

The Catholic Imagination in the Postmodern Condition: Narrative as Sacrament in Andrew Greeley's Fiction

Mark Anthony G. Moyano*

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Abstract:

This study reexamines the fiction of Andrew M. Greeley through the lens of postmodern literary theory. While Greeley has been popularly regarded as a clerical storyteller or dismissed as a writer of popular Catholic melodrama, little sustained scholarship has positioned his work within the discourse of postmodernism. Addressing this critical gap, this study argues that Greeley's novels, spanning clerical sagas (*The Cardinal Sins* 1981; *Thy Brother's Wife*, 1982), science fiction (*The Final Planet*, 1987), and the *Nuala Anne McGrail* mystery series (1994-2009), exhibit defining features of postmodern literature. This study employs close textual analysis informed by key postmodern theorists: Lyotard's incredulity toward metanarratives, Hutcheon's poetics of parody and historiographic metafiction, and Jameson's cultural logic of capitalism. Also, the analysis is supplemented by theological insights from Tracy, Kearney, and Greeley's own *The Catholic Imagination* (2000). Comparative readings demonstrate how Greeley destabilizes clerical and ecclesial grand narratives, hybridizes popular genres, commodifies faith through mass-market fiction, and engages in intertextual and metafictional play, while simultaneously sacralizing the fragment through a distinct Catholic imagination. The findings establish Greeley as a postmodern novelist whose fiction integrates theological vision with aesthetic strategies typically associated with secular postmodernism. This reframes his literary significance: rather than marginal popular entertainment, his novels participate in the broader cultural negotiation of faith, pluralism, and irony.

Keywords: Andrew M. Greeley, postmodernism, Catholic imagination, historiographic metafiction, theology and literature

Introduction

Andrew M. Greeley (1928-2013) occupies a curious and contested position in American letters. Ordained as a Catholic priest in 1954 and widely recognized as a prolific sociologist of religion, Greeley simultaneously carved out a second career as a bestselling novelist, publishing more than 60 works of fiction between 1978 and 2010 (Greeley, 2006, p. 3). His novels, which

*Associate Professor PhD, Department of English and Humanities, Central Luzon State University, markanthony.moyano@clsu2.edu.ph

include sweeping clerical sagas such as *The Cardinal Sins* (1981) and *Thy Brother's Wife* (1982), speculative works like *The Final Planet* (1987), and the lighthearted but layered *Nuala Anne McGrail* mystery series (1994-2009), achieved considerable commercial success.

Despite this popularity, Greeley's fiction has been largely marginalized in serious literary criticism. Reviewers frequently dismissed his novels as religious romances or "clerical soap operas" that catered to a mass-market readership. Critics tended to value his sociological and theological writings – especially *The Catholic Imagination* (2000) – while relegating his fiction to the peripheries of both American Catholic literature and post-Vatican II cultural studies. This bifurcation has obscured a crucial critical question: what if Greeley's fiction, when read with the tools of postmodern literary theory, discloses an aesthetic and theological sophistication overlooked by his detractors?

This study challenges that Greeley's novels embody defining features of postmodern narrative: incredulity toward metanarratives (Lyotard, 1984), parody and historiographic metafiction (Hutcheon, 2002), and the commodification and cultural logic of late capitalism (Jameson, 1991). While critics such as David Tracy (1981) and Charles Taylor (2007) have argued for the continued vitality of religious imagination within pluralist and secular contexts, Greeley's fiction provides a narrative enactment of these theoretical claims. His works destabilize the institutional Catholic "grand narrative", hybridize popular genres, sacralize the fragmentary, and engage in playful intertextuality.

Two stakes motivate this rereading. First, it revises the conventional assumption that Catholic fiction in the post-Vatican II era remained locked within realism or didactic moralism. Instead, Greeley's novels show that Catholic imagination can thrive through postmodern strategies such as irony, hybridity, and intertextual play. Second, it expands the study of postmodernism, which has often privileged secular or avowedly anti-religious figures such as Thomas Pynchon, John Barth, or Umberto Eco, by considering a Catholic priest's contribution to postmodern cultural production.

The study proceeds in four stages. First, it establishes a theoretical framework drawing on Lyotard, Hutcheon, and Jameson, as well as theological interlocutors such as Tracy, Richard Kearney, and Greeley himself. Second, it situates *The Catholic Imagination* (2000) as a theoretical key for interpreting Greeley's fiction. Third, it offers close readings of *The Cardinal Sins*, *Thy Brother's Wife*, *The Final Planet*, and the *McGrail* mystery series, showing how each enacts postmodern strategies. Finally, it reflects on the implications of naming Greeley as a postmodern Catholic novelist, thereby reframing his position within both literary and theological studies.

Theoretical Framework

Postmodernism and the Incredulity Toward Metanarratives

Jean-François Lyotard's *The Postmodern Condition* remains the canonical entry point for theorizing postmodernism. Commissioned as a report on knowledge, Lyotard defines the postmodern as "incredulity toward metanarratives" (1984: xxiv). By this, he refers to the collapse of legitimating "grand narratives" of modernity – progress, emancipation, Enlightenment reason, and even the scientific ideal of objective truth. For Lyotard, the postmodern moment is marked by a proliferation of "language games", localized discourses and small stories that resist subsumption into a single unifying narrative (40-41).

Applied to literature, this skepticism translates into narratives that foreground fragmentation, reject teleological closure, and dramatize the instability of meaning. Greeley's fiction resonates strongly with this framework. *The Cardinal Sins* (1981) and *Thy Brother's Wife* (1982) dramatize the breakdown of Catholic clerical authority, exposing ambition, desire, and hypocrisy where the Church's institutional discourse claims coherence and sanctity. Instead of affirming a stable priestly identity, Greeley's clerical protagonists embody fractured subjectivities that destabilize the metanarrative of the priesthood itself. In Lyotard's terms, Greeley invites "paralogy", i.e. new moves within language games that resist systematization (1984: 60).

From a theological angle, David Tracy's *The Analogical Imagination* argues that pluralism defines modern religious culture: "the Christian theologian must live with a multiplicity of classics and a plurality of publics" (1981: 410). Tracy's insistence on analogy – the recognition that the divine can be refracted through multiple symbols, narratives, and traditions – provides a theological corollary to Lyotard's incredulity toward metanarratives. Read together, Lyotard and Tracy illuminate how Greeley dismantles clerical grand narratives while sustaining a sacramental sense of meaning through fragments, symbols, and stories.

Pastiche, Parody, and Historiographic Metafiction

Linda Hutcheon's interventions are indispensable for recognizing postmodern narrative strategies. In *A Poetics of Postmodernism* (1988), she identifies irony, parody, and self-reflexivity as central techniques that unsettle the authority of traditional forms. Particularly influential is her concept of "historiographic metafiction", defined as novels that both narrate history and problematize its status as representation: "they install and then blur the line between fiction and history" (1988: 113).

Greeley's *Nuala Anne McGrail* series exemplifies this aesthetic. In *Irish Gold* (1994), Nuala's mystical visions reveal forgotten episodes of Irish nationalist struggle, while Dermot's narrative voice reflects ironically on the process of reconstructing and retelling those histories.

The interplay between visionary fragments and contemporary detective work foregrounds the constructedness of both historical knowledge and narrative authority. As Hutcheon observes, such texts both “use and abuse” history (1988: 23): they tell stories of the past but constantly destabilize their own claims to truth.

Beyond historiography, Hutcheon identifies parody as central to postmodern play. Unlike modernist parody, which was often satirical or corrective, postmodern parody is a form of “repetition with critical difference” (1985: 32). Greeley parodies clerical discourse in *The Cardinal Sins*, juxtaposing solemn theological language with sensual, even scandalous, descriptions of priests’ sexual entanglements. Rather than dismissing the sacred, this parody opens it up to ambiguity, irony, and revaluation.

Genre hybridity also falls under Hutcheon’s rubric. Greeley fuses romance, mystery, science fiction, and theological speculation, producing texts that refuse singular classification. Such hybridity exemplifies what Hutcheon later called postmodernism’s complicitous critique (1989), i.e. it participates in popular forms while simultaneously destabilizing them. In this sense, Greeley’s novels perform a Catholic inflection of Hutcheon’s historiographic metafiction and parody.

Postmodernism as the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism

Fredric Jameson extends the discussion by interpreting postmodernism as “the cultural logic of late capitalism” (1991: 1). For Jameson, postmodern culture is characterized by depthlessness, pastiche, and the waning of historicity. He sees the proliferation of stylistic borrowing, nostalgia, and commodification as aesthetic symptoms of global consumer capitalism (35-36).

Greeley’s fiction fits squarely within this frame. His novels were packaged as mass-market bestsellers, often marketed with sensational cover art and provocative blurbs. The very fact that a Catholic priest’s theological imagination was mediated through popular genres like romance, mystery, and science fiction underscores Jameson’s point: even religious discourse becomes commodified under late capitalism. Yet, as Jameson admits, postmodern texts can also contain “critical negativity” within their complicity (1991: 49).

In Greeley’s case, commodification coexists with sacramental vision. The packaging of *The Cardinal Sins* as a scandalous clerical exposé lures readers into a story that, beneath its melodrama, meditates on grace, failure, and vocation. The *McGrail* mysteries’ playful Irish branding masks a deeper engagement with forgotten traumas of famine and revolution. Greeley’s work thus dramatizes what William Cavanaugh calls the “theopolitical imagination” of consumer culture, where liturgy and spectacle interpenetrate (1999: 1-5).

By situating Greeley within Jameson's cultural logic, we can see how his fiction negotiates the paradox of faith in a commodified world: theology smuggled into mass entertainment, sacrality refracted through market forms. Rather than disqualifying him as "merely popular", this very tension marks his fiction as quintessentially postmodern.

The Catholic Imagination as Theological Aesthetic

Finally, any theoretical framework for Greeley must account for his own contribution in *The Catholic Imagination* (2000). Here, he argues that Catholic culture is shaped by a "sacramental imagination" – the conviction that God is mediated through the material, the symbolic, and the aesthetic. "The Catholic imagination", Greeley writes, "sees created reality as a sacrament, a revelation of the presence of God" (2000: 1).

This vision resonates with postmodern aesthetics in striking ways. Like postmodernism, Catholic imagination resists rigid binaries – sacred/profane, natural/supernatural, high/low. Like Hutcheon's parody and Lyotard's paralogy, it thrives on plurality, symbol, and play. Yet unlike a secular postmodernism that often revels in fragmentation without transcendence, Greeley sacralizes the fragment: every shard of narrative, every symbol or vision, can refract divine presence.

The Catholic imagination thus becomes both theme and method in Greeley's fiction. His novels hybridize popular genres not simply to entertain but to enact sacramental vision within the late capitalist marketplace. In this sense, Greeley embodies what Richard Kearney calls a "hermeneutics of religion" – an openness to God through narrative, imagination, and otherness (2001: 4-5). By embedding sacramentality within postmodern strategies, Greeley discloses how theology and literature can mutually illuminate one another in a pluralist, commodified age.

Discussion

The Cardinal Sins (1981): Fragmented Priesthood and the Collapse of Metanarrative

Andrew Greeley's *The Cardinal Sins* opens with the intertwined lives of Kevin Brennan and Patrick Donahue, two seminary classmates whose paths diverge dramatically. Kevin is an intellectual and pastoral figure, striving toward integrity, while Patrick pursues ambition and political advancement within the Church. The novel dramatizes the disjunction between priestly vocation and clerical power, exposing the fissures beneath Catholicism's grand narrative of a holy, unified clergy. Through its character studies, narrative structure, and even its reception, the novel employs a postmodern aesthetic to deconstruct institutional myths and paradoxically affirm a sacramental vision grounded in human fallibility.

On a narrative level, the text resists teleological closure, rejecting a simple redemptive arc. Kevin's life is marked by unresolved tensions – between fidelity and temptation, intellectual rigor and emotional

vulnerability. Patrick's ascent to the rank of cardinal is consistently undercut by his moral corruption and profound personal emptiness. In Lyotard's terms, the modern "metanarrative" of priestly sanctity and institutional infallibility is destabilized, replaced by fragmented and localized stories of human fallibility. Greeley dramatizes what Lyotard calls "the heterogeneity of language games" (1984: 10): the discourses of theology, bureaucratic politics, and erotic desire collide within the lives of the characters, yet they are incommensurable and incapable of achieving a synthesized reconciliation.

Stylistically, Greeley deploys what Hutcheon terms parody as "repetition with critical difference". This is not mockery but a formal recycling that subverts the original's intention. The parody here is destabilizing: it acknowledges the lingering power of liturgical discourse while simultaneously critiquing its corruption by institutional politics and individual sin.

Jameson's notion of commodification provides a crucial lens for understanding the novel's cultural context and double function. *The Cardinal Sins* was aggressively marketed as a sensational scandal novel, its cover blurbs and promotional copy promising readers a revelatory exposé of "forbidden love" and "ecclesial intrigue". Yet, beneath this sensational packaging – a product of the late capitalist market – the narrative itself dwells on complex themes of grace, failure, and redemption in ways that exceed its commodified shell. The text thus simultaneously participates in the logic of the market and resists it, a duplicity that exemplifies Jameson's claim that postmodern cultural products can both express and implicitly critique the cultural logic of late capitalism.

Ultimately, David Tracy's concept of the "analogical imagination" clarifies Greeley's deeper theological project. For Tracy, this imagination seeks God "in, with, and under" the complexities and ambiguities of human experience (1981: 410). This is precisely Greeley's method. The novel does not end with a triumphant restoration of order but lingers in the fragments of compromised lives. In doing so, it discloses a sacramental possibility that divine grace is not reserved for the pure but is mediated precisely through failure and ambiguity. Kevin Brennan's loves, though fraught and imperfect, become fractured symbols of this grace. *The Cardinal Sins* ultimately uses the tools of postmodern critique – the dismantling of metanarratives, parodic repetition, and an acknowledgment of commodification – not to nihilistic ends, but to advance a robustly Catholic argument: that the sacred manifests itself most powerfully within the flawed and the human.

Thy Brother's Wife (1982): Erotic Desire, Sacramental Imagination, and Parody

Andrew Greeley's *Thy Brother's Wife* intensifies the critique of clerical culture begun in *The Cardinal Sins* by intertwining erotic desire and religious vocation in a scandalous yet theologically profound

narrative. The novel follows Father Sean Cronin, a man whose priestly vocation becomes entangled in a forbidden love affair with his brother's wife. The title itself, echoing the biblical prohibition in Leviticus 18:16, signals a narrative that deliberately stages transgression within a sacred frame, using the tension between divine law and human passion to explore the nature of grace.

From a postmodern perspective, Hutcheon's model of parody is unmistakable here. Greeley takes the traditionally sacrosanct trope of priestly celibacy – a cornerstone of Catholic narrative – and reworks it into a site of intense irony and ambivalence. In pivotal scenes, the sacred and the erotic are juxtaposed, such as when Sean reflects on his illicit attraction while reciting the Divine Office. This is not a simple rejection of tradition but a quintessential postmodern gesture: a repetition of Catholic forms infused with critical difference, forcing a re-examination of their meaning and cost.

Through a Lyotardian lens, the novel functions to undermine the “grand narrative” of clerical celibacy as an unambiguous and universally applicable sign of holiness. Lyotard's concept of the disintegration of metanarratives into localized “language games” is vividly staged in Sean's fractured consciousness. Celibacy ceases to be a sacred absolute and becomes one contested discourse among many – including those of scriptural law, canon law, human desire, and pastoral compassion – with no single discourse possessing totalizing authority in his crisis.

Yet, in a characteristically Greeleyan move, the novel refuses the nihilism this deconstruction might suggest. Instead, it embodies what David Tracy calls the “analogical imagination”, which seeks to find God “in, with, and under” the complexities and ambiguities of human experience (1981: 410). Sean's moral failure does not become a narrative of damnation but a paradoxically graced redefinition of vocation itself – not as a state of achieved perfection, but as a fractured openness to a divine presence that works through human weakness and desire. The erotic, in this view, is not the antithesis of the sacred but a potential locus for its disclosure.

Finally, the novel's own popular reception becomes part of its postmodern critique. As Jameson's work suggests, late capitalism commodifies everything, including the sacred. *Thy Brother's Wife* was a massive bestseller, marketed and consumed as a sensational “priest scandal” novel, its cover often placing it in the same commercial category as the steamy potboilers of Jackie Collins. Yet, Greeley can be seen to subvert this very mechanism of commodification. He uses the market's appetite for scandal as a vehicle for a serious sacramental imagination, turning a plot of illicit eros into an occasion to explore the most disruptive and forgiving forms of divine grace.

Thus, *Thy Brother's Wife* stands as a prime example of a postmodern Catholic aesthetic. It employs parody to critique tradition, uses narrative to destabilize metanarratives, and is itself commodified by the cultural marketplace. Yet, through it all, it remains stubbornly sacramental, insisting on the possibility of finding the trace of God even in the most forbidden and fractured forms of human love.

The Final Planet (1987): Science Fiction, Sacramentality, and Postmodern Genre Play

While Father Andrew M. Greeley is often remembered for his scandalous parish novels, his science fiction work *The Final Planet* reveals his postmodern theological hybridity at its most explicit. The novel narrates the journey of the pilgrim starship Iona, carrying the Holy Order of St. Brigid and St. Brendan on a quest for a new home. Their mission is governed by a strict ethical rule: they must receive an invitation to land. This premise sets the stage for an encounter with the alien civilization of Zylong, a world grappling with its own internal collapse, allowing Greeley to use the science fiction genre to explore profound theological questions of incarnation, grace, and redemption.

From Hutcheon's standpoint, this is a paradigmatic case of postmodern genre hybridity. The novel fuses classic science fiction tropes – a generation ship, first contact, a failing society – with deep theological speculation. As Hutcheon argues, postmodern texts often “use and abuse” genre conventions (1988: 3). Greeley uses the SF quest narrative for its propulsive energy but abuses or subverts it by making the goal not conquest but invited communion, and the resolution not technological but sacramental. He deploys the genre's framework only to destabilize it with theological reflection.

This subversion is most striking in the novel's depiction of alien liturgy. In a key scene, Zylongi rituals employing symbols of light and water powerfully evoke Christian sacramental imagery. Here, Greeley enacts his “Catholic imagination” directly: the alien ritual becomes a legitimate sign of grace, refracted through cultural otherness. This scene is a narrative performance of what Kearney terms a “hermeneutics of religion” – an openness to the divine ‘in, with, and under’ the encounter with otherness (2001: 4). For Greeley, God's revelation is not confined to a single tradition but can be disclosed through the sacred practices of another species.

This pluralizing impulse resonates with Lyotard's postmodern framework. The novel inherently resists the metanarrative of human exceptionalism and colonial conquest. Instead, Greeley champions what Lyotard would call paralogy, i.e. the creation of new, incommensurable language games that cannot be subsumed under a universal system. By suggesting that salvation may be disclosed through Zylongi ritual no less than through Christian liturgy, Greeley posits a new move in the language

game of theology, one that disrupts totalizing claims and embraces a plurality of narratives.

Furthermore, the novel exemplifies Jameson's assertion that science fiction is a privileged genre for "cognitive mapping", rendering the totalizing system of the present visible by imagining its logical extreme (1991). Greeley leverages the speculative register to stage a confrontation between two decaying rationalist systems: the worn-out utilitarianism of the pilgrim ship Iona and the critically dysfunctional, irrational rationalism of the Zylongi, who deny the existence of their own repressed kin, the Hordi. Both systems are stand-ins for a disenchanted modernity. Greeley thus uses SF's world-building power to map a systemic critique, theologizing the postmodern condition by imagining grace and redemption emerging not from human logic, but from the "absolute otherness" of the planet's own hidden spiritual reality.

Thus, *The Final Planet* demonstrates that Greeley's engagement with postmodern aesthetics extends beyond scandal and parody into the realm of speculative sacramentality. The novel is a profound thought experiment in which theology is refracted through the imaginative play of genre, arguing that in a pluralistic, postmodern universe, grace is ever-present, emerging from the most unexpected encounters and inviting a hermeneutics of open, hopeful response.

***The Nuala Anne McGrail Mysteries (1994–2005):
Historiographic Metafiction and Popular Catholicism***

Perhaps Greeley's most sustained literary project is the *Nuala Anne McGrail series*, beginning with *Irish Gold* (1994). These mysteries follow Nuala, a singer and visionary, and her husband Dermot, as they solve crimes by recovering forgotten fragments of Irish and Irish-American history.

Hutcheon's concept of historiographic metafiction provides the clearest lens. In *Irish Gold*, Nuala's psychic visions of the Irish Revolution interweave with Dermot's contemporary detective work in Dublin. History is simultaneously narrated and problematized: the text stages history as a set of competing narratives – official accounts versus personal and political secrets – mediated by vision, story, and memory. The series exemplifies Hutcheon's claim that postmodern fiction "acknowledges its own textuality even as it re-engages history" (1988: 125).

Lyotard's "little narratives" also find expression here. Instead of affirming nationalist or colonialist metanarratives, Greeley's mysteries disclose forgotten, localized stories – of rebels, ordinary citizens, and immigrants – whose fragments resist subsumption into any triumphalist account. The novels dramatize paralogy by multiplying historical discourses, none of which claims totalizing truth.

Jameson's cultural logic again contextualizes the series. The McGrail novels were marketed as cozy mysteries, their covers featuring

Celtic fonts and shamrock motifs. Yet within their commodified packaging, they function as theological-political interventions, recovering marginalized histories of trauma and faith. This tension embodies Jameson's dialectic: the novels are products of the market but carry a counter-discursive force within their very popularity.

Finally, the McGrail mysteries embody the Catholic imagination in popular form. Nuala's visions – ambiguous, fragmentary, and unverified – are nonetheless treated as sacramental signs, mediating grace through story. As Tracy insists, the analogical imagination finds God “through the classic, the symbol, the fragment” (1981: 109). Greeley's series sacralizes popular culture by embedding this theological quest within the accessible conventions of mass-market genre fiction.

Conclusion

This study has argued that Andrew Greeley's fiction exemplifies a distinct synthesis of Catholic theology and postmodern narrative form. Through close readings of *The Cardinal Sins*, *Thy Brother's Wife*, *The Final Planet*, and the *Nuala Anne McGrail series*, we have seen how Greeley consistently mobilizes postmodern strategies – parody, hybridity, metafiction, and narrative play – not to dismantle meaning altogether but to refract it through the sacramental imagination. His novels dramatize the incredulity toward metanarratives identified by Jean-François Lyotard, yet they also propose alternative ways of imagining transcendence through fragments, symbols, and stories.

The Cardinal Sins (1981) and *Thy Brother's Wife* (1982) exemplify the collapse of clerical metanarratives. Both novels dramatize ambition, desire, and fallibility within the priesthood, destabilizing the idealized narratives of ecclesial authority. Yet, even amid scandal and transgression, Greeley sustains the possibility of grace, suggesting that broken lives can still bear traces of the divine. This dynamic resonates with Lyotard's paralogy and David Tracy's pluralist theology: the destabilization of grand narratives does not entail nihilism but rather the opening of new, multiple ways of encountering meaning.

In *The Final Planet* (1987), Greeley deploys the tropes of science fiction to reimagine theology across cultural frontiers. The clash of Earthly Catholicism with alien religiosity enacts what Linda Hutcheon terms historiographic metafiction: a narrative that stages the encounter of competing traditions while questioning the authority of any single historical or doctrinal version. Here, Catholicism becomes one discourse among many, yet it is precisely through its vulnerability to otherness that it discloses sacramentality. The novel suggests that theology, like postmodern narrative, thrives not on closure but on dialogue and multiplicity.

The *McGrail series* (1994-2005) extends these concerns through its hybrid form, fusing detective fiction, romance, Irish history, and

mystical vision. Nuala Anne's prophetic flashes expose the constructedness of both historical knowledge and narrative itself, foregrounding the instability of truth-claims in ways reminiscent of Hutcheon's parody and Jameson's cultural logic. At the same time, the series insists that mystery, both human and divine, persists within these fragments. Greeley turns the detective genre – so often a quest for definitive answers – into a site for sacramental wonder, where partial knowledge and unresolved histories become vehicles for grace.

Taken together, these case studies demonstrate that Greeley is neither a naïve realist nor a purely cynical ironist. Instead, he inhabits what might be called a Catholic postmodernism: a mode of writing that embraces postmodern fragmentation, irony, and parody while refusing to relinquish the sacramental conviction that the divine shines through the contingent. His fiction exemplifies what Kearney calls a "hermeneutics of religion," i.e. an openness to God through narrative, imagination, and the play of otherness.

This dual commitment – to postmodern form and Catholic sacramentality – marks Greeley's singular contribution to contemporary literature. Where Jameson emphasizes the commodification of culture under late capitalism, Greeley demonstrates how even mass-market novels can carry theological weight. Where Lyotard highlights the collapse of grand narratives, Greeley dramatizes this collapse within the Church itself, only to disclose grace in the ruins. Where Hutcheon identifies parody and historiographic metafiction as central to postmodern poetics, Greeley appropriates these very techniques to tell stories that remain fundamentally theological.

To read Greeley as a Catholic postmodern novelist is, therefore, to recognize that theology and postmodernism are not adversaries but potential collaborators. His novels reveal how the Catholic imagination, far from being trapped in premodern dogma, can engage the pluralist, ironic, and hybrid aesthetics of our time. In Greeley's hands, postmodernism becomes not merely a symptom of cultural decline but a fertile medium for reimagining the sacred in a fragmented world.

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