

ABSTRACT
DISILLUSIONMENT AND DOMESTICITY IN MID-20TH CENTURY BRITISH
CATHOLIC LITERATURE

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Marquette University, 2024

This project offers an in-depth analysis of the Roman Catholic concept of pilgrimage as an antidote to the postwar traumas and domestic instability of post-World War II Great Britain. Rather than approach these crises with cynicism or sentimentality, Roman Catholic British authors of the time demonstrate how dis-illusionment, or loss of illusions of empiricism and imperialism, can mitigate the existential plight of the loss of an erstwhile domestic stability. This project interrogates the idea of domesticity as a stabilizing force and demonstrates how, for the post-World War II Catholic writer, the loss of locus can become a channel to spiritual truth. This project considers how postwar writers harness the chaos and creativity of experimental literature, including non-linear narrative structures, multiple or unreliable narrators, and various narration techniques, to identify the narrative spaces that offer complex and nuanced arguments unavailable to empirical realism. Critically-claimed authors such as Evelyn Waugh, Graham Greene, and Muriel Spark grapple with metaphysical issues of the nature of evil and the eschatological significance of human actions, while expounding the difficulties of how to react to the reshaping of the domestic sphere after World War II. Is it possible to rebuild? Or was the prewar domestic ideal simply an illusion? Critics show how the "Catholic dimension" in these works offers a complex but nuanced response to the postmodern crises of post-World War II Britain.