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Between the Idea and the Reality. John Broderick and the French Connection.
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In an article for *The Sunday Independent*, Brighid McLaughlin wrote:

In Seán's Bar in Athlone, I wondered who would remember Broderick. Dr. Harmon Murtagh was not optimistic.

"If you walk down Church Street and ask the first ten people who John Broderick was, I'd be surprised if they'd know."(McLaughlin 1998, 1-6)

John Broderick's (1924-1989) legacy to Irish literature is not so much his dedication to the craft, or indeed his craftsmanship, but his role in the shaping of the modern Irish novel. He despised the hypocrisy of the provincial bourgeoisie, and was one of the first to make a homosexual his central protagonist. In doing so he faced the wrath of the clergy – we might think lightly of the eponymous brandishing of the crozier today, but in the Ireland of the early sixties, it was, if nothing else, an audacious piece of brinksmanship. Of course, he could afford to be somewhat blasé when facing down our cultural totems – unlike John McGahern or Francis McManus he was not reliant on the State for financial support as his family owned one of largest bakeries in the midlands. After his first four novels were published to critical acclaim, his work became more embittered, more insular but he was never forced to ameliorate the standards of his work. Rather, he blithely continued on writing bad novels, retreating further into the literary backwaters until, by the time of his death, he was all but forgotten⁹.

For the purpose of this chapter I wish to discuss Broderick's first novel, *The Pilgrimage*, and his Franco-Irish influences that impacted on its composition. If Broderick has any immediate literary consanguinity, it would be in the European

tradition and, foremost, the French Catholic writers. The term in itself is contentious. Broderick's great literary hero was François Mauriac, scrutinizer of the *coeurs inquiets* and practitioner of a complex religious plenitude that defies any simple elucidation.

I have little doubt that Broderick used Mauriac's early novel *Le Baiser au Lépreux* as the basis for *The Pilgrimage*; Noémi d'Artailh, married to the repulsive cripple Jean Péloueyre for prestige and monetary accretion, bears a striking similarity to Julia Glynn. Both Michael Glynn and Péloueyre share a penchant for martyrdom; Péloueyre goes so far as to deliberately contract tuberculosis on account of his disfigurement. Jean's trip to Paris proves the epiphany that is only hinted at in *The Pilgrimage*, but in both instances the reader must decide on the motives of the leading players.

A second literary influence would most likely lie in the Realist canon. If the French Catholic writers spoke of the necessity of emerging from Balzac's shadow, they, as other French writers would discover, were never wholly successful in their aspirations. Balzac looms large over the writing of Mauriac; they share the same preoccupation with human emotions, with provincial life and mundane routine, with physical and material captivity, with psychology and introspection — particularly in regards to the feminine subconscious — and a preoccupation with the possibility of salvation, even with spirituality.

It is curious how often the name of Balzac crops up in connection with Broderick. The *Daily Telegraph's* obituary for the writer on the 31 July 1989 states that: 'He thought of himself as a kind of minor Balzac of the Irish midlands.' Elsewhere, in a review in *The Irish Independent* (27 January 1973) of his fifth novel, *An Apology for Roses*, Hugh Leonard commented upon the 'black-souled, pietistic, money-grubbing

denizens of a landscape as materialistic as Balzac.’ Benedict Kiely, again in a review for *An Apology for Roses*, spoke of Marie Fogarty’s rapacious behaviour in the following terms: ‘This is as brutal as Balzac, who among novelists, is still the best man on money and what it can do, and what men and women will do for it.’ (Kiely 1973)

To broach both these fields - and in one essay - I will be leaning upon the work of the American critic, Leo Bersani, whose forte lies in the area of psychoanalytical realism. Bersani has made a habit of treating fictive characters as though they were patients and the critic the analyst. In his *A Future for Astyanax: Character and Desire in Literature*, Bersani focuses upon the concept of desire as the central tenet in exploring character and identity in realist narratives. (Bersani 1969) According to Freud, desire represents one of the major determining forces in language and symbolic interaction. (Freud 1952, 62-63) The repression of desire forms the cornerstone for psychoanalysis – the great duality of want or fantasy in conflict with social or sexual constraint. For Bersani:

Desire is a threat to the form of realistic fiction. Desire can subvert social order; it can also disrupt novelistic order. In formal terms, disruptive desire could be thought of as a disease of disconnectedness in a part of the structure which rejects being defined by its relation to other parts and asserts, as it were, a scandalous affinity with elements alien to the structure. (Bersani 1969, 66)

I chose the medium of psychoanalytical criticism for much this reason. Bersani speaks of the realist novel’s ambivalence in relation to ‘heroes of desire.’ (Bersani 1969, 67) Confrontation in the realist novel habitually erupts when the protagonist clashes with the strictures of social containment (Bersani 1969, 73). Bersani speaks of the realist authors’ *penchant* for ‘castrating desire’ in much the same way that Freud referred to the castration complex in his essays on the theory of sexuality – if society is

phallogocentric, then the subject defends himself against the contradictions which result from observation, a conflict that is abandoned only after a severe internal struggle. (Freud 1952, 241-260) I will go into further detail on this matter later in this chapter; for now, suffice it to say that I chose the psychoanalytical approach in relation to John Broderick, because of the notable presence of rebellious or iconoclastic heroes in his fiction.

Broderick's characters founder under the austere climate of social and religious probity. Homosexuality is seen as a disease that is to be exorcised; something malevolent that threatens to disrupt the social order. For Broderick, sexuality was about subjugation or it was seen as something unbridled that was recurrently hammered by the Catholic Church until it was reduced to an act of indecorous perversion. In *The Pilgrimage* there are scarcely any relationships that could be termed 'loving' (Murray 1992, 20) People marry for money, property and social advancement. Sex is almost bestial, in that it is all flailing limbs and darkened rooms reeking of uninhibited concupiscence. Should it fall into dissolution, Broderick's heroes are arbitrarily dismissed from the narrative. Nevertheless, in their departure, they attain a grace denied to them by the society that castigates them for their *dégagé* attitude – it is a small thing perhaps, for in Broderick's novels conformity and desire are forever at odd with one another. He offers no compromise to this particular *pons asinorum*; for Broderick, as life mirrors art, struggled vainly with a fervently Catholic outlook and a sexual proclivity that was forever open to boundless speculation.

In his article in *Eiré-Ireland*, Patrick Murray writes: 'A critic with a taste for the psychoanalytical interpretation of authors and their work would certainly be tempted to read Broderick in Freudian terms.' (Murray 1992, 31) The danger of this approach is

falling into psychobabble, thereby reducing Broderick's work to crude adumbrations, where his beloved mother is centred behind the text with the author too frightened to bring his female characters 'into' the family home, condemning them forever into a sort of literary exile, a half-way home for fallen women. Broderick may have had, as Murray suggests, an oedipal complex but in comparison, his work is no more misogynistic than other writers of his generation. It does not excuse his penchant for female deprecation, nor should it be overly belaboured. The primary section in this chapter will utilise Bersani's treatment on Flaubert in a comparative study of *The Pilgrimage*.¹⁰ His work on the centrifugal pull in literature helps open up the possibility of non-referential criticism of the self, a criticism that strips bare the belief that the antecedent source is more pertinent than the gesture, 'the experiences which already exist.' (Bersani 1970, 10) Another area which I wish to examine, particularly in relation to Mauriac, is the final chapter in *The Pilgrimage* which has given rise to a great deal of speculative criticism; as such, I aim to explore the problems of closure in the aforementioned text in particular.

Utilising Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* in a comparative study of John Broderick's *The Pilgrimage* is as good a place as any to begin in earnest. The novel centres around the marriage of the rapacious Julia Glynn to local business man Michael Glynn, a closet homosexual who is bedridden, racked with a severe form of arthritis. He is attended upon by both his nephew, Doctor Jim and his manservant, Stephen. Julia has been having an affair with Jim, who, while treating her with contempt, satisfies her voracious demands. While she may have designs upon furthering the relationship, she begins to receive anonymous letters detailing her sexual infidelities. Her suspicion falls upon the 'sinister' Stephen, who both attracts and repels her. From Stephen, she learns that his

relationship with Michael was, in part, sexual. He later relates to Julia the story of another relationship he had with a Stephen Page-O'Reilly, 'a notorious queer', which leads to blackmail on his part and the threat of disclosure. They are miserable figures indeed. In one notable passage from *The Pilgrimage*, Julia Glynn relates the influence of Page-O'Reilly on the impressionable Stephen:

This was how the first pattern had been imposed: the pattern which Stephen would repeat all his life. With what deadly intuition had that corrupt young man known down to the most inconsequential gesture the part he must play if he was to bind Stephen to him. (Broderick 2004, 175)

And later, in the same paragraph:

But she thought she knew why Stephen had fallen in love with her. He would always be attracted to the perverse, the abnormal, the corrupt, because only with them could he construct the impossibly romantic vision of life which he cherished. (Broderick 2004, 176)

Note the proliferation of negative adjectives. Much may be read from these lines, for if desire/eros destroys, the containment of our desire helps induce equilibrium back into society. Sex is the corrupting force in Broderick's fiction; it has to be purged from the system. Hence, when the local priest suggests a pilgrimage to Lourdes, it is as much a metaphor for the immolation of desire as it is for any possible remedy for the stricken Michael. The final chapter is a succinct one-liner: 'In this way they set off on their pilgrimage, from which a week later Michael returned completely cured.' The realist author places a great deal of importance in these 'disruptive forces'; they represent the breaking down of the social construct, throwing caution to the wind, for they rage against the options open to them, and rather than compromise, dismiss them arbitrarily.

However, in order to regain the order that is of paramount importance to the realist novel, these fictive rebels have to be exposed to a ritual of expulsion. If not, as pointed out by Bersani, the novel drifts from a realistic portrait to one that becomes increasingly allegorical. Once the hero has been dismissed, the community is once more able to settle down, to begin once more the process of social structuring. A character such as Zola's Anna Coupeau, the purient courtesan whose behaviour appears outrageous to a community in which affairs and tryst were common but never flaunted (Zola 1972), offers a good example. As a child descended from the Rougon-Macquart line, she was raised in an atmosphere of dissolution and promiscuity, and she can no more avoid her future than she can escape her past. In order for the novel to progress, she is to be expelled and thus the thin veneer of morality is reapplied.

Bersani has done sterling research into Flaubert and the influence of Flaubert on Broderick is irrefutable. In his later novels, Broderick's exasperating habit of halting the dialogue to offer some form of hierarchal commentary on events increased to the point where he actually began to intervene directly in his own novels. But if Broderick ever had a literary brother, it would probably have been Willie Ryan, the protagonist from his fourth novel, *The Waking of Willie Ryan*. Willie has been incarcerated in an asylum for over twenty years, a pawn in a conspiracy between his sister-in-law and local Parish priest, who are aware of his homosexual affair with a local landowner, Roger Whittaker. After he is released, he returns home causing consternation for all involved. Willie, in speaking to Halloran, his 'minder', describes his former lover, Roger, as 'more or less like a father to me.' He continues, 'I never had anybody like that, I suppose that was what I was looking for.' Willie builds up Roger as a God, 'the way you do with somebody you love.' (Broderick 1969, 111)

Freud refers to this double orientation of the Oedipus complex in his paper on the psychological consequences of the anatomical distinction between the sexes. This orientation refers to a sort of affection for the father that makes the mother superfluous; indeed the son may wish to arrogate the place of the mother. (Freud 1952, 241-260) The love rival here is not the hypothetical mother but the church, which threatens and, in part, follows through on the threat to castrate the child. The ideal marriage of his sister-in-law, Mary, and Roger, his surrogate father, is denied to Willie Ryan. Both spurn his affective advances; Roger misinterprets his idealistic love and uses him for his own sexual gratification while Mary is horrified when Willie attempts to kiss her. The church intervenes, and Willie is expelled from the community so that the linearity of the plot may continue unruffled, if only until his latter-day return.

It is to Willie's reading habits that I wish to turn to next. During a later exchange between Willie and Father Mannix, the priest takes an interest in a few books of Willie's piled up on the mantelpiece:

'Susan got them for me,' said Willie, standing up and taking down *Madame Bovary*, which was on the top of the pile. 'I've read them before, years ago. Roger lent them to me. But I'm enjoying reading them again... She's got this in a second-hand bookshop in town. It's a curious coincidence, but it's Roger's, the same book I first read. Mrs. Whittaker must have sold some of his books after he died. Look, here's his name. (Broderick 1969, 123)

A curious coincidence indeed. Roger Dillon is the absent centre in the novel and around him the plot weaves its torturous course. The resolution of desire takes place retrospectively, as it does in *The Pilgrimage*, in which Julia Glynn idly recreates an earlier love affair with Howard Kurtz, an American divorcee. Using the Flaubertian *cliché*, often as breathless as to be maddeningly cloying, Julia remarks, 'She was never

to love again in the course of her life.’ (Broderick 2004, 21) Both she and Willie Ryan share a penchant for sadistic theatrics, as Willie muses: ‘I thought I hated him, and because I didn’t know then that no matter how we fought or tortured each other I would always go back.’(Broderick 1969, 112) If Julia finds Stephen’s sadistic lovemaking ‘distasteful’, it is preferable in the sense that it helps to recreate some semblance her relationship with Kurtz, the American who initiated her to lovemaking. Both seem indifferent to sexual pleasure, but not in a conventional manner. Rather, it is the symbiotic turning away from physical to intense sensations that indicates to me a certain predominance for visual desire.

It is for this reason we return to *Madame Bovary*. I mentioned in the opening paragraphs of this article, a debt, I feel, Broderick owed to Mauriac’s *Le Baiser au Lépreux*. The female protagonist is a representation of Phèdre, a modern-day Emma Bovary. She is invoked in other novels of Mauriac, such as the named protagonist of *Thérèse Desqueyroux*, once more as a young wife who tries to liberate herself from a boorish, unsatisfactory husband and later, along the path of redemption, she appears again in “Thérèse chez le docteur,” a short story from his collection, *Plongées*, and *La Fin de la nuit*. Emma Bovary may well have been Julia Glynn in an earlier, literary existence, but Julia lacks the imagination of Emma, a saving grace perchance. Emma kills herself because, after attempting to reach into the panicky depths of her vocabulary, she fails to conjure up the intense sensations that forever trip along the tip of her palate. Whilst Emma searches for the true meaning of desire, Julia merely seeks to survive, for Julia ‘was not a woman who could live without a lover.’(Broderick 2004, 135) Emma, equally, hungers for a lover who can help her escape the drab reality of Yonville, a lover who can recreate the extreme sensations of the ball at la Vaubyessard.

Jean-Pierre Richard, in his work on Flaubert titled *Littérature et sensation*, considers the infusion of these sensations as a masking device that breaks down the difference between people, reality and daydreams (Richard 1970, 147). The result is that Emma Bovary is more a loose coalescence of body parts and surfaces.

Many commentators seized upon Broderick's fondness for recording bodily movements in almost minute detail. As Patrick Murray acknowledges, his characters are constantly 'pursing their lips, stroking their noses, crossing and uncrossing their legs, folding and unfolding their arms' and so forth (Murray 1992, 25). These bodily movements, whilst remaining an irksome assuaging of lust, accentuate the diffusion of character into a confusing *mélange*, where a sort of fragmented comportment replaces centrality. On one level, we are merely being offered an insight into the hidden innuendo promulgated by the legion of scandalmongers who populate a Broderick novel. On a deeper level, we recognise a character like Julia Glynn as a hedonistic creature, who associates 'love with luxury, with pleasure given and accepted lightly, almost casually,' (Broderick 2004, 21) as do innumerable others from the Broderick canon, such as Sybil Quill from *Don Juaneen* or Kitty Carroll and Mary Ryan from *The Waking of Willie Ryan*. Psychologically, they may appear apt for deeper analysis, yet beneath the surface there is very little to them. In between moments of monotony, they provide a catalyst for the plot's evolution, not by what they represent, but what they fear. They risk exposure to the voracious maw of the watchful jungle, and under its gaze, they appear to founder. Ultimately, these characters are sensualists, 'products of years of rich foods, over-heated houses, soft beds, fine linen and financial security'. (Broderick 1969, 81) If there is no depth to the psychological stratum, then their comportment, their manner and material assets prove most telling. Julia Glynn was

educated in a very old tradition, 'that of the sensitive courtesan to whom the luxury of idle days is the very breath of life.'(Broderick 2004, 21) She differentiates herself from Kitty Carroll and Mary Ryan only in that 'men were as necessary to her as jewels and furs are to other women.'(Broderick 2004, 135) Like Emma Bovary, Julia Glynn is no more than the sum of her parts; 'underneath her thick woollen dress so correct, so respectable, she was naked.'(Broderick 2004, 13) Comparatively, as Bersani says of Emma Bovary: 'the unresponsiveness of Emma's environment to her dreams of glamour produces the symptoms which, while they superficially suggest a complex psychology, emphasize the highly original thinness of her character.'(Bersani 1969, 155) Emma awaits the catastrophe of disclosure that will reveal her love for Leon, but she does nothing to encourage the development. She is held back by 'idleness and fear', and the disclosure never materializes (Flaubert 2003, 214). Julia, equally, awaits disclosure, but with bated breath. Whilst Emma turns her anxiety as surrogate to her romantic fantasies, Julia appears oblivious to anything but the preservation instinct, as does her lover, Jim, who concerns himself more with the five thousand pounds coming to him from Michael's will than with Julia's overtures.

Freud's theories on infantile sexuality may shed some light on this anxiety.(Freud 1952, 123-246) Before puberty, the development of inhibitions tends to be more pronounced in females, in that the component instincts tended to take the passive form in female sexuality while repression tends to become more manifest with girls. With the onset of puberty, boys experience the ascension of libido whilst girls face a fresh wave of repression, centred on the vagina supplanting the clitoris as the leading erotogenic zone. Because of having to change their sexual zone in the crisis years of puberty, females are more prone to neurosis, particularly hysteria. Another element, the

emphasis on the breast as a place of succour, is also highlighted. The child depends upon those who satisfy his needs; he comes to love them. When the child is denied access to the breast, he may well feel that he has lost someone he has loved. Thus, states Freud, 'a child, by turning his libido into anxiety when he cannot satisfy it, behaves like an adult. On the other hand an adult who has become neurotic owing to his libido being unsatisfied behaves in his anxiety like a child: he begins to be frightened when he is alone.' (Freud 1958, 239) Neither Julia nor Emma can bear to be alone; the ache of drab reality is too much to bear. Both, then, sate their anxiety with men who will never, can never, love them.

Romantic despair is edged in dignity. Julia may be regarded as a whore; indeed, she sells her body as readily for money as she does for satiation. Even Emma stoops to prostitution at the very last. Everything in her life is done with an air of theatrics; even her sickness is imaginary. But her redeeming quality, between the mediocre and the imaginary, is the verbal luxury of sensual objects. Her death, at her own hands, is the perfect dénouement for Emma Bovary, and she thus demonstrates her independence from the author who possibly sought to inflict a more coded form of sexual punishment upon her. Flaubert, in his attempt to fill in those 'great vacant spaces' of boredom, as Rousset would term it, further attenuates the imagination of Emma Bovary, an imagination in which only the strongest sensations linger. (Rousset 1962, 172) The possibilities of life are thus pronounced, never more so than in refrain she hears carried through her window, as she lies on her deathbed: "*souvent la chaleur d'un beau jour / Fait rêver fillette à l'amour...*" (Flaubert 2003, 304).

Julia's saving grace is that she emerged in the ascendancy, from the earlier possibilities of her sexual maltreatment into a woman who appears to have supplicated

the role of Kurtz, the only love of her life. Kurtz tells her, 'If ever I saw a body made for love you've got it. From now on you're going to learn what to do with it', and these are the same lines she reiterates to Stephen. (Broderick 2004, 20) Julia Glynn is empowered, and Emma Bovary doomed, because Julia is a realist, Emma an incurable romantic. As Julia states rather pointedly, 'Everything happens in real life...As you well know. It's only in novels that it doesn't.' (Broderick 2004, 77) The sublimating nature of love is utilised to great effect in *Madame Bovary*, but aside from one throwaway comment in *The Pilgrimage*, it is not a preoccupation of Broderick's. Between the sensual and the abstract, there lies only the thin veneer of idealistic affectation. Julia Glynn is a romantic heroine, a modern Madame Bovary, only because she is not in any way romantic. She cannot afford to be; at least, not in John Broderick's world.

Any discussion on linearity in the novel requires some reference to Georg Lukács, Marxist critic and author of the remarkable *The Meaning of Contemporary Realism*, which savages the modernist movement, lambasting the apostates as a motley assortment of self-obsessed misanthropists. I wish to discuss some of Lukács theories before referencing D.A. Miller's *Narrative and its Discontents* in relation to the closing chapter of *The Pilgrimage* in particular. But first, what of Lukács? His views on realism are of inestimable value, though somewhat tempered by his Marxist ideology. Arbitrarily dismissing the naturalists' surface reading, he saw the classical realist novel as reflecting 'a truer, more complete, more vivid and more dynamic reflection of reality.' (Lukács 1964, 174) It is a view that would clash, for example, with John McGahern's manifesto, 'The Image;' that is, the 'still and private world' which draws comparison with the Proustian *moi profond*, the profound and deep seated 'I', juxtaposed against the ritualistic milieu (McGahern 1991). Explicitly, it is the solitary

artist in society who transforms the subjective world of the imagination into the objective world of social identity and form. For Lukács, the realist novel was not so much about ‘the episodic life of the mind’ but the ‘full process of life.’ He rejects both the objective and subjective views of reality, the latter Joycean or, in parlance, McGahern-esque. (Lukács 1979, 54) Rather, he promulgates the necessity of presenting an ‘intensive totality’ which corresponds to the ‘extensive totality’ of the world at large. (Lukács 1979, 55) His thoughts emanate from Hegelian philosophy; that is, society as part of an unfolding drama, where linear development is never straightforward, but fragmented and contradictory. Lukács uses the example of the workers’ struggle against their capitalist overseers; the contradiction between the proletariat establishing control and thereby negating the capitalist mode that utilises their labour to the benefit of the factory owners. But since the capitalist system formed the basis for the inception of the factory system, the workers are more or less negating themselves. Lukács’s solution is dialectical, a dynamic and developmental resolution that reflects his Marxist thinking. Put somewhat adumbratively, my thesis will be met by antithesis, until such time as both sides are powerful enough to form synthesis, which becomes the thesis, which will be met by antithesis and so on. Against this view, we have the individualism of modernist writers like Woolf, Eliot, Joyce and the French Naturalists, who were conceived of as distinctly elitist. Lukács’s work on linearity is of pivotal importance in our understanding of modern literary trends. Broderick, in contrast, would have followed the example of Mauriac, who was concerned more about the individual than any particular social group. As Mauriac states:

Il est certain qu’au delà de la vie sociale, de la vie familiale d’un homme, au-delà des gestes que lui imposent son milieu, son métier, ses idées, ses croyances, existe une plus

secrète vie : et c'est souvent au fond de cette boue cachée à tous les yeux que gît la clef qui nous le livre enfin tout entier. (Mauriac 1928, 273)

Unlike McGahern, Broderick never espoused any significant literary manifesto. In the words of F.C. Molloy, from the 1960s in Ireland, there were signs 'that themes related to the community were no longer of primary importance; instead, there was an increasing concern for the lot of the individual.' (Molloy 1978, 193-194) Broderick followed that trend negating even the words of Mauriac when later he fell back upon caricature.

There is nothing unambiguous about Broderick. I agree that he does not fit into the Lukáćian definition of the classical realist. Rather, when he slipped from Mauriac's gaze, he made a habit of borrowing whatever style suited his needs, whether out of design or lack. Often he fell back on the language of chatter, what Barthes called 'an unweaned language: imperative, automatic, unaffectionate, a minor disaster of static.' (Barthes 1975, 5) Miller, in his writing upon narrative closure, spoke of 'hesitation...matched by decision, nonobjectal desire by object choice, the cultivation of suspense by the culmen of moral judgement, irony by knowledge, chatter by an elsewhere of serious revelations...' (Miller 1981, 44) That is, he speaks of the binary oppositions in the traditional novel that is epitomized in the opposing of narratability, which is the evidence of the narrative text and closure, which is the sign that the text is over. The difficulty of closure is thus the difficulty of erasing the narratable. We are aware of a happy ending in which the quest is completed or the lovers are (re)united, as much as the composition of a sad ending, which is often symbolised by a funeral or departure. If the McGahern novel habitually ends with a funeral (as it did with *The Barracks*, *The Pornographer*, *Amongst Women* and *That They May Face the Rising*

Sun), the Broderick novel most often ends in stasis. The novel that leads itself towards death often appears to be bracing itself for the flight from death. Thus, all such postulations on closure remain, simply, an attempt to persuade the reader to suspend the disbelief that closure is, ultimately, possible.

In that context, the final chapter in *The Pilgrimage* is worthy of closer scrutiny. It was probably the reason the book was banned in the first place, under the auspice that someone such as Michael should not be so arbitrarily ‘cured’ at the shrine of Lourdes. Of this, Julien Green replies in his Preface to the 2004 edition, rather stoically: ‘Since when has healing been exclusively available to the just?’ (Broderick 2004, 2) Of course, before we begin, we have to ask the pertinent question: cured of what? His arthritis or his homosexuality? Michael’s paralysis is likely a metaphor for his impotence; his ‘limbs were too twisted for massage’, with the word ‘twisted’ of particular interest in that it connotes a certain unbalance. (Broderick 2004, 26) Julia suffers from a similar condition in accordance with her sex, in that ‘a woman suffers continuously from the impotence which is exceptional in a man’ as indicated by the critic Janet Dusingberre (Dusingberre, 1996). With her husband’s paralysis, she is forced to assume the dominant, phallogocentric role in the relationship.

If Michael is cured, what then? Does he reassume his previous role at the head of the family? The childless marriage may indicate further impotence against nature’s decree; when the material worth of the family is devoid of an heir, it will remain threatened with extinction. The conclusion, in the words of Sean McMahon, ‘proposes another novel, which is, I think, unwritable. Impressed as one is by the blow-in-face technique of such an ending, one still feels cheated. It smells of prestidigitation and is unworthy and unnecessary.’ (McMahon 1971, 127) Unworthy only in the sense that the

closing chapter does little to erase the narratability, we draw our own conclusions thereafter. The question of Noémi d'Artailh's possible renunciation in Mauriac's *Le Baiser au lépreux* is equally *équivoque*; according to your conviction, you either choose to believe in the divine or not. As the Abbot in Brian Moore's novella *Catholics* states: 'No one can order belief... it is a gift from God.' (Moore 1983, 90) If Broderick's desires were unfulfilled or sublimated, it is not surprising that the Church also came to symbolise something more than a sideshow. However, it is important to remember that the Church, as Broderick saw it, was divided into two separate spheres: there was the Church as extension of the community and the Church as the extension of one's private faith. The former was damned by association, while the latter was instinctual and deeply personal. This stance was a by-product, no doubt, of Broderick's staunchly 'Catholic' influences, in particular, Mauriac. Mauriac had no qualms in naming his ideological derivations. In *Mes Grands Hommes*, he names, amongst others, Pascal, Rousseau, Maurice and Eugénie de Guérin, Balzac, Flaubert, Loti, Gide, Radiguet and Graham Green (Mauriac 1951). Mauriac differentiated between the common-law believers whose substantiations were afflicted with 'intellectual poverty, base credulity, hatred, the fear of strange alluring passions, and, under the guise of edification, prejudice against the noble works in favour of false and foolish rhapsodies' and the more daring proponents of a internalised Christian faith (Mauriac 1952). However, a writer like Mauriac could afford to be daring; he could afford, even, to be sanctimonious. At the time of Mauriac's 'conversion', Catholicism in England and France was no longer the force it once had been. Mauriac rallied against the dying of the sacramental light, and thus brought into being an intrinsic tenet of his philosophy: to be a true Christian is to suffer; we all have a cross to bear and we bear it, for the most part, alone.

In *The Pilgrimage*, Julia Glynn states, rather melodramatically, ‘This is the way the world ended: in solitude.’ (Broderick 2004, 49) The world, of course, is merely a temporal structure. It is a testing ground of one’s faith and it is likely that Mauriac would heartily ascribe to this assessment. It is here that we return to this question of desire. Mauriac may have found fault with Freudian psychoanalysis, but there was no doubt that he was deeply affected by it. The unnamed whiskey priest in Graham Greene’s *The Power and the Glory* is such an example: in one instant, he celebrates a forbidden Mass; in the second, he is arrested for public drunkenness. We are all tempted by external agencies, but within us all there remains the possibility of salvation and redemption. Both the priest and Sarah Miles in *The End of the Affair* suffer internal turmoil before choosing to die as saintly figures. If stability is to return to the community and linearity to the plot, it is done in much the same way as a magician draws a rabbit from the hat. What is the trick? The fact that there is none, that the miracle might be real, is so absurd to a sceptical audience that the final chapter really needs no further explication. It is as damning an indictment of the faithlessness of modern society as any in the Broderick oeuvre. He says everything he wishes to say, by saying nothing at all!

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