

Winter 1996

# How Realistic Can a Catholic Writer Be? Richard Sullivan and American Catholic Literature

Una M. Cadegan

*University of Dayton*, [ucadegan1@udayton.edu](mailto:ucadegan1@udayton.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: [https://ecommons.udayton.edu/hst\\_fac\\_pub](https://ecommons.udayton.edu/hst_fac_pub)

 Part of the [Catholic Studies Commons](#), [History Commons](#), [Practical Theology Commons](#), and the [Religious Thought, Theology and Philosophy of Religion Commons](#)

---

## eCommons Citation

Cadegan, Una M., "How Realistic Can a Catholic Writer Be? Richard Sullivan and American Catholic Literature" (1996). *History Faculty Publications*. 66.

[https://ecommons.udayton.edu/hst\\_fac\\_pub/66](https://ecommons.udayton.edu/hst_fac_pub/66)

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Department of History at eCommons. It has been accepted for inclusion in History Faculty Publications by an authorized administrator of eCommons. For more information, please contact [frice1@udayton.edu](mailto:frice1@udayton.edu), [mschlangen1@udayton.edu](mailto:mschlangen1@udayton.edu).

## How Realistic Can a Catholic Writer Be? Richard Sullivan and American Catholic Literature

Una M. Cadegan

In 1933, a twenty-five-year-old writer named Richard Sullivan articulated for himself the qualities a novel should have.<sup>1</sup> In a "Record of Work Begun and Ideas for Stories," 1932-1933, he wrote:

Let all be adoration. 9-14-33  
a novel must be—  
American—constantly; of course, naturally.  
Scope—heights to depths; and length also: a life  
Religious—naturally; how else?  
Bitter—like life; intermittently.<sup>2</sup>

When he wrote these words, Sullivan had not yet published a novel; the publication of his first short story in a national magazine was still three years away. He eventually published six of his novels and dozens of short stories while teaching English at the University of Notre Dame from 1936 to 1974. Few people have heard of him or his work, and, at first glance, his life looks commonplace, even prosaic—he never lived farther than one hundred miles from his birthplace and seldom traveled; he taught at the same place, largely the same courses, for thirty-eight years; he wrote and published for almost forty years, coming tantalizingly close to major success, which nonetheless always eluded him.

Despite the fact that Sullivan never achieved the fame he sought, the record he left behind reveals much about the way one writer handled the complicated personal and professional questions of regional, literary, gender, and religious identity. He was a regional author with national ambitions, a serious author who did not disdain the notion of popular success, and a male author whose primary focus was domestic life and relationships. He was also a Catholic author—that is, he belonged to a tradition that believed in normative standards for artistic value in an era when such a belief was considered by some to be inconsistent with, even inimical to, art. He held himself accountable to those norms while simultaneously refusing to concede that such accountability limited his scope as an artist. It was a position that he

found himself defending on several fronts—against some of his fellow Catholics who thought his realistic depiction of contemporary life veered too close to naturalism as well as against some of his fellow writers and critics who thought including Catholicism made any depiction of contemporary life unrealistic.

In the end, what characterizes Sullivan's understanding of himself is his matter-of-fact belief in the natural coherence and rightness of the multiple facets of his identity. Richard Sullivan's work and career reveal not so much an overlooked genius as an ordinarily complicated craftsman, a rich example not of timelessness but of timeliness. This essay is not an attempt to rehabilitate him, to present him as an undiscovered treasure in the archive of American literature, because, as Jane Tompkins (among others) has shown, mining literary history for examples that fit preconceived categories leaves much of literary history unexplored and useless.<sup>3</sup> Rather, it is much more interesting to recover the terms of ordinary complexity in which a largely forgotten life was lived in order to highlight and to clarify those things that are remembered and preserved.

As the lens through which he viewed all of reality, Sullivan's Catholicism clarified and framed for him the complicated interplay of his multiple identifications. Little about being Catholic in this period was simple, reductionistic post-Vatican II (anti)nostalgia notwithstanding. In the late 1940's and the 1950's, the distinctive, insular American Catholic subculture known as the "ghetto" flourished. Sullivan himself was the product of a deep, lifelong immersion in that culture, and he lived for nearly half a century in its citadel, the University of Notre Dame. He had national literary ambitions and an agent in New York City, but he apparently never indicated any desire to leave the Midwest or to teach and write anywhere other than Notre Dame. Most of his novels and short stories were set in Baysweep, a fictional midwestern town on Lake Michigan, apparently modeled on his hometown of Kenosha, Wisconsin. Sullivan was "midwestern" also in less tangible ways; he was universally described, by people who knew him well or met him briefly, as "friendly," "sane," "unassuming," "old-shoeish," "gracious," and "modest." Fanny Butcher, one of his colleagues as a book reviewer for the *Chicago Sun-Times*, said he was "as open-faced and friendly as a sunflower."<sup>4</sup> But if Sullivan's writing was regional in content and his demeanor modestly midwestern, his ambition was neither regional nor modest.

From the time he first began writing, Sullivan aimed his stories at a national audience. He sent story after story to *The Atlantic*, *Harper's*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Mademoiselle*, *The New Yorker*, and *Scribner's*. Only after being rejected by such national magazines did Sullivan begin circulat-

ing a story to the “little magazines,” which, while often prestigious, did not pay for submissions.

The majority of Sullivan’s publications followed on the beginning of his association with Henry Volkening, a New York City literary agent who opened an agency in 1940 with Diarmuid Russell, son of the Irish writer A. E. Russell.<sup>5</sup> In May 1941, Henry Volkening wrote to Richard Sullivan offering his services, Sullivan having been recommended to him by Harry Sylvester, a Notre Dame classmate of Sullivan and a fellow writer.<sup>6</sup> Sullivan accepted Volkening’s offer, though expressing reservations about whether his work would earn enough to make Volkening’s effort worthwhile.<sup>7</sup> These reservations would in some measure prove to be justified because, although Sullivan went on to publish dozens of short stories, six novels, one book of collected stories, and one book of nonfiction, his work never made the money for Volkening that Sullivan continued to wish for into their respective old age. What Volkening did gain was a thirty-year friendship, conducted mostly through the mail, with a man whose work he admired and whose integrity he respected.

Sullivan’s career reveals the permeable boundaries of the ghetto and the strategies its inhabitants developed for living within it while communicating and affiliating outside it. Circumscribed but not thereby confined, American Catholics knew that their beliefs and their church made them different from other Americans but resolutely asserted the consonance of their tradition and their nationality. Sometimes challenged—even impeded—as they moved more and more into the mainstream of American life (from within as well as from without, since agreement on general principles did not guarantee unanimity in their application), they developed concrete strategies for meeting challenges and removing impediments while sacrificing as little as possible of their distinctiveness. As a writer and intellectual, Richard Sullivan was implicitly entrusted with this process of dual reconciliation—with learning to speak two languages while not losing anything in translation; with pleasing sometimes deeply conflicting constituencies while avoiding both disingenuousness and duplicity. His correspondence and his works contain evidence of the strategies he developed to answer challenges posed by others who saw him breaching boundaries that Sullivan himself neither saw nor, when they were pointed out to him, acknowledged.

Whether and how Catholics were and are different from other Americans is debated, even (perhaps especially) among historians of U.S. Catholicism. For example, historians such as R. Laurence Moore and James T. Fisher emphasize, even as they document Catholic sub-cultural distinctiveness, the extent to which this distinctiveness facilitates Catholic assimilation or overlaps with American identity

generally.<sup>8</sup> The scholar who, perhaps more than any other, is responsible for documenting the distinctiveness of the American Catholic subculture—Philip Gleason—seems increasingly reluctant to argue that differences in circumstance create anything so tangibly intangible as a Catholic identity.<sup>9</sup>

Others do see Catholic identity as distinctive, whether as chosen or imposed. John Murray Cuddihy argues that both Catholics and Jews in the United States were required to adopt a Protestant demeanor at some level inimical to the historical claims of their respective traditions.<sup>10</sup> Leslie Woodcock Tentler argues in a recent *American Quarterly* article that the history of American Catholicism has been left at the margins of American history as a whole, presumed, even and often by Catholics, to be of interest only to other Catholics.<sup>11</sup> This study of Sullivan does not attempt to settle these complicated questions once and for all or even exhaustively to explore them. What is clear from a study of Sullivan's work and correspondence, however, is that, whether the differences were real or definitive or empirical or delusional, Catholics frequently perceived themselves, and as frequently were perceived by the culture into which they were rapidly assimilating, as different.

Sullivan's agent, Henry Volkening, was not Catholic nor was he religious in any conventional sense of the word. He apparently respected Sullivan's religiousness, however, and never encouraged Sullivan to modify it.<sup>12</sup> While Sullivan and Volkening almost never discussed religion, it surfaced in their correspondence in a number of ways that reveal the tensions in Sullivan's multiple identities. For example, following the publication of Sullivan's only work of nonfiction, a history of Notre Dame (written by Sullivan as part history, part personal memoir, the profits split fifty-fifty with the University), Volkening wrote to him concerning the *New York Times* review of the book:

Why, goodness, Dick, even a Mississippi State College teacher "did all right by you", dint he? Shows how far the world has progressed since the Al Smith era, huh? Maybe, though I wish I had *quite* the confidence, Uncle Joe is somehow uniting us all, all of us people of good-will. That's the *first* step, not is it so [sic]?<sup>13</sup>

Volkening's comments refer to a complicated network of interlinked attitudes. In the postwar years, Catholics were, anomalously, both intensely anticommunist and frequently accused of blindly accepting the authority of a totalitarian system not unlike Communism.<sup>14</sup> Volkening here expresses a tentative hope that growing awareness of Stalin's excesses might highlight what Americans have in common rather than

what divides them (he is, however, characteristically sardonic about the possibility).

In examining the marginality inherent in Sullivan's position as a mid-century Catholic intellectual, it is important to remember that Sullivan did get published by major houses, that he did get reviewed in the *New York Times*, that he himself reviewed books for the *Times* and for the *Chicago Tribune*. It would be simplistic and unhelpful to suggest that his lack of definitive success is linked in any linear way to his Catholicism. But his Catholicism did elicit notice and question, as did the Catholicism of many of his compatriot coreligionists throughout the century.

Sometimes the questioning was explicit. The Catholic settings of Sullivan's novels and stories appeared to some publishers as a marketing obstacle. His first novel, originally entitled *As a Fruitful Vine*, was rejected in 1939 by Longmans, Green and Company. The editor of their Catholic publications wrote to Sullivan that "it is an excellent piece of work. Unfortunately, we think we should have difficulty in selling such a novel. The trouble is the subject matter. It would be available only to a section of our Catholic market, and we are fearful of its appeal in the general one."<sup>15</sup> This seems like a logical, perhaps pragmatic judgment, the kind such an editor is hired to make. But the characters in *As a Fruitful Vine* are only incidentally Catholic. The novel is the story of a young couple awaiting the birth of their second child, unexpected and not entirely welcome. When his wife becomes seriously ill, the main character, Eddie Nails, prays for her health. They go to Mass occasionally; a priest is called when the mother's life seems to be in danger during the birth. Presuming the novel to be of interest only to Catholic readers suggests a high degree of sensitivity to the details of religion. The novel was eventually published by Doubleday Doran, but, instead of the scriptural title Sullivan originally chose,<sup>16</sup> it was called *Summer After Summer*, from the last line of the novel.

Similarly, Sullivan's third novel, *The World of Idella May*, was turned down by *Cosmopolitan* as a prepublication serial possibility because it contained "too little story . . . plus a distaste, not *too* surprising, for the 'religious' parts."<sup>17</sup> Sullivan's reaction was to ask in reply, "Is there too much 'religious' matter in the first half of the book?" He feared he had, without knowing it, "drifted into some kind of tractarian writing," and he asked for Henry Volkening's opinion as an "intelligent reader"; it is significant that his explicit concern is not for how Catholicism comes off in the depiction but for the integrity of the book itself.<sup>18</sup> Volkening responded, "I'd say definitely not, from my own point of view as a constantly fascinated reader! In other words, *all* those sections are excellent, relevant, moving." He said that, although the "religious" sections took some focus off Idella May, it was a small problem that

could be remedied at final revision. "Seems to me that the question is not one of substance at all, but rather merely one of proportion and emphasis."<sup>19</sup>

*Idella May's* title and point-of-view character satirically personified the spiritual and intellectual impoverishment of a woman duped into believing that life should be like the movies and romance magazines. Idella May Clocker acts so much like the heroine of a romance magazine, in fact, that Sullivan was anxious that the novel's dust jacket not lead people to mistake it for one.<sup>20</sup>

The "religious sections" of the novel arose out of Idella May's marriage to Tom Logan, a Catholic. In approximately the first half of a 350-page novel, about five scenes involve some sort of Catholic setting or activity. Tom attends the baptism of his niece as her godfather the night after his first date with Idella May; he explains to her that he will be late picking her up one Friday night because he wants to attend the Stations of the Cross even though he doesn't "have" to; Idella May takes religious instruction before their marriage, primarily in response to a vague sense that his religion is her most serious competition for Tom's attention; Tom attends Midnight Mass alone after their first serious argument, Idella May being "too tired."

The character of Tom Logan reflects on what he believes and does so in self-consciously theological terms. For example, during the baptism of his niece, in between counting the hours until he can see Idella May again, he thinks: "as a child you learned the words by heart, then all your life they unfolded into meaning, they were unfolding for him this moment; a sense of the mystery and the antiquity of this ceremony filled him."<sup>21</sup> These reflections can, at times, seem stilted—this very quality, however, is what Harry Sylvester praised. Sylvester wrote Sullivan that Tom Logan was the novel's real achievement, a deadly accurate portrait of the typical Catholic college graduate in his very self-consciousness and, to Sylvester, his repression.<sup>22</sup> However, this kind of "Catholic" detail—arguably integral to the novel's character development—seems to have been interpreted as a stumbling block by editors who believed such detail alienated rather than attracted non-Catholic readers.

Other aspects of Sullivan's writing also elicited questions, aspects which at first glance were not identifiably "Catholic." Closer examination, however, reveals a deeply and self-consciously Catholic sensibility shaping even apparently nonreligious elements of his work. The effects of this shaping were, perhaps not surprisingly, discerned more readily (though not unfailingly) by Catholic critics than by others, who sometimes saw in them evidence of pathology rather than of artistic intent.

For example, in 1934, Walter Schmidt suggested that one of Sullivan's stories might have been rejected by *Story* magazine because of "its definite 'red' color." "On the City" told of the attempts of Juska, an immigrant worker, to replace a defective sweater given to his daughter by "city-relief." The story reflects explicitly on the frustration of a capable worker unable to find work, pondering the injustice of disparity in wealth in the world, and recalling vague promises of the poor being exalted. Schmidt's assessment of the story: "It is, whether you realize it or not, Dick, a socialistic piece."<sup>23</sup> Schmidt postulates an unconscious drift on Sullivan's part into socialism; there is considerably more evidence in the story itself, however, for a conscious apprehension of principles inherent to Christianity—potentially as challenging to the perceived injustices of the industrial order but not necessarily leftist.

Sullivan himself preferred not to be identified as a leftist, asking his agent not to submit his work to "the radical weeklies—or monthlies—such as *New Masses*."<sup>24</sup> He did not, apparently, agree with Schmidt's assessment of "On the City" as socialist; there is no evidence that he revised it before it was published in the little magazine *Manuscript* in 1935. And while the story itself provides the best evidence for its sources in the gospel, it can also be argued that Sullivan had as many Catholic as socialist sources on which to draw to make his critique. Leo XIII in *Rerum Novarum* (1891) had argued for the "closest neighborliness and friendship" between capital and labor (par. 33), a position reinforced by Pius XI in *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931). In 1919, the American bishops had compiled a list of needed social reforms, deemed by others entirely too radical at the time; all but one were subsequently implemented under the New Deal.<sup>25</sup> Sullivan's concern for social justice was not explicitly grounded in papal teaching (though it is not unlikely that he was aware of the social encyclicals), but what his critic calls by one of the harshest names of the 1930's could just as plausibly have had Christian origins.

Similarly, two reviewers of Sullivan's fourth novel, *First Citizen* (1948), see very different things in the book, depending on their ability to see through a Catholic lens—where one sees doctrinal affirmation, the other sees aberration. *First Citizen* creates in Kingsley Bond a title character whose self-involvement brings disastrous consequences down upon his family. His wife and daughter suffer from residual guilt over the death of the family's older daughter; though responsible for the automobile accident in which she was killed, Kingsley Bond nevertheless sued the other driver and won a judgment that became the basis of his own fortune.

Stylistically more ambitious than Sullivan's previous works, *First Citizen* follows each member of Bond's family during the day



before the Fourth of July on which Bond has been asked to give a speech that will anoint him as the town's next mayoral candidate. The first section reveals Bond's hollowness and bombast; the second, his daughter's alienation and eagerness to free herself from the family; the third, his wife's descent into madness. Believing herself somehow to be physically preserving the household, Mrs. Bond goes into the attic late at night and pounds nails into the beams of the roof. On the night of the day the novel depicts, her dementia deepens and she nails her own hand to the floor of the house's entryway. Her daughter returns home later the same night, drunk, and passes out in the living room without seeing her mother.

The novel's fourth and final section takes place on the following morning. The discovery by Kingsley Bond's political patrons of Mrs. Bond's desperate action and her daughter's apparent debauchery leads to the unraveling of Kingsley Bond's tenuous political career. His own empty depravity is revealed as incurable by the indifference and egocentrism of his reaction to the situation.

Harold C. Gardiner, S.J., literary editor of *America*, called *First Citizen* "another penetrating study of the human heart" and noted, as few secular reviewers did, that "the symbolism that runs through the story is that of the mystery of suffering and the need for it to cast the light of proper values onto lives."<sup>26</sup> In contrast, the reviewer for the *Hartford (Connecticut) Courant* rejected what she termed "the author's conviction that pain is not merely an essential part of life—it is the crucible wherein human dross is burned away": "This philosophy is all very well for stoics and masochists, but for the average reader who enjoys this age of pain preventatives the idea of enduring any unnecessary anguish will seem archaic if not perverted."<sup>27</sup>

The difference between these two assessments was not one so much of literary sensibility as of philosophical and theological principle. Within a Catholic or Christian framework such as Gardiner's, suffering could be not only meaningful but also even redemptive; without a transcendent reference point, however, that meaning disappeared, and an insistence on searching for it seemed outdated, even perverse. This divergence is representative of a persistent strain of twentieth-century criticism, both literary and cultural, that has wrestled with whether and how religious belief and its consequences are compatible with modernity. The rise of science, the reallocation of political authority to the nation-state and of personal authority to the individual conscience, a growing confidence in the human capacity to solve the problems of this world without reference to the next—these and other crucial changes in culture, in the structures of meaning by which societies organize themselves, have had the often unintended

side effect of relegating religious belief to marginality, irrelevance, or worse.<sup>28</sup>

Within twentieth-century literary criticism, this trend has frequently emerged in assertions that traditional belief was irrelevant to literary creation, even directly harmful. For example, in "The Name and Nature of Our Period-Style," Nathan Scott asserted the loss of the primordial Christian images that once bound Western culture together and the consequent necessity of the great modern authors to create personal systems of ultimate meaning.<sup>29</sup> Similarly, for New Critic and author Robert Penn Warren, criticism was endangered by critics whose minds were "hot for certainties": "the hand-me-down faith, the hand-me-down ideals, no matter what the professed content, is in the end not only meaningless but vicious. It is vicious because as parody, it is the enemy of all faith."<sup>30</sup> And, in the "Polemical Introduction" to his *Anatomy of Criticism*, Northrop Frye writes:

The critic may need to know something of religion, but by theological standards an orthodox religious poem will give a more satisfactory expression of its contents than a heretical one: this makes nonsense in criticism, and there is nothing to be gained by confusing the standards of the two subjects.<sup>31</sup>

This has arguably been the mainstream view of twentieth-century criticism—religious belief no longer constitutes a shared system of meaning, and any attempt to frame a literary work according to the mandates of religious orthodoxy, to insert orthodox views into a literary work or to apply them as critical tools, distorts the literary enterprise beyond recognition.

In contrast, as Paul Giles has argued, the work of many Catholic artists exhibits a sensibility that has eluded the categories of much mainstream American criticism. Giles goes so far as to argue that these artists and their works represent an alternative American intellectual tradition that "has been obscured from view precisely because it rejects the traditional American equation of intellectualism with 'questioning' or with 'nonconformity' in the broad sense of that term."<sup>32</sup> For example, the "our" of Nathan Scott's "period-style" excludes anyone for whom the "primordial images" of Christianity (incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection) have continued to resonate and to call for embodiment and exploration in any but the most personal way.<sup>33</sup> The implied syllogism presents a logical difficulty: if modern writers, the writers of the day, by definition lamented the loss of a common religious vision, were other writers who were still engaged in exploring orthodox religious traditions somehow not of their own day?

This postulated disjunction between literature and traditional belief is one consequence of a decisive shift in the twentieth-century

academy to naturalist and objectivist methods of scholarship. What Edward Purcell has described as “the combined forces of pragmatism, scientific naturalism, and modern critical philosophy” challenged some of the fundamental presuppositions not only of Catholicism but of all “absolutist” or normative systems of meaning. By the 1930’s, the shift had resulted in a “sense of intellectual frustration and institutional anxiety” among many American Catholic scholars, a sense that persisted well into the cold war period.<sup>34</sup> Reliance on the techniques of scientific naturalism as the primary determinant of truth, Purcell argues, led to the rejection of normative or a priori systems of value as invalid, even as leading inevitably to political absolutism. Purcell documents the largely defensive and sometimes “vitriolic” reaction of Thomistic legal scholars to the emergence of legal realism;<sup>35</sup> other scholars faced with the same challenges chose not retrenchment but engagement.

What they engaged in was what John Murray Cuddihy has called “a two-front war” and “the task of all modernizing intellectuals”: accommodating the demands of the traditional religions to the pluralistic venue of modernity without sacrificing the integrity of either.<sup>36</sup> This challenge was faced not only by writers and not only by Catholics, but Catholic writers confronted it in a peculiarly intense way. One of the best-known expressions of the confrontation is Flannery O’Connor’s summary of her reasons for writing.

One of the awful things about writing when you are a Christian is that for you the ultimate reality is the Incarnation, the present reality is the Incarnation, the whole reality is the Incarnation, and nobody believes in the Incarnation; that is, nobody in your audience. My audience are the people who think God is dead. At least these are the people I am conscious of writing for.<sup>37</sup>

In choosing to write for this audience, O’Connor chose to confront a series of beliefs—that God is dead, that what is observable is all there is, that human beings can be fully understood by applying the techniques of social science—with which she profoundly disagreed.<sup>38</sup> Against them, she persistently juxtaposed explicitly Christian conceptions of the same things—that God had entered and transformed human history in discernible and describable ways, that humanity is fallen but redeemed and has, therefore, a transcendent destiny in addition to its temporal one.

Making this case was difficult, to say the least. Cuddihy describes the task as “a tall order indeed and one requiring intelligence, conceptual elegance, and the intellectual poise a two-front war exacts.”<sup>39</sup> It is not surprising that O’Connor often seems to be somewhat beleaguered, under fire from both sides at once. In an article published

in *America* in 1957 on "The Church and the Fiction Writer," O'Connor rejected both the pressure of fellow Catholics that fiction above all be inoffensive and the claims of non-Catholic critics that Catholics were, by definition, incapable of producing real literature. Her bemused conclusion reads: "When people have told me that because I am a Catholic, I cannot be an artist, I have had to reply, ruefully, that because I am a Catholic I cannot afford to be less than an artist."<sup>40</sup>

The "two-front war" and other martial metaphors are perhaps more intuitively appropriate to O'Connor's shocking and often violent attempts to "draw large and startling figures" for "the almost blind"<sup>41</sup> than they are to Sullivan's much more subtle and less aggressive fictional sensibility. But that he shared her sense of estrangement from the dominant contemporary view is explicit when he writes *about* fiction and in his work as a book reviewer, lecturer, and classroom teacher.

Sullivan was very much a part of "secular" literary culture—publishing more often in secular magazines than in Catholic, striving for mainstream success for his novels, reviewing hundreds of books for two major national newspapers. An examination of his work in these secular forums reveals the extent to which it was informed by an inescapably Catholic sensibility—and the extent to which his Catholicism was challenged by the variety of perspectives to which his book reviewing, especially, exposed him.

In his reviewing, Sullivan seems to have been assigned (occasionally to have requested) a large number of books somehow definable as "Catholic." He reviewed or included on his annual "Year's 10 Best" works by some of the most celebrated twentieth-century Catholic authors—Georges Bernanos, T. S. Eliot, François Mauriac, Evelyn Waugh, and Graham Greene—and by former Catholics who frequently took Catholicism as their subject matter, such as James T. Farrell and Mary McCarthy. He seems to have made a special point of boosting those actively involved in promoting American Catholic literary culture, including Sr. Mariella Gable and Harold C. Gardiner, S.J., as well as those frequently identified as among the hopes for a truly "American" Catholic literature: Leo Brady, Caroline Gordon, J. F. Powers, and Harry Sylvester. Some of the same proprietary concern for the state of modern Catholic letters can also be seen in his reviews of British authors Bruce Marshall and H. F. M. Prescott—Prescott being a historical novelist celebrated for her vast and panoramic renderings of English history. Sullivan also reviewed Catholic "phenomenon" novels such as *The Cardinal* by Henry Morton Robinson and *The Nun's Story* by Kathryn Hulme.

It would be a mistake, however, to conclude that Sullivan's evident interest in Catholic literary culture limited him as a reviewer. He also reviewed books by—among many others—James Agee, Albert

Camus, Simone de Beauvoir, Isak Dinesen, Andre Gide, Bernard Malamud, Vladimir Nabokov, Gore Vidal, and Herman Wouk. In addition, he had other apparent specialties. He reviewed numerous books on Russian literature, including new translations of Dostoevsky and Tolstoy, as well as much contemporary fiction, both serious and popular, and many anthologies of short stories, including the yearly "Best Short Stories" of a given year and the O. Henry annual prize volume.

Sullivan's book reviewing situated him squarely in the literary mainstream but did not require the suspension of self-consciously Catholic approaches to literary evaluation. He brought to—and learned from—his reviewing a distinctive set of criteria for literary evaluation, based not solely on formal or technical excellence but also on how accurately a work depicts the fullness of "reality." This notion, for Sullivan as a Catholic, includes not only the temporal and the tangible, not only the authentic rendering of social experience, but also the transcendent and the ultimate. In this, he departs in his notion of "realism" from its more common usage in American literary criticism.<sup>42</sup> Some examples will illustrate the balance he seeks between respecting what a work intends to be and assessing the extent to which it encompasses the fullness he so prizes.

Sullivan praises Albert Camus' *The Stranger* as "a terrible little book, wonderfully well written," while describing it as "a queerly disinterested celebration of meaninglessness, a work of strange, deadly, and horrible implication."<sup>43</sup> Similarly, he says of James T. Farrell's *Bernard Clare* that "every page . . . exhibits the clear desire of a sorely dissatisfied man to blast away at the things which have hurt him. . . . Wrong headed, bitter, one sided, it still has the dignity that comes whenever a sincere man speaks his mind."<sup>44</sup> From the hundreds of Sullivan's book reviews this ethic emerges: craftsmanship, that is, technical excellence, deserves admiration on its own terms; every book should be evaluated for what it is. He reserves the highest praise, however, for works that demonstrate not only technical brilliance but something even less tangible, best described, perhaps, as a commitment to meaningfulness. Thus, he seems almost to mourn in his review of Simone de Beauvoir's *All Men Are Mortal*:

Behind this icy nihilism, and behind the beautifully controled [*sic*] writing which expresses it, there lies a profound anguish. It is, perhaps, an anguish peculiar to our own times, and more European than American, rising as it does out of suffering and the endurance of horror as well as out of fierce human pride. It rejects religion, ethics, and standards; it clings to a thin compassion; but in the end, in despair, having abandoned all values, it

abandons humanity itself, except as the empty object of bitter, acute lamentation.<sup>45</sup>

In contrast, H. F. M. Prescott's *Son of Dust* combines technical excellence with, for Sullivan, a fuller and truer understanding of the human condition:

Human beings are seen as intricate and profound personalities tugged at by both impulse and grace. . . . Fulcun and the woman he loves are subject to all the glandular thunders and felicities. They are also subject to social custom and moral law. But—and it is in this that "Son of Dust" differs from much contemporary fiction—beyond and above the opposing compulsions of passion and of morality, these people are subject to a Providence which surrounds them as free creatures, in a mystery of love, both human and divine.<sup>46</sup>

Here Sullivan makes explicit his discomfort with what he saw as the contemporary tendency to emphasize the "impulses" and "glands" that move people to the exclusion of "grace" and "reason." This "view of man as simply animal . . . as a being driven only by hunger, sex, and a concern about comfort" was, for Sullivan, too restrictive, too reductionistic, and too "unreal."<sup>47</sup> His realism was not so much a literary technique as an existential orientation, an insistence that the "real" had to include the divine. To limit the real to the perceivable and measurable, to limit the human to the physiological and psychological, was to misrepresent the nature of reality. Good fiction, even great fiction, could be based on this mistaken notion of reality, but the greatest took the richer view into account and explored its full implications.

From the perspective of literary criticism, Sullivan's view may seem eccentric, even idiosyncratic. Extensive evidence exists, however, that it derives in large part from his immersion in American Catholic literary culture. Even here, though, he was not entirely comfortable or entirely accepted.

Beginning in the nineteenth century and continuing unabated through the mid-twentieth, American Catholicism developed an extensive alternative network of literary production, including presses, publishers, newspapers, book clubs, awards, conferences, and professional associations.<sup>48</sup> Such a network required authors to fuel it, and all involved worked hard to identify Catholic authors and bring them into the enterprise. Sullivan himself connected his writing and his Catholicism early on. A 1933 notebook includes the following projected work:

Nov. 29, 1933—A series of Catholic one-acts for Catholic schools, churches and parish societies. Christmas, Passion Play, Easter Play, Ascension Play, Pentecost Play. Perhaps also a cycle including the holy days: All Saints, Immaculate Conception, Assump-

tion; the various saint-days.—A hand book of drama for the liturgical year. And nothing soppy about it.<sup>49</sup>

He was invited and usually agreed to be included in anthologies of Catholic fiction, including Sr. Mariella Gable's *Great Modern Catholic Short Stories*.<sup>50</sup> He was asked to come to a Catholic Press Association meeting (May 1943) on the state of diocesan newspapers. In summer 1943, he was asked to write a biography of a parish priest (his choice); he turned down the offer because he was working on his second novel. He was invited to submit a fifteen-hundred-word biographical sketch to Walter Romig's *The Book of Catholic Authors*, and he was eventually included, though he initially declined because he said he could not see the facts of his life adding up to fifteen hundred words without "presumption" or "pretentiousness."<sup>51</sup> He spoke to Catholic groups frequently, including the Sheil School of Social Studies in February 1948, addressing them on "The Intention of the Novelist as Catholic." He was asked to judge a Catholic Press Association short story contest in 1948 and had to decline but agreed to participate in 1949. In summer 1949, Sullivan helped to run a writers' workshop at Notre Dame, participated in one at the Catholic University of America, and was asked to participate in but had to refuse one at Marquette. His book of short stories, *The Fresh and Open Sky*, won a fiction award in 1952 from the Catholic Writer's Guild of America.<sup>52</sup> He was invited to be a member of the Gallery of Living Catholic Authors, headquartered at Webster College in Webster Groves, Missouri, and accepted.<sup>53</sup>

This partial list suggests the variety and scope of Sullivan's participation in Catholic literary culture. He was not, however, sanguine about all its aspects. Some of his ambivalence is bemused, but he was not naive about the quality of much of the work with which he was dealing. Henry Volkering once asked him for a list of Catholic periodicals that published fiction. In his list, Sullivan included *America*, *Catholic World* ("Old-fashioned fiction, not much good"), *Columbia* (whose editor, John Donahue, had been encouraging to him early in his career), *Commonweal*, and *Spirit*. Sullivan's assessment was equivocal, to say the least.

Frankly, Henry, I don't think that outside of *Commonweal* and *Columbia* there are any Catholic magazines in this country which would generally or steadily offer markets for really good fiction. . . . If you have some Catholic writers who are doing good work distinctively Catholic in tone or implication I think the best bet is in the *Atlantic*, *New Yorker*, literary group.

. . . Sweet stuff, sentimental stuff, will sell to a number of Catholic magazines, but that's not the kind of thing you are asking about. I wish I could give you better tidings, both for your sake and because I'd like things to be different—there *ought* to be

a respectable Catholic magazine to print stories. But I'm afraid there ain't.

. . . This is a hell of a report.<sup>54</sup>

Privately, also to Volkening, he called *Books on Trial* "a poor, poor, bemused, sad affair, but with a wide circulation."<sup>55</sup> Sullivan's ambivalent assessment suggests that even those who presumably shared much of his definition of "realism" did not agree on how that definition might best be embodied in literature. He rejects not only depictions of reality without God but also depictions in which God or Catholicism is overlaid like "glossy varnish." "Writing fiction, it is not my job to edify or uplift or disperse cozy smug comfort. . . . It is not my purpose as a writer to *impose*, to smear on, to frost my stories with a Catholic icing."<sup>56</sup> Explicitly Catholic fiction, in Sullivan's opinion, fell far too often into the fictional trap opposite to materialist realism, the trap of pious sentimentality.

There were signs of hope, though. Sullivan and Harold C. Gardiner, S.J., were mutual admirers. As literary editor of *America*, Gardiner played a crucial role in shaping the public discussion of the relationship between Catholicism and literature. Sullivan wrote an admiring letter to him in 1944, complimenting him on his recently published *Tenets for Readers and Reviewers*. Gardiner's reply was equally admiring: "When you get your teeth into a theme worthy of your style, I feel that we will have a truly major novelist in you."<sup>57</sup> In a later letter to Gardiner, Sullivan said:

You are approaching books, particularly fiction, with wisdom, clarity, and precision; and in doing so you are gaining, I know, a wide respect in secular circles for Catholic criticism. I am so deeply concerned about what you are doing because in a fumbling way I have been trying to write books informed by the values which you find important; and it is a happy thing, you know, for a writer to work with some assurance of not being misunderstood.<sup>58</sup>

Other people also shared Sullivan's assessments and sense of toiling without much appreciation. Clement J. Lambert, S.M., had asked him for a "Catholic" story for an anthology but had to reject the first one Sullivan sent, "Night in August," "because of the finicky and still unformed taste of my 'pious' readers."<sup>59</sup> Sullivan replied in sympathy: "I think we've both read a few overtly Catholic pieces which, for all their unction, have seemed to lack inner, organic Catholic values."<sup>60</sup> Sullivan's opinion of much Catholic literary taste is summed up in another reference to "persons who think that Kathleen Norris is the world's greatest writer: persons who feel that the virtue of a novel lies in its making one feel either holy (this is preferable) or just plain peachy



(which is next best)."<sup>61</sup> He did, however, see J. F. Powers as "one of the most gifted and sound and powerful writers of what is often engagingly referred to as 'our time' "<sup>62</sup> and as "one of the real hopes of American letters."<sup>63</sup>

Sullivan was critical of the Catholic literary subculture but charitable about it; he was not very optimistic about it, but he was active in it. In this, his position is again similar to Flannery O'Connor's, who reviewed books for her diocesan newspaper, spoke at Catholic colleges, and was active in other ways in Catholic literary culture. She did not hesitate, however, to make clear that an uninformed and moralistic approach to fiction was as un-Catholic as it was hazardous to art. Preparing to speak to the Macon Parish Catholic Women's Council on "the dizzying subject—"What Is a Wholesome Novel?" " she wrote witheringly to a friend, "I intend to tell them that the reason they find nothing but obscenity in modern fiction is because that is all they know how to recognize."<sup>64</sup> O'Connor's and Sullivan's exasperation was sporadic and usually private; Harry Sylvester's was much more pervasive and public. In a 1947 *Atlantic Monthly* article, Sylvester scathingly delineated "obstacles insuperable, perhaps irremovable, while the writer remains a Catholic"; the reasons, he believed, that "those Catholics . . . who have published what might be described as a body of work have failed so utterly to create anything even suggesting art that they try the faith of those who have thought very much about cause and effect."<sup>65</sup>

The point at which Catholic literary culture, and the approach to literary evaluation it embodied, diverged most sharply from the mainstream was on the issue of censorship. Here Sullivan develops a position so nuanced as to seem at best schizophrenic and at worst duplicitous, again demonstrating the tensions inherent in Cuddihy's "task of all modernizing intellectuals." Sullivan was a member of a religious tradition that espoused norms for aesthetic value precisely at the cultural moment when such norms were being most definitively rejected by the literary mainstream.

Sullivan does not reject the need for censorship; in fact, he presumes it.<sup>66</sup> He found Walter Kerr (a fellow Catholic), in his book *Criticism and Censorship*, to be similarly minded, rejecting as "extreme positions" both "those who would fiercely rule out all censorship" and "those who would suspiciously view all art as potentially subversive." While describing "the spread of the censorial habit of mind" as "not only unfriendly to art but ignorant of its ends," Sullivan nonetheless presumes along with Kerr the need for "a more intensive study—in Aristotle, Aquinas, and Maritain, to start with—of what art is and what it is for."<sup>67</sup> The thought of Catholics getting together and deciding what art is and what it is for might chill the bones of many a twentieth-cen-

ture artist, but the potential breadth and flexibility of their critical tools become apparent in Sullivan's refusal to testify in the notorious *Tropic of Cancer* obscenity trial. Asked by John Turner, a Chicago city attorney, whether he would consider testifying, Sullivan read the book and returned it to Turner, replying, "I think it nauseous, revolting—and extremely dull. But I will not testify under oath that it is obscene." "Four-letter words have been with us a long time," he continued, noting that "in themselves they constitute no obscenity whatever. . . . What I consider most objectionable in Miller's book is its grimy, grubby, dim, and shabby view of life. But this is a philosophical and critical objection, not a legal one. . . ."68

If, however, Sullivan thought that he himself was transgressing, his reaction was swiftly and intensely apologetic. He took his obligations to the Catholic community very seriously, as shown by the reply he made to Fr. James Donnelly, who wrote to Sullivan lamenting his "taking the Lord's name in vain" in his history of Notre Dame. In a scrupulous two-page letter, Sullivan apologized for any offence he might have given. He did not quite concede the case, though, arguing two different qualifying points. First, he defended the duty of an author to depict all of human experience, including sin, and quoted Newman and Maritain to support his argument. Second, he argued for a distinction between taking God's name in vain and using it as a sign of great familiarity; he hoped, he wrote, that this second way was how the name occurred in *Notre Dame*.69

Fluency in more than one language is often required of someone living in more than one culture. But Sullivan's facility in moving back and forth between religious and secular literary culture, his ability to speak fluently the language of whichever culture he happened to be writing for, can be a little disconcerting. If religion is believed to be inconsistent with modernity, then critics on either side can see any leaning toward the other as treason. If the two are defined dichotomously, as they frequently were, then fidelity to one leaves one an infidel in the eyes of the other. In attempting to bridge the two, Sullivan was vulnerable to accusations of abandonment or duplicity from both sides.<sup>70</sup> And by accepting his Catholicism as organically related to his writing, but writing nonetheless for everyone, not just Catholics, Sullivan was certainly attempting to live in two worlds. Crossing the boundaries was uncomfortable; correction came not only from without but also from within.

Sullivan's fiction by no means elicited unified reaction from the Catholic press. While some saw him as a genuine asset to American Catholic writing, others worried that his work veered too closely to naturalism. Much Catholic critical discussion of Sullivan's work, in fact, centered around precisely the issue of "realism" with which he

himself was concerned as a teacher and reviewer. If Sullivan alienated some part of his "secular" audience by insisting that realism had to include an awareness of the transcendent destiny of humanity, he also alienated parts of his "Catholic" audience by insisting that realism include the depiction of all aspects of human experience, not only the edifying and uplifting ones. Some Catholic reviewers shared his view; others rejected it.

Thus, when Rufus William Rauch in *Ave Maria* said of *Summer After Summer*, "In the tradition of sound and significant realism, it gives us a memorable experience of the pathos and the joy, the little agonies and the little ecstasies of common life," he was taking a definite stance on the novel—that it comes down on the side of the transcendent, it leaves room for the mysterious in its detailing of the ordinary, and it maintains, Rauch continues, "the attitude of reverence as well as detachment toward 'the holiness of reality'" advocated by French Catholic author Paul Claudel.<sup>71</sup>

Not all reviews in Catholic periodicals were so complimentary, and their divergence occurred on precisely this point. In *Books on Trial*, the reviewer scathingly dismissed the story as "clinical" and "peep-holing."<sup>72</sup> Sullivan's colleague at Notre Dame (and head of the Philosophy Department), Rev. Philip S. Moore, C.S.C., wrote to John C. Tully, the editor of *Books on Trial*, taking him to task for printing the review. In defending the book against these charges, Moore makes the same distinction as the *Ave Maria* reviewer:

The failure of the [*Books on Trial*] reviewer to grasp the theme of this novel, its significance and meaning, reveals an astounding incompetency. In *Summer After Summer* we are at last getting true American Catholic fiction, shot through with Catholic realism. This is in happy contrast to American Catholic fiction of the past which was either sticky with piety or juvenile. Mr. Sullivan's book is not milk for babes, but good solid food for those who have attained to full intellectual Catholic manhood.<sup>73</sup>

Six years later, *First Citizen* raised the issue of appropriate realism even more explicitly. The novel received widely divergent reviews in the secular press, depending on whether the reviewer saw the ending as sustained and justified or as melodramatic and overwrought, as Greek tragedy<sup>74</sup> or movie serial. The *Saturday Review of Literature* summed up many reactions when it began by stating, "Over-indulgence has done in Mr. Sullivan."<sup>75</sup> In contrast, Hal Borland in the *New York Times* called Kingsley Bond's fall "magnificent, deserved, and complete" and said that "his story rises to an almost unbearably stark climax."<sup>76</sup> The Book-of-the-Month Club was ambivalent but respectful: "This is a psychopathic novel that really has some psyche. . . . It is a

painful book, unsuccessful in the extreme judgment because horror is pushed too literal. But a book of pain and power, and if I were a publisher I would be proud to have published it."<sup>77</sup>

Reaction in the Catholic press was, as usual, proprietary—reviews in Catholic periodicals almost invariably mentioned the minor character of Pete Morrissey, who, the novel's second section makes clear, intends to marry Elizabeth Bond and save her from her family's derangement. Harold Gardiner refers to Morrissey's "sane Catholicism"; the *Ave Maria's* reviewer, Thomas E. Burke, describes Morrissey as "a level-headed youth whose religious faith made him understanding and sympathetic."<sup>78</sup> Catholic proprietary feeling also manifested itself doctrinally. *Our Lady of Letters* emphasized the "need for a stabilizing faith . . . indicated in the lives of both women, the wife having been deprived in childhood of her birthright of Catholicism." The reviewer went on immediately to note: "Extremely well written, the book is a particularly fine character study."<sup>79</sup> This virtual conflation of technical excellence and religious soundness is typical of Catholic reviewers, including Walter Romig in the *Michigan Catholic*, who described the novel as "Reminiscent of 'Babbitt' " but "better in its surer grasp of spiritual values. It is also well written and interesting."<sup>80</sup>

Despite the proprietary preoccupations of Catholic reviewers, Catholicism is conspicuous primarily by its absence in this novel, a fact noted by Francis X. Connolly in the *Catholic Mirror*. For Connolly, *First Citizen* poses directly the question of "whether a Catholic novelist can be as realistic and harrowing as his contemporaries, whether he can be faithful to the world of fact without, at the same time, sacrificing the world of truth."<sup>81</sup> He compares it with recent novels by other Catholic authors, works that might conceivably be called "realistic"—Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited*, Greene's *The Heart of the Matter*, Undset's *Kristin Lavransdatter*—but argues that in each of these works "the main personalities are led at least to the threshold of Divine Mercy by explicitly supernatural forces." *First Citizen*, in contrast, allows its main character "absolute fidelity to his real self . . . as a valid representation of the presumably large number of people for whom God is a word expressing a vague emotion." Connolly argues that the book proves a Catholic can be a realist, an achievement Sullivan accomplishes by "unflinching fidelity to the world of fact"; by including Pete Morrissey and another Catholic friend of Elizabeth Bond, without whom "one would be persuaded [by the book] that life was a nightmare"; and by "send[ing] a message to the mind, not merely a shock to the nerves."<sup>82</sup>

Taken as a whole, reactions to Sullivan's work in the Catholic press reveal both his confirmed place within American Catholic literary culture and the tensions that tugged at him both from without and from

within. Catholic reviewers applauded his use of Catholic characters as foils for the emptiness of lives deprived of the spiritual and, for the most part, acknowledged that he was “perfectly consistent with [his] Catholic belief in allowing [his] non-Catholic character to speak for himself.”<sup>83</sup> This evidence would seem to suggest that Sullivan was at least partially persuasive in his attempts to reconcile the normative aspects of Catholicism’s approach to art with the contemporary literary view that norms inevitably limited art to the point of distortion.

The approaches Sullivan attempted to reconcile are so distinct that his failure to please all constituencies is hardly surprising. The conflicts that, in his lifetime, resulted in frustration and dissension, however, in retrospect reveal the constellation of cultural presumptions he was trying to navigate. Sullivan himself had some confidence that a pattern would eventually emerge. In 1971, he observed to Harry Sylvester, “Isn’t it odd the way our lives can be shaped while we are also responsibly shaping them? More and more deeply I believe in mysteries.”<sup>84</sup>

As a Catholic intellectual and artist, Sullivan took on the task of reconciling the imperatives of modernity with those of his religious tradition. As a Catholic writer, he was bringing ideas integral to the relationship between Catholicism and art—the grounding of art in the sacred nature of reality, the necessarily moral nature of the artistic enterprise—into the secular literary realm of New York publishers and editors, whose presuppositions were formed more by modernism and the free market than by Catholic theology. Conversely, he was also bringing forward ideas integral to modern art, to contemporary literature—the obligation of the artist to represent the full range of human experience, the fundamental freedom required by art if it were to be true—and demonstrating how they could be consonant with Catholic approaches, despite the doubts of some of his fellow Catholics.

This attempt at reconciliation did not always proceed smoothly, but Sullivan never seriously questioned the fundamental cohesion of his worldview. The confluence of “American,” “midwestern,” “Catholic,” and “writer” that shaped him may seem an anomaly because the history of American Catholicism has often tended to emphasize its homogeneity and “otherness.”<sup>85</sup> Neither exotic nor antiquated, Richard Sullivan’s complex, ordinary life resolves simplistic or externally defined contradictions. His multiple self-identifications, both in their tensions and in their coherence, suggest the possibility that mid-century U.S. Catholicism, often caricatured as monolithic and unengaged with modernity, may not only have contributed to but also embodied the distinctive pluralism of American culture.

## Notes

1. The initial research for this article was made possible by a Research Travel Grant from the Charles and Margaret Hall Cushwa Center for the Study of American Catholicism at the University of Notre Dame, which I am very pleased to acknowledge. Warm thanks also to the archivists in the Notre Dame archives, particularly to Wendy Clauson Schlereth and Kevin Cawley. Various drafts of this article were read and commented on with generous attention by a number of colleagues and friends to whom I am most grateful: Mike Barnes, Dennis Doyle, Philip Gleason, Jim Heft, Frank Henninger, Jack McGrath, David O'Brien, and Sandra Yocum Mize.

2. Richard Sullivan, "Record of Work Begun and Ideas for Stories," 1932-1933, Papers of Richard Sullivan (hereafter cited as CSUL) 1/2, Archives of the University of Notre Dame (UNDA).

3. Jane P. Tompkins, "But Is It Any Good?: The Institutionalization of Literary Value," in *Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction, 1790-1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), chap. 7.

4. Dorothy Larrimore to Richard Sullivan, December 3, 1943, CSUL 1/6, UNDA.

5. Another of Russell and Volkening's clients was Eudora Welty. Her extended correspondence with Diarmuid Russell is excerpted and published in Michael Kreyling, *Author and Agent: Eudora Welty and Diarmuid Russell* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1991).

6. Henry Volkening to Richard Sullivan, May 2, 1941, CSUL 1/5, UNDA.

7. Richard Sullivan to Henry Volkening, May 11, 1941, CSUL 1/5, UNDA.

8. See James T. Fisher, *The Catholic Counterculture in America, 1933-1962* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989); and R. Laurence Moore, *Religious Outsiders and the Making of Americans* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).

9. See "Forum—Sources of Personal Identity: Religion, Ethnicity, and the American Cultural Situation," *Religion and American Culture* 2, no. 1 (Winter 1992): 1-22; Gleason's contribution is 13-18. See also his other works, especially Philip Gleason, *Keeping the Faith: American Catholicism, Past and Present* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1987).

10. John Murray Cuddihy, *No Offense: Civil Religion and Protestant Taste* (New York: Seabury Press, 1978).

11. Leslie Woodcock Tentler, "On the Margins: The State of American Catholic History," *American Quarterly* 45, no. 1 (March 1993): 104-27.

12. Russell and Volkening, in fact, seemed to have more than their share of Catholic writers as clients: besides Sullivan, there was Joseph Dever, Mary Lavin, J. F. Powers, and Harry Sylvester.

13. Henry Volkening to Richard Sullivan, September 12, 1951, CSUL 2/3, UNDA [emphasis in the original].

14. See Robert Wuthnow, *The Restructuring of American Religion: Society and Faith Since World War II* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1988), 72-76. The most prominent contemporary critic was, of course, Paul Blanshard, whose *Communism, Democracy, and Catholic Power* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1951) was a book-length argument for the similarity between the Vatican and the Kremlin.

15. Julia Kernan to Richard Sullivan, September 20, 1939, CSUL 1/1, UNDA.

16. Psalm 127:3 (Douay version).

17. Henry Volkening to Richard Sullivan, June 21, 1945, CSUL 1/6, UNDA [emphasis in the original].

18. Richard Sullivan to Henry Volkening, June 25, 1945, CSUL 1/6, UNDA.

19. Henry Volkening to Richard Sullivan, June 28, 1945, CSUL 1/6, UNDA [emphasis in the original].

20. Richard Sullivan to Buck Moon of Doubleday Doran and Company, June 22, 1946, CSUL 1/6, UNDA.

21. MS of *The World of Idella May*, CSUL 4/9, UNDA, 132.

22. Harry Sylvester to Richard Sullivan, January 4, 1947, CSUL 2/1, UNDA.

23. Walter Schmidt to Richard Sullivan, March 5, 1934, CSUL 1/1, UNDA; the manuscript of "On the City" can be found in CSUL 9/14, UNDA.

24. Richard Sullivan to Harold Matson, June 16, 1938, CSUL 1/1, UNDA.

25. *Encyclical Letter of His Holiness Pope Leo XIII on the Condition of the Working Classes (Rerum Novarum)* (Boston: Daughters of St. Paul, 1942), 20; on the Bishops' 1919 program, see James Hennesey, *American Catholics: A History of the Roman Catholic Community in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 259.

26. Harold C. Gardiner, S.J., "Eight More for Christmas," *America* 80, no. 11 (December 18, 1948): 245 [found in CSUL 5/8, UNDA].

27. Review of *First Citizen*, by Richard Sullivan, *Hartford (Connecticut) Courant*, October 2, 1949 [found in CSUL 5/8, UNDA].

28. See James Turner, *Without God, Without Creed: The Origins of Unbelief in America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985).

29. Nathan A. Scott, "The Name and Nature of Our Period-Style," in *Religion and Modern Literature: Essays in Theory and Criticism*, ed. G. B. Tennyson and Edward E. Ericson, Jr. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 121-37.

30. Robert Penn Warren, "Pure and Impure Poetry" (1943), in *New and Selected Essays* (New York: Random House, 1989), 27-28.

31. Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1957), 19.

32. Paul Giles, *American Catholic Arts and Fictions: Culture, Ideology, Aesthetics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 52.

33. The Catholic principle of sacramentality—the belief that all of created reality is potentially revelatory of the divine—is crucial to this understanding of literature. See Avery Dulles, *The Catholicity of the Church* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985); Lawrence S. Cunningham, *The Catholic Faith: An Introduction* (New York: Paulist Press, 1987); Monika K. Hellwig, *Understanding Catholicism* (New York: Paulist Press, 1981); and Richard P. McBrien, *Catholicism (Study Edition)* (Minneapolis: Winston Press, 1981), especially 1180-83. An appealing and accessible description can be found in the first hundred pages of Andrew M. Greeley and Mary Greeley Durkin, *How to Save the Catholic Church* (New York: Viking, 1984).

34. Edward Purcell, *The Crisis of Democratic Theory: Scientific Naturalism and the Problem of Value* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1973), 170.

35. *Ibid.*, 159-78.

36. Cuddihy, *No Offense*, 66.

37. Flannery O'Connor to A., August 2, 1955, in *Collected Works* (New York: Library of America, 1988), 943.

38. Whether she fairly characterized the content of modernity is less important here than understanding how deep she thought the rift really was. Thomas Hill Schaub in *American Fiction in the Cold War* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991) argues that O'Connor, while rejecting the "liberal narrative," was, in the 1950's, developing a critique that looked much like that of postwar liberals.

39. Cuddihy, *No Offense*, 66.

40. O'Connor, *Collected Works*, 808-9.

41. *Ibid.*, 805-6.

42. Paul Giles, in *American Catholic Arts and Fictions*, argues (135-38) that Catholic writers have often stood outside the romantic tradition of the "American" novel as defined by Richard Chase and others. While Sullivan's definition of "realism" is different from that of the authors (Dreiser and Farrell in particular) Giles discusses, his analysis is still useful in understanding Sullivan's distinctiveness.



43. Richard Sullivan, review of *The Stranger*, by Albert Camus, *Chicago Tribune*, April 14, 1946 [found in CSUL 12/5, UNDA].

44. Richard Sullivan, review of *Bernard Clare*, by James T. Farrell, *Chicago Tribune*, May 12, 1946 [found in CSUL 12/5, UNDA].

45. Richard Sullivan, review of *All Men Are Mortal*, by Simone de Beauvoir, *Chicago Tribune*, January 30, 1955 [found in CSUL 12/1, UNDA].

46. Richard Sullivan, review of *Son of Dust*, by H. F. M. Prescott, *Chicago Tribune*, December 9, 1956 [found in CSUL 12/1, UNDA].

47. Richard Sullivan, "The Composite View: A Lecture on Contemporary Fiction," typescript (CSUL 11/5, UNDA), 12.

48. See William M. Halsey, *The Survival of American Innocence: American Catholics in an Era of Disillusionment, 1920-1940* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1980); Paul R. Messbarger, *Fiction with a Parochial Purpose: Social Use of American Catholic Literature, 1884-1900* (Boston: Boston University Press, 1971); and Arnold Sparr, *To Promote, Defend, and Redeem: The Catholic Literary Revival and the Cultural Transformation of American Catholicism, 1920-1960* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1990).

49. Sullivan, "Record of Work Completed and Ideas for Stories," CSUL 1/6, UNDA.

50. Richard Sullivan, "Jubilee at Baysweep," in *Great Modern Catholic Short Stories*, ed. Sr. Mariella Gable (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1942), 121-39.

51. Richard Sullivan to Walter Romig, January 27, 1945, CSUL 1/6, UNDA.

52. Sullivan's ambivalence about Catholic literary culture and his place in it comes through in letters he wrote to Volkening about this award. On January 4, he wrote, "Catholic Writers Guild of America—confidentially I don't know what or who this is—has chosen Fresh and Open Sky for some kind of award—not as I understand it cash, alas—as best fiction by an American Catholic in 1951, or something" (Richard Sullivan to Henry Volkening, January 4, 1952, CSUL 13/25, UNDA). After the awards dinner, to which he did not go, Sullivan wrote, "I heard from a former ND priest who was there that it was extremely dull and ecclesiastical [*sic*]—this priest describes himself as anti-clerical—and that the main speech of the evening was devoted to the thesis that a story ain't a story if it ain't got a plot" (Richard Sullivan to Henry Volkening, February 3, 1952, CSUL 13/25, UNDA).

53. See Sparr, *To Promote, Defend, and Redeem*, 22-26, for a description of the origins and purposes of the Gallery.

54. Richard Sullivan to Henry Volkening, November 5, 1942, CSUL 1/5, UNDA [emphasis in the original]. It should be noted that, in his correspondence, Sullivan often did not use the convention of underlining or italicizing the titles of magazines.

55. Richard Sullivan to Henry Volkening, January 24, 1947, CSUL 1/6, UNDA.

56. Sullivan, "The Composite View," 9-10 [emphasis in the original].

57. Harold C. Gardiner, S.J., to Richard Sullivan, February 4, 1944, CSUL 1/6, UNDA.

58. Richard Sullivan to Harold C. Gardiner, S.J., November 24, 1947, CSUL 2/1, UNDA.

59. Clement J. Lambert, S.M., to Richard Sullivan, December 2, 1947, CSUL 2/1, UNDA.

60. Richard Sullivan to Clement J. Lambert, S.M., December 7, 1947, CSUL 2/1, UNDA.

61. Richard Sullivan to Henry Volkening, February 16, 1948, CSUL 2/1, UNDA.

62. Richard Sullivan to Henry Volkening, February 19, 1946, CSUL 1/6, UNDA.

63. Richard Sullivan to Kelsey Guilfoil, November 10, 1946, CSUL 1/6, UNDA.

64. Flannery O'Connor to John Lynch, September 2, 1956, *The Habit of Being: Letters*, ed. Sally Fitzgerald (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1978), 172.

65. Harry Sylvester, "Problems of the Catholic Writer," *Atlantic Monthly* 181, no. 1 (January 1947): 109-13.

66. He owned a copy of Francis Betten's *The Roman Index of Forbidden Books Briefly Explained*, 3d ed. (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1935), a work designed to clarify canon law on reading and publication and explain its implications for the ordinary reader.

67. Richard Sullivan, review of *Criticism and Censorship*, by Walter Kerr, *Chicago Tribune*, February 3, 1957 [found in CSUL 12/1, UNDA].

68. Richard Sullivan to John Turner, December 26, 1961, CSUL 11/12, UNDA. In this context, it is interesting to consider Sullivan's refusal to have his fiction circulated to "Esquire and all its little cousins." From time to time, when sales were few and far between, Henry Volkening would try to dissuade him from this position. His definitive reply came in a letter to Volkening of October 24, 1951: "Oh, look—on Esquire: I've been thinking, but it's no good. Like Minsky's. You know? I see your point—if that's the proper word—about the bra ads in the other magazines being pretty much the same thing. But not exactly, Henry. Esquire—I was looking at it on a newsrack the other day and I see a calendar of Twelve Cuddlesome Lovelies, One for Each Month of the Year—is in its own little class. You know me well enough to realize I do not despise femininity, but I can't help cringing and feeling a bit resentful when Esquire lays it out on a double page and throws it at me with a leer. This is no

comment on Esquire fiction. I just don't want to be mixed in with that leering mentality. As an old art student, I prefer acres of bare flesh to one leer. As a moralist, I question Esquire's basic philosophy. As a pure and simple snob—this is also it!—I abhor the vulgarity. As a writer, I'd love any money which Esquire might pay me; but what kind of an honest writer would I be if I denied the artist, moralist and snob in me? So the hell with Esquire. Okay?" (Richard Sullivan to Henry Volkening, October 24, 1951, CSUL 2/3, UNDA).

69. Richard Sullivan to Fr. James A. Donnelly, C.S.C., March 30, 1952, CSUL 2/4, UNDA.

70. In the title essay of *The Critics Bear It Away* (New York: Random House, 1992), Frederick Crews notes a similar disjunction in Flannery O'Connor's book reviewing: "There we find O'Connor, writing for regional diocesan papers, arguing for a measure of religious tolerance and relaxed censorship but also displaying a surprising meekness and credulity. . . ." (204, n. 44).

71. Rufus Willian Rauch, review of *Summer After Summer*, by Richard Sullivan, *Ave Maria* 56, no. 16 (1942).

72. R. J. B., review of *Summer After Summer*, by Richard Sullivan, *Books on Trial* 1, no. 3 (1942): 20.

73. Philip S. Moore, C.S.C., to John Tully, n.d. (probably September/October 1942), carbon in CSUL 4/3, UNDA. *Books on Trial* also published something of a rebuttal by Leo L. Ward, C.S.C., head of Notre Dame's English department and Sullivan's mentor and friend. In their introduction to Ward's letter, they acknowledged that "the use of the term 'peep-holing' was unfortunate, since it apparently was taken to mean more than was intended" (*Books on Trial* 1, no. 4 (1942): 16). See also Edward Fischer, "How Realistic Can a Catholic Writer Be?" *Catholic Library World* 21 (December 1949): 73-74.

74. Fanny Butcher, review of *First Citizen*, by Richard Sullivan, *Chicago Tribune*, October 3, 1948 [found in CSUL 5/8, UNDA].

75. Review of *First Citizen*, by Richard Sullivan, *Saturday Review of Literature* 31, no. 49 (December 4, 1948): 58 [found in CSUL 5/8, UNDA].

76. Hal Borland, review of *First Citizen*, by Richard Sullivan, *New York Times*, October 10, 1948 [found in CSUL 5/8, UNDA].

77. Christopher Morley, review of *First Citizen*, by Richard Sullivan, *Book-of-the-Month Club News*, October 1948 [found in CSUL 5/8, UNDA].

78. Gardiner, "Eight More for Christmas"; Thomas E. Burke, review of *First Citizen*, by Richard Sullivan, *Ave Maria* n.s. 69, no. 22 (May 28, 1949): 698 [found in CSUL 5/8, UNDA].

79. Review of *First Citizen*, by Richard Sullivan, *Our Lady of Letters*, January 2, 1949 [found in CSUL 5/8, UNDA].

80. Walter Romig, review of *First Citizen*, by Richard Sullivan, *Michigan Catholic*, January 20, 1949 [found in CSUL 5/8, UNDA].

81. Francis X. Connolly, "Book Tour: Facts and the Truth," *Catholic Mirror*, January 1949 [found in CSUL 5/8, UNDA].

82. Ibid.

83. Ibid.

84. Richard Sullivan to Harry Sylvester, January 7, 1971, CSUL 3/5, UNDA.

85. Cf. Tentler, "On the Margins," 105.