervasive in the novel, through the image of the Virgin Mary that looks down on Stephen, and in Susan's fixation with candlesticks and crucifixes. The importance of the sacraments is also emphasised. When Susan receives the Last Rites, Stephen is at pains to explain to Robert the meaning of Extreme Unction. Later the parish priest emphasises to Stephen the importance of the sacramental dimension of marriage for Catholics, which reflects my discussion of this area in the main introduction. Through this emphasis the author also implies that the laity is held to ransom by the Church; the characters believe that they must receive the sacraments in order to enter the kingdom of God, whilst the clergy enjoy an elevated and powerful position as administrators of these sacraments. It is against this backdrop that Susan's difficulties with Robert's Protestantism arise. Like Rose Anne in *Bridie Steen*, she is the mother of the household and acts as an arm of the Church. In her mind, an adherence to Catholic dogma is paramount.

While Susan and Robert are 'as close as two clam shells', they are unable to discuss matters concerning the Catholic faith.⁶⁹ When Susan asks for the Last Rites, Robert is perplexed and seeks the counsel of Stephen, who explains, 'You must understand, Robert, that Susan's a Catholic, and she has a certain feeling about things'.⁷⁰ Although

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 43, p. 45.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 113.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 113.

Stephen is a lapsed Catholic, he is shown to be at one with Susan, whilst Robert her husband, is excluded because of his Protestantism. Like Crone and Moore, however, Tomelty ascribes a transcendent role to this Protestant character. If Bridie finds solace in the bog, Robert finds it at sea:

You know, Stephen, at sea people don't feel the same way about religions they do on land. On land they never seem to find God, so they must fight about him all the time. But at sea you can see Him everywhere, in the water, in the moon, in the stars, and you can hear him in the windHe's always there, like a strong but silent friend.⁷¹

Susan seeks the religious conversion of Robert and her mission and her impending death adds a sense of urgency. It is clear from the narrative that she has been working on his conversion for some years. When Robert informs Stephen that he is in fact a Protestant, Stephen is confused because he remembers seeing him kneeling and praying or behaving as though he was a Catholic. Robert enlightens him by explaining that it was Susan who taught him to kneel and pray before each voyage. Tomelty's representation of the conversion issue is noteworthy. Although somewhat diluted in the papal encyclical *Matrimonia mixta* of 1970, until then the Catholic Church has insisted, as noted in the main introduction, that in a mixed marriage the Catholic should seek the conversion of the non-Catholic. This was clearly and unequivocally expressed by Archbishop McQuaid in a series of Lenten Pastorals:

The Catholic party is obliged in conscience prudently to strive for the conversion of the non-Catholic party. These guarantees are solemn pledges very gravely binding in conscience. Once given, they may not ever be disregarded or set aside.⁷²

Susan's explanation as to why her husband married her in the first place – 'because I laughed well' – suggests that this relationship, unlike those in *The Feast of Lupercal* or *Bride Steen* has transcended Northern Ireland sectarianism or the attitude of the Catholic Church.⁷³ However, in contrast with *Red Is the Port Light*, the relationships in those novels are never allowed to develop and in this way Tomelty's indictment of the

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 143.

⁷² 'Regulations for the Archdiocese of Dublin', *Irish Independent*. 5 March 1962, p. 8.

⁷³ Tomelty, p. 177.

Church is all the more searing, as we see a loving and enduring mixed marriage eventually blighted by Church dogma.

Red Is the Port Light is a pessimistic novel. After the death of his wife, Stephen remains tortured by his own Catholicism to the end. In the closing pages, he still visualizes an authoritative and unforgiving God, and is never granted what he yearns for, which is: 'a real home, with a wife and children'.⁷⁴ Whilst Susan and Robert's relationship is a happy one, their home is conspicuously absent of children. That the relationship bore no progeny is possibly Tomelty's bleakest metaphor for the outlook for mixed marriages in Northern Ireland.

Conclusion

These three novels capture the divisive effects of inter-faith relationships, amplified by their being set in Northern Ireland, with its history of sectarianism, plantation, war and partition. Devine's observation that 'Ulster Protestants were atypical' is especially germane here. The novelists ascribe most responsibility for the negative outcomes of the inter-faith relationships to Catholicism, whether in the form of the Church establishment or the *habitus* of the laity. Bearing in mind the fact that the Church was organised on a thirty-two county basis, there are firm institutional grounds for the position adopted by the authors: the Catholic Church saw itself as the moral guardian of the people and the defender of the true faith, and also regarded the family and marriage as the bedrock of society. Mixed marriages constituted exactly the sort of 'attack' from which the 1937 Constitution sought to protect marriage. However, as noted in the introduction, *both* Churches unreservedly condemned inter-faith relationships, something that appears to have been lost on the authors. It should be noted that both Catholic writers, Moore and Tomelty, are at pains, perhaps to the detriment of their work, to amplify the pervasive and oppressive nature of mid-twentieth century Irish Catholicism. Whilst Anne Crone, a Protestant also embellishes her narrative with Catholic iconography, this is balanced by her emphasis on the importance of the Bible for Protestants. Crone uses symbols of the respective faiths to illustrate the extent of the division that exists between two communities.

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 27.

In all of the novels the Catholic Church is shown to take a far more active role than the Protestant Churches. We see direct intervention by the Catholic clergy in *The Feast of Lupercal*, in *Bridie Steen* and to a lesser extent, in *Red Is the Port Light*. The organisation of the Catholic establishment as an active agency is clearly evident in characters such as Tim Heron, Rose Anne and Susan King. All three are seen to act on the Church's behalf. Catholicism is represented in the novels as a tradition that people engage with on a daily basis, and the clergy are seen to play an active, if destructive, role. Catholic zealotry exists in sharp contrast with Protestant passivity as the idea of a Protestant establishment is virtually absent from the texts. Moreover, Protestant ministers as in Crone's novel, unlike their Catholic counterpart, do not become embroiled in the inter-faith relationship. This depiction of the Protestant Church again leans towards the notion that the Protestant faith is as much about culture and identity as it is about religious practice.

Pierre Bourdieu and Rosemary Harris offer useful sociological lenses through which these texts can be examined. Harris's belief that it is necessary to look as much at individuals as communal groupings opens up the possibilities of what can be learned from the 'intimate social tensions' related to mixed marriages. Through *habitus*, Bourdieu highlights why mixed marriages might play on the consciences of the laity without direct intervention of the Church. His claim that the 'church has the power to modify, in a deep and lasting fashion, the practice and world-view of lay people'⁷⁵ is clearly applicable to Devine, Bridie, and Susan, who are ultimately incapable of following their instincts and putting their relationships before their Church.

The religious *habitus* can also be seen in the ways that characters look upon one another through stereotype. In all three novels, the Catholics are seen by Protestants as enslaved and unable to act independently of their Church. Bearing in mind Rosemary Harris's belief that stereotype was often only an over-generalisation of facts, and the widely held view that the Catholic Church at the time was at the zenith of its social powers in Ireland, this Protestant view of Catholics had more than a degree of accuracy, if not a universal one. In the *Feast of Lupercal*, Clarke sees Devine as a slave to Catholicism; in

⁷⁵ Bourdieu, p. 126.

Bridie Steen, Jerem and Alicia see Bridie in a similar fashion, while the narrator in *Red Is the Port Light* implies that all Catholics live beneath the cosh. Moreover, each author also ascribes a position above sectarianism to a Protestant character: Clarke in *The Feast of Lupercal*, William Henry in *Bridie Steen*, or Robert in *Red Is the Port Light*. This ascription reflects the stereotype that Protestants were not as belligerent or hostile as their Catholic counterparts, or that Catholics were somehow more intellectually impaired.

The protagonists demonstrate an initial willingness to follow their human instincts and to transgress the religious divide. Even though the *divide* has cultural, political or class implications, it is the Catholic Church and by extension its *habitus* that the three novels identify as the main agent of destruction, as a power-wielding body that instils fear in its subjects from childhood. These subjects have been indoctrinated and consequently, and perhaps unconsciously, follow their *habitus* to the detriment of the inter-faith relationship within their community. The depictions of the Church pursuing its own dogma-driven agenda concerning mixed marriage, failing to take into account related issues such as cultural identity, the views of other denominations or the historical context has clear echoes in contemporary debates. Finally perhaps, that *love* does not appear to be recognised as a sound reason for marriage, is perhaps the three authors' most damning indictment of a Church that is out of touch with its people.

Chapter Five

Sexual Embraces and Political Unions? Inter-faith relationships in 1960s Ulster Fiction

At the heart of the Troubles which erupted in the late 1960s was a dispute between Catholic nationalists and Protestant unionists over the constitutional position of Northern Ireland. As Richard Rose explains, 'Nationalist assertions that the people of Ireland were one nation, united by geography if not by religion, were countered by Protestant claims that they were one nation with Britain, united by law if not by geography'.¹ The 1960s was a tense decade which saw the sectarian animosities between Catholic and Protestant communities exacerbated by changes in the internal economy of Northern Ireland and the social effects of changes in welfare policy.² Both working and middle class Protestants had grave concerns regarding the Northern Irish economy, particularly after the collapse of the province's linen and shipbuilding industries. Many began to doubt the tentative reforms proposed by the Unionist Prime Minister of Northern Ireland, Terence O'Neill, who had declared that if Catholics had enough money 'they could live like Protestants', and turned instead to the fiery rhetoric of the dynamic leader and gifted orator Ian Paisley, who warned of a 'massive betrayal' by the Unionist establishment.³ The effect of his passionate and often burning speeches during this period should not be underestimated; as Charles F. Carter argues, great numbers 'wanted to hear the traditional Unionist and Orange dogmas expressed with crude force and clarity'.⁴

Protestants were alarmed at the increasingly elevated status of Catholics in Northern Ireland. Although Catholics had suffered decades of discrimination in areas such as

¹ Richard Rose, *Governing Without Consensus: An Irish Perspective* (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1971), pp. 85-86.

² R.F. Foster, p. 584.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 584; Bartlett, p. 498.

⁴ Charles F. Carter and Denis P. Barritt, *The Northern Ireland Problem: A Study in Group Relations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972, 2nd edn.), p. 158.

employment and housing allocation, by the 1960s the effects of the Education Act of 1947 were beginning to be felt, as a new generation of educated and articulate activists began to demand greater civil rights, coinciding with a new global mood for change on streets across Europe and the United States. Arguably one such civil rights campaign in Derry provided the final spark that triggered the violence that continued through to the 1990s. The parallels between the Protestant reaction to changes in Northern Irish society at this time and the Protestant reaction to the prospect of Home Rule sixty years earlier are striking. As before, many Protestants were fearful for the province's economy, feeling that O'Neill's policies and other welfare and social changes posed challenges to their identity and that power structures in place since the plantation were beginning to unravel.⁵ Largely due to the efforts of the civil rights movement, this febrile decade saw the beginning of a reconfiguration in the dynamic of the social positions of Protestants and Catholics; Catholics began to achieve greater equality which in turn threatened to further erode 'Protestant supremacy'.⁶

This final chapter focuses on three Ulster novels which were written during this period: Anthony C. West's *The Ferret Fancier: A Novel*, Jack Wilson's *Dark Eden* and Maurice Leitch's *Poor Lazarus*. All three depict Ulster society as being trenchantly divided along sectarian lines and are set at seminal moments in the history of the province: *The Ferret Fancier* in the immediate aftermath of Partition; *Dark Eden* during the early years of the Ulster Plantation; and *Poor Lazarus* on the cusp of the Northern Ireland troubles.

Each novel depicts explicit sexual encounters between Protestant and Catholic lovers, encounters which function as metaphors for a form of political engagement. Commenting on Doris Sommer's appraisal of some Latin American romances, Joe Cleary has argued that 'the sexual embrace of the lovers is concomitantly a political embrace since their union functions as a metaphor for political unification'.⁷ However, Cleary qualifies this by arguing that Sommer's hypothesis cannot be readily applied to the Northern Ireland situation, and given the fact that the strife in Ulster/Northern Ireland has been grounded largely in a territorial dispute, the theories of feminists

⁵ Ibid., p. 498.

⁶ Barritt and Carter, p. 157.

⁷ Cleary, *Literature, Partition*, p. 114.

Andrea Dworkin and Simone de Beauvoir are perhaps more relevant to the three novels I will examine. Dworkin argues:

Entered, [the woman] has mostly given something up [...] But it is from the sex that she takes the texture of wartime invasion and occupation, the visceral reality of occupation [...] those with power use the conquered who are weaker, inhabit them as territory. Physically, the woman in intercourse is a space inhabited, a literal territory occupied literally.⁸

de Beauvoir continues along similar lines by quoting the French philosopher Julien Benda who aligns male sexuality with aspects of war and military discourse:

So for the lover the act of love is conquest, victory [...] the erotic vocabulary of males is drawn from military terminology: the lover has the mettle of a soldier, his organ is tense like a bow, to ejaculate is to 'go off'; he speaks of attack, assault, victory. 'The generative act,' writes Benda in *La Rapport d'Uriel*, 'consisting in the occupation of one being by another, imposes on the one hand the idea of conqueror, on the other something conquered. Indeed, when referring to their love relations, the most civilised speak of conquest, attack, assault, siege, and of defence, defeat, surrender, clearly shaping the idea of love upon that of war'.⁹

In this chapter I will argue that, set against the backdrop of conquest and colonisation which is synonymous with Ulster, the sexual embraces or encounters between Catholics and Protestants are evocative of occupation, invasion or defeat and function as metaphors for political disharmony. Moreover, where these relationships are shown to be damaging to the Catholic female, it is the Protestant male who is depicted as the oppressor. With the personification of Catholic Ireland as a woman in mind, these representations can be interpreted as a defilement of Ireland by Protestant colonisers. However, there are some portrayals of relationships in the novels which do not conform to this pattern. In *Dark Eden* Protestant Ansil and Catholic Rachel eventually enjoy a

⁸ Andrea Dworkin, *Intercourse* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1987), pp. 132-133.

⁹ De Beauvoir, Simone, *The Second Sex*, ed. by H.M. Parshley (London: Jonathan Cape, 1953, repr. 1968), p. 369.

successful relationship which is consummated, but this is qualified in that the couple are forced to leave Ulster. The representation of the homoerotic relationship between Protestant Yarr and Catholic Quigley in *Poor Lazarus*, on the other hand, reverses ‘the hyper-masculinity’ traditionally associated with colonialism and offers what appears to be a successful relationship in a politically hostile environment.¹⁰ This relationship ends in failure, however, as Quigley appears to become infected with the same ‘Ulster’ poison as Yarr.

The Protestants we see in *The Ferret Fancier* are plagued by uncertainty. They are disillusioned with the Free State, struggle with their identity and question the benefits that have been achieved through the Civil War. Protestants are of a higher social status in the novel, and the brief personal union between the Protestant and Catholic protagonists transgresses class as well as religious and political lines. The unsuccessful and fleeting nature of this encounter illustrates the slim chances of reconciliation between the communities, and the novel includes several other examples of ill-fated mixed marriages to emphasise this pessimistic conviction. Whilst it is significant that the momentary union between the protagonists takes place in a graveyard, a supposedly neutral space free from social or religious mores, it is clear that Catholic Agnes’s elevated status is temporary, that her Protestant partner never actually considers marrying her despite her subsequent pregnancy, and that he continues to threaten her and treat her with contempt: for these reasons their union can be interpreted as the degradation of a Catholic by a Protestant.

Anthony C. West was born in Co. Down in 1910, but was reared in the border county of Cavan.¹¹ *The Ferret Fancier*, banned by the Irish Censorship Board three years after its publication in 1963, is set just after the establishment of the Free State in 1922 in the fictional Protestant community of Ballyshane, just south of the border.¹² This *Bildungsroman* traces the development of the young Protestant protagonist, Simon Green, whose father Conor, is ‘an Orangeman of long standing’.¹³ Simon meets the Catholic, Agnes Jameson at the local school (which is a neat device of West’s in an

¹⁰ Nandy, p. 48.

¹¹ ‘West, Anthony C.’, *The Concise Oxford Companion to Literature*, ed. by Robert Welch (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) <http://www.oxfordreference.com/views/ENTRY.html?subview=Main&entry=t55.e2463> [accessed 26 May 2011]

¹² Register of Prohibited Publications issued by Dept. of Justice, Ireland, p.56, [Banned 14 June 1966].

¹³ Anthony C. West, *The Ferret Fancier: A Novel* (Dublin: The O’Brien Press, 1963) p. 33.

endogamous community to bring Protestant and Catholic together) 'as the nearest Catholic school is four miles away'.¹⁴ Simon struggles with their social and religious differences, but the relationship is eventually consummated in a graveyard, after which the couple part company: Agnes leaves for the supposedly sunnier climes of County Cork, while Simon gets lost half-way up the snow covered Knockbawn mountain. The depiction of the working-class area of Ballyshane suggests the Civil War was fought in vain:

Bottle Boulevard, so called for the weight of glass flying every Saturday night [...] the un-civil war until the Guards appeared and rested the leaders in the barracks, letting them out in time for Mass: [sic] nothing to do, except exist, get drunk, sleep, suffer, breed, die and, rot [...] He suddenly understood why Micky the Rebel Fitzpatrick said that the Trouble was exactly the same thing as a blind fart a mile under the sea.¹⁵

Protestant identity appears uncertain and under threat: whilst Simon considers himself to be 'Irish', his father considers himself Anglo-Irish and loyalist. Simon's awkward position is described thus:

It was the first time Simon had come up against catholic nationalism and it made him uncomfortable. He had always taken it that his birth guaranteed his Irishry even though Conor [his father] saw himself as a protestant loyalist and no more than an Anglo-Irishman whereas Ellen [his mother] looked on herself only as a protestant and would remain one were she floating in the ocean on an icefloe [...] From the bit of history Simon knew, an English king had fought an English king at the Boyne, Irishmen on both sides. It was very confusing and disturbing.¹⁶

Protestant apprehension and discontent are manifested in resentment at a perceived imposition of an alien culture by the newly established state. This can be seen in the case of Rainey, the tyrannical Protestant school master. Although he has taken extra

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 69.

¹⁵ Ibid., pp. 220-221.

¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 41-42.

tuition in the Irish language at the local technical school and in Galway his lack of enthusiasm is profound and resentment is palpable:

They were all curious about the new Gaelic but the master went slowly and without much conviction for what he was doing, unable to overcome his prejudice that the language was a Roman innovation, ignorant of the fact that the catholic church itself wasn't all that enthusiastic about it.¹⁷

Not all Protestants in the novel, however, are shown to be so reluctant to adopt an alien culture as evident in the portrayal of the local post master, Tommy Cooke. Having re-branded himself Tomás Ui Coicare, he removes the old English sign from over his door and replaces it with one which has Gaelic wording and which is brightly enamelled in green and gold.

West's portrayal of Catholics is unsparing: described by the narrator as 'poor-whites', they are represented in the novel by the Jameson family, poor, uneducated and living in squalid conditions.¹⁸ Agnes's mother, Mrs Jameson has eleven children, ascribed to the fact that 'the Roman church encouraged breeding'.¹⁹ As Barry Sloan argues in relation to the representation of Catholics in the novel, 'the Catholic represents the 'other' – that which is opposite to the familiar and acceptable; he or she is forbidden or unknown, religiously and culturally strange, exciting and frightening'.²⁰ The chaos of the Jameson bothy exists in stark contrast with the ordered Protestant farmsteads:

Although not for years without a baby on the breast, Mrs Jameson fed them all a long time, making milk as easy as a cow, for the sake of economy and for handiness, the older infants sharing the last baby's milk [...] She was carrying her eleventh child although the ninth was not a year old and stood most of its day in a tea chest for a playpen by the fire. After a first contact, he [Simon] kept away from the tea chest

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 45.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 88.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 90.

²⁰ Barry Sloan, *Writers and Protestantism in the North of Ireland: heirs to damnation?* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2000), p. 279.

since it smelt strong as the school privy, the child obviously pissing and shitting in it.²¹

In his representation of the Jameson family West also draws attention to economic deprivation in the Free State. Crucially, however, the narrator apportions this between the Free State government and the lack of co-operation between the Catholic and Protestant communities:

For the first time in his life Simon had direct contact with a poverty that was just the breadth of a crust and the depth of a bailiff's whim away from straight destitution. Without bothering to argue with them, he saw the continued existence of inequalities which a government elected for the people by the people had not attempted, as yet, to eliminate. He had heard dissatisfied patriots claim their citizen right to criticise both state and church since it would be nonsense to praise or blame one without praising or blaming the other. But for him, as yet, all fundamental issues concerned with the economic distance between pocket and mouth were still obscured by his own greed to grow, and were confused by sustained religious bigotry; catholic supporting catholic, protestant backing protestant, irrespective of most moral and material issues. On the one hand, the protestant minority refused to forget the time they were freemen, the poor catholic little better than a serf. On the other hand, the poorer catholics hoped that their government would begin to look after them, hope being their only visible insurance. But the two faiths failed to pull together for the good of the whole, for different reasons parson and priest burking each attempted improvement when it appeared.²²

Given that both Catholics and ordered Protestants are unhappy with the Free State, an inter-faith relationship between a Catholic and a Protestant would appear to be an unlikely possibility. As the narrator explains:

Outside the democracy of the playground, Simon had no contact with people like these Jamesons, nor any parish licence to fraternise with

²¹ West., pp. 94-95.

²² Ibid., pp. 90-91.

them [...] Greens and Jamesons existed on two different social and religious levels which only ever touched to bid the time of day.²³

Reinforcing the sense of separation between the communities, West interpolates the main narrative of Agnes and Simon with sketches of other doomed or blighted inter-faith courtships, similarly informed by slurs and stereotypes. These 'crossroaders', as they are sometimes referred, are ostracised by the Protestant community in the novel, the implication being that they pose a threat to the endogamy of that community.²⁴ The post master Tommy Cooke, whose father was a lapsed Catholic and mother a Protestant, is labelled by the narrator as a 'half-breed', whilst Agnes's father, a Scottish Protestant who caused consternation by converting to Catholicism, is referred to as 'half-caste'.²⁵ The narrator's description of this conversion alludes to the Catholic requirement that children of mixed marriages should be raised Catholic, reflecting sociologist Rosemary Harris's assertion that 'intermarriage bridged no gaps':

[Jameson] had turned indifferently to his wife's faith, in that he didn't object to his family being reared as Catholics. He was now a tolerated, semi-ostracised nothing in a Protestant locality and not even welcomed by his Catholic compatriots: reformation and counter-reformation still alive, renegades always distrusted.²⁶

The importance of endogamy to the Protestants of Ballyshane is underlined by the activities of Nance the Pants Halpin, 'a ferocious, middle-aged orange-woman' who is the self-appointed guardian of the community:

She reported to the Rector whenever she suspected that a Protestant boy might be fancying a Catholic girl – the opposite association seldom happening. She sent dusk-infected girls home and told the boys they should be concentrating on the responsibilities of their coming candidacy in the proud orange order. Whether or not the crossroaders

²³ Ibid., p. 88

²⁴ Ibid., p. 132.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 137, p. 89. The notion that products of mixed marriages are 'half-breeds' comes up time and again in fictions, but is not confined to fiction writers; Patricia Craig in her essay 'The Liberal Imagination in Northern Irish Prose' in *Returning to Ourselves: Second Volume of Papers from the John Hewitt International Summer School*, (1995) ed. by Eve Patten, refers to the eponymous heroine of *Bridie Steen*, discussed in the last chapter, as 'a cross-bred orphan', p.142.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 89.

laughed at her, she was a holy terror, her iron convictions very disturbing things.²⁷

The stigma attached to mixed marriages is also highlighted by the reaction of Simon's father to his son's relationship with Agnes. He is troubled not only by the fact that she is Catholic and from a lower class, but also because she is the product of a mixed marriage: 'Conor [...] had abused Simon loudly for consorting with a gang of tramps [...] that the Jameson marriage was also a mixed one was worse than association with a straight papist family' [sic].²⁸ The inference here is that there is a flaw or an impurity in the pedigree of the product of a mixed marriage.

Parallels may be discerned between Simon's close relationship with Jill, a ferret he uses for hunting: both relationships are transgressive and are conducted without regard for 'moral, religious and social codes'.²⁹ In sexist or misogynistic terms, the narrator explicitly refers to Simon's relationship with Jill as a marriage:

She [Jill] remained his own thing in a kind of marriage, in sickness or health, despite the many featured hauntings of old fears: like a wife, she was strong willed but simple-minded, satisfied with little, too dense to care or hate or love.³⁰

One of Simon's hunting expeditions with Jill turns into an orgy of sorts where, 'every hole a female one [sic] and every tuft of moss a tuft of pubic hair, the ferret a kind of cock which they shoved into the holes to rape the waiting rabbits',³¹ echoes Simon's and Agnes's eventual love-making in the graveyard:

As Agnes fell softly backwards, taking him with her so he kneeled over her in the hollow, he saw what could be the white flash of a hunting stoat's dickey [...] his cold mind rejected her unashamed heat much as the fierce mating of the ferrets had somehow excitedly disgusted him [...] But no or yes or no – no good, the cock was driving, now, Agnes groaning, holding him, leaving him only one way to go. Vividly he saw

²⁷ Ibid., pp. 131-132

²⁸ Ibid., p. 132.

²⁹ Sloan, p. 282.

³⁰ West, pp. 230-231.

³¹ Ibid., p. 38.

the salmon rising and standing rigid, a fish in a glass case, hurdling the weir in the swift tongue of solid water, shivering, thrusting, striving.³²

The semi darkness of the graveyard, its dank smells, chorus of birds, and juxtaposition of dead bodies with copulating life-forms establishes a curious and other-worldly environment which allows for their consummation. Interestingly, the depiction of this graveyard has echoes in other works such as the 'Hades' episode in Joyce's *Ulysses* with its ghosts, and where Leopold Bloom makes a descent, of sorts, into the underworld. In West's novel the idea that the graveyard is a space free from the constraints and hierarchies of contemporary society is further illustrated by Agnes's deportment as she arrives for their tryst. For once she is dressed smartly, in a new coat, stockings and new shoes, rather than her customary rags, suggesting that the graveyard, a space in which all are equal, has afforded her the opportunity to mount a temporary ascent to Simon's social standing. On her departure however, and in a clearly dishevelled state, she reverts to her former lowly status: 'The fine new coat was now old, its cheap weave dragged out of shape [...] the stockings all twisted again. She was poor again – the shabby daughter of inescapable poverty that would never relent all her born days'.³³

The graveyard becomes an 'identifying sign of a culture' for Simon as political and religious mores re-surface.³⁴ His forefathers' names appear on the headstones before him, reminding him both of the strength, relative to his own, of their Protestant faith, and of their deeds in the service of this: in a clear reference to Catholicism and perhaps the Ulster Rebellion of 1641, the narrator remarks acidly that, 'the dead might be forever remembering that faith's past tyrannies'.³⁵ Simon is also haunted by his own religious upbringing: torn between whether to make love or not, he imagines both his puritanical mother crying, 'no.....' and recalls Rainey, his bigoted school principal, describing the act as 'fornication'.³⁶ Agnes's Catholicism also presses on Simon's conscience. She is heard to mutter 'meaningless saints' names', and her act of blessing after accidentally stepping on a grave is described as 'itself evidence of her alien

³² Ibid., pp. 177-178.

³³ Ibid., p. 181.

³⁴ Philippe Ariès, *The Hour of Our Death*, trans. by Helen Weaver (London: Allen Lane, 1981), p. 476.

³⁵ West, p. 172.

³⁶ Ibid., pp. 178-179.

faith.’³⁷ As a forlorn and guilt-ridden Simon leaves the graveyard, the narrator, with echoes of the Fall of Man in Genesis, describes his demeanour, ‘the dismal emptiness of his fall was slowly filling, his mind making new faces for poor appearances’.³⁸

West’s construction of the graveyard as a space free from social codes should be qualified by the fact that this episode is clearly loaded with symbolism, describing a sex act between a Catholic and a Protestant between the mounds of two Protestant graves in a village just south of the border after the formation of the Free State. While the encounter might therefore be interpreted as a form of political union, the brief nature of their relationship points to the unlikelihood of reconciliation or interaction between the communities. This is underlined by Agnes’s choice shortly afterwards to marry Packeen-Shaun, a Catholic of similar social standing. The fact that Packeen-Shaun assumes the role of step-father to the child of Simon and Agnes itself assumes a more bright and productive future for Catholics in the Free State.

Simon’s feelings of superiority after the encounter smack of Protestant hubris (‘It wouldn’t be for Agnes Jameson or any other girl that he might tinker the roads [...] he laughed aloud with the sudden feeling of pure wealth he had’), but the closing pages of the novel suggest he faces an uncertain future, as he attempts to climb Knockbawn mountain but becomes disillusioned half-way up and turns back.³⁹ Simon can thus be read as symbolic of Protestant anxiety at this time, and representative of a community unsure of its place in post-Partition Ireland. Likewise, the position of Agnes by the end of the novel, pregnant, poor, and uneducated, yet with a secure future, would seem to provide a further illustration of West’s apprehension of Catholic domination of the emergent Free State.

John Wilson’s *Dark Eden* is similarly narrated from a Protestant perspective. Religion is flagrantly imbricated with politics in this novel as the English colonisers are Protestants and the colonised Irish are Catholics. Sexual encounters between these two groupings are key metaphors. Protestants in the novel are male, and with de Beauvoir and Dworkin in mind, their aggressive or perverse sexual acts on the female Catholic

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 177, p. 172.

³⁸ ‘The Fall of Man’ Genesis 3:1-24. West, p. 181.

³⁹ West, p. 224.

protagonist, Rachel, can be interpreted as crude metaphors for conquest or colonisation. Conversely, and closer to Sommer's theory, the consummated relationship between Rachel and Ansil, a Protestant, in the latter part of the novel, can be seen as a form of political unification between both communities. This apparently successful conclusion, however, is tempered by the fact that the couple feel compelled to depart from Ulster. During the Plantation of Ulster, the lands of the Catholic Irish were seized and planted by English and Scottish Protestant settlers. This was not wholly successful, however. The numbers of settlers fell below expectations, leading to a situation in which more Irish tenants had to be retained, leading to a growth in areas of hostility where settler communities lived in close proximity to the disgruntled native Irish. As Raymond Gillespie has argued, the Plantation involved more than redistribution of land or displacement of the Catholic population: it also constituted an attempt to blend disparate ethnic groups to create a new society.⁴⁰ The Plantation bound religion and identity together, as settlers were identified as Protestant whilst the colonised were identified as Catholic. To a considerable degree, this religious division also determined political allegiance. As Denis P. Barritt and Charles F. Carter have observed:

To the Protestant, the fact that a man was a Catholic was prima facie evidence that he would be disaffected and disloyal to the state: to the Catholic the fact that a man was a Protestant suggested that he was an alien invader maintained by foreign military power.⁴¹

Wilson's novel takes the form of diary entries written between July 1616 and September 1618 by a young Protestant settler, Ansil Adams, and is narrated in both the first person (Ansil's diary entries) and the third person. After the death of his parents, Ansil is forced to move in 1616 from Scotland to Ulster in order to live with his Protestant uncle, Joel, a despotic and deranged leader of a band of mercenaries and Wilson's answer to Conrad's Kurtz. We learn from the narrator that Joel had originally arrived in Ireland as an officer in the 'conquering Tudor armies', was subsequently rewarded for his efforts, and later set up 'a small kingdom' as part of the Ulster Plantation.⁴² His contentment was short-lived, and he was set upon and castrated by an angry band of

⁴⁰ Raymond Gillespie, 'After the Flight: The Plantation of Ulster', *History Ireland*, XV.4 (July/August 2004), pp.40-5 (p.42) <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27725657> [accessed 1 July 2011]

⁴¹ Denis P. Barritt and Charles F. Carter, *The Northern Ireland Problem: A Study in Group Relations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), p. 12.

⁴² Jack Wilson, *Dark Eden* (London: Frederick Muller, 1969), pp. 140-141.

Irish rebels – who like many others resented the loss of their lands and the subsequent imposition of high rents on tenancies. As John Wilson Foster notes, this castration reflects ‘the inability of the Ulster Protestants ever to defeat or subdue the Irish. Joel owns Rachel from whom he exacts obedience but he cannot, literally or metaphorically penetrate her innermost self’.⁴³ His castration or impotency may also be symbolic of a bleak future for Protestants in Ulster. When Ansil arrives at his uncle’s fortress he meets Joel’s common-law wife, Rachel, a Catholic who has been bartered from an Irish chieftain and who is continually raped by Joel’s brigands. Ansil and Rachel fall in love, consummate their relationship and flee Ulster at the end of the novel. In a final twist, Joel turns out to be Ansil’s father, but is captured and hung by the imperial forces for atrocities committed.

In *Dark Eden* Wilson inverts the Plantation ideal, portraying Ulster as an uncivilised place where the settlers are more savage than the native Irish. Here Ulster itself seems beyond redemption and destructive of life, as is spelled out clearly by Joel:

It [compassion] is poison to the spirit. You must have compassion neither for nature nor the self [...] In this place a man is purged by experience, a man is dismantled. He is made simple again. All that is complex, superfluous, inessential, is stripped from his spirit [...] These things are cut out, a painful amputation accomplished only by time and application, of purpose and will. It is the place [...] There is a brutal, perpetual involvement with strength in this place [...] You are wedded to time in this place.⁴⁴

Ulster Protestant siege mentality can be traced to the Plantation, and this is captured by the narrator who describes Joel’s holding as ‘an outpost of British colonial development’:

We are secure, and we are comforted in our poor minds by the light and the heat [...] Look at these stout walls around us [...] Each one is thick and as strong as the side of a mountain [...] Hatred and murder behind every tree, so that we may not sleep without watch, or walk without

⁴³ Foster, p. 280.

⁴⁴ Wilson, pp. 52-53.

musket, or venture alone into the least shadow of that outward darkness.⁴⁵

While such passages suggest that the Plantation is primarily a territorial project, Wilson also places heavy emphasis throughout the narrative on religion and nationality as markers of identity. Joel anglicises the name of Bronach O'Donnell by renaming her Rachel, but he is also hugely concerned by her Catholicism and her apparent reluctance to convert to Protestantism. As the narrator explains, he 'wrenched from her a promise that she would recant 'the Pope and all His Idolatrouse Workes.'⁴⁶ Later, Joel reiterates his strong distaste for Catholicism:

I perceive that you are still determined to cling to your cross [...] Indeed you are a most passionate martyr, Rachel. [...] Your race....your cursed race is riddled with martyrs [...] Be warned yet again, Rachel, I am not deceived by any such papist perversity. I have a particular source of intelligence which keeps me closely informed of such reluctant slow progress as you make towards that one true faith and purity of spirit.⁴⁷

As in *The Ferret Fancier*, Protestants are depicted as having a firm belief in their social superiority. Rachel is Joel's common-law wife, but he treats her as a servant, a slave or a material possession, whom he bought 'with even greater ease and less expense than he had bought sheep or cattle'.⁴⁸ More notable is Ansil's attitude towards Rachel, since it is with her that he eventually forms a successful relationship, as the narrator explains:

Perhaps this was because Ansil was occasionally inclined to a severe type of tactlessness in his attitude towards her, a smug, perhaps imperious inclination that had much to do with what informed characters now might call a superiority complex. From his writing it is obvious that he was convinced that she was his social and racial inferior.⁴⁹

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 26, p. 50.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 142.

⁴⁷ Ibid., pp. 46-47.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 142.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 97.

Ansil, himself also clearly outlines the class differences he sees between himself and Rachel:

My Aunt his Wiffe, is no Lady borne, and bredde, of goode bloode or sperit, but a swarthie native, withalle of a finelie-made and comlie kind, whose employment and moode of dresse and manner sets her in such loe caste and qualitie that a kitchen wenche would be of a class equal if not superior.⁵⁰

Rachel is continuously raped by Joel's cohorts, and as a 'ravished bride' is clearly symbolic of a colonised or defeated Ireland. Moreover, and corresponding to her Catholicism, she is also depicted as a martyr. After Joel attempts to force Ansil to have sex with her for his own gratification, she explains to Ansil:

Lie down, Ansil. Lie down quickly. Let them do what they want with your body. Tramp on it, spit on it, kick it and soil it, but don't let them know of the feeling inside. They will tear out that feeling, they will destroy it. They fear it.⁵¹

Her martyrdom is evident not only from her dignified stoicism, but also from the fact that she is prepared to forgive her oppressors, symbolic of the endurance of the native Irish in the face of oppression:

She perceives all of my uncle's bestiality as symptoms of sickness and suffers all his abuse with no worde of reproache. It maie even be that she loveth him, with love not of the bodie or flech, but with a deepe compassionate pure love out of knoelidge and pitie. No brutalitie towards her, no hurte yette inflicted, hath turned this compassionate goode love from him.⁵²

As Joel has been castrated, his rape of Rachel is more in mind than in deed, inviting his brigands to have sex with her as he watches. Rachel's response to her subjugation is again both stoical and dignified:

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 55. The diary entries are written in an archaic form of English

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 109.

⁵² Ibid., p. 146.

My uncle pulled the man from my aunte, but the man was in a frenzie to finish his work and cursed and faute and left it unwillinglie, and all the while, even as I looked on, my auntie laie pale as if death itselffe had possessed her and made no response. When I looked down upon her in pitie for the shame of her distresse she shewed none of it, as if that vile animal had defiled no parte of her bodie but left her untouched.⁵³

Rachel's subjugation at the hands of the Protestant oppressors is also represented through the male gaze. When she and Ansil first meet, the narrator outlines Ansil's reaction to her physical features: 'everie inche of fleshe and bone was made in perfick in proportion to the reste [...] the worn satin dress so alarmingly low-cut in the bodice [...] soe muche bosome nakid'.⁵⁴ Later at a banquet Ansil observes the reactions of Joel's cohorts:

Her breasts bursting their scant restriction and swelling into enormous full view [...] The eyes of the men [...] were fixed on Rachel with increasing lewd interest [...] Some of the faces wore as they watched the most brazen desire [...] these followed the girl's lissome bodie with utmost attention.⁵⁵

Carolyn Korsmeyer argues in relation to the male gaze:

All of these approaches assume that vision, the quintessential aesthetic sense, possesses power: power to objectify – to subject the object of vision to scrutiny and possession [...] theories of the gaze stress the activity of vision, its mastery and control of the aesthetic object.⁵⁶

Significantly, the male gaze in the novel is described in similar terms to sexual assaults. Those who gaze are Protestant males, and in so doing possess and control their object, a Catholic female. In light of the novel's historical background, the male gaze reflects the broader imperialist project.

⁵³ Wilson, p. 132.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 29. (Diary entries are in a form of old or middle English)

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 70.

⁵⁶ Carolyn Korsmeyer, 'Feminist Aesthetics', in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. by Edward N. Zalta (Fall 2008) (Part 3.) <<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/feminism-aesthetics>> [accessed 5 July 2011]

The sexual relationship between Ansil and Rachel is altogether more conventional and as noted, can be read as symbolic of an ideal of political unification. Indeed, the fact that Rachel enjoys a considerable recovery through her union with Ansil offers some hope for a brighter future for the Irish nation. She explains how Ansil has awakened her natural human instincts following her suffering at the hands of Joel:

Ansil, there have been times when I have felt that my body was a dead thing downward from my waist, sometimes I have felt it like a desert, arid and dry like a desert. Until I grew to know you I would not have wanted it any other way. But the desert has gone now. I have feeling. I am not ashamed that I desire you.⁵⁷

While the couple apparently find happiness in exile, Rachel's barrenness suggests that the treatment meted out to her and by extension, Ireland, has come at a significant cost. The implication is that while peace might be achieved, the scars left by colonisation would be carried for generations to come.

Unusually and significantly, given her Catholicism, Rachel is mildly critical of Ansil's conservatism in relation to the consummation of their relationship, declaring that: 'If you were a man and not a page out of Genesis it would have happened long before this'.⁵⁸ Conversely, Ansil shows no such liberalism, stating forcefully: 'Until we are lawfully married there will be no sharing of bodies. No fornication [...] As a Catholic you should understand it'.⁵⁹ For the most part Rachel is unfazed by their religious difference, but she does hint that in the event of their marriage, Ansil may have to convert to her faith, following the Catholic Church requirement dating back to the Reformation which I discussed in the introduction to this thesis:

'Sensual Puritan.' (Rachel remarks to Ansil)

'Provocative Catholic'.

'You may be that soon'.

'Provocative?'

⁵⁷ Wilson, p. 270.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 272.

⁵⁹ Ibid., pp. 273-274.

'No, oaf. Catholic.'⁶⁰

However, she later informs Ansil that if religion became problematic to their relationship she would happily convert to his faith: 'After all this does so superficial a thing really matter? I will follow where you want'.⁶¹ Ansil, warns her that this course of action could lead to her excommunication from the Catholic Church, but in any event, romantic love eventually supersedes any doubts either party harbour about religious dictates as their relationship is consummated prior to their marriage.

However, in a clear signal that there is no future for the couple in Ulster, it appears that its colonisers appear to have robbed Rachel of her ability to procreate:

'I am perplexed by one thing'. [Ansil to Rachel]

'What thing'?

'You have not had children'.

'I can't have children'.

'But you are just a girl yet'. There was a strange, almost insistent note of hope in his voice, the echo of an old hope she had long ago forgotten and no longer needed.

'I cannot,' she said, and sighed, 'have children, Ansil. Do you think I could bear it if I could?'⁶²

By setting *Dark Eden* against the Plantation, and by clearly depicting religion as a marker of identity, Wilson excavates the roots of the conflict that scarred Ulster for nearly four centuries. The plantation ideal is shown in a state of disintegration, as a malfunctioning political construct that turns Ulster into an uncivilised and inhospitable place. Perhaps the two most notable aspects of its conclusion are the fact that Ansil and Rachel choose to ignore both the political and religious transgressions of their relationship. However, that brighter note is tempered by the fact that the couple, 'sadlie in communion' prepare to depart Ulster's shores.⁶³

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 291.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid., p. 243.

⁶³ Ibid., p.348.

The pessimistic outlook for Ulster in *The Ferret Fancier* and *Dark Eden* continues in Maurice Leitch's *Poor Lazarus*, where 'a brooding malevolence' permeates every page.⁶⁴ The novel, which spans one day, is set in the fictional and predominately Catholic south Armagh village of Ballyboe in the mid-1960s and is illustrative of the febrile atmosphere immediately before the outbreak of the Troubles. The sectarian division of the village is mirrored by the structure of the novel, narrated from the point of view of a Protestant man, Yarr, but interpolated with extracts from the personal diary of a Catholic, Quigley. The depth of sectarian hatred in *Poor Lazarus* precludes a normal heterosexual relationship between a Catholic and a Protestant. However, Leitch offers portrayals of two less conventional relationships or sexual encounters which can be interpreted as metaphors for political engagement: that between Yarr and Quigley, which can produce no offspring and which ultimately ends in failure, and the sexually violent encounter between Yarr and a nameless Catholic girl.

Yarr's relationship with Quigley contravenes the traditional gender system often associated with colonialism such as an aggressive masculinity and passive femininity (as already seen in Wilson's portrayal of Joel and Rachel). In his analysis of England's colonial relationship with India, Ashis Nandy has argued that:

It was colonial India, still preserving something of its androgynous cosmology and style, which ultimately produced a transcultural protest against the hyper-masculine world view of colonialism, in the form of Gandhi [...] and that the battle he was fighting for the minds of men was actually a universal battle to rediscover the softer side of human nature, the so-called non-masculine self of man relegated to the forgotten zones of the Western self-concept.⁶⁵

There are echoes of Nandy's theories in Leitch's depiction of the relationship between Yarr and Quigley which can be described more as homoerotic than homosexual. As Gandhi did in his campaigns, Leitch replaces the 'normal' male aggressor/female victim system with a 'non-masculine' and to some degree, androgynous one. In the hostile

⁶⁴ John Hanratty, 'Getting to Know Ourselves: Maurice Leitch on Protestants', *Fortnight*, No. 223, 1-15 (July – Sept 1985), p.15 <www.jstor.org/stable/25550520> [accessed 15 July 2012] According to Julia Carlson, *Poor Lazarus* was banned in Southern Ireland. *'Banned in Ireland': Censorship and the Irish Writer* (London: Routledge, 1990). p. 99.

⁶⁵ Nandy, p. 48, (2nd edn).

environment of Northern Ireland, this relationship offers fleeting hope for the future. Yarr suffers from schizophrenia, however, and hope quickly dissipates in Leitch's portrayal of his dalliance with the nameless Catholic girl, which can be interpreted as a flagrant sectarian attack by a Protestant on a Catholic.

Yarr runs an unsuccessful grocery store in the village he refers to as 'a rebel hole' and he has a history of mental illness, whilst Quigley, a Canadian of Irish extraction, is in Northern Ireland to make a film documentary.⁶⁶ His recent work has been poor, and he sees this assignment as a final opportunity to revive his career. A relationship between the pair develops after Yarr agrees to assist Quigley in his work by showing him around the locality. Yarr's hatred of Catholic nationalists soon becomes apparent, while Quigley is sceptical of Protestant unionists. After a night spent drinking where they encounter a colourful cast of characters including stage Irishmen and sinister republicans, the pair pick up two Catholic girls who are begging for a lift home, whereupon Yarr commits a physical and sexual assault on one of the girls. As noted, the relationship between Yarr and Quigley ends in failure. Quigley believes that he is catching the same mental illness that inflicts Yarr and decides to opt out, while Yarr in response, suffers a psychotic attack and ends up in an Irish bog.

Like the other Protestant protagonists, Simon in *The Ferret Fancier* or Joel in *Dark Eden*, Yarr is a deeply troubled and unhappy outsider. The point is reinforced as Leitch situates his Protestant protagonist in a village in south Armagh, a traditional hot-bed of republican subversive activity. There, Yarr's sense of insecurity is exacerbated by the fact that as a small trader he is at the mercy and whim of his predominately Catholic customers:

He lived his life in an anthill, a tolerated guest, ignored, as they moved about skirting him carefully, day by day, but one false move and they could turn on him, picking his bones white any afternoon they chose.⁶⁷

Yarr's bitterness is illustrated by his thoughts as he observes his Catholic maid-servant going to Sunday mass:

⁶⁶ Maurice Leitch, *Poor Lazarus* (London :MacGibbon & Kee, 1969: repr. London: Minerva, 1995), p. 130.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 130.

Secretive wee papish bitch, he thought. Off to her idolatry with all the other Fenians of Ballyboe. Never missing their chapel, not if they were dying, by Christ, packing in through the big arched doorway there like cattle at the mart, for their weekly brand of holy water on the forehead.⁶⁸

Although, as already noted, the novel spans only one day, Yarr's life is largely made up of a series of minor, but venomous skirmishes with Catholics or 'pope-heads' in which he invariably ends up on the losing side.⁶⁹ One such incident occurs when Yarr, in an effort to impress the newly arrived Quigley, attempts to degrade old Carbin, a militant nationalist in a crowded pub. He calls on old Carbin to sing a song and he obliges with a rendition of the rebel ballad 'Should my Soul pass through Old Ireland'. The resounding applause which follows from the republican crowd is clearly a defeat for Yarr:

It suddenly became plain to him how apart he was from this mob. He didn't belong [...] He also realised, not for the first time in his life either, how cruelly fast they might align themselves against him.⁷⁰

With the Catholic side clearly ahead after this initial skirmish, Yarr counters by attempting to denigrate old Carbin by bringing to the attention of the crowd that Old Carbin's 'hobby' (his penis) is hanging out, albeit beneath his raincoat. Carbin's diatribe after this mockery is vicious:

You dirty Protestant bastard! You black Orange huer's get! You know what you can do, you can go back home across the Border an' lick Basil Brooke's loyal British arse, so you can! [...] *Your* time is comin'. Some o' these nights you'll get a bullet in you, niver fear, you British cunt.....*Informer!*⁷¹

After a series of similarly minor defeats Yarr becomes paranoid about the Catholic members of the community:

⁶⁸ Ibid., pp. 105-106.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 54.

⁷⁰ Ibid., pp. 41-42.

⁷¹ Ibid., pp. 42-43.

They were all watching him, penetrating him with their eyes. He was different – that’s what their eyes said. His action had stripped him. He could almost hear their minds working, chewing on him noiselessly like grasshoppers. He felt frightened [...] but it was the look in their eyes, the sudden terrible knowingness – the same look he had seen earlier back in The Cozy Bar after that bit of fun with old Carbin. Fun. But they didn’t see it as fun, that was the thing [...] They conspired [...] They had formed up against him [...] Their little dark minds sped messages among themselves he could never intercept [...] He trembled, more frightened than he had ever been.⁷²

Quigley has had a strict Catholic upbringing in North America and although he has forsaken his faith he is haunted by the fact that he is forever attached to it. As he points out in his diary, ‘I am hauled back slowly but surely by that age-old umbilical cord’.⁷³ The most notable aspect of Leitch’s representation of Quigley’s lapsed Catholicism is how it serves as a password to gain access to what is in effect a hermetically sealed community. Leitch draws attention to the strength of religion as a form of communal identity and reinforces the depiction of Ulster as a deeply polarised society. The local Catholic priest, Father Devine is initially wary of Quigley, but eventually allows him into his confidence when the Canadian feeds him ‘a string of lies concerning fictitious priests and Toronto churches’.⁷⁴ Now both at ease in the knowledge of their supposed shared Catholicism, Quigley remarks, ‘And now we can relax into that state of chummy Catholicism you find from Fiji to Finglas’.⁷⁵

Leitch’s depiction of Quigley’s dalliance with Yarr’s Catholic maid, Bridie, provides another illustration of the closed nature of the Catholic community. Although Quigley is deeply suspicious of Catholicism, he briefly plays the part of practising Catholic by walking to church and attending mass with her. Quigley explains the rationale behind his mass attendance: ‘Expediency, and it’s expedient now, I’ve decided, for me to gain entry into the Catholic life of this village’.⁷⁶

⁷² Ibid., p. 77.

⁷³ Ibid., p. 138.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 110.

Quigley is also intent on stripping away the façade of an idyllic Ulster, in part, a legacy of John F. Kennedy's visit to Ireland in 1963 which Quigley has seen on newsreels in North America. Like *Dark Eden* and *The Ferret Fancier* Ulster is depicted as such a troubled place that it cannot be readily co-opted into a picture book representation of Ireland. What Quigley refers to in his diary as 'the famous guide-book greenness' turns out to be, 'ruined cottages – roofless, yellow fudgy crumbling walls, doors plastered with auction posters, old bedsteads taking the place of gates'.⁷⁷ Moreover, the notion that the Irish have an ancient and glorious past is summarily dismissed with his claim that 'the smell of madness hangs about them [the Irish]. A bell should be rung before them'.⁷⁸ His visit to a local itinerant campsite similarly explodes the notion that Ulster is a blissful place:

But these weren't the traditional horse-drawn, intricately decorated red, blue, yellow and green caravans I had seen on Irish Tourist Board calendars. These had wooden trailers on rubber tyres with four windows and a door and there was a beat-up car or truck to tow each one of them [...] But there were plastic flowers in the window-sills, and butane gas stoves inside, and one or two portable battery-operated TV sets.⁷⁹

The presentation of loyalist iconography in the novel is similarly unsparing:

Yes, the Orange Hall Soirée. Yarr's people living it up with heavy footed abandon [...] Red-necked respectable elders of the church with religious stickers on the back windows of their latest model Rovers [...] The platform festooned with union jacks. A great Orange banner, scarlet and gold, with tassels and fringing, flying frozen on the wall above [...] hatred for the Archbishop of Canterbury, Cardinal Heenan, the Catholic inquisition in Spain and South America, the present Pope.⁸⁰

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 60.

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 11.

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 125.

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 163.

In this diary entry Quigley makes reference not only to the simmering political and sectarian tensions in 1960s Northern Ireland but also to the endogamous Protestant community:

I don't warm to these people. That old atavism again? What would have happened if they'd discovered my religion, the one on my birth certificate anyway. A powder-keg feel in the air. An invisible wind blowing them between extremes. That savage seriousness between the speeches, then the great brutality of the dance. Yarr's people. The Protestant ruling minority. An ugly face. Inbreeding? No poet will ever sing for them – of them.⁸¹

Yarr and Quigley are brought together by the crisis in their personal lives and by their shared disillusionment with Ulster and its divided society. Whilst the relationship is covert and the actual sexual engagement muted, Leitch emphasises the tenderness and sensuousness. This depiction offers a fleeting hope that some degree of political harmony may be achievable in the troubled province:

Yarr looked at Quigley and he grinned back at him, sharing the experience with him. He loved him at that moment because he looked young and happy and clean in a boyish way [...] instinctively he reached out, putting an arm around the other's shoulder. Quigley's smile stretched and, in turn, he touched his elbow into Yarr's ribs [...] The tiny pattern of movements seemed so effortless yet so perfect in design that his eyes became moist. He felt purged of all the corroding emotions that beset him, returned to a former age of innocence.⁸²

Their relationship is short-lived, however, and is notably brought to an end by external provincial forces, rather than any incompatibility between the couple. Quigley becomes infected by the same bitterness and poison that afflicts Yarr: as in *Dark Eden*, Ulster itself appears poisonous, destructive and diseased. To this end, Quigley's diary entry refers to their 'marriage' and why he must abandon it:

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 164.

⁸² Ibid., pp. 61-62.

A week, night and day together, until we seemed merged. A marriage?
[...] He's got me all screwed up too, like himself. Whatever he's got
it's contagious. Some creeping horror eating him from the inside out.⁸³

While this relationship comes to nothing, it stands nonetheless, in marked contrast to the abusive encounter between Yarr and the Catholic girl he picks up on the roadside. By drawing attention to the airline bag she carries Leitch leaves the reader in no doubt as to her ethnic or religious persuasion: 'Aer-bloody-Lingus. No British bag for her, the rebel bitch'.⁸⁴ Patricia Craig argues that when women in *Poor Lazarus* are 'used for sexual purposes it is with revulsion, resentment and to gratify an urge towards mastery'.⁸⁵ The key term here is 'mastery' as the male Protestant exerts total control over the Catholic female. Also, with de Beauvoir and Dworkin in mind, it is notable that Yarr in this episode refers to his manhood as 'a weapon': 'He meant to dominate them, or one of them anyway – using the one weapon they could never fight against'.⁸⁶

The actual assault weapon is the chain of her crucifix and the heavy-handed symbolism here is clear. The town dump to which Yarr and Quigley take the girls is similarly symbolic, and emphasises the sense of waste and destruction:

Vegetarian smells started coming out of the darkness too, insinuatingly. The wind changed and the one smell alone swamped all others – the acrid bite of wet ashes and smouldering rubbish. Slaney's tip lay before them, hidden [...] a mashed causeway of burnt-out debris sprinkled with bottles, tins, old bed-springs [...] an out of the way dead end, the Slaney dump [...] the moon, a moon, for he hadn't known it even to exist, had come out from somewhere to light up the unromantic scene. A bumpy, littered, grey wasteland.⁸⁷

The encounter between Yarr and Catholic girl images the rape of Rachel in *Dark Eden*. Perversely Yarr explains, 'women like her all wanted to be raped, for god's sake, mentally and physically', while later the narrator points out that Yarr 'wanted to

⁸³ Ibid., pp. 164-165.

⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 94.

⁸⁵ Patricia Craig, 'Moore's Maladies: Belfast in the mid-Twentieth Century', *Irish University Review*, 18, (1988), 12-23, (p. 18.)

⁸⁶ Leitch, p. 86.

⁸⁷ Ibid., pp. 87-89.

humiliate her by skipping the normal courting procedures'.⁸⁸ Yarr's mood changes from apathy to outright hatred which eventually leads to his attempt to strangle her:

He felt disgust and a kind of disbelief at the performance [...] Coldly, but with great gentleness, he hooked a finger underneath the chain, managing it when she relaxed between spasms, for it was rhythmical with her now [...] Tighter and tighter, he imagined it, and it slicing like the wire on a cheese-cutter into the softness of her flesh, but he welcomed it, feeling passion in his blood for the outcome whatever it was.⁸⁹

Poor Lazarus is an overtly allegorical novel, which evokes the febrile mood in Ulster during the 1960s. In this tense setting, Leitch offers two different representations of inter-faith relationships which end in failure. The relationship between Yarr and Quigley fleetingly offers hope for some form of conciliation between both communities, but ends when both are apparently infected with some malady that is apparently pervasive in Ulster. The encounter between Yarr and the Catholic girl, on the other hand, can be seen as a flagrant sectarian attack.

Although Leitch attempts to offer different perspectives of Ulster through the eyes of Yarr and Quigley, both characters' outlooks for the province are similarly pessimistic; Yarr is an isolated Protestant with seemingly no future in a Catholic community, while Quigley is a Catholic outsider, intent on stripping away the façade of an idyllic Ireland revealing a deeply troubled province. In fact, while their shared negative outlooks for Ulster are a factor which brings them together, the same outlooks are a factor in the destruction of their relationship. The brief encounter between Yarr and the Catholic girls contains no such complexities. Leitch apparently includes this as a sharp reminder to the reader of the simmering vitriol which lies just below the surface in pre-Troubles Ulster.

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 88, p. 90.

⁸⁹ Ibid., pp. 90-92.

Conclusion

The three novels are radically different in terms of settings, but their plots hinge on sexual relations between Catholics and Protestants, encouraging broadly similar interpretations. All of the Protestant protagonists, Simon in *The Ferret Fancier*, Joel in *Dark Eden* and Yarr in *Poor Lazarus* are isolated, suffering from a crisis of identity and go on to demean Catholic women through their various sexual engagements.

The main focus of *The Ferret Fancier* is on the middle-class Protestant Green family and their plight in the newly formed Free State. Catholics in the novel are represented through Agnes's lower class family and they are portrayed as stereotypically poor, uneducated and dirty. While there might be an arguable case to be made that Simon's dalliance with Agnes was simply another stage of his developing sexuality, that would be to ignore not only the vexed political and social backdrop against which the relationship is framed, but also the symbolically loaded graveyard where consummation takes place. Moreover, while the inter-faith relationship clearly transgresses political, religious and class lines, West is also at pains to emphasise the taboo surrounding mixed marriages in what is, in effect, an endogamous Protestant community.

By setting *Dark Eden* during the early years of the Ulster Plantation, Wilson arguably goes to the genesis of the problems that have beset Ulster for the past four centuries. The rape of Rachel by Joel's Protestant cohorts is clearly a metaphor for the ravishment of the province by the English colonisers. However, while they are represented as the spoliators of the province and its people, their destruction is limited. Joel, the main perpetrator is sterile and as such his poison cannot infect the native Catholic population. Moreover, despite the repeated rape of Rachel she maintains a dignified stoicism. The novel ultimately offers a qualified hope in that the innate goodness of Rachel and Ansil is shown to transcend politics or religion.

Sexuality is also a key theme in *Poor Lazarus*, which differs from the other two novels in that it is narrated from both Protestant and Catholic perspectives. In fact, it is fair to say that Leitch, de-sexualises the relationship between Yarr and Quigley, to some degree, by depicting it as homo-erotic rather than homosexual. In other words, Leitch

renders the relationship possible in this hostile environment by representing it as less charged. Conversely, the encounter between Yarr and the Catholic girl is highly charged sexually – with dire consequences.

Almost without exception, the representations of the sexual embrace between Catholic and Protestant in all three novels point to political disunion. Agnes and Simon's relationship founders, whilst the rape of Rachel is a blunt metaphor for the conquest of Ireland. Yarr and Quigley are ultimately incompatible, and the violence of Yarr's rape of a Catholic girl offers a chilling indication of future developments. And with such troubled backdrops to the novels, all three writers, as Julien Benda might say, 'shape the idea of love upon that of war'.

Conclusion

In 1912 the Protestant and Catholic communities of Portadown were divided by revelations at a sworn local government inquiry into a complaint of proselytism and ill-treatment by a patient against a staff nurse at Lurgan workhouse hospital. Ellen Moore, a Catholic, the wife of Alexander Moore, a Protestant, was admitted to the maternity unit of the hospital and gave birth to a baby girl. Ellen Moore complained that, unbeknownst to her or her Protestant husband, and at the behest of a nurse Margaret Hanrahan, her baby had been baptised by a priest into the Roman Catholic faith.⁹⁰ It was alleged that Hanrahan was preoccupied or fixated with Moore's mixed marriage and with the notion of baptising Moore's baby into the Catholic Church. The inquiry heard that prior to the birth, Hanrahan was overheard saying to Moore: 'You must have this baby baptised a Catholic when it is born, no one will be the wiser of it'.⁹¹ Moore was extremely reluctant to accede to Hanrahan's supplications; and the inquiry also heard that after Moore had requested medication, an outraged Hanrahan responded: 'I would rather put you in a tar-barrel and roast you'.⁹²

Apparently Hanrahan then took the matter into her own hands. While Moore was under sedation, and as a Catholic priest was 'doing his rounds', Hanrahan allegedly approached him and advised that there was a 'baptism to be done'.⁹³ He readily agreed, and after both decided that 'Mary' was a suitable name, the baby was baptised in a corridor on a box which was procured by the nurse. When Ellen Moore awoke and discovered Hanrahan's ruse, she hid the card on which the baptism had been recorded beneath her pillow, 'because if her husband saw Roman Catholic on it, HE WOULD HAVE HER LIFE' [sic].⁹⁴

Three weeks later, after Moore and her baby were discharged from hospital, the baby was baptised in the local Protestant church by one Rev. Morrison, a Church of Ireland clergyman. However, the baby's previous Catholic baptism did later come to light,

⁹⁰ 'Religion of a Child. Heated Lurgan Discussion. The Mother's Allegation', *Belfast Evening Telegraph*, 4 October 1912, p.5.

⁹¹ Portadown Mixed Marriage Case', *Irish Times*, 2 November 1912, p.6.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ 'Religion of a Child. Mother V. Nurse. The Lurgan Dispute. Official Inquiry', *Belfast Evening Telegraph*, 26 October 1912, p.6.

⁹⁴ 'Mother and Child. Charge against a Nurse', *Belfast Evening Telegraph*, 28 October 1912. p.5.

when Moore's horrified husband, an army reservist in the British army, discovered it on a birth certificate which he had sought in order to satisfy a condition of the War Office.

My research in the area of mixed marriages or inter-faith relationships has unearthed a large number of cases in Ireland similar to this, and which now stand as an important area of historical enquiry. In fact, the reason why many of these cases have remained part of Ireland's 'hidden history' is undoubtedly due to the sensitivities involved; mixed marriages are still taboo in parts of rural Ireland. These cases, almost without exception, involve conflict between Catholics and Protestants at a domestic level, but which hold wider implications for a society that often struggles to accommodate both communities. To put this another way, these domestic disputes can often be interpreted as microcosms of the communal relationship between Catholics and Protestants that encompasses such issues as religion, politics, history or ethnicity.

Specifically, my research into these cases reveals that problems associated with mixed marriages were not always concerned with baptisms or the religious upbringing of children: the Carter case of 1953 in Co. Kildare (not discussed in this thesis) for instance, involved a dispute over a will.⁹⁵ Other cases which I investigated involved issues over land ownership. A further trend emerged in this area during the course of my research: many of these disputes arose in the second decade of the twentieth century, suggesting that in the immediate aftermath of the promulgation of *Ne temere* in 1908, the Catholic Church may have been more active in the area of mixed marriages than has been previously assumed. Some of the material pertaining to these disputes has been difficult to obtain, with documents in archives and historical newspaper reports proving the most prolific resource. That said, the Public Records Office of Northern Ireland agreed to release the 'Meeting Minutes' pertaining to the above case, but on examination they were found to be heavily censored. However, I was able to glean much more information from contemporary newspaper reports. In sum, these disputes are an important new area of enquiry, as they are unquestionably a significant, yet neglected part of Ireland's cultural history.

⁹⁵ In the *Carter* case, William Carter made a will in 1951, but stipulated that if any of his children married Roman Catholics they would forfeit any benefit under it. The dispute arose after his death when his daughter, Elizabeth married a Catholic. The case was heard before a jury in the High Court in Dublin in 1953.

In terms of literature, my research has identified a significant number of important, if largely forgotten fictional narratives which address inter-faith relationships in Ireland. Due to the limited scope available by this project many of these cases could not be included. Those which merit further critical attention include: Patricia O'Connor's *Mary Doherty* (1938), Barbara Fitzgerald's *We Are Besieged* (1946), Michael Sandy's *Cruel Easter* (1958), Thomas Kilroy's *The Big Chapel* (1971) and some of the short stories of Frank O'Connor, Norah Hoult, Mary Lavin, James Joyce and Edna O'Brien.⁹⁶ Inter-faith relationships have also been represented in Irish language fiction: works including Una Bean Uí Dhíosa's *Cailín na Gruaige Duinne* (1932) and Séamus Ó Néill's *Máire Nic Artáin* (1959) also deserve further critical attention.

Due to the limited scope of this thesis, it has not been possible to investigate in any significant detail different Protestant denominations and how they are represented by authors who engage with the romance-across-the-divide tradition. For instance, it may be found that relationships between Catholics and Presbyterians are more transgressive than say those between Catholics and Anglicans. Moreover, a field that merits further research is the area of mixed marriages or inter-faith relationships between members of different Protestant denominations and how these are represented in fiction. This study may in turn shed light on the fault lines within unionism.

One of the strengths of this thesis lies in the fact that many of the novels analysed are non-canonical. Many of these do not have any great literary merit, and their value to this project lies in their sociological import; it is for this reason that I believe they have been unjustly neglected. In relation to my decision to examine non-canonical fiction, John Wilson Foster's argument is especially pertinent:

Any account of the popular novel must perforce include works that are interesting and worthwhile less for their literary merit than for the

⁹⁶ Barbara Fitzgerald was the daughter of Rev J.A.F. Gregg, Church of Ireland Archbishop and Primate of All Ireland. He was a very outspoken critic of *Ne temere* and I quoted him in this thesis. Short stories which address the romance across the divide tradition include, James Joyce's 'Grace', Norah Hoult's 'Bridget Kiernan', Mary Lavin's 'An akoulina in the Irish midlands' and 'The Convert', Frank O'Connor's 'My First Protestant' and Edna O'Brien's 'The Connor Girls'. I am grateful to Guy Woodward and Avril Patterson for bringing *The Big Chapel* and *We are Besieged* to my attention.

historical context of their popularity and for their social content. Such inclusion goes against the critical grain and requires a suspension of critical disbelief while priorities are rearranged. One outcome hard to avoid is an implied flattening out of literary merit. However, I believe that the social and at times literary pay-off makes this suspension worth the critical concession.⁹⁷

Despite the large volume of fiction which takes mixed marriage as its theme, I have been largely frustrated in my efforts to find works of memoir or biography that deal with this subject. Moreover, the works of fiction writers in this regard have also proved disappointing. Terence de Vere White, Norah Hoult and Glenn Patterson are all authors either born of mixed marriages or with grandparents in mixed marriages, yet their volumes of memoir, respectively entitled *A Fretful Midge* (1957), *Frozen Ground* (1952) and *Once Upon A Hill: Love in Troubled Times* (2008) all fail to address the subject in significant detail. Most interestingly, however, is the fact that both Hoult and de Vere White address the issue in their fictional works, *Holy Ireland* (which I discussed in detail in the third chapter of this thesis) and *The Remainder Man* (1963). The most obvious conclusion to be drawn is that some authors might be more comfortable with the 'safer' medium of fiction when addressing this sensitive issue. It is also possible that the public had no appetite for factual accounts of the subject.⁹⁸

* * * *

The research for this thesis has been conducted on an interdisciplinary basis, employing various research methods. I have identified many obscure yet relevant texts through various mediums such as anthologies or newspaper reviews. I have often used electronic newspaper databases, before sourcing novels on-line or in repositories such as the Early Printed Books department in the library of Trinity College, Dublin or the National Library of Ireland. In turn, the theoretical approach to these novels has been informed by developments in new historicism and postcolonial criticism.

⁹⁷ John Wilson Foster, *Irish Novels 1890 – 1940: New Beginnings in Culture and Fiction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 19.

⁹⁸ Two useful 'non-literary' memoirs, however, have been identified which deal explicitly with mixed marriages, they are Sheila Mooney's *A Strange Kind of Loving* (1990) and Lily O'Connor's *Can Lily O'Shea Come Out to Play?* (2000). My research in this area is continuing.

I have established the historical and sociological basis for this study through extensive research of a wide variety of published works, archives, newspaper reports, interviews and official records such as *The Irish Reports*. Sources such as *The Catholic Encyclopaedia* and the *Irish Ecclesiastical Record* have also been employed. The Dublin Diocesan Archive in Drumcondra, and the National Archives of Ireland, also in Dublin, have proved particularly fertile resources. Interviews with people such as Monsignor Alex Stenson of the Catholic Church and Dr. Donald Caird of the Church of Ireland have also yielded valuable insights. Monsignor Stenson was Chancellor for the Archdiocese of Dublin in the 1960s and had responsibility for the granting of dispensations for mixed marriages. Dr. Donald Caird was Church of Ireland Archbishop of Dublin and Primate of Ireland from the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s and has been an outspoken critic of *Ne temere* and of the promises sought by the Catholic Church in relation to the religious upbringing of children.

* * * *

The main aim of this study was to establish how writers of Irish fiction addressed romances-across-the-divide. I also wanted to establish whether these writers were aware of the sensitivities surrounding inter-faith relationships or demonstrated understanding of particular issues such as *Ne temere* or the religious upbringing of children of mixed marriages. From a political or a historical perspective, a further aim of this study was to explore some of the reasons why mixed marriages or inter-faith relationships have proved to be such a divisive issue in Ireland. I have also sought to clarify some theological issues which have often been misinterpreted, such as the Catholic *Ne temere* decree or the conditions laid down by the Catholic Church to obtain a dispensation for a mixed marriage. Analysis of factual cases have shown that it was in fact the state that was the final authority on mixed marriage matters, and has also emphasised the extent to which these relationships affected the lives of ordinary people.

The thesis has therefore evolved on an interdisciplinary basis, and having established the relevant historical, theological and sociological contexts, has shown that representations of mixed marriages or inter-faith relationships in Irish fiction are heterogenous and by no means confined to national allegories or metaphors for conciliation or the lack of conciliation between both Protestant and Catholic

communities. Many of the novels addressed in this study are in fact a 'curious hybrid' between a romantic tale and a critique of some societal or religious issue such as *Ne temere*.⁹⁹ I have also demonstrated that most writers, to some extent, were aware of the political and sociological implications of these unions and also had some understanding of the theological issues involved.

My investigations have revealed some interesting narrative patterns. Protestant and Catholic communities in the novels are almost always presented as distinct and separate social groupings, but do not exist in total isolation, since all of the protagonists share a willingness, however ephemeral, to cross the religious or political divide. Their efforts towards successful romantic unions are often frustrated by political or religious boundaries, however, and many of these relationships are blighted in some way or must be realised in exile. Very different modes of religious observance emerge from these novels: authors have tended to depict Catholics as looking to their faith in spiritual terms, whilst Protestants are shown to look on their faith more as an inherent part of their political and cultural identity. Stereotypes have also been used extensively by many authors with Catholic and Protestant protagonists projecting them on each another: Catholics are often looked upon as socially inferior, poor, unkempt and uneducated, whilst Protestants, on the other hand, are seen as hardworking, industrious and superior in social terms. It is as though, in their efforts to draw attention to the transgressive nature of the romance-across-the-divide, the authors' use of stereotypes emphasises not only the religious but also the ethnic boundaries between their Protestant and Catholic characters.

* * * *

The main introduction to the thesis established how these unions pose both theological and political dilemmas. The Bible is the source of much Catholic doctrine regarding mixed marriages, and the Catholic Church has always been at pains to discourage such unions – primarily because of the perceived danger they posed to the faith Catholics or their children. The Protestant Churches have also been historically disapproving of inter-faith relationships, but their scepticism appears to have been grounded more in a

⁹⁹ Cleary, *Literature, Partition*, p.114.

fear of the negative impact these might inflict on their numbers. In the Irish Free State following partition, many Protestants adopted a fortress mentality and marrying 'outside' was often interpreted as a form of betrayal. However, by contrast, Catholic Church doctrine specifically legislated against mixed marriages. The Council of Trent's *Tametsi* decree of 1563 dictated that all marriage ceremonies, including those between Catholics and Protestants, must be performed before a priest and two witnesses. As with *Ne temere*, this was interpreted as an attempt by the Catholic Church to legislate for Protestants. Trent also confirmed the sacramental nature of marriages, which in turn created the theological difficulty of issuing sacraments to heretics. Catholic dispensations for mixed marriages also proved to be notoriously divisive; in order to be granted a dispensation, Protestants had to promise to raise their children as Catholics. As I explained in my introduction, the widely misunderstood *Ne temere* decree can be interpreted as an attempt, deliberate or otherwise, by the Catholic Church to legislate for Protestants in mixed marriages, but was *not* concerned with the religious upbringing of children. Given the timing of its promulgation in 1908, in the period leading up to the third Home Rule Bill, the decree was afforded a political traction it might not otherwise have enjoyed.

The introduction also showed how mixed marriages or inter-faith relationships transgressed political boundaries. Beginning with the Desmond Rebellion of the sixteenth century through to the 1798 Rebellion, the brief survey of various sectarian flashpoints demonstrated how Protestants and Catholics were divided along political lines. Through various movements such as the campaign for Catholic emancipation or the Protestant defence of the union, Catholic and Protestant identities became more conspicuous at a national level by the mid-nineteenth century, as religious and political identities coalesced.

Having established the theological and historical backdrop to mixed marriages in Ireland, the third section of the introduction drew attention to the relationship between the Church and state before and after Independence regarding such unions, and demonstrated how mixed marriage disputes were most often concerned with the religious upbringing of children of these marriages. My analysis showed how 'paternal supremacy' was enshrined in civil law up until 1950, meaning that the father enjoyed the sole right to determine the religious upbringing of his children. This privilege was

overturned, however, in the *Tilson* judgement of 1950 which drew on the relevant articles of the 1937 Constitution. In Ireland as in Britain, it was the state and not the Church that was the final authority regarding mixed marriages.

The first chapter of this thesis examined fiction by both Protestant and Catholic writers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Here Protestant writers tended to emphasise the importance of economic and material well-being in their narratives: in Shan F. Bullock's *Dan the Dollar*, the Catholic protagonist is faced with the choice between her Catholicism or a materially better life with a Protestant, but ultimately chooses her faith. Her apparent morally-inspired decision, however, is tempered by the fact that the rejection of her Protestant suitor has as much to do with his Protestantism as his materialism, and what is essentially a moral tale is coloured to some degree by religious bigotry. Another novel by a Protestant writer, L.T. Meade's *The O'Donnells of Inchfawn* is shown to be more flagrantly concerned with materialism: here a successful mixed marriage between the Catholic and Protestant protagonists gestures towards more economic co-operation (in the form of a benign colonial relationship) between Ireland and Britain. Two didactic novels by Catholic writers, Dillon O'Brien's *Frank Blake* and Mrs. J. Sadlier's *Bessy Conway*, on the other hand, use the romance-across-the-divide tradition to promote Catholicism and denigrate Protestantism. These novels are coloured by a tendency for triumphalism in late-nineteenth-century Catholic discourse (generated to a large degree by Cardinal Paul Cullen), and their message is shown to be stridently delivered: Protestants, it is strongly suggested, should convert to Catholicism not only to achieve a happy marriage but also to guarantee their personal salvation.

The second chapter of this thesis argued that early twentieth century novelists used inter-faith relationships as metaphors for a political conciliation, while simultaneously critiquing Catholic dogma. Two novels by Catholic writers, Gerald O'Donovan's *Waiting* and M.E. Francis's *Dark Rosaleen* are set against the campaign for the third Home Rule Bill, and the successful unions at the end of the novels can be read as metaphors for a form of political conciliation. Both novels, however, are deeply concerned with two of the most contentious issues associated with mixed marriages in Ireland. O'Donovan's novel is arguably informed by the *McCann* case discussed in the introduction, and is heavily critical of the Catholic Church and the power vested in individual priests, but also addresses the vexed issue of dispensations for mixed

marriages. From a literary perspective, *Dark Rosaleen* is arguably the weakest novel in the entire survey, but in socio-cultural terms it is possibly the most valuable. Francis addresses what has been, perhaps, the most contentious sociological issue between the Protestant and Catholic communities: the novel shows how the insistence of the Catholic Church that the children of a mixed marriage should be raised as Catholics was ultimately the undoing of the relationship between Hector, a Protestant, and Norah, a Catholic. The one novel by a Protestant writer addressed in this chapter, Frank Frankfort Moore's *The Ulsterman: A Story of Today*, was concerned primarily with the possible negative economic impacts of Home Rule, and I have argued that the successful inter-faith relationship we see by the end of the novel constituted a tacit admission, on the part of the author, that the world of 'the Ulsterman' was about to change irrevocably under self-government.

Chapter Three addressed novels that were written during the years of the Free State. Two novels written by male writers, *The Knife* by Peadar O'Donnell and *Helen Spenser* by Patrick MacGill, show how some authors hankered back to the revolutionary period of the early twentieth century. The happy endings of these novels were shown to be uncomplicated, if crude political allegories. Two novels by female writers, however, *The Trains go South* by Temple Lane and *Holy Ireland* by Norah Hoult demonstrated the concern of those authors for the social impacts of these relationships on ordinary citizens of the Free State. Lane's novel evokes sympathy for its isolated Protestant protagonist, bound by Catholic dogma and the conservative civil laws of the Free State: he seeks a divorce from his Catholic wife, but neither the laws of the land nor the doctrine of her Church will allow it, forcing him to submit to the Catholic ethos of the Free State. Lane seems to have regarded the cultural and perceived moral differences between Catholics and Protestants as forming an almost unassailable barrier to integration between both communities. Hoult's novel similarly presents the Free State as oppressively Catholic in ethos, as the Catholic protagonist who is in a relationship with a Protestant/theosophist abandons her family. However, the second part of the novel is heavily qualified in that she is equally unhappy in her new theosophist home. Hoult's offers a scathing assessment of the Free State and her message is plainly delivered, as she demonstrates that: if the state has not put in place the necessary social apparatus or structures needed in order for a society to function, then the religious beliefs of partners in a relationship are of little consequence.

The fourth chapter of this thesis examined novels which identified the oppressive nature of the Catholic Church as the agency of destruction in inter-faith relationships in mid-twentieth century Ireland. This chapter also applied Pierre Bourdieu's theories of *habitus* to Irish religious communities and to the ways in which both Protestant and Catholic characters in the novels used stereotypes when thinking and speaking about one another. My reading of Brian Moore's *The Feast of Lupercal* showed within Protestant majority Belfast, it was possible for the minority Catholic community to enforce religious mores as a means of excluding those it perceived as outsiders. The one Protestant who does manage to penetrate its cordon is treated as 'other' and ultimately escapes Catholic oppressiveness by fleeing to London. The Catholic protagonist, on the other hand, appears weak and pathetic remains under the Catholic cosh. My reading of this novel also highlighted the Catholic Church's fixation with 'avoiding scandal' which has resonance in contemporary Ireland. In Anne Crone's novel *Bridie Steen*, written from a Protestant perspective, Protestant characters are shown to have an acute sense of history and continually refer to events such as the Ulster Plantation. Although not as spiritually-minded as their Catholic counterparts, they nonetheless place great emphasis on the Bible. Although the Protestant community in the novel is shown to be strictly endogamous, Crone ultimately depicts (and presumably intentionally) the Catholic Church as the destructive force in the romance between Catholic and Protestant protagonists. In Joseph Tomelty's *Red is the Port Light* Catholic dogma was also seen to have a direct and corrosive influence on the inter-faith relationship. As the Catholic protagonist realised she was approaching death, she sought, in accordance with Canon law, the conversion of her husband of many years, a demand which blighted what had been a long and successful relationship.

In the final chapter I sought to demonstrate how sexual encounters in romance-across-the-divide fiction can be read as forms of political engagement. Moreover, as these novels were all written in the 1960s, these can be seen as reflective of the tense political atmosphere in Northern Ireland at that time. Significantly, the most notable of these encounters were violent sexual assaults committed by Protestant men against Catholic women. In Anthony C. West's *The Ferret Fancier* the relationship between the Catholic and the Protestant transgresses political, religious and class lines; these divisions are such, that after their love-making the Protestant cannot even countenance a relationship

with her. Jack Wilson's *Dark Eden* describes violent sexual assaults against his Catholic protagonist, in an Ulster Plantation setting, echoing the conquest and colonisation of Ireland by British imperialist forces. Similarly, the sexual assault by a Protestant man on a Catholic woman in Maurice's Leitch's *Poor Lazarus* can be seen to symbolise loyalist loathing for Catholic Ireland. Not all of the inter-faith relationships in these novels were malignant, however. The relationship between the Catholic, Rachel and the Protestant, Ansil in *Dark Eden* could be seen as a traditional 'Romeo and Juliet' style romance, but this should be qualified by the fact that at the end of the novel, Rachel is depicted as barren, and their relationship is only realised in exile. The homo-erotic relationship between Yarr and Quigley in *Poor Lazarus* is also a loving relationship, but this ends abruptly after Quigley is possessed by sectarian hatred.

The sociologist Chris Curtin has argued that 'Exogamy – that is out-group marriage – offers the possibility of forming alliances with other groups and families. Endogamy or in-group marriage threatens that possibility'.¹⁰⁰ Curtin's contention, however, can be taken a step further: mixed marriages or inter-faith relationships offer a means of combatting sectarianism while successful mixed marriages can overcome it. When writers of Irish fiction depicted these unions in their narratives, they addressed a crucial issue for a society that has been continually divided along religious and political lines. The fact that many of these fictional unions end ultimately in failure or are blighted in some way, shows that these writers were all too aware of the complexities and difficulties associated with such alliances. In fact, while depictions of the relationships varied immensely, what unites all of the novels is an implicit or explicit understanding of the complex and contentious implications of a romance between a Catholic and a Protestant in Ireland.

¹⁰⁰ Chris Curtin, 'Marriage and Family', in *Ireland: A Sociological Profile*, ed. by Patrick Clancy and others (Dublin: Institute of Public Administration in association with the Sociological Association of Ireland, 1986), p. 157.

Appendix

The romance-across-the-divide in broadside ballad form

Lines Written on
A Discussion
Between a Protestant Gentleman and a Roman
Catholic Lady, in Townley Hall,
near Drogheda.

As I roved out one evening on the 20th of July,
To view each meadow in in full bloom, with my inspecting eye,
The small birds did they sweetly sing in chorus one and all,
The swans did glide along the tide in charming Townley Hall

I did advance along the line, my heart being light and free,
When I spied a lovely maid, appearing there to me,
Her cheeks they were like roses fair, her person straight and tall,
No other lass could her surpass, she's the pride of Townley Hall.

I did salute this lovely maid, and said – my charming fair –
By your enchanting beauty rare, I'm caught in Cupid's snare,
You will soon have land and property, and servants at you call,
If you agree to wed with me, – sweet star of Townly Hall.

This maid she then answered – kind sir, don't make so free,
You know well I'm not your equal, so therefore let me be
I am a Roman Catholic – on blest Mary's aid I call,
To guide me from such imps as you, in charming Townley Hall.

Fair maid, don't speak so hastily – now remember what you say,
If you are a Roman Catholic, you know you're going astray –
The blest Bible is our rule of faith, till God does on us call –
I wish you'd be converted by me, in charming Townley Hall.

Kind sir, you speak presumptuously, to state I'm going astray,
For believing in that Holy Church – where St. Peter holds the key;
The spouse of our Redeemer good, who laid down his life for all,
Where is the clown that dare confound those words in charming Townley Hall.

I am no clown, the young man said, your text I can confound,
You say your Church is universal and it stands on firm ground,
We don't confess to earthly men, but to God the head of all,
It's He who can forgive all sins, sweet pride of Townley Hall.

Our blest Saviour did confess himself, upon the Mount 'tis true,
To leave that figure in his Church, though sin he never knew,
Where Moses and Elias too, appeared like glittering Sol,
So don't be blind, but repent in time, with me in Townley Hall.

Ah! fair maid, you speak with candour, and talent most sublime,
So to save my soul, I'll join the fold, but say you will be mine,
The English Church I will forsake, and on my knees will fall,
And blest the day I met my love, in charming Townley Hall.

Young man, if you be constant true, I'll give to you my hand,
In the holy Church of Rome we'll join, in wedlock's blessed hands,
The Blessed Virgin will rejoice when you do on her call,
She'll be your friend you may depend, when far from Townley hall.

This young couple now consented in wedlock's hands to join,
In true love they fondly parted then till the appointed time,
Her name should be recorded then with females one and all,
Because she did convert her love in charming Townley Hall.

This fair one's name now to explain, this Rebus will expound,
Three letters from a river that in Scripture will be found,
Two vowels next then you must find out, this name for to extol,
If you're sublime, you're sure to find, the pride of Townley Hall.

c. 1865.

Dublin, National Library of Ireland, Manuscripts, 5159 (50b)

As in the nineteenth century novels discussed in the first chapter, happiness is achieved by a conversion to Catholicism.

* * * * *

Apart from fiction, poetry, drama and film, the romance-across-the-divide tradition has also been represented in song:

I met you in no mans land
Across the wire we were holding hands
Hearts a-bubble in the rubble
It was love at bomb site

– Stiff Little Fingers, 'Barbed Wire Love'.

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