







The eight novels of Graham Greene offer the reader a penetrating and provocative analysis of certain themes particularly significant for the present age. Still their significance does not stop there. The recurring themes of Greene's novels are not only contemporary but span the questions and problems inherent in human existence.

The Man Within, It's a Battlefield, and England Made Me deal, to a large extent, with the question of identity. Most of Greene's characters are utterly introspective. In their search for the nature and meaning of the self, they achieve the painful but necessary goal of self knowledge.

The publication of Brighton Rock marks a broadening and deepening of Greene's talent. Relentless self-analysis is still present but, more and more, Greene's characters are viewed sub specie aeternitatis. This does not mean that the natural man is overlooked. The flesh with all its needs and pains is glaringly present in all of Greene's work. For Greene, however, human acts have both a temporal and an eternal value.

The Power and the Glory, The Heart of the Matter, and The End of the Affair mark Greene's most creative period. These three novels offer variations on the theme of love. Love as manifested in religion, marriage, adultery, and parenthood is skilfully examined. Love is a redeeming force in Greene's novels but it offers no universal solution to unravelling the knot of life. Although love has God as its source, it may become contaminated in the slush of the world and the flesh.

In The Quiet American Greene makes explicit ideas which were previously implied in his novels. The theme of personal involvement in and personal responsibility for the human condition forms a backdrop for much of his writing. In The Quiet American the theme is explicitly examined. Perhaps for this reason the novel is less convincing than its immediate predecessors.

Considered as a whole Greene's work is an examination of the relationship between the two realities of God and man. Greene is an observer of life. His observations constitute a sensitive testimony to the worth of human effort.



**The Novels of Graham Greene: a study of the  
essential I**

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## PREFACE



Graham Greene has divided his fictional narratives into "novels" and "entertainments". Although, broadly speaking, the stories in both categories are novels, the distinction does serve a useful purpose. By the designation "novel" Greene refers to his more serious artistic efforts. The "entertainments", although certainly not devoid of intrinsic merit, are not primarily works of art. Greene has employed a valid distinction by differentiating art from entertainment. This does not mean that art cannot or should not entertain. But it does emphasize that entertainment, in itself, is not necessarily art.

In this study of Greene's novels I have restricted my enquiry to those eight works which the author himself designates as novels. They are: The Man Within, It's a Battlefield, England Made Me, Brighton Rock, The Power and the Glory, The Heart of the Matter, The End of the Affair, and The Quiet American. I have not attempted to include an analysis of his poetry, short stories, two withdrawn novels, critical writings, plays, travel books, children's stories, essays, or entertainments. When I have referred to any of these writings it has been with the purpose of elucidating a point relevant to the novels. A study of this kind cannot attempt to cover completely such a wide and divergent body of writing. Consequently I have limited myself to what I consider his finest artistic accomplishment.

In dealing with a body of writing covering more than a quarter of a century I have, on the whole, preferred a chronological approach. This has been modified in some chapters to explain the development of a recurrent theme or to explain a point which seemed better treated in this fashion.

There is one preliminary consideration to be made. In four of Greene's novels, Brighton Rock, The Power and the Glory, The Heart of the Matter, and The End of the Affair, a Roman Catholic frame of reference is consistently used. This has unfortunately tempted some critics to apply non-literary standards in their judgement of Greene.

Two reactions are specific faults of certain Catholic critics: one party praises him because of his supposed adherence to and revitalization of Catholic dogma; the other condemns him because of his supposed aberration. Another extreme position claims that Greene is a didactic propagandist or, at best, an author of very limited appeal because his frame of reference is so largely defined by a particular religion or cult. From a literary point of view these judgements are irrelevant.

The whole question is clearly resolved by some remarks of W. Somerset Maugham. In his introduction to Great Novelists and their Novels he writes:

. . . I wish to say something about readers of fiction. The novelist has the right to demand something of them. He has the right to demand that they should possess the small amount of application that is needed to read a book of three or four hundred pages. He has the right to demand that they should have sufficient imagination to be able to envisage the scenes in which the author seeks to interest them and to fill out in their own minds the portraits he has drawn. And finally the novelist has the right to demand from his readers some power of sympathy,



for without it they cannot enter into the loves and sorrows, tribulations, dangers, adventures of the persons of the novel.<sup>1</sup>

I wish to make two inferences: these words, addressed to the reader, are even more pertinent for the critic; the "power of sympathy" to which Maugham refers is independent of intellectual acceptance or rejection, moral approval or disapproval. The "power of sympathy" is the element lacking in both the praise and blame of what may be broadly termed Greene's hyper-sensitive Catholic commentators and in the condemnation of his anti-Catholic detractors.

Numerous reasons could be cited to show why Graham Greene's novels deserve a serious reading and a careful analysis. Among them the most important is, I believe, his artistic revitalization of two beliefs which have, either in our acceptance or rejection of them, substantially influenced our life and thought. Greene's most impressive literary portraits are those of the demi-monde or underworld we like to ignore. Still in his depiction of the coward, the adulterer, the alcoholic, the murderer, and the other manqués of his dramatic personae, we recognize a reiteration of the traditional theme of our western cultural legacy: the indestructible and intrinsic dignity of the human person. Modifying and informing this belief is Greene's artistic embodiment of the primary premise of our Christian heritage: man, independent of his personal good or evil, belief or denial, hope or despair, can never destroy the intrinsic dignity of the human person or nullify the ensuing eternal meaning of every human act because man is, in some inexplicable way, the image and likeness of God.

1. "Somerset Maugham, Great Novelists and Their Novels, p. 5.



THE MAN WITHIN

The first three published novels of Graham Greene are The Man Within, 1929, The Name of Action, 1930, and Rumour at Nightfall, 1931. The author has prohibited republication of the 1930-1931 novels but has permitted it in the case of The Man Within. This alone indicates that it has an importance not shared by the others. When it was reprinted in 1952 for the Heinemann Uniform Edition, the author added an interesting prefatory note:

The Man Within was the first novel of mine to find a publisher. I had already written two novels, both of which I am thankful to Heinemann's for rejecting. I began this novel in 1926, when I was not quite twenty-two, and it was published with inexplicable success in 1929, so it has now reached the age of its author. The other day I tried to revise it for this edition, but when I had finished my sad and hopeless task, the story remained just as embarrassingly romantic, the style as derivative, and I had eliminated perhaps the only quality it possessed--its youth. So in reprinting not a comma has been altered intentionally. Why reprint then? I can offer no real excuse, but perhaps an author may be allowed one sentimental gesture towards his own past, the period of ambition and hope.<sup>1</sup>

It's style and historical setting do date the novel and relegate it to the author's past. In realizing this Greene shows himself to be an astute self-critic. Still its fundamental and unifying theme is basically that of his later novels. The fact that the action of The Man Within is set in the eighteenth century does not make of it an historical novel. Only the externalia are eighteenth century; the meaningful terms of reference are modern. Andrews's characterization is

really an anachronism: a twentieth century man in an eighteenth century setting. Like his creator he cannot escape the pressure of his age. Andrews hopes, fears, believes, and doubts as a contemporary.

The phenomenon of pursuit is constant in Greene's work and it is the central theme of his first published novel. Joseph Andrews, the protagonist, is a hunted man, hunted not only by the law and by the former comrades he has betrayed, but, on a more significant level, by an "inner critic". The physical pursuit, in which Andrews is hunted by Carlyon, symbolizes the psychological pursuit of Andrews by Andrews, (and perhaps also, at least embryonically, the pursuit of the man's soul by God).

"Andrews's character," the reader learns, "was built of superficial dreams, sentimentality, cowardice, and yet he was constantly made aware beneath all these of an uncomfortable questioning critic."<sup>2</sup> The conflict of The Man Within with which I am mainly concerned is the interior conflict of Andrews, the clash between the actual and the potential self. The actual self is a coward. Betrayal of his fellow smugglers is the only articulate form of protest he is capable of devising. Having committed the deed, he is in fear of his life. He is actually terrified of meeting Carlyon, his former friend and idol. The potential self, known to the actual one, cherishes beauty, truth, and courage. There is, I believe, a sort of immature romantic idealization about the potential self which Greene himself later realized. This may be responsible for the unconvincing, almost brutal cynicism of It's a Battlefield which appeared five years later. Ever since the publication of The Man Within an excess of cynicism, not idealism, has been Greene's temptation. The actual and potential self are not really the psychological constituents of a schizoid

personality, but a simplified way of designating the literary character as he is and as he aspires to be. Andrews himself realizes that the mere aspiration to be better is, if not a promise of its fulfilment, at least an indication that it is possible:

Suppose that after all a man, perhaps when a child, at any rate at some forgotten time, chose his dreams whether they were to be good or evil. Then, even though he were untrue to them, some credit was owing simply to the baseless dreaming. They were potentialities, aspects, and no man could tell whether suddenly and without warning they might not take control and turn the coward for one instant into the hero."

It is with these somewhat vaguely termed "potentialities" and "aspects" that the author is mainly concerned. Greene the novelist, dealing with the intangibles of human nature, has realized a truth frequently obscured by the social scientists: beneath the superstructure of religious affiliations, social status, wealth, background, and the other identifying tags of the contemporary caste system, there lies, as a base, the human personality. Although this base may be obscured and almost stifled by the din of the crowd, it cannot be extinguished. It maintains its "potentialities" and "aspects", and it is the realization and development of these which is the proper function of man.

The legacies of heredity and environment weight heavily on Andrews. The child of a brutal alcoholic father, tortured by the memory of an unhappy school life, thrown at an early age among a gang of smugglers with whom he has nothing in common, his life is a story of the growth of the personality which no adverse combination of hereditary and environmental circumstances can totally stultify. A careful reading of even a few of his novels will show how unconvincing is the charge that Greene's viewpoint



is deterministic. The ambition and hope which, according to the author, characterize The Man Within, do, in later years, undergo the catharsis of artistic and personal maturity, even a degree of disillusionment, but they are still present.

Like so many of Greene's characters Andrews is a solitary individual. School and family life plus his acute sensitivity to impressions and his highly developed power of perception tend to isolate him further from the madding crowd. Like every mental recluse he craves human sympathy. Jacques Madaule's voyage into Greene's world has been one of discovery. The French critic writes: "La pire des choses, c'est d'être seul. Tous ceux des héros de Greene qui se sauvent réussissent à n'être pas seuls. Le plus souvent, c'est une femme qui rompt cette solitude."<sup>4</sup> This is precisely the function of Elizabeth. While trying to evade his pursuers, Andrews finds her cottage. He imagines he will find within "a white-haired old mother". Elizabeth, however, is young and beautiful. Still, she does perform one vital function of the mother, protection. Within the framework of the novel Elizabeth becomes the sine qua non of Andrews's integration. She is more of an allegorical personification than a convincing literary character. As one critic has commented: "Elizabeth a toute l'irréalité d'un rêve. Elle est à peine féminine."<sup>5</sup> Andrews also recognizes, in a different way, the unreality of Elizabeth:

But you seem so wise--understanding. As if you knew as much as any woman who had ever been born and were yet not bitter about it.<sup>6</sup>

On another occasion he refers to her as a "Saint". Elizabeth is a romanticized and non-Biblical Marian figure; she, too, is full of grace. Not until Brighton Rock was Greene able to portray a convincing female

character, that is, convincing as a human being. Elizabeth is convincing as an allegorical representation of the perfect woman. She is the instrumental cause of Andrews's salvation.

Early in the novel Andrews recognizes his own cowardice and betrayal. It is, in fact, his intellectual honesty which makes possible his redemption, the integration of the actual and potential self. His intellectual honesty is, however, tinged with a degree of self-pity:

I know I am a coward and altogether despicable, he said to himself with heavy self-deprecation, trying without much hope to underbid his real character, I know I haven't an ounce of courage, that if Carlyon appeared now I'd go down on my knees to him, but all I want is a little sympathy.

Self-realization for Andrews demands the integration of the actual and the potential self: the integration of the coward and "that other hard, critical self". Elizabeth in her role as protectress (and also redemptress) persuades Andrews to go to Lewes in order to testify against the former associates whom he has betrayed. She convinces him that he will thus conquer his cowardice because he will make public his act of betrayal. While at Lewes Andrews meets Lucy, the concubine of Sir Edward Parkins, the crown prosecutor. Lucy promises to reward him with the only gift in her possession if he testifies against the smugglers and so helps her paramour win his case. Andrews agrees to give the evidence but persuades himself that he does so because of his love for Elizabeth and not his physical desire for Lucy. On the following night, however, he accepts her reward. This is the first example of Greene's habitual distinction between love and lust, a quasi-Thomistic differentiation embodied in what is, principally, a non-Thomistic outlook. Later the same



day when he returns to Elizabeth he confesses:

I do not love her. Never will I love anyone but you. I swear to that. If a man loves one, he cannot help lusting after others. But it was love not lust, I promise, that strengthened me this morning.<sup>6</sup>

The Andrews-Lucy relationship is not primarily physical or emotional.

Rather, it displays, through an immature use of the sexual symbolism, the conflict between responsibility and licence (as distinct from liberty):

Here was someone who would give him more than kind words and yet exact no sense of responsibility. All his reason commanded him to go to her, only his heart, and that hard abstract critic for once allied to his heart, opposed.<sup>7</sup>

As early as The Man Within Greene's customary stress of the heart is evident. Because his emphasis of the heart is an artistic viewpoint, it should not be equated with a theological or philosophical system. The question of influences, conscious or unconscious, is not within the scope of this enquiry. I wish to suggest, however, if only in passing, that Greene's emphasis on the heart is provokingly reminiscent of the outlook of both Duns Scotus and Pascal. This is admittedly a generalization. But within the limited field in which generalizations are valid, I would say that as a novelist Greene's outlook is that of a Scotist and not that of a Thomist.

By his affair with Lucy Andrews betrays the inner critic, the aspired-to, potential self. This self-betrayal is not caused by a concession to physical desire but by Andrews's disregard of the dictates of responsibility. Just as Elizabeth is convincing only when considered as an allegorization of the perfect woman, so Lucy's credibility depends on understanding her part in the novel as a personification of temptation.

Opposing the plan of salvation devised by the Marian figure, Elizabeth, Lucy's role is that of an Eve.

Andrews's surrender of responsibility is only temporary. The "inner critic" persuades him to return to Elizabeth to warn her that the smugglers, acquitted at the trial, intend to injure her for harbouring the informer. The trial scene itself, in which a clever defense attorney ruthlessly manipulates an all too willingly deceived jury, is one of the many instances in Greene's fiction in which official justice is shown to be the tool of the unprincipled.

Andrews returns to Elizabeth and confesses both his cowardice, that is his indecision whether to return or not, and his faithlessness towards her. She dismisses the self-accusation of cowardice as an unfounded obsession by indicating that he left his knife behind for her protection, the knife which was his sole means of defence. Sean O'Faolain has noted: "In Greene as in much of modern fiction the hero has given place to the martyr."<sup>10</sup> This observation is true of all of Greene's novels but its relevance is given an interesting twist in The Man Within. This first novel is not so much the story of a martyr ready-made as it is an account of the education of a potential martyr.

When Andrews confesses his betrayal of Elizabeth because of the Lucy episode, Elizabeth answers: "I don't understand how that's a betrayal of me. Of yourself perhaps. . . ." This response does not suggest the credibility of a human literary character. Yet it does embody the wisdom of allegorized female perfection and it is exactly this that Elizabeth is intended to represent.

Towards the close of the novel both Andrews and Elizabeth are awaiting the arrival of Carlyon's smugglers. Elizabeth, aware that the

criminals are close by, devises a final test of Andrews's character in order to prove to him rather than to herself that the potential self has become the actual one. Andrews is sent to the well for a bucket of water and on his return learns that the smugglers have already entered. His courage fails him and he rationalizes that it would be preferable to seek help rather than to endeavour a rescue single-handedly. He soon realizes that this prudence is actually self-deceit. He returns to the cottage and finds Carlyon there with Elizabeth's corpse. Andrews learns from the smugglers's leader that the traffickers, without Carlyon's knowledge, frightened the girl beyond her wits. She took her own life with the knife left behind by Andrews. Her former beauty is heartlessly contrasted with the "idiotic expression" of the corpse. Elizabeth's innocence renders her acceptable as a scapegoat. She pleads Andrews's redemption by the offertory of self and expiates his sins by becoming a sacrificial victim. In Greene's world sacrifice and atonement are necessary steps not so much to sanctity as to sanity.

Throughout the novel Andrews eulogizes Carlyon for his courage, faithfulness, and single-mindedness. He is a romantic figure in the sense that the Wordsworthian idiot is romantic; he is a God-like and heroic ape. It is Andrews, however, who determines the resolution. Carlyon, although admired throughout the novel by the vacillating protagonist, is finally powerless in his virtue. Andrews realizes that the nemesis which has stalked his life has been the memory or influence of his brutal father. By an act of supreme generosity he could destroy forever his personal demon. He orders Carlyon to leave so that he himself will be blamed for Elizabeth's death. He finally achieves the integration for which he longed:



Andrews did not look back upon the cottage. Regret had gone, even remembrance of the graceless body abandoned there. To his own surprise he felt happy and at peace, for his father was slain and yet a self remained, a self which knew neither lust, blasphemy nor cowardice, but only peace and curiosity for the dark, which deepened around him.<sup>11</sup>

Fundamentally Joseph Andrews represents the Greene protagonist in skeleton form. As Greene gains experience of the world and of his art, the development changes but the basic structure remains almost invariably constant. Pinkie, Scobie, Bendrix, all the Greene heroes, display interesting, in some ways even radical transformations. Still their brotherhood, their formation in the same artistic womb, is strikingly evident. Andrews, like the others, is an isolated man in pain. His crown of thorns is the world; his cross is the weight of his own soul. Because the cross cannot be destroyed, it cannot really be denied. Andrews learns to live with it, or what is the same thing, to live with himself.

In his prefatory note to the Uniform Edition Greene described The Man Within as belonging to the period of "ambition and hope". The Man Within, however, is more than a novel of hope; it is a novel of certainty. In his first published novel Greene avoided the use of a deus ex machina or miracle. He had not then introduced the dimension of eternity into his fiction, although its presence is always implied. The action of The Man Within, while not denying its spiritual import, is entirely on the natural level. Andrews achieves the integration of actual and potential self. The potential or aspired-to self becomes the actual one, and he can equate the two by saying: "I am that critic." The conclusion of The Man Within indicates a certainty (not a hope) never since equalled in a novel by Graham Greene.

1. The Man Within, Author's note.
2. ibid., p. 39.
3. ibid., p. 187.
4. Jacques Madaule, Graham Greene, p. 230.
5. Victor de Pange, Graham Greene, p. 80.
6. The Man Within, p. 88.
7. ibid., p. 17.
8. ibid., p. 173.
9. ibid., p. 178.
10. Sean O'Faolain, The Vanishing Hero, p. 194.
11. The Man Within, p. 245.

IT'S A BATTLEFIELD

It's a Battlefield was published in 1934 and marks at least one significant change in Greene's development as a novelist. The Man Within, and the two suppressed novels which followed it, The Name of Action and Rumour at Nightfall, are, as far as plot is concerned, historical adventures. They are set in the past of an obsolete romanticism. The changing of the milieu of his novels from the past to the present, and the substitution of realism for romanticism, are among Greene's most important steps in his self-education as a novelist. This change from past to present and from romantic to realistic portrayal was first achieved in Stamboul Train, an entertainment published in 1932. The first novel in which the transformation appears is in the work of 1934.

Actually, It's a Battlefield is a disappointing novel. As Francis Wyndham has observed: "The pity of it is that in this book Greene has been defeated by his own ends: like Stamboul Train it is too diffuse; too many characters spoil the total impact."<sup>1</sup> The plot itself, however, is remarkably simple. Jim Drover attends a Communist meeting with his wife. Violence breaks out before the group disbands. He believes that a policeman is about to strike his wife and, trying blindly to protect her, kills the constable with a knife. Tried and found guilty of murder, he is sentenced to be hanged. For motives of politics and self-interest the Home Secretary wants to reprieve him and has the Assistant Commissioner of Police appointed to ascertain what effect this would have on the



national situation. The novel deals with the reaction of various people to Jim Drover's sentence, chiefly the reaction of Jim's brother, Conrad, of the Assistant Commissioner, the prisoner's wife, Milly, and her sister, Kay.

Several other characters are introduced, more for the purpose of their individual characterization, one feels, than for their intrinsic part in the novel. The consequent irrelevance of many of its parts to the whole seriously impedes the unity of the work. The individual characterizations, however, are in themselves skilful and provoking. Greene possesses to a high degree the power of analysing mind, motive, and emotion. He uses this ability as an artist and not as a psychoanalyst. Moreover, It's a Battlefield is, in many ways, a seed bed for several of its author's later, more fully depicted characters. Ida Arnold, Rose, Scobie, and Alden Pyle exist there in embryonic form.

Of Greene's art a French commentator has remarked: "Il se plaît à décrire les bas-fonds populaires. Les isolés, les inadaptés, les miséreux, tous ceux qui souffrent de notre civilisation trop évoluée sont ses êtres d'élection."<sup>2</sup> Joseph Conrad, the condemned man's brother and the protagonist of the novel, belongs pre-eminently to this group. Conrad is Greene's first attempt to portray an intellectual and the title character of The Quiet American is the second. In neither case was he entirely successful. Conrad is frustrated, ineffective, and indecisive, yet the acuteness of his sympathy with others makes of him a man engagé. When he sleeps with his brother's wife, he does so out of pity, not sexual attraction:

If he had felt the slightest lust, he would have fled; it was the unexcitement in his love, the element of pity, that kept him there. It seemed unbearable to him that she should suffer.<sup>3</sup>



Conrad was always conscious of his difference from others. While at school his precocity made him an object of ridicule. Now, at his job, (chief clerk with an insurance firm), and in his limited social intercourse, his superior intelligence still haunts him. Praise of his ability is for him not a compliment but a painful reminder of his nemesis. The depreciation of his own intelligence becomes a mania: "If ever I have a child, he thought, I shall pray that he will be born stupid." Associated with this attitude is the insidious type of hero-worship evident in Conrad's adulation of Jim: the ineffective intellectual idealizes the muscular force of his almost illiterate brother. The genuflection of brains in the presence of muscles is the primary ritual in the cult of the he-man.

Conrad's feeling of uselessness, frustration, and guilt, accentuated by his inability to save his brother, gives rise to a hatred. Hatred has an interesting significance in Greene's fictional characterizations. According to one critic: "La haine se présente donc chez Greene comme la résultante des toutes les forces qui agissent sur l'homme pour le dégrader."<sup>4</sup> Moreover, in Greene's novels, hatred becomes a fundamental and necessary result of unrestrained and unbearable pressure, not only the pressure exerted by the crowd on the individual's sensitivity, but also the pressure exerted by the hyper-critical individual on his isolated self. Conrad hates both himself and the person whom he regards as the visible symbol of the injustice suffered by his brother. While totally ignorant of its use he procures a revolver in order to kill the Assistant Commissioner. Thus he will avenge his brother and also exert his own existence and power of will.

The discharge of the revolver becomes his constant obsession and his consequent activity is an ironic comedy of errors. When he reflects that only love could heal his torment, he is referring to human sympathy and understanding which could establish his kinship with humanity and obliterate his habitual feeling of being different. Pity not lust drove him to his sister-in-law's bed. Sympathy not sex is his great need:

And yet there remained, even below the hatred, the belief that if he had been able to love naturally and without shame, if he had been loved with tenderness and permanence, there would have been no need of the pistol in the pocket, the aimless walking and the guilt.<sup>5</sup>

His complete divorce from ordinary communication with mankind prompts him to assert his existence by any and all means. At one point he is tempted to stop a passing pedestrian and tell him: "I am alive like you." The irony of his "useless hatred" is ruthlessly exposed near the close of the novel. Standing in the street opposite the Assistant Commissioner, waiting for the courage to squeeze the trigger and wondering where he should aim, Conrad is hit by a car, fires blindly, misses, and dies in hospital. It is later revealed that the man who had given him the gun had loaded it with blank cartridges. Both his death and his life were useless.

Greene's writing, taken as a whole, is, I believe, the most complete fictional examination of the contemporary police mind. One of Greene's earliest policemen is the anonymous Assistant Commissioner of It's a Battlefield. His lack of confidence is immediately suggested by the incoherence of his speech: "As usual before a sentence was finished he became lost in the difficulties of expression." In actual life a person's hobby is an important criterion of self-revelation. This is also true of the

imagined personality of a literary character. The Assistant Commissioner's interest in carpets has revealing limitations:

The Assistant Commissioner paused for a moment before a shop window in Pall Mall filled with carpets. One could not live long in the east without learning something about them. The Assistant Commissioner was interested, but he had no idea whether the colouring was beautiful or coarse, whether the pattern pleased or repelled; he was interested because he could apply certain formulas to determine whether the carpet had been made in the east.<sup>6</sup>

His interest in carpets has nothing to do with their beauty, colouring, or ability to please, but with the mundane consideration of where they are made, a fact which can be determined by "certain formulas". Only the external and extrinsic, things directly susceptible to sense knowledge, interest him. In a complex world his carpets remain simple. The Assistant Commissioner shuns considerations which demand moral rather than factual judgement. Therefore he is content with questions of a "who did it" nature, but is unhappy about the necessity of reporting on the effect of a reprieve. Ignorant of the self-interest which motivates the Home Secretary, he believes his report will influence the decision to hang or reprieve the prisoner. When ordered to furnish this report, his reaction is typical:

"I don't understand," the Assistant Commissioner began. It was one of his favourite expressions; extraordinary the number of occasions on which he could apply it: on first nights; when discussing the latest novel; in a picture gallery; when faced with an example of corruption.<sup>7</sup>

The Assistant Commissioner is a man without a vocation; his activity is simply a job, that of apprehending criminals: "His work was simply to preserve the existing order." Fingerprints, ballistics, signed statements, are his world, not decisions of good and evil, decisions involving life and death: "I've got nothing to do with justice, he thought, my job is



simply to get the right man." The Assistant Commissioner is able to effect a complete severance between related fields. He is essentially a man who minds his own business: "He considered morality no more his business than politics." His job is both his life and his escape from life. He is a man without a cause, without any dedication, passion, or raison d'être, beyond his job:

In the case of Drover he was upholding a system in which he had no interest because he was paid to uphold it . . . At other times the highest motive he could offer was that of doing his job . . . It was only when he was tired or depressed or felt his age that he dreamed of an organization he could serve for higher reasons than pay . . . Then he told himself with bitterness that he was too old to live so long.<sup>8</sup>

Like the other Greene characters who prefer the noncommitment of fact to the involvement of truth, the Assistant Commissioner recognizes face value as the only one. Ida Arnold in her devotion to fair play and Alden Pyle in his concern to realize the Ivy League ideal are arch conformists; so is the police officer of It's a Battlefield:

One had to choose certain superstitions by which to live . . . The Assistant Commissioner bought poppies, took the outside of the pavement, was silent for two minutes a year, touched wood, drank soup from the side of the spoon, raised his hat to the Cenotaph.<sup>9</sup>

Like Greene's later creations, Ida Arnold and Alden Pyle, he substitutes manners and habits for morality.

The characterization of It's a Battlefield emphasizes one of the themes which later becomes a hallmark of Greene's fiction:

But the Assistant Commissioner, like Pilate, washed his hands; justice is not my business; politics are not my business. God help the man responsible for the way that life is organised; I am only a paid servant, doing what I am told; I am no more responsible than a clerk is responsible for the methods of the business he serves.<sup>10</sup>

The Assistant Commissioner does not wish to be responsible. He performs the work for which he is paid but lacks the moral and intellectual courage to make decisions which involve weighty consequences. He is responsible only in the limited sense of rendering an honest day's work for an honest day's pay. As his job is his life and escape from it, so it is his responsibility and escape from it. As shall be seen when considering The Heart of the Matter, the major difference between the two police officers is that Scobie is irrevocably committed while the Assistant Commissioner lacks the perception, courage, and sympathy necessary for total commitment. The latent responsiveness of his humanity is numbed by his self-imposed, restrictive sense of obligation. His job, or what he interprets it to be, anaesthetizes his humanity. Thus, he disavows any active role in the "giant agony of the world".

The exaggerated contrast with which Greene portrayed the two feminine characters in The Man Within is present also in It's a Battlefield. The difference between Milly, Jim Drover's wife, and Kay, her sister, demonstrates the author's habit of segregating his women characters into two opposed types. Kay, an extrovert and voluptuary, partakes of the crowd; Milly, a suffering introvert, is an isolated individual. One of the unfortunate aspects of Greene's novels, especially present in his early work, is this tendency to divide his female characters into the quasi-biblical allegorical types of Eve and Mary. In the early novels the distinction is too pat. Not until Brighton Rock was Greene able to delineate his female characters in a convincing manner.

Of the various extraneous characters who appear in It's a Battlefield, the most interesting is Conder who is "dissatisfied with his



pay, his profession and life." He works as a journalist and, the reader learns: "he saw his only hope of a posthumous immortality in a picturesque lie which might catch a historian's notice as it lay buried in an old file."

Some critics have compared Greene's novels to those of Kafka. This comparison is valid for Greene's early work only. Later he introduces a dimension and point of view quite alien to Kafka. The one salient point on which both authors do stand comparison is in their mutual interest in the question of identity. Conrad is Greene's most Kafka-like figure. Completely dissatisfied with his mode of existence he invents several personalities. To satisfy his need of belonging he devises a wife, a child with whooping cough, and a new house where he is bothered by a leaky faucet. His sense of adventure is appeased by informing others that he is a confidant of Scotland Yard. He compensates for his social isolation by attending Communist meetings. Conder begins to imagine himself a revolutionary. At times he finds it difficult to know who or what he exactly is:

It even occurred to him quite plainly for a moment that he had been too inventive; he had to draw the line immediately between what was real . . . and what was unreal. . . .<sup>11</sup>

A number of the scenes in It's a Battlefield are set in the milieu of English communism of the 1930's. There are meetings, speeches, petitions, etc., to secure Jim Drover's freedom. The leaders, however, are more interested in his propaganda value as a martyr for communism. The secondary characters introduced in these and similar scenes, Surrogate, Jules, Mrs. Barry, et al., are symptomatic of the moral, philosophical, and political chaos of a rootless age which Greene did not quite succeed in describing. With the Manifesto as their law, the platform their pulpit,

the proletariat their tabernacle, they find a cause. Unwilling to better themselves, they chant the hollow chorus of a better world.

The reading of It's a Battlefield does not constitute an integrated aesthetic experience. To be sure, there are certain passages, characterizations, and uses of imagery which are satisfying, but the novel as a whole is not. The situations are contrived and the characters have no chance to be or do anything worth while. The cards are stacked against everybody. It is as if, in this one novel, Greene were endeavouring to show that this is the worst of all possible worlds. This is not to say that it is a novel of despair. Despair and hope share one thing in common: they are both dynamic reactions. It's a Battlefield is static.

Futility is the result of every endeavour. The Assistant Commissioner would like to see Conrad freed, but honesty dictates that he report the complete disinterest of the population. He thinks his report will be responsible for Conrad's life or death, but is informed that the decision was made, in favour of a reprieve, before his report was submitted. Then the prison chaplain resigns not because Conrad is to die, but because he will live. Conrad tries to commit suicide (unsuccessfully) when told of his reprieve because, loving his wife and knowing he is loved by her, he believes that no woman can be faithful during eighteen years while seeing her husband once a month. Conrad's brother dies in hospital, having been run over while trying to shoot the Assistant Commissioner (and he missed) with blank cartridges. After all this the Assistant Commissioner returns with relish to his business, the detection of murder and rape. It's a Battlefield is Greene's voyage au bout de la nuit. It is his only novel in which there is no light. And without light there can be little truth.

1. Francis Wyndham, Graham Greene, p. 11.
2. Victor de Pange, Graham Greene, p. 32.
3. It's a Battlefield, p. 143.
4. Victor de Pange, Graham Greene, p. 43.
5. It's a Battlefield, p. 201.
6. ibid., p. 2.
7. ibid., p. 9.
8. ibid., pp. 147-148.
9. ibid., pp. 195-196.
10. ibid., pp. 190-191.
11. ibid., p. 156.

ENGLAND MADE ME



England Made Me first appeared in 1935 and is the last novel of Greene's early period. It shows definite improvement over It's a Battlefield. Still, when related to the author's later work, its faults are apparent. I do not share the opinion, expressed by some critics, that England Made Me is one of Greene's best novels. Our interest in the work is based largely on our interest in Greene's later novels. As the last novel of his formative period, it furnishes an interesting record of the author's development. Moreover, it shows how some of Greene's favourite artistic themes become crystallized and assume the more substantial form in which they were later expressed.

England Made Me is the story of Anthony Farrant. Anthony's characterization plays an integral part in Greene's genealogy of manqués. In Greene's world "the child is father of the man" is taken to its furthest degree: somewhere in the barely perceptible life of the foetus destiny is rooted. Man may acquiesce, rebel, or impose a purpose on the determined pattern. This is the challenge of Anthony and of all Greene's protagonists.

One of Farrant's striking characteristics is that, although in his thirties, he still looks and thinks like a schoolboy. His sister, Kate, is his only competent analyst:

His face, she thought, is astonishingly young for thirty-three; it is a little worn, but only as if by a wintry day, it is no more mature than when he was a schoolboy.<sup>1</sup>

His intellectual immaturity is suggested by what Kate terms his "absurd"

and his "depraved" innocence.

Anthony is a transplanted Englishman who cannot take root in foreign soil. Although he arrives in Stockholm after a ten-year absence from England, he is immediately homesick: "He had always worked in places where others had established the English corner." Anthony's xenophobia is as much a caricature of English insularity as the simplicity of Alden Pyle and his compatriots is of American bonhomie. Farrant is only happy in the imported "English corner" of "the club"--from which he is habitually expelled. He remarks that "foreigners aren't sportsmen." His initial antipathy for Krogh is softened by his condescending realization that the industrialist "was only a poor bloody foreigner after all." Not only is Anthony isolated in a foreign country, but the ties with his homeland are stretched to the limit of endurance. While not a product of a public school, he wears a Harrow tie, as if to create a bond, no matter how fragile, with some visible institution. The creation of an illusory bond contributes at least some sense of belonging. His affair with Loo, a young English girl touring Sweden with her parents, is yet another attempt to establish a link with someone or something. Even his morals fail him. When Kate has a drink, his reaction is typical: "He was disappointed, he didn't believe in girls drinking, he was full of the conventions of a generation older than himself." He is isolated both in place and in time.

Anthony Farrant does not demand much of life. He does not expect success, happiness, or approval. (He predates the cult of the grey flannel suburbanite.) Self-preservation, the continuation of life, of being in its most unequivocal sense, is all he anticipates:

This was victory: somehow to have existed; happiness was an incidental enjoyment: the unexpected glass or the unexpected girl.<sup>2</sup>

Anthony accepts the fate attached to his being during the dark moments of pre-natal life. He does not rebel, nor does he try to create a meaning for his existence by the realization of a purpose. He just is. The uniqueness of his position (an employee of his sister's lover) lends his character a false exhilaration:

He was frightened, he was breezy, he was bitterly happy because after all this was the end, one couldn't go lower by any club standard than to ask for work from your sister's lover.<sup>3</sup>

His only criterion is the nebulous club standard. The sole restraint on his moral jusqu'au boutisme is his attachment to the conventions of an earlier generation. In the absence of morals the rules of etiquette provide a feeble guide.

The position of Krogh, the multi-millionaire Swedish industrialist, is no more enviable than that of Anthony. The tycoon is a prisoner of his wealth and power, a slave of the monster he created:

He was Krogh; his taste in music had to be displayed in Stockholm. But he sat always in a small wilderness of his own contriving, an empty seat on either hand. It at once advertised his presence and guarded his ignorance: for no importunate neighbour could ask him his opinion of the music, and if he slept a little it was unnoticed.<sup>4</sup>

The ennui of luxury is as depressing as that of poverty. Like the Assistant Commissioner of It's a Battlefield, Krogh is completely immune to aesthetic pleasure. He tries to like what he is expected to like. On the advice of associates he engages Sweden's leading sculptor to execute a statue. Yet he is utterly incapable of judging it. The Assistant Commissioner did not believe in God but scrupulously observed the trivial superstitions of common acceptance. So Krogh is an atheist, but he

"believed implicitly in the lines on his hand." One is reminded of Elizabeth's comment to Andrews in The Man Within: "You are so superstitious--it is always so with those who don't believe in God." Surrounded by plush carpets, monogrammed ash-trays, and eulogizing sycophants, Krogh is no more at home than is Anthony. Even the most occasional stimulus suggests a nostalgia for his earlier and less complicated life. The memory of his peasant youth at Lake Vatten haunts him. Isolated by his wealth, luxury, and power, among but no longer of his own people, Krogh, too, is an exile.

Although a minor character, Minty is, I believe, the most interesting person of England Made Me. His characterization is a sort of prelude for the later portrayal of Pinkie in Brighton Rock. An authentic Old Harrovian, Minty has been exiled by his mother from his native England because of some scandal during his youth. As a bribe to keep him away she furnishes him with a monthly cheque as long as he stays out of England. He supplements his income by a bastard form of journalism: he spies on Krogh in order to furnish the newspaper with any information he can unearth. (Whatever Krogh does is news.) Minty, like Anthony, suggests Greene's satire on English provincialism:

Presenting a dog-eared card at the Poste Restante counter he believed that, as an Englishman and an old Harrovian, he honoured Stockholm by choosing it as his home.<sup>5</sup>

The occasional flash of humour in Greene's novels is all the more appreciated because of its rarity. Minty is an individual persecuted by the crowd but he is not defeated. Somewhere in the recess of his soul is an indestructible pride which fortifies him against his enemies; like



other, it effaces pain. After one of the many reprimands by his boss

Minty reflects:

But this was the familiar poison. He had been slowly broken in by parents, by schoolmasters, by strangers in the street. Crooked and yellow and pigeon-chested, he had his deep refuge, the inexhaustible ingenuity of his mind.<sup>6</sup>

Minty to a greater degree than Joseph Andrews and Conrad Drover is the victim of an unhappy school life. Nevertheless he clings to juvenile school phrases as a child clutches a worn-out toy. A Freudian critic might, with justice, cite a certain masochistic tendency in Minty's frequent reversion to his unhappy school days. "The school and he," the reader learns, "were joined by a painful reluctant coition, a passionless coition that leaves everything to regret, nothing to love, everything to hate, but cannot destroy the idea: we are one body."<sup>7</sup>

In much of Greene's fiction there is a strong element of Manicheism: an acute consciousness of the disparity between the material and spiritual worlds and a tendency to view the two as mutually inimical. This is accompanied by an exaggerated notion of the depravity of the fallen world of nature and an anathema of the demands of the flesh. Minty is one of Greene's most convincing Manicheans:

Yes, it was ugly, the human figure. Man or woman, it made no difference to Minty. The body's shape, the running nose, excrement, the stupid postures of passion, these beat like a bird's heart in Minty's brain.<sup>8</sup>

Minty (he is described as an Anglo-Catholic) manifests a definite perversion of the religious sentiment. For him religion is an addiction:

A church claimed him. The darkness, the glow of the sanctuary lamp drew him more than food. It was Lutheran, of course, but it had the genuine air of plaster images, of ever-burning light, of sins

forgiven. He looked this way and that, he bent his head and dived for the open door, with the caution and dry-mouthed excitement of a secret debauchee.

Minty's indulgence of the religious appetite becomes a substitute orgasm. And this in spite of (perhaps because of) his Manicheism.

England Made Me shows Greene's awareness of contemporary social problems, especially the injustice of human relations in the impersonal laissez-faire system of production and the social order it both presupposes and sustains. The novel describes the dishonesty of Krogh's stock market manipulations, his duplicity towards his employees, the cynical ruthlessness which preserves his industrial empire. As a novelist, however, Greene's interest is not in social evil or social remedies, but in the human person as he reacts to them. Man in society, sometimes a victim of society, is his interest, but not society viewed as a human collective.

This helps to explain the recurrence of the "outlaw" in Greene's work. By rebelling against the law the outlaw also rebels against the social contract of which the law (that is human positive law, not the moral imperative) is the enforcement and embodiment. The outlaw is the true anarchist. Unlike the protagonist of The Man Within and It's a Battlefield Anthony Farrant does not rebel; he merely acquiesces. When Minty asks him why he is leaving Krogh's, Anthony realizes his situation:

He thought: It's because I'm not young enough and not old enough: not young enough to believe in a juster world, not old enough for the country, the king, the trenches to mean anything to me at all.<sup>10</sup>

Neither idealism nor tradition offer a refuge. As Jacques Madaule describes him, Anthony is a person "qui n'a plus de place."<sup>11</sup>

Kate, in direct contrast to Anthony, has completely mastered her environment. The effects of every choice are calculated before she acts.

In answer to her brother's question, whether or not she loves Krogh, Kate replies: "Love's no good to anyone. You can't define it. We need things of which we can think, not things we can feel." Sure of herself, she feels capable of plotting the destiny of others also. But her plans for Anthony fail miserably.

One of Krogh's devoted subordinates, Hall, realizes that Anthony's sentimentality and lack of dedication to any motive (including self-interest) threaten Krogh's safety. Anthony's lack of discretion could expose Krogh's illegal transactions. Kate's retort to her brother, "Tony, you're too innocent to live" is literally true in the jungle of men who will pay any price to achieve their end. Finally Anthony is murdered by Hall. Krogh sends a wreath to the funeral.

The conflict of innocence and experience is a major consideration in Greene's work. In later novels Greene was able to find his own symbols to suggest it. In England Made Me he borrowed the Blakean symbolism of tiger and lamb. Kate, a child of experience, is the tiger, Anthony the lamb. The tiger-lamb theme is developed to some length in the closing pages of Part II.<sup>12</sup> This section is both a microcosm of the whole novel and its denouement. Anthony, whose only reaction to a hostile world is acquiescence, suffers the traditional fate of the lamb. Only Kate can survive "in the forest of the night".

1. England Made Me, p. 6.
2. ibid., p. 62.
3. ibid., p. 101.
4. ibid., p. 41.
5. ibid., pp. 84-85.
6. ibid., p. 91.
7. ibid., p. 105.
8. ibid., p. 109.
9. ibid., p. 116.
10. ibid., p. 238.
11. Jacques Madaule, Graham Greene, p. 119.
12. England Made Me, pp. 80-82. This is a good example of Greene's use of the "stream of consciousness" technique. He abandoned it after England Made Me.



**BRIGHTON ROCK**

Brighton Rock occupies a peculiar and important place in Graham Greene's writing. It was originally published in England in 1938 as a novel. The American edition and subsequent English editions relegate it to the status of an entertainment. In the Uniform Edition it reappears as a novel. It has been explained how Greene uses the terms novel and entertainment to distinguish his more serious endeavours from his lighter ones. This change in classification is puzzling and tends to suggest that the author's own appraisal of the book fluctuated from time to time. It is the only work of which the classification, not the title, has been changed.

When Brighton Rock is related chronologically to Greene's entire novel output, its singularity is emphasized. In it he introduces what may be called the dimension of eternity. Before it appeared The Man Within, the two withdrawn novels, It's a Battlefield, and England Made Me. After it came The Power and the Glory, The Heart of the Matter, The End of the Affair, and The Quiet American. Placing it chronologically between the immediately preceding and succeeding novels we have: England Made Me--1935, Brighton Rock--1938, and The Power and the Glory--1940. To anyone who has read these three novels it is obvious that there is a radical difference between England Made Me and The Power and the Glory. In my opinion Brighton Rock is the pivotal work dividing Greene's early novels from his more mature ones. In skill of characterization, decisiveness of theme,

maturity and confidence of composition, Brighton Rock more closely resembles The Power and the Glory and the succeeding novels than England Made Me and the preceding ones.

What the exact reasons are for this decisive change or growth in Greene's outlook is difficult to surmise. Undoubtedly they are many and complex. The artistic maturity of Brighton Rock and its successors represents the culmination of a barely discernible process rather than an overnight metamorphosis. Journey Without Maps, a revealing autobiographical account of Greene's first trip to Africa, hints at certain steps in this development. It is a portrait of the novelist as a changing person. The journey itself was in many ways a pilgrimage, a search for the seedy grail of the naked self. According to R. W. B. Lewis:

The Liberian adventure was the turning-point in Greene's intellectual and artistic career, and very likely in his personal life. What he discovered in Africa helps explain the remarkable development in momentum and texture from England Made Me, which preceded the journey, to Brighton Rock, which came after it.<sup>1</sup>

This is exact. It is also as far as one may legitimately proceed in this direction. A strictly biographical interpretation of literature is risky under the best circumstances. When applied to a contemporary author who is as reticent about his personal life as Greene is, it tends to fill in the wide gaps of certain knowledge or reasoned opinion with imaginative conjecture or, even worse, the supposed omniscience of literary psychoanalysis.

The whole action of Brighton Rock is set in an atmosphere of unnaturalness, incongruity, and distortion. Although it skilfully inaugurates the novel's action and plot, part one of the novel, some forty

pages long, is primarily concerned with depicting the milieu, physical, spiritual, and emotional, in which the characters act. One of the singular characteristics of Greene's fiction is the way in which, often from the opening paragraph, the reader is plunged into the heart of the action. Nowhere is this more true than in Brighton Rock. As Francis Wyndham aptly observes, "Brighton Rock made a successful film, because it has a film technique in much of its writing."<sup>2</sup> This is exact in so far as it indicates Greene's mastery of realism in his novel of 1938. Still Brighton Rock evinces a psychological subtlety and spiritual profundity which can hardly be reproduced by even the most capable film director.

The opening sentence of Brighton Rock describes Hale, a tortured pitiful human being:

Hale knew they meant to murder him before he had been in Brighton three hours. With his inky fingers and his bitten nails, his manner cynical and nervous, anybody could tell he didn't belong--belong to the early summer sun, the cool whitsun wind off the sea, the holiday crowd.<sup>3</sup>

Nail-biting is a recurring habit in Greene's work. In Brighton Rock alone, Hale, Pinkie, Kite, and Drewitt bite their nails, as does Raven in A Gun for Sale. Judging by his novels, Greene, perhaps unconsciously, uses this image to symbolize fear and frustration. Similarly the sea birds of Brighton Rock and the vultures in later novels represent imminent defeat. Hale is not only afraid; he has fear as some men have asthma. The whole atmosphere of the novel is one of terror: Hale is afraid of death; Pinkie is afraid of detection by Ida, marriage with Rose, and of eternal damnation; Rose is afraid of Ida, Pinkie, and Hell; Drewitt and Cubitt are afraid of Pinkie.



Hale is one of Greene's most pathetic figures, a ~~man~~ trying unsuccessfully to lose himself in the crowd; but his individuality refuses to be destroyed. Throughout the opening pages of Brighton Rock there is an antithesis between the reality of Hale, an individual, and the fantastic unreality of the crowd. The crowd is rendered as a false, distorted mode of existence, a conglomeration of individuals trying to stifle that which makes them individuals, the propensity to think, to fear, to pity, to hate, to love, to pray. The crowd in Brighton Rock represents a collective attempt by individuals to annihilate conscience, pain, identity, the self. Hale, pathetic as he is, has an identity as a human being. Although unsuccessfully trying to lose himself in it, he regards the crowd as a dehumanized mass devoid of reason and sensibility:

He leant against the rail near the Palace Pier and showed his face to the crowd as it uncoiled endlessly past him, like a twisted piece of wire, two by two, each with an air of sober and determined gaiety.

The crowd is prospecting for pleasure: "With immense labour and immense patience they extricated from the long day the grain of pleasure: this sun, this music. . . ."

In Brighton Rock Greene is not so much a social critic as a critic of the concept of crowd. The crowd is a distorted phenomenon which destroys the very purpose of society, the self-perfection of the individual. In a penetrating criticism of Greene's writing Victor de Pange makes the following observation:

L'oeuvre de Graham Greene est une protestation et une plaidoirie. Une protestation contre ce monde artificiel qui a évolué trop vite pour permettre à l'homme de s'y adapter sans perdre ses vertus. Une plaidoirie pour ceux qui ce monde

stouffe quand il ne les écrase pas. C'est, en effet, dans une civilisation qui se désagrége que les valeurs sont renversées.<sup>5</sup>

The leit-motiv of the effect of an unnatural society on the individual is not uncommon in Greene's work. Andrews of The Man Within represents this idea in embryonic form. It's a Battlefield and England Made Me develop it to some degree. In the novels following Brighton Rock it is a constant theme. It is only in the novel of 1938, however, that the idea of that particular distortion of society, the crowd, is so fully developed. Every important literary character of Brighton Rock is delineated by his reaction to, identity with, or withdrawal from the crowd. There is something not human about all who are of the crowd. Substantives properly denoting human beings are qualified by non-human attributes: "expensive women", "brass hair", "metallic confidences", "girls waiting to be picked".

Hale's gripping fear drives him to merge himself in the crowd. His identity is obstinate and will not be destroyed. His consciousness of self has been too long engrained, for, "from childhood he had loved secrecy, a hiding-place, the dark." Hale instinctively knows that Ida is of the crowd and clings to her: "His eyes turned to the big breasts; she was like darkness to him, shelter, knowledge, common sense. . . ." Again his conscious identity exerts itself: "but, in his little bitten inky cynical framework of bone, pride bobbed up again, taunting him 'back to the womb . . . be a mother to you . . . no more standing on your own feet'." "

Hale soon dies. The manner of his death is never completely revealed. It appears that while being murdered by Pinkie and his gang, Hale died of heart failure. While his desire to lose identity was frustrated

in life, it is ironically satisfied in death. In a masterly piece of satire and sardonic humour, Greene describes the disposal of the corpse. The individuality which Hale tried unsuccessfully to smother poses no difficulty for the officiating clergyman. For him there is no individuality, no personal soul, no eternal meaning to life, no good, no evil, no self. His is the ersatz religion of the crowd, the idolatry of the amorphous One.

'Our belief in heaven,' the clergyman went on, 'is not qualified by our disbelief in hell. We believe,' he said, glancing swiftly along the smooth polished slipway towards the New Art doors through which the coffin would be launched into the flames, 'we believe that this our brother is already at one with the One.' He stamped his words, like little pats of butter, with his personal mark. 'He has attained unity. We do not know what that One is with whom (or with which) he is now at one. We do not retain the old medieval beliefs in glassy seas and golden crowns. Truth is beauty and there is more beauty for us, a truth-loving generation, in the certainty that our brother is at this moment reabsorbed in the universal spirit.'

In England Made Me Anthony Farrant is similarly disposed of and one is left with a puff of smoke. Cremation accompanied by elocution is the requiem for Greene's undenominational atheists.

Hale's death sets in motion what may be called the major conflict of Brighton Rock, that between Ida and Pinkie. Although the novel's conflict takes place on several levels, Pinkie versus Rose, Pinkie versus the rest of the gang, and the interior struggle of Pinkie versus himself, its most important manifestation is within the framework of Pinkie versus Ida.

It is on this point that much criticism of Greene's work is totally inadequate: because the Ida-Pinkie conflict is seen as an allegorical interpretation of Protestant-versus Catholic. Typical of this is John



Atkins's criticism.<sup>7</sup> Atkins's position basically is that Greene's sympathy for Finkle, a murderer, sadist, and pervert, is evidence of the author's propagandist intentions. Atkins goes on to complain that Ida is not a fair representative of the Protestant religion, and that Protestantism, as a democracy, should be allowed to furnish its own literary representatives. The irrelevancy of this whole line of approach should be obvious. Why should Ida be a fair representative of Protestantism, or, for that matter, Finkle a fair representative of Catholicism? Since when are novelists obliged to pick fair representatives? Is Casaubon a fair representative of the Church of England minister? Are the Jesuits of Westward Ho fair representatives of the Catholic clergy? Is Fagan a fair representative of the English Jews? Fair representatives of anything may well be the back bone of the nation but they are hardly very interesting characters for the individualizing art of the novelist.

It should be realized that Ida as a fictional literary character is not portrayed as a Protestant. If the terms Protestantism and Protestant religion are to mean anything, they must mean a type of Christianity as distinguished from other types, for example Roman Catholic or Greek Orthodox. Protestantism is basically Christianity and differs from other forms of Christianity in certain matters of hierarchy, morality, and especially doctrine. While the doctrinal divergencies may be wide, not only between Protestant and Roman Catholic but between the various Protestant denominations themselves, the very meaning of Christianity supposes some mutually accepted doctrines, including, as a minimum, those of the Trinity, Incarnation, Redemption, and Resurrection. This is entirely independent of the truth of Christianity or of any form of Christianity.



The fact is that Ida is not portrayed as a Christian of any kind in Brighton Rock. She is no more a Protestant than she is a Catholic. To regard her fictional character as Protestant one would have to be either completely ignorant of Protestantism or entirely prejudiced against it.

Pinkie is only incidentally a Catholic, and a very weird specimen at that, representing a certain fringe of Catholic thought which has always been officially disavowed by the religion it intended to represent. Basically, it is a distorted form of Augustinian theology which received its more appealing development with Pascal and the teachings of Port-Royal and its most depraved expression in the Manichean movement. What the artistic development of the Ida-Pinkie conflict in Brighton Rock represents is not an antithesis of Catholic-Protestant but a clashing of two much broader and more inclusive world outlooks, that of Ida which denies the existence of the eternal and the absolute and that of Pinkie which affirms it.

Ida Arnold's characterization in the novel of 1938 is a milestone in Greene's development as a novelist. Before Brighton Rock Greene's female characters were either unconvincingly idealized or similarly caricatured. Ida's portrayal is simple and credible. As Victor de Pange has written:

Le type de la vulgarité c'est Ida Arnold dans Recher de Brighton. Elle est malgré tout presque sympathique. Il n'y a pas en elle de conformisme. Elle veut vivre. Ce qu'elle demande à la vie c'est le soleil, la joie, et un verre de bière. C'est un des personnages les plus réels de Greene.<sup>8</sup>

Ida's character is rendered in several ways: by her own words and deeds, by her effect on others and their reaction to her, and by statements of

the narrator. She is a person of "comraderie, good nature, cheeriness." According to Hale, "she smelt of soap and wine; comfort and peace and a slow sleepy physical enjoyment, a touch of the nursery and the mother stole from the big tipsy mouth. . . ." One of her most interesting characteristics is her innocence, not the innocence of abstention from evil, but the innocence which is completely oblivious of good and evil: the innocence by which everything is right or wrong. Ida is an inhabitant of Ulro; her innocence is the innocence of ignorance.

Ida has no concept of the type of inner struggle which Hale suffered in his attempt to deny his individuality. She is completely, unknowingly, and wholeheartedly one of the crowd:

She was of the people, she cried in cinemas at David Copperfield, when she was drunk all the old ballads her mother had known came easily to her lips, her homely heart was touched by the word 'tragedy'.

Ida completely rejects any concept of the eternal significance of human acts. She consequently has no belief in or knowledge of a morality based on absolute good and evil. The very terms are meaningless to her. Her ersatz morality is summed up in the sophisms which she continually utters, the substitute credo of the crowd. The closest she comes to any kind of belief is her reliance on ouija boards and her desire to "play a hunch" at the race track. Her motivating principles are:

I'm out for a bit of fun;  
It's a good world if you don't weaken;  
When I make a day of it, I like to make a real day of it;  
I'm a sticker;  
Waste not, want not;  
I like fair play;  
I believe in right and wrong.

The protagonist of Brighton Rock is Pinkie. He is in many respects the most enigmatic and singular character in Greene's eight novel cast.

Pinkie's outlook differs fundamentally from that of Ida, his antagonist. By exploring this difference and its consequences Brighton Rock gives the reader a bifocal view of humanity. For Ida Arnold things are either right or wrong; for Pinkie they are good or evil. There are several ways of explaining the difference between the right-wrong outlook and the good-evil one. Commenting on Brighton Rock Walter Allen points out that the contrast is "between the ideas, on the one hand, of good and evil in their exalted sense, as making for eternal salvation or damnation, and, on the other, of the purely secular ideas of right and wrong."<sup>10</sup> This is correct as far as it goes. But it gives the impression that good and evil and right and wrong are two different ways of looking at the same thing. This is not the case. While the good-evil and right-wrong outlooks may often coincide, their origin is distinctly separate. The right-wrong viewpoint is based on convention and is a judgement of expedience. The good-evil viewpoint is based on morality (what Kant calls the categorical imperative) and is a judgement of obligation. While social custom and the natural moral law (again the Kantian categorical imperative) often coincide and ideally, I suppose, the former is an expression of the latter, still in practice they may differ and are, therefore, logically and really distinct. In short one recognizes expediency, the other moral obligation, as the basis of judgement.

The antithesis of right-wrong and good-evil is an important one not only for an analysis of Brighton Rock but for an understanding of Greene's artistic viewpoint in general. It is worth examining this antithesis under different lights. A competent French critic explains it like this:

Le couple good-evil évoque des notions qui se rattachent aux fondements mêmes de la morale, aux racines métaphysiques de la conduite humaine, tandis que le couple right-wrong s'applique plutôt aux superstructures particulières et variables des civilisations qui n'engagent pas les ultimes profondeurs de l'être, l'essentiel de la destinée humaine.<sup>11</sup>

In his essay on Baudelaire T. S. Eliot remarks:

So far as we are human, what we do must either be evil or good; so far as we do evil or good, we are human; and it is better, in a paradoxical way, to do evil than to do nothing: at least we exist. It is true to say that the glory of man is his capacity for salvation; it is also true to say that his glory is his capacity for damnation.<sup>12</sup>

Pinkie and Ida live in different worlds and speak a different language. Between Ida's world of right and wrong and Pinkie's world of good and evil, there is the gulf of moral consciousness. Ida tells Rose: "I know one thing you don't. I know the difference Right and Wrong. They didn't teach you that at school." Then we read:

Rose didn't answer; the woman was quite right; the two words meant nothing to her. Their taste was extinguished by stronger foods--Good and Evil. The woman could tell her nothing she didn't know about these--she knew by tests as clear as mathematics that Pinkie was evil--what did it matter in that case whether he was right or wrong?<sup>13</sup>

Pinkie, murderer, sadist, pervert, that he is, has an acute moral consciousness. Believing the only way to escape the stigma of Nelson Place is to become the underworld leader at Brighton, he freely decides to follow the chosen course to its logical conclusion. He wills both the end and the means necessary for its attainment.

Much of Brighton Rock is a catalogue of violence. At times Pinkie partially regrets his decision. He is caught in the momentum of sin and is haunted by a sense of inevitability. Speaking with Dallow about the



necessity of killing Rose, the Boy says: "Maybe I got to. No choice. Maybe it's always that way--you start and then you go on going on." On another occasion Pinkie is walking with Dallow and roughly pushes an old man out of the way.

'Why should I get out of my way for a beggar?' But he hadn't realized they were blind; he was shocked by his own action. It was as if he was being driven too far down a road he wanted to tread only a certain distance.<sup>14</sup>

Pinkie's reasoning is only partially correct. As long as his goal is domination of the underworld, then the violence and murder are inevitable. But he always possesses the freedom to will another goal.

The boy gangster's relationship with Rose is the most sensitive and penetrating part of the novel. Rose, he realizes, is the only person who can identify his gang as the murderers of Hale. He makes her acquaintance with the intention of marrying her in order to prevent her from testifying against him.

The necessity of eventually consummating his marriage after it is contracted goads Pinkie's every thought. Ingrained with a perverted horror of sex Pinkie guards his virginity as a miser hoards his gold.

A strange and tense relationship develops between Pinkie and Rose. But as the net tightens Pinkie resolves on destroying Rose and devises a suicide pact to explain her death. His plan, however, is frustrated and it is Pinkie himself who is killed while Rose lives.

Brighton Rock is a grim, violent, and depressing novel. Yet there is a ray of light. In the confessional Rose tells the old priest that she doesn't want absolution. She wants to be damned like Pinkie. But salvation and damnation are beyond the ken of human understanding. Pinkie's feeling

for Rose was the closest he could come to love. Perhaps for him it was love. And there can be no love without goodness, no matter how disguised a form it may assume. Finally and always there is the great imponderable:

'You can't conceive, my child, nor can I or anyone--the . . . appalling . . . strangeness of the mercy of God.<sup>15</sup>

1. R. W. B. Lewis, "The Fiction of Graham Greene: Between the Glory and the Horror," edited by John Crowe Ransom, The Kenyon Review, XIX: 58, December, 1957.
2. Francis Wyndham, Graham Greene, p. 16.
3. Brighton Rock, p. 5.
4. ibid., p. 6.
5. Victor de Pange, Graham Greene, p. 33.
6. Brighton Rock, pp. 35-36.
7. John Atkins, Graham Greene, pp. 88-101.
8. de Pange, p. 28.
9. Brighton Rock, p. 32.
10. Walter Allen, "The Novels of Graham Greene," edited by John Lehmann, The Penguin New Writing, No. 18, June, 1943.
11. Paul Rostenne, Graham Greene témoin des temps tragiques, p. 29.
12. T. S. Eliot, Selected Essays, p. 277.
13. Brighton Rock, p. 201.
14. ibid., p. 131.
15. ibid., p. 249.

THE POWER AND THE GLORY



The Power and the Glory (originally issued as The Labyrinthine Ways), is one of Greene's topographical novels. It was, to some degree, suggested by the author's travels. The same is true of England Made Me in which Greene supplies the Swedish background from his own observation. In 1938 Greene went to Mexico to investigate the Communist-inspired suppression of religion. The Lawless Roads is the resulting book. It is not an ordinary travel document, but a compendium of Greene's personal reactions to the situation. It also has a certain interest as an autobiographical document. Because both books deal with Mexico and were written within a year of each other, some critics approach The Power and the Glory with that novel in one hand and The Lawless Roads in the other. Undoubtedly a reading of The Lawless Roads adds much to one's appreciation of the novel. The reader is introduced to the geographical, political, and religious background used in the ensuing book. Yet to appraise The Power and the Glory by constantly comparing it with The Lawless Roads is not only unnecessary but misleading. While all imaginative writing, and particularly prose fiction, has a relationship with the author's own experience, it also has an independent existence of its own. An attempt to establish the degree to which an imaginative work depends on the author's personal experience is a legitimate task, but it is not the object of this essay. The Power and the Glory is a self-contained novel; its action is imaginative, not factual, its appeal aesthetic, not didactic.

My treatment of it will be literary, not biographical.

The nameless whisky priest who is the central character of The Power and the Glory is the first full-bodied protagonist in Greene's novels. While Joseph Andrews's characterization is skilfully developed, the incessant duel between the conflicting demands of actual and potential self diminishes his vitality as a central figure. In It's a Battlefield the multiplicity of characters detracts from any unity of impression. Neither the Assistant Commissioner nor Conrad are very compelling characters. Both die when the book is closed. Anthony Farrant (England Made Me), is similarly ephemeral. Pinkie is dynamically portrayed, but his credibility cannot simply be accepted; it has to be arrived at by a process of rationalization. The characterization of the whisky priest, however, has the quality of immediacy which demands belief. The reader has the feeling that if he entered the room--drunk or sober-- he would be recognized.

The reader first meets the whisky priest under singularly unheroic circumstances. He is at the wharf hoping to escape on the "General Obregon" and meets Tench, an English dentist, looking for ether cylinders. Ominous vultures hover above them. "Mr. Greene's carrion birds and beasts," Donat O'Donnell has observed, "are normally conventional symbols of the corruption that waits upon the flesh and the horror of a world without God."<sup>1</sup> The setting is one of squalor and oppression. Both men are lonely and, having accidentally become acquainted, they pass some time together at Tench's. Tench is one of Greene's uprooted Englishmen stranded in a hostile land he neither loves nor understands. Greene's exiles lack both the cosmopolitanism of Hemingway's wanderers and the romanticism of Maugham's. Their love of England resembles Minty's love of Harrow--they "were joined

by a painful reluctant coition"--but it is still a bond which will not be denied. The priest, too, is without a home--an exile from the complacent security which surrounded him before the cataclysmic revolution. When asked by Tench if he is a doctor, the whisky priest replies: "You would call me perhaps a--quack." The novel exposes the priest's moral and spiritual state without pretence. And his physical aspect, seen through the eyes of a dentist, is almost clinically analysed: "The man's dark suit and sloping shoulders reminded him uncomfortably of a coffin, and death was in his carious mouth already." While drinking with Tench the alcoholic learns that a dying person needs him. Again the demands of his calling require that he surrender his chance of escape.

When the whisky priest is introduced his degradation is already accomplished, yet the reader is given an outline of its genesis. An ambitious and fairly clever son of a middle class store-keeper, he used to visualize the priesthood as a secure and more or less enjoyable job. As a parish priest in Concepcion he enjoyed the authority of his position and the acknowledgement of his efficiency. The society of various ladies's guilds and other parish associations flattered his ego and he was quite confident of eventual appointment to a large and comfortable parish. In short,

The good things of life had come to him too early--the respect of his contemporaries, a safe livelihood, the trite religious word upon the tongue, the joke to ease the way, the ready acceptance of other people's homage . . . a happy man.<sup>2</sup>

After the revolution and subsequent legislation against religion he decided to remain, thinking that things would improve, and influenced also, one is lead to believe, by a personal inertia. His easygoing and



seldom-tempted piety, while quite sufficient for directing a prosperous parish in an atmosphere of eulogy and security, disintegrates after the onslaught of the world and the flesh. One by one the tenets of self-discipline and church regulation are abandoned until he emerges as the whisky priest whom the reader meets.

Morton Dauwen Zabel has written:

The identity Greene's heroes seek is that of a conscience that shirks none of the deception or confusion of their natures. If the "destructive element" of moral anarchy threatens them, it is their passion for a moral identity of their own that redeems them.<sup>3</sup>

The whisky priest's former identity as the patronizing, jocular, self-satisfied cleric, an identity which proved incapable of withstanding crises, is destroyed forever. It now becomes his task to forge another identity, one which does not collapse under the stress of circumstances.

The priest's antagonist and hunter is the province's lieutenant of police. Although the term is never used, the lieutenant is recognizable as a Marxist Communist--and more convincing as such than the lukewarm altruists of It's a Battlefield. The capture of the whisky priest, the last functioning clergyman in the province, is the lieutenant's goal, which he will achieve at all costs. With full endorsement of the end justifies the means principle, he shoots civilian hostages for their failure to betray the priest. The reader is told: "There was something disinterested in his ambition: a kind of virtue in his desire to catch the sleek respected guest of the first communion party."

The lieutenant is the first interesting atheist portrayed in a Greene novel. Some of the secondary characters of It's a Battlefield are described as Communists but they do not have ideas, just slogans.



Ida Arnold has her own God, the God of the crowd, the God who "doesn't mind a little fun now and then." The Assistant Commissioner (It's a Battlefield), and Krogh (England Made Me), are nominally atheists but their disbelief is not convincing. The first real atheist in Greene's novels is impelled by what might be termed a religious fervour. Its intensity is seldom rivalled by Greene's believers. The lieutenant's atheism is as fanatical as Alden Pyle's humanitarianism. This is how Greene describes the Mexican officer:

It infuriated him to think that there were still people in the state who believed in a loving and merciful God. There are mystics who are said to have experienced God directly. He was a mystic, too, and what he had experienced was vacancy--a complete certainty in the existence of a dying, cooling world, of human beings who had evolved from animals for no purpose at all.<sup>4</sup>

The lieutenant is very fond of children. It is his self-imposed task to save them from the "superstition" and "corruption" of religion. For them he is "quite prepared to make a massacre." One is reminded of Pinkie. In order to escape from Nelson Place, "it was worth murdering a world."

The whisky priest and the police lieutenant are opposed ideologically; they are also opposed physically, within the framework of hunter and hunted. Yet the police officer curiously resembles the fugitive: "There was something of a priest in his intent observant walk--a theologian going back over the errors of the past to destroy them again." His bedroom also is as "comfortless as a prison or a monastic cell." Their major difference is that the priest, an alcoholic with an illegitimate child, a frail man himself, sympathizes with the weakness of others, while the lieutenant "felt no sympathy at all with the weakness of the flesh."

Of Greene's accomplishment in The Power and the Glory Francis Wyndham writes: "For the first time he had succeeded completely in relating his characters and story to form a coherent, taut whole."<sup>5</sup> The tautness and coherence result from the skilfully sustained dialectic, within a framework of pursuit, between the believing sinner who is the fugitive, and the atheist ascetic who is the hunter.

The theme of childhood plays an important part in much of Greene's fiction and its crystallization in The Power and the Glory is among the novel's most interesting features. The whisky priest comes into contact with two children. The first is Coral, the daughter of Captain Fellows, a bluff, hearty banana exporter who "felt no responsibility for anyone." Coral's neurotic mother is chronically ill, (She is perhaps, a preliminary draft of Louise in The Heart of the Matter.), and during the frequent absence of her father, Coral manages the household. She is a child of innocence:

She was very young--about thirteen--and at that age you are not afraid of many things, age and death, all the things which may turn up, snake-bite and fever and rats and a bad smell. Life hadn't got at her yet: she had a false air of impregnability.<sup>6</sup>

Greene reminds the reader of the difference between the child's world and that of an adult. Among his short stories "The Basement Room", "The End of the Party", "I Spy", "The Hint of an Explanation", and "The Destroyers" all explore various aspects of the universe of childhood. Coral's father realizes that the disparity between juvenile and adult reality may be so acute as to impede communication:

A child is said to draw parent together, and certainly he felt an immense unwillingness to entrust himself to this child. Her answers might carry him anywhere. He felt through the net for his wife's hand--secretively: they were adults together. This was the stranger in their house.<sup>7</sup>

Coral, on her own initiative and without the knowledge of her parents, hides the whiskey priest and lies to the police lieutenant that he is nowhere near. She engineers his escape and devises a method of signalling so that, if the priest returns, he will be able to attract her attention and she will then aid him once again. Toward the close of the novel, while trying to elude his pursuers, the priest does return and finds no one there. He later learns that the "gringo" criminal, also being sought by the police, used her as a shield in an attempt to escape. The police shot and she was killed.

The second child with whom the priest comes in contact is Brigitta, an illegitimate daughter by his former housekeeper:

They had spent no love in her conception: just fear and despair and half a bottle of brandy and the sense of loneliness had driven him to an act which horrified him--and this seared shame-faced overpowering love was the result.<sup>8</sup>

Of Brigitta one critic has written: "in her ancient depravity she is an almost allegorical figure of the corrupt fruit of a sinful union."<sup>9</sup> The "almost" in the above quotation should, I believe, be deleted. The whisky priest "was aware of an immense load of responsibility; it was indistinguishable from love." Once again the novel emphasizes the similarity between the priest and the lieutenant. The policeman, too, "suffers the little children to come unto him"; it is for them that "he was quite prepared to make a massacre."

Brigitta enjoys none of the childhood pastimes of Coral; she knows no games and has no friends. It is only physically that she is a child at all: "The seven-year-old body was like a dwarf's: it disguised an ugly maturity." Her fate also differs from Coral's in that she does not suffer an early death. Coral was innocent and, according to the

inexorable logic of Greene's art, dies. Brigitta, who knows the disillusion of experience, endures. Like Kate of England Made Me she survives "in the forest of the night". In a provoking study of the themes of innocence and experience in the writing of Greene, (a study to which I am indebted in my treatment of this aspect of Greene's novels), Joseph M. Duffy, Jr. points out: "Physical death or death of the spirit is the gesture of rejection Greene commonly makes toward his innocent characters."<sup>10</sup> In Greene's novels innocence is analogous to Ulro; it is a state of progressive decay culminating in an eternal limbo; death, actual as with Coral, or symbolic as in Greene's short story "The Basement Room", is its reward.

Objections have frequently been raised about the "seediness" of Greene's novels. The author himself in Journey Without Maps has explained, at least partially, why it attracts him. Indicating the reason for his African trip he writes:

This too attracted me. There seemed to be a seediness about the place you couldn't get to the same extent elsewhere, and seediness has a very deep appeal: even the seediness of civilisation, of the sky-signs in Leicester Square, the 'tarts' in Bond Street, the smell of cooking greens off Tottenham Court Road, the motor salesmen in Great Portland Street. It seems to satisfy, temporarily, the sense of nostalgia for something lost; it seems to represent a stage further back.<sup>11</sup>

The seediness of Greene's novels, whatever one's reaction to it may be, is neither pornography nor naturalism (at least in the Zola sense). Its use in Greene's writing has the specific function of representing "a stage further back." It plays an intrinsic role in Greene's artistic outlook. Still his interest in seediness and the preoccupation with the themes of betrayal, defeat, squalor, and perversion which accompanies it do, at



times, result in an unnecessary vulgarity, or at best, a loss of the sense of proportion which should characterize all art. This inclination is evident in many of Greene's protracted comparisons:

But at the centre of his own faith there always stood the convincing mystery--that we were made in God's image--God was the parent, but He was also the policeman, the criminal, the priest, the maniac, and the judge. Something resembling God dangled from the gibbet or went into odd attitudes before the bullets in a prison yard or contorted itself like a camel in the attitude of sex.<sup>12</sup>

The whole question of seediness in Greene's novels is well treated by Sean O'Faolain. He not only states the objection but points out what is, I believe, the most intelligent reaction towards it. I shall quote his observation at length:

His obsession was the ugly and the evil side of life is equally troubling. More than occasionally one feels that he is not merely outraging nature but that he is taking a perverse pleasure in rubbing its face in its own ordure. One feels that in concentrating on a restricted set of themes he has implied that no matter what subject he may choose to paint--childhood innocence, mother-love, a first kiss--he could make it look just as grim. Not, of course, that anybody has the least right to object to grimness, and every writer is entitled to wear whatever spectacles he pleases. But one may, indeed must if necessary, draw attention to the limitation of an artist's palette, or of his human sympathy, or of his intellectual interests.<sup>13</sup>

I believe that this is a valid and fair judgement, applicable not only to the work of 1940 but to Greene's other novels as well.

In The Power and the Glory the suspense is keen and is maintained throughout the narration of the fortunes, but mostly misfortunes, of the main character. His night in prison, dismissal, and flight, and his temporary refuge with the Lehrs are all dramatically described. When

final escape is almost a certainty, the half-caste traitor reappears. He tells the priest that the "gringo" has been shot, is dying, and wants to confess. Fully aware that the half-caste intends to betray him for the reward money, but also realizing that the "gringo" might want him, the whisky priest knowingly walks into the trap.

The hunter-hunted dialectic, begun early in the novel and continued, often by suggestion, throughout it, comes to a final climax. The conflict between policeman and priest is ideological and without personal antipathy. Before the execution the lieutenant and the priest converse together:

"I hate your reasons," the lieutenant said.  
 "I don't want reasons. If you see somebody in pain, people like you reason and reason. You say-- perhaps pain's a good thing, perhaps he'll be better for it one day. I want to let my heart speak."<sup>14</sup>

And the priest replies:

"Oh, well, perhaps when you're my age you'll know the heart's an untrustworthy beast. The mind is too, but it doesn't talk about love. . . ."<sup>15</sup>

This is curiously like a tutor correcting his pupil, the former being a realist and rationalist, and the latter an idealist and emotionalist. In their knowledge of man, the ascetic lieutenant is the neophyte and the whisky priest with a bastard child the initiate.

An ironic background is provided for the priest's execution. The heroism of martyrdom, echoed by Juan's "Viva el Cristo Rey," is pitilessly contrasted with the reality of human weakness. Tench, the English dentist, narrates the priest's exit:

A small man came out of a side door: he was held up by two policemen, but you could tell that he was doing his best-- it was only that

his legs were not fully under his control. . . .  
 and the little man was a routine-heap beside the  
 wall--something unimportant which had to be  
 cleared away.<sup>16</sup>

Yet he remains more than "something unimportant which had to be cleared away." His former identity as a self-satisfied complacent cleric is destroyed and in its place the whisky priest realizes a more powerful identity. In the terminology of Kirkegaard "purity of heart is to will one thing"; that one thing for the whisky priest is a complete acceptance of his personal fate. By equating his personal will with the necessity of events he achieves freedom.

The conclusion of The Power and the Glory--the arrival of a new priest--has been regarded as an unwarranted surrender to the popular concept of poetic justice. I do not believe this is the case. The arrival of the new priest signifies the continuation of the whisky priest's work. It also illustrates that by freely willing an appointed destiny the whisky priest not only co-operates with the necessity of the present but influences the freedom of the future. Betrayed by Judas and condemned by Pilate, but sustained by the virtue of faith, the whisky priest's Passion ends on the Calvary of the firing squad.

1. Donat O'Donnell, Maria Cross, p. 69.
2. The Power and the Glory, p. 29.
3. Morton Dauwen Zabel, Craft and Character in Modern Fiction, p. 294.
4. The Power and the Glory, p. 33.
5. Francis Wyndham, Graham Greene, p. 17.
6. The Power and the Glory, p. 44.
7. ibid., pp. 45-46.
8. ibid., p. 90.
9. Joseph M. Duffy, Jr., "The Lost World of Graham Greene," edited by Joseph E. O'Neill, S. J., Thought, XXXIII: 231, June, 1958.
10. ibid.
11. Journey Without Maps, p. 7.
12. The Power and the Glory, p. 136.
13. Sean O'Faolain, The Vanishing Hero, p. 74.
14. The Power and the Glory, p. 268.
15. ibid.
16. ibid., p. 294.



THE HEART OF THE MATTER

The setting of The Heart of the Matter, the West Coast of Africa, is a region familiar to Greene. The Power and the Glory was also set in an area previously visited by its author. But whereas the Mexican novel was written within a year of Greene's visit, twelve years elapsed between Greene's first journey to Africa and the later novel. The actual trip is described in Journey Without Maps, published in 1936. Greene also spent two years in Africa during the war, in 1942-1943. The time period of The Heart of the Matter is approximately that of his second stay. In a prefatory note, however, Greene makes it quite clear that The Heart of the Matter is a work of fiction:

No character in this book is based on that of a living person. The geographical background of the story is drawn from that part of West Africa of which I have had personal experience--that is inevitable--but I want to make it absolutely clear that no inhabitant, past or present, of that particular colony appears in my book.<sup>1</sup>

The Heart of the Matter has been suggested as Greene's best book, so have The Power and the Glory and, less convincingly, The End of the Affair. The whole question is, of course, one of taste and not precept. As Morton Dauwen Zabel sees it:

The Heart of the Matter is Greene's most ambitious book thus far but in spite of its advance beyond the schematic pattern of its predecessors it is not finally his most convincing one. Its excessive manipulation keeps it from being that.<sup>2</sup>

Scobie is introduced early in the novel and the reader first meets him through the eyes of Harris and Wilson. Both characters form a backdrop

for the drama of Scobie. While Wilson in a sense is the antagonist, Scobie is really his own worst enemy.

Recalling the sea birds of Brighton Rock and the carrion birds of The Power and the Glory, a parallel symbolism suggesting corruption, defeat and death accompanies Scobie's entrance: "A vulture flapped and shifted on the iron roof and Wilson looked at Scobie." As the early appearance of the vulture symbolizes impending defeat, so also Scobie himself feels an "odd premonitory sense of guilt . . . as though he were responsible for something in the future he couldn't even foresee."

Until the introduction of Helen Rolt, Scobie's responsibility is directed mainly toward his wife, Louise. According to the novel's pitiless terminology: "Her face had the yellow-ivory tinge of atabrine: Her hair, which had once been the colour of bottled honey, was dark and stringy with sweat." For Scobie there are her most attractive moments: "These were the times of ugliness when he loved her, when pity and responsibility reached the intensity of a passion." Because he feels personally responsible for her "melancholy, dissatisfaction, and disappointment," Scobie assumes an impossible task. He endeavours to construct a shelter from experience for his wife and to buy happiness for her without thinking of the price.

Louise is unhappy in the African colony and when she learns that her husband, an Assistant Commissioner of Police, has been passed over for promotion, her dissatisfaction increases. She asks her husband to send her on a holiday to South Africa. Scobie tries unsuccessfully to borrow money from a bank, but after her continual entreaties, although he does not know where he can raise the amount, he commits himself unconditionally to financing the trip. He is "bound by the pathos of her unattractiveness"



and feels personally guilty for her unhappiness:

Fifteen years form a face, gentleness ebbs with experience, and he was always aware of his own responsibility. He had let the way: the experience that had come to her was the experience selected by himself. He had formed her face.<sup>3</sup>

The exact nature of pity, or of Scobie's pity, although difficult if not impossible to define, will be treated later. A working definition, suitable for the present, is supplied by Marie-Béatrice Mesnet according to whom pity is "one of the harmonics of love in the presence of suffering, but not love itself."<sup>4</sup> Once the latent force of Scobie's pity is unleashed, it cannot be controlled. His integrity as a police officer is stained by his breach of regulation in failing to report the clandestine letter concealed by the captain of the "Esperanza". Scobie realizes that this invasion of his integrity by the demands of pity is a sign of disintegration. He compares himself with other police officers who have been convicted of accepting bribes and thinks:

They had been corrupted by money, and he had been corrupted by sentiment. Sentiment was the more dangerous, because you couldn't name its price.<sup>5</sup>

The unchaining of his capacity for pity begins not only the professional disintegration of the police officer but also the corruption of Scobie's personal moral sense. His conception of truth becomes a sentimentalist distortion:

The truth, he thought, has never been of any real value to any human being--it is a symbol for mathematicians and philosophers to pursue. In human relations kindness and lies are worth a thousand truths.<sup>6</sup>

Pinkie's "doma nobis pacem," also the prayer of Andrews and the whisky priest, is repeated by Scobie. Louise, who in her moments of lucidity is aware of the tension between her and her husband, suggests to



Scobie that after her departure he will have peace:

"You haven't any conception," he accused her angrily, "of what peace means." It was as if someone had spoken slightly of a woman he loved. For he had dreamed of peace by night and day.

For Greene's protagonists peace is the hardly attainable El Dorado.

At the end of the first part of Book I Scobie has promised to send Louise away; he has irrevocably compromised himself and his peace for the happiness of another. He further endangers himself by borrowing money from a Syrian trader and smuggler, Yusef. Before Louise's departure there is one other important event. Scobie is sent to investigate the suicide of Pemberton, a young District Commissioner. He is given another object on which to vent his pity. This time he is confronted with the death of an innocent:

When Scobie turned the sheet down to the shoulder he had the impression that he was looking at a child in a night-shirt quietly asleep: the pimples were the pimples of puberty and the dead face seemed to bear the trace of no experience beyond the classroom or the football field. "Poor child," he said aloud.

When the local priest begins quoting "the church's teaching" regarding suicide, Scobie interrupts: "Even the Church can't teach me that God doesn't pity the young. . . ." The affinity between the fate of Pemberton and the ensuing fate of Scobie is emphatically stressed by the similarity in their nicknames; Pemberton signs his suicide note "Dicky" while Scobie's "hated nickname" is "Ticki". Later, in a state of semi-consciousness, he half identifies himself with Pemberton and cannot remember whether he is Dicky or Ticki.

At the close of Book I the sense of impending doom has been carefully established. The appearance of the vulture, Scobie's "odd premonitory sense of guilt," and his self-identification with Pemberton all underline

it. His personal and professional integrity have been compromised by his desperate attempts to make Louise happy. One is tempted to say that his consequent actions are inevitable; but from the point of view of Scobie's motivation they are not. As has been so aptly observed,

It is his personal actions--chosen deliberately, their consequences foreseen (if only in confuso as the theologians would say)--which charge the book on every page with a realization of personal responsibility.<sup>9</sup>

The creation of complementary characters is one of the most effective techniques in Greene's fiction. A complementary character is one who, by his relationship with the protagonist or by his importance as an object of comparison or contrast with the protagonist, helps the reader understand the characterization of the central figure. The complementary character as used by Greene may take the form of an aspired-to self, as Carlyon in The Man Within, of a protecting guardian, like Kate in England Made Me, of a mediatrix, like Rose in Brighton Rock, or of an ideological opposite, as is the lieutenant in The Power and the Glory. In The Heart of the Matter the characterization of both Wilson and Harris is complementary to the story of Scobie.

Wilson is one of Greene's reappearing spies. The scene is a British colony in wartime with the Vichy French a few miles away. The regular police, Field Security Police, and secret service agents are caught in a comical web of conflicting reports and orders. Although Wilson with his secret code book is supposed to be on a very hush-hush assignment, practically everyone in the colony, including the people on whom he is reporting, becomes aware of his occupation. This is typical of his ineffectiveness. He is another of Greene's characters who try to smother any individualizing trait. Although fond of poetry he professes disinterest

and he has his volumes of Wallace for public exhibition. Wilson falls in love with Louise, the wife of Scobie, who is one of the men on whom he is spying. He writes a poem dedicated to her for his old school magazine and after Scobie's death, in a painful proposal, states that he can make Louise happy. By realizing the asininity of his claim Louise demonstrates her superiority to Wilson. The theme of pursuit, important in most of Greene's fiction, has only an ancillary significance in The Heart of the Matter, but on that secondary level it is represented by the Wilson-Scobie relationship.

The work of Harris, like that of Wilson, is concerned with secrecy; he is a sanitation inspector. While Wilson loves Louise and hates Scobie, Harris despises Louise and has a pitying friendship for her husband. It is significant that they are both "Old Downhamians" but whereas "Like Minty in England Made Me, Harris is one more victim of a childish fidelity to his Alma Mater,"<sup>10</sup> Wilson disavows any conscious sentimental association with his former school. Harris eschews the society of women and Wilson is an ineffectual lover. Actually both Wilson and Harris are childish. While it is Harris who invents the silly cockroach game and suggests a championship, Wilson soon enters into the spirit of what is essentially a substitute for public school cricket. During their first match Wilson disputes the score, but since Harris invented the game, he not illogically claims the right of making the rules. The object of the game is the accumulation of points by swatting cockroaches. Their dispute and reconciliation remind one of the fervour, competitive spirit, and quick forgiveness of school-children. Both Wilson and Harris are emotionally and intellectually immature and, as such, contrast vividly with Scobie,



who idealizes childhood in others but cannot recapture it himself. The cockroach championship reminds the reader of Minty's game with the spider. Unable to control men Greene's ineffectives turn to insects.

Part II of The Heart of the Matter precipitates the action by introducing Helen Rolt. She is a survivor of a wartime sinking in which the man to whom she was married for a month died. Scobie's reaction to the disaster shows that in his concept of responsibility there is an element of intellectual pride:

. . . and the weight of all that misery lay on his shoulders. It was as if he had shed one responsibility only to take on another. This was a responsibility he shared with all human beings, but there was no comfort in that, for it sometimes seemed to him that he was the only one who recognized it.<sup>11</sup>

However it is Helen Rolt who becomes the special target of Scobie's epidemical pity: "Scobie always remembered how she was carried into his life on a stretcher, grasping a stamp album, with her eyes fast shut."

Helen is another innocent. Like Coral of The Power and the Glory she takes a childish delight in the fact that she doesn't believe. In Greene's novels disbelief is the homage paid by innocence to experience. Scobie visits her in the Nissen hut, brings stamps for her album, and tries to amuse her as he would a child. But his trust in the "security of his age" is unfounded. When a drunk RAF officer tries to pick her up Scobie realizes how vulnerable she is to abuse and pain. According to his misguided logic, what is pitiable is desirable:

When the sound of Bagster's feet receded, she raised her mouth and they kissed. What they had both thought was safety proved to have been the camouflage of an enemy who works in terms of friendship, trust, and pity.<sup>12</sup>

For Scobie pity is a sexual stimulus. When he sleeps with Helen, he succumbs to the temptation of pity, not lust.



Scobie realizes the inherent contradiction of his position: the need to maintain the happiness of two women, a wife whom he pities and a mistress whom he pities. He is unwilling to accept an easy solution. After a quarrel with Helen she tells him not to return, but he knows that she spoke in anger and still needs and wants him. During their unhappy relationship Helen becomes a second Louise. "Something in her voice reminded him oddly of Louise." Scobie mentally refers to his wife as "poor Louise" and soon unconsciously thinks of his mistress as "poor Helen".

The complexity of Scobie's character is suggested by the variety of epithets he earns: for the natives he used to be the "bad man", according to his immediate superior he is "Scobie the Just", Louise calls him "Ticki", Harris, "poor old Scobie", and for Yusef, he is a "good man". The applicability of each reputation depends upon the particular relationship of pity in which he is engaged.

Louise returns to the African colony sooner than expected. It is later revealed that she was informed of her husband's infidelity. Both she and Scobie are Roman Catholic and in order to force her husband to discontinue the affair, she suggests that they receive communion together. She takes it for granted that her husband would not make a sacrilegious communion and therefore would at least have to try to avoid the occasion of temptation. Louise uses religion as a criminologist uses a lie detector. Scobie's total self-honesty prohibits him from going to confession because he does not even wish to try to avoid Helen. "God can wait, he thought: how can one love God at the expense of one of his creatures?" By feigning illness he avoids an unworthy communion. He knows, however, that if he does not follow Louise to the communion rail, she will

know his unrepentance, so he receives. In his own words, "He was desecrating God because he loved a woman--was it even love, or was it just a feeling of pity and responsibility?" Unwilling to deny the appetite of his pity for Helen and knowing that he must continuously be "desecrating God" in order to deceive Louise, he decides on suicide as the only alternative. He plans his exit so that it will appear as a natural death although Wilson, in a later examination of his diary, learns and publicizes the truth. Before taking the fatal dose Scobie realizes his complete isolation from the rest of mankind:

No man surely was less alone, with his wife upstairs and his mistress little more than five hundred yards away up the hill, and yet it was loneliness that seated itself like a companion who doesn't need to speak. It seemed to him that he had never been so alone before.<sup>13</sup>

As a literary character Scobie is Greene's closest approximation to the Aristotelian concept of tragic hero. The character's fate is to some degree the product of his tragic flaw. I believe it is generally agreed that the tragic flaw in the case of The Heart of the Matter is the leading character's uncontrollable pity, but in their understanding of this pity, critics differ. In my opinion the most accurate analysis is that of Donat O'Donnell who sees Scobie's pity as integrally related to Greene's recurrent interest in the innocence-experience or childhood-maturity nexus. He writes:

'Pity,' then, in Scobie, is an emotional loyalty to his own childhood, as well as a generalization of that loyalty by an ability to discern and cherish childhood subsisting in others. But the generalization, the transfer to others of that ardent and arrested self-loyalty, produces only a painful and precarious adulthood.<sup>14</sup>

The veracity of this observation is evident when one considers that Scobie often treats the objects of his pity as if they were children. This is true not only of his dealings with Louise and Helen, but also of his early relationship with Ali, his judgement of Pemberton, and his leniency with the captain of the "Esperanca". As Scobie sees him,

He kept on wiping his eyes with the back of his hand like a child--an unattractive child, the fat boy of the school. Against the beautiful and the clever and the successful one can wage a pitiless war, but not against the unattractive: then the millstone weighs on the breast.<sup>15</sup>

O'Donnell continues his analysis of Scobie's pity by remarking:

Superficially, one of the most curious features of The Heart of the Matter is its almost complete lack of social interest, or rather its implication of social stasis.<sup>16</sup>

Answering his own objections he continues:

In reality, however, the sense of history is present, but according to the classical mode compressed into the personal relationships of a few people. Scobie's relations to his pity-group are very much those of a colonizer to his natives.<sup>17</sup>

One may also add that Scobie's relationship with the natives shows that they are included in the ever-widening circle of his "pity-group". For Scobie pity is associated with love; it also becomes a substitute for love. Thinking of both Louise and Helen, he wonders:

Do I, in my heart of hearts, love either of them, or is it only that this automatic terrible pity goes out to any human need--and makes it worse?<sup>18</sup>

While intended to alleviate the pain of others, Scobie's pity also serves to fulfil a personal need. He must pity others to gratify himself. On the whole O'Donnell's character analysis is accurate and can be textually verified. Yet it is not sufficient to explain the final tragedy--suicide by a conscientious man who fully accepts the teaching of his church



regarding self-destruction. One of the most interesting aspects of The Heart of the Matter has been overlooked: the internal conflict between Scobie's religion and his personal myth.

As a literary character Scobie fully and knowingly assents to the teaching of his church. Parallel to but distinct from intellectual assent to a religion there exists his personal myth, and the two are inherently opposed. The Crucifixion, a basic dogma of Christianity, states that Christ was killed to expiate man's sin. Being the Son of God and a divine person himself, he allowed that he be killed. Scobie's Christianity which teaches Christ was killed conflicts with his myth which urges that Christ committed suicide:

Christ had not been murdered: you couldn't murder God: Christ had killed himself: he had hanged himself on the cross as surely as Pemberton from the picture rail.<sup>19</sup>

Scobie's myth is an inversion of the Christian concept of the Crucifixion. Thus Scobie experiences a feeling of affinity with Pemberton after the latter's suicide. His mythical inversion also throws light on the discrepancy between his theology and his morality. The intellectual assent of his theology is guided by his Christianity; his practical day-by-day conduct, or morality, is directed by his myth. Scobie's Christianity or faith is basically (but not exclusively) an assent of the intellect. His myth is a reaction of the heart in the Pascalian sense. (Le coeur a ses raisons que la raison ne connaît point.) For a while both enjoy a precarious co-existence. Consciously, Scobie affirms Christianity; unconsciously, he is faithful to his inverted Crucifixion obsession. Although before the final crisis he affirms his religious belief, a certain scepticism haunts him: "How often, he thought, lack of faith helps one to see



more clearly than faith."

The conflicting demands of his transcendental pity precipitates the final crisis. He does not wish to hurt Helen by leaving her, to hurt Louise by abstaining from communion, or to "hurt God" by continuously making a sacrilegious communion. Under the pressure of a self-destructive pity his traditional Christianity is vanquished by his personal myth. The reasons of the heart ( . . . que la raison ne connaît point), triumph. In what Scobie conceives to be an emulation of Christ--not the Christ of Christianity who was killed but the Christ of his myth who killed himself --he ends his own life. His final words are: "O God, I love. . . ." but the sentence is not complete. Greene's eschatology stops in time and with death. Because he is an artist and not an apologist, his novels give no answers. Only rarely do they suggest the hint of an explanation. But because he is a novelist of man's destiny his novels do ask questions:

If one knew, he wondered, the facts, would one have to feel pity even for the planets? If one reached what they called the heart of the matter?<sup>20</sup>

1. The Heart of the Matter, prefatory note.
2. Morton Dauwen Zabel, Craft and Character in Modern Fiction, p. 293.
3. The Heart of the Matter, p. 7.
4. Marie-Béatrice Mesnet, Graham Greene and the heart of the matter, p. 64.
5. The Heart of the Matter, p. 45.
6. ibid., pp. 47-48.
7. ibid., p. 49.
8. ibid., p. 71.
9. Harold C. Gardiner, S. J., Norms for the Novel, p. 85.
10. Mesnet, p. 32.
11. The Heart of the Matter, p. 104.
12. ibid., p. 140.
13. ibid., p. 209.
14. Donat O'Donnell, Maria Cross, p. 87.
15. The Heart of the Matter, p. 40.
16. O'Donnell, p. 89.
17. ibid.
18. The Heart of the Matter, p. 182.
19. ibid., p. 160.
20. ibid., p. 105.

THE END OF THE AFFAIR

In an analysis of The End of the Affair, published in 1951, there are certain critical reservations to be made, and the sooner this is done, the better. The crux of the novel's action is a claimed miracle. Bendrix, presumably killed during an air raid, is miraculously restored to life after Sarah, his lover, vows to discontinue their illicit affair on the condition that he be allowed to live. This is a nebulous base on which to develop the novel's structure. A miracle is a suspension of the operation of the natural law and there is certainly no intrinsic reason why it should be excluded from literature. Greene has chosen to set the novel within a Roman Catholic frame of reference, as is assuredly his privilege. It is not the fact of the miracle but the manner of its use to which the reader objects. The use of the central miracle in The End of the Affair is literally and blatantly a deux ex machina. This question is not related to the reader's personal acceptance or rejection of a particular doctrinal position. Possessing the necessary "power of sympathy" which, according to Maugham, the novelist has a right to expect, the reader accepts the novel's doctrinal position as valid for the purpose of Greene's fictional world. The real objection is that the miracle is not consistent with this fictional world. There is no preparation for the crucial miracle. (Sarah's skilfully portrayed spiritual development succeeds it.) Consequently the reader is left wrestling between his acceptance of a particular world view as the framework for the novel and his knowledge



that the basis of the novel's action is not consistent with that world view.

About the other alleged miracles at the end of the novel, Philip Toynbee writes: "In The End of the Affair the fatal error came near the end, in those fictional miracles to which so many critics took such legitimate exception. It was again a hotting-up of religious belief for fictional purposes, a vulgarisation of the faith."<sup>1</sup> In my opinion the miracle of Bendrix's return to life is a more serious flaw. The later miracles are in poor taste but at least the novel's development does not depend directly on them. Toynbee's view that the use of the miracles in the novel constitutes "a hotting-up of religious belief for fictional purposes," is exact. Greene cannot justly be accused of using fiction for religious purposes. His use of the miraculous in the novel of 1951 should be censured, but still he emerges as a novelist and not as an apologist. Jacques Madaule, comparing Greene and Bernanos, has observed: "Quoi qu'il fasse, Bernanos apologise toujours quelque peu. Greene n'apologise jamais. Les cas qu'il nous présente n'ont pas valeur d'exemple. Ils sont simplement ce qu'ils sont."<sup>2</sup> If this were the whole case there would be little more to say. But after one has taken into consideration the novel's defects, it still remains an interesting and important book in Greene's body of writing.

The End of the Affair is primarily a novel of character. Sarah undergoes a process of development more radical, and perhaps less convincing because it is more radical, than that of Andrews or the whiskey priest. This story of an unhappy wife who finds a relative fulfilment in the company of her lover and later vows to deny her passion shows how far

Greene has progressed in his ability to portray female characters. Jacques Madaule has carefully analysed the role of women in Greene's writing and has drawn some interesting conclusions:

La femme est toujours chez Graham Greene plus naïve, plus simple, plus une que l'homme; elle n'est point partagée comme lui entre le bien et le mal. Ou bien elle adhère, pardela les apparences, au bien véritable, perçant de son regard tranquille tous les faux semblants; ou bien elle demeure prise aux apparences, et alors elle est infiniment pire que l'homme, qui est toujours divisé, bon ou mauvais contre lui-même.<sup>3</sup>

This is essentially true of Greene's early work and, to a degree, of everything preceding The End of the Affair, but it does not apply to Greene's delineation of Sarah. By 1951 Greene had progressed in his ability to draw women characters. The quasi-allegorical figures such as Elizabeth and Lucy in The Man Within and Milly and Kate in It's a Battlefield are no longer present. Sarah's characterization is the work of a more mature artist. Putting aside the interlude of the miracle, Sarah's portrayal, whether as the "bitch and fake" which she imagines herself to be, or as the victim of her struggle between the flesh and the spirit, is a masterful character sketch.

Madaule views Greene's world as a matriarchy.<sup>4</sup> This is true in a limited sense. In Greene's fiction woman is an indispensable element in man's development. Whether her influence be for good or evil, every contact affects vitally, either lightens or increases the burden of the male protagonist, contributes either to his self-knowledge or his self-deception. In The End of the Affair Sarah directly and profoundly affects the life of her lover, her husband, and her admirer, Smythe. Her influence is always contagious, restraining and directing the lives of those with

whom she comes in contact. An American critic, Harold C. Gardiner, S. J., has written on the use and composition of Sarah's diary in the novel:

It is an interesting and key fact that once the reader turns with the narrator, to the pages of the diary in which Sarah recounts her agony to be true to her promise and to end her affair, the seriousness of the language progressively gives way to a reflected and filtered treatment of passion that removes even the slightest suspicion of undue occupation with flesh at the expense of the spirit. As Sarah's realization of real love and purity grows, Greene's style mirrors the purity of her new-found world.<sup>5</sup>

Greene's skilful depiction of Sarah's development can be demonstrated by comparing various sections of her diary in a chronological order. The first pages are a record of scepticism and hate, fostered by her immense pain:

Why do I write "Dear God"? He isn't dear--not to me he isn't. If he exists, then he put the thought of this yow into my mind, and I hate him for it. I hate.<sup>6</sup>

Later her dilemma takes on the form of an opposition between the flesh and the spirit. Like Minty in England Made Me, she tends to view them as inherently incompatible. Religion, or the idea of religion, suggests itself as a means of escaping the ties of the flesh:

When I came in and sat down and looked around I realised it was a Roman church, full of plaster statues, the crucifix, all the emphasis on the human body. I was trying to escape from the human body and all it needed. I thought I could believe in some kind of a God that bore no relation to ourselves, something vague, amorphous, cosmic. . . .<sup>7</sup>

The resolution of Sarah's spiritual conflict is her realization of the power and meaning of love. The irritating element of Manicheism which colours much of Greene's description of human love is absent in



The End of the Affair. There is more than a hint of *Duns Scotus* in the novel's affirmation of the relationship between love of man and love of God. The capacity to love becomes the possibility of salvation. In the second last entry of her diary Sarah is no longer tormented by a supposed opposition of the flesh and the spirit. She realizes that her love of Bendrix and love of God are not contradictory but complementary. It is, I believe, a unique passage in contemporary English fiction:

Did I ever love Maurice as much before I loved You? Or was it really You I loved all the time? Did I touch You when I touched him? Could I have touched You if I hadn't touched him first, touched him as I never touched Henry, anybody? And he loved me and touched me as he never did with any other woman. But was it me he loved, or You. For he hated in me the things you hate. He was on Your side all the time without knowing it. You willed our separation, but he willed it too. He worked for it with his anger and his jealousy, and he worked for it with his love. For he gave me so much love and I gave him so much love that soon there wasn't anything left when we'd finished but You. For either of us. I might have taken a lifetime spending a little love at a time, doling it out here and there, on this man and that. But even the first time, in the hotel near Paddington, we spent all we had. You were there, teaching us to squander, like You taught the rich man, so that one day we might have nothing left except this love of You. But You are too good to me. When I ask You for pain, You give me peace. Give it him too. Give him my peace--he needs it more.<sup>8</sup>

Part of the artistry of Sarah's development is that at the end of her metamorphosis she bears a logical resemblance to her previous self. She does not become a contemplative ascetic, but stays true to character and maintains a spirit of rebellion and a hope of evasion. These are the final words in her diary:

I'm not at peace anymore. I just want him like I used to in the old days. I want to be eating sandwiches with him. I want to be drinking with him in a bar. I'm tired and I don't want any more pain. I want Maurice. I want ordinary corrupt human love. Dear God, You know I want to want Your pain, but I don't want it now. Please take it away for a while and give it to me another time.<sup>9</sup>



The contrast of appearance and reality is present in much of Greene's writing and his characters are often trapped by the affinity of presumed opposites. Sarah realizes that two qualities, while appearing to be contradictory, may actually be complementary. The maturity she achieves through pain teaches her that love and hate are not mutually exclusive reactions but closely related ones. She thinks:

. . . sometimes I've hated Maurice, but would I have hated him if I hadn't loved him too? O God, if I could really hate You, what would that mean?<sup>10</sup>

According to this outlook hatred does not exclude love but presupposes it, perhaps in a distorted form. As Bendrix observes, "Hatred seems to operate the same glands as love; to even produce the same actions." What love and hatred do have in common is that both require an involvement of the will. Greene's association (not identification) of love and hate gives a subtle complexity to all emotional entanglements. I suppose the logical refutation of his concept of love and hate is the distinction that while both necessitate an involvement of the will, love is creative and hate, destructive. As a general philosophic maxim the distinction seems convincing. But it does not affect Greene's truth. As an artist he is hardly concerned with the convenient simplicity of textbooks. The love and hatred in which Greene is interested have a great deal in common. As Bendrix sums it up:

Hatred seems to operate the same glands as love; it even produces the same actions. If we had not been taught how to interpret the story of the Passion, would we have been able to say from their actions alone whether it was the jealous Judas or the cowardly Peter who loved Christ?<sup>11</sup>

What love and hate do have so much in common is their mutual demand for sacrifice. Hatred sacrifices its object for the gratification of self;

love sacrifices self for the gratification of another. The need to sacrifice is innate in Greene's world. Blood, it would seem, is the only cleanser.

If Sarah's characterization is something new in Greene's writing, the same cannot be said of Bendrix. While I do not believe that one can rightly speak of a typical Greene character, he is at least easily recognized as a creation of his author.

Like so many of Greene's creations Bendrix is afraid of belief in God and the obligations such a belief imposes. He is also afraid of the unquiet demon within him who keeps whispering that human life is more than the sum of its biological components. But fear of belief in God is no insulation against it. Finally doubt secedes as Bendrix reluctantly acknowledges "that other in whom in those days we were lucky enough not to believe." Greene's use of imagery is often strikingly original. One has the feeling that he is comparing belief to an incurable cancer. Sarah writes to Bendrix: "I've caught belief like a disease." After it has gained entry belief devours the person it inhabits. Neither doubt nor sin offer immunity. In Greene's fiction the grace of God is an ever-present reality affecting not only the communion of saints but also the suffering communion of sinners.

Although outwardly misanthropic, Bendrix is afflicted with the propensity towards pity. For Bendrix as for Scobie pity is like an unhealed cut which flows freely at the slightest contact with pain. Bendrix's scorn for Henry is forgotten when the latter becomes a fellow sufferer; he thinks: "I could no longer patronize him; he was one of misery's graduates, he had passed in the same school and for the first

time I thought of him as an equal." The presence of suffering or deformity is necessary to evoke Bendrix's pity, otherwise he maintains an attitude of cynical scorn. This peculiarity is evident in his relationship with Smythe who has an ugly birth mark: "Everytime he turned his unmarked cheek towards me my anger grew; everytime I saw that raw strawberry flush it died away. . . . " On one occasion Bendrix cannot master his will to hurt. The reader is given an example of the mordant, even sadistic type of humour sometimes present in Greene's work. Bendrix enquires of the private detective Parkis why his boy is called Lance:

"After Sir Lancelot, sir. Of the Round Table."

"I'm surprised. That was a rather unpleasant episode, surely."

"He found the Holy Grail," Mr. Parkis said.

"That was Galahad. Lancelot was found in bed with Guinevere."

Why do we have this desire to tease the innocent? Is it envy? Mr. Parkis said sadly, looking across at his boy as though he had betrayed him, "I hadn't heard."<sup>12</sup>

Yet Bendrix's cynicism is not convincing. It is an anodyne to offset his need to pity. Bendrix the person is inclined to pity; only the persona is a cynic.

In a recent critical study of some modern novelists Sean O'Faolain entitles his chapter on Greene "Graham Greene or I suffer, therefore I am."<sup>13</sup> Frequently in Greene's novels one senses that suffering is a necessary condition for the affirmation of personal existence. The thought is made explicit by Bendrix:

The sense of unhappiness is so much easier to convey than that of happiness. In misery we seem aware of our own existence, even though it may be in the form of a monstrous egotism--this pain of mine is individual, this nerve that winces belongs to me and to no other. But happiness annihilates us; we lose our identity.<sup>14</sup>



Actually Bendrix's existence is not dependent on his unhappiness. As Greene sees it, existence on anything higher than the vegetable or brute animal level must be purposeful. Self-knowledge, the Socratic gnothi sauton, is its necessary prerequisite. But it is sorrow or rather the individuality of sorrow which pricks man's knowledge of himself and makes purposeful existence possible. Suffering, pain, unhappiness, sorrow, call it what you will, becomes a creative force. As the excerpt from Leon Bloy with which Greene prefaces the novel states it, "Man has places in his heart which do not yet exist, and into them enters suffering in order that they may have existence." Greene's endorsement of pain, however, is generically different from the racial and nation theorizing of the Black Shirts and the Brown Shirts. What Greene suggests is something personal and individual, motivated from within, not demanded from without. It is simply the acceptance of the cross, the will to relive the Passion on the human level.

In The End of the Affair Greene's use of marriage and infidelity as literary themes is more prominent than in his other novels. And it is something which should be taken into consideration. Hilda Graef, a Catholic critic, commenting upon the frequency of adultery in Greene's work writes that the author, "like Luther, is more deeply convinced of the inevitability of sin than of the efficacy of grace, and of the inevitability of adultery rather than of the sanctity of marriage."<sup>15</sup> Later she continues:

To describe marriage and human love almost uniformly in terms of disappointment and degradation, to have nothing to say of the profound happiness they can bring, of the marvelous transformation they can work in men and women is to present us with a caricature, not with a true picture of the world and of our fellow men and women. Indeed, we have recently read so much about the horrors of marriage from our more famous Catholic authors that



it would be a welcome change to be told of its brighter side. It might even be quite a searching test of their genius to present a happy marriage without falling into either sentimentality or clichés.<sup>16</sup>

There can certainly be no dispute with the last sentence. Still Hilda Graef and other critics who adopt the same attitude are ignoring an important aspect of Greene's art. Marriage has a symbolic function in his novels; it represents in microcosm man's relation to the world. As in marriage each partner forms and is formed by the character of the other, so man is both made by and a maker of the conditions of his world. It is the old antithesis of activity and passivity, doer and done to, freedom and necessity.

Marital infidelity has a corresponding symbolic value. Adultery represents the inability of man to live in harmony in his world and his unwillingness to face honestly the conditions of his existence. Sarah's vow to abandon Bendrix conflicts with her love of him. Her final victory is not only one of the spirit over the flesh or of grace over sin but also the triumph of order over chaos. And it is order which makes possible the attainment of freedom. Chaos, whether it be moral, emotional, or intellectual, enslaves man and makes him subservient to the whims of caprice. It is order which makes possible the attainment of human freedom. The important thing about Sarah is not that she subdues her passion, hears the call of grace, or intercedes for miracles. Her real victory is her ability to shed the straight jacket of moral chaos and achieve the freedom which is the concomitant of order.

1. Philip Toynbee, The Observer, December 4, 1955, p. 11.
2. Jacques Madaule, Graham Greene, p. 14.
3. ibid., pp. 289-290.
4. ibid., p. 327.
5. Harold C. Gardiner, S. J., Norms for the Novel, p. 32.
6. The End of the Affair, pp. 77-78.
7. ibid., p. 91.
8. ibid., pp. 103-104.
9. ibid., p. 109.
10. ibid., p. 93.
11. ibid., pp. 14-20.
12. ibid., p. 63.
13. Sean O'Faolain, The Vanishing Hero, pp. 73-97.
14. The End of the Affair, p. 37.
15. Hilda Graef, "Marriage and our Catholic Novelists," edited by Rev. John B. Sheerin, C.S.P., The Catholic World, Vol. 189, No. 113, June, 1959.
16. ibid.

**THE QUIET AMERICAN**

The Quiet American, published in 1956, is the latest work to date which Greene includes among his "novels" as distinct from his "entertainments". The author has placed Our Man in Havana (1958), in the second category. The novel's publication followed a personal trip to Indo-China during the French-Vietminh struggle; but in a prefatory letter to friends in Saigon Greene writes that the book "is a story and not a piece of history."<sup>1</sup>

The narrative has a very strong and somewhat tiresome element of what is usually called anti-Americanism. This tendency is more pronounced in The Quiet American than in any of Greene's other novels, but it is not new. His critical attitude towards America is evident in many of his movie reviews and in The Lawless Roads. To what degree personal reasons influenced it is difficult to say. Greene's antipathy may have been fostered by difficulties with the United States Government. When he was nineteen Greene was for a short while a member of a Communist or pro-Communist group and because of this he has come under a provision of the McCarran Act barring entry to the U.S.A. of persons who have been members of "subversive organizations". Added to his personal grievances is the fact that anti-Americanism has been and still is very much à la page. Of The Quiet American Victor de Pange remarks,

Il n'est donc pas étrange que ce livre soit une satire de l'Amérique. Greene a souhaité en faire une contre-partie anglaise du livre d'Henry James qu'il admire tout particulièrement: The American.



Mais il a voulu mettre en évidence toute la part d'enfantillage et d'innocence de l'esprit américain, qu'il estime être la cause inconsciente des fautes commises au nom de la civilisation occidentale.<sup>2</sup>

Whatever the case may be, in his latest novel America is used as a scape-goat to represent superficiality, materialism, and innocence, attributes which have always evoked Greene's anathema.

The exaggeration, caricature, and vulgarity which accompany much of the anti-Americanism in Greene's 1956 novel are evident in the description of the American attache. He is conveniently named Joe (perhaps a hybrid of GI Joe and Joe College). This is how he greets Fowler's visit to the embassy:

"Come in, come in, Tom," Joe called boisterously. "Glad to see you. How's your leg? We don't often get a visit from you to our little outfit. Pull up a chair. Tell me how you think the new offensive's going. Saw Granger last night at the Continental. He's for the North again. That boy's keen. Where there's news there's Granger. Have a cigarette. Help yourself. You know Miss Hei? Can't remember all these names--too hard for an old fellow like me. I call her 'Hi, there!' --she likes it. None of this stuffy colonialism. . . ."<sup>3</sup>

Much of the novel's invective is mouthed by Fowler.

Suddenly I was angry; I was tired of the whole pack of them with their private stores of Coca-Cola and their portable hospitals and their Wydecars and their not quite latest guns.<sup>4</sup>

The smugness and flippancy so prevalent in The Quiet American are hardly consonant with the seriousness of purpose which characterizes even the lowest form of satire.

At the end of the novel, as if to compensate for the harsh treatment of Granger, the American journalist is shown as a rather decent fellow after all. Although informed by telegram that his son is dying of polio, he refuses to leave his post because by so doing he would expose

an associate. A co-worker has taken a few days unauthorized holiday for reasons which would hardly impress his employer. Fowler stays to cover for him and to protect him from losing his job. At closer examination, however, this fidelity is not very convincing. Whether intentionally or not, it reminds one of that canine faithfulness, the type which has given coin to the "man's best friend" myth.

Although Fowler may be a more interesting character, the principal character of the novel is Alden Pyle. There is nothing subtle about his characterization. It is generally agreed--Fowler, Vigot, and Phuong apply the epithet to him--that he is a "quiet" American. As Fowler describes him to Vigot, "He's a good chap in his way. Serious. Not one of those noisy bastards at the Continental. A quiet American." Vigot answers, a little too conveniently, "a very quiet American." Pyle has "an unmistakably young and unused face." He is "quite possibly a virgin." Furthermore he eats "Vit-Health" sandwiches sent by his mother. In short,

He belonged to the sky-scraper and the express lift,  
the ice-cream and the dry Martinis, milk at lunch,  
and chicken sandwiches on the Merchant Limited.<sup>5</sup>

Pyle is the second intellectual in Greene's novels. (Conrad in It's a Battlefield is the first.) According to Fowler, and everything about him is according to Fowler,

. . . Pyle had taken a good degree in--well, one of those subjects Americans can take degrees in: perhaps public relations or theatrecraft, perhaps even Far Eastern studies (he had read a lot of books).<sup>6</sup>

Pyle is a dedicated philanthropist; his object is not any particular person, "but a country, a continent, a world." The good he is determined to do has been suggested in a book by York Harding, a fictitious American

sociologist or political scientist, who omnisciently wrote that the East needs a "Third Force". The creation of this panacea becomes Pyle's mania. Fowler blames himself for not having detected earlier the danger of the quiet American's misguided philanthropy:

Perhaps I should have seen that fanatic gleam,  
the quick response to a phrase, the magic sound of  
figures: Fifth Column, Third Force, Seventh Day.  
I might have saved all of us a lot of trouble,  
even Pyle, if I had realized the direction of that  
indefatigable young brain.

Like the police lieutenant in The Power and the Glory, Pyle is a fanatic do-gooder. And, like the lieutenant, he is also an apostle of human perfectibility.

"The Quiet American," writes one critic, "contains Greene's most recent working over of a theme that has occupied him in various other contexts: the precarious and ambiguous course of innocence in a fallen world."<sup>8</sup> In Greene's fiction innocence is analagous to a contagious disease against which one must seek protection:

That was my first instinct--to protect him. It never occurred to me that there was greater need to protect myself. Innocence always calls mutely for protection, when we would be so much wiser to guard ourselves against it: innocence is like a dumb leper who has lost his bell, wandering the world, meaning no harm.<sup>9</sup>

Innocence is sometimes described as a mental disease, "a kind of insanity."

The description of Pyle's courtship of Phuong shows the title character's concept of fair play. After he has fallen in love with Fowler's mistress, Pyle undertakes a hazardous journey in order to inform his friend. His reason for the trip is that Fowler might have been killed, in which case his own falling in love with Phuong "wouldn't have been honourable." His notion of fair play in love is apparently an outgrowth of the ideal sportsmanship of college athletics. Obligated to return to Saigon he leaves



a note for Fowler and promises "I won't see Phuong until you return. I don't want you to feel that I've been unfair in any way." Pyle's dedication to fair play, his implicit trust in York Harding, as well as his crew-cut, seriousness, and quiet manner, are, within the novel's framework, the stigmas of a college graduate. As, in Greene's earlier novels, Minty, Harris, and Wilson cannot escape the influence of the English public school, so Pyle is doomed to live under the mentalegis of the Ivy League. Greene's graduates are victims of an alumnus complex.

What would appear to be Pyle's redeeming virtue, his total commitment, is actually his fatal vice. The theme of commitment is central in Greene's novels, but it is in The Quiet American that the term engage is first used. As a do-gooder, unreservedly committed to the development of York Harding's remedial Third Force, Pyle is thoroughly engage. He decides to erect this theoretical panacea around General The and supplies him with American aid to organize demonstrations. American residents and embassy personnel are quietly informed of the dangerous times and places. Only the native Indochinese are the victims of the bombs, the chief ingredients of General The's demonstrations. One such event, intended to coincide with a French Army parade, was not cancelled when the parade was postponed and civilians, mostly women and children, were the victims. Pyle agrees that The was rather careless and intends to warn him that further aid will be withheld if things are not better planned. His fanatical yearning to create York Harding's Third Force binds him to the suffering and death for which his aid is responsible. After the untimely bombing he notices blood on his shoe but remains unscathed, remarking that he needs a shoe-shine before seeing the Minister.



The Quiet American marks a fundamental change in Greene's novels. In the earlier work the man engagé is the ersatz-hero in Greene's un-heroic world, but in his latest novel Pyle is dangerous because he is engagé. The explanation is suggested in a passage by Jacques Madaule contained in a critical work published seven years before The Quiet American.

En face de ce monde visible, monstrueux et tout-puissant, il n'y a que trois attitudes possibles: ou bien l'accepter, renoncer à soi-même et à son propre monde. Alors on peut espérer faire une assez honorable carrière. Ou bien le nier, faire comme s'il n'existait pas; vivre le plus sérieusement du monde dans un univers imaginaire et se figurer même, si l'on veut, que le monde ou l'on vit et vraiment le monde réel. C'est, par exemple l'attitude de Minty. Ou bien entrer en lutte ouverte avec lui et accepter l'issue fatale du combat. C'est le parti que prennent les "hommes traqués", qui sont si nombreux dans l'oeuvre de Graham Greene.<sup>10</sup>

The first alternative is self-betrayal, a negation of individual demands in order to achieve identity with the crowd. (Perhaps the classic example in contemporary fiction is Alberto Moravia's The Conformist.) The second choice is to live in a world of appearance, oblivious of reality. The final position is that of the man engagé. Superficially, Pyle is a man engagé, but his commitment is to a world of appearance--the unsubstantiated theory of York Harding--and not to the world of reality. He lives in an "imaginary universe".

R. W. B. Lewis, in an article entitled "The Fiction of Graham Greene: Between the Horror and the Glory", writes of Pyle:

He belongs with those persons who, like Ida in Brighton Rock, are satisfied not only that they know the difference between right and wrong but

that it is the only difference worth knowing; relentless missionaries from what Greene calls "the sinless empty graceless chromium world" sent to bring disaster upon residents of the (for Greene) infinitely realer and more vibrant, though narrower and sparser, world of good and evil, of heaven and hell.<sup>11</sup>

I cite this passage because Lewis rightly compares Pyle and Ida Arnold, although his explanation of their similarity is not, I believe, quite accurate. The Quiet American in no way implies that Pyle adheres to a right-wrong outlook and not a good-evil one. In an argument with Fowler (who is an atheist although this is hardly an issue in the novel), Pyle claims that he believes in God and is a Unitarian. The species of his moral outlook is not implied. What Ida Arnold and Pyle do share is an adherence to the world of appearance and a corresponding ignorance of the world of reality. Within Greene's framework Ida is ignorant of moral reality while Pyle is ignorant of political reality. They are both deceived by appearance and their commitment is to illusion (l'univers imaginaire of Madaule) and not reality.

Two serious flaws mar the characterization of Fowler: he is too recognizable as a Greene character and the Fowler-Pyle antithesis is too obvious. Their distinction is partially revealed through their association with Phuong: "She had attached herself to youth and hope and seriousness and now they had failed her more than age and despair." The antithesis of youth-age and hope-despair is also one of innocence-experience and credulity-scepticism. It is, I believe, overdone.

The character of Fowler, the narrator of The Quiet American, is more than structurally similar to that of Bendrix, the narrator in The End of the Affair. They are both described as writers: Bendrix is a novelist

and Fowler a journalist. Also, they are both acute cynics. Fowler's attitude not only expresses the anti-American sentiment, but other criticisms as well. When he "learns" of Pyle's death he decides to cable his newspaper, reflecting,

It was only a gesture: I knew too well that the French correspondents would already be informed, or if Vigot had played fair (which was possible), then the censors would hold my telegram till the French had filed theirs.<sup>12</sup>

He also thinks:

It wouldn't have done to cable the details of his true career, that before he died he had been responsible for at least fifty deaths, for it would have damaged Anglo-American relations, the Minister would have been upset.<sup>13</sup>

Like Bendrix, Fowler is afraid of old age. And like him also, his love life is inextricably complicated. His favourite mistress left him because of his jealousy; Phuong leaves him for Pyle; his estranged wife will not divorce him. (When she finally agrees to a divorce, it is too late.) Both Bendrix and Fowler succumb to the temptation of inflicting pain. Bendrix hurts Parkis by explaining the real significance of his son's name. Fowler similarly disillusion Pyle:

"The first dog I ever had was called Prince. I called him after the Black Prince. You know, the fellow who. . . ."

"Massacred all the women and children in Limoges."

"I don't remember that."

"The history books gloss over it."<sup>14</sup>

The passage continues:

I was to see many times that look of pain and disappointment touch his eyes and mouth, when reality didn't match the romantic ideas he cherished, or when someone he loved or admired dropped below the impossible standard he had set.<sup>15</sup>



The similarity between Bendrix and Fowler goes to the point of a verbal parallel. With Parkis in mind Bendrix wonders: "Why do we have this desire to tease the innocent?" And Fowler, referring to Pyle, echoes: "Why does one want to tease the innocent?" But adamant cynicism is only one side of Fowler's character. Like Scobie, he can also bleed for the pain of others. After receiving a letter from his wife he reflects: "I had forced her to write it, and I could feel her pain in every line."

Originally Fowler was aloof from the war waging around him. He tells Pyle "I'm not engagé." When he finally realizes the danger of the American's continued efforts to establish a Third Force, he commits himself. By agreeing to decoy the unsuspecting Pyle into the hands of the Vietminh, he implicitly acquiesces in his murder. The same ambiguity which was present in the murder pact between Scobie and Yusef regarding Ali is evident in The Quiet American. Fowler realizes that he has "become as engagé as Pyle." He knows also that "no decision would be simple again."

Two minor characters of Greene's novel, Vigot and Phuong, contrast interestingly with the figures of Pyle and Fowler. Vigot, the Pascal quoting police officer, is able to survive in Asia without becoming addicted to the fanaticism of the former or the cynicism of the latter. He is impregnable to the excesses of both belief and doubt. Phuong is the only character of any importance who is an indigenous Asian. She begins as the mistress of Fowler, becomes the fiancée of Pyle, and ends as Fowler's mistress once again. She is not immoral, however, but amoral, an unfettered noble savage. Phuong represents the romantic ache which still torments Greene's fiction.



In The Power and the Glory the whiskey priest thinks with his head while his antagonist thinks with his heart. In the succeeding novels the heart is predominant. This is as much the case with Fowler as it is with Scobie and Sarah. Fowler did not wish to be committed; it was his constant boast that he was neutral. Finally, however, he is subdued. As Captain Trouin once explained to him: "It's not a matter of reason or justice. We all get involved in a moment of emotion, and we can't get out." Fowler was trapped by his pity--his pity for the victims of Pyle's good intentions.

Greene's last novel is by no means his best one. The diametric opposition of Pyle and Fowler is strained, and the characterization of Pyle is overdone. He represents what is for Greene the lost generation, but the burden is too heavy. Pyle sinks under the weight of carrying almost every weed in Greene's wasteland.

1. The Quiet American, prefatory letter.
2. Victor de Pange, Graham Greene, p. 21.
3. The Quiet American, p. 190.
4. ibid., p. 132.
5. ibid., p. 16.
6. ibid., p. 17.
7. ibid., p. 23.
8. Joseph M. Duffy, Jr., "The Lost World of Graham Greene," edited by Joseph E. O'Neill, S. J., Thought, XXXIII; 231, June, 1958.
9. The Quiet American, p. 40.
10. Jacques Madaule, Graham Greene, pp. 41-42.
11. R. W. B. Lewis, "The Fiction of Graham Greene: Between the Glory and the Horror," edited by John Crowe Ransom, The Kenyon Review, XIX: 58, December, 1957.
12. The Quiet American, p. 17.
13. ibid.
14. ibid., pp. 91-92.
15. ibid., p. 92.

## CONCLUSION

In this concluding essay I do not intend to posit any dogmatic assertions. There is a paradoxical subtlety about Greene's art which defies categorical judgement. Critics who have ignored this must be aware of the frustration of their efforts. The critic interested in interpretation can only surmise and suggest; he is in no position to dictate the interpretation of others.

One of the most striking characteristics of Greene's fiction is his constant interest in the eternal problems of man's destiny. For this reason he has often been compared with certain contemporary French novelists, especially Bernanos and Mauriac. This comparison is frequently misleading. As different as Bernanos and Mauriac are, they have certain things in common quite alien to Greene. The two French novelists inherit an unbroken (but not uninterrupted) historical and cultural tradition of Roman Catholicism. The theological debates of Pascal and the Jesuits, Bossuet and Fenelon, Lacordaire and Veillot, and, in general, the rich diversity of French Catholic thought, have all contributed to their artistic as well as purely intellectual development.

The position of Greene, a convert to what is, in his country, a minority religion, is very different. Not that the casuistry and doctrinal debate of the continent are unknown or even unimportant to him. I suppose this interplay of religious sentiment has played a role in the formation of his intellectual outlook. I suppose; I do not know. The point is that



the subtleties and forensic of French Catholic thought have not moulded his emotional or artistic outlook. He is in the perhaps fortunate position of being able to regard his faith from without as well as from within, having been a Protestant Christian before becoming a Catholic one. Because Greene is not emotionally or artistically committed to the nuances of intellectual French Catholicism (and the particular prejudices and eccentricities it has engendered), he is able to concentrate on the essentials. As seen in his novels these essentials are God, Christ, and man.

In Greene's novels, as far as I know, there is not one chief character whose religious orientation is not clearly defined. This is true to a lesser degree of many minor characters. Almost every variety of theism and atheism is represented in Greene's fiction.

One religious import from France which is significant in Greene's writing is the pari of Pascal. Indeed this particular Pascalian concept is today in vogue on both sides of the Channel. "O God, if there is a God" is the preamble to Joseph Andrews's prayer in The Man Within. And in The End of the Affair Sarah writes in her diary "Dear God," and then wonders whether God exists. Greene's use of the pari is superficial in comparison with that of Mauriac. In L'Agneau Brigitte Pian tells Dominique: "Je vous le répète: on n'a pas besoin d'avoir la foi pour prier. Il faut prier pour avoir la foi." When used by Greene the pari is a symptom or superstructure of one's religious orientation. For Mauriac it is the very essence of one's religious life. Still their concept of religious doubt is related to the same source.

At least two species of atheism are explored in Greene's novels: the scientific atheism of the marxist police lieutenant in The Power and the Glory and the evangelical atheism of Smythe in The End of the Affair. For both, however, atheism is a substitute religion. The police lieutenant, as well as the whisky priest, wishes to "save" people--to save them from the nothingness of his "dying, cooling world" by an exposition of the marxist dialectic. The police lieutenant does not lack faith. As a marxist he believes in the validity of the dialectic; he also believes in the ultimate accomplishment of his envisioned utopia. The doctrine of the withering away of the state is the most demanding article of faith in any credo.

The atheism of Smythe is also a substitute religion. He belongs to the order of preachers who sermonize atheism on street corners. For him the idea of God is an obsession which cannot be destroyed. Although avowedly an atheist, he never succeeds in ejecting God from his life.

Another recurring position in Greene's novels is that of the uncommitted atheist. The Assistant Commissioner of It's a Battlefield, Fowler, and others are content not to believe without feeling obliged to be crusaders for atheism. These literary characters lack the force of Greene's more dynamic believers and disbelievers alike. They are committed neither for nor against a belief in God.

Greene has been accused of infusing a uniformity of religious sentiment in his believing characters. This is far from the truth. Greene's novels are by no means a manual of orthodox Christian doctrine. The Manicheism of Minty and Pinkie, the hidden God of Sarah (Pascal's Dieu caché), the loving God of the whisky priest, the "vulnerable" God

of Scobie, are all varieties of religious experience depicted by Greene. What is evident in Greene's novels is not a uniformity of belief or disbelief, but a realization that God is important. If God exists, He is important and His existence has a direct bearing on human life. If He did not exist, this fact too would be important. In Greene's work the question of the existence of God, whether affirmed or denied, is the most important question in man's life. Whether the answer is yes or no, and Greene's characters give a variety of both, the question must be answered. Indifference is alien to man's nature.

The figure of Christ appears frequently in Greene's art. An unusual intensity, even a perversion of religious sentiment often accompanies references to the Incarnation:

To think that God Himself had become man.  
Minty could not enter a church without the  
thought, which sickened him, which was more  
to him than the agony in the garden, the  
despair upon the cross.<sup>1</sup>

The idea of the humanity of Christ also haunts Pinkie and Sarah. Scobie's dread of a sacrilegious Communion is heightened by his fear of "hurting" God. According to traditional Christian theology Christ is fully God and fully man. Without denying this many of Greene's characters stress how much Christ is like man. But if Christ is like man, the reverse is also true: man must be, at least potentially, like Christ. For the most compelling of Greene's literary characters--Scobie, the whisky priest, and Sarah--life is an attempt to relive on the human scale the sacrifice of Christ's Passion. The frailty of the whisky priest, the delusion of Scobie, the pride of the flesh which goes against Sarah's love of God, indicate that the attempt is never fully realized on the purely human level. Greene's human



passion ends on Good Friday; but there is a hint of Easter Sunday.

Greene is not a novelist of social protest nor is he an exponent of social engagement. Engagement is a fetish, an evasion of responsibility rather than an acceptance of it. As early as It's a Battlefield one reads: "In a cause was exhilaration, exaltation, a sense of Freedom." A little later Jules thinks:

Shout, sing, be in a crowd, as he was here; that was better than searching in the dark for something as hopelessly gone as the sheltered existence of the womb.<sup>2</sup>

Engagement can only furnish a "sense of freedom" but not freedom itself. The engagement of Pyle in The Quiet American is catastrophic because it loses sight of the individual in its adoration of the group, whether the group be society, the class, the nation. Freedom can only be achieved by the acceptance of personal responsibility. Dedication to the revolution, the proletariat, the zeitgeist, or any other impersonal superimposed symbol is a betrayal of freedom. Freedom is created rather than inherited, created by the individual's personal acceptance of his own responsibility. The Greene hero is responsible in the sense of St. Exupéry: "Chacun est responsable. Chacun seul est responsable. Chacun seul est responsable de tous." This is literally an awful burden. It's acceptance is man's cross and its consummation, the human crucifixion.

Essentially, Greene's work is a series of variations on a single theme: the reaction of the solitary individual to the world in which he is forced to live. The interior monologue of Jules, a secondary character of It's a Battlefield is, in a sense, the theme of all the novels:

Loneliness was only too easily attained; it was in the air one breathed; open any door, it opened on to loneliness in the passage; close the door at night, one shut loneliness in. The toothbrush, the chair, the ewer and the bed were dents in loneliness.



One had only to stop, to stare, to listen, and one was lost. Then sorrow gripped him for all the useless suffering he could do nothing to ease, he was torn by humility, he was desperate for a place in the world, a task, a duty.<sup>3</sup>

It is this sensitivity to the world's pain, uninformed by the truth of Christianity, which explains the dangerous innocence of Greene's professional humanitarians: the Communist police officer who will start a massacre to hasten the realization of his ideal, the fanatical quiet American for whom human carnage is only an unpleasant stage prefacing the panacea of a "Third Force". When this sensitivity is enlightened by Christian truth, however, it leads to that total, human, and creative responsibility which views life as a vocation.

Some of Greene's critics have associated his novels with the Christian Existentialism of Gabriel Marcel. This approach, particularly evident in the work of Marie-Beatrice Meagnet and Paul Rostenne, has contributed to a penetrating insight. It tends to over systematize Greene's novels, however, and to confuse the novelist with the teacher, literary themes with philosophic principles. I do not mean to disparage Greene's interest in the phenomenon of existence. Many of the undercurrents in his novels, the antithesis of innocence and experience, freedom and necessity, etc., are primarily developments of Greene's constant preoccupation with existence in its relation to the human person. Yet to associate his novels with a philosophic system is, I believe, to misunderstand the purpose of the novelist.

The Greene protagonist is basically the responsible individual. Tradition, dogma, authority, and grace are important realities. Still it is the human person who determines and justifies his own fate.

The dramatis personae of Greene are trapped by the sensitivity of their own perception. Their one access to freedom is love. The love of Rose, Sarah, the whisky priest, even Scobie, stripped of the chromium lure of worldly approval, remains as the will to sacrifice. Greene's hope in man is not defeated by the onslaught of the world. The world of betrayal, violence, and lust he portrays is also the world of fidelity, love, and grace. The eternal prayer "dona nobis pacem" is never really denied. In Greene's world hope in man is firmly rooted in a belief in God.

1. England Made Me, p. 109.
2. It's a Battlefield, p. 48.
3. ibid., pp. 171-172.

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