THE FICTIONAL WORLD IN FOUR
NOVELS BY BRIAN MOORE

by

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Abstract

The fictional worlds of Brian Moore's four novels are, in this thesis, explored for their relation to reality and to the action and overall effect of the novels. The argument rests on the premise that the nature of the world a novelist creates affects the action which is possible in the novel and predisposes that action to certain kinds of interpretation. It also assumes that for this sort of investigation, some workable description of a fictional world can be arrived at by examining such features as the selection of detail, the ordering principles, and the language with which that world is created, as well as the narrator's position in relation to the fiction. The introductory chapter is devoted to elaborating these premises and illustrating their application to modern fiction in a general way.

The next four chapters analyse the fictional worlds in Brian Moore's four novels in order of publication, marking any discernable connection they have with the action of the novels and judging their influence on the reader's interpretation of the action. These chapters examine Moore's
techniques of projecting an illusion of reality, with occasional comparison with the methods of other novelists and more frequent comparisons among the four novels, designed to trace signs of development in his techniques. Chapter Two deals with *Judith Hearne*, tracing particularly the fate of the aging spinster's religious and romantic impulses in a world which might be described as rhetorically, as well as spiritually, constricting. In Chapter Three, the world of dehumanized social forces in *The Feast of Lupercal* is examined together with the failure of the Belfast schoolmaster Diarmuid Devine to offset these forces with any strong human qualities or values transcending the claims of social expedience. A large part of Chapter Four, dealing with *The Luck of Ginger Coffey*, Moore's only novel set in Canada, is concerned with developments in the author's techniques. Its fictional world is found to be larger, and to accommodate more of the individual humanity of his characters. Greater reliance on representational techniques has also affected the depth and range of interpretation of his fiction. Chapter Five, on Brian Moore's latest novel, *An Answer from Limbo*, is less a study of development than of innovation in the author's methods. The effect of first-person narration is examined, and the complication of the fictional world by the development of three distinct perspectives on the action, corresponding to the three main characters.

The concluding chapter summarizes the similarities in the fictional worlds of the four novels, and attempts a general characterization of
Moore's techniques of presenting an illusion of reality, relating them to the overall effects of his fiction. The differences traced in the earlier chapters are also drawn together in an effort to find some pattern of development in the changes. On the basis of this one characteristic of his fiction, Brian Moore is finally compared with other novelists as a means of estimating his position in the stream of modern fiction.
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THE FICTIONAL WORLD IN FOUR NOVELS BY BRIAN MOORE

Chapter 1: Introduction

Comparing novels which project widely differing illusions of reality makes it clear that the nature of the fictional world created materially affects the range of significance the work as a whole can have. Even when the imitation of life in the novels is on a similar "mimetic level," to use Northrop Frye's term, the distinctive characteristics of the world created predispose the action to certain kinds of meaning or interpretation.1 Those who concede, for example, that Isabel Archer from James's The Portrait of a Lady could not exist in a scene with Joyce's Leopold Bloom will also agree that this is not because of differences between London and Dublin in the real world. The two characters have different modes of existence because the fictional worlds of which they are a part

are differently created, and the final significance of their appearance must differ as surely as the immediate impressions they make. The nature of this dependence of overall significance on the qualities of the fictional world can only be approached through a close examination of how that world is constituted.

Fictional worlds vary in the elements of human experience they contain or recreate. Proportions of physical, emotional and psychological experience are basic determiners. Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, for example, is a compendium of physical detail, while Crusoe's psychology remains as rudimentary as a contrivance for catching wild goats. This results as much from the type as the quantity of detail. Physical experience is recreated in documentative detail as opposed to, say, the vivid sensory detail of a D. H. Lawrence short story. Psychological description too may recreate mental states analytically from without or descriptively from within a personality, and it may confine itself to consciously ordered mental processes or attempt to recreate the greater bulk of involuntary associative activity. Similarly, emotions may be confined to clearly definable—even socially acceptable—states of feeling or may include signs of dark, chaotic subterranean stirrings. Analysis is not always most productive in these fundamental terms. Dos Passos, for example, in his "Newsreel" sections of *U. S. A.* attempts to introduce into his fictional world a complex part of our cultural experience seldom seen in fiction.
The author's choice of language helps to determine the elements of experience recreated in more than simply the detail it denotes. Its connotative values produce the nebulous fringes of perception; its figurative uses determine the type of experience the metaphor introduces as a corollary to the literal action. Dickens' religious metaphors in describing Coketown, for example, help to transform the moral judgment in *Hard Times* into spiritual condemnation. If any quality of the fictional world has direct bearing on a novel's final significance, its scope of human experience has, as Mark Schorer points out in his "Technique as Discovery." He shows in his first example how a concentration on merchantile and measurable elements of life changes *Moll Flanders* from the moral lesson Defoe intended to a kind of audit of the wages of sin.

The variety of experience, particularly psychological experience, in a fictional world will depend partly on narrative point of view in the Jamesian sense, but the concept is of limited value for this investigation. Both *The Portrait of a Lady* and *Ulysses*, for example, are narrated from a point of view which could be described as "selective omniscience," yet the similarity is incidental. The term is itself misleading to the extent that it suggests the coincidence of the fictional and real worlds or some existence of the fictional world beyond what is given or implied in the narrative. The value of approaching a novel

as though its fictional world were an artifact rather than a view of the real world (one of James's "windows on life") depends on the possibility of appreciating some organic relation between the ethos and the action of the novel which is de-emphasized in the traditional approach. In part it depends on the limits of presentation being significant as limits not of vision but of action in the novel.

The term "perspective" is more apt, with its implication of arrangement and distortion as qualities of the landscape rather than of the viewer. Experience making up a fictional world arranges itself in a certain perspective according to the proportion and emphasis devoted to various elements. Leopold Bloom's fascination with the world "parallax" draws attention to the changing perspective in *Ulysses*. The elements of Bloom's world in the strongly sensuous morning scene where he eats "the inner organs of beasts" are not in the same perspective as in later mock-romantic scenes. A more extreme example is Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*, where the elements foremost in the perspectives of Benjy, Quentin, and Jason are so diverse that three separate fictional worlds are provisionally created and can be unified only by painstaking reconstruction around half a dozen recognisable points of correspondence. To consider a novel with unified perspective, Schorer's description of Moll Flanders would put Christian values near the diminishing point of the perspective with economic concerns in the foreground. Such descriptions often reveal a kind of moral or thematic perspective corresponding
to the physical one.

Closely related to the matter of experience is the manner of arranging it, the system underlying the ordering of description and narration. The illusion of reality in fiction stems not only from individual correspondences with life, which any literary form can have, but from creating a sense of the process of life. Any of the elements which lend continuity to human experience can act as the ordering principle behind this sense of process. Our sense of the continuity of time and of movement through space are a resource of realism in narrative. Together with physical details of circumstance they tend to produce that documentive realism fiction shares with historical reportage. They are a main factor in the strong illusion of reality generated by the Halifax explosion scenes of Hugh MacLennan's *Barometer Rising*. 

Closely related are the ordering of cause and effect and patterns of logic in both physical and psychological action generally. All these are rational, relatively objective sources of order. More subjective elements like states of feeling and patterns of association can also provide continuity. The child Stephen's reflections in the opening of *A Portrait of the Artist*, or the associative flights of the heroine in *Mrs. Dalloway*, are good examples of subjective ordering, emphasizing the illogic rather than the logic of human life.

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Language helps again to determine the ordering principle. In psychological description Henry James never allowed himself the freedom (he would have called it looseness) of expanding associations used by Mrs. Woolf to present the multi-relational quality of subjective experience. His descriptions are linear and explicit, exacting the last possibility of subtle relationship of ideas from the grammar of the language. Grammar generally has a tendency to rational ordering of experience, just as a disruption of syntax is often used to convey a suspension of rational control. Figurative language is one of the chief resources of subjective ordering. As the subject of metaphor may introduce new elements to the fictional world, the abundance and strength of metaphor may provide a new ordering principle. In The Great Gatsby, for example, the possibility of Gatsby's dream emerging in real substance and significance is inherent in Nick Carraway's earliest descriptive passages: "... there was an excitement in her voice that men who had cared for her found difficult to forget: a singing compulsion, a whispered 'Listen,' a promise that she had done gay, exciting things just a while since and that there were gay, exciting things hovering in the next hour." \(^4\) In the metaphor with which Carraway creates the fictional world, human feelings are given an immunity to logical constraint which is necessary to penetrate beyond the "vulgar and mere-tricious" in Gatsby's dream.

Metaphor also contributes to the richness and subtlety of a fictional world, though many other elements of technique are involved. A Katherine Mansfield short story, for example, could serve as a paradigm of the use of subtly suggestive detail. Implicit exposition and rendering of attitudes give her fiction a rich "background" quality, with varying degrees of illumination. The reader is inclined to view her world as immediate, human and problematic; an abstract "moral" would be irrelevant. By comparison, the explicit, fully externalized world of many of Morley Callaghan's stories lends itself to allegorization. James Joyce achieves another sort of subtlety by refusing to point the implication of the action. Statement, feeling, gesture remain unanalysed, carrying their suggestive power in their arrangement, inviting interpretation by the narrative stillness in which they are suspended.

As the example of Joyce suggests, the reader's interpretation of fictional action is influenced by the prominence of the narrator, the degree to which he is felt as an evaluating, analysing force in the world. The less he is felt, the more reliance there is on representation rather than statement, and the greater the chance of the action acquiring that suggestive ambiguity which draws significance from areas not strictly conscious. This is not precisely a quality of the fictional world, but it is observable in the way the world is presented. Though

5 For some of the methods of assessing the richness of a fictional world employed here, and for the idea of its effect on interpretation of fiction, see Erich Auerbach, "Odysseus' Scar," Mimesis, trans. Willard Trask (New York: Anchor, 1957), passim.
many of these matters of form and technique are objects of analysis in entirely different contexts, they can, without any intention of encroaching, be examined here specifically for their effect on the fictional world and the ethos it provides for the action of a novel.

Some dependence of significance on fictional world may be seen clearly enough in extreme contrasts and unfamiliar styles; it is much less evident, though it cannot be less effective, in the novels of a writer like Brian Moore. Moore follows conventions of realistic presentation so familiar to twentieth-century readers that they are taken for granted, hardly recognized as conventions. Any textual examination of the fictional worlds of his four novels will need occasional contrasting examples to dispel the film of familiarity from his techniques.
Chapter 2: Judith Hearne

Brian Moore's Judith Hearne presents the world of a Belfast spinster who seeks to escape the hard material necessities of life on a diminishing income by indulging in reminiscences, romantic fantasies, and alcohol. It includes her thoughts and her feelings, which revolve chiefly around the boarding house where her last romantic hope is naively attached to James Madden, and around a church where she suffers the fear that her dreams of eternal recompense for a life of sterile righteousness may be vain. It is a world of carefully enumerated circumstantial detail, of spots on the carpet, shillings and spoons of cocoa. Rooms, streets and buildings are carefully described physically, but in rationalized terms, rarely with any vividness of sensory impressions. Miss Hearne's lodgings, for example:

A chair, broadbeamed, straightbacked, sat in the alcove by the bay window, an old pensioner staring out at the street. Near the bed, a dressing table, made familiar by her bottle of cologne, her combs and brushes, and her little round box of rouge. Across the worn carpet was a wardrobe of brown varnished wood with a long panel mirror set in its door.6

The description of the room continues in an orderly panorama.

Experience too is usually rationalized, orderly and continuous, with little evidence of sensations and with a meticulous preservation of time and space ordering. The room described above is seen at seven-ten A.M.; Miss Hearne lies in bed for twenty minutes. Clocks are ubiquitous throughout the novel. More significantly, the narrative preserves a careful chronological sequence.

So she smiled at Mary and was introduced by Mrs. Henry Rice. The hammer was given into her hands and she fumbled with it, saying thank you, and that she would return it as soon as she had finished hanging her picture. Mrs. Henry Rice said there was no hurry and to let them know if she needed anything else, and then Miss Hearne went back up the two flights of stairs to her room. (p. 17)

This summarized narrative with indirect dialogue serves mainly to preserve the logical and chronological sequence of events while moving Miss Hearne from one scene to the next. The realism of actions as well as objects is circumstantial.

With a few exceptions, mental activity is also logical and consecutive. States of mind and human emotions are finite and fully expressed.

Thus, she did not shirk consideration of the fact that she had sat up all night in a chair, that she might have made a lot of noise, that everyone might know her secret. She was drunk, so she found these possibilities amusing but unlikely. She did not forget her unpleasant conversation with Mrs. Henry Rice. She remembered it with relish and her mind triumphantly altered the facts to a more bold, more heroic pattern. (p. 89)

This passage might be termed internal "analysis" rather than description,
since it presents not the play of instantaneous impressions across the
surface of a mind (to adapt Henry James's term) but a state of mind as
an accomplished fact. Pure psychological description, in this sense,
is less common in Judith Hearne, but where it does appear, it is similar­ly orderly.

Friends with the likes of Mrs. Rice, Miss Hearne said to herself. Oh, Moira doesn't understand things
at all. How could I be friends with that fat thing and how could something, a serious thing--a love
affair--just blow over like that? Oh, Moira wouldn't know, sitting here in the middle of her chickens
like some contented hen. (p. 121)

Even when subjectively presented, Miss Hearne's thoughts are syntacti­cally and logically connected, after the manner of internal monologue rather than stream of consciousness.

The scrupulous attention to logical, commonsense aspects of ex­perience in this perspective is complemented by the choice of language which is generally mundane and literal, seldom suggestive or figuratively rich. The infrequent figurative uses of language themselves emphasize the prosaic quality of the description. Bernard Rice is "like some monstrous baby swelled to man size," has a face "the colour of cottage cheese," and when he laughs his cheeks "wobble like white pudding."
The metaphor is homely. The dearth of religious metaphor in particular is notable in a novel in which so much of the action is overtly con­cerned with religion. The metaphor does little to liberate the imagina­tion from the physically and morally constricted world of Judith Hearne.
Like many of the adjectives—horrid fatty, dear aunt, sneaky thing—it personalizes the description. The choice of much of the detail, too, reveals that the narrative focus has been at least conditionally displaced to the mind of the aging spinster. Hairpins, lace doilies and china dogs are objects of fastidious female attention.

The only unrationlized subjective elements in Judith Hearne's world are her fantasies, her addiction to alcohol, and her bonds with the pictures of her aunt and the Sacred Heart. In these lie the major conflict and the major action of the novel. Her fantasies are not, like her usual mental activity, restrained and logical. She is seen building illusions of beauty about her image in the mirror: "Gipsy, she thought fondly, like a gipsy girl on a chocolate box." Her fantasies are a potential source of vitality to carry her subjectively beyond the very measured confines of her life, but she calls herself back ("Gipsy indeed!") to the reality of hairpins and the ever-present clock (p. 20). Her sexual fantasies go further afield: "That handsome boy bathing that day at Greystones, standing up in his tight bathing trunks, his bump of virility sticking out, he would enfold me, he would run gracefully with me up the strand to the dunes" (p. 103). Note particularly the run-on sentence, the romantic vagueness of the setting, and the concentration on the subjective power of desire unconstrained by any

James Madden's sexual desire is given similar treatment. It is anarchic enough to occasion one of the few disruptions of the syntax, but it has too little bearing on the central action of the novel to deserve separate examination.
practical considerations. But even such inward indulgence is not viable in the meticulous world of Judith Hearne. Her consciousness rejects it; she suffers remorse, as she does after succumbing to alcoholism, which also produces powerful non-rational experiences which are subjectively portrayed.

Then, while the bottle of cheap whiskey beat a chattering dribbling tattoo on the edge of the tumbler, she poured two long fingers and leaned back. The yellow liquid rolled slowly in the glass, opulent, oily, the key to contentment. She swallowed it, feeling it warm the pit of her stomach, slowly spreading through her body, steadying her hands, filling her with its secret power. Warmed, relaxed, her own and only mistress, she reached for and poured a tumbler full of drink.

(pp. 83-84)

Sense impressions of the liquor and of her movements are vivid; direct metaphor replaces the usual similes; logic and time are temporarily subdued. It is not simply a matter of intoxication disorganizing her rational faculties. The time is before and during her first drink. It is a triumph of strong anarchic desire over those faculties.

But the effects of this desire inevitably leave Miss Hearne a more abject victim of her own practical concerns—the expense, the sickness, the danger of disgrace. There remain only her aunt's photograph and the oleograph of the Sacred Heart. To both she attributes a degree of sentience and will: "The photograph eyes were stern and questioning, sharing Miss Hearne's own misgivings about the condition of the bedsprings ..." (p. 9). When tempted by drink, she looks to the oleograph for strength:
"He looked down, wise and stern and kindly, His fingers raised in warn-
ing. No, He said, you must not do it. It would be a mortal sin" (p. 83).
However ironically intended, the two form a major part of Miss Hearne's
private drama, and they have, initially at least, considerable efficacy
within the subjective world of Judith Hearne. With them watching over
her, as on her first night at Mrs. Rice's, a new place becomes home.

She said good night to them both, then switched
off the bed light and lay, snuggled in, with only
her nose and eyes out of the covers, remembering
that both of them were there in the darkness. They
make all the difference, Miss Hearne thought.

(p. 18)

The photograph gradually loses its power as Miss Hearne recognizes the
probability that the old woman has ruined her life. The Sacred Heart,
however, is central to her religious faith which produces the crucial
scenes of subjective intensity in the church.

The world so presented is characteristically Judith Hearne's, and
from the outset there are faint signs of some larger perspective in which
this world is viewed. There is no obvious intrusion by the narrator until
the second chapter, but a slightly ironic tone in presenting the aging
spinster's viewpoint is evident from the first. The very individualized
nature of the metaphor, the adjectives, and some of the detail draws at-
tention from the things observed to the observer. The reader is separated
from and observing Miss Hearne. Before any direct evaluation by the
narrator, there is a clear suggestion of hypocrisy in Miss Hearne's actions.
The "bad house" Mrs. Rice speaks of is the sort of place that "shouldn't
be mentioned," yet at its mention, Miss Hearne "leaned forward, her black eyes nervous, her face open and eager" (p. 15). The irony is only confirmed by direct narrative comment on her game of illusions before the mirror: "Her angular face smiled softly at its glassy image. Her gaze, deceiving, transforming her to her imaginings, changed the contour of her sallow-skinned face, skilfully refashioning her long pointed nose on which a small chilly tear had gathered" (p. 20). Because much of Miss Hearne's viewpoint is inherent in the imaginative colouring of the description, the reader experiences and sympathizes with it, but he cannot identify with it. Ultimately he must examine and judge it, presumably within some broader perspective which defines the whole fictional world in which Judith Hearne's beliefs and actions must prove themselves.

The other characters whose viewpoints are adopted from time to time throughout the novel provide few clues to this larger perspective. Each has his own severely limiting self-interests and vanities: almost invariably they are presented ironically. Their vision does not extend to any higher reality. The only exception to the ironic tone is the O'Neill household, which is sympathetically presented. They cherish the comforts of a contented family life; they know that Miss Hearne is a bore, but their humane belief is that aging and lonely people need someone to talk to. Their view is logical—each of us may be old and lonely some day—but hardly adequate to Miss Hearne's needs. Their
disguised pity emphasizes the general lack of honest human feeling and understanding in the world that surrounds Judith Hearne.

Beyond is a Belfast evident in rare passages of direct comment and description by the narrator. It is one with Miss Hearne's private world in its concentration on the common-sense, empirical elements of experience. It differs from hers chiefly in lacking any positively presented subjective qualities. Much of the description is circumstantial, replete with objective detail, but at the same time suggestive of meanness and poverty of spirit.

This time, the bus was almost empty as it rushed through the gritty gloom of evening, down grey drab streets, fringed by row upon row of mean little working-class houses, brick-red, stone-grey, each and every one the same. At each window, between fraying lace curtains, a coloured vase, a set of crossed Union Jacks, or a figurine of a little girl holding her skirts up to wade, sat like little altars, turned toward the street for the edification of the neighbours. (p. 125)

The details are all generalized to epitomize the narrow, unimaginative, barren spirits of the inhabitants. The human values are reduced to negatives just as human motives and aspirations when they appear in Miss Hearne, James Madden and various minor characters, are reduced by ironic treatment. It is a land where all dreams are calculable. The rare religious metaphor of flags and trinkets as altars becomes significant in the light of Judith Hearne's search for some transcendent meaning in religion.

At times the narrator's denial of human value in the Belfast setting
is more explicit. The following descriptive passage includes a fairly complete evaluation.

Then, under the great dome of the building, ringed around by forgotten memorials, bordered by the garrison neatness of a Garden of Remembrance, everything that was Belfast came into focus. The newsvendors calling out the great events of the world in flat, uninterested Ulster voices; the drab facades of the buildings grouped around the Square, proclaiming the virtues of trade, hard dealing and Presbyterian righteousness. The order, the neatness, the floodlit cenotaph, a white respectable phallus planted in sinking Irish bog. The Protestant dearth of gaiety, the Protestant surfeit of order, the dour Ulster burglers walking proudly among these monuments to their mediocrity. (p. 76)

All the moral, spiritual and aesthetic significance of the scene is externalized, rendered finite and measurable in direct assertion. Though such passages are rare, the same tendency toward conscious evaluation is evident in the language of Miss Hearne's expository reminiscences and in the dramatic scenes of the novel, which are never allowed to reach that purity of drama found, for example, in the Christmas dinner scene from A Portrait of the Artist. Some internal monologue always issues from the wings, drawing attention to some specifically conscious concerns at issue in the scene. And the narrator's irony is always pointed; never innocent as it is in Joyce's Christmas scene.

The values explicitly denied in this evaluative description are everywhere implicitly denied by the perspective of the fictional world. The denial is implicit in more objective description as well as in the
lives of the characters (though they are not protestants). The presentation of their experiences gives precedence to that "surfeit of order" referred to here. All human experience and human desires are reduced to rational terms, referable to the "garrison neatness" of this larger world of objective facts. Where human feeling threatens to escape into the infinite imaginative dimensions of faith, love or worship, the world of objective circumstances reasserts itself to mark it as illusion.

The feeble anarchy of Judith Hearne's religious feelings suffers this fate continually. Though it can transcend the minor ordering of her own private experience, it cannot displace the ordering of the larger perspective. Here she approaches the church in need of reassurance:

But there in front of her was Saint Finbar's, its Gothic spire uplifted like two praying hands, a grey religious place, the house of God in the peace of night. (p. 101)

The church is transformed, animated by a rare access of spiritual vitality. But immediately the broader common-sense perspective reasserts itself in a commercial metaphor.

The church was empty: cleared of its stock of rituals, invocations, prayers, a deserted spiritual warehouse waiting new consignments. (p. 101)

In her time of doubt, when she is tempted to believe that the tabernacle contains only round wafers of unleavened bread, her faith can at first recover in her own mind: "O God, God forgive me! she cried, falling on her knees. Forgive me, O Sacred Heart, for the terrible doubt the devil put in my head. O my guardian angel, shield me, protect me. Forgive
me, O God, for I have sinned. I have blasphemed." The next words assert the prior claim of empirical fact:

The footsteps returned. "You'll have to leave now, missis," the old sacristan said. His soutane was unbuttoned, showing a dirty brown pullover underneath. She looked into his old discoloured eyes, searching for secrets. But saw only that he was tired, that he wanted to close the church, that he wanted her to go. (p. 103)

The dirt on his brown pullover does more than the absence of secrets in his eyes to dispel mysteries from this world. Such treatment is not peculiar to the religious scenes in the novel. Similar juxtapositions are effected whenever marital aspirations or alcohol overcome Miss Hearne's rational restraint.

In this perspective Judith Hearne's religious faith could never survive except ironically within a delusional world of her own. Its complete destruction results from her demand for a sign. A sign, to her, must be physical, observable, like the sunlight cast through the church window on her and Madden, or a proposal of marriage, a bolt of lightning, or an angry fire-breathing god emerging from the tabernacle. The rewards of religious belief must be translatable into empirical fact. The answer to her plea is again implied in the overall perspective. Her final solace is in the only possible reconciliation of her subjective experiences and her environment. Her desire for religion she ascribes

In this respect she bears out the ancient tradition of her name. "Judith" in Hebrew signifies "Jewess."
to a need for a community of feeling with her countrymen. In the hospital she returns to her pictures with a new understanding.

She smiled. The familiar things. How often I've thought that.

And on the dressing table, her aunt in sepia tones. Aunt D'Arcy's picture. More real now than aunt herself. For she is gone. It is here. It is part of me.

And You. Were You ever? Is this picture the only You?

It is here and You are gone. It is You. No matter what You are, it still is part of me.

She closed her eyes. Funny about those two. When they're with me, watching over me, a new place becomes home.

The last elements of subjective freedom are finally rationalized into logical conscious human sentiments. Judith Hearne is in harmony with the fictional world of which she is a part.
Chapter 3: *The Feast of Lupercal*

The opening lines of *The Feast of Lupercal* reveal several dominant features of its fictional world: "Diarmuid Devine, B. A. (Junior and Senior English), stood at his desk sizing his books into a pile."\(^9\)

The lines reveal first the prominence of the narrator and second the most common type of detail. The narrator is more obtrusive than in *Judith Hearne*, as is shown in the directness with which he introduces and provisionally defines the central character. Exposition throughout is more inclined to be direct, not assimilated into the characters' reminiscences. Devine's past takes shape in passages like this: "Their father, his and Josie's, had died fourteen years ago. Their poor mother followed him to the grave one year later. He and Josie had been left alone. Josie got married and he moved to digs" (p. 9). If the words "poor" and "digs" are to mark this as Devine's own reflection, it is

\(^9\) (Boston: Little Brown, 1957), p. 3 -- subsequent quotations are from this edition.
not plausibly stimulated. Direct statement from the outset helps to reduce the schoolmaster to an ironic level. The scrupulous detail and official phrasing of his qualifications initiate an ironic tone which characterizes his treatment in the novel. That the purely local distinction of teaching "Junior and Senior English" should be important enough to mention at this stage suggests that Devine's is a soul which can be defined in such infra-human terms.

The terms are "social" in the broadest sense of the word. They describe no individual human qualities in the man, but his position in a social order. Devine exists mainly as a social being struggling for a satisfactory position in that order, and in a fictional world in which the social elements of experience predominate.

Broadly the realism of this world is similar to that of Judith Hearne. The circumstantial realism of physical detail is generally maintained, though not quite as prominent:

Taking off his raincoat and hat, Mr. Devine went into his den. The fire was drawing and it was not dark yet. A late afternoon sun shone through the iron-barred basement windows, beyond which he could see the back garden with washing on a long line. (p. 11)

The detail is documentive, without sensory vividness; "raincoat", "hat", "fire", "garden", and "washing" are unparticularized as are the verbs "taking", "went", "shone" and "see". Events form a continuous process through time and space; Devine is explicitly moved into his den, and
the back garden is the last stage in a panorama of the room.

Some more overtly purposeful detail may be found in the first scene when the school bell sends the pupils, the masters and the priests with their canes scurrying to the next class:

At that moment, in a small cubbyhole off the entrance hall of Saint Michan's College, the hall porter pushed a key into the switchblock and pressed it down. An electric bell, deafeningly loud, screamed out into corridors, crying unheard in empty dormitories, echoing across wet playing fields to die in the faraway mists over Belfast Lough. (p. 3)

Devine, who is so acutely aware of all social pressure, can anticipate accurately the sounding of the bell which controls the periodic movements of human life within the college and penetrates even beyond. Dehumanized social order at its purest, the bell is a possible analog of the whole action of social forces in the novel. Like the bell, various forces of social approbation and disapproval drive the complacent schoolmaster into a romantic involvement with Tim Heron's young niece, Una Clarke, who is driven, in turn, to luring Devine into a compromising situation. In an unsuccessful attempt to shield himself from the forces of outraged propriety, he betrays her trust—and his own self-respect—by denying any part in her disgrace. The bell is a particularly appropriate analog, since it is operated by Old John. The hall porter is appropriately the stoney arbiter of fates on a larger scale by remaining deaf to any direct intercourse with the inmates while carrying their most guarded secrets to the college president. The militant
social code of the school, like the sound of the bell, extends into the social surroundings, as Diarmuid Devine painfully learns. Very little of the detail, however, attracts such speculation.

Internal, like external, experience is connected and rational. Much of it is in the colloquial form of Devine's internal monologue: "He felt damned sorry for Young Connolly" (p. 5). Feelings are finite and identifiable, usually quite explicit. Thoughts are fully conscious and logically arranged, even when heightened emotions demand a closer description for immediacy of effect. Devine, when faced with the reality of his sinful dreams, is incompetent but always logical:

And he, what should he do? Undress? Be in bed and waiting? Or just sit here? With shame he thought of his naked body. He would look awful, his turned-in knees, his narrow chest, and, merciful God! long white underwear. (p. 147)

His sentences suffer from the urgency of his fear, but his thoughts remain logically ordered. Heightened feeling does not produce the sensory vividness found at the onset of Judith Hearne's alcoholism, or the strength of metaphor accompanying it. To do justice to the complexity of Devine's feelings, his love scene does contain an occasional simile: "Afraid, he knelt once more, as though in genuflection before the altar of her body" (p. 145). But the strength of the logical order is rarely suspended, even in moments of feeling, by stronger forms of metaphor.

In spite of basic similarities in realistic technique, the selection of detail and of language make this world considerably different from
that of Judith Hearne. The conventional or social details of any character, scene or action outweigh the radically personal, sensory and subjective detail. The introduction of Diarmuid Devine by his academic position is a first sign. The same tendency is evident in the description of his street:

He lived midway between the school and the city, in a quiet avenue once prosperous, now failing. Its small front gardens had a naked, communal look, occasioned by the wartime removal of their iron railings for use in making tanks. The railings had not been replaced, the avenue had not recovered. Dusty squares of lawn, enclosed by low stone parapets, lay like neglected empty pools in front of the houses. It was an avenue whose first owners had moved to new areas, making way for widows on annuities, salesmen on commission and policemen pensioned off. (p. 11)

Details of its economic history "once prosperous" may suggest something of its appearance, but physical detail is slight. Its past and its present decline are mainly of social importance, like the description of the inhabitants by their social categories "widows salesmen and policemen." There is no personal detail of the people or of what the street means to Devine. He lives there because "some of the houses took in boarders." The expository part of the description has a sociological tone.

Character analysis shares this bias. In the description of Diarmuid Devine's appearance, the language in particular is notable.

He was a tall man, yet did not seem so: not youthful, yet somehow young; a man whose appearance
suggested some painful uncertainty. He wore the jacket and waistcoat of a business suit, but his trousers were sag-kneed flannels. His black brogues clashed with loud Argyle socks. The military bravura of his large mustache was denied by weak eyes, circled by ill-fitting spectacles. Similarly, his hair, worn long and untidy behind the ears, thinning to a sandy shoal on his freckled brow, offset the Victorian respectability of waistcoat, gold watch chain and signet ring. (p. 6)

The first sentence is physical description in personal terms: "tall, young, uncertainty." The rest of the description evokes comparisons with a series of social conventions, whether by typical features, "loud Argyle socks, hair worn long and untidy," or by specialized terms like "business, military, Victorian." The only quality presented with more individual than social significance is Devine's weakness of character. It is appropriate that this personal trait is represented by a pastiche of conflicting social modes in his dress, since it is a weakness not to any dreams or appetites springing from within but to all external social pressures, from the threat of ruin to the frown of a lady on a passing tram.

The preference for social detail is not confined to describing the vacillating conformity of the central character. Even the fiery Tim Heron's self-assertion is analysed as a social reaction: "All his life, his constant fear had been that he would be overlooked, his constant pre-occupation the seeking out of fancied insults ... His bony body was warped by tics and tremblings of suppressed rage, his electric-blue eyes flickered
to and fro in search of a sneak attack" (p. 17). If any more radically personal components of character underly this pattern of social response, they are never clear. Characters are present in this world not in their fundamental humanity, but as social beings. To use a chemical metaphor, the reader is given not their atomic structures but their valences.

As the earlier descriptions show, expository detail has the same emphasis. Devine's character is developed by exposition of his family background, his father's occupation and social standing, the schools the boy attended and his ten years at St. Michan's. Purely personal details, like his remembered fear when as a child he watched his father swim out to sea leaving him alone on the beach, are rare. Few of Devine's memories have that inward quality of feeling. More typical is the explanation of the boys Father Creely catches spreading scandal: "They were junior boys, fourteen-year-olds, from the Glens of Antrim. That was why Corny had been telling the other two when Father Creely sneaked up and overheard them. They always told each other everything. They were all Cushendall boys together" (p. 93). Once they are categorized by their cultural background, their characters are explained. If this world has an explanation it lies in social causes.

Not surprisingly, the social emphasis extends into the revealed consciousness of Diarmuid Devine, which includes most of the novel's psychological action. As his judgment of the bell intervals suggests, he is acutely sensitive to social ordering and to its controls. His
characteristic gesture in conversation is to see if anyone is overhearing—the pupils, the Dean, his landlady, the waitress in the tea shop. When Maloney is joking coarsely at Tim Heron's party, Devine's concern is not to condemn or contradict his scandalous remarks about Tim's daughter, but to keep them quiet: "Whisht man, somebody might hear." When Tim Heron is excoriating him in the school hallway, Devine is only partly concerned with vindicating his honour. He wants to avoid calumny: "'Whisht!' Mr. Devine murmured, with a warning look at the half-opened classroom door" (p. 157). His mind is occupied less with how things are than with how they will look to others. Even the slights on his manhood which goad him into the main action of the novel do not raise serious self-doubts. The sins of his imagination assure him of his sexual normalcy, but he worries about the appearance he presents to the world: "It was a shock, dammit, to find out you were a laughingstock" (p. 9). The shock is especially violent to a man whose conduct is all oriented outward, set in a pattern to evoke the proper response from everyone around him.

Even his view of himself is generally external. When he first meets Una Clarke and ponderously attempts conversation, he is stimulated mainly by the outward view of himself he imagines: "by jingo, here he was, flirting with a girl." He enjoys the novelty of the experience, but without losing sight of its effect. He hopes the garrulous Maloney will spread the story among the other masters at St. Michan's. The terms in
which he judges himself reflect the same outward orientation. He despises his own individuality when he compares it with social norms which have popular acceptance:

His face was of another species from the handsome men who daily looked down on him from cigarette, shaving cream, and hair tonic advertisements. Wouldn't he look ridiculous on a cinema poster? (p. 53)

That he can draw his standards of comparison from even the superficial and romantic world of commercial art shows that he stands indiscriminately in awe of public taste. His centre of judgment must lodge in any convenient social convention because he has no enduring personal standard. He has no moral principles strong enough to transcend the claims of social expedience and form a basis for individual judgment. As he reflects after taking an interest in Una Clarke and then hearing Maloney's scandal about her: "Information about a stranger meets no defense. In the balance against nothing, it weighs complete" (p. 31). The "nothing" balanced against it is Devine's independent judgment.

His more studied reflections reveal an explicit belief in the power of social forces to match his conscious preoccupation with social appearances. He blames his own social ineptitude entirely on his early training: "It was the education in Ireland, dammit, he had said it many a time. He had been a boarder at this very school, shut off from girls until he was almost a grown man" (p. 9). And he attempts to understand his own experience by reference to borrowed stereotypes; protestant
girls are "hot stuff," french kissing is "dirty," protestants are the hostile establishment. The last bitter blow of his defeat in the novel is that he has not even been allowed to disgrace himself and fit into a socially acceptable pattern of failure. He will never be "a man to be gossipped about, a man who ruined himself." Success or failure is measured in the appearance you present to the world.

A great deal of this emphasis might simply be said to characterize Diarmuid Devine, for it does. He is a timorous and dependent soul, in abject need of acceptance by his fellows and in constant fear of social criticism. It nonetheless forms a large proportion of the psychological realities of the novel, and for various reasons which will become apparent, its coincidence with the emphasis in direct narrative statements makes it more than usually significant in identifying the overall perspective of this fictional world.

The dominance of social values in that perspective is established by the detail. The orderliness of documentive realism also favours the conventional, conscious, social parts of experience over the individual, the radical and the intuitive. Aside from specialized sociological terms, the language, in its prosaic quality and dearth of figurative usage helps to confine the dimensions of individual human values, to keep them in the background of the perspective when they are present at all. The irony with which Devine's constant social anxiety is viewed should presuppose the presence of some transcendent moral value in the perspec-
tive, but there is nothing in the action that could establish the ironic norm. Devine's one piece of a-socially motivated behaviour, his confrontation of Heron and the college authorities, is rewarded by his acceptance back into the social system. The irony must be for Devine's ineffectiveness rather than his aim of social acceptance.

The perspective is more consistent than in *Judith Hearne*, partly because the narrative technique is simpler. Though Devine's reactions and thoughts are a part of most scenes in the novel, the narrative focus is never thoroughly displaced to his consciousness. His perceptions usually exist in a larger context of narrative comment on him and on the scene as a whole. *Judith Hearne's* private viewpoint, though it is ironically exposed, is sustained for much longer periods without the intrusion of any broader view of reality. Her experience is more thoroughly developed, including as the novel progresses, a broader range of her sensations, her thoughts, and the impulses which lie below her consciousness. In *The Feast of Lupercal*, Devine's running internal monologue is never allowed to develop as an autonomous view of the action distinct from the narrator's. It is regularly interrupted by comment, "Mr. Devine did not know anything about wine," by some external view of Devine, "his body was unpublic" or by the narrative machinery of "he thought" or "Mr. Devine said to himself." The perspective is imposed by the narrator, and extends into the reflections of the main character, who is viewed more externally than *Judith Hearne*. Because the ironic pretense of Devine's
view is never sustained, the irony of tone is clearer but less subtle.

The fictional world is held firmly in the given perspective by the narrator's evaluative tendency. Characters are analysed, like Devine and Heron, when they are introduced. Una Clarke is the lone exception, developing through the action and the comments of other characters. The purest descriptive passages contain a final word of analysis, like the description of Tim Heron's street: "Here, people went to bed early, rose early, and had a tiring day" (p. 16). The analysis, again, is sociological.

The large proportion of scenic narration does not lead to any consistent withdrawal of the narrator. The dramatic scenes, like the later scenes of Devine and Heron, are an exception. They are more purely dramatic than any in Judith Hearne, with less accompaniment of internal monologue. In such scenes, autonomy of representational techniques is not limited. Less dramatic scenes make free use of internal monologue in which occasional hints of analysis emerge in spite of what could be called the lyric intensity of the scene. The near-seduction scene in Devine's flat, for example, builds to an intensity at the time of Una's professions of love:

"Now I'll tell you," she said. "I love you, Dev. I love you."

Gratefulness filled him. He put his hands on her neck and kissed her on the lips. But her mouth opened, her tongue probed. The reverence was profaned. He knelt back swiftly on his heels, hearing the short shocked gasp of his own breath.

(p. 145)
The brief passage is mainly omniscient narration, but the sentence "The reverence was profaned" is not descriptive like "Gratefulness filled him." It analyses the whole turn of events, and it is not Devine's analysis. His reaction to that type of caress is already shown to be more specific: "Damn her soul, who taught her that!" (p. 144)

Besides imposing a rigid perspective, the prominent narrator tends to externalize the world of The Feast of Lupercal, to expose it fully to conscious judgment. There are no areas of dimly perceived background, no enigmatic figures. Explicit exposition draws all elements of the world into the fully illuminated foreground. Each picture on Diarmuid Devine's wall, each habit he has cultivated, has a history which appears in detail with the first mention of its subject: "In the years of teaching, he had learned to calculate each forty-minute period without reference to his watch" (p. 3). More fully and more promptly even than in Judith Hearne, each suggestive detail is given explicit meaning. Situations, too, have their significance—usually their social significance—fully externalized. Mr. Devine's encounter with the "old ones" in Tim Heron's best parlour is reminiscent of Joyce's "The Dead," but their effects provide a useful contrast. Here the implications of the situation are caught and confined in a direct analysis:

Out of it, in this room, the old ones and the maiden ladies waited for Mr. Devine to bring some of the party to them. And when he could not, they wished that he would go, they could discuss him then, they could use him as a starting point to begin again that
familiar conversational pilgrimage from the
unsatisfying present to the familiar past. (p. 24)

Unanalysed, the old aunts in "The Dead" are mutely expressive; their
range of significance could not be captured explicitly without loss.
These old people, though admittedly they appear for only a moment, are
confined to the given significance, and their bearing on Devine is also
made explicit. He too is in danger of becoming old and neglected.

Even the dashing mephistophelean figure of Dean McSwiney is not
left the romantic appeal of shadowy and sinister motives. His design
on the president's chair and his rationalization of such worldly ambi-
tions are clearly exposed in the scene in his study. The Dean sees the
dead coal stifling the fire in his grate as analogous to the old presi-
dent impeding the progress of the school. The image itself, with the
ambiguous implications of the fire Dean McSwiney is stirring up is a
rarity, for the presentation of meaning is usually as unambiguous as it
is explicit and literal. In a fictional world with such externalized
significance, the action tends to be unproblematic, to invite conscious
judgment.

The interaction of social forces provides the essential action of
the novel. There are no forces of individual human will set up against
them, no element of radically personal perceptions or values (inside or
outside the main character) sufficient to produce such individual will.
Diarmuid Devine is not an antagonist of social conventions, but a more
or less passive victim of their conflicting demands. He consistently
evinces the personal human emotion of fear, which evokes compassion, but his individual, spontaneous motivation is so feeble it provides little relief from and no opposition to the ever-present external pressures. The truth he fears, that he is striving to be all things to all men and would betray his own mother to avoid a quarrel, is the ultimate in selfless social adjustment. He is in this ironic way "divine." He is so attuned to convention and to the will of others that his personal desires are stillborn.

Even his "love" for Una Clarke seems an attempt to conform to the habits expected of a young man, inspired by a fear of growing old and neglected or of being a laughingstock. Its first trembling urgency, when he has met Una at the party, is easily overcome by Maloney's gossip about the girl's past. As he waits for the bus it recovers briefly, urging him to return to the party, but gives way to his fear of offending the bus conductor who is waiting for him to board. Later, when Una draws him toward the realization of all his fantasies, both love and strong desire could be expected of him. He is conscious instead of the disapproval of his father's picture on the wall above him. The scene is made comic by the incongruity of his thoughts and emotions: "But she smiled and lay down, full length, on the rug. He saw that his dirty old slippers were in their cardboard box, a few inches from her head. He leaned over, as if to kiss her, and shoved them behind the fender" (p. 144). Any number of trivial outward concerns can distract him from
intimacy. He fears he may frighten the girl, fears it not for her sake, but because she might scream and cause Mrs. Dempsey to send for the police. From the point at which Una's intention becomes clear, he is moved not by desire but by his fear that anything he could say to stop the procedure would offend her: "He tried to phrase it--he had been taken ill, something he had eaten, no doubt. But he could not say it."

(p. 148).

Like Judith Hearne, Devine depends on social approbation, but he has no corresponding alcoholism, Sacred Heart, or fantasies to stir him from within. It is probably significant that his name is left off the programs by the dramatic circle, that his body is "unpublic," that he listens unseen to the conversations of others. In a sense, he is not there; he has no identity. The conflicting demands of social normalcy, of propriety, of personal loyalty operate through him. Except for the more or less socially oriented drives of ambition, indignation, and revenge, none of the basic human passions have any prominence in this world. There is no desire, love, friendship, compassion or joy. Even the saintly Dr. Keogh, when he saves Heron and Devine from their own folly and the Dean's malice, is shown to act less from compassion than for administrative expedience and the satisfaction of putting Dean McSwiney in his place. Devine's confession to Tim Heron involves neither love nor exact honesty, but by sacrificing other concerns to personal loyalty, he regains his self-respect and is accepted back into the community.
Though the expiatory ritual of the Roman Feast of Lupercal is emphasized by the title, it has only superficial application to the action of the novel. The priests and schoolmasters with their canes, the scourges of a dry conventional morality, might be seen ironically as priests of sterility. The impotent Devine, by placing himself in the way of the mad Heron as the Roman women placed themselves in the path of the Luperci, is paying for his transgressions against the morality of the community, and ironically being rendered less fertile by the act. But the ritual can be accepted only with reservations, because the world of the novel does not extend to those psychic depths at which sin and expiation take place. Devine, in his moment of possible sin, is not afraid of damnation but of ridicule. He thinks of sin: "In this, his own solitary bed where he had sinned a thousand times in sinful imaginings, repented nightly in mumbled acts of contrition, in this bed this very night, real sin would be consummated" (p. 146). He is more afraid, however, of looking like "a comedian in long drawers." The "sin" for which he suffers is indiscretion.

An emphasis on purely social values and characteristics, an exclusion of more intimately personal feelings and motivations, and a scrupulously explicit externalizing of all thought, feeling, and significance in the novel leave no room for the moral and psychological depths at which sin takes place. The action concerns the conscious effects of systems consciously evolved. There is no glimpse of subconscious depths,
no evidence of those private substrata of consciousness which manifest themselves in dreams, fantasies, impulses, in love, in faith or in poetry.
Chapter 4: The Luck of Ginger Coffey

The occasional passages of loosely connected impressions replacing rationally ordered description in *The Luck of Ginger Coffey* produce one feature of its fictional world distinguishing it from those of Moore's first two novels. In *Judith Hearne* and *The Feast of Lupercal*, such impressions and sensations emerging without the restraint of rational arrangement indicate abnormal emotional states: James Madden's lust, Judith Hearne's alcoholism, Diarmuid Devine's panic. Portions of Ginger Coffey's environment appear impressionistically under normal circumstances, as on his first morning walk in downtown Montreal:

Slow stroll across Dominion Square, everyone hurrying save he, every face fixed in a grimace by the painful wind, eyes narrowed, mouths pursed, driven by this cruel climate to an abnormal head-bent helter-skelter.\(^\text{10}\)

This sentence fragment, first of all, is a departure from form, and the

\(^{10}\) (New York: Dell, 1962), p. 18--subsequent quotations are from this edition.
series of generalized impressions used to portray a specific scene is unfamiliar. The slightly chaotic final impression of a "head-bent helter-skelter" adds to the effect of greater subjective emphasis and arrangement than could be expected in scenes of calm from either of the earlier novels. The passage indicates in part a modification of the central character's position in the narrative structure, a greater descriptive adherence to his impressions, but also a relaxation of certain conventions of descriptive ordering which helped to form the fictional worlds of Judith Hearne and The Feast of Lupercal.

The differences in narrative and descriptive technique can easily be overstated. The framework of realistic fiction conventions is still strong. Through most of the action, continuity of movement through time and space is preserved. Time is itself important, as Coffey reflects on time wasted, on the time elapsed in his life, and as he attempts to meet or to avoid deadlines when things must be done. He has only so much time to prove himself, before he must admit defeat and return to Ireland or give his wife her freedom. The time of the day is prominent as he rushes from the "Tiny Ones" depot at four to the Tribune at six, and as he moves minute by minute toward Grosvenor's apartment or toward an adultery appointment in a cheap hotel. Even where it is incidental, continuity of spatial movement is usually maintained:

He left the room, calling to Paulie.
"Apple? Are those sandwiches ready yet?"
"Hold your horses, Daddy, I'm making them."
He went into the hall, put on his coat and hat. Paulie came out with sandwiches in a brown paper bag. She gave them to him and he took her by the shoulders, kissing her pale cheek . . . .
He went out, closing the apartment door behind him, and in the common hallway put on his overshoes. (p. 91)

This narration serves mainly to preserve continuity of movement. Coffey's actions are detailed but descriptively bare, and with the exception of "brown" paper bag and "pale" cheek, completely divorced from sensation. Note the generic rather than specific verbs: "left, went, came, gave, took," and the unparticularized nouns: "room, hall, hat, coat, overshoes, sandwiches."

Physical detail, too, is prominent from the first, with some of the effect of circumstantial realism, but as the opening lines reveal, the proportion and selection of detail show signs of more direct purpose:

Fifteen dollars and three cents. He counted it and put it in his trousers-pocket. Then picked his Tyrolean hat off the dresser, wondering if the two Alpine buttons and the little brush dingus in the hathand weren't a shade jaunty for the place he was going. Still, they might be lucky to him. And it was a lovely morning, clear and crisp and clean. Maybe that was a good augury. Maybe today his ship would come in.

James Francis (Ginger) Coffey then risked it into the kitchen. (p. 7)

The money is counted to the cent, along with the adornments on his specifically Tyrolean hat. Yet the apparently scrupulous detail includes nothing of Coffey's other garments or of the bedroom, beyond the presence
of a dresser in it. The same selectivity is operative on a larger scale later in the novel. Coffey's second apartment, for example, is given no particular features except two bedrooms, a livingroom and a kitchenette. Though his first twenty dollars is counted out by the cent, the money he makes at his jobs is never accounted for.

The detail is more purposeful than circumstantial, and more so than in the two previous novels. While in *Judith Hearne* the oppressive weight of physical detail was significant in itself, here more of the details are effective individually. The money which is all too readily countable is Coffey's main concern, the hat and his anxiety over it reveal the "persona" behind which he is trying to hide himself. Elsewhere in the novel, and particularly where the description is unmistakably from Coffey's point of view, the details share this quality. The second prospective employer Coffey meets is detailed to embody the unyielding meanness of a business community which has no place for him. "H. E. Kahn wore a blue suit with narrow lapels which curved up to the points of his tight, white, tab-collared shirt. His black tie knot was the size of a grape and the tie itself narrow as a ruler. The mouth above it was also narrow; narrow the needle nose, the eyes . . ." (p. 27). The effect reaches a comic extreme with H. E. Kahn, but it is typical that this minor figure has no qualities working simply as plausible upholstery to his character. Nor do characters appear, as some of the boarders in *Judith Hearne* or Diarmuid Devine's colleagues, to populate the land acceptably.
The selected detail is not, like the details of St. Michan's College in *The Feast of Lupercal*, suggestive of analogs to the whole action. It does not attract individual attention, with the possible exception of the periodic use of mirrors. The images in mirrors present a visual parallel to Coffey's degree of self-knowledge at various stages in the action. Mirrors have the same value to some extent in the earlier novels, but Coffey extends their use. He sees his image in mirrors and windows, and later reflected in other characters like Wilson, Old Billy Davis, and "Cripple Mate" in the recurring newspaper headline.

The opening lines of the novel also indicate the proportion of subjective detail to be found with the objective. Coffey is wondering about the hat and about his luck, his "ship coming in." The morning is "lovely" and may be a "good augury." The selection of the verb "risked it" adds to the details which present Coffey's hopes and fears more than his physical presence. Such subjective realities as hope, fear, love, hatred and despair are plentiful and varied throughout the novel. They take forms ranging from Coffey's obvious wish-fulfilment dreams of a world where "you travel into beautiful jungles with four Indian companions, climb a dozen distant mountain peaks, sail rafts in endless tropic seas" (p. 40), to the human feelings implicit in an afternoon street scene:

Five o'clock. In the financial district the street lights flared. Down came the office workers, spilling out into the streets, released, facing the freezing bus terminal waits, the long, slow-stopping journey home. (p. 108)
The hardships of "freezing waits" and "slow-stopping journey" imply the workers' feelings as vividly as the metaphor "spilled out" describes their appearance.

Ginger Coffey's conscious thoughts are regularly occupied by such deeply personal emotions as love and loyalty. He wants to penetrate to the meaning of the words, but not in abstractions. They are always connected with immediate experience. Love, he finds, is not "being the great stud" or "staying together for Paulie's sake" or "going to bed with the likes of Grosvenor." When Vera tells him love is unselfish, he immediately identifies it with his plan to do a "far far better thing" by unselfishly giving his wife her freedom. He thinks about hope and the need to keep it alive through his difficulties, though he sees himself as "running up hill, his hope in his mouth, his shins kicked by people who have no faith in him" (p. 40). He searches in the same concrete terms for some meaning in human contact, especially when loneliness has made him doubt that he means anything to humanity: "He had no one. He was three thousand miles from home, across half a frozen continent and the whole Atlantic Ocean. Only one person in this city, only one person in the world, really knew him now: knew the man he once was, the man he now was" (p. 155). In a very concrete way he is trying to capture the essence of his loneliness. In a similar way he tries to find some absolute moral justification for his actions, and in particular, for his ambitions. He weighs them against the moral claims of the
religion and the Irish society he has rejected to pursue them.

More than anything else about him, Ginger Coffey's tendency to consider life in terms of subjective absolutes—hope, faith, love, loyalty—marks his reflections off from those of Judith Hearne or Diarmuid Devine. It extends the dimensions of the novel's psychological world. Judith Hearne sought moral justification within the codology of a religion. Devine within the conventions of a society. For Coffey, both these concerns are partial.

He is worried, like Devine, about public success and about what people think of him. His ambition to become "Coffey, the editor" and even his personal vanity make that clear. He quiets his wife in the hotel dining room for fear of what people will think, though the personal implications of their quarrel are much more serious than its public effect. He almost prefers going through with the adultery evidence to offending the prostitute sent to stage it. He is mortified when an Irish girl he has known in better times recognizes him in his Tiny Ones uniform because the people in Ireland will see their lack of faith justified:

Ha, ha! cried all the countrified young thicks he had gone to school with, who now, ordained and Roman-collared, regularly lectured the laity on politics and love. Ha, ha! cried the politicians North and South, united as always in fostering the ignorance which alone made possible their separate powers . . . . Emigrate, would you? We told you so.

Their laughter died. What did it matter? What did they matter, so long as he was not going home?

(p. 123)
The descriptions of the "young thicks" and politicians show that his fear of their scorn is balanced by an equal contempt for them. He is able to reject them partly because his desire for recognition can still be satisfied by his new homeland. Eventually he must also reject the opinion of the new world as he stands in the prisoner's dock: "All he was this morning, facing prison and ruin, was an excuse for courtroom sallies. So what did it matter, his life in this world, when this was what the world was like?" (p. 209) He is able to reject them because there are other sources of strength in his life. His most fundamental values are not dependent upon public opinion.

The personal quality of his moral judgments is evident in his visit to the church. His religious doubts form an interesting contrast with Judith Hearne's.

If there was a God above, was that what God wanted? To make him poor in spirit? To make him call pax, to make him give up, to herd him back with the other sheep in the fold?

He looked at the tabernacle. His large ruddy face set in a scowl as though someone had struck it. His lips shut tight under his ginger mustache. I never could abide a bully, he said to the tabernacle.

(p. 24)

Christian submissiveness does not satisfy Coffey's private ethical standards. And he habitually follows his thoughts through to an ethical judgment, in his own down-to-earth terms, "I never could abide a bully." The prominence of such concerns in the psychological activity of the novel opens the possibility, if not the necessity, of the action leading
to some judgment about life in absolute moral terms.

The psychological element in *The Luck of Ginger Coffey*, despite its greater scope, has broadly similar organizing principles to that in Moore's first two novels. With the exception of occasional collections of impressions like those first mentioned, it follows the rational, sentence form of internal monologue. There is no determined attempt at the associative freedom of "stream of consciousness" in the manner of Virginia Woolfe. The opening lines do reveal an increased tendency toward psychological description. Analysis is rare and always brief. Reminiscences have an increased importance, and their way of obtruding into the momentary consciousness shows a slight relaxation of the rational order. In a quiet administrative conversation, for example, Coffey watches his wife and recalls his tormenting fantasies: "She talked. He watched her lips move; those lips which at night kissed a stranger's hairy flanks. Talking, making noises of motherhood, that mouth which each night he heard cry out in desire" (p. 145). The distinction between his experiences and his fantasies is not as definite as in the case of Diarmuid Devine's timid imaginings or the extravagant outburst of Judith Hearne's repressed longings. The shadowy realm of Coffey's hopes and fears draws nearer the surface. The greater role his fantasies themselves play in the psychological action prefigures the part Mrs. Tierney's dreams play in Moore's fourth novel.

The opening lines of *The Luck of Ginger Coffey* are characteristic
of a new technique of exposition appearing in this third novel. Moore's implicit rendering of character and of the opening situation in Coffey's home is reminiscent of Katherine Mansfield's methods. The Tyrolean hat implies a great deal about Coffey's disposition and his attitude toward himself; his faith in luck and auguries is revealing, as is his personal idiom: "his ship would come in" and "little brush dingus." The strained family relations and Coffey's way of dealing with them emerge tellingly in "risked it" into the kitchen. The atmosphere of hostility not met squarely by the central figure is extended in the same scene by the wording used when his wife stops him at the door "before he could flee the coup," and when he finally "got clean away." A bare reference to "the tickets" begins a gradual introduction of his wife's determination to return to Ireland, just as "the place he was going" prepares the reader for Coffey's counterplan of going to the employment office and beginning again to seek his success in the new world. The setting is identified by reference to a "Montreal Roads Department tractor." The exposition of Coffey's character continues as he leaves the house: "Coffey wagged the policeman the old salute in passing." The brief sentence implies not only a military background but a whole complex of attitudes toward himself and other people. The method, in addition to serving the ends of economy and plausibility, enriches the quality of background in the action. The reader's imagination is set to work elaborating the fictional world, extending the possibilities through every ambiguity of suggestion.
The sense of depth and background is not lost when more explicit exposition begins to develop a past for the characters, since it emerges in reminiscences stimulated by Coffey's present activities--the sight of a church, a statue, a man, or an application form. Some of Judith Hearne's reminiscences are lengthy, not well motivated; some of Devine's family background is provided by authorial intrusions. Coffey's memories, like the implicit exposition, preserve the historical perspective, the sense of the past held in the present.

Implicit character delineation and reliance on Coffey's own reflections are symptomatic of a greater withdrawal of the narrator from the fictional world. The narrative focus is shifted more thoroughly to the central character than in the two previous novels. The world is largely the private world of Ginger Coffey, as can be seen from the appearance of his individual idiom in much of the description and narration. Judith Hearne's private world was also distinguished by her idiom (horrid fatty, dear aunt) but here there are fewer alternative viewpoints. The narrator's omniscience is shifted to another character's mind only once. It moves very briefly to M. Beauchemin in the first job interview. Otherwise the world contains what Coffey can see and know, and occasional direct narration.

While there is greater reliance on the main character's view of the action and greater acceptance of the perspective he imposes on it, the fact that he must in the end re-order certain prominent features of it
shows that his cannot be the whole fictional world in its final perspec-
tive. But to take that as the only evidence would lead to a circular
argument, explaining the action by the fictional world after determining
the fictional world from the action. That Coffey's vision is imperfect
and that something exists beyond it are implied in the slightly ironic
tone sustained by the briefest of aside comments and by odd signs of
Coffey's childishness and vanity. His idiom is individualized enough
to draw attention from the thing observed to the observer. He describes
the Canadians as "like Ruskis," a woman's footwear as "big bloothers of
boots," Gerry Grosvenor as "the drippiest long drink of water." His
expressions like "flute," "steady the buffs," and "shanks maring it"
correspond to Judith Hearne's homely metaphor in removing the reader
to an ironic height from the character. The irony is perceptible, though
the ironic norm is left obscure until Coffey is in the end presumably
brought into line with it.

Direct narrative indications of the irony are rare and brief, mingled
with Coffey's own views:

Bells, calling to the noon mass in the Basilica,
tolled out across the city in a clear and freezing
tone, waking him from an exhausted sleep into a
world without end, amen. Slowly they focused, the
facts of his life. Someone lost, someone stolen,
someone strayed. But the morning habit of a life-
time, kicking now with its head cut off, must
begin to balance the good with the bad. The habits
of an habitual ratiocinator must be fixed in hope.
And so, let's see. At least he had gained a little
victory by running away last night. (p. 164)
"The habits of an habitual ratiocinator must be fixed in hope" is not Coffey's idea, though what goes before is mixed, and what follows is thoroughly from his point of view. This is typical of the narrative comment in the novel. With so little direct evaluation, the ironic norm can only be inferred from what others say about Coffey (his wife, for example, calls him a "selfish brute" and a "glorified secretary") and from the action itself. Most of Coffey's ambitions are unrealized; he must eventually thrust all dreams of personal "victories" and worldly success from his mind. But the main bases of his world stand through his adjustment to the action. Life is still comprehensible as a matter of human hope, despair, love, and—as the climax demonstrates:—joy. His perspective is, in the main, valid, though certain features of it, marked from the beginning by an ironic tone, are not viable in the complete fictional world.

The figurative language which individualizes Coffey's internal monologues is not alone. The quantity of metaphor draws the novel into closer correspondence with Moore's first than his second. It is common in description, as in this first appearance of the Tribune composing room:

In rows, like children in some strange classroom, the linotypers threaded their little tines of words . . . . A foreman in stiff white collar and black knitted tie moved with ecclesiastic tread up the aisle. As he drew level with Coffey he leaned over, hand to his ear, in smiling dumbshow inquiry as to the visitor's business.

[italics miné] (p. 61)

This is true of many aspects of the novels, though the author confirms that they were written in their order of publication, in a letter to the present writer, 13 April 1965.
Much of the metaphor is religious, like "ecclesiastic tread." After one of the managing editor's visits to the proofreaders with his "fanatic eye starved for trouble," they revile him in chorus: "... monks performing a rite of exorcism--the proofreaders downed galleys and intoned a short chant of MacGregorian abuse" (p. 73). The pun on Gregorian chants makes the figure quite intricate. Another identifiable body of metaphor has a military subject; aside from the proofreaders, the unionized workers in the composing room are immune to the editor's authority: "Here, old battles had been fought, old forts abandoned. Here the enemy was in full command, camped permanently within MacGregor's walls" (p. 72).

The quality of the metaphor is more significant than the subjects it introduces. The associative freedom it produces can be seen in the comparison of the proofreaders' obscenities to a religious rite. Often in description the same freedom is apparent. Melting frost is described as "changing gray fieldstone office fronts to the colour of a dead man's skin" (p. 13). Old Billy Davis' open mouth displays "gaps of gums policed by ancient dental survivors" (p. 67). The most complete freedom of metaphor is in Coffey's epiphanic moment on the courthouse steps when he experiences the joy of becoming part of humanity and all creation by abandoning his pretensions to the world's admiration:

For one liberating moment he became a child again; lost himself as a child can, letting himself go into the morning, a drop of water joining an ocean, mystically becoming one.

He forgot Ginger Coffey and Ginger's life. No longer was he a man running uphill against hope,
his shins kicked, his luck running out. He was no one: he was eyes staring at the sky. He was the sky. (p. 214)

The passage ends a half-page description in which the extravagance of the metaphor liberates a similar subjective intensity in Coffey's sensation of joy. The possibility of such intensity extends the fictional world to a depth impossible in the two earlier novels. The metaphorical representation also adds poetic ambiguity to Coffey's epiphany, with the attendant possibilities of significance extending into areas of comprehension not strictly conscious.

These variations in structure and technique produce a fictional world with an extended scope of human experience and an increased emphasis on subjective elements. The extension is needed to admit Ginger Coffey, with his disdain for the "misleading facts of a life" as he sees them entered on an application form. Yet the action of the novel, his wife's hatred, his failure, his experiences with the police, lead him gradually toward an acceptance of what he comes to regard as the "true facts" of his life. The fictional world beyond his consciousness proves uncongenial to many of his subjective values--his ambitions, his desire for victories, his idea of the marriage bond and of love. He recognizes this in the courtroom: "Unsurely but surely he came to that. His hopes, his ambitions, his dreams: what were they but shams?" (p. 209). He finds he no longer lusts for his wife, that she is another illusion he no longer has. The disillusionment of the central character is familiar from Moore's first two novels. Judith Hearne and Diarmuid Devine are both
brought to a painful acceptance of hard social and material facts in their worlds which crush their well-nurtured fancies. The movement of the action is similar, but in Coffey's world it does not have quite the same significance.

The imaginative elements of his world are of several sorts. There is a corpus of romantic fancies ranging from his occupational ambitions to his pride in his sexual prowess which might all be related to his childhood dream of escaping to a land where he can scale distant mountain peaks. They are all more or less autonomous fancies, not evoked by experience but consciously summoned, feeding not on his experience but on popular stereotypes. He tries to dress himself, for example, like a Dublin squire, and fancies the role of a great lover though he bores his wife. The title "Coffey of the Tribune" sounds glamorous though he knows nothing of newspaper work. The new world is central to these fancies because of the luster/the stereotypes he, as an immigrant, takes for the reality. America is a "go-ahead" place, and Canada is just like America as seen in the movies.

All these fancies are treated with irony from the beginning; in Ginger's phrasing the stereotypes are easily recognized, and the reality with which they fail to conform is often juxtaposed with them in Coffey's own direct perceptions. Other imaginative elements are less voluntary, inherent in direct narration or in Coffey's perception. The descriptions of Montreal, street scenes embued with the spirit and life of the people, and with Coffey's own feelings, these are the unironic imaginative ele-
ments. They appear in the metaphor and are related to Coffey's concrete way of visualizing the essence of human situations. The strongest example is in the strongest metaphor, when Coffey stands on the courthouse steps.

The gratuitous, irrational emergence of joy at his darkest moment of disillusionment demonstrates the viability of strong subjective elements in the fictional world of the novel. Its appearance as an epiphanic moment and its extravagant metaphor, as much as the presence of joy itself, make the climax of the novel anything but a reassertion of purely rational values. Admittedly, *The Luck of Ginger Coffey* is the first of Moore's novels to sound an optimistic note in the climax, but a line such as "He was no one: he was eyes staring at the sky. He was the sky" would be impossible in the two earlier novels, just as it would be nonsense in a Jamesian novel though it might easily appear in a novel by Joseph Conrad. The fictional world of *The Luck of Ginger Coffey*, with its particular perspective on human experience makes such a climax possible, if not quite necessary.

The nature of Ginger's final understanding of love is in keeping with his habits of mind, with the general withdrawal of the narrator, and the resultant reliance on representation rather than statement:

> Love--why, I'll tell you what love is: its you at seventy-five and her at seventy-one, each of you listening for the other's step in the next room, each afraid that a sudden silence, a sudden cry, would mean a lifetime's talk is over. (p. 221)

It is not an explanation, but a correlative, mute but expressive. Like
the climax, it has a quality which might be called metaphoric or poetic, which gives the novel a greater depth and range of significance.
Chapter 5: An Answer from Limbo

Brendan Tierney's first-person narration in *An Answer from Limbo* changes the perspective of the fictional world as well as the way the reader accepts that world. A first-person narrator enjoys more freedom in his attitude toward the reader and toward his material. Northrop Frye distinguishes from the novel proper a whole category of fiction, the "confession" form, narrated in the first person and inclined to an introverted, intellectual tone. In this case, Brendan's introspection occupies the greater part of his account. He is continually examining his own motives: "Wasn't it the need to run which made me . . . book my one way passage out," his own sensations: "I am living not in New York, but in a world of my characters" (p. 101).

His observations are intellectualized by his analytical intentions.


13 (New York: Dell, 1963), p. 27--subsequent quotations are from this edition.
and the terms in which he conducts his analysis: "Resentment is, perhaps, a key to my character" (p. 6). Both the abstract diction--"resentment," "character"--and the syntax are intellectual; the parenthetical "perhaps" is a trademark of intellectual detachment. His mother's death he analyses: "The temporal life was, for her, a secondary thing. For me, it is all there is. Because of this difference in belief, a gate shut between us. Because of that gate, she died trying to reach me" (p. 284). The short sentences and simple diction are in this instance deceptive; the rhetorical arrangement of the ideas in parallel, interlocking sentences presents the pure logic of a situation potentially strong in sensation and sentiment. Moore is drawing on some of the resources of the confession form.

Moore's characters in the earlier novels have been introspective, but the first-person relationship with the reader gives Brendan Tierney new freedom for extended analysis--even philosophical digressions--and for an intellectual tone. A declared narrator gives the impression of licensing direct authorial address of the reader, which is why Henry James disapproved of it and why Northrop Frye builds a separate category of fiction around it. 14 When Brendan, for example, is trying to show the injustice of his having to support a widowed mother, he is able to say "no, no, let me explain it in another way" (p. 6). He claims the privilege of directly, self-consciously addressing the reader. His own

"reflexive" attitude, or open awareness of his story as a story, enables him to structure it very deliberately and to comment upon it to the reader in ways which would be thought impertinent of an omniscient, undeclared narrator.\textsuperscript{15}

The first effect this has on the fictional world, or on Brendan's portion of it, is to draw intellectual experience into the foreground of the perspective. The very question which awaits the "answer from limbo" is moral in substance but intellectual in tone: "You'll sacrifice other people, all right. But will you sacrifice yourself?" (p. 21) The abstract and figurative verb "sacrifice" puts the moral question into a different context than does, for example, Mrs. Tierney's early impression of her son: "Oh, you haven't changed, my boy, you're still the same stuck-up wee fellow, thinking yourself a cut above the rest of the world around you" (p. 34). Like Ginger Coffey, she grasps moral questions in very concrete terms.

The first-person narration also helps to win from the reader a greater acceptance of Brendan's point of view. In more familiar phrasing, it helps the reader to identify with Brendan. In the first three novels, Moore deals ironically with his characters. The narrative focus may be shifted more consistently to the mind of one main character, but always with reservations induced by an ironic tone. Brendan Tierney's account is the first sincere rather than ironic displacement of the nar-

\textsuperscript{15} For the term "reflexive attitude," see Albert Cook, \textit{The Meaning of Fiction}, pp. 24-37.
rative focus. Brendan has no personal or dialectal idiosyncrasies to make the reader aware of his limitations; his intellectualism is not inflated or contrived. There is none of the machinery of tonal irony, though there is dramatic irony in such incidents as Brendan's misinterpretation of his wife's sexual submissiveness mid-way through the novel. His ignorance is known from action seen in Jane's part of the narrative. Generally, his weaknesses as a character are revealed by him; as narrator he remains absolute as long as he occupies the stage. The action may prove that his view is partial, but that view and the perspective it imposes must be seriously accepted within their own bounds.

Those bounds diminish as he recedes into his world of novel-writing, and more of the action takes shape in the minds of his wife, who replaces him as the wage-earner, and his mother, who has come from Ireland to tend his children until domestic conflicts drive her from his home to the shelter of a lonely apartment. The other two main points of view, Mrs. Tierney's and Jane's, cannot be accepted as unreservedly, though neither is treated with consistent irony. Mrs. Tierney has a few peculiarities like her expression "some Dago Dan you wouldn't trust your girls with," but they fade as the story progresses. There is even a tendency to lapse suddenly from third to first person narration in her portions of the book. Jane is the object of more direct narrative analysis: "Jane Tierney dreamed of dark ravishers ..." (p. 22), but this too diminishes gradually into internal monologue and psychological descrip-
tion. The alternation among the three viewpoints may eliminate the need for much tonal irony and direct analysis. The plurality of views creates structurally the same ambiguity that irony creates tonally. Each viewpoint brings different elements of experience into high relief, yet despite the recurring metaphor in the novel about people living in different "worlds," the three create a single fictional world. They may be regarded as different perspectives on that world, but their similarities are enough to hold the fiction together.

In Brendan's perspective, states of mind and moral abstractions are more prominent than concrete experiences. Figurative language is plentiful, though in keeping with Brendan's preoccupations, the metaphor has more ingenuity than vividness: "What spectacle more degrading than these Village Rimbauds, covered in the vomit of sickly pastiche . . ." (p. 56). The figure depends on an equivocation in the meaning of "sickly," which in the usual expression "sickly pastiche" denotes weakness more than nausea. Again, in his description of Max Bronstein: "Through some telepathy of failure we know each other's paths, resting places, drinking wells. Yet which of us is the hunter? I feel it is he. But in my need for his company am I not bird to his snake?" (p. 9) As it extends, the figure shows signs of strain in changing from animals of prey to a bird and a snake. Similar beast and insect metaphors are common in his descriptions of people. The literati are "ticks" on the back of literature; he and his wife are two "cockroaches" cut off from the warm, dark drainpipe; Solomon Silver is an "eagle" in his cool eyrie above the city,
Mrs. MacAnaspey is a black "crow" flapping after him to protect her "hideous baby brute."

The subjects of metaphor are perhaps more significant than in the previous novels. In keeping with Brendan's withdrawal from the circle of humanity, the demeaning metaphor he applies to people helps to reduce their moral value. As might be expected, classical and literary metaphors and allusions are common: Sisyphus. "Each time I labour to push the stone of my domestic difficulties up and out of sight, if falls back and crushes me" (p. 204), "Ah, Mamma, Mamma. There are far fewer things in heaven than are dreamt of in your philosophy" (p. 82). Significantly, he applies religious metaphor mainly to his work, speaking of being baptised into a new "communion" when he dedicates his life to writing, and wondering as he impassively views a woman's thigh, if his "vocation" has made him an "anchorite" who is above these things of the flesh.

His expressed moral convictions bear out this comparison. His moral judgments, with which he is preoccupied a great deal, all place the claims of his writing first: "'Having a family to support is one thing. But there are more important things!'" (p. 34). His mother's characteristic reaction is, "Important, what could be more important than looking after your wife and children?" Later, when he is resisting the editor's suggestions for his manuscript he says, "...when I woke this morning the question of to cut or not to cut seemed the most important moral decision of my life" (p. 260). Later still, some other moral values seem to lie in the background when he describes the same morning with the knowledge
of his mother's death: "She lay dying on the floor of a strange apart-
ment while I, her son, ran senseless about the city, quibbling over
words" (p. 280). The changed wording from "moral decision" to "quibb-
ing" shows that some more broadly humanistic values are emerging and
it is by them that he judges himself in the end as "that other curiously
vulgar watcher" at his mother's grave.

As the comparison of himself to an anchorite reveals, Brendan con-
sciously emphasizes the gradual disappearance of fleshly appetites and
everyday human concerns from his life. The conscious substance of his
mind does change as the action progresses, but tonally his physical and
emotional experience never does enjoy much emphasis. He writes of "day-
dreaming fitfully and lasciviously" about a woman on the subway and of
the girl in the orange suit with a "magnificence of buttocks," but the
language is not sensual. It tends to reduce the intensity of such ex-
perience and shift the emphasis from his desires to his self-analysis.

Though these are the salients of Brendan's perspective, it retains
the framework of realistic conventions, including historical data of time
and place for his actions. The time continuity has some oddities result-
ing from first person narration. A revealed narrator using the past
tense is inevitably writing in retrospect about the action, and must be
in a position to know and judge it completely from the outset. To re-
store the sense of present, progressing action and eliminate the charac-
ter's foreknowledge, Moore has Brendan write in the present tense. Each
segment of his account is a retrospect on one stage of the action, but
each is composed in a time present: "That stranger who is my parent is asleep. 'She's asleep,' a voice said to me . . ." (p. 43) This preserves suspense in much the same manner Sinclair Ross does with Mrs. Bentley's diary entries in *As for Me and My House*.

The conventions of documentive realism provide a nucleus of data Brendan's perspective shares with the other two. Mrs. Tierney's perspective holds the physical and documentive elements nearer the foreground; physical detail is more complete, physical sensations more frequent and vivid. Here is a typical fragment.

> The sun came through the bamboo blind, half lighting the room. Mrs. Tierney's mouth and nose felt dry. She turned her head on the pillow and saw her little alarm clock beside the Chinese paper lamp. Five past six. She reached out and took up her watch. Five past eleven. That was Irish time. (p. 48)

Note the scrupulous continuity of movement through time and space, the detail, the prosaic language, and the simple sentence structure. The sentences in Mrs. Tierney's portion of the story are typically short, simple, and uniform in the subject-verb-object sequence. Metaphors are never numerous or strong. Mrs. Tierney lives among the common-sense perceptions of daily life. They are too straightforward to demand complex syntax, like the equally concrete forms of her fundamentalist religion. God, she believes, is visibly punishing her when her children turn against her. Frank Finnerty is not a moral man, because he lives for his "own self." Unlike her son, Mrs. Tierney does not deal in abstractions. She does not analyse her own beliefs or feelings, and there is little external
analysis of them. Objects, actions and feelings she is involved in may have significance, but it is not explicit, as it is in Brendan's case.

The reliance on representation rather than statement in her section may explain the apparent paradox of her dreams. For all her concrete realities, the unrationalized stuff of dreams lies surprisingly close to the surface of her consciousness. But then, because of the unsubtle quality of her waking life, the dreams provide the only access to the subconscious depths of her feelings, and they do it in an appropriately representational way. In dreams, people and incidents from her waking reality interact with her beliefs. Her deeper hopes and fears find embodiment and form more or less symbolic arrangements. The young lover she embraces indiscreetly on the beach, for example, turns suddenly into her son Rory, crystalizing all her fears of sexual sin. In her dream of final judgment, her family and friends bear witness against her, recalling all the moral doubts she cannot face consciously.

Her conscious adherence to Christian moral and spiritual law has the rigidity of unspoken assumption. She simply has no choice but to baptize the children, though she knows the present human suffering she may cause herself and others. When she fears Liam may die, the unspoken authority of her spiritual laws is apparent in her thoughts of her son: "O Brendan, Brendan, why didn't you baptize him, what do your silly notions matter now, you can write all the books you want but you have failed in your duty" (p. 99). A similar absolute code of duty--filial, social, and religious--is implicit in all her waking judgments, disturbed only by the action in her dreams.
Physical actions play a large part in Jane's portion of the novel, too, but for her they have more sensory vividness and are usually related to strong emotions. Resentment, shame, hatred, and desire are the focal points of her world, surrounded by the experiences which excite them. The stimuli of her resentment of Mrs. Tierney, for example, appear as rationalized accounts of actions and dialogue, the old woman's words and deeds. Jane describes one of the "maddening little incidents" which set her against the older woman. Jane never serves tea, has never used the silver tea service her mother-in-law sent as a wedding gift.

That afternoon when Jane came back from downtown she found Mrs. Tierney waiting for her in the living room with a silver tea service, hot buttered toast, and thin little bread-and-butter slices. "I just made us a cup of tea," Mrs. Tierney said. "I found this teapot on a top shelf in the kitchen. I hope you don't mind me using it."

The service, last seen tarnished and wrapped in newspaper, now gleamed in reproach. (p. 50)

The account is rational, with circumstantial detail down to the "bread-and-butter slices" and direct quotation. It all leads quite purposefully to the idea of reproach Jane sees in it, which is in turn important because it stimulates her resentment.

Her growing sexual revulsion for Brendan is stimulated by a combination of sensation (he is not covered with hair) and rationalized action (he is predictable). The stimuli of her desire for Vito appear mainly as sensations:

His skin was dark in a way that had nothing to do with the sun. His teeth were large and white. His shirtsleeves were rolled up and she saw an animal coating of black hair, thick on his forearms,
curling over his linked gold watchband. As she stared at him she remembered her shock at the assured, cruel way his fingers seized at her flesh. "Go away," she said; but this time her voice was shaky. (p. 111)

The detailed and vivid sensations are all in the interest of the desire betrayed by her voice. They are interacting with her sexual fantasies as she recognizes that this man is "the flesh and blood of all those dark ravishers she had dreamed of." She herself identifies the source of these darker impulses as masochism, though she is not normally analytic or introspective. She usually looks no further than the emotion and its external cause.

What analytical depth her portion of the novel has is imposed by external analysis: "Sin was, to Jane, an archaic word . . . . But in the disparity between dream and reality she had a sense of wrongdoing, a vague guilt that foolish fantasy could rear so terribly large in the midst of fact . . . ." (p. 22). This type of analysis, and her own awareness of her emotions give fairly explicit significance to the elements of her life. The range of things stimulating her emotions bring a wide variety of experience into her perspective—sensation, rational reflection, emotion, imagination—but always with emotion in the foreground. In the end, when her world is no longer animated by the emotions which have driven her, she is lifeless. Her view of the city provides a visual analog: "She sat until the darkness faded, the red neon glow behind the buildings died in a gray milk sky. The city was no longer on fire. It seemed dead" (p. 276).
The language in Jane's sections of the novel helps to establish the emphasis. Her regular internal monologue contains a fairly large proportion of emotionally toned expressions. A sample paragraph contains: "blessed moment," "the cosmos crumbled," "perfectly dreary," "inane questions" "she could scream" (p. 52). Her term of derision for Mrs. Tierney is "Mrs. Let Me," and her inability to confide in Brendan she calls the "most terrible" part of the old woman's "visitation." Her speech and her thoughts are punctuated by emotional interjections such as "all right," "definitely not," "God knows," and "for godsakes." In moments of heightened emotion her expressions are proportionately intensified. Vito is variously described as "a bully," a "lousy stinking rat," an "imitation Brando tough" and a "bastard." Emotion is implicit in her view of life as much as it is explicitly on her mind.

Figurative usage is fairly frequent, particularly when the heightened sensations of her collisions with Vito disrupt the rational ordering of her experience:

She was on the sofa. Time stopped: she was on the floor. Something was hurting her back: it was her handbag. He came at her again and she moaned and clung to him. It was a street accident; she could not remember what happened. Her hair was all over her face. (p. 150)

The erratic syntax, the chaotic impressions, and the strong metaphor, "time stopped, it was a street accident" indicate the power her sensations have to overcome the rational principle in her world. Her use of religious metaphor is revealing. Just as Brendan applies it to his work, she
applies it to the sex act. Their lovemaking after a quarrel is a "rite of atonement," "an act of communion."

The narrative omniscience shifts briefly to the minds of others in the novel--to Lisa, to a policeman, to Ted Ormsby--but their views are too brief to be worth examining individually, with the possible exception of Ormsby's. He has a minor choric function in the beginning, just as Father Keogh has at the end of The Feast of Lupercal. Each has the wisdom to judge and to predict the action of the novel. Each might be said to be in touch with the moral laws of his fictional world. Ormsby asks the central question about Brendan Tierney to which the novel gradually supplies the answer. His suspicions of Brendan and humane concern for Mrs. Tierney are what Brendan himself comes to in the end. Most of the shifts, however, are mechanically convenient. The shift to the policeman who bears the news of Mrs. Tierney's death, in particular, creates an effect similar to the sudden changes of scene or camera angle in movies.

Considered together, the main effect of the minor viewpoints is to increase awareness of the narrator's presence in the fictional world. There are, of course, two narrators: Brendan and the omniscient, anonymous being who takes a small part in Jane's and Mrs. Tierney's accounts and a prominent part in brief viewpoints like Ted Ormsby's. The presence of this second narrator slightly diminishes the authority of Brendan's narration but without ever becoming more than a minor factor.

Each main character's portion of the novel, because of its individual emphasis on experience of various kinds, on intellection, sensation,
or emotion, imposes a different perspective on the fictional world of An Answer from Limbo. What results is not as closely unified as, for example, the world of The Luck of Ginger Coffey with its consistent narrative focus on Ginger's mind, or of Hugh MacLennan's Barometer Rising, where the point of view shifts from Neil Macrae to Penelope to Major Murray, but the perspective remains the same. The shifts here involve more than differences in knowledge of or personal involvement in the action. Each, for example, sees the spare room prepared for Mrs. Tierney differently: as an artistic creation, as a bare hospital room, as "that room Japanned by Jane"—yet each includes some visual impression of it. The separation is not like that in Faulkner's The Sound and The Fury, where points of coincidence in Benjy's, Quentin's and Jason's narratives must be carefully sought. The accounts here never diverge or conflict seriously enough to make incidents from one perspective unrecognizable in another. It is not the fictional ethos but the characters who disintegrate and lose all communication with each other.  

All three main characters say at some time that they have had no choice but to act as they did. Mrs. Tierney says she had no choice but to baptize the children. Jane says she could not allow the older woman to stay in her home. Brendan could not defend his mother because Jane is the indispensable ally in his work. The tragedy of Mrs. Tierney's

16 For a contrary view, see Michael Hornyansky: "The problem is that Mr. Moore confronts us with several distinct worlds—Brendan's, Jane's, Mrs. Tierney's, and some minor ones, all different, even incompatible, and touching only at the edges." See his "Countries of the Mind," Tamarack Review (Winter 1963), p. 64.
death is inevitable partly because of their different ways of experienc­ing life, but partly too because of a certain rigidity and lack of under­standing in their personalities. Their views of life, under other cir­cumstances, could be complementary, though here without communication or sympathy they are simply isolating.

In the end, Brendan's becomes the synthesizing perspective, partly because he is successful, but also because his intellectual view can, at least in its own terms, comprehend the other two. He analyses his mother's moral position:

She was shocked by what she found here. She thought it her duty to do something and so she baptized my children in a meaningless ceremony in the bathroom; she told them foolish myths about her God; It was for those crimes that we banished her. (p. 281)

This is one way of understanding Mrs. Tierney's position, though it does scant justice to the realities of her torment. Brendan also analyses his own and Jane's position in relation to his mother's:

Is my belief in my talent any less an act of superstitious faith than my mother's belief in the power of indulgences? And, as for the ethics of my creed, how do I know that my talent justifies the sacrifices I have asked of others in its name? O Mamma, I sacrificed you; I see your yellow face [sic]. Jane, I abandoned you: I look at you now and know that all is changed. (p. 285)

He criticizes his earlier presumption, though not precisely his ethical standards. He sees his wife's estrangement, though with even less understand­ing of her experience of it than he has of his mother's suffering.

The other two perspectives are reflected in Brendan's in another
way, though it is not made explicit. The failure of Jane and Mrs. Tierney coincides with a failure in Brendan's private world of those elements which are dominant in their perspectives. Jane, ruled by passions, is left drained of emotion, just as Brendan becomes so barren of emotion he cannot "feel" but only record. In the beginning, emotion and desire had at least a minor part in his life. The traditional values his mother carries to her grave also lose their faint hold on his attention. He is no longer capable of being "appalled" by his children's table manners, for example, or even by his mother's "mechanized last descent" which he duly records. These are the elements of himself he has lost and sacrificed in becoming an artist. Like Stephen Dedalus in *A Portrait of the Artist*, he has become alienated from portions of himself by rejecting his environment. If, for that matter, Joyce's tone is ironic toward Stephen's joy at his apotheosis into an artist, as the appearance of Stephen in *Ulysses* might suggest, then Brendan Tierney's distaste for his own transformed state is a close parallel.

Brendan's final synthesis leaves the novel with a moral significance in predominantly intellectual, abstract terms. Yet the creation of the other perspectives makes it apparent that his view is partial. The action implies the need for some more broadly humane outlook without the limitations of any of the three. That all three are obliged to remain partial in their understanding is one of the main implicit statements the novel makes. The statement is limited by the fact that the reader

17 *A Portrait of the Artist* is actually referred to twice in the novel.
can unite the three comprehensibly in one fictional world. To compare the novel again with *The Sound and the Fury*, Moore's can be taken as a statement about human personalities, while Faulkner's novel makes a comparable statement about the nature of human experience.
Chapter 6: Conclusion

Examining the illusions of reality in each of Brian Moore's four novels leads inevitably to devoting more attention to minor differences than to their very substantial similarities. With few exceptions, characters and incidents could be moved from one novel to another after only minor adaptations. The strong basis they all have in techniques of documentive realism tends in each case to produce an illusion of reality in which both the elements and the organizing principles are oriented to the needs of communication. Traditionally, we select and arrange our perceptions to make them more readily communicable, often at the expense of our sense of how life really assorts and arranges itself in the individual experience of it. Communication always has needs to be met, but the extent to which some novelists seek to diminish and disguise their effect on experience is apparent in the more subjectively ordered fictions of people like Virginia Woolf and James Joyce. Moore's is the reality of conscious reflection, on which the logic of cause and effect has begun to impose itself. In this respect his work has something in
common with what is loosely termed "naturalistic" fiction.

In Judith Hearne and The Feast of Lupercal particularly, where the protagonists show very little effective exercise of free will, a pattern of inexorable causes and effects attracts notice. Judith Hearne brings her own misfortunes upon herself; but a substantial portion of the novel dwells on her economic and social victimization by "dear Aunt D'Arcy", on accidents of the economy which have reduced her to poverty, and on her classic introduction to the fatal habit of tippling. Not just her position, but her pathetic character seem to be the product of natural forces in her society. Diarmuid Devine has already been discussed as a victim of more purely social forces; he even explains himself as a product of social mismanagement. Moore's fictional worlds, with their temporal continuity and circumstantial detail lend themselves to the naturalists' inductive approach to analysing social causes.

This quality puts him closer to Mordecai Richler than to anyone else prominent in Canadian fiction. Richler is more flamboyant, but his fictional worlds have a similar kind of realism and a similar emphasis on social causes. The ironic tone in which he creates Duddy Kravitz is like Moore's treatment of the central figures in his first three novels. Morely Callaghan's novels also show a concern for individuals victimized by social forces, but in his fiction the social forces are deductively presented; they exist as prior conditions and are embodied in characters like the Montreal publisher Joseph Carver in The Loved and the Lost.
through whom they operate with allegorical simplicity. The general spareness of Callaghan's fictional worlds, like the symbolic separation of Montreal into the mountain and the river draws the significance of his novels closer to allegory than Brian Moore's ever come. Moore published his first novel with first-person narration only three years later than Hugh MacLennan produced George Stewart's story in *The Watch that Ends the Night*, but the preoccupations of the two novelists are so different that it is only surprising that the isolated technical similarity produces any resemblance in the novels. The effect of an intellectual, reflective narrator common to the confession form is seen in some of George Stewart's closing comments: "... to be able to love the mystery surrounding us is the final and only sanction of human existence." It is recognisably a statement of the same order as Brendan Tierney's "I have lost and sacrificed myself" (p. 288). It might even be regarded as an affirmative counterpart of Brendan's discovery that he has ceased to love or respect the mystery surrounding him.

*An Answer from Limbo* is the most difficult of Moore's novels to relate to any pattern of development in his manner of creating a fictional world. Between *Judith Hearne* and *The Luck of Ginger Coffey*, the change in his methods parallels roughly the historical development of the modern novel by a general withdrawal of the narrator from the fictional world. *The Feast of Lupercal* does not fit into this pattern

through most of its length, since the narrator is more prominent and the irony toward the main character more pointed than in the first novel. It does advance the tendency, though, in its dramatic scenes, which have a new freedom from comment and internal monologue, seen again in the third novel. In most other respects it seems a movement away from rather than toward the features which develop further in *The Luck of Ginger Coffey*. Accompanying the withdrawal of the narrator is a greater reliance on representational techniques, as can be seen in the climax and denouement of *The Luck of Ginger Coffey*. At the same time, an increase in the quantity and strength of metaphor and implicit exposition enrich and enlarge the extent of the fictional world. It becomes more complex and problematic, especially with the development of a more delicate balance of the ironic tone toward the main character. Ginger Coffey occupies the narrative focus in almost the Jamesian role of a forming intelligence for the action. He is still regarded ambiguously, but he is sensitive, and, in a primitive way, articulate.

The reduction of tonal irony is one tendency which does continue into the fourth novel, with the serious acceptance of Brendan Tierney's point of view. Brendan himself becomes the ironist when he tells, for example, of his imperfect imitation of a "paterfamilias" or of his childish ambition to die at thirty with his poetic gift still unclouded. Many other techniques seem to have remained static, like the use of metaphor, or to have regressed, like the purity of dramatic scenes and the use of
implicit exposition. These reach a limited excellence in The Luck of Ginger Coffey, but the attempt at more ambitious technical scope in the fourth novel disrupts them.¹⁹

The last novel is hard to compare evaluatively with the others because first-person narration opens up expressive possibilities of a different sort. Brendan Tierney, besides speaking directly to the reader, is the first thoroughly articulate character Moore has created. The quality of his understanding is a source of explicit meaning, not from without, like the narrator's analysis in The Feast of Lupercal, but from within the fiction. His attitude toward his story, evident in comments like, "shall I describe myself and get it over with," draws the fictional world all into the foreground yet it creates freedom for a more open and deliberate imposition of artistic form on the action. In this case the freedom produces only a few extended metaphors, usually ironic, like Brendan's comparison of himself to the blind beggar on the subway as he feels his way "tap-tap" through the hostility in his household trying to mediate the quarrels.

A world of documentive reality is inclined to be finite, even in its subjective dimensions and to constrict the imaginative expansion of subjective experience. The trend in Moore's fictional worlds is toward a slight relaxation of the rational ordering, mainly in a greater freedom

¹⁹ Which may have been a factor in George Woodcock's judgment of An Answer from Limbo as an "interim exercise" rather than a completed work of the quality to be expected from a novelist like Brian Moore. See "A Close Shave," Canadian Literature (Spring 1963), p. 70-72.
of metaphor, to admit those infinite imaginative expanses in which such human absolutes as love, faith, and joy can develop. This expansion of the world is also inclined to draw in more of the subjective experience that occurs at depths not accessible to the conscious mind but shadowed forth in dreams, fantasies, and impulses. Ginger Coffey's epiphanic moment on the courthouse steps might be compared with the type of experience James Joyce portrays in some of his fiction. Here, for example, is Stephen Dedalus in the first flush of his dedication to the artist's purpose in *A Portrait of the Artist*.

He closed his eyes in the languor of sleep. His eyelids trembled as if they felt the vast cyclic movement of the earth and her watchers, trembled as if they felt the strange light of some new world. His soul was swooning into some new world, fantastic, dim, uncertain as under sea, traversed by cloudy shapes and beings. A world, a glimmer, or a flower? Glimmering and trembling, trembling and unfolding, a breaking light, an opening flower, it spread in endless succession to itself . . .

The freedom of metaphor is similar, the experience similarly irrational and limitless, without any reference to time, space, or logic. This tendency in Brian Moore's fiction, however, is slight, and Ginger Coffey's is a rare experience.

It may have been what prompted one critic, writing in *Canadian Literature* shortly after the publication of The Luck of Ginger Coffey, to refer to Moore as the "heir" of James Joyce. Though his fiction is more often


compared to Joyce's than to anyone else's, the similarities are mainly in things other than the nature of their fictional worlds. Some of the ideas which can be abstracted from their fiction are similar, like the idea that Irish society is paralysed and stifling. Though Moore writes of Belfast rather than Dublin, a great many descriptive similarities in setting and custom are to be expected from their common nationality, like the resemblances between the boarding house in Joyce's story of that name and in Judith Hearne. A number of Moore's characters have counterparts in Joyce's work. Brendan Tierney, in his role of nascent artist is somehow related to Stephen Dedalus; Diarmuid Devine might owe something to both Leopold Bloom and James Duffy from "A Painful Case." Judith Hearne's visits to Professor O'Neill's house have something in common with Maria's evening out in "Clay," but their significance is altogether different. The similarity seems strong only when they are considered outside the context of their fictional worlds, as though they were incidents recalled from life.

The analogous situations of the old maids might, in fact, serve as examples of the effect the fictional world can have on the significance of descriptively similar incidents. In addition to its symbolic import, the Hallow Eve game reveals Maria's position in the household through the reaction that follows her choice of the clay:

She felt a soft wet substance with her fingers and was surprised that nobody spoke or took off her bandage. There was a pause for a few seconds; and then a great deal of scuffling and whispering.
Somebody said something about the garden, and at last Mrs. Donnelly said something very cross to one of the next-door girls and told her to throw it out at once: that was no play. Maria understood that it was wrong that time and so she had to do it over again: and this time she got the prayerbook.  

The youngsters are making game of the old lady, while the hostess politely tries to chastise them and to protect Maria from their rudeness. This, among other things, is clear though not only Maria's but the narrator's innocence is maintained throughout. His irony is never pointed. By comparison, in the analogous situation in Judith Hearne, all significance is made external and finite by the narrator's evaluation and the character's internal monologue. After Miss Hearne has recalled an incident from the O'Neill boy's infancy, she sees her mistake:

But they turned glowering faces at her, rejecting the often heard story. Children do not like to be reminded of their baby days. Oh, I know that. Why did I put my foot in it?

Shaun got up off the rug and looked at the clock. "Holy smoke! It's past three. I told Rory Lacey I'd be over at his house at three."

His mother looked at him, her eyes cold to the falsehood. (p. 63)

Hugo McPherson, in the *Literary History of Canada*, refers to "effects borrowed from Joyce" in *Judith Hearne*, but it is precisely the effect of these two similar situations which varies. Though there are such isolated correspondences in the work of Moore and Joyce, the difference in


their manner of creating a fictional world makes any similarity in overall effect unlikely. Any claim of resemblance would have to be confined to Joyce's earlier works, *Dubliners* and *A Portrait of the Artist*, and then the similarities are more pronounced in Moore's short stories than in his novels. His story "Grieve for the Dear Departed," for example, comes nearer to creating a Joycean world than any of the novels.

The constitution of Brian Moore's fictional worlds places him more centrally in the historical tradition of the novel than James Joyce. If the novel is taken as primarily a form presenting man interacting with others, with the resultant emphasis on the social form and moral substance of his actions, then the elements of most of Moore's fiction are well designed to serve the traditional ends of the novel. The very principles which unify his fiction into an illusion of the process of reality—logic, measurable space, clock time—except for their specialized scientific applications, are conveniences of social organization in the broader sense of the term. It is significant that even his artist, Brendan Tierney, has many moral and few aesthetic preoccupations. He is not, like Stephen Daedalus, fascinated by words. He is the artist as social being rather than "as a young man." Brian Moore does strive, especially in *The Luck of Ginger Coffey*, to represent man in his more intimately personal relationships to his god and to himself, but the elements which form the common basis of his fictional worlds throw the greater emphasis on man as a conscious social being.
Bibliography

I  List of Works by Brian Moore


______.  "Lion of the Afternoon,"  *Atlantic*, CC (November 1957), 79-83.

______.  "Next Thing was Kansas City,"  *Atlantic*, CCIII (February 1959), 77-79.


II  List of Articles About Brian Moore


_______. Letter to the writer, 13 April 1965.


III List of General Works Consulted


Dear Richard Harrison:

First of all, in answer to your letter, I did not publish anything until I came to Canada.

Stories which might be of interest to you appeared in
the following: A paperback called THE IRISH GENIUSUS (an
American company) edited, I think by DIVIN-ADAIR, a New York Publishing company, contains a
story of mine called: A VOCATION.

Another story which might be of interest was called
UNCLE T and appeared first in a New York Magazine called
GENTLEMAN'S QUARTERLY.

I am sorry I cannot be more precise about the issues, but
I am at present three thousand miles from my files and home
base and will be here through August. I am writing an original
film script with Alfred Hitchcock.

The Fan of L'percal was written after Judith Hearne. J.H.
was written, as I remember in 1953-54 and L'percal was written
55-56-

If there are any other questions I
can help you with, you can find me at the above address.