THE APPALLING MYSTERIES: THE VISION OF LOVE IN GRAHAM GREENE'S NOVELS

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by

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate that each of Graham Greene's novels is obsessively concerned with "...the appalling mysteries of love moving through a ravaged world."[1] I do not wish to suggest that this obsession is absent from his other creative works, for an obsession, an overriding preoccupation, cannot be commanded to appear or depart as one chooses; however, because of this paper's nature, I have limited this study to the "novels", which are generally considerdd Greene's most serious and important works, for they stress character development rather than physical action which is emphasized by the "entertainments" - the very nature of the latter demands that the pace be maintained by revealing character quickly and accurately. The entertainments lack the subtlety and profundity of the novels, for they do not stress the supernatural consequences of human actions. The novels, for Greene, seem to have a more serious purpose and perspective. The entertainments, plays, short stories, essays and travel books are referred to when they illustrate a particularly relevant point.

Since Greene did not explore his vision in chronological order, I have not examined his novels in this order. Instead, I have attempted to group the

[1] Graham Greene, The Lawless Roads (Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd., 1971), p. 15.

works according to the particular aspect of love with which each is concerned. This procedure provides a more complete and concentrated view of complex ideas which are frequently presented as integral parts of several novels.

Two books usually classified as novels have been omitted from this study. The Name of the Action and Rumor at Nightfall, Greene's second and third published novels, are crude and exaggerated works which have been regarded as juvenilia by critics and refused republication by Greene who has completely rejected them: "There is no spark of life in The Name of the Action or Rumor at Nightfall because there was nothing of myself in them."[2] I agree with the contention of David Lodge here expressed:

> "Greene has excluded these two novels from the Uniform Edition of his works, and there seems no justification for resurrecting them in a study as short as the present one."[3]

[2] Graham Greene, A Sort of Life (London: The Bodley Head Ltd., 1971), p. 202.

[3] David Lodge, Graham Greene (New York: Columbia University Press, 1966), p. 12.

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To those who wondered.

To Jim Francis who wondered and helped.

To Lynn who wondered, helped and wrote.

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INTRODUCTION

Graham Greene has unequivocally declared his belief that the superior creative writer is driven by a single, controlling obsession which determines the major characteristics of his work:

> "Every creative writer worth our consideration, every writer who can be called in the wide eighteenth-century use of the term a poet, is a victim: a man given over to an obsession."[1]

Greene, with typical reservation, never indicates that he himself has an obsession, but he does guardedly concede that certain ideas recur in his work. "If there are recurrent themes in my novels it is perhaps only because there have been recurrent themes in my life."[2]

These 'recurrent themes' have not gone unnoticed by literary critics. Frequently and arduously, they have examined Greene's concern with innocence, sin, guilt, religion, and betrayal. No one would deny that these, and numerous other themes, are to be found in Greene's novels; however, what has often been overlooked is the complex organization of these 'themes'. There is an overriding concern which forms the minor themes into a highly structured and coherent whole. Greene, too,

[1] Graham Greene, Collected Essays (Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd., 1970), pp. 108-109.

[2] Graham Greene, A Sort of Life (London: The Bodley Head Ltd., 1971), p. 213.

is a victim. His novels are determined by a powerful and dynamic obsession, an obsession with Christian love.

> "...he has devoted his entire serious literary output to illustrating in fallen human terms the one theme which is central to all Christian thought and which the Incarnation and Crucifixion taught us: 'The appalling mysteries of love moving through a ravaged world'."[3]

Although Greene's characters use the term 'love' for such divergent relationships as Kate Farrant's incestuous desire for her brother, the whisky priest's affection for his daughter, and Sarah Miles' abandonment to God, one becomes aware, from a close examination of the novels, that the author himself establishes a rigid criterion by which to distinguish love from sexuality, pity and egotism. Greene's concept of love is based firmly upon religious belief, upon an awareness of the spiritual. In a world without beliefs and values, in a world alienated from the supernatural, love, which is intimately connected to the divine, is impossible. Querry emphasizes this idea when he states, "'Perhaps it's true that you can't believe in a god without loving a human being or love a human being without believing in a god.'"[4]

3 William D. Ellis Jr., "The Grand Theme of Graham Greene," Southwest Review XLI (Summer 1956): 239.

4 Graham Greene, A Burnt-Out Case (Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd., 1970), p. 276.

In a world where decisions and actions have no absolute or infinite relevance, the individual and his deeds become unimportant. Love, like everything else, becomes inconsequential. Without an awareness of the spiritual, man's inept attempts to love degenerate into the egotism of a Conrad Drover, or become, as they do for the Smiths, futile gestures of human concern.

Greene's Christian faith, his Roman Catholicism, forms the basis for his vision of love. He contends that the Christian ethic, with its insistence upon self-sacrifice and self-abnegation, provides the most fertile environment in which love can flourish. Commenting on the tragic and tortured relationship of Edith Lees and Havelock Ellis, Greene writes that they had such potential for love "...one mourns at the thought of what was lost to them because they had not been born into the Christian tradition".[5] The central dogma of Christian theology, God's infinite love for mankind, is the focal point of Greene's obsession. God so loves man that He offered Himself as a sacrificial victim for man's redemption. Man, therefore, owes God an immeasurable debt which can be partially repaid by loving Him. For Greene, divine love, love of God, is man's duty and ultimate achievement. However, the power and demands of God's love are often

5 Greene, Collected Essays, p. 276.

terrifyingly incomprehensible to man. His love is so demanding that it requires nothing less than total destruction of self through conformity to the Divine Will. The recognition of God's love ceaselessly pursuing man often brings, as the whisky priest and Sarah Miles come to realize, not joy and serenity but fear and pain:

> "Once a man admits God's desperate love, nothing will be left for him; for when God loves desperately, the only answer can be loving God desperately. And this means losing one's own life...Indeed, there is the misery of losing God, but there is also the terrible pain of finding God Whose name is love."[6]

The whisky priest perceives that corrupt human nature reacts to God's unfathomable love with terror and aversion:

> " 'We wouldn't recognize that love. It might even look like hate. It would be enough to scare us - God's love. It set fire to a bush in the desert, didn't it, and smashed open graves and set the dead walking in the dark. Oh, a man like me would run a mile to get away if he felt that love around.' "[7]

Greene's faith has not only given him an understanding of the necessity of God's love, it has also substantiated his belief in the value of human

6 W. Peters, "The Concern of Graham Greene", The Month X (November 1953): 288-289.

7 Graham Greene, The Power and the Glory (Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd., 1971), p. 200.

beings' love for one another. Human love provides an intermediary stage where man can learn the virtues required for divine love. Man cannot directly ascent to the infinite. The sacrifice and self-abnegation necessary for divine love are so great that man is unable to move his debased will to choose the suffering which divine love entails. Human love initiates man into the cult of love. For Greene, no one can come to love God who has not first loved man - Greene views those who claim to love only God as hypocrites. However, human nature's capacity for love has been so limited by evil that man finds it impossible even to come directly to love general humanity. Man's attempts to love are so feeble that they resemble "'The smallest glass of love mixed with a pint pot of ditch-water.'"[8] Man needs to be brought from indifference and complacency to love of humanity. All those in Greene's novels who advance to love of humanity do so by first learning to love a specific individual: Francis Andrews loves Elizabeth; the whisky priest loves his daughter; Sarah Miles loves Bendrix. One must learn to tolerate the misery, ugliness and weakness of one person before one can hope to accept these qualities in all men.

Greene has an intense realization of the

[8] Ibid., p. 199.

relationship between divine and human love. Through a spiritual association man's love partakes of the supernatural's power and goodness. Human love leads to love of God; divine love ennobles and perfects human love. Only when human love is based upon a conviction that each individual is made in God's image is it free from egotism; only when divine love is founded upon love of the individual is pious hypocrisy avoided.

Greene's vision is not, however, entirely bound by his religious affiliation. He believes that one must sometimes be disloyal to one's church. The religious sense and formal religion are not inseparable. The need for the regulations and structures of formal religion can be disputed - the need for love cannot. Greene sometimes affronts his Church's teachings when he lauds those Péguy-like characters such as Rose Brown, who would damn themselves for love of others. He generally accepts such sins as Sarah Miles' adultery, the whisky priest's alcoholism, and Francis Andrews' promiscuity since they lead to love. Marie-Beatrice Mesnet has observed that "He (Greene) goes beyond the ethic and beyond the Law, intent only on love and the sin against love".[9] Love can function outside religious laws; religious laws without love become perverse and

[9] Marie-Beatrice Mesnet, Graham Greene and The Heart of the Matter (London: Cresset Press, 1954), p. 114.

destructive. Greene believes that the ultimate indication of salvation is not whether a man observes the laws of religion, but whether he loves. Man's capacity for love reveals his capacity for salvation.

> "Conventional piety and the formal aspects of religion are often slighted because, Greene feels, they tend to drive out the essentials - love of God and love for a corrupt and suffering humanity which is made in God's image."[10]

Even though man's salvation depends upon his ability to love, human nature is so corrupt that love is frequently rejected. To Greene, mankind is involved in the great calamity of original sin, and he believes that evil is integral to man's nature. This idea was corroborated even as early as his childhood readings and observations:

> "Goodness has only once found a perfect incarnation in a human body and never will again, but evil can always find a home there. Human nature is not black and white but black and grey. I read all that in The Viper of Milan and I looked round and I saw that it was so."[11]

Evil, a powerful force, has its roots in another world, that of Satan and Hell. Shapeless and unseen, it pervades every aspect of human existence. Life becomes

[10] Charles J. Rolo, "The Man and the Message", Atlantic Monthly CCVII (May 1961): 65.

[11] Greene, Collected Essays, p. 17.

a battlefield on which rages the incessant struggle between good and evil. Every human being, by the very fact of his birth, is connected with evil even though he may refuse to accept this reality. The refusal to face evil is a great obstruction to love, for one's own evil must be acknowledged before one can understand the evil in another. Love and compassion are felt only when one can recognize the real person and not be governed by the romantic conceptions of what he or she should be. Innocents and hypocrites are incapable of loving, since they refuse to acknowledge their implication in the human condition. It is the recognition of evil which makes the acknowledged sinner capable of the love denied the innocent and the pious. This statement does not mean that Greene believes that knowledge of evil is sufficient in itself to bring about love. This knowledge must be combined with compassion. Pinkie Brown is quite aware of Rose's goodness and of his own evil: "She was good, he'd discovered that, and he was damned: they were made for each other".[12] But Pinkie will not allow himself to feel affection "...he was bound in a habit of hate".[13] Greene, nevertheless, sees Pinkie as more capable of love

[12] Graham Greene, Brighton Rock (Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd., 1970), p. 128.

[13] Ibid., p. 233.

than Ida Arnold, who refuses to accept evil. Pinkie resists love only with the greatest effort; Ida is never tempted to advance beyond sexual companionship and 'good times'.

Greene often sees evil as paradoxically leading to good. "For Greene good is invariably filtered through evil. Mankind for him has so fallen from grace that good cannot exist in a pure state, cannot exist unmixed with sin."[14] Through sin, the individual becomes aware of the truth of his own evil. The sinner, like the primitive, does not attempt to cover evil's ugliness - evil is a reality. The great sinner is, at least, not mediocre. His commitment to evil brings him close to good, for, to Greene, goodness and evil are sides of the same coin: "The greatest saints have been men with more than a normal capacity for evil, and the most vicious men have sometimes narrowly evaded sanctity".[15] Recognition of sin is an indirect assertion of God's existence, and, like T.S. Eliot, whom he has quoted on this topic, Greene contends that any realization of the supernatural, even though it entails damnation, elevates

[14] Barbara Seward, "Graham Greene: A Hint of an Explanation", Western Review XXII (Winter 1958): 84-85.

[15] Greene, Collected Essays, p. 131.

and dignifies human nature.[16] However, it must be vigorously asserted that Greene does not glorify sin *per se*, but the suffering and compassion, so necessary for love, that sin can bring. Evil may impede love, but, through guilt, humility and reparation, it may, as it does for the whisky priest, Francis Andrews and Sarah Miles, bring about a greater love.

> "Personal corruption and the suffering it entails are essential to the attainment of love...unless one has experienced pain and guilt in one's own life, one can feel no compassion for the pain and guilt of others."[17]

Greene considers suffering a creative force, "Pain makes an individual..."[18] Suffering not only expiates sin, it also increases the quality of life by forcing the individual to expand his field of perception and become aware of the decadent nature which he shares with others. It leads to a sense of humanity, essential for love, by incorporating the individual into the misery and guilt of mankind.

[16] Although Greene quotes Eliot in reference to Henry James' characters, the quotation is strikingly applicable to much of Greene's own writing:

> " 'It is true to say', Mr. Eliot has written in an essay on Baudelaire, 'that the glory of man is his capacity for salvation; it is also true to say that his glory is his capacity for damnation. The worst that can be said of most malefactors, from statesmen to thieves, is that they are not men enough to be damned.' "
> (Collected Essays, p. 41)

[17] Seward, "Graham Greene: A Hint of an Explanation", p. 85.

[18] Greene, Collected Essays, p. 286.

> "'Sometimes I think that the search for suffering and the remembrance of suffering are the only means we have to put ourselves in touch with the whole human condition'."[19]

Through suffering, man is compelled to concede that he is not self-sufficient, that there is a need for someone greater than himself. For Greene, suffering is God's method of purifying and preparing corrupt human nature for love. By suffering, man is taught "...the last and most difficult lesson of all - the lesson of love..."[20] By stripping the individual of complacency and pride, God opens man's heart to Himself. Suffering, to Greene, becomes a sign of God's love; man is united with his Creator by sharing in His pain. As Sarah Miles observes, "'...How good You are. You might have killed us with happiness, but You let us be with You in pain.'"[21] Suffering, then, is to be accepted as a means to a supernatural benefit. It is the preparation for Salvation.

> "Man has been forced through suffering to grow and extend himself, to deepen his whole nature, to take his part in breaking down the walls that separate man from man, to co-operate with the whole redemptive process."[22]

19 Greene, A Burnt-Out Case, p. 128.

20 Graham Greene, The Lawless Roads (Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd., 1971), p. 82.

21 Graham Greene, The End of the Affair (Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd., 1970), p. 120.

22 N. Elizabeth Monroe, "The New Man in Fiction", Renascence VI (August 1953): 9.

Although pain may come in various forms, the human condition is such that some type of suffering is inevitable. Greene's characters are marred from childhood by corruption and misery. As adults, burdened by a sense of guilt and failure, they are tortured by self-disgust and ennui. Since all suffer, the important consideration becomes how one accepts one's pain. Suffering is beneficial only when it is recognized as the just result of one's implication in the world's evil. Those who think their lot grossly unmerited learn, not tolerance and compassion, but hatred and defiant pride. Rejecting responsibility and guilt, they degenerate into egotism, and, in Greene as in Henry James, one finds "...evil to be distinguished from good chiefly in the complete egotism of its outlook".[23]

Nowhere is Greene's hatred of egotism so evident as in his treatment of that vice which is so frequently substituted for love:

> "Just as Balzac came back again to avarice and Stendhal to ambition, so, in book after book, Graham Greene analyzes the vice of pity, that corrupt parody of love and compassion which is so insidious and deadly for sensitive natures...
> Behind pity for another lies self-pity, and behind self-pity lies cruelty.
> To feel compassion for someone is to make oneself their equal; to pity them is to regard oneself as their superior."[24]

[23] Greene, Collected Essays, p. 22.

[24] W.H. Auden, "The Heresy of Our Time", Renascence I (Spring 1949): 24.

Greene views pity, founded upon weakness and exclusiveness, as an attempt to avoid love's suffering and humility while at the same time appearing selfless and commendable. In reality, pity, a thinly disguised form of contempt, is the manipulation of others in order to increase one's own self-esteem. It is based upon an assumption that one is above others and closer to God. Pity is the attempt to exercise a god-like control over those to whom one feels benevolently superior. Although those who pity might appear to sacrifice for others, their actions are motivated not by love but by personal, selfish needs. Like all egotists, those who pity are so involved in themselves that they are incapable of love.

In his novels, Greene attempts to examine the nature, development, and operations of love, which is God's grace working amidst the sinful and corrupt who inhabit this fearful and absurd world. This grace, appallingly associated with suffering and society's outcasts, fascinates Greene; however, he realizes that man's limited intellect is ultimately incapable of fully understanding love's supernatural perplexities. But perhaps it is this very enigmatic quality which obsesses him and compels him to return in novel after novel to:

> "...the appalling mysteries of love moving through a ravaged world - the Curé d'Ars admitting to his mind all the impurity of

> a province, Péguy challenging God in the cause of the damned. It remained something one associated with misery, violence, evil, 'all the torments and agonies', Rilke wrote, 'wrought on scaffolds, in torture chambers, mad-houses, operating theatres, underneath vaults of bridges in late autumn...' "[25]

This thematic continuity does not in any way harm Greene's development as an artist. His obsession is not just a simple idea set down according to an inflexible formula; it is the cohesive development of a concept essential for meaningful human existence. Greene's novels are not just illustrations of an idea, for Greene contends that, "Argument is valueless in fiction unless it is dramatic and individualized".[26] Around his abstract vision, Greene forms an extremely particularized story which dramatizes his ideas through the plight of an individual. Greene is primarily an artist with a story to tell, with a desire to create life. The technical mastery which he has shown through his use of symbolism, irony, point of view, pace, creation of setting and character is generally acknowledged. His insight into and respect for the techniques of his craft are easily discernible in his essays on novels and novelists where he praises Henry James' 'sharp observation' and 'relevant detail'[27], Ford Madox Ford's

25 Greene, The Lawless Roads, p. 15.

26 Graham Greene, "The Cinema", The Spectator, September 1, 1939, p. 325.

27 Greene, Collected Essays, p. 23.

'dramatic dialogue' and 'wildly complicated irony'[28], Robert Louis Stevenson's 'cleverly varied cadences and sudden metaphors'[29] and Conrad Aiken's "subtlety and exactitude of...style, his technical ability which never allows a value to escape"[30]. Greene's vision shapes his creative attitudes and processes, but he is able to subject his personal vision to stringent artistic controls.

Greene's obsession is not static, is not stagnant. It is an impressive vision, continually changing and expanding, which has varied with each novel and has enabled him to write a series of stories which are exciting in themselves. His obsession unifies and gives significance to his work. Indeed, Greene's comments on James' 'private vision' are strikingly applicable to the author's own novels: "...the symmetry of his thought lends the whole body of his work the importance of a system".[31]

The central theme of Greene's novels has

28 Ibid., p. 59.

29 Ibid., p. 61.

30 Ibid., p. 117.

31 Ibid., pp. 21-22.

certainly determined the structure of his books. Since Greene sees the individual as being pursued by human and divine love, the novels are frequently based upon a 'pursuit' structure, but it is a more complex form of chase than that found in most mystery stories for the pursuit operates upon the physical, psychological and spiritual levels. These distinct chases are frequently parallel, and characters are often hunted at once by some natural opponent, by God and by their own conscience.

Greene finds that the thriller tradition which bases its structure upon the concept of the chase provides him with the set pattern and techniques which suit his vision. The violence and cruelty found in the thriller match Greene's concept of the world, and the fast paced, tightly constructed plots which stressed concrete action permit him to maintain reader interest by expounding on abstract ideas through an outward projection of an inner struggle. Through a careful selection of detail, economy of language and speedy and numerous changes of scene, he establishes a pace which keeps the reader at a high level of interest. But Greene's concern with good and evil, with the spiritual, with love and hate, adds to his novels a

substance and importance which the ordinary thriller lacks. What matters in Greene's works is not so much the action as the implications of human action.

Greene also advances his theme and maintains interest through some variation of the conventional 'love triangle' structure. Most often he uses the traditional pattern of two women and a man or two men and a woman. All of his novels have at least one of these affairs which accentuates the concept of human love. The sole exception is The Power and the Glory which, because of its clerical context, does not lend itself to such a structure. However, even here one is able to observe a variation of the pattern - the priest is torn between the particularized love he feels for his illegitimate daughter and the universal love his vocation demands he give to every human being. Another mutation of the pattern is recognizable in Brighton Rock where Ida and Rose vie for Pinkie, but the former wishes only his destruction while Rose seeks his salvation.

Just as the structure of the chase exists on the natural and spiritual levels, so does Greene often impose a supernatural triangular structure upon the secular one. In The End of the Affair there exists the human affair between Bendrix, Sarah and Henry, but there also exists the more important spiritual affair between Bendrix,

Sarah and God. It is quite obvious that Bendrix considers God his rival for Sarah's affection and that he hates Him for this. Much more will be made of this intriguing structure when the novels are considered individually. It will here suffice to say that Greene's choice of this pattern displays considerable insight for it brings to the reader's imagination a situation which has traditionally been associated with love. Thus, the structure affords Greene a ready-made vehicle through which he may convey his vision to the conditioned reader.

The topical subjects which Greene sometimes seems to choose almost directly from the daily newspaper's headlines (his most recent novel, The Honorary Consul, which relates the kidnapping of a government official by a band of South American revolutionaries, is a good example) reflect contemporary interest and create reader acceptance. Greene further intrigues the reader by the frequent use of techniques from the cinema, the knowledge of which he gained through five years (1935-1939) as film reviewer for The Spectator. Like a camera which focuses on important, selective detail, Greene directs attention only to those objects, Pinkie's bottle of vitriol, Scobie's rusty handcuffs and broken rosary, Fowler's opium pipe, which advance the dramatic and thematic aspects of the story. The point of view cuts from one

character to another in order to speed up the narrative. The scenes change quickly and frequently. There are few technical details which would tend to slow down dramatic movement - in A Burnt-Out Case there is little detailed analysis of leprosy or its treatment, The Heart of the Matter says little about the World War. Time is telescoped to quicken pace. One never considers how long Querry is in the leper colony, how long the whisky priest wanders or how long Pinkie is married to Rose.

Greene's use of point of view is also analogous to a cameraman shooting a film: he uses it to select, frame and emphasize the action, character and theme. But, unlike most films, Greene's perspective is seldom objective, for he frequently uses an omniscient viewpoint which allows him greater flexibility and freedom. Greene firmly contends that the author has the right to comment in his novel. In an article on Mauriac, he writes of...

> "...the traditional and essential right of a novelist, to comment, to express his views... The exclusion of the author can go too far. Even the author, poor devil, has a right to exist."[32]

Even when Greene uses the dramatic narrator, he avoids the limits of this technique by manipulating the narrator so that various points of view are given - Sarah's diary, for example, gives the reader information of which

[32] Ibid., pp. 92-93.

Bendrix would be unaware. Greene is one author who demands that he be in control of his novels.

Although some have claimed that Greene's characters are just his mouthpieces, this is not so. The people in his novels are not just disembodied abstractions. His characters are brilliantly created because their ideas and actions flow from the depths of the characters themselves. The creative imagination of the author allows him to view his characters as individuals not just as extensions of himself. Characters do not cease to exist as living human beings.

Indeed, Greene challenges the reader's conventional attitudes by demanding compassion towards and tolerance of those, such as Pinkie, who appall the reader's sensibilities. Those who people Greene's world are seldom easily comprehensible. The complexity of the characters, possessed of the ambiguity and turmoil found in human nature, makes heavy demands upon the reader's understanding of humanity.

Greene creates a wide spectrum of common humanity, but some types of characters frequently recur. They might differ in age, sex, religion or occupation, but they essentially serve the same function. Generally, they symbolize some important aspect of Greene's vision - Scobie and Drover are contaminated by pity; Ida Arnold

and Anthony Farrant take an hedonistic approach to love; Fowler, Querry, Brown and Dr. Plarr wish to refuse love's commitment; Pinkie and Bendrix try to substitute hate for love; Andrews and Wilson are sentimental romantics; Minty, Pinkie and Pyle appear ashamed and nauseated by the physical side of love. Most of the characters are fearful, guilt ridden and hunted. Pursued by the police, their conscience, God or any combination of the three, they are exiles, failures, betrayed and betrayer. All seem to suffer at the hands of life.

Minor characters receive the same meticulous care and detail as do the protagonists, for these people fulfill an essential purpose in Greene's novels. In addition to influencing and interpreting the major figures, characters such as Phuong, Minty, Ryker, Carylon and Padre José, expand and intensify principal ideas by symbolizing further attitudes towards love. Greene also repeatedly uses minor characters in creating tension by developing a confrontation between the protagonist who has one attitude towards people and love and the secondary character who possesses the opposite view. This technique is exemplified by such conflicts as those between Pinkie and Ida, Scobie and Wilson, Querry and Ryker, Sarah and Smythe, Brown and

Dr. Margot.

Characters are developed by Greene through an association with the images which surround them. Settings are particularly important in the novels since Greene believes that "People are made by places...."[33] His characters are often victims of their environment, and the appalling human condition can only be explained by a world which is a reflection of hell. His description of the modern wasteland's sterility and decay has been so remarkably consistent that critics have given his fictional world the collective name of "Greeneland". The locales may vary, but the images remain the same. Varied and unusual settings arouse reader interest, but no matter if they be cosmopolitan Stockholm or the most squalid Mexican village, the settings are chiefly attempts to create an atmosphere, to convey Greene's concept of the world. He uses the settings to support his own ideas and objectives. They reflect his view of the contemporary situation and reflect the absurdity, violence, illogic and evil which he perceives as inherent in man's nature. They are settings which reveal man at his worst. Even those institutions which men have established to control the evil in human nature are, ironically, corrupt and

33 Greene, The Lawless Roads, p. 16.

ineffectual. Human laws, for example, are incessantly presented as absurd and unjust and are symbolized by the smell of urine and excrement.

The settings do not just depict a reality such as a photograph might present. The abundant realistic detail affects an overall impression which stresses the emptiness, the isolation - the hell - of a world which has abandoned God and love, a world Greene frequently describes by the adjective 'seedy' which denotes this shabby, contemptible place devoid of value and truth. Settings are essentially microcosms; thus, they are highly symbolic. Wars, persecutions and rebellions, which emphasize man's lack of love, form the symbolic background for most of the novels. Violent and cruel images - storms, the blitz; beggars hideously deformed, a canal filled with bodies, children blown to pieces - create a picture of nightmare, and this external violence also signifies both the violent struggle between good and evil which rages in man, himself, and the antipathy which exists between the material and spiritual realms. The rotting teeth, carrion birds, disease and vermin which abound in the novels simply but effectively symbolize the human situation. America, in particular, functions as a symbol of adult innocence, permeated by materialism and sentimentality, which opposes the

intense sense of the supernatural which Greene found in the more primitive regions of Africa and Mexico.

Even though hell may lie about Greene's characters from their infancy, his picture of men in a fallen world is not filled with despair. Greene's world is redeemed by God and love. Religious words, references and images imposed upon a secular world suggest a spiritual dimension which can overcome natural sordidness. Ultimately, the condition of the world can be altered by love founded upon a realization of God's compassion and mercy. Love, by giving meaning to suffering and evil, reduces the world's chaos and leads to salvation. "Love is the final answer to evil, the unity for which we must strive, the ultimate victory for God."[34]

Greene's style and technical artistry have been greatly praised. There is the bare, lucid prose which creates character and atmosphere by an image or a phrase which strikes the reader's imagination - "Pity smouldered like decay at his heart"[35], "...his virginity straightened in him like sex"[36], "The canal was full of bodies: I am reminded now of an Irish stew containing

[34] Mesnet, Graham Greene and The Heart of the Matter, p. 99.

[35] Greene, The Heart of the Matter, p. 170.

[36] Greene, Brighton Rock, p. 91.

too much meat"[37]. There are those remarkable instances where everything comes together to create an unforgettable moment, such as the cell episode in The Power and the Glory, the bombed-square scene in The Quiet American, Rose's conversation with the old priest in Brighton Rock. However, what must never be forgotten is that Greene's technique is aided and directed by his obsessive focus on the mystery of love. It is this focus which determines the entire trend of Greene's writing.

[37] Greene, The Quiet American, p. 50.

CHAPTER I

Touchstone for the Vision:
The End of the Affair

The End of the Affair is the touchstone for a full understanding of Greene's vision. As the fullest, most completely realized yet simplest treatment of the power of love and the relationship between human and divine love, this novel stands as the apex of his recurrent theme's development. In no other novel are the possibilities of love made so evident. No other character achieves the perfection attained by Sarah Miles - perfect unity, through love, with all humanity and with God. Sarah, for Greene, is the complete human being, the exemplar, the saint.

Artistically, the novel displays an extraordinarily skillful blending of vision and technique. Around an extremely simple plot based upon a stock love affair, Greene creates a tale of pursuit which functions on both the natural and supernatural levels. For the first time in this his ninth novel, he makes use of a narrator who is emotionally involved in the story. Bendrix's narrative is filled with conflict and vague suggestions. He is obviously ill at ease, and the confused narrative gives ample indication of his psychological state. That he himself is fully aware of his condition is evident. "If this book of mine fails to take a straight course, it is because I am lost in a strange region: I have no maps."[1] Nevertheless,

[1] Graham Greene, The End of the Affair (Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd., 1970), p. 49.

Bendrix makes the perfect narrator, for the reader is also in unexplored territory. Through Bendrix, whose uncertainty the reader shares, Greene begins to unravel Sarah's character. As narrator, Bendrix has a knowledge of past events which the reader does not have, but he refuses to acknowledge the full effect of these events upon himself. Thus, Bendrix's revelation of what has happened to Sarah and himself is distorted. He can relate the physical and emotional nature of their affair, but it is left to Sarah's diary to convey the spiritual implications of their love. Together Bendrix's narrative and Sarah's diary operate to emphasize the author's vision. A.A. DeVitis explains this subtle interaction particularly well:

> "Technically, The End of the Affair is brilliant. Greene's use of the diary and of the journal allows him not only to characterize his people but also to portray various levels of meaning concerning the spiritual drama enacted. Bendrix looks at Sarah; Sarah looks at herself as she looks at God."[2]

This novel is Greene's ultimate statement on the awful mystery of love which is so incomprehensible that it is often indistinguishable from hate. Although Bendrix states that the story "...is a record of hate far more than of love..."[3], one soon comes to agree with Stratford

[2] A.A. DeVitis, Graham Greene (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1964), p. 114.

[3] Greene, The End of the Affair, p. 7.

that "...Bendrix's record of hate is really a love story."[4] The conflicts about love and hate which exist within the narrator add dramatic tension, for this is also the story of Bendrix who is himself in the process of change. From the beginning, we know the essential fact that Bendrix now believes in God even though he does not want this faith which fills him with terror. Just as Sarah is pursued by God, so is Bendrix pursued. The tension is created by Bendrix's hatred and jealousy towards the divine person who has taken his mistress and by his bitter resistance to God's love.

The nature of the narrative also forcefully illustrates the fact that Bendrix, with his limited human perception, cannot comprehend the mystery of love. His profession as a writer seems to have increased his tendencies towards egotism, isolation and petty cruelty. He has been able to experience only a callous, impermanent lust. He is even unable to understand his own ability to love. Sarah observes, "...(he) thinks he hates, and loves, loves all the time"[5].

Sarah's own progress towards love is notably similar to the whisky priest's in The Power and the Glory. She betrays her vows and falls into sin; her sins prove

4 Philip Stratford, Faith and Fiction (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1964), p. 198.

5 Greene, The End of the Affair, p. 99.

to be her means to salvation. Sarah's capacity for love seems to grow from her wrong-doing. Her adulterous affair with Bendrix alleviates her egotistical desire to be wanted and admired by men. He teaches her to disregard lies and deception, to seek the truth. From him, she learns that she is "a bitch and a fake" whose only concern is self. Above all, her complete physical and emotional abandonment prepares the way for her total abandonment to God. Sarah's love is so complete that, when she believes Bendrix to have been killed by an exploding bomb, (the novel is set against the background of the London blitz) she is able to offer her happiness for his life. In a moment of complete abnegation, she vows to a God, in whom she only vaguely believes, that she will do anything, even give Bendrix up, if he is allowed to live. When he walks unharmed into the room, Sarah realizes agony has just begun.

Sarah's character is developed through Bendrix's journal and through the multiple perspectives provided by Parkis, Smythe and Henry, but only in Sarah's diary, which reveals the terrible anguish she experiences, does the reader obtain the intimate account of her conversion. The diary shows the errors in Bendrix's judgment of Sarah. He believes that she is troubled neither by guilt nor by religious belief; quite the opposite is

true. She suffers from the guilt of betraying her husband, Henry, and from the fear that their affair will end, but these sufferings are inconsequential when compared to the pain of separation from Bendrix. Her torment arouses in her a hatred for the being who made her prayer a reality, the God in whom she does not wish to believe. "If he exists, then he put the thought of this vow into my mind and I hate him for it. I hate."[6] Sarah, as do so many of Greene's characters, finds herself trapped by a dilemma. She is overcome by a hatred for whatever caused her to be separated from her lover, but, if she hates this being, then she must logically posit its existence, an existence in which she will not allow herself to believe. Her hatred, however, becomes so overbearing that she must direct it at some object - the cause of her suffering. Thus, Sarah comes to believe in God's existence through her hatred. Since God now exists for her, she is able to attempt 'getting even' with Him. She has numerous affairs for she reasons that she never vowed to abstain from 'making love' with other men. None of these affairs satisfy her; all leave her with greater despair and frustration. But, as her hatred for God increases, she recognizes a paradoxical parallel:

"I thought, sometimes I've hated Maurice,

6 Ibid., p. 92.

> but would I have hated him if I hadn't loved him too? Oh God, if I could really hate you, what would that mean?"[7]

Sarah begins to realize that, in her intense hatred for God, she has come very close to loving Him.

Growth through suffering is a common element in Greene's novels; this belief is strikingly and accurately presented in the inscription from Léon Bloy with which Greene prefaces this novel.

> "Man has places in his heart which do not yet exist, and into them enters suffering in order that they might have existence."

Sarah, through her suffering and hatred, comes to a new perception, a new existence. She finds capacities in herself which she never knew existed.

The struggle between human and divine love, between love and hatred, makes Sarah aware of the immense possibilities of God's love, but she is both attracted and repelled by a God who wishes her to love Him with such complete abandonment. She fears that she might lose all pleasure and even her own identity. Sarah knows that she loves Bendrix intensely; she now perceives that she can progress to a more perfect love. She in no way belittles human love for, as does Greene, she knows that all love, no matter how faulty, prepares for God's love.

7 Ibid., p. 110.

> "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."[8]

Without the experience of human love, Greene believes, one could never have the divine.

Through Sarah, Greene directs the reader to one of his primary beliefs - the interrelation of all types of love. All love shares in God's love; all love shares in God's suffering. The more one loves God, the more one shares in God's pain, the more one is able to love all mankind.

> "If I could love You, I'd know how to love them. I believe the legend. I believe You were born. I believe You died for us. I believe You are God. Teach me to love. I don't mind my pain. It's their pain I can't stand. Let my pain go on and on, but stop theirs. Dear God, if only You could come down from Your cross for a while and let me get up there instead. If I could suffer like You, I could heal like You... If I could love You, I could love Henry. God was made man. He was Henry with his astigmatism, Richard with his strawberry mark, not only Maurice."[9]

These ideas are the very heart of Greene's vision. Through sharing in God's love and suffering, one is able

[8] Ibid., p. 121.

[9] Ibid., p. 118.

to love and sacrifice for others who are made in God's image. Greene does not believe, however, that belief in God's love can be a purely rational process. Belief in His love requires an emotional commitment, a desperate leap into love:

> "If I stopped loving him (Bendrix), I would cease to believe in his love. If I loved God, then I would believe in his love for me. It's not enough to need it. We have to love first."[10]

Sarah has the courage to take this leap. She can understand that Bendrix has been God's instrument to prepare her for her final commitment. Through a new and awesome religious sense, Sarah is able to abandon herself completely to God's love, and, in so doing, finds love controls her whole being.

Bendrix's story of hate is a parallel to Sarah's conversion rather than an opposite reaction. Through him, Greene repeats and intensifies the central beliefs of his vision. Bendrix, like Sarah, is tainted by egotism - he cannot even desire a woman unless he feels himself her superior. Possessed by a selfish desire to dominate and control, he takes great pride in his conquest of Sarah. Her departure strikes a serious blow to his ego, especially when he suspects that another man might now be enjoying the pleasures he had experienced. When Bendrix finds that God is his rival, the usual love triangle is replaced

[10] Ibid., p. 89.

by a love affair of supernatural dimension. Bendrix competes with God for Sarah and experiences the same hatred for God as he would for a human adversary. But, ironically, Bendrix, like Sarah, does not wish to hate this being, for hatred would imply belief. He can only furiously cry, "I hate You if You exist"[11].

Bendrix presents the same hard and indifferent exterior as do Fowler and Querry, but he, too, shares their basic affection for other human sufferers. He throws himself over a complete stranger in order to protect him from a falling wall; he feels concern for Henry and for Parkis, a naive detective, whom he has treated with spiteful cruelty. Bendrix, as does Sarah, possesses the basic quality which Greene considers necessary for salvation: a genuine compassion for one's fellows.

Bendrix's initial hatred for Sarah, whom he sees as having caused this terrible pain of separation, is, in reality, a cry of frustrated love. "His hatred for her is the consequence of a great love intensely shared."[12] His tremendous hatred is the measure of his tremendous love and of his fear of God's love, for Bendrix fears the loss of identity which the leap into

[11] Ibid., p. 133.

[12] H.C. Webster, "The World of Graham Greene", in Graham Greene: Some Critical Considerations, ed. Robert O. Evans (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1967), p. 21.

God's love will entail. After Sarah's death he prays to her:

> "It's all very well for you to love God. You are dead. You have Him. But I'm sick with life, I'm rotten with health. If I begin to love God, I can't just die. I've got to do something about it...If I loved like that, it would be the end of everything. Loving you I had no appetite for food, I felt no lust for any other women, but loving Him there'd be no pleasure in anything at all with Him away. I'd even lose my work, I'd cease to be Bendrix. Sarah, I'm afraid."[13]

Bendrix is, however, relentlessly pursued by the same grace which hunted his mistress. As the pursuer, he loses Sarah and, ironically, falls victim to her Pursuer, his rival. His attempts to avoid God's love are as ineffectual as Sarah's, for the passionate relationship with her has rendered it impossible for him to avoid God's pursuit.

> "It is the very intensity of their 'human all too human love' which in the end kindles in them the love of God. Sarah's love has grown to such proportions that no merely finite object could any longer satisfy it. And a similar observation may be made in regard to Maurice with the difference that in his case the movement is much slower and the resistance much stronger."[14]

Ironically, Bendrix's most important affair is only just beginning at the novel's conclusion. When he demands a God as simple as an equation, God provides him

[13] Greene, The End of the Affair, p. 179.

[14] Reinhardt, Kurt Frank, The Theological Novel of Modern Europe (New York: F. Unger Publishing Co., 1969), p. 200.

with the miracles worked through Sarah's intercession. The miracles, essential to plot and meaning, leave no doubt that Sarah has achieved sanctity and that Bendrix too can reach this state. They leave Bendrix with no alternative but to believe. Both he and Sarah are marked by God's sign, and Maurice's last desperate cry, reminiscent of Sarah's, informs the reader that Bendrix will eventually share her fate:

> "O God, You've done enough, You've robbed me of enough, I'm too tired and old to learn to love, leave me alone for ever."[15]

Greene displays in this novel a mature grasp of human sexuality which is absent in his earlier novels. He has set himself the difficult task of capturing the tremendous complexity and importance of human love without degenerating into sentimentality and without underestimating the value of the spiritual. That he attains his goal is due to both his technical craftsmanship and the depth of his vision. Greene has always contended that sexuality without love is meaningless and that love of God is greater than love of man. Greene has, however, also vehemently insisted that those who are disgusted with the body deny their own humanity and, like Minty, Pinkie, Conrad Drover and Ryker, become emotionally warped and incapable of love. The End of the Affair demands that the truth of Greene's vision be acknowledged,

15 Greene, The End of the Affair, p. 187.

for Sarah, the saint who cures Parkis's son, is the same woman who makes violent, passionate love with Bendrix on the living room floor while her husband lies ill in another room. She knows that love involves more than just intellect:

> "We can love with our minds, but can we love only with our minds? Love extends itself all the time, so that we can even love with our senseless nails: we love even with our clothes, so that a sleeve can feel a sleeve... And of course on the Altar there was a body too - such a familiar body, more familiar than Maurice's, that it had never struck me before as a body with all the parts of a body, even the parts the loin-cloth concealed."[16]

The End of the Affair is Greene's ultimate concept of love's possibilities. In it, he presents human nature in its integrated totality. Other novels might explore different aspects of love, but this book is as far as Greene's vision can go, for no human being can achieve anything greater than a complete personal and intimate love for God and through this love a love for all humanity.

16 Ibid., pp. 108-109.

CHAPTER II

Exploring the Vision:

The Man Within
It's a Battlefield
England Made Me

Although frequently ignored by critics, The Man Within, It's a Battlefield and England Made Me offer significant insights into Greene's obsession with love. Just as these novels reveal Greene's attempts to master technique and style, so do they present his efforts to achieve a clearer understanding and presentation of his vision. Each novel succinctly examines concepts of love which will be integral to later works.

In these novels, Greene allows the characters to define 'love' according to their own prejudices and desires. Therefore, the term is used in a great variety of ways. Love, for Francis Andrews, is either sexual intercourse or romantic sentimentality; for Conrad Drover, it is pity; for Anthony Farrant, it is fun and good times. This technique affords Greene a wide base upon which to examine his subject and eliminates the danger of monotonous repetition. However, Greene himself clearly refutes the attitudes maintained by many of his characters by demonstrating the destruction and anguish they cause. These three novels present terrifying portraits of the catastrophe which results when love is distorted into sentimentality, pity or sexuality. Very importantly, however, The Man Within also presents a positive image of a love which leads to selflessness and salvation.

Set in eighteenth century Sussex, The Man Within

relates Francis Andrews' growth from sentimental egotism to the realization of his identity as a responsible and compassionate human being. A prototype for future characters, he is Greene's first victim of a 'lost childhood', a childhood ravaged by physical and mental torment. Brutalized by a domineering father who symbolizes Andrews' lower nature, he seeks to escape sordid reality by creating a world of romantic illusion. This characteristic is further strengthened by his mother and by Carlyon, a smuggler, who shares this same method of escape. Tormented into manhood by these influences, Andrews finds himself trapped between his real self, the man within, and the brutishly sensual yet sentimental character fostered in him by his father, his mother and Carlyon. Andrews is quite aware of this condition. "He was, he knew, embarrassingly made up of two persons, the sentimental, bullying, desiring child and another more stern critic."[1] This crude and awkward presentation of a character's complexity in terms of an oversimplified dual nature comprised of a higher and lower self gives certain evidence of Greene's technical immaturity.

Although quite aware of his lusts and fears, Andrews lacks the strength to move his will to action. An innocent who possesses a child's instincts but who is disturbed by an adult's knowledge, he ardently desires

[1] Graham Greene, The Man Within (Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd., 1971), p. 24.

a permanent, comforting oblivion which will erase this knowledge of reality and eliminate any need for responsibility or action. When asked if there is anything he really wants, he replies:

> " 'To be null and void,' he said without hesitation. 'Dead?'
>
> The sound of the word seemed to draw his eyes to the window, which stared now on complete darkness.
>
> 'No, no,' he said, 'not that'. He gave a small shiver and spoke again. 'When music plays, one does not see or think; one hardly hears. A bowl - and the music is poured in until there is no "I", I am the music.' "[2]

Lost in his illusions, Andrews refuses to acknowledge his real self or to see others as they are. By professing his absolute worthlessness and irrevocable corruption, he seeks to convince himself that any attempt to change would be futile. All men are categorized as superior to himself, the cowardly failure, and so make no demands of him. Women he divides into two groups: harlots, weak sensual creatures whose main function it is to satisfy men's lusts, and saints, who are above any man's help. In either case, Andrews feels secure, for neither category demands responsibility or sacrifice from him. This attitude is apparent on his first meeting with Elizabeth, Greene's idealization of the good woman. At first he attempts to reduce her to a whore's role:

[2] Ibid., pp. 56-57.

> "He described what he would do to her in a brief, physiological sentence, and rejoiced at the flush which it fetched to her face. His outburst brought the mist down closer upon him. 'You can join your fellows on the streets then,' he cried at her..."[3]

When he perceives that he was wrong in this approach, he idealizes her as a saint:

> "He had been kneeling to gain a view of the room beyond, but now in heart he knelt to her. She is a saint, he thought."[4]

Andrews shirks any relationship which demands commitment and change. He continues to wallow in sin, and, revelling in self-pity, rejects any responsibility for the character he possesses:

> " 'It's not a man's fault whether he's brave or cowardly. It's all in the way he's born. My father and mother made me. I didn't make myself.' "[5]

Conrad Drover, It's a Battlefield, and Anthony Farrent, England Made Me, share much with Andrews. Both have been corrupted during childhood. Drover, persecuted and isolated because of his pretentious Christian name and superior intelligence, has carried his childhood hatred and distrust into adult life. A chief clerk who is separated from his fellows in a glass cage-like office, he feels that all seek his position and conspire to

[3] Ibid., p. 17.

[4] Ibid., p. 61.

[5] Ibid., p. 52.

betray him. Believing that he is despised by all, he hates all in return with the notable exceptions of his brother, Jim, and Jim's wife, Milly. When Jim, virile but stupid, is arrested and sentenced to hang for accidentally killing a police officer at a communist rally, Conrad's bitterness increases. His hatred is further fanned by his failure to help, and by the political game the government and communists play with Jim's life.

Anthony Farrant, another absurd innocent, has been imbued, by a traditional English education, with what Greene considers a totally irrelevant and destructive moral standard:

> "Do not show your feelings. Do not love immoderately. Be chaste, prudent, pay your debts. Don't buy on credit."[6]

Taught to excise his emotions, his 'heart', Farrant turns to the cerebral, but he is neither cunning nor corrupt enough to be anything but a seedy failure who hides the truth, by rationalization and deception, even from himself. Unable to commit himself to anything, he, like Andrews, endeavours to avoid demanding relationships. His maxim becomes: "Look after number one".[7] Love, for him, is no more than a pleasurable frolic with any

6 Graham Greene, England Made Me (London: William Heinemann and The Bodley Head, 1970), p. 73.

7 Ibid., p. 63.

accessible woman who demands only pleasure or money:

> "Love was not gratitude, love was not this dependence of the brain...love was fun, love was a good time, love was Annette, was Mabel."[8]

The manhood of these three central characters is questioned by others as well as by themselves. Elizabeth asks Andrews, "You are a man, aren't you?"[9] Milly says to Drover, "Oh, if I had you here for a month, I'd make a man of you."[10] Kate Farrant comments on her brother, "His appearance irritated her, for a man should grow up..."[11] Not surprisingly, all attempt to vindicate their virility. In addition to frequenting prostitutes, they all perform some action which will confirm their existence. Andrews betrays to the authorities the smugglers who have always treated him with ridicule and contempt; Drover betrays Jim by sleeping with Milly; Farrant asserts himself through women and through lies which aggrandize his image. However, all these actions result in hopeless failure.

The simple, chronological plot of The Man Within centers around Andrews' betrayal. When some of

8 Ibid., p. 92.

9 Greene, The Man Within, p. 23.

10 Graham Greene, It's a Battlefield (London: William Hunemann & The Bodley Head., 1970), p. 68.

11 Greene, England Made Me, p. 6.

the smugglers escape the customs officer's trap and swear revenge, Andrews is forced to flee. This flight, which is the first time Greene uses this recurrent pattern, is symbolic of Andrews' efforts to escape his own conscience, and his frequent, confused wanderings in fog become representative of his uncertainty about his true self. The flight and pursuit thus operate on both a physical and psychological level. A Judas figure, Andrews is pursued not only by the criminals but also by the guilt and responsibility he desperately wishes to avoid. Terrified and alone, he seeks peace and pity in a hostile world:

> "A wave of self-pity passed across his mind and he saw himself friendless and alone, chased by harsh enemies through an uninterested world. Sympathy is all I want, he said to himself."[12]

Through Elizabeth, whom he encounters on his flight, Andrews eventually finds the peace, but not the pity, which he desires.

Elizabeth is the very embodiment of love. Compassionate and virginal, she exemplifies love's mystery and is associated with the sun as a life-giving force and with the preciousness of gold:

> "Then the small door which led to the upper floor opened and he looked up.

[12] Greene, The Man Within, p. 24.

> 'Is it you at last?' he said. His voice was hushed and trembling in the presence of a mystery. The room was gold with sunlight, but he had not noticed it till now."[13]

She is the force which moves Andrews from self-pity and inertia and directs him toward responsible action. Operating as evil's conqueror, she unifies his nature and opposes the lust, which Greene presents in this novel as the essence of evil. In particular, Elizabeth, synonymous with love, contrasts with Lucy, a wealthy aristocrat's mistress. Sexually immoral, Lucy vividly represents the lust which destroys the inner man. She is pleasure devoid of responsibility and arouses in Andrews 'the prick of desire'. Through her, he is tempted to forsake his commitment to Elizabeth and return to a sinful existence:

> "He watched her closely. Never before had he desired a woman so much - no, not Elizabeth. There was a kind of mystery in Elizabeth, a kind of sanctity which blurred and obscured his desire with love. Here was no love and no reverence. The animal in him could ponder her beauty crudely and lustfully, as it had pondered the charms of common harlots, but with the added spice of a reciprocated desire. It is true, he thought, what danger can there be? This is a civilized land. I will go to London and I shall not be lonely without Elizabeth for I shall have many other such adventures as this."[14]

In addition to opposing lust, Elizabeth also

[13] Ibid., p. 176.

[14] Ibid., p. 120.

acts as a foil to romantic sentimentality. Her Christian outlook allows her to perceive the world and the human condition without becoming mired in their corruption. Too much a realist not to discern Andrews' failings, and too much a Christian not to forgive them, she sees the potential for goodness deep within the man and refuses him the pity which would increase his escapism and lead to destruction. She directs him along the road to truth and love, for she recognizes that his true character is imprisoned by rationalization and egotism.

Drover's adultery and betrayal are caused by his desire to destroy the self which he despises and to assume his brother's more virile role:

> "When you lay with your brother's wife, did you not become, receiving the same due as he received, something of the same man, so that if you were weak, you became strong, clever, you became stupid?"[15]

However, this is not the most significant reason for his action. Greene makes it very clear that Drover betrays his brother because of pity for Milly. With almost cruel precision, Greene negates the possibility that Milly's physical attributes might have attracted Drover. With her desperate eyes, bony knees, thin hair and immature breasts, she is not a woman created to arouse sexual passion. Conrad, himself, is assured that he feels no physical desire for her:

[15] Greene, It's a Battlefield, p. 184.

> "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."[16]

But, pity deceives him as it later deceives the unfortunate Scobie, and he realizes too late that pity has led him to "...the direct contact of skin with skin, the thrust of lust..."[17]

This is Greene's first detailed account of pity's destructiveness. The concept had been briefly, but meaningfully, raised in The Man Within where Elizabeth refuses to pity Andrews. It is significant that the last major idea in this novel involves pity and suggests that it is destructive and incompatible with love:

> "Slowly his hand stole out unnoticed on an errand of supreme importance, for between the two candles there was a white set face that regarded him without pity and without disapproval, with wisdom and with sanity."[18]

It's a Battlefield provides a detailed analysis of the underlying motives behind pity, motives which are primarily involved with egotism and abuse of humanity. Pity feeds off misery. When Milly is happy and has some hope that she might aid in Jim's release, Drover is

[16] Ibid., pp. 132-133.

[17] Ibid., p. 144.

[18] Greene, The Man Within, p. 221.

disturbed and wishes that she return to her usual fearful and miserable state, in which he can pity her:

> "'I'm so happy.'
> 'Happy?' he asked incredulously. There was a slight flush on her cheek-bones, and her wide mouth trembled; it occurred to him that she might be drinking. 'Yes. Everything is going to be all right. I feel it. I made her sign. I feel - I feel as if there's nothing I can't do.' She took off her hat and threw it on the bed. Conrad had never known her talk so much; he was anxious, startled, disappointed."[19]

Conrad also quite succinctly voices his realization that his action has been an unsuccessful attempt to alleviate loneliness and to emphasize the importance of his existence:

> "The act which was to have been his armour against life, the secret inner pride, 'Even I am loved', had betrayed him..."[20]

When his betrayal brings disgust and guilt rather than the desired effects, Drover is quick to concede that "...he had wanted love, but he had had that; it was over."[21] and that "...he loved her no longer...".[22]

It is apparent that the underlying motives for Conrad's pity are egotism and pride, the characteristics

[19] Greene, It's a Battlefield, p. 121.

[20] Ibid., p. 183.

[21] Ibid., p. 169.

[22] Ibid., p. 186.

Greene most detests. Drover's degradation does not stop here. Racked by despair, he seeks to abolish his anguish by shifting the guilt engendered by the betrayal of his brother to the Assistant Commissioner of Police, whom he wrongly blames for Jim's imprisonment. His futile attempt to murder the Assistant Commissioner in an effort to appease his guilty conscience results in Drover's death, a death marred by even greater abandonment and despair.

It's a Battlefield is marked by considerable technical advancement. Greene expresses the central image of the novel through the controlling metaphor of a battlefield where small groups of soldiers engage in isolated and ignorant combat. This is an image which Greene takes from the passage from Kinglake with which he prefaces this novel:

> "In so far as the battlefield presented itself to the bare eyesight of man, it had no entirety, no breath, no depth, no size, no shape, and was made up of nothing except small numberless circlets commensurate with such ranges of vision as the mist might allow at each spot. ...In such conditions, each separate gathering of English soldiery went on fighting its own little battle in happy and advantageous ignorance of the general state of the action; nay, even very often in ignorance of the fact that any great conflict was raging."

The characters in each of Greene's 'circlets' are drawn together through some connection with Jim Drover. This complex structure and the use of multiple

perspective allow Greene the opportunity for a fuller development of character and of interpersonal relationships. The outer circle of hell might be the prisons, factories, schools and offices where life's victims reside, but the intense terror of hell's inner circle is to be found in one's self and one's association with others. No pain generated by Conrad's childhood or social experience can equal the anguish caused by the betrayal of the one person he loves. Greene shows in this novel a grasp of human nature not found in The Man Within - he recognizes that evil is not something external to man but is integral to his nature. Use of interior monologue also permits Greene to bring the reader inside a character to view the hell of that person's inner self, to show the battlefield within.

All characters in this novel are immersed in hopelessness or fantasy. All display the same desperate striving for something in which to believe. Carolyn Burry's humanism, the Assistant Commissioner's intellectual rationalism, Kay Rimmer's sexuality, Condon's pretense are doomed to failure, for they have absolutely no sense of love or of God. They are condemned by their own selves to a life of bitterness, despair and chaos.

It's a Battlefield and England Made Me are the bleakest and most pessimistic of Greene's novels. All

doors to love and redemption seem firmly closed - there is no hope, only an intense desire to achieve one's own satisfaction at whatever cost. There is a powerful sense of exile and desolation. Even love is perverted.

In the preface of the collected edition of England Made Me, Greene states:

> "The subject - apart from the economic background of the thirties and that sense of capitalism staggering from crisis to crisis - was simple and unpolitical, a brother and a sister in the confusion of incestuous love."[23]

This affair is played out against a depraved and corrupting background in which the only relationships which exist are those as decadent as the environment which nurtures them:

> "Cosmopolitan Stockholm and suburban London represent two worlds, between which the protagonists are torn, and in neither of which they can find a spiritual home. Bound, on the one hand, by traditions which have degenerated into mere prejudices and conscious, on the other, of a freedom which is sterile because deprieved of spiritual foundations, brother and sister are involved logically in a tragedy which reflects the mixture of attraction and repulsion towards the family bond, that is the decisive element in their natures."[24]

That Anthony and Kate never consummate their affair provides valuable insight into Anthony's

23 Greene, England Made Me, p. X.

24 Derek Traversi, "Graham Greene: The Earlier Novels", Twentieth Century CXLIX (March 1951): 234.

complicated character. He has sunk so low that he is forced to use his very faults to bolster his image of himself:

> "The fountain slipped away below him, damply dripping into the grey basin, and he thought with pride: I'm human. I may have my faults, but they are human faults. A glass too much, a girl now and then, there's nothing much wrong with that. It's human nature, I am Human..."[25]

He strengthens his faltering pride through sexual intercourse:

> " 'This' was their kiss, the closer embrace, the half reluctant effort which took them to bed. But his passion wore itself out in his hands, it was vanity only which he experienced in the final act, it had never been anything else but vanity. One liked to make them helpless, to cry out..."[26]

He is even forced to seek employment from Kate's lover, but he will not sleep with his sister. It is undoubtedly true that his conservatism would preveht a sexual affair; however, it is also apparent that his desire to avoid a relationship which would demand commitment and sacrifice provides an even stronger motive. It is much safer to have a trite and superficial affair with 'Loo' Davidge, a pathetic innocent, than to involve himself with Kate.

[25] Greene, England Made Me, p. 91.

[26] Ibid., p. 158.

But he is just as attracted to his sister as she is to him:

> "It occurred to him with astonishment and pain that he had been wrong just now, that this after all was love, that he had been damned to bad luck from birth: He was conscious of a great waste, a great disappointment."[27]

His feelings are so apparent that even a drunken actress-prostitute recognizes them, and, when confronted with the fact of his perverted affections, Anthony admits his desires. Any suggestion that he is unaware of his feelings or Kate's is incorrect. He simply does not wish to become involved. Kate is quite the opposite. She is totally involved in Anthony. Although firmly entrenched in the rewarding world of international finance and the successful secretary, confidante and mistress of the millionaire Erik Krogh, she is miserable without Anthony, and, when the opportunity arises, she conspires to obtain him a position near her. However, Kate is not so magnanimous as she might seem. Her devotion to Anthony is based on the desire for personal gratification, and, although she is concerned with his well-being, her primary consideration is that she be satisfied:

> "...I love him more than anything in the world; no, inexact, go nearer truth: I love no one, nothing but him; therefore give him me, let me keep him; never mind

[27] Ibid., p. 93.

what he wants, save me, the all-important me, from pain..."[28]

That Kate has no real love for Anthony is not surprising. Her physical sterility is indicative of her incapacity to partake of anything creative. Greene suggests that we can expect no more from one who has stated that: "'Love's no good to anyone. You can't define it. We need things of which we can think, not things we only feel.'"[29]

Anthony's murder, the result of a threat to prove his superiority by blackmailing Krogh, leaves Kate to face the loveless fate which she has always dreaded. "No more pain, no more movement, nothing to fear and nothing to hope for, a stillness indistinguishable from despair."[30]

The world Greene describes in his first novels is frightening and corrupt. It is a world given to murder, hatred, perversion and deceit, where the air is stale, the water scum-covered and the color an unvaried, Kafka-like grey. The supernatural is reduced to irrational superstition: "He did not believe in God, but he believed implicitly in the lines on his hand."[31] or to the magical:

"But she wouldn't pray, she took what comfort and credit she could for

[28] Ibid., p. 242.

[29] Ibid., p. 168.

[30] Ibid., p. 170.

[31] Ibidl, p. 38.

> not praying; it wasn't that one disbelieved in prayer; one never lost all one's belief in magic."[32]

Even when Christianity is retained in a recognizable form, it has degenerated into escapism. There exists no feeling of brotherhood within humanity. Social philosophies, in a ceaseless struggle for power, attempt to treat human beings as usable and expendable objects. People become, almost literally, cogs in a machine and are deprived of all human attributes:

> "The hundred and fifty girls in the machine-room worked with the regularity of a blood beat; a hand to the left, a hand to the right, the pressure of a foot; a damp box flew out, turned in the air, and fell on the moving stair. It was impossible to hear the boxes falling, or a voice speaking, because of the noise of the machines, the machines in the hall, the machines in the cellar where tree trunks uncurled into thin strips of wood, the machines in the room above..."[33]

Even human justice, man's ultimate attempt to create a better world, is absurd. Conder comments:

> "The world, he thought, as they walked between the coffee-stalls, past the lit restaurants, the foreign newspaper shops, and the open doorways, was run by the whims of a few men, the whims of a politician, a journalist, a bishop and a policeman. They hanged this man and pardoned that; one embezzler was in prison, but other men of the same kind were sent to Parliament. Conder, the revolutionary, became a little flushed with the injustice of it, but he

[32] Ibid., p. 242.

[33] Greene, It's a Battlefield, p. 23.

> knew well enough that it was not systematic enough to be called injustice."[34]

But, in spite of these horrors, one becomes aware that Greene holds much hope for mankind. He harbors no belief that human institutions can provide any solution to the dilemma of man's condition, but there is a benign power superior to the human. Ultimately, Greene contends that humanity is doomed unless it turns to this power, God, who is perpetually ready to provide the justice and mercy so lacking in human society. The prison chaplain's comments at the conclusion of It's a Battlefield crystallize this concept:

> "The chaplain said, 'I can't stand human justice any longer. Its arbitrariness. Its incomprehensibility.'
> "I don't mean, of course, to be, to be blasphemous, but isn't that very like, that is to say, isn't divine justice much the same?'
> 'Perhaps. But one can't hand in a resignation to God.'
> The Assistant Commissioner took off his shirt and searched in the drawer. Through the open door he could see the chaplain fidgeting with a wooden tobacco jar.
> 'And I have no complaint against his mercy.'"[35]

For Greene, man's only hope is God and the only way of reaching God is through love. Even the pathetic Conrad Drover, immersed in hatred and pride, recognizes that love provides the means to a better existence.

[34] Ibid., p. 36.

[35] Ibid., p. 214.

> "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 loved with tenderness and permanence, there would have been no need of the pistol in the pocket, the aimless walking and the guilt."[36]

This concept of love's power is most fully developed in The Man Within where Greene presents all the requirements for love's attainment - suffering, emotion, sacrifice and faith.

That Francis Andrews suffers is obvious, but it is also evident that, like the "beetle-man" of Kafka's "Metamorphosis", he derives little benefit from the pain which he considered totally unjustified. It is only through his growing affection for Elizabeth that Andrews gradually comprehends that his suffering is merited by his personal guilt as well as by mankind's collective sins.

In this novel, Greene also presents the intellectual and carnal as associated in a devious conspiracy to destroy man, and, although his attitude towards the physical changes, Greene never abandons his contempt for man's feeble but disastrous mental processes. In Journey Without Maps, he recalls "'...to what perils of extinction, centuries of cerebration have brought us...'"[37] Greene, like Kierkegaard, contends that man cannot rationalize his

[36] Greene, England Made Me, p. 187.

[37] Graham Greene, Journey Without Maps (Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd., 1971), p. 21.

position. Faith and love are emotional rather than intellectual experiences. Man must 'leap' into both conditions; he must listen to his heart not his mind. But Andrews is unable to make this leap:

> "'You hesitate and hesitate and then you are lost,' she replied. 'Can't you ever shut your eyes and leap?'
> 'No, No,' Andrews said. He got to his feet and moved restlessly about the room. 'I can't.'"[38]

He is a victim of the physical and the cerebral.

It is through Elizabeth that Andrews eventually learns to follow his heart, to abnegate self and to believe, for Elizabeth is Greene's affirmation that love does exist in this depraved world. She functions in the world but is not contaminated by its evil. Her existence is based upon a religious sense. Her simple faith, which sees God as the primary force in creation, governs her capacity for love and endows her with peace and serenity. Her love is such that she would gladly sacrifice herself for Andrews, who gradually realizes that this willingness to offer oneself is integral to love:

> "'Yes, I am in love,' he said to himself, with sadness and not exaltation. 'But are you, are you, are you?' the inner critic mocked him. 'It's just the old lusts. This is not Gretel. Would you sacrifice yourself for her? You know that you

38 Greene, The Man Within, p. 86.

wouldn't. You love yourself too dearly.'"[39]

Eventually, he is able to offer his life for his friends and for his sins because he has been drawn towards a supernatural belief by Elizabeth.

> "Elizabeth in The Man Within, however, does manage to revitalize Andrews, by bringing him to something like a religious awakening - to a condition of charitable love, rooted in a religious sentiment and transcending the purely erotic."[40]

Through her, Andrews learns to pray and to hope in a future existence. And, while he never comes to a complete belief, he at least desires an infinite realm founded upon love, a desire which indicates his imminent salvation.

[39] Ibid., p. 86.

[40] R.W.B. Lewis, "The Fiction of Graham Greene: Between The Horror and The Glory," Kenyon Review XIX (Winter 1967): 63.

CHAPTER III

Egotism: The Rejection of Love:

Brighton Rock

The Heart of the Matter

The Comedians

Pinkie Brown (Brighton Rock), Major Scobie (The Heart of the Matter), and Brown (The Comedians) share a common damning vice. Like many of Henry James' characters, they are contaminated by egotism, "...an egotism so complete that you could believe that something inhuman, supernatural, was working there through the poor devils it had chosen."[1] Not one of them will permit himself to love, for each fears the responsibility and changes which love demands. Committed only to themselves, mired in oppressive sterility, the three exemplify opposite, but equally destructive egotistical reactions to love. Pinkie evades love by hatred and violence; Scobie avoids love by adhering to pity; Brown seeks to escape love through indifference.

The plot of Brighton Rock is a typical fast-paced, highly organized thriller structure. Hale's murder instigates the action which centers around the pursuit of the boy-criminal Pinkie by Ida Arnold, a woman whose natural sense of justice demands that the killer of her friend, Hale, be apprehended. This story is, however, not as simple as it might at first appear, since in Brighton Rock, Greene, for the first time, makes use of an explicitly religious framework and scale of values which were only hinted at through Elizabeth's character in The Man Within and through the prison

[1] Graham Greene, Collected Essays (Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd., 1970), p. 32.

chaplin's comments on God's mercy in It's a Battlefield. All Greene's usual motifs, the corrupted childhood, the betrayal, the pursuit and flight, are connected with this religious context. Religious images and references abound: the images of the cathedral, the sacraments, the old woman saying her rosary, the dialogue of Pinkie and Rose with the constant allusions to grace, sin, Heaven and Hell, the repetition of the 'Agnus Dei'. All indicate that the story is to be read on more than a natural level. Pinkie is pursued by human justice represented by Ida, but he is also pursued by God represented by Rose and by his own conscience. One of the merits of this novel is certainly the exquisite blending of the physical, psychological and spiritual pursuits.

For Greene, the tension which exists between Ida on the one side and Pinkie and Rose on the other is a tension between different levels of existence. Theirs is the conflict which exists between those living on the supernatural plane of good and evil and those who exist on the natural level of right and wrong. At the beginning of the novel, the reader's attention is directed away from Hale, who is alone, who is not part of the crowd, towards Ida. This use of a shifting perspective not only quickens pace and heightens tension, but also emphasizes the fact that Ida is representative of the

crowd which throngs gaudy, superficial Brighton in a search for pleasure which they hope will alleviate life's fear and loneliness. Greene sees Ida as a symbol of the great middle law-abiding class who believe that they understand compassion and justice; but Ida's concept of justice is merciless, subjective and distorted. Like her sexual escapades, her pursuit of Pinkie is little more than 'a bit of fun'. It is an exciting and amusing game. In her childless sterility, she represents the same shallow, superficial values as Anthony Farrant. She discounts God and possesses no sense of a deeper reality. She is spiritually empty. Ruthlessly self-seeking, she is far removed from salvation, for love to her means nothing more than the sentimentality stereotyped in cheap songs.

Greene creates the violent and brutal world which Pinkie inhabits through images which remind one of hell - the beggar who has lost one side of his body, the pregnant girl who suicides by placing herself across a railway track and waiting for the train, the squalor of Nelson Place where Rose's parents 'sell' her for fifteen guineas. Pinkie himself seems possessed by this same demonic malevolence and is consumed by a ". . .hideous and unnatural pride."[2] A social misfit, Pinkie hates life with an overwhelming passion. When told that life

[2] Graham Greene, Brighton Rock (Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd., 1970), p. 7.

may not be as bad as it appears, he vehemently replies:

> " 'Don't you believe it,' he said. 'I'll tell you what it is. It's jail, it's not knowing where to get some money. Worms and cataract, cancer. You hear 'em shrieking from the upper windows — children being born. It's dying slowly.' "[3]

But, like Léon Bloy, "...he hated the world as a saint might have done, but only because of what it did to him and not because of what it did to others."[4] Paradoxically, Pinkie also dreads death, for he is a Catholic to whom the spiritual realm is a terrifying reality. He possesses an intense sense of time rushing past, death, and then the ultimate horror, hell. However, Pinkie completely perverts his religious faith. He states his belief as " 'Credo in unum Satanum...' "[5] For him, God and heaven are doubtful; Satan and hell are incontestably real. Deprieved of Christian hope, yet retaining a guilty awareness of evil's consequences, Pinkie desperately desires peace and is prepared to murder an entire world to achieve this end.

Pinkie first kills to avenge his mentor's murder, kills again to silence an accomplice, and is forced into marriage to silence the one witness who might betray him. This marriage disgusts him, for he has an unnatural revulsion from the sexual. Nauseated

[3] Ibid., p. 229.

[4] Greene, Collected Essays, p. 103.

[5] Greene, Brighton Rock, p. 167.

by his parents' methodical Saturday night sexual performance, he has repressed his natural sexual instincts and perverted them to sadism. He experiences sexual excitement only when he feels the sharp edge of a razor or handles a bottle of vitriol. His greatest ignominy is having to pretend that he loves this girl, Rose, who can destroy him.

Rose, an instrument of God's grace, has great capacity for love and commitment. Completely dedicating herself to Pinkie, she is ready to bear the responsibility of and suffer damnation for his sins. Her love asks nothing, not even that Pinkie be worthy of it or love her in return. In her utter selflessness, she is likened to Péguy who offered everything for others:

> "'There was a man, a Frenchman, you wouldn't know about him, my child, who had the same idea as you. He was a good man, a holy man, and he lived in sin all through his life, because he couldn't bear the idea that any soul could suffer damnation. . . .
> 'This man decided that if any soul was going to be damned, he would be damned too. He never took the sacraments, he never married his wife in church. I don't know, my child, but some people think he was - well, a saint."[6]

Her tremendous love offers the one chance Pinkie has to gain the peace he seeks, but he cannot trust or comprehend her affection. He cannot perceive that her love is anything more than the sexuality which he loathes. For him, hatred is a more powerful force than love. "She

[6] Ibid., p. 248.

loved him, whatever that meant, but love was not an eternal thing like hatred and disgust."[7] The boy detests Rose, but he is drawn to her. He realizes that she can lead to salvation, but he refuses it:

> "He watched her with his soured virginity, as one might watch a drought of medicine offered that one would never, never take: one would die first - or let others die."[8]

Maddened by the girl's goodness and pursued by Ida Arnold, his perverse nemesis, Pinkie becomes even more desperate and vicious. He convinces himself that his only hope for peace is Rose's death. When she is gone, he believes, his torments will end. The conflict between her goodness and his evil will cease. There will be only himself:

> "Life would go on. No more human contacts, other people's emotions washing at the brain - he would be free again: nothing to think about but himself. Myself: the words echoed hygienically on among the porcelain basins, the taps and plugs and wastes."[9]

He induces Rose to participate in a suicide "pact". Rose will kill herself; he will be free. But, plans go awry. Ida interferes, and, when a container of vitriol breaks in his face, Pinkie, blinded, runs over a cliff.

Pinkie's fate seems certain even though no human mind can comprehend "the...appalling...strangeness

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[7] Ibid., p. 189.

[8] Ibid., p. 89.

[9] Ibid., pp. 233-234.

of the mercy of God."[10] Greene clearly indicates, and the boy certainly realizes, that there are no last minute repentances:

> "Between the stirrup and the ground there wasn't time: you couldn't break in a moment the habit of thought: habit held you closely while you died..."[11]

Rose's confessor connects Pinkie's fate with his ability to love:

> "'If he loved you, surely,' the old man said, 'that shows there was some good...'
> 'Even love like that?'
> 'Yes'"[12]

If Pinkie loved, there is hope for his salvation, but Pinkie has never loved. Rose will return home to "...the worst horror of all."[13], Pinkie's recorded voice making the ultimate statement on his destiny. "'God damn you, you little bitch, why can't you go back home forever and let me be?'"[14]

Pinkie is doomed because he rejects love and unreservedly chooses hatred. His environment helps to produce these attitudes, but Greene emphasizes that Pinkie's condition is his own personal, free choice.

10 Ibid., p. 248.

11 Ibid., p. 109.

12 Ibid., p. 249.

13 Ibid., p. 250.

14 Ibid., p. 179.

> "When Pinkie, the boy gangster, commits murder, when he plans to blind his girl with vitriol, he is not indulging in an 'acte gratuite': he is deliberately and consciously 'choosing' damnation instead of salvation. Hell lay about him in his infancy and, adolescent, of his own free will he opts for hell."[15]

In his evil, Pinkie, unlike Ida, is close to sanctity, and Greene treats him with respect and compassion. Although poetic justice seems to be achieved by Pinkie's death, Ida's comment that human nature is the same all the way through is shown to be erroneous. Pinkie knows that change is possible. He is tempted to love but makes a 'heroic' effort to choose damnation. Greene clearly suggests that the boy's evil could have been turned to good. Even at the end, there is still the spiritual pursuit, the chance to turn to God, but Pinkie is too fearful of the change love will cause in his existence:

> "An enormous emotion beat on him; it was like something trying to get in, the pressure of gigantic wings against the glass. Dona nobis pacem. He withstood it, with all the bitter force of the school bench, the cement playground, the St. Pancras waiting room, Dallow's and Judy's secret lust, and the cold unhappy moment on the pier. If the glass broke, if the beast - whatever it was - got in, God knows what it would do. He had a sense of a huge havoc - the confession, the penance, and the sacrament..."[16]

At the novel's conclusion, the focus shifts to

15 Walter Allen, "Graham Greene", in Writers of Today, ed. Denys Val Baker (London: Sidgwick, 1946): 24.

16 Greene, Brighton Rock, p. 242.

the positive vision of Rose's love. One knows that she is going home to hear Pinkie's recording, but one is also aware that she will continue to love. Rose has already stated that she would love Pinkie regardless of whether or not he loved her. She knows that love brings pain not peace. Her suffering will, one feels, bring her closer to humanity and to God.

The Heart of the Matter employs the same triangular structure used to advance the theme and action in earlier novels. The story is built around a series of incidents which trace the destructive path of pity through a number of complex human relationships. There are three basic triangular structures in which Scobie is the common element - Scobie, Louise and Helen; Scobie, Louise and Wilson; Scobie, Helen and Bagster. The characters involved in these affairs offer a wide spectrum of attitudes towards love: Scobie substitutes pity for love; Louise has been hardened and embittered by Scobie's lies and pity; Helen, like Marie Ryker, has a child's ignorant misunderstanding of love; Bagster is interested only in sex, and Wilson, with his Golden Treasury of romantic poetry, confuses love and sentimentality. These affairs are further complicated by Scobie's powerful religious beliefs which perceive God as an important factor in his relationship with Louise and Helen. The novel is divided into three sections in which Scobie's association with Louise, Helen and God is

examined primarily from Scobie's point of view, a perspective which Greene uses to emphasize the ruinous and delusive effects of pity upon all aspects of human existence.

The novel is essentially a poignant study of the egotistical causes and corruptive nature of pity. The feelings created by images of malaria, carrion, unbearable heat, and brothels intensify the overwhelming atmosphere of disease and decay which Greene associates with this 'vice'. Major Scobie, the novel's central figure, is firmly entrenched in this environment. As a police officer, he is intimately acquainted with local corruption, but his own neurotic sense of pity induces him to become, in effect, even more evil than those criminals with whom he associates. This feeling of pity drives him to professional delinquency, adultery, sacrilege, murder and suicide.

His pity approaches the monstrous. It lives off the misery of others, and, like Conrad Drover, Scobie is disturbed by others' happiness. When Louise returns from her vacation self-assured, more attractive and comparatively happy, Scobie becomes desperate, for he cannot pity her:

> "But he couldn't tell her the entreaty that was on his lips: let me pity you again, be disappointed, unattractive, be a failure so that I can love you once

> more without this bitter gap between us."[17]

His pity is exclusive. It is only the ugly failures that he cares for:

> "Against the beautiful and the clever and the successful, one can wage a pitiless war, but not against the unattractive: then the millstone weights on the breast."[18]

In brief, Scobie rejects those superior to himself; inferiors only are recipients of his pity.

> "The people who touch him must be immature and helpless: he alone is responsible, the policeman, the father. The relationship seems sometimes incestuous, as with Helen, sometimes parasitic, as with Louise - that blood bank of pathos - but the initial pattern is constant: pity generating responsibility, the child as father to the man. For Scobie cannot be a man, cannot emerge from the solitude of his bathroom "home" until he has reduced others to the status of moribund children, imposed on them the image of his dead daughter, Caroline. Then he can be for them the adult he is so conspicuously dressed to resemble."[19]

Pity becomes an assertion of Scobie's superiority and manhood. Beneath an upright facade, he hides a terrible sense of guilt and exile. A betrayer of himself, his faith, his profession, and his wife, he is riddled with feelings of failure and inadequacy. "It seemed to him

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[17] Graham Greene, The Heart of the Matter (Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd., 1965), pp. 245-246.

[18] Ibid., p. 49.

[19] Donat O'Donnell, "Graham Greene: The Anatomy of Pity", Maria Cross: Imaginative Patterns in a Group of Modern Catholic Writers (New York: Oxford University Press, 1952), p. 79.

that he must have failed in some way in manhood."[20]

Afflicted with feelings of inferiority, Scobie attempts to achieve the peace of vacancy by eliminating all memories and objects to which he might grow attached. He desires things to be "...a firm, friendly, unchanging minimum."[21] Even in his own home, he feels secure only in the isolation of the bathroom. It is little wonder that Scobie refuses love's commitments and chooses the less demanding sentiment of pity.

> "Love is fire and must often hurt in order to achieve its ends. Pity is the easy way, an escape for the weak, who cannot face truth directly or tolerate any impediment to their self-centered peace."[22]

Scobie's pity is a conscious and deliberate rejection of love. People are objects which he can pity without being troubled by their humanity. In his imagination, he goes so far as to reduce those he pities to the grotesque and inhuman. Louise, his wife, reminds him of "... a joint under a meat cover,"[23] and Helen, his mistress, is described as "...a bundle of cannon fodder."[24]

20 Greene, The Heart of the Matter, p. 45.

21 Ibid., p. 21.

22 Marie-Beatrice Mesnet, Graham Greene and The Heart of the Matter (London: Cresset Press, 1954), pp. 64-65.

23 Greene, The Heart of the Matter, p. 23.

24 Ibid., p. 153.

Then, since those people are so pathetic, Scobie feels justified in governing their lives by determining what is best for them. This attitude demonstrates that Scobie deceives himself into believing that these people are incapable of self-direction and that he is a benign superior.

The intricate workings of Scobie's pity are most clearly illuminated in his association with Helen Rolt. An ugly, childish innocent who has suffered shipwreck, exposure, and starvation, she provides a perfect object for his pity. Although he at first deceives himself into believing that their relationship is that of a father and child, it gradually develops into a sexual affair. Amazingly, although he leads Helen into adultery and makes her life miserable, Scobie still believes he is her savior. Only he can save her from despair and from the snares of evil men like Lieutenant Bagster who seek to use her for their own ends. Scobie will not leave Helen, and, even when she informs him that she does not want his attentions, he persists, an indication that his feelings are for his personal benefit rather than for hers:

> "'Poor dear', he said.
> She said furiously, 'I don't want your pity.' But it was not a question of whether she wanted it - she had it. Pity smouldered like decay at his heart."[25]

25 Ibid., p. 170.

The knowledge that he makes misery more unbearable never causes Scobie's pity to diminish. Indeed, he desires to pity the entire universe:

> "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?"[26]

Not even God can escape his pity. He, too, must be a failure:

> "I love failure: I can't love success. And how successful she looks, sitting there: one of the saved, and he saw laid across that wide face like a news-screen the body of Ali under the black drums, the exhausted eyes of Helen, and all the faces of the lost, his companions in exile, the unrepentant thief, the soldier with the sponge. Thinking of what he had done and was going to do, he thought with love, even God is a failure."[27]

Eventually, not only does he disparage God, he begins to equate himself with the Divine. He perceives himself in his role as God is in His. Scobie envisages himself as responsible for others; he must arrange their happiness; he must not abandon them to God's care. God must come to fit Scobie's concepts. God must share his sense of pity and his aversion from suffering. Scobie cannot accept that God's love and mercy might be incomprehensible to his mind. He assumes that an infinite love can be comprehended in its entirety in a finite world. And,

[26] Ibid., p. 117.

[27] Ibid., p. 245.

when he is unable to understand God, Scobie comes to doubt His mercy and develops an underlying conviction that God is not to be trusted.

> "For Scobie suffering and love are irreconcilable. He cannot fathom a God who seems not to love those whom he has created, a God who has not the same sense of pity and responsibility as himself."[28]

Ultimately, Scobie perceives himself as a Christ figure. He is the one who must assume the responsibility for saving, not only Louise and Helen, but the entire world. He is the only man who can prevent disaster. He can influence God's decisions:

> "The lights were showing in the temporary hospital, and the weight of all the 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. In the Cities of the Plain a single soul might have changed the mind of God."[29]

This Christ-like image is intensified at Scobie's suicide. He sees himself as offering his life for the salvation of those given to his care. He even convinces himself that Christ also committed suicide:

> "Christ had not been murdered; You couldn't murder God; Christ had killed himself: he had hung himself

[28] A.A. Devitis, "The Church and Major Scobie", Renascence X (Spring 1958): 119.

[29] Greene, The Heart of the Matter, p. 116.

> on the cross as surely as Pemberton from the picture-rail."[30]

However, Scobie's death is less an attempt to save others than a last, desperate, egotistical effort to escape the self-knowledge which, like Wilson the secret agent who suspects his dishonesty, is relentlessly pursuing him. He has deceived himself into believing that he could borrow money from a criminal and function effectively as a police officer, that he could commit adultery and murder, yet retain his integrity; but Scobie's mind cannot shut out forever the truth which he fears and hates.

> "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."[31]

This truth eventually forces itself upon his consciousness. He is moved to ask himself:

> "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?"[32]

The realization that he is far from being a great benefactor crushes his pride, and his participation in his servant's murder, an act instigated by the guilty

30 Ibid., p. 182.

31 Ibid., p. 56.

32 Ibid., p. 198.

fear that the boy was spying on him, brings an even more complete realization of his degeneration. "Scobie thought: if only I could weep, if only I could feel pain; have I really become evil?"[33] However, he refuses to accept responsibility for his character. "...looking up towards the Cross on the altar he thought savagely: Take your sponge of gall. You made me what I am. Take the spear thrust."[34] His death is nothing more than an act of pride, another self-pitying and cowardly evasion of the truth, and his last words "'Dear God, I love...'"[35] are a final attempt at self-deception.

Scobie's death is foreshadowed in the scene at Pendele where he finds Pemberton hanged and, in a dream, associates the boy's death with himself. His suicide, his physical self-destruction, is a parallel to his professional and moral decay, symbolized by Scobie's rusty handcuffs and broken rosary. Ironically, Scobie's death is only another instance of a false pride in a sense of justice which he knows to be corrupt.

The final comment on Scobie's fate is left to Louise who is much more observant and cunning than she at first appears. Louise fully realizes the facts of

33 Ibid., p. 238.

34 Ibid., p. 216.

35 Ibid., p. 257.

Scobie's affair, of his reliance on the 'comforting lie', and of his inability to love her. At the end, in a conversation with Father Rand, she is truth's cold, hard conveyor:

> "'It may seem an odd thing to say - when a man's as wrong as he was - but I think from what I saw of him, that he really loved God.'
>
> She had denied just now that she felt any bitterness, but a little more of it drained out now like tears from exhausted ducts. 'He certainly loved no one else,' she said.
>
> 'And you may be in the right of it there, too,' Father Rank replied."[36]

Louise effectively emphasizes that Scobie loved no living person, and that Scobie could love God without loving others is completely contrary to Greene's vision. Looking at The Heart of the Matter in the total context of Greene's work and of the Christian tradition, one can feel assured that Scobie loved neither man nor God, and, although neither Greene nor the Catholic Church feels at liberty to say that a man is damned, Scobie's hope for salvation seems to be God's mercy, in which he had such little trust.

The Comedians is another portrayal of a world which has abandoned religious faith and, in so doing, has destroyed the religious sense which Greene considers necessary for love. This loss of faith has made the world a place where there exists no true nobility, where everything, even the traditional virtues of courage,

36 Ibid., p. 264.

loyalty, and idealism, is tarnished by comic absurdity. In this novel, Greene has progressed:

> "...from fiction based on a 'tragic' conflict between human and divine values, to fiction conceived in terms of comedy and irony in which the possibility of religious faith has all but retreated out of sight in the anarchic confusion of human behavior."[37]

This nightmare world of Haiti, a microcosm of modern society, is reminiscent of 1984 with its fear, frustration and violence. In this deforested wasteland, this 'shabby land of terror', where nothing changes for the better and violent deaths are natural deaths, only the horror seems real. Everywhere loom the menacing Tontons Macoute, Papa Doc's inscrutable secret police, symbols of a macabre and grotesque evil which permits not even the dead to possess any semblance of humanity.

In such conditions it is small wonder that people don 'comic masks' in order to conceal, even from themselves, their true feelings. All, in order to survive, are forced to play a role.

> "The Comedians, it would seem, are the pretenders, those who play a part, those neither good enough nor grand enough for tragedy, perhaps because the world no longer allows for tragic action."[38]

But even the comedians must have a belief which will give some meaning to their superficial lives, for Greene

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37 David Lodge, "Graham Greene's Comedians", Commonweal, LXXXIII (1966): 605.

38 A.A. DeVitis, "Greene's The Comedians: Hollower Men", Renascence XVIII (1966): 130.

contends that: "Nobody can endure existence without a philosophy."[39] In this world of religious vacuity, any belief is accepted as better than none. Belief in vegetarianism, communism, revolution, even belief in one's own lies seems better than belief in nothing. The Smiths, American innocents, are idealists who advocate vegetarianism as a means of removing passion from the human body. Jones, an incorrigible fraud, presents himself as a skilled and heroic military expert who is in the process of completing an important business arrangement with 'Papa Doc's' regime. Neither the Smiths nor Jones are 'bad men'; like Dr. Magiot, the gentle, sincere, heroic communist, they are simply men who have no religious basis upon which to pattern their action, and, because they lack belief in the spiritual, Greene sees their efforts as doomed to failure. These people, however, see the absurdity of their situation and their comic possibilities. They can laugh at themselves and this laughter, for Greene, is a form of redemptive humility. It is Brown, the story's narrator, who is the most pathetic and absurd comic for he, with complete seriousness, plays a role devoid of love, belief, or humor. Brown is essentially indifferent to the events and people which surround him. For him, belief in or commitment to anything is a limitation. He plays the

39 Graham Greene, The Lawless Roads (Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd., 1971), p. 200.

part of a once successful businessman who has fallen on hard times, of a lover, of a patriot, and of an Englishman who is concerned about a fellow countryman, but he plays these parts without feeling or conviction.

> "Although his sympathies are with Dr. Magiot, Philipot and the partisan cause, there is no commitment. There is no commitment to anything, not to love, not to religion, not to God, not to innocence."[40]

Middle-aged and cynical, Brown is a 'citizen of nowhere' who inescapably realizes his incapacity for love and the mediocrity of his life but who refuses to take any action which might precipitate change:

> "'I had felt myself not merely incapable of love - many are incapable of that, but even of guilt. There were no heights and no abysses in my world - I saw myself on a great plain, walking and walking on the interminable flats.'"[41]

Enamoured of his hotel's past prosperity, Brown evaluates life in terms of comfortable affluence and sexual gratification. He is unable to accept change or to desire anything of his existence other than the egotistical enjoyment of pleasurable trivia:

> "'What do you want, Brown?'
> 'I want to run this hotel - I want to see it as it used to be. Before Papa Doc came. Joseph busy behind the bar, girls in the bathing-pool, cars coming up the drive, all the stupid noises of enjoyment. Ice in glasses, laughter in the bushes, and of

40 A.A. Devitis, "Greene's The Comedians: Hollower Men", p. 136.

41 Graham Greene, The Comedians (Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd., 1970), p. 286.

course, oh yes, the rustle of dollar-notes.'
'And then?'
'Oh, I suppose a body to love.'"[42]

His affair with Martha, an ambassador's wife, provides him with a body to love. Brown has little affection for this woman; she is only an object which dispenses sexual satisfaction and bolsters a faltering ego. As he crudely states, he just 'made' her. Lacking any respect for her individuality, he demands that she, like all others, play the part he has assigned her:

> "'We can't even talk to you, can we? You won't listen if what we say is out of character - the character you've given us.'
> 'What character? You're a woman I love. That's all.'
> 'Oh yes, I'm classified. A woman you love...'"[43]

Martha can arouse only one emotion in Brown's dead soul. Unable to understand this woman's basic goodness, he becomes enraged when he suspects that Jones, by lies of heroic daring, has usurped his privilege of enjoying Martha's body. For his own egotistical reasons, Brown determines to discredit Jones. He arranges to transport this imposter to a rendezvous with the ill-organized guerilla band who, engaged in a futile campaign to overthrow the demonic 'Papa Doc', desperately need an experienced and charismatic military leader. Brown harbours the secret hope that Jones will reveal himself

[42] Ibid., p. 234.

[43] Ibid., p. 229.

as the liar that he actually is, but, much to his amazement, Jones persists with his dream. When Brown's involvement is discovered, he is forced to flee Haiti and seek refuge in the Dominican Republic where he finally finds employment as an undertaker, a situation which Greene suggests is a fitting occupation for an egotist who rejects love.

Greene leaves the final irrevocable comment on Brown's existence to the priest who delivers the funeral eulogy for the revolutionaries:

> "'The church condemns violence, but it condemns indifference more harshly. Violence can be the expression of love, indifference never. One is an imperfection of charity, the other, the perfection of egoism.'"[44]

[44] Ibid., p. 283.

CHAPTER IV

Progress Towards Love

The Quiet American
A Burnt-Out Case
The Power and the Glory

The Quiet American, *A Burnt-Out Case* and *The Power and the Glory* progressively scrutinize the individual's advance towards love. None of the central characters in these novels achieve the perfection attained by Sarah Miles; they are, like Bendrix, in a state of flux. Fowler moves from non-involvement to love of people, but, as the novel concludes, he has only a very vague longing for a supernatural dimension. Querry overcomes extreme egotism and indifference and is just beginning to feel love for people and belief in God when he is murdered. The whisky priest, who is closest to Sarah's saintliness, conquers pride and cowardice and possesses both a love for people and an understanding of God's love, but these qualities have not fully developed at the time he is executed. All these characters are, however, much closer to salvation than Pinkie, Scobie or Brown, for they have begun to abandon egotism, to feel compassion, and to desire God.

Greene uses the setting in *The Quiet American*, which takes place during the Franco-Vietminh war of the 1950's, to create an image of the futility and horror which prevails when men, alienated from the spiritual, attempt to direct the world. The minute detail of the war scenes show, through images of the callous destruction of human beings, the terrible lack of love men feel for one another. Greene leads the reader through a series of scenes - a canal filled with bobbing corpses, a

napalm bombing, a mutilated girl, a mother and child shot neatly through the head, a twitching, legless torso - which terrify and nauseate. One is able to understand why Fowler, the narrator, says:

> "The human condition being what it was, let them fight, let them love, let them murder. I would not be involved. My fellow journalists called themselves correspondents; I preferred the title of reporter. I wrote what I saw: I took no action - even an opinion is a kind of action."[1]

Throughout the story, Fowler's desire to remain uninvolved is symbolized by this insistence on his professional role. But, ironically, Fowler cannot live by his philosophy. Greene quickly makes one aware that Fowler has become engagé by making a most serious decision, a decision to destroy a human life. The conflict which this decision creates within Fowler, who betrays both his beliefs and his friend, is of major importance; indeed, the novel is built upon conflict. Fowler's internal conflict is paralleled by the external clash between himself and Pyle, the quiet American, between Fowler's growing compassion for human beings and Pyle's inordinate concern with ideas and economics.

Soon after the novel begins, the reader learns that Pyle has been killed and that Fowler has been involved in his murder. Through this technique, Greene directs one's attention to the questions which he considers

[1] Graham Greene, The Quiet American (Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd., 1971), p. 27.

of paramount importance - why was Pyle murdered and what motivated Fowler to become involved? Through the use of flashback and by presenting the story through Fowler's eyes, the eyes of a trained observer dedicated to the facts and the truth, Greene answers these questions. In addition, the use of Fowler as the narrator allows a more intimate investigation of his character. It also allows for the dramatic creation of Pyle's character from the viewpoint of his murderer and heightens suspense by withholding information which the narrator cannot know.

The novel is partially structured as a version of the Christ story. By ironic inversion, Fowler, the betrayer, is a Judas figure; Pyle, the innocent, dies for the good of all. At the novel's beginning, Greene creates antipathy towards Fowler and sympathy for Pyle. Pyle possesses many attributes of the stereotyped hero which Fowler cynically refers to in his comments on Errol Flynn and Tyrone Power movies. Pyle appears honest, trustworthy, chaste, courageous; well intentioned and idealistic, he is committed to the ideal of democracy as the salvation of the world. One gradually becomes aware, however, of another side to Pyle's character. This Jamesian innocent abroad is completely unsuited to confront the corruption and deception which proliferate in a war-torn country possessing a culture he cannot comprehend.

Pyle, whose only glimpse of experience is that

gleaned from books and lectures, displays an adolescent incapacity to distinguish between dream and reality. He has no proper understanding of the world, for he is unable to recognize the evil in himself or in others. His innocence is destructive, for it is nothing more than a naive ignorance which prevents him from feeling any sense of guilt no matter what desolation his actions may cause. Like Ida Arnold, he lacks insight and is concerned only with what seems right, with 'being fair'. This inability to see beneath the surface of things expresses itself through his numerous trite cliches. Pained and disappointed when the real world does not match his romantic preconceptions, Pyle, naively and self-righteously, dedicates himself to abstract ideas, to the concept of democracy. Ironically, this 'boy-man' forgets that the essential principle of democracy is the individual's importance, and he consequently develops a contemptible attitude towards others.

> "Pyle's choices seem despicable because they are apparently made without insight or compassion, because he forces 'living action upon abstract formulae'."[2]

Obsessed by his desire to spread democracy, he feels no real love for anyone. Individuals are only pawns which may be ruthlessly sacrificed in order to spread democracy. And, disastrously, Pyle is quiet only

[2] Ralph Freedman, "Novel of Contention: The Quiet American", Western Review XXI (Autumn 1956): 78.

in the sense of being non-vocal. Nominally attached to an American economic aid mission, he is, in reality, authorized to create a Third Force, an anti-communist pro-American contingent, and he spares neither effort nor lives in accomplishing his task. Time and again, Pyle uses his power and shows a deplorable lack of concern for those whom he destroys. When he observes the devastation caused by his bombs, he unemotionally dismisses the incident:

> "'They were only war casualties,' he said. 'It was a pity, but you can't always hit your target. Anyway they died in the right cause'...'In a way you could say they died for Democracy,' he said."[3]

Most of the action in the novel is generated by the juxtaposition of Pyle and Fowler, who is middle-aged, cynical, corrupt and experienced. His life has been controlled by a fear of involvement which has made any emotional response impossible. He has left a wife and a mistress in England because he feared commitment. His existence in Vietnam is devoid of any attachments. Fowler has taken a Vietnamese mistress, Phuong, but her primary function is to alleviate the loneliness which he dreads. When reality becomes too unbearable, Fowler uses opium, for he will allow nothing to disturb his artificial calm. His situation perfectly fits George Orwell's observation that:

[3] Greene, The Quiet American, p. 177.

> "If one could follow it to its psychological roots, one would, I believe, find that the main motive for 'non-attachment' is a desire to escape from the pain of living, and above all from love, which, sexual or non-sexual, is hard work."[4]

Pyle disrupts Fowler's isolation and is the instrument which forces the older man to move from his position of non-involvement. Fowler gradually comes to realize that the innocent young American who mutely called for protection is a "...dumb leper who has lost his bell, wandering the world, meaning no harm."[5] And, because his indifference is only a forced façade which camouflages a great sympathy for corrupt humanity, Fowler finds himself forced to choose between Pyle's life and the lives of those whom Pyle's bombs are destroying.

Greene's writings show little sympathy for Americans and the American foreign policy. Pyle, innocently ignorant and crassly inhuman, certainly symbolizes American fledgling naiveté in international affairs. Fowler, with his conscience, sense of guilt and compassion, represents the older European culture which, although often unsatisfactory, has, nevertheless, maintained a realization of human worth and social responsibility. The novel is not, however, primarily

4 George Orwell, Collected Essays (London: Sicker P. Warburg, 1968), p. 456.

5 Greene, The Quiet American, p. 36.

concerned with anti-Americanism. In this book, Greene returns to the idea that it is not forms of government nor ideas that are important but love for people. As Fowler states:

> "'Isms and ocracies'. Give me facts. A rubber planter beats his labourer - all right, I'm against him. He hasn't been instructed to do it by the Minister of the Colonies. In France I expect he'd beat his wife. I've seen a priest, so poor he hasn't a change of trousers, working fifteen hours a day from hut to hut in a cholera epidemic, eating nothing but rice and salt fish, saying his Mass with an old cup - a wooden platter. I don't believe in God and yet I'm for that priest."[6]

Greene's gradual reversal of the reader's attitude towards Fowler and Pyle exposes the fallacy of 'good motives' as a criterion for judging action and repudiates the Machiavellian belief that the end justifies the means. It also emphasizes the author's belief that traditional virtues are unimportant when the primary virtue of love is absent and that love compensates for a multitude of vices.

The novel is built around a series of emotional incidents which lead Fowler towards involvement and love - the canal filled with rotting corpses, the woman and child neatly shot through the head, Pyle's desire to shoot two innocent boys are just some of these. Then, there are the comments, made to Fowler by three very different types of men, which influence him. Captain

6 Ibid., p. 94.

Trouin, a French flyer nauseated by the war observes:

> "'It's not a matter of reason or justice. We all get involved in a moment of emotion and then we cannot get out. War and Love - they have always been compared.'"[7]

Vigot, the Pascal-quoting police officer who pursues him for his part in Pyle's murder, says, "'You don't follow your own principles, Fowler. You're engagé, like the rest of us.'"[8], and Heng, the communist who wishes Fowler to assist in Pyle's murder tells him, "'Sooner or later...one has to take sides. If one is to remain human.'"[9] These incidents and comments play upon Fowler's mind. He becomes involved as he is made aware of Pyle's destructive indifference and of his own responsibility. The physical wound he receives is symbolic of his growing emotional commitment. The culminating moment of emotion comes when he sees the bodies in the bombed square and notices Pyle's complete lack of concern. Particularly influential in stimulating Fowler's emotional reaction is the powerful image of the mother who covers the remains of her child with her hat. The total effect of this incident on the normally calm and controlled reporter can be seen when he talks with Heng:

7 Ibid., p. 150.

8 Ibid., p. 136.

9 Ibid., p. 172.

> "'If you'd seen him, Heng. He stood there and said it was all a sad mistake, there should have been a parade. He said he'd have to get his shoes cleaned before he saw the Minister.'
> 'Of course, you could tell what you know to the police.'
> 'They aren't interested in The either. And do you think they would dare to touch an American? He has diplomatic privileges. He's a graduate of Harvard. The Minister's very fond of Pyle. Heng, there was a woman there whose baby - she kept it covered under her straw hat, I can't get it out of my head. And there was another at Phat Diem.'
> 'You must try to be calm, Mr. Fowler.'
> 'What'll he do next, Heng? How many bombs and dead children can you get out of a drum of Diolacton?"[10]

Fowler makes his commitment to assist in Pyle's murder not because he hates Pyle nor because the American has taken his mistress, but because Fowler has begun to feel compassion for human beings. He has become emotionally involved in the human situation. He has seen the suffering which the people endure and understands their condition, for he too has experienced pain. He is starting to progress towards love. However, his decision to assist in Pyle's murder is made purely on humanitarian grounds without any supportive religious framework. Fowler does not believe in a God. This lack of a spiritual dimension is essential to Greene's purpose for through it he emphasizes that even actions performed through human compassion are absurd and destructive if not directed by the spiritual.

[10] Ibid., pp. 171-172.

> "The Catholic demand for an extra-personal, extra-human authority through which right action and therefore positive existence can be assured remains almost unspoken yet all-pervading, for through it Fowler's choices might have become real; through it he might have broken the vice of his sterility. In the absence of this authority, the world of Saigon of Indo-China, the world of men crumbles."[11]

Throughout the novel Greene suggests that Fowler needs and desires a supernatural reality, a permanent absolute. Fowler states, "'I envied those who believe in a God...'"[12], and later, "'Perhaps if I want to be understood or understand I would bamboozle myself into belief, but I am a reporter; God exists only for lead-writers.'"[13] At the novel's conclusion, Fowler's greatest desire is to understand and to be understood.

Because Fowler cannot intellectually convince himself that a God exists, because he finds himself in a moral dilemma, he is forced, through compassion for others, to take upon himself the responsibility for a human death, a responsibility which Greene believes is outside human authority. The plot, ironically, moves in a full circle; Fowler finds himself in the same position as Pyle - killing a person for a good motive.

[11] Freedman, p. 80.

[12] Greene, The Quiet American, p. 43.

[13] Ibid., p. 60.

Everything seems to go well with Fowler after Pyle's death. His involvement in the murder cannot be proven (another example of the inadequacy of human justice); he remains in Viet Nam; his wife grants him a divorce which enables him to marry Phuong. But this burlesque of the superficial 'happy ending' is abruptly shattered by Fowler's final agonizing cry which indicates a dissatisfaction with a purely human explanation of experience and a need for understanding. "Everything had gone right with me since he had died, but how I wished there existed someone to whom I could say that I was sorry."[14] Fowler cannot intellectualize God's existence, but perhaps, Greene suggests, Fowler may come to Him emotionally just as he became emotionally involved with the war and humanity. Fowler's involvement with God is predicted by frequent references to Pascal. When the novel concludes, Fowler wants and needs a God. The words of the Father Superior in A Burnt-Out Case can be equally applied to Fowler and Querry. "'You remember what Pascal said, that a man who starts looking for God has already found him.'"[15]

Querry deviates from the usual pattern of Greene's characters in that he is an unqualified material success. An architect of international repute, he is acclaimed by the world as a great builder, a great lover, a great

[14] Ibid., p. 187.

[15] Graham Greene, A Burnt-Out Case (Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd., 1970), p. 207.

Christian, but within the man there rages a fearful conflict, for he realizes that he is none of these. Success brings Querry only destruction, hollowness and disgust. It accentuates what Greene has implied in previous novels - success is more damning than failure. Querry's self-deception has induced him to believe in the image of himself which others had presented to him; now he is unable to delude himself further. This recognition of the truth is traumatic, for the man sincerely believed that he was his image. The entire autobiographical parable of the disillusioned jeweler which he relates to Maria Rycker emphasizes this concept:

> "'Even the man himself began to believe that he loved a great deal better than all the so called good people who obviously would not be so good if you knew all... It was quite a shock to him when he discovered one day that he didn't love at all.'"[16]

Querry discovers that he has never built anything or loved any woman except for his own pleasure. He had never shown any interest in the people who used his buildings, only in the structures themselves; his 'love' affairs had simply been using people. Now he has lost his faith in everything, and, like the jeweler, no longer loves 'the King'. Sorrowfully, he realizes that nothing he has ever done is free from egotism's taint:

16 Ibid., p. 161.

> "'What I have built I have always built, for myself, not for the glory of God or the pleasure of the purchaser. Don't talk to me of human beings. Human beings are not my country.'"[17]

In the novel, Greene portrays egotism and success through the allegorical use of leprosy, a disease so terrible that it totally ravishes its victim. Like a leper, Querry is numbed; he suffers the spiritual equivalent of the physical disease. Querry even sees himself as a leper. "'...I cannot feel at all, I am a leper.'"[18] Mired in this petrifying aridity, Querry suffers the most terrible condition that Greene feels is possible for man. He is unable to experience any emotion, not love, nor hate, nor religious feeling. So utterly unable to respond to other human beings is he that a mistress' suicide leaves him horribly unmoved. Querry, a sensualist who finds no joy in pleasure, an artist with no belief in his art, a Christian with no love for his God or his fellows, has become completely empty.

Sick of acting as if he loved, hounded by those who inanely praise him and wish him to continue the fraudulent role which, unlike the comedians, he refuses to play, Querry determines to flee the sterility and deceit which surround him and seeks peace in complete

17 Ibid., p. 52.

18 Ibid., p. 32.

vacancy. But, despite his repeated assertions that he wants only nothingness, he unconsciously seeks his own humanity and a meaning in existence; for Querry, as his name suggests, is a 'questioning' man, a man embarked upon a search, a man pursued by his conscience. His journey operates on both a literal and a figurative level.

> "Querry is his own quarry; his quest is for himself - for a self uncluttered by reputation, admiration and the public image behind which no one has ever seen."[19]

Ironically, Querry seeks escape in one place where his emotions can be rekindled, for in the remote Congo leper colony, symbolically the final step on the river, exposed to others' pain, he learns to love. The man who said, "I suffer from nothing. I no longer know what suffering is."[20] is united with the human race through regaining the ability to suffer. Greene continually emphasizes that one must suffer before one is able to feel compassion for others. Querry has lost this link which Greene believes joins one man to another and to God, but in the environment in which this arid man finds himself "...suffering is something which will always be provided when it is required."[21] Central to this story,

19 Paul West, The Wine of Absurdity (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1966), p. 182.

20 Greene, A Burnt-Out Case, p. 17.

21 Ibid.

as to all Greene's novels, is the theme of God's grace pursuing man, and man can only be made receptive to this grace through suffering which fosters mercy and humility.

Typically, Greene sees God's grace pursuing man in rather perverse guises. Querry's personal torment is increased by certain individuals who deny him the isolation and nothingness he desires. Querry's situation is analogous to that of Ralph Ellison's 'invisible man' - people refuse to see him as he is:

> "...people refuse to see me. Like the bodiless heads you sometimes see in circus sideshows, it is as though I have been surrounded by mirrors of hard distorting glass. When they surround me they see only my surroundings, themselves, or figments of their imagination - indeed everything and anything except me."[22]

There is a continual tension created between the way Querry sees himself and the roles others force upon him.

Although the characters function within the novel's dramatic structure, they also afford Greene the opportunity to explore a subject essential to the novel. He mentions this subject in a letter to Docteur Michel Lechat, whom he met in a Congo Lepersorium:

> "It would be a waste of time for anyone to try to identify Querry, the Ryckers, Parkinson, Father Thomas - they are formed from the flotsam of thirty years as a novelist. This is not a 'roman à clef'; but an attempt to give dramatic expression to various types of belief, half-belief, and non-belief, in the kind of setting, removed from world-

22 Ralph Ellison, Invisible Man (New York: The New American Library, 1972), p. 7.

> politics and household preoccupations, where such differences are felt acutely and find expression. This Congo is a region of the mind..."[23]

The characters he encounters furnish Querry with the opportunity to evaluate different beliefs and gain insights into his situation. Father Thomas, a priest tormented by his own unstable faith, wishes a saintly model to bolster his failing belief. He uses others and sees people as he wants to perceive them not as they are. Querry provides him with an immediate and convenient saint. Parkinson, a reporter, needs a sensational story, a new Schweitzer, to sell his newspaper, and distorts Querry's situation so that it will suit his own purposes. Maria Rycker, whom Greene uses to again repudiate innocence as a viable way to contend with existence, needs someone to protect her and uses Querry for her own ends. However, the character who inflicts the most pain upon Querry and who eventually senselessly murders him in a fit of jealous rage, is Rycker, a Belgian 'colon'. No character in Greene's repetoire of obnoxious characters quite equals Rycker, who embodies everything which Greene detests. A pious hypocrite, he sees himself as the epitome of Christian belief and continuously mouths devout phrases about love. The stench of Rycker's oleomargarine factory parallels the stench of sanctimony which he exudes. Proud of his spiritual problems, jealous

23 Greene, A Burnt-Out Case, p. 5.

even of his wife's dog, he fancies himself an ardent follower of 'agape' not 'eros' and claims to love fully only God. Sex is only a 'marital duty'. Through Rycker, Greene dramatically emphasizes that love and belief have no association with egotistical, hypocritical piety.

The Father Superior and Dr. Colin are much more subtly drawn than the other characters and present clearly defined attitudes toward love. They do not force a role upon Querry, but they do present what would seem to be two possible ways of dealing with existence. Dr. Colin, scientific, rational, atheistic, is indeed an admirable man. His entire life has been devoted to the eradication of leprosy, but while Greene portrays him as a good, and in many ways, a wise man, his actions are fruitless since he does not consider the entire man. Additionally, unlike the Father Superior who advocates love and who sees all love as a prototype of God's love for man, Dr. Colin does not love. "'I think I have always liked my fellow man. Liking is a great deal safer than love.'"[24] The Father Superior, humane and unorthodoxly tolerant, asks only that people help one another. He is involved with physical welfare, but his primary concern is with the spiritual realm. His attitudes are the ones which Greene himself seems to advocate and which have the most effect upon Querry's attitudes towards suffering, belief and love.

[24] Ibid., p. 87.

Through the anguish and confusion caused by the different characters, through the immersion in physical suffering experienced in a locale permeated with the stench of rotting flesh, Querry begins to be drawn out of himself. He begins to lose his self-centeredness and to allow his emotions to respond to events and people around him. The first real indication of this change is the rescue of Deo Gratias, a burnt-out case whose physical condition parallels Querry's spiritual state. When the leper becomes lost in the jungle, Querry searches for him and spends the night comforting the terrified man. Although Querry does not understand why he has done this deed and refuses to see it as indicative of any change in his character, the incident demonstrates that Querry is abandoning intellectualization, allowing his 'heart' to respond, and acting without personal consideration.

> "...at the farthest limit of human penetration is self-sacrifice and love, and Querry, nailed to Deo Gratias, learns enough of this mystery to start back from aridity and despair and, by a kiss to the leper, through sympathetically sharing his fate, begins his restoration to whole humanity after having been so long himself a burnt-out case. The visible sign of Querry's cure is his renewed ability to laugh."[25]

Later, when he involves himself in building a hospital for the lepers, when he sympathizes with Maria Rycker, Querry comes to realize the truth of Colin's

[25] Philip Stratford, Faith and Fiction (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1964), pp. 26-27.

remark that "...a man can't live with nothing but himself."[26]

The change in Querry is gradual, but it is convincing because of the vast amount of authentic psychological detail which Greene uses. The reader, the other characters, even Querry himself, realize the vast distance he has travelled:

> "'It's strange, isn't it, how worried I was when I came here, because I thought I had become incapable of feeling pain. I suppose a priest I met on the river was right. He said one only had to wait. You said the same to me too.'
> 'I'm sorry.'
> 'I don't know that I am. You said once that when one suffers one begins to feel part of the human condition, on the side of the Christian myth, do you remember? "I suffer, therefore I am." I wrote something like that once in my diary, but I can't remember what or when, and the word wasn't "suffer".'
> 'When a man is cured,' the doctor said, 'we can't afford to waste him.'
> 'Cured!'
> 'No further skin-tests are required in your case.'"[27]

Querry's condition is, as the novel's title suggests, analogous to that of a 'burnt-out case', a leper who has been cured even though he has a distorted face, withered limbs and destroyed nerves. He has lost everything, but the disease will no more ravage his body. Querry too has lost everything, vanity, hypocrisy, indifference. He is now well on his way to salvation.

[26] Greene, A Burnt-Out Case, p. 54.

[27] Ibid., p. 195.

for he has learned to suffer, to laugh, to serve others, and has reached a level of self-acceptance and peace.

Greene does not wish to portray Querry as the heroic ideal. Rather, he wishes to show that man does not need heroic virtues to gain salvation. Part of Querry's difficulty seems to have been a desire for something too great, too heroic. As the Father Superior states "'Perhaps you are looking for something too big and too important.'"[28] Greene suggests that normal human love touched by a desire for God will suffice for salvation, and Querry does experience a need for God. Unlike Colin, the atheist, he is troubled by his lack of faith.

> "Greene, on the other hand, shows his hero coming closer and closer to acceptance of the Augustinian notions of evil as essentially not-being and God as the finality of all loves."[29]

Querry's self-discovery and search for God are interrupted by a bullet from Rycker, who jealously believes that he is having an affair with Maria. Querry dies laughing at himself and at the uncertainty of life; however, there is more than a hint that he realizes his death is something more than absurd, that it is all part of some divine plan, for he recognizes

[28] Ibid., p. 131.

[29] D.J. Dooley, "A Burnt-Out Case Reconsidered", Wiseman Review CCXXXVII (Summer 1963): 176.

that there is no scientific or intellectual reason why he should care for others:

> "'Absurd,' Querry said, 'this is absurd or else...' but whatever alternative, philosophical or psychological, he had in his mind they never knew."[30]

Querry has not reached the spiritual heights, the perfection of love, attained by the whiskey priest and Sarah Miles, but he is on his way to this summit since he has learned the value of suffering, belief and sacrifice.

> "Querry has recognized the absurdity of his existence and the meaninglessness of death without spiritual references...Querry, in death, like Fowler in bitter victory, has come close to belief."[31]

The Power and the Glory presents a further development in Greene's portrayal of the redemptive process. Unlike Francis Andrews, Thomas Fowler and Querry, who all grow in love but who lack full spiritual insight, the whiskey priest's life is dominated by a belief in a supernatural dimension. This faith gives added significance to his existence and allows him a much greater participation in Christ's mercy and suffering. To Greene, the priest exists on a much more meaningful level than any of the author's previous characters since his belief protects him from absurdity and despair.

[30] Greene, A Burnt-Out Case, p. 205.

[31] Stanford Sternlicht, "The Sad Comedies: Graham Greene's Later Novels", Florida Quarterly I (1968): 72.

Like Querry, the whiskey priest experienced worldly success and, like him, the priest must be cleansed of the egotism and spiritual mediocrity which success fosters. The ambitious son of a middle-class Mexican family, he chose his vocation because it provided an enjoyable, secure and prestigeous position. Popular with his pious parishoners, the priest, appalled at any question of serious sin, delighted in his own piety. He so surrounded himself with trivia, so contaminated himself with self-righteous pride and heartless conceit that, when a religious persecution occurred, he quickly betrayed his vows and fell into grievous sin. But even these demonstrations of weakness did not immediately destroy the priest's enormous egotism, for he took a foolish pride in being the sole cleric to remain in the 'godless state'.

Gradually, however, purified by what Greene sees as a baptism of suffering and increasingly tormented by his failings, the priest, a nameless Everyman, is brought to a realization of his littleness. In this redemptive process, Greene, again emphasizing that for him the basic Christian paradox is the co-existence of good and evil, uses the priest's sins as a regenerative force. Through his corruption, the priest is impelled to learn what he would not recognize voluntarily - that he is a failure and that only love and belief are of any importance. The priest's corruption allows Greene once again to emphasize

his belief that the difference between true Christianity and hypocritical piety is love. These ideas are dramatically illustrated when the priest observes, amongst the wanted posters in a police station, an early picture of himself, and honestly contrasts his past and present conditions:

> "The priest stood not far from his own portrait on the wall and waited. Once he glanced quickly and nervously up at the old crumpled newspaper cutting and thought, It's not very like me now. What an unbearable creature he must have been in those days - and yet in those days he had been comparatively innocent. That was another mystery: it sometimes seemed to him that venial sins - impatience, an unimportant lie, pride, a neglected opportunity - cut you off from a grace more completely than the worst sins of all. Then in his innocence, he had felt no love for anyone; now in his corruption he had learnt."[32]

Greene quite strongly underscores his belief that the priest benefits spiritually from his corruption, that sin, in fact, has been instrumental in developing the priest's capacity for loving.

Through spiritual and physical humiliation, this man comes to see himself as he is - a coward, a fornicator, a drunkard, a scandal. He no longer prides himself on his decision to remain behind when all other clerics have abandoned the people, for he perceives his unworthy motives. His egotistical resolution ironically forces him into a situation that involves him in an almost irreconcilable dilemma which dominates his thoughts. Does his continued

32 Graham Greene, The Power and the Glory (Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd., 1971), p. 139.

presence only succeed in endangering the lives of innocent villagers who are probably scandalized by his worthlessness, or is his presence the last remaining symbol of Christ's love for the people? Whatever the answer may be, the priest now fully realizes the extent of his pride:

> "He said, 'Pride was what made the angels fall. Pride's the worst thing of all. I thought I was a fine fellow to have stayed when the others had gone. And then I thought I was so grand I could make my own rules. I gave up fasting, daily Mass. I neglected my prayers - and one day because I was drunk and lonely - well, you know how it was, I got a child. It was all pride. Just pride because I'd stayed."[33]

This is a most important passage in the total context of Greene's writing, for it unequivocally emphasizes what is central to any understanding of the author's vision: 'pride is the worst thing of all'. Pride must be eradicated before the redemptive process can come to fruition. Even though the priest believes that his pain lacks merit because it is forced upon him (in reality, much pain could be avoided if he showed less compassion for others) he, nevertheless, learns to accept suffering. Unlike Pinkie, he benefits from what he suffers:

> "He said, One of the Fathers has told us that joy always depends on pain. Pain is part of joy. . . 'Pray that you will suffer more and more and more. Never get tired of suffering. The police watching you, the soldiers gathering taxes, the beatings you always get from the jefe because you are too poor to pay, smallpox and fever, hunger

[33] Ibid., p. 196.

> ...that is all part of heaven - the preparation."[34]

The priest now speaks not as a man who mouths a clever, pious cliché but as one who intimately understands the value of accepted pain.

Burdened by almost insufferable torment, unwanted, despised, this man would seem a probable candidate for the complete despair which seizes so many of Greene's characters, but he does not despair, for the priest is able, like Querry, to laugh at the ironic incongruity of his situation. He is bolstered by one virtue which he has never lost and which places him in direct contrast to Scobie - a complete trust in God's mercy. As the priest affirms, "You could trust God to make allowances..."[35] Unlike the pathetic Padre José who has denied his vocation, the whiskey priest never loses sight of his essential, indissoluble role. He would never refuse to take the sacraments to those who need them. José has been overcome by despair, has lost his love for God and man, has denied God's love for man. José has lost his religious perspective, but the whiskey priest retains the primary spiritual vision which makes him the spiritual superior of any of Greene's previous characters - he never loses sight of God's love.

Through the priest's journey, a series of

[34] Ibid., p. 69.

[35] Ibid., p. 66.

adventures and encounters with various types of people, Greene is able to present the character from different perspectives. One sees the priest from the point of view of Trench, the exiled dentist; José, the fallen priest; Coral Fellows, a young girl; the mestizo, the priest's betrayer, and the lieutenant. This shifting focus, supported by the priest's own thoughts, actions and dialogue, gives a thorough and intimate insight into an extremely complex character.

The godless state of Tabasco provides both a dramatic and a symbolic setting. Presented through images of death and decay (vultures, carrion, flies, coffins, rotting teeth), Tabasco represents a world which has rejected God. The atmosphere of desolation created permeates and unifies the novel. The priest's desperate journey through this land is a flight from both the law and grace. The book's American title, The Labyrinthine Ways, a quotation from Francis Thompson's poem 'The Hound of Heaven' suggests this idea of pursuit and flight. Greene's subtle interplay of the physical and spiritual pursuits, his juxtaposing of the lieutenant and the priest, and of God and the priest, adds suspense and depth to the story.

During his travels, the priest arrives at an understanding of the evil in himself and a compassion for the suffering of others. A Christ-like sense of

charity emerges from his experiences; he learns never to judge others, not even the Judas-like mestizo whom he knows will betray him. All judgements must be left to the God who died for all men. The evil in oneself must be faced; the evil in others must be forgiven. Even the pious must be recipients of compassion although the priest, as does Greene, wonders if this damning egotism can be pardoned: "God might forgive cowardice and passion, but was it possible to forgive the habit of piety?"[36]

Because of this compassion, the priest becomes willing to sacrifice himself for all men whether it be by giving his mule to the man who betrays him, sitting all night supporting a sleeping old man, or offering his life for the possibility of a criminal's salvation. All men must be loved, for all are created in God's image. The priest has learned the core principle of Christianity.

> "The priest in Greene's novel loves his fellows because his imagination allows him to see God's image even in the most corrupt of them. He loves them through Christ, and like Christ sacrifices himself for them. But it is not just in his heroic martyrdom that he resembles Christ; indeed, Greene is at pains to show the unheroic side of his death. Rather, his Christianity shows in the commonplace action of Christian love which determines his conduct throughout the novel, and which is constantly revealed in his attitude towards others. He sees their weakness and vices in himself and identifies himself with them. He does not judge them."[37]

36 Ibid., p. 169.

37 Philip Stratford, Faith and Fiction, p. 219.

This complete identification of himself with his fellows is quite evident in the scene of the priest's imprisonment, the central scene in the novel, for here all the major images and themes are brought together. The prison scene, operating on psychological and symbolic levels, conveys the novel's central vision. Greene presents the crowded, stinking cell as a microcosm filled with the same lusts, crimes and unhappiness as the world which it mirrors. Its inhabitants experience the same hates, loves and fears as do all mankind. In the cell's darkness and confinement, the priest finds an understanding and clarity of vision which had previously eluded him:

> "Again he was touched by an extraordinary affection. He was just one criminal among a herd of criminals... He had a sense of companionship which he had never experienced in the old days when pious people came kissing his black cotton gloves."[38]

This sense of brotherhood fills him with a frightening realization of the awesome responsibility which is his, but it is responsibility which keeps its perspective. Unlike Scobie whose sense of responsibility forces him to try to regulate others lives, the priest avoids egotism through love.

The priest does not simply, immediately acquire the ability to love all mankind. He was prepared for this by the love he felt for his illegitimate daughter who teaches him 'the shock of human love'. It is through

38 Greene, The Power and the Glory, p. 128.

her that he comes to recognize the possibilities of love. In contrast to the state's leaders, the priest sees the importance of the individual child. His daughter, to him, is of more value than any ideology or any cause. It is this love for his daughter which instills in him an awareness of the love which each individual human being deserves and which it is his priestly duty to give. It is this love for the individual which differentiates the priest from the lieutenant, which accentuates the difference between religious and secular values.

Ironically, the official seems to be quite like a cleric: there is something of the priest in the policeman's intent, observant walk; his room resembles a monastery cell; he is religiously dedicated to his ideals; the priest even describes him as a 'good' man. However, for all his priestly qualities, the lieutenant differs essentially from the priest. The policeman, possessed by a belief in a dying world peopled with descendents of animals who have absurdly evolved for no purpose whatsoever, directs his affection towards the group rather than towards any individual. Strikingly similar to Pyle, he is innocently determined to save the world even if this might demand the destruction of any number of individuals. The conflict between the policeman and the religious is a conflict between love based upon

a spiritual awareness and humanism. The lieutenant, because he lacks a religious sense, is unable to perceive that misery, poverty and corruption are means through which God's grace can operate. Dedicated to abstract ideals, hating politicians, clerics and foreigners, advocating the violence symbolized by his obsession with his gun, the lieutenant is only able to offer a sterile pity, which fosters hatred and fear, rather than the priest's warm compassion.

The priest witnesses the incomprehensible mystery of God's love. His life and death attest the power and glory of a love which pursues men and which challenges them to respond to its influence with complete abandonment even though they may fear the consequences. At his death, the whiskey priest recognizes the necessity and possibility of love and salvation. Although the priest is never capable of the complete abandonment to God's love which Sarah Miles achieves, nor can he experience the same intense love for all men that he feels for his daughter, Greene leaves the reader with the impression that this man has achieved spiritual greatness, has been a recipient of salvation.

The priest through his death prepares the way for a new priest's warm reception by a boy who previously had been enthralled by the policeman's violent power. This child had been bored by the sentimental story of Juan, a holy priest and martyr, which his pious mother read to

him. However, the whiskey priest's death, an ironic contrast to Juan's, has a tremendous influence upon the boy.

> "After the priest's death, the boy who had admired the lieutenant's gun and watched the soldiers respectfully now spits upon the revolver butt. The child's gesture symbolizes man's ultimate rejection of violence in an evil and sinister world."[39]

The boy's action emphasizes the failure of secular and political powers to solve the difficulties of human existence. It again reflects Greene's belief that man's attempted assumption of God's power results in a world of chaos and misery. The lieutenant's philosophy is proven to be just as erroneous as his statement that there are no more priests in the state. The arrival of a new, nameless priest, a symbol of God's continued love, irrefutably confirms the superiority, the greatness, of the whiskey priest's faith and love.

[39] Gwenn R. Boardman, Graham Greene: The Aesthetics of Exploration (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1971), p. 69.

CHAPTER V.

Farce and Obsession:

<u>Travels with my Aunt</u>
<u>The Honorary Consul</u>

Graham Greene possesses a macabre wit as well as a hearty dislike for critics and academics. David Lodge observes that Greene has shown considerable impatience with critics who have attempted to define and categorize his literary identity.[1] Charles Rolo states that those who know Greene well find that he is "...an inveterate and elaborate prankster."[2] Philip Stratford in "Unlocking the Potting Shed" cites Greene's delight in practical jokes, puns, literary jokes and self-mockery.[3] These characteristics all combined to produce Travels with my Aunt, a book quite unlike anything else Greene has written.

Much as Our Man in Havana is a burlesque on the thriller and on Catholicism so is Travels with my Aunt a mockery of Greene's entire literary career. In the Times Literary Supplement of September 17, 1971, the reviewer accurately describes the book as a "...comical resumé of his (Greene's) entire career, revisited in the company of his Muse, a raffish old Catholic lady..."[4]

[1] David Lodge, Graham Greene (New York: Columbia University Press, 1966), pp. 3-8.

[2] Charles Rolo, "The Man and the Message", Atlantic Monthly CCVII (May 1961): 61.

[3] Philip Stratford, "Unlocking the Potting Shed", Kenyon Review XXIV (Winter, 1962): 129-43.

[4] "The Man Within", Times Literary Supplement, September 17, 1971, p. 629.

The novel is a travel book in the tradition of Journey without Maps, The Lawless Roads and In Search of a Character except, now, the travels are not through a geographical region but through Greene's career. The names of certain characters - Henry, Curran, Maria, Carter, Rose, Bertram - were all used in previous works. The places Henry Pulling, a comic innocent, and Aunt Augusta, a Catholic convert, visit or mention are also familiar Greene locales - Brighton, Istanbul, Havana, South America, Venice, Africa, Indo-China. But this book creates a different tone from previous novels. This humorous journey into Greene's literary past solicits not fear, guilt and despair but light-hearted laughter. "...the tone is set by Henry Pulling himself. For surely this name hints that Greene is, in the English idiom, pulling the reader's leg."[5]

There are the usual themes of pursuit and flight, betrayal, boredom, the love triangle, lost childhood, violence, corruption, but, because of the way these are treated, they lack the intensity, terror and significance which they possessed in earlier works. The former bitterness is not here. Vultures and gulls, for example, are presented only as omens of bad luck not as symbols of corruption and death. Greene even

[5] Gwenn R. Boardman, Graham Greene: The Aesthetics of Exploration (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1971), p. 177.

good-naturedly laughs at the spiritual. He humorously uses conventional aspects of Christian piety - Aunt Augusta and her friends operated a church for dogs where all the usual religious rites are performed. Greene's anti-American feelings are also absent. The C.I.A. agent, whose primary concern seems to be making an accurate analysis of his own urinary habits, is a quiet American who is harmless.

Throughout the novel, Greene also mocks and titillates the critics. He makes autobiographical allusions: "He was trapped first by his family...and then he was nearly trapped by Oxford - so he went away fast without a degree."[6] Aunt Augusta utters such 'loaded' comments as, "'I sometimes believe in a Higher Power, even though I am a Catholic.'"[7] and refers to herself as "...a half-believing Catholic."[8] She also mentions her French and Italian periods, an allusion to those academics who debate whether Greene is really a French Existentialist or a Roman Catholic. The 'villain' of the novel, Visconti, described several times as a 'real viper' is a reference to the Visconti in Marjorie Bowen's The Viper of Milan, a book whose influence upon

6 Graham Greene, Travels with my Aunt (Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd., 1969), p. 116.

7 Ibid., p. 85.

8 Ibid., p. 114.

Greene has been over-emphasized by critics. There is mention of "the cult of the good murderer"[9], a phrase cynically applied by reviewers to such characters as Pinkie, Fowler and Raven. Sean O'Faolain's caustic statement that Greene reverses the intent of Browning's famous words so that they read, 'God's in his heaven, All's wrong with the world,' is ironically dealt with at the novel's conclusion when Greene quotes Browning's exact passage. One could continue in this vein, but these seem sufficient examples to illustrate the fact that Travels with my Aunt possesses a tone altogether different than that found in any other of Greene's novels.

With this work, Greene also drops the distinction between novels and entertainments. Those books formerly called entertainments are henceforth listed as novels. Since Greene has always insisted upon the difference between these categories, this modification is either a drastic change in artistic philosophy or a further ploy to confuse critics. I believe that the latter is true and that this work belongs in the category usually referred to as entertainments.

> "With Travels with my Aunt, the term entertainment disappears. The book's light, playful tone generates neither terror nor tension. Relying upon its

9 Ibid., p. 90.

> loose picaresque frame and upon Greene's winking partnership with the reader, this charming suspense comedy sets no exciting artistic challenges. Greene's billing it as a novel sidesteps the question of narrative craft and thematic bite."[10]

This paper makes mention of Travels with my Aunt only because Greene lists it as a novel. However, the book offers no real insight into the subject of this thesis other than the fact that Greene was conscious of his obsession and tried to restrict its influence. In this work, Greene's obsession with love is firmly and consciously kept under strict control and forbidden to appear, but an obsession can be restrained only with the greatest difficulty. Even then it cannot be controlled for long, as Greene's next and latest novel, The Honorary Consul, demonstrates.

There exists a tremendous difference between Travels with my Aunt and The Honorary Consul. What strikes one most forcefully is the shift in tone. The good natured humor so evident in the former work is absent. Greene is once again the serious artist who perceives that "'Life isn't noble or dignified...Life is surprises. Life is absurd.'"[11] Greene's frighteningly corrupt and destructive environment, not emphasized in the earlier novel, is again brought to the fore through vivid images of children

10 Peter Wolfe, Graham Greene the Entertainer (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1972), p. 7.

11 Graham Greene, The Honorary Consul (Toronto: The Bodley Head (Canada) Ltd., 1973), p. 18.

swollen from malnutrition, hovels of tin and mud where the poor suffer in silence, throats clogged with phlegma, vultures continually scouring for death; and through a most powerful image of a starving child who drowns his infant sister so he can have more food. An atmosphere of misery, suffering, and death dominates this novel which treats with bitter sarcasm such typical Greene nemesis as human justice, American foreign diplomacy and conventional piety.

One can see that the force and dominance of Greene's obsession could not be kept under control for very long. Indeed, Greene's situation is appropriately described by a phrase from the novel: "An obsession may sleep for awhile, but it doesn't necessarily die..."[12] This novel focuses on the idea of obsession and is an attempt by Greene to revaluate the vision which has determined his entire literary career. Every element in the book revolves around Dr. Eduardo Plarr's obsession with Clara, his mistress, and his developing sense of love and of the spiritual - ideas which have completely controlled all Greene's novels.

Plarr is a typical later-Greene character in the mould of Fowler and Querry. A successful physician in Buenos Aires, he comes to a small border town to escape a civilization which he finds intolerable. He

[12] Ibid., p. 102.

also wishes to be near Paraguay, a country from which he, as a child, had to flee because of his English father's political beliefs. Plarr literally and symbolically lives on a border. An exile who feels he will never be accepted, he is a remote and uncommitted man, but he can feel compassion, indeed, he spends considerable time treating the poor who he knows are unable to offer him any material remuneration. However, he avoids emotional contact with people. Symbolically, he never indulges in the Spanish habit of touching others during a conversation. He views his numerous affairs as simply 'games' and fears and despises emotion. Love, for him, is nothing more than "...an emotion which was curable by means as simple as an orgasm or an éclair."[13] All he feels after his sexual experiences is a sadness at how little they mean.

Plarr, like Fowler, has his life very tidily arranged until two events disrupt his sterile peace. The first is Charley Fortnum's marriage to a local whore. Fortnum, the Honorary Consul, has been given his powerless position as a reward for minor services performed for the British Government. Always ready to see people's good sides, Fortnum, naïve and lonely, displays sentiments which upset Plarr who is acutely embarrassed by the older man's emotional statements, such as, "'It's not a bad

13 Ibid., p. 71.

thing to feel you've made at least one person a little happier."[14] Indeed, Fortnum marries Clara in order to bring about her happiness. His previous marriage to an upright and intellectual woman, who knew nothing of human nature and who married him out of pity, was unbearable. Now, he wants someone whom he can love and for whom he is willing to make any sacrifice.

Fortnum's marriage to Clara turns into a triangular affair when Plarr becomes attracted to her because he feels that she, a whore who has had many men, will always remain a stranger. Afraid of involvement, he is aroused by her apparent indifference and believes that a sexual relationship with her would be like intercourse in a brothel - clinical, functional, unemotional. Plarr, however, finds himself strangely drawn to this woman. He had thought that, with their first orgasm together, he would forget her - this does not happen. She is not beautiful; like so many of Greene's heroines she is thin with small breasts and immature thighs, but he is unable to drive her from his mind. He, a rational man, finds himself frighteningly obsessed:

> "Is it possible, he wondered, if a man is too rational to fall in love, that he may be reserved for a worse fate, to fall into an obsession?"[15]

[14] Ibid., p. 87.

[15] Ibid., p. 89.

The other event which disrupts Parr's contrived peace is the reappearance of Léon Rivas, an old friend and a former Roman Catholic priest. Rivas has lost his vocation but has never left the Church, for he believes that the Church is the world, and the only way one leaves the Church is through death. He passionately believes in a God but not the one taught him in the seminary. His is a personal God in the process of evolution towards the good, a God whose love Rivas cannot understand. Like Scobie and unlike the whisky priest, he cannot understand that God's love might look like hate - why should an innocent child die, why would a loving God allow a Hitler? Rivas is tormented by the apparent horror and evil of God, but, at the same time, he perceives the tremendous love Christ displayed in His suffering and death. Greene again emphasizes that Christ is the great symbol of love, for His willing sacrifice and all-embracing compassion are the ultimate human achievements. Rivas feels that he must change conditions which destroy human life and dignity, but, unlike Christ, he chooses violence as a means to his goal. Rivas, himself, knows that he is wrong, but he also believes that his actions are based on a kind of love:

> "'There are ten men dying slowly in prison, and I tell myself I am fighting for them and that I love them. But my sort of love I know is a poor excuse. A saint would

only have to pray, but I have to carry a revolver.'"[16]

When Rivas and his friends determine to kidnap an American ambassador and hold him for the release of political prisoners, they need to obtain information about the ambassador's itinerary. Plarr can get this information, for he is a friend of Fortnum whose responsibility it is to guide the official party through the local countryside. Plarr, naturally, does not wish to become involved, but Rivas strikes at the one weak spot in Plarr's armour of indifference when he informs him that one of the prisoners to be released is Plarr's father, the one person for whom Plarr feels great affection.

Plarr refuses to use the word love. When Fortnum asks him if he had ever loved anyone, he sarcastically replies, "'That depends upon what you call love.'"[17] He later states that, "'I like to know the meaning which people put on the words they use. So much is a question of semantics.'"[18] Throughout this novel, Greene is concerned about defining the term 'love' - what is love, what do people mean by love? These are questions which have surfaced in all his novels, but never before

[16] Ibid., p. 286.

[17] Ibid., p. 61.

[18] Ibid., p. 86.

has he so consciously tried to explicate this extremely subjective word. Plarr, as does Greene, realizes that the term has been so abused that it is often quite meaningless. As does the Caodoist priest in The Quiet American, people frequently use the word for their own aggrandizement. "'The word has such a slick sound. We take credit for loving as though we had passed an examination with more than the average mark.'"[19] Yet, Plarr, against his instincts, admits that perhaps he did love his father, and his attempt to remember Clara's final question to him - "'Did you love him?'"[20] - becomes the most important motif in the novel. To a great extent, the novel centers around Plarr's attempt to rediscover the ability to love which passed from his life when his father left him.

Because, under his seeming indifference, he does feel compassion, Plarr agrees to help the revolutionaries. The whole affair, however, becomes absurd when Rivas and his men mistakenly kidnap Fortnum, who lacks any political importance. This error places Plarr in an intolerable position. He is plagued by what he considers a primitive sense of guilt and responsibility for Fortnum's predicament;

19 Ibid., p. 272.

20 Ibid., p. 222.

he also wishes Fortnum released since he does not wish to be burdened with the responsibility for Clara who is pregnant with Plarr's child. Fortnum would provide him with an escape from his affair with Clara whom he fears has begun to love him and to demand sympathy and tenderness. Through his many affairs, Plarr always feared the inevitable question, "Do you love me?". He had felt secure in brothels since there the word 'love' was never used. Now, he must make a choice:

> "The small patch of marble floor on which he stood seemed like the edge of an abyss; he could not move one step in either direction without falling deeper into the darkness of involvement or guilt."[21]

Plarr chooses involvement even though he believes that "'...caring is the only dangerous thing...'"[22] He does all he can to obtain Fortnum's release; during this attempt to help another, he comes to see his own shallowness and egotism and to reproach himself for his ignorance of love. When he is accused by Rivas of being jealous of Fortnum, he vehemently denies the accusation. Later, after he has suffered, Plarr realizes the truth of the statement:

> "'You told me the truth, Léon. I am jealous. Jealous of Charley Fortnum... 'I'm jealous because he loves her. That stupid banal word love. It's

[21] Ibid., p. 220.

[22] Ibid., p. 296.

> never meant anything to me. Like the word God. I know how to fuck - I don't know how to love.'"[23]

He believes that Fortnum would make a better father for the child than he, since a child needs the love which Plarr believes he cannot provide. But Plarr under-estimates his ability to love just as he mistakenly thought that he was not jealous of Charley. Through his contact with the kidnappers, Saavedra, Fortnum and Clara, Plarr is forced to observe people in situations where their humanity is apparent. He is no longer able to withdraw into his private universe where others exist merely to satisfy his needs. Through seeing others agony, compassion and sacrifice, Plarr slowly and unwillingly comes to realize that people are not unfeeling, egotistical, biological systems. He commences to feel responsibility and wishes that the comic situation they are in should end in comedy, for he feels none of them are suited for tragedy. Greene, however, does not see these people as comedians in the same sense as Brown, Jones and Smith (The Comedians). Most characters in The Honorary Consul act as they do because they love. Fortnum quite accurately realizes that even his kidnappers acted as they did because they cared. "'Perhaps it was love of a kind. People do get caught up by love...Sooner or later.'"[24]

23. Ibid., p. 313.

24. Ibid., p. 328

Plarr is certainly trapped into love; he is also trapped into belief in God. Plarr claims that the words 'love' and 'God' are meaningless to him. This is not true. In the novel, Greene again uses a structure which parallels physical and spiritual pursuit. The physical chase by the police is symbolic of Plarr's pursuit by love and God. Greene strongly emphasizes the intimate connection between human and divine love. When one comes to love human beings, love of God follows, for all love participates in God's eternal love. Plarr is not a church-goer. He does not want to believe in God. Belief, for him, is seen in the image of a disease. He states:

> "'It's much easier not to believe in God at all.'
> 'Are you sure?'
> 'Well, perhaps the Jesuits left one germ of the disease in me, but I have isolated it. I keep it under control.'"[25]

But Plarr finds that to control this disease is impossible. He, like Fowler, begins to envy others their faith. When Fortnum asks him if he believes in God, he replies with a vehement, 'No!', but immediately adds, "'I don't think so.'"[26] Plarr is concerned with God, even though he does not wish to acknowledge this interest. Fortnum, much as Dr. Colin does with Querry, points out to him that he

[25] Ibid., p. 287.

[26] Ibid., p. 303.

is obsessed with God. "'God again! You can't get away from the bloody word, can you?'"[27] Perhaps Plarr's situation, and indeed, Greene's entire concept about man's relationship with God can be best summarized in the words of Rivas who sees God as the relentless pursuer. "'We have Jehovah in our blood. We can't help it. After all these centuries Jehovah lives in our darkness like a worm in the intestines.'"[28] Belief, for Greene, is more than Bishops, more than cathedrals, more than a formalized religion. Belief is beyond time and space; above all, it is the memory of a carpenter's son and the love which he symbolizes. As are so many of Greene's characters, Plarr is condemned to love and belief. He is given the pain of caring which leads to his death. His attempt to bargain with the police for the kidnappers' lives fails, and he is shot and killed. Although his death is completely mis-interpreted as an act of 'machismo', of heroic masculinity, Plarr's sacrifice does save Fortnum who has the final comment on Plarr's growth in love. "Perhaps, he'd begun, Clara. Some of us...we are a bit slow...it's not so easy to love..."[29]

The Honorary Consul is a particularly appropriate

[27] Ibid., p. 304.

[28] Ibid., p. 273.

[29] Ibid., p. 333.

novel with which to end this thesis, since it admirably exemplifies those unique qualities of theme and technique which have stamped Greene's work from the beginning of his career. The highly topical subject and the exotic setting used to arouse reader interest are apparent as are the various types of physical and spiritual pursuit which mark so many of the novels. There is the same careful selection of detail, economy of language, change of scene, quickened pace and multiple view point. The traditional love triangle is again used to create tension and suspense and to advance theme. The minor characters continue to expand and intensify principal ideas by presenting certain attitudes towards love. Doctor Saavedra, for example, a writer who seems to specialize in sentimental, romantic novels, is proud of his obsession with 'machismo' and believes love to be a continued succession of male heroics. Doctor Humphries, an older Minty, sees love as nothing more than nauseating sexuality. The basic plot and the central character are typical of Greene's novels. Plarr is a rational man who sees love as absurd until, through association with Clara who acts as a guide on his journey towards love and through his contact with the revolutionaries who disrupt his studied routine, he is exposed to suffering which strips him of complacency and egotism while at the same time revealing

to him his weakness and evil. Through his sins and betrayal, Plarr comes to see that love is not a comedy and that he needs someone greater than himself. He comes to an awareness of God through experiencing suffering which brings an understanding of the corruption and misery of the world and its inhabitants. Above all, The Honorary Consul exemplifies Greene's continued obsession with the theme of love. To define and objectify love, to extricate it from the relativity of abstraction, to distinguish between pity, impersonal humanism and love, these are the ultimate purposes of Greene's novels. To a significant extent, Plarr's agonized cry, "'Love, love, I wish I knew what you and all the others mean by the word.'"[30] can be seen as expressing the aim of Greene's work. Quite certainly, this novel is a very conscious attempt on Greene's part to define his obsession with love in terms of the Christian tradition. Love, for Greene, seems to be a combination of compassion and self-sacrifice intimately connected with the divine by being based upon the love Christ displayed through his crucifixion. Greene does not see a formal religious structure as necessary for salvation, for love can function outside religious institutions since the ultimate means to salvation is not the obeying of religious laws but the willingness to love. The drama

[30] Ibid., p. 213.

at the center of Greene's work is the challenge to love, and, if man rejects this challenge he is reduced to non-existence. There is a compelling intensity to Greene's obsession, for at the heart of his subtle and complex vision lies an essential simplicity:

> "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it, you shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets.'"[31]

[31] Matthew 22: 37-40.

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