THE DESPERATE HERO: A STUDY OF CHARACTER AND FATE
IN THE NOVELS OF GRAHAM GREENE

by

TRISTAN R. EASTON
B.A., University of British Columbia, 1969

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS

in the Department
of
English

We accept this thesis as conforming to the
required standard

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
September, 1973
In presenting this thesis in partial fulfilment of the requirements for an advanced degree at the University of British Columbia, I agree that the Library shall make it freely available for reference and study. I further agree that permission for extensive copying of this thesis for scholarly purposes may be granted by the Head of my Department or by his representatives. It is understood that copying or publication of this thesis for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission.

Department of English

The University of British Columbia
Vancouver 8, Canada

Date September 23, 1973
ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis will be to show how Graham Greene's vision of man's position in the modern world changes and deepens as the author matures as a man and a novelist. The thesis will be primarily concerned with the relationship of the central characters of Greene's novels to their environment. I will try to show how this relationship, which in Greene's early novels is often fatalistic and deterministic, changes as Greene becomes more concerned with the possibilities of a spiritual and moral 'awakening' within his heroes which can perhaps counterbalance the forces of determinism. In order to explore this expansion of Greene's vision, it will be necessary to analyze not only the growth in complexity and self-awareness that takes place in the main characters of Greene's novels, but also to explore the moral and physical universe these characters inhabit.

It is the unceasing conflict between the oppressive, paralyzing environment and the protagonist's desperate search for meaning and purpose that creates the basic tension in Greene's writings. I hope to show in this essay that while the environment remains a more or less hostile constant in Greene's fictional world, the scope and vision of the protagonist is widened and enlarged to the
extent that he becomes an individual capable of choice and action rather than a mere victim imprisoned by forces beyond his control.

This study of the development of the hero in Greene's fiction is composed of four chapters, which attempt to delineate the changing relationship between the hero and his world. Chapter One, "The Outsider As Victim", focuses on Greene's early novels — *The Man Within*, *It's a Battlefield*, *Stamboul Train* and *England Made Me* — which portray a world where the protagonists become a prey to themselves and their environment, unable to rise above their own impotence as the fatalistic world closes in around them.

Chapter Two, "Studies in Social Determinism", deals with two novels, *A Gun for Sale* and *Brighton Rock*, in which the author develops the conflict between determinism and free will. Although both Raven and Pinkie, the protagonists of these two novels, have occasional glimpses of the possibilities of love and peace that are denied the earlier characters, they too are denied these possibilities because they have no free will. They cannot choose to live, since, totally conditioned by confusion and hatred, they are destined for destruction, haunted as they may be by visions of 'freedom'.

Chapter Three, "The Rise of the Individual", attempts to show how the protagonists of *The Power and the Glory* and *The Heart of the Matter* emerge as fully rounded individuals who are able to choose and act in spite of the fatalistic world
that threatens to stifle free will. Greene's increasing em­phasis on God's mercy and grace creates an 'opening' in the deterministic world; the protagonist is no longer necessarily a victim of his own inevitable fate.

The concluding chapter, "Love and Commitment", will attempt to summarize the new more positive stance of the protagonist in Greene's later, increasingly more secular novels -- The End of the Affair, The Quiet American, The Burnt-Out Case and The Comedians.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>i-iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter One: The Outsider as Victim: The Early Novels</td>
<td>6-42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Two: Studies in Social Determinism: A Gun for Sale and Brighton Rock</td>
<td>43-78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Four: Love and Commitment</td>
<td>126-138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Footnotes</td>
<td>139-150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>151-156</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION

Graham Greene, like three previous writers who have influenced his writing -- Dostoevsky, Henry James and Joseph Conrad -- is primarily concerned with a kind of artistic dissection of the confused and often tortured depths of the human psyche. He attempts to explicate the complexity of human motives and behaviour in a world where justice is arbitrary and destiny seems to guide and control men's actions with a heavy hand. His characters exist in a bewildering moral universe, where the secular code of right and wrong is often at odds with the religious code of good and evil, and where the ability to act in any way is continually threatened by the powers of fatalism and paralysis both within and outside the protagonist.

Greene's main characters are all marked in a special way, whether it be by the actual physical presence of a harelip or by a state of honesty and integrity which alienates the hero from the corruptible mass. Whatever the mark is, it is something that makes him an outsider in the social scheme. Through this exploration of the outsider as the central figure, Greene is able to explore human nature in its essence, since
the outsider, alone with himself and his conscience, is unable to blend back into the anonymous crowd. Though these characters are often on opposite sides according to man-made ethics -- priests and atheists, murderers and police officers, sinners and saints -- it is their similarities that make them all outsiders in the strange maze of society. They are driven by a quality which can only be called desperation; they are filled with what one could describe as a kind of moral intensity, whether it is of evil or good. They are obsessed by their own thoughts and actions, by the sense of evil that they feel inside and around them, and by the powerful need for confession and absolution whether or not they believe in a higher power.

The purpose of this thesis will be to show how Graham Greene's vision of man's position in the modern world changes and deepens as he matures as a man and a novelist. In order to explore this expansion of Greene's vision, it will be necessary not only to analyze the growth in complexity and self-awareness that takes place in the main characters of Greene's novels, but also to explore the moral and physical universe these characters inhabit.

Greene's fictional world is a shabby, seedy place, a metaphorical hell that masquerades as realism, filled with images of death and decay. In this harsh landscape strangely mingled with factories and vultures, steaming jungles and cheap cafes, Greene's characters become a prey to their environment. The world of childhood is not Wordsworthian bliss, but the place
where children begin to understand the horror of life even as they are molded into strange shapes by the forces around them. The tremendously oppressive force of this environment tends to give Greene's fiction a sense of fatalism; the characters are dominated by the mental and physical landscape around them in spite of anything they can do.

I hope to show in this essay, however, that while the environment remains a more or less hostile constant in Greene's fictional world, the scope and vision of the protagonist is widened and enlarged to the extent that he becomes an individual capable of choice and action rather than a mere victim imprisoned by forces beyond his control.

This study of the development of the hero is composed of four chapters, which mirror the progressive stages of Greene's own development as an artist. The first chapter, entitled "The Outsider as Victim", is a study of Greene's early novels (perhaps one could call them 'apprentice works'), which reveal a world where, as the title suggests, the main characters are rendered impotent and are often destroyed by a fatalistic and alien world -- the only escape is the oblivion of death. The sense of character in these novels is not strong; Greene is still learning his craft, and because of this the characters often appear as shadows drifting through a rather nightmarish scenario.

In these two novels, and especially in *Brighton Rock*, Greene develops the conflict between determinism and free will; the outsider-hero is shown to be, to a great extent, a product of his own alienated childhood who yearns for love and peace and yet cannot escape the need for destruction and death that his tortured existence has engendered.

These two novels differ from the earlier ones mainly because they possess a much stronger sense of character and place. Like the earlier protagonists however, both Pinkie and Raven, in spite of the occasional glimpses of 'freedom' that each character has, are trapped and destroyed because ultimately they have no free will. They cannot choose to live, since they are destined for destruction, and totally conditioned by confusion and hatred.

Chapter Three, entitled "The Rise of the Individual", deals with two of Greene's best novels, *The Power and the Glory* and *The Heart of the Matter*. In this chapter I will try to show that an important change has taken place in Greene's concept of character; the protagonist emerges as a fully rounded individual who is able to choose and to act in spite of the fatalistic world that hangs over him. He is no longer a victim of his own inevitable fate; from now on Greene's protagonists will have the strength to rise above their situation, if only for one moment, in order to exercise some moral control over their destiny.

The concluding chapter, "Love and Commitment", which will serve as a postscript to the main body of the thesis, will touch
on the means whereby the protagonist in Greene's later novels, (The End of the Affair, The Quiet American, The Burnt-Out Case, and The Comedians) learns how to commit himself to life, and how to work out a feasible philosophy which will enable him to survive and hope in the midst of a world in which doubt and despair still predominate.
CHAPTER ONE

THE OUTSIDER AS VICTIM: THE EARLY NOVELS

Here is a place of disaffection
Time before and time after
In a dim light: neither daylight
Investing form with lucid stillness
Turning shadow into transient beauty
With slow rotation suggesting permanence
Nor darkness to purify the soul
Emptying the sensual with deprivation
Cleansing affection from the temporal.
Neither plenitude nor vacancy. Only a flicker
Over the strained time-ridden faces
Distracted from distraction by distraction
Filled with fancies and empty of meaning
Tumid apathy with no concentration
Men and bits of paper, whirled by the cold wind
That blows before and after time,
Wind in and out of unwholesome lungs
Time before and time after.
Eructation of unhealthy souls
Into the faded air, the torpid
Driven on the wind that sweeps the gloomy hills of London,
Hampstead and Clerkenwell, Campden and Putney,
Highgate, Primrose and Ludgate. Not here
Not here the darkness, in this twittering world.

T. S. Eliot, from "Burnt Norton"
All of Graham Greene's novels are studies in loneliness, set in a world where loneliness is just one symptom of man's failure to rise above the forces that conspire against him. This quality of loneliness, or to use a more modern term, alienation, is a constant force in Greene's fiction from beginning to end -- the sense of man separated, unable to communicate or to love, fighting to control his own destiny yet being driven by elements within himself or in the surrounding environment towards an unchosen fate. Jules Briton in It's a Battlefield is an early victim of this all-pervasive state of emptiness:

Loneliness was only too easily attained; it was in the air one breathed; open any door, it opened on to loneliness in the passage; close the door at night, one shut loneliness in. The toothbrush, the chair, the ewer and the bed were dents in loneliness. The sorrow gripped him for all the useless suffering he could do nothing to ease, he was torn by humility, he was desperate for a place in the world, a task, a duty.

'A place in the world' is essentially what all of Greene's central characters are searching for, a commitment to something greater than their own survival, a purpose for living which will enable them to escape the loneliness and failure
that continually haunt their minds. Developed in many different ways, emphasized more in some books than in others, this is the theme that stays with Greene the novelist throughout his career. His novels explore many different aspects of the problem, and as Greene's vision deepens and matures, the image of man in his novels undergoes a subtle yet profound metamorphosis. His books become increasingly centred around a single male protagonist, who slowly and faltering confronts his own existence and makes in his own way his separate peace. After the abortive romanticism of The Man Within, however, Greene's early novels avoid the concept of the hero in order to develop and explore the plight of the anonymous 'outsiders' and their despairing attempts to survive in the malignant twentieth century world. After Harry Andrews, the melodramatic protagonist of The Man Within, it is not until one reaches the whisky priest in The Power and the Glory and Scobie in The Heart of the Matter that one sees a character whose consciousness so dominates his respective novel. Greene, realizing that Harry Andrews and to some extent the whole of The Man Within, was in many respects a failure, concentrates in the novels immediately following on graphically delineating the external forces that act on his characters and on developing and refining his art. It is only when some sort of 'world picture' has been formed that the 'hero' can emerge to grapple with that world.
When *The Man Within* was published in the 1952 uniform edition of Greene's works, Greene wrote for it an Author's Note describing his reactions to his first published novel, which had appeared in 1929.

The other day I tried to revise it for this edition, but when I had finished my sad and hopeless task, the story remained just as embarrassingly romantic, the style as derivative, and I had eliminated perhaps the only quality it possessed -- its youth.

*The Man Within* certainly shows its youth. Its prose is often overly lush and comically melodramatic; the book is full of what George Orwell describes as 'purple passages', and the characters are on the whole as unreal as the setting, which is lurid and shapeless. But although it lacks a great deal in maturity and technique, the basic themes that Greene dwells on throughout his writings are there, in embryo form.

The book is set on the south coast of England, sometime in the early 19th century, the time of the so-called rum-runners who smuggled illegal liquor into the country. The central figure in the book, twenty-one-year-old Francis Andrews, is a smuggler who has betrayed his captain and crew to the authorities. When we first meet him he is on the run, knowing that the captain of the smuggler's ship and two crewmen have escaped capture and are tracking him down. Greene seems, at first glance, to be writing an adventure story, but in fact the action or plot in the novel is secondary to the exploration
and development of Francis Andrews' character. The use of the thriller-like plot will become a standard Greene technique, with one major change; after *The Man Within* he abandons the historical romance for dramas of contemporary life, and in consequence his style and characterization become more immediate and realistic. He moves from romance to realism in his rendering of modern existence in much the same way as Orwell progressed from the romanticism of *The Clergyman's Daughter* to the intensely realistic portrayal of the underworld of the poor in *Down and Out in London and Paris*. This growing realism will be discussed further, but in the main it entails a changing use of setting -- a closer and more objective use of the surrounding details and objects -- and a different concept of character. His characters become far more limited in their scope, far less capable of the 'heroic gesture', and perhaps in consequence more human and more true to the framework of their world. The thriller, however, with its emphasis on the chase, the hunted and the hunter, oppression and victimization, justice and injustice, and the sense of fear and bewilderment which pervades the whole genre, remains a useful framework for Greene since it provides an image of contemporary existence that is basic to Greene's vision of life. As David Pryce-Jones argues, "... Greene is using popular forms to get across the confusions of the twentieth century."³

Andrews is a strange young man, completely unsuited to the smuggling life, and continually torn apart by a divided
nature and an intense feeling of his own cowardice. He feels that his character is divided, almost literally, down the middle. "He was, he knew, embarrassingly made up of two persons, the sentimental, bullying, desiring child and another more stern critic." Andrews, agonized by this split in his character, asks himself, "Why should any man be plagued as he had been plagued, with all the instincts -- desires, fears, comforts -- of a child and yet possess the wisdom of a man? In these moments of crisis he felt physically drawn in two -- an agonizing stretch of the nerves".

Andrews is completely aware of the constant battle between the two sides of his nature, and he knows that in order to become a man the 'more stern critic' which resides in him must gain the upper hand over his weak and sensuous tendencies. It is his accidental meeting with Elizabeth, whose cottage he stumbles into, exhausted and trembling with fear, which gives him the purpose needed in order to come to grips with his delinquent character. She provides through her almost maternal warmth and wisdom the impetus needed to vanquish the childish cowardice that overwhelms him.

Many of Greene's characters are obsessed with human sexuality, and Francis Andrews is no exception: he is both fascinated and disgusted by his own desires and by the evidence of sexuality around him, and tries desperately to subdue the lusts of what he considers to be his 'lower' nature. Andrews perhaps interprets the Christian view of man too literally;
he sees himself as half animal, half man, torn between his lustful, irrational desires and his need for a 'true' relationship above the sordidness of sexuality. Throughout the story, Andrews is bound to his lust, yet is constantly searching for love. As he stumbles half-conscious through the woods at the beginning of the story, he thinks he is in the fairytale wood of Hansel and Gretel, and that Gretel is his childhood love, never to be found again.

He and Gretel had kissed under the holly tree on the common one spring day. Across a faintly coloured sky a few plump clouds had tumbled recklessly. And then time and again he was walking up narrow stairs to small rooms and untidy beds, and walking down again feeling dissatisfied, because he had never found Gretel there.

Andrews' self-hate is only equalled by his self-pity; he is constantly seeing himself as a helpless victim of the world at large, buffeted by the storm of fate. "A wave of self-pity passed across his mind and he saw himself friendless and alone, chased by harsh enemies through an uninterested world . . . I could be made into a man if anyone chose to be interested -- if someone believed in me." Andrews, loveless and alone, does however find something to which he can commit himself -- the saintly Elizabeth, who eventually draws out his 'higher' nature and establishes it as dominant over the other lustful yet alienated half. Elizabeth is a purely idealized character, a woman who remains unexplored as a person because she is in the book for one reason -- to exude saintliness,
and to offer an idealized love that Andrews can strive for. She is the catalyst for Andrews' growth into manhood and morality.

Andrews suffers from an excess of self-consciousness; he is so aware of himself and his faults that his greatest desire is "to be null and void"; he longs to become unconscious of the clamouring ego, to lose sight of himself in another phenomenon, whether it is inspiring music or the emotion of love, and ultimately, perhaps, to lose consciousness forever. When he falls in love with Elizabeth he experiences this pleasurable void, which instills in him a desire to make some kind of offering:

A gap of shadow separated them, and the flickering of the flames made useless but persistent attempts to cross it. He was shamed by the patient obstinacy of their compassion and was temporarily rapt from his own fear, hatred and self-abasement, touched for a lightning instant with a disinterested longing for self-sacrifice. . . . For that instant his second criticizing self was silent; indeed he was that self.

Greene's often puritanical Catholicism (he became a convert in 1926) creates a conflict of loyalties within many of his major characters. Does one owe one's loyalty to God, to the woman one loves, or to oneself? If, as Pryce-Jones suggests " . . . lust is sinful abandonment of the flesh, love is virtuous abnegation of the self . . . " any kind of sensual gratification is suspect: the character fights a continual battle between his instinctual needs on the one
hand, and his conscience on the other, which demands adherence to a totally different code of ethics. In this kind of struggle there can be no fulfillment; one either fights against God, rejects love altogether, or destroys the self out of the sheer inability to cope with the inner division. None of Greene's protagonists are able to solve this dilemma completely. Scobie represents perhaps the most profound dramatization of the kind of despair that this conflict can produce, but in Greene's later novels one begins to see the emergence of individuals who can cope with this tension. Protagonists like Bendix, Fowler, Querry and Brown are aware of the essential absurdity of the human condition, but they do not reject life because of it. They are able in differing degrees to maintain an equilibrium, precarious as it is, that is impossible for many of Greene's earlier heroes. They, too, search for commitment, but to the ambiguities of existence rather than to static principles which often bring about death, in the way that Andrews' loyalty to Elizabeth and his 'higher nature' brings him to suicide.

Love, for Andrews, is primarily peace, escape from the prison of the criticizing self. Andrews longs passionately for peace -- "peace was a sanity which he did not believe that he had ever known" -- and it is Elizabeth's peaceful nature and serenity that attracts Andrews so powerfully. When they finally admit their love for each other, after Andrews, through Elizabeth's persuasion, has journeyed to the Assizes at Lewes
to give evidence against the smugglers, Andrews says to Elizabeth: "You must possess me, go on possessing me, never leave me to myself."\(^{12}\)

Andrews commits himself to a hazardous course of action at Elizabeth's urging in order to redeem himself from his original act of betrayal. Significantly enough, he betrays his shipmates to the law in order to show them that, ineffectual as he may have seemed, he has the power to bring them all to ruin -- a despairing deed of an isolated man. He gives evidence against them in a town that is run by the smugglers, and receives nothing for his pains but threats of death and public scorn? his evidence is useless since there is no justice in Lewes, or anywhere else, as Greene so often points out. As the prosecution lawyer says, "'If you want to stamp out smuggling you must do away with the idea of justice'."\(^ {13}\) Although justice is not carried out and the smugglers are set free to hunt him down, Andrews has at least had the courage to denounce the smugglers publically rather than continuing to hide behind the anonymous note of betrayal. As in other key situations in the course of Greene's novels, Andrews puts conviction over personal survival, the very opposite of his previous code of existence. His sense of dignity and personal worth become more important than the mere saving of his skin; he is committed to a course of action, since only by principle and action can a man find some purpose for living. Andrews bemoans this fact, but accepts it: "If it were barren of desire and of the need of any action how sweet life would be. If it were only this coolness . . . ."\(^ {14}\)
So the protagonist, we are led to believe, finds freedom from his cowardice, his lust and his fear through his faith in the love for Elizabeth, which more importantly stimulates his faith in himself. The world that Greene writes about, however, may allow, albeit at great cost, an expression of freedom, but it rarely if ever allows the rewards that a liberating act could bring. Elizabeth commits suicide while being attacked by one of the smugglers and Andrews, to complete the melodrama, is in the process of committing suicide as the book ends. He returns to Elizabeth's cabin from the trial at Lewes knowing that he will be in danger of death, but survival has become far less important than the effort of maintaining some sense of dignity and purpose in a rather foul world. "He felt no fear of death, but a terror of life, of going on soiling himself again. There was, he felt, no escape. He had no will left."\textsuperscript{15}

The surface progression in \textit{The Man Within}, if one can see through the foggy melodramatic atmosphere, is from fatalism to freedom. Andrews throughout the major part of the book despairs of ever being able to control his actions, since he feels his behaviour is completely controlled by heredity. "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."\textsuperscript{16}

This sense of fatalism, which Greene develops into a far more subtle and pervasive feeling in his later novels, is what
Andrews finally overcomes when he rebels through suicide. His new-found freedom is not the freedom to live, but the freedom to reject life. He does not come to grips with any of the problems of his existence, and his suicide is not spurred on by any commitment to love or to a code of ethics, but solely by a distaste and horror of life. The conclusion of *The Man Within* is basically false, however, because the author's sympathy obviously lies with Andrews' chosen 'heroism'. Greene is not conscious in this first novel that the love that Elizabeth offers is the equivalent of death, that Andrews' heroism is cowardice, and that the promptings of his 'higher nature' which Andrews finally accepts are nothing more than a strong death-wish.

Like so many of Greene's heroes, Andrews has a deep hatred of his father, and commits suicide mainly to spite the father figure within him.

Once on his way to death, a strange kind of peace overwhelms him:

To his own surprise he felt happy and at peace, for his father was slain and yet a self remained, a self which knew neither lust, blasphemy nor cowardice, but only peace and curiosity for the dark, which deepened around him.

A purge has taken place, but it is an unconvincing one. Andrews rejects life without ever having lived -- he does not exercise his free will but merely follows a fatalistic propensity for death.
Greene realized that he had to go beyond this kind of melodramatic simplicity — that he had to explore the world of the living, not the land of the still-born.

* * *

After *The Man Within* Greene wrote two forgotten and long out-of-print novels, *Rumour at Nightfall* and *The Name of Action*, which maintained the vague air of historical romance and melodrama that so irritates the reader in his first novel. As the sales of his novels fell drastically Greene was spurred into revising his whole technique; from now on romance would be subservient to realism: he would write about his own contemporary world, and in contrast to the vague setting and shapeless characterization of his first three books, he would learn to pinpoint details of landscape and character in a way distinctive enough to become his personal and immediately recognizable trademark. By the time of the publication of *Stamboul Train* in 1932, Greene has in three years become a different writer, except for the same basic obsessions which will remain with him throughout his writing career. Technique — subject matter, setting, characterization, use of dialogue — has been changed and sharpened to a new height of intensity. Greene's view is now directed outward, towards society, and characters become individuals in their own right rather than all being facets of the same person — Greene himself, young, introspective and poetic. Philip Stratford writes in *Faith and Fiction: Creative Process in Greene and Mauriac*:
In his own case added years, disappointment, even the threat of failure as a novelist certainly played their part in deciding a more mature attitude. For the first time, too, because of the depression and social unrest at home and in Europe, Greene began to see a reflection of his private anxieties in the world of public affairs. His first three novels had belonged, like Mauriac's to a lyric phase when he was engrossed in his own drama and was mainly concerned to test the validity of his own perceptions and sensitivity. In *Stamboul Train*, together with the new objectivity in approach gained through greater technical control, there was the first evidence of a social conscience which grew increasingly important in the following novels, a sense that what the author was describing was not just a highly personal matter, but the common lot.

Greene discovered that the problem of the individual's search for a purpose in life must be brought back to the beginning and started from a fresh viewpoint. In *The Man Within* Greene crudely explored the possibilities of commitment and escape from a sense of fatalism that paralyzes the character in immaturity and allows no room for development, but his use of this theme was immature. His melodramatic and romantic treatment of the subject had in effect imposed an artificial solution on an artificial background, and the double suicide at the end was dramatically meaningless. What he had to do now was to explore the harsh world around him, get in touch with the contemporary details of existence, learn what forces a man or woman of our age is exposed to, and basically to reinforce his personal obsession with a technique that would bring his characters and the world in
which they live into sharper focus. He had to explore and comprehend the environment his characters operated in before he could understand the forces that control them. Only by learning of the forces of fatalism could he understand the process of freedom; only then could he return to the subject of commitment on a more mature level, and only then can an act such as suicide, perhaps the ultimate act of rebellion against a bewildering world, have any meaning. His next four novels develop the battlefield on which his characters exist. The later novels, once the nature of the world has been determined, are more concerned with man's possibilities of freedom, accepting the strict limitations his environment and his own nature put upon him.

_The Stamboul Train_ is centered around a train journey from Ostende to Istanbul. The journey itself is not only an effective device on Greene's part to gather a motley group of strangers together into close and, in a sense, involuntary proximity, but it also works as a pervasive metaphor of isolation. On the train Greene's characters are in a different world, cut off from their normal environment and their normal values by glass and steel and speed. The journey forces them into an interim existence; not only a passive existence of waiting but a moment as it were in which they have time to step back from their routine-filled lives and to observe in varying degrees the pattern of their isolation. "In the train, however fast it travelled, the passengers were compulsorily
at rest; useless between the walls of glass to feel emotion, useless to try to follow any activity except of the mind; and that activity could be followed without fear of interruption." ¹⁹

The passengers are an odd collection of people, all isolated from the general mass of the English people in some way, whether it is their race, their profession or just their nature.

Carleton Myatt is a wealthy Jew who sells currants, quite closely modelled on a character from Eliot's "The Waste Land":

Mr. Eugenides, the Smyrna merchant
Unshaven, with a pocket full of currants
C.i.f. London: documents at sight,
Asked me in demotic French
To luncheon at the Cannon Street Hotel
Followed by a weekend at the Metropole. ²⁰

Coral Musker is a young dancer in a second-rate chorus line; Dr. Czinner is an aging revolutionary presumed killed in Belgrade five years earlier, returning to his country to start a new uprising after spending the last five years in exile in England. The other less central characters maintain this atmosphere of incongruity -- Mable Warren, the harsh lesbian reporter, Josef Grunlich, the petty thief who graduates to murder, even Quin Savery, the Cockney best-selling novelist whom Greene seems to have included partly in order to get in a few digs at 'popular' literature while trying to write it himself.

Myatt and Coral have a brief affair aboard the train, and Myatt, who is used to these brief interludes between his more important business engagements, is surprised to learn that
Coral is a virgin. "He was touched by the complete absence of coquetry, and remembered again with sudden force that he had been her first lover."\textsuperscript{21}

The sudden and unexpected tenderness that they feel for each other in a world ruled by callousness and ubiquitous lust, although it tapers off rapidly, is one of the two scenes in the book in which one person shows, not love, but at least affection and concern for another. Myatt and Coral are both rather pitiable characters, Myatt because of his intensely self-conscious Jewishness and his sense of isolation, Coral because of her childlike yet curiously worldly innocence. She is the first of Greene's child-women, flung into the world of adult cynicism without the necessary instincts of self-preservation. Although Coral's character has none of the tragic aspects of Pinkie's girl, Rose, in \textit{Brighton Rock}, they share the same quality of reckless innocence that is like a burden to them in the fallen world that surrounds them.

Even a passionless emotion like affection is rare in \textit{Stamboul Train}. Mabel Warren's emotions are primarily destructive -- even the 'love' she feels for her companion Janet Pardoe is a fickle, possessive, selfish emotion. But: "... when there was a choice between love of a woman and hate of a man, her mind could cherish only one emotion, for her love might be a subject for laughter, but no-one ever mocked her hatred."\textsuperscript{22}

Josef Grunlich is the first in Greene's long line of thugs, unlike Fred Hall in \textit{England Made Me} only because his
devotion is directed towards himself rather than towards another. He is purely negative and destructive, inhuman to a degree that characters like Pinkie and Raven, who share his criminality and propensity towards violence, are incapable of. He continually gloats on his ability to murder:

But it was a bad moment all the same, thought Josef, staring out into the falling snow, when the doctor spotted that his bag had been moved. I'd got my finger on the string. If he'd tried to call the guard I'd have shot him in the stomach before he could shout a word. Josef laughed again happily, feeling his revolver rub gently against the sore on the inside of his knee: I'd have split his guts for him.  

Dr. Czinner, the aging revolutionary, is even more cut off and alienated from the world about him than his fellow passengers. He is in many ways the central figure in *Stamboul Train* -- alone, hunted by the authorities, hiding under an assumed name, he is a precursor to the long line of similarly hunted, obsessed and abandoned figures around whom Greene's novels revolve. Like the whiskey priest in *The Power and the Glory*, he has dedicated his life toward the salvation of his countrymen, only his kind of salvation is economic and social rather than religious. He is returning to his eastern European country, his home, in order to become a martyr for his cause, yet nobody seems to want him, and he is killed at the border without ever reaching his destination. His mind is filled with the same sense of fate, of longing for death, of loss and despair and inability to hate his enemies that weigh on
and haunt the whiskey priest to his death. Ironically he is fighting for justice in a world that is inherently unjust.

As he dies he realizes the futility of his life-long struggle:

The world was chaotic; when the poor were starved and the rich were not happier for it; when the thief might be punished or rewarded with titles; when wheat was burned in Canada and coffee in Brazil, and the poor in his own country had no money for bread and froze to death in unheated rooms; the world was out of joint and he had done his best to set it right, but that was over.

As he dies in a shed at the border he realizes that his faithfulness to his cause had a rigidity about it, as does any faith, which made him ineffectual in a world in which survival depends on flexibility. It is his sense of duty that has doomed him and made him tragically archaic in an unprincipled world. In a perceptive flash he sees:

... the express in which they had travelled breaking the dark sky like a rocket. They clung to it with every stratagem in their power, leaning this way and leaning that, altering the balance now in this direction, now in that. One had to be very alive, very flexible, very opportunist ... His father and mother bobbed at him their seamed thin faces, followed him through the ether, past the rush of stars, telling him that they were glad and grateful, that he had done what he could, that he had been faithful. He wanted to say to them that he had been damned by his faithfulness, that one must lean this way and that, but he had to listen all the way to their false comfort, falling and falling in great pain.

Once again, as in The Man Within, a woman offers the saving grace of humanity and sympathetic concern in an otherwise
totally unsympathetic environment. Coral Musker stays behind with Czinner when he is shot during their attempted escape from the customs office. She stays with him in the claustrophobic packing shed throughout the night, scared and trapped herself as she tries to offer some kind of comfort and sympathy to the dying man. This scene closely parallels the one in *A Gun for Sale*, where Anne Crowder and Raven spend a frightened night in the little shed, surrounded by the police. The contrast between the saintly, idealistically drawn Elizabeth of *The Man Within* and the tarnished innocence and pathetic fear and timidity of Coral Musker, does show, however, how Greene's fictional world has evolved in the three years between the two novels. In *Stamboul Train* there is no triumphantly romantic end, only a painful, purposeless death and a neat shuffling of the characters into new combinations as the story ends. Myatt decides it would be profitable to marry Janet Pardoe, and Mabel Warren, having lost her 'girlfriend', decides to adopt Coral as her new housemate.

*Stamboul Train* is a slickly written and briskly cynical book; Greene himself admits to his dislike of the novel. However, while it served the purpose of resuscitating to some extent Greene's flagging income, and his career, which he was on the point of abandoning, it also made Greene come to grips with the technical and stylistic problems that plague the first three novels.
Stamboul Train is tautly structured -- the five chapters each represent the five major stations on the journey -- the characters are deftly and on the whole convincingly drawn, and Greene's style has been toned down from his earlier sentimental and often overly lush prose to a sharp, hard and cinematic use of language. The movements of the train, the stations the passengers stop at, the actions of the characters themselves, are all described as if seen through a camera. Greene was in fact very much influenced by the film (he was film critic on The Spectator for a number of years) and it is not surprising that so many of his novels have been made into films. They are easily adaptable to the medium of film because he himself has adopted so many stylistic techniques from the cinematic art. As one critic writes:

... like all the entertainments, Stamboul Train is cinematic ... it is impossible not to see the action in terms of tracking-shot, panning, close-up and fade-out ... Conscientiously a visible world is created. 26

The power to create compellingly visual images of characters and environment is one of Greene's great strengths as a novelist, and, as Pryce-Jones says, "It is in Stamboul Train that Greene's talent is first revealed." 27

*                *                *

In It's a Battlefield, fatalism emerges as a major aspect of Greene's fiction. As the 1930's progressed, Greene became increasingly concerned with his vision of society as a whole, its seediness, its mechanized, industrialized maze that prevents
escape, its power of alienation which leaves people drifting aimlessly, surrounded by their own loneliness. Greene's social conscience, developing in tune with the socially conscious thirties in England, enabled him to bring his private obsessions to a much broader spectrum, since he saw that his own obsessions -- loneliness, terror of life, the frightening inability of a man to break through the patterned fatalism of his world -- could be applied to society in general. This is one of the reasons why *It's a Battlefield* is more powerful than *The Man Within*: Greene is concerned with the actual contemporary world and the people who live within it rather than with a subjective figure in an unreal landscape. As Greene's landscape develops from book to book, the sense of fatalism becomes ever stronger. His characters, as one can see in *It's a Battlefield*, are dominated by their environment and, aware of this, they make pitifully futile attempts to attain some kind of individuality. To take one small example, there is Kay Rimmer, who fights the deadening routine of factory labour by sleeping with as many different men as she can, but even this cannot free her from the machines: "With oranged lips and waved hair she fought their uniformity and grey steel, but she was as one with them as a frivolous dash of bright paint on a shafting."

John Atkins has this to say about Greene's characters:

They are merely products of their environment, something important is left out.
The result is, to quote Mr. Symons again, 'a world without faith, where men may exist simply as the hunter, strengthened by hardness and emptiness, and the hunted, tragically weakened by a disturbing sense of guilt . . . the whole compound of violence, terror and a bewildering search for some form of faith'. When Greene attempts to fill the emptiness he has recourse to dogma.

Symons and Atkins recognize very clearly the hopelessness of Greene's world, but what they tend to dismiss is the constant effort Greene's characters make to overcome this disturbing hopelessness. This is the basic and most profound tension in his work as a whole, and it is present in his novels long before the religious 'dogma' enters. In other words, this struggle is much more basic than Atkins seems to see it: it is not emptiness versus dogma, but the struggle of the individual against the fatalism of both his inner and outer environment. In It's a Battlefield this struggle begins to become apparent. Like the express in Stamboul Train, It's a Battlefield has its own image of isolation and claustrophobia -- the circles of hell. The city of London around which the novel is centred is a city of circles, without any escape routes. The Assistant Commissioner, noticing this subconsciously, "... had a dim memory that someone had once mapped hell in circles . . . " and the Dantean image is reinforced throughout. Chapter One ends: "At each station on the Outer Circle a train stopped every two minutes."30

Greene's fictional landscape is often composed of this fascinating mixture of realism and symbolism; he chooses certain
'realistic', naturalistic details -- "the porcelain basins, the taps and plugs and wastes";31 "Phil lay asleep on the bed in pants, his mouth a little open showing one yellow tooth and a gob of metal filling . . . . (He) opened an eye -- yellow with the sexual effort"32 -- to reinforce his vision of a landscape which is primarily symbolic. Greene's is a selective realism; he selects his details carefully to add strength to the image of the modern world he is trying to create -- the image of a tawdry wasteland, full of sordid close-ups of the seamier side of human existence. It is this curious intermingling of real and surreal, for example, London as Dantean Hell -- that gives 'Greeneland' its unique flavour, heightening as it does the intensity and obsessiveness of the author's fictional world yet doing it subtly enough to maintain the appearance of reality.

The theme of the circular hell operates on all levels of the book: the institutions, the city itself, the operation of justice, the characters all and sundry are collectively structured and twisted by this circularity which allows no break in the pattern. Out of the host of characters who are all obsessed with fear and loneliness, without a purpose to their lives, emerges Conrad Drover, the brother of a man who is being tried for the murder of a police constable at a political meeting. He loves his brother and his brother's wife Milly as much as he hates the world, yet ironically he ends up sleeping with Milly, and eventually being killed by
a speeding car as, with a gun loaded with blanks, he attempts to shoot the Assistant Commissioner, who has the power to repeal his brother's hanging. Again a concrete detail is used as a symbol -- this time of Conrad's frustrated impotence in the face of his existence. Like the other characters of Greene's fallen world, he is emasculated by his environment.

Like Kay Rimmer, the factory girl who is Milly's sister, Conrad is a clerk trapped in the claustrophobic uniformity of society, yet to an even greater degree than the other characters, he is completely cut off from humanity, cut off essentially by his fear and his intelligence. He feels he has been victimized by "... a badge of brains since birth. Brains, like a fierce heat, had turned the world to a desert around him, and across the sands in the occasional mirage he saw the stupid crowds, playing, laughing, and without thought enjoying the tenderness, the compassion, the companionship of love."

Greene as a novelist is not interested in the crowd, although he casts wistful glances at its obliviousness from time to time. His concern is with the man apart and this man's anguished attempts to exert his own individuality, to establish a connection with a being other than himself, in spite of the forces that render him helpless. As one critic writes:

Greene reveals with compassion the world of those who seem unable to stand outside the plot. His sympathy goes out to the
most miserable of men, so weak that they cannot apply their will to free the 'inward man' in them; those who are caught in the mud.  

David is obsessed by the ever-present fear of failure: "Pale, shabby, tightly strung he had advanced from post to post in his insurance office with the bearing of a man waiting to be discharged." When his brother is arrested, he is given a sense of purpose for the first time; for the first time he is needed. He goes to Milly in order to help her, and, both realizing the hopelessness of her husband's position, they make love almost out of desperation, as if realizing that the intimacy of sex is the only way they can share their fear. Milly's dependence on him frightens Conrad. He is unused to it, and is deeply depressed by his unthinking betrayal of his brother, and his lack of any real communication with Milly, the only woman he had ever felt anything for.

It was difficult to know what kept him alive; he had no ambition, work was only a grim struggle to survive; the only man he loved was locked away from him; the only woman he had ever loved had shown him exactly what love between a man and woman was worth.

His growing despair, paranoia and fear drives him eventually to his own death. He buys a gun to get revenge, not only for his brother, but more significantly for himself. The world is his enemy, especially the people "... who do not (that was the worst crime) take me seriously, as a
man, as a chief clerk, as a lover." Conrad is fighting for his own basic human dignity in a world that refuses to accept him. He is attempting to assert himself as an individual, an individual driven to the border of insanity by the intensity and contradiction of his own emotions, but is the victim of a painful and ignominious death. Stepping out of the pattern of his previous alienated and barren existence was the action that brought about Conrad's doom.

Conrad is the only one who tries to break through the fatalistic, passive pattern of his life. The others -- Conder, Jules Briton, Kay Rimmer, Surrogate, the Assistant Commissioner -- all remain trapped within their own circles of hell, fighting off loneliness and despair.

Jules Briton, like the rest of the estranged characters in the book, needs distraction from himself and the abyss within and around him in order to stay sane. "Only a woman, only a noise, only a gramaphone playing or people talking could save him then from sinking back, back into himself . . . . Shout, sing, be in a crowd as he was here; that was better than searching the dark for something as hopelessly gone as the sheltered existence of the womb." The characters in It's a Battlefield are uniformly without faith in themselves or the universe around them. There is only one exception to the rule, Catherine Bury, the aging literary lioness, and as for her faith, " . . . perhaps it was unshakeable because of its vagueness."
When Catherine probes the Assistant Commissioner about his faith, all he can say is:

'Well', he said, 'one lives and then, that is, one dies'. It was the nearest he could come to conveying his sense of a great waste, a useless expenditure of lives . . . . It was impossible to believe in a great directing purpose, for these were not spare parts which could be matched again.

All the characters within the battlefield are victims of an injustice that goes far beyond merely social inequality. It is an all-pervasive element, as much a part of their lives as the air they breathe. The mechanical fatalism of these characters' lives is made even more numbing by this sense of cosmic injustice that hangs in the air around them. The book ends with this exchange between the chaplain and the Assistant Commissioner, the one, God's law-enforcer, the other the instrument of the ruling classes.

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.'

Some of Greene's later figures, however, such as Scobie, seem to do exactly that.
One of the basic needs of Greene's characters is security; and if the 'sheltered existence of the womb' is gone forever, one can at least centre one's life around a private and precious vision of 'home'. Greene's next novel, *England Made Me* (1935) focuses on each character's idea of home, even though in their present state each is pathetically homeless. All of Greene's protagonists seem to have a mental image of home, an image usually inextricably linked with childhood, and all try to duplicate the security of this vision in their adult lives by constructing an aura of protection and security around one specific locale, or even one specific room: one only has to think of Scobie's office, Pinkie's crumb-scattered bedroom, Raven's dilapidated boarding-house room with the kitten's saucer of milk on the windowsill. The inhabitants of Greeneland are thrust out of the womb before their time, and spend the rest of their lives trying to crawl back into a calm and peace-giving refuge from the storm of life.

Anthony Farrant's vision of home is of cheap lower-class London. He is a con-artist, and makes his living around the globe by cheating, impersonation, and slick salesmanship; now his sister has caught up with him, and tries to persuade him to come to Sweden to work for Krogh, the fabulously wealthy industrialist, whose mistress Kate is. Anthony, temporarily weary of maintaining his false front on foreign soil, replies:

'If only you could stay with me here.'

'Here' was the twin dials on the gas meter, the dirty pane, the long-leaved plant, the paper fan in the empty fireplace;
'here' was the scented pillow, the familiar photographs, the pawned bags, the empty pockets, home.  

Kate's 'world' and the world that Anthony is soon to enter, is the exact opposite to the seedy, cluttered, huddled warmth of the world of London that Anthony accepts as the environment that formed him. Sweden, and more specifically Krogh's factory and living quarters, is all "... glassy cleanliness, the latest fashionable sculpture, the soundproof floors and dictaphones and pewter ashtrays and Erik in his silent room listening to the reports from Warsaw, Amsterdam, Paris and Berlin."  

Not surprisingly, even Erik Krogh himself does not feel at home in such bleak antiseptic surroundings. He longs for the old days in Chicago, before his sudden accumulation of wealth, when he was young and had a few acquaintances that were almost friends. Now he has no sense of identity, and has to look at his initials flashing in neon lights above each doorway in his factory to remember who he is: "... he was like a man without a passport, without a nationality; like a man who could only speak Esperanto."  

Minty, whom one critic labelled the first of Greene's full-length grotesques, is really the only one who has managed to make himself a home away from home in the bleak Swedish environment; but his 'home' is no more than a burrow, a filthy room in an ancient lodging-house.
. . . he hurried upward, fourteen more stairs, to the fourth landing, to security, to home -- the brown woollen dressing-gown hanging on the door, the cocoa and water biscuits in the cupboard, the little Madonna on the mantelpiece, the spider under the toothglass.

This spider under the toothglass is mentioned several times, and becomes a central image within the book. Like the spider the characters are trapped by their environment, unable to escape, to act, to communicate. They are imprisoned not only by the social maze they are forced into but also by the spiritual, mental and, to go beyond the personal, the universal cage that holds Greene's characters in passive subjection. Thus the image of the spider under glass comes to be a symbol of fatalism, like the previous central images of fatalism -- the express train, and the circles of Hell superimposed over the physical details of London. As Minty goes to sleep, he realizes that God holds him under a glass just as he, Minty, holds and imprisons the spider.

. . . he turned out his own lamp and lay in darkness, like the spider patient behind his glass. And like the spider he withered, blown out no longer to meet contempt; his body stretched doggo in the attitude of death, he lay there humbly tempting God to lift the glass.

Like Krogh and Anthony he mutely appeals for freedom, knowing that freedom would probably mean death. The foxhole is safe, while the open plain he desires so much is fraught with pitfalls. Within the undeveloped character of Minty, Greene hints at a
subject which long occupies his mind: what would happen if God 'lifted the glass' and offered perfect freedom? Would it be a new and sparkling life -- or annihilation?

In all of these early novels which follow The Man Within Greene describes a world which is composed only of the dead and the dying: the focus on the desolation of the modern world grows sharper and more inclusive with each novel. As in Baudelaire's poem "Au Lecteur" --"Folly, error, sin and avarice/ Occupy our minds and waste our bodies,/ And we feed our polite remorse/ As beggars feed their lice" Greene's characters sink into an ever-widening abyss of despair and ennui. To quote from Allott and Farris:

It has been suggested that 'the terror of life' in this phase of Greene's work is no longer projected mainly through the self-torture of a single character . . . but is spread to create a general picture of a fallen world . . . Seediness goes beyond the cruelties of material poverty, even beyond the 'spiritual bankruptcy' of modern life, until it stands for a permanent truth about the human situation . . . Greene's world is already that of Newman's 'aboriginal calamity'.

All the characters in England Made Me are linked together within the same spiral, and driven by the same fears, the same frustrations and the same inadequacies. Krogh the billionaire, who is in the process of making some very shady financial deals, is awkward and helpless when confronted with other people, and needs Kate for paid company and Fred Hall for his personal protector and bodyguard just as much as they need the security
of his wealth. Minty the newspaperman needs Krogh, since Krogh is his special subject, just as Krogh needs the publicity that Minty gives him. They are all, willingly or not, attached to each other, and out of this attachment grows a kind of perverted loyalty, the dependent loyalty of one crew member for another. Only Anthony does not belong on the merry-go-round, and is cast off without compunction at the end of the book.

Why is he thrown off? Is he not a man of the world, well-travelled and experienced in the crooked ways of surviving and profiting amidst treacherous waters? Much as he would like to give this impression, Anthony is, however, essentially an innocent in a corrupted adult world. _England Made Me_ centres around Anthony's tarnished but essential innocence, which is so much in contrast to the world of experience he is constantly forced to face: through the metaphor of Anthony's death Greene is dealing with one of his major themes -- the never-ceasing death of innocence, innocence killed or corrupted, unable to survive in a world that demands experience, compromise, and at its very heart, selfishness. Anthony's perceptive sister Kate sees his innocence immediately, and comprehends the impassable gulf between them:

His face, she thought, is astonishingly young for thirty-three; it is a little worn, but only as if by a wintry day, it is no more mature than when he was a schoolboy. He might be a schoolboy now, returned from a rather cold and wearing football match. His appearance irritated her, for a man should grow up, but before she could speak and tell him what she thought, her tenderness woke
again for his absurd innocence. For he was hopelessly lost in the world of business that she knew so well, the world where she was at home: he had a child's cunning in a world of cunning men; he was dishonest, but he was not dishonest enough. She was aware, having shared his thoughts for more than thirty years, felt his fears beat in her own body, of his incalculable reserves. There were things he would not do. That, she told herself, was the amazing difference between them.

And that, Anthony's deeply buried but nevertheless present sense of right and wrong, is his downfall. He refuses to do Krogh's dirty work, to drive out and silence a workman come to beg Krogh to end the maltreatment and persecution of his socialist father; and it is this refusal to compromise his basically humane attitude towards other people, in order to make his own position more secure, that leads first to his decision to go home to England and then, because of the secret information he possesses about Krogh's shady financial deals, to his murder by Krogh's henchman Hall. As Kate ironically says to him late in the novel: "'Tony, you're too innocent to live'."

The only commandment in the modern world, of which Anthony is unwillingly a part, is 'Look out for Thyself'. Because of this dictum, whatever love there is between characters in the book is warped and twisted, unfulfilled and egotistical. The only hope within this brutal and lonely world is contained in one tiny part of Anthony's nature which shows through his insincerity and continual posing: his compassion. With this tiny spark extinguished, one would have a picture of Dante's
congealed hell, where people lie trapped back to back in the frozen slime, bonded together yet eternally alone. The twisted, crippled relationship between Hall and Krogh stands for all the relationships in Greene's world:

They had nothing to say to each other; what lay between them, held them apart, left them lonely as they drove away together, was nothing so simple as a death, it was as complicated as the love between a man and a woman. 51

Anthony is an outmoded, archaic figure in this dog-eat-dog world, and yet his intrinsic humanity, however tenuous it is, is what Greene is searching for, trying to discover in the violent and seedy world around him. In England Made Me Greene is trying to find an answer to what to him is the main dichotomy of our time. As Greene sees it, at least in this early novel, the modern world inspires and perpetuates the fatalism and fear that alienates the individual, while the values of love and honesty that motivate the protagonist towards commitment to his fellow beings and his surrounding world come from another less anarchic age. In Greene's vision these values have been driven underground, are being ruthlessly exterminated, and a new, anarchic age of violence and spiritual emptiness -- the age of Yeats' "The Second Coming" -- has dawned. In an essay called 'At Home', written during the early years of World War Two, Greene tries to explain this phenomenon:

There are things one never gets used to because they don't connect: sanctity and fidelity and the courage of human beings abandoned to free will: virtues like these belong with old college buildings and
cathedrals, relics of a world with faith.

Violence comes to us more easily because it was so long expected -- not only by the political sense but by the moral sense. The world we lived in could not have ended any other way. The curious waste lands one sometimes saw from trains -- the cratered ground round Wolverhampton under a cindery sky with a few cottages grouped like stones among the rubbish: those acres of abandoned cars round Slough: the dingy fortune-tellers on the first-floor above the cheap permanent waves in a Brighton back street; they all demanded violence, like the rooms in a dream where one knows that something will happen -- a door fly open or a window-catch give and let the end in.52

Greene understands the anarchic attraction of the seediness of our modern culture, and sees that our environment inspires and complements the lack of direction inside ourselves. In England Made Me he confronts the modern world with Anthony's innocence and naive belief in human nature, and Anthony is swallowed up: in later books protagonists again confront the fatalistic all-devouring world around them, with varying degrees of failure. But, of course, failure is a virtue to Greene, since it signifies a withdrawal from the labyrinth of acceptance, of success, and brings a greater self-awareness and humility: it also serves, as we will see, as a kind of preparation for faith. Philip Stratford writes:

Yet 'the passion, the uncertainty, the pain', and the sense of failure and betrayal experienced in varying degrees in . . . Stamboul Train, It's a Battlefield and England Made Me, are not only a vestigial sign of Christian conscience but, in opposition to the apathy and hostility of the irreligious world, a positive footing for a religious attitude.53
Graham Greene develops through his first four novels his particular vision of the modern wasteland. In each novel the environment, and the emptiness of his characters within it become more clearly defined until in *England Made Me* one reaches a nadir: Greene shows his reader with unerring clarity the hollowness of his protagonists and the cheapness and vacuity of our civilization. In the words of one critic:

Greene has reached in impasse. Man must grow up, but only towards death. Everything is a little death, an ebbing of innocence. Once innocence has evaporated, no action assumes an importance over another. It is just a bald observation that some men do well and others fail. Doing well is just another form of death: Krogh is of the same material as Anthony and Kate. It is a closed world of nihilism.\(^\text{54}\)

This definition of his fictional world is an integral part of Greene's artistic progression, but once man's surface condition is defined, the author must begin to look more deeply, to follow that one little spark of hope: he must go beyond the seeming deadness of the age, just as Eliot went beyond "The Hollow Men" to the final vision of the "Four Quartets". For his epigraph to his novel *The End of the Affair* Greene quotes Leon Bloy: "Man has places in his heart which do not yet exist, and into them enters suffering in order that they may have existence." Greene now has to explore these places, and to watch them grow there blankness ruled before, so that the nihilism he sees surrounding him can be counterbalanced, be it ever so slightly.
CHAPTER TWO

STUDIES IN SOCIAL DETERMINISM:
A GUN FOR SALE AND BRIGHTON ROCK

Modern fiction has constantly dealt, during the last century, with characters struggling toward some act of consciousness or self-awareness that would be a gateway to real life. But the great majority of treatments of this theme are ironic: the act is not made, or is made too late, or is a paralyzing awareness with no result except self-contempt or is perverted into illusion.

Northrop Frye, from The Modern Century
With *A Gun for Sale* and *Brighton Rock*, Greene begins a more penetrating study of the outsider as a victim of his social conditioning in childhood; Raven and especially Pinkie are ultimately unable to find fulfillment because they cannot really imagine any form of life that is not determined by a sense of terror and loss. A sense of fatalism pervades both the characters and the world they live in. The possibility of fulfillment through love is raised, yet even love is not a strong enough force to dislodge Pinkie from his direct path towards self-extinction. There is still no real hope for the protagonist because he remains alienated from life.

In both of these novels the protagonist is a criminal; he stands outside the social realm, both physically and morally, and becomes a perfect image of alienation and rebellion -- a man cut off from his own roots. From the biblical figure of Cain to the modern day, the criminal has always been pictured as an outsider, an outcast from the cosy inner wheels of the social mechanism. Greene, in his development as a writer, is searching for a meaningful symbol of isolation, and in *A Gun for Sale* and *Brighton Rock*, both of his main characters are murderers and solitaries, twisted by heartless upbringings
and full of bitter hatred towards the world into which they were dragged against their will. In fact one can see Raven, the protagonist of *A Gun for Sale*, as a kind of working model for one of Greene's most striking characters, Pinkie Brown of *Brighton Rock*.

In these two books Greene explores the mind and fate of the outcast, just as Dostoevsky explored the turbulent machinations of Raskolnikov's mind in *Crime and Punishment*. In all three books one of the author's main concerns is to dramatize the growth of conscience that takes place within the main character; to Greene at least the growth of conscience signifies a possible return to life for the alienated man, or, as one critic calls him, the 'displaced person'. Walter Allen writes:

> The figure of the displaced person can, of course, be taken as a symbol of man's essential situation on this earth. In our time, the leading English novelist of the displaced person in the fundamental sense is Graham Greene . . . though he sees his characters in what he believes to be the fundamental human situation, they are always given a strictly contemporary setting.1

Greene does not necessarily see alienation as the fundamental human situation, but he does feel that most people are trapped within this state of mind, paralyzed and unable to reach out in order to communicate hidden griefs and desires.

Chapter One attempted to show the surface vacuum of Greene's world, where each person is in isolation. Greene's portrayal
of our modern civilization is often a damning one, but he never ceases to explore the possibility of salvation for modern man, salvation at first on a purely secular level, then increasingly on a religious one. In *A Gun for Sale* and *Brighton Rock* we have a glimpse of the two kinds of salvation before both characters are sucked back into the vacuum of death and obliteration. The shadow of religion that hovers over *Brighton Rock*, specifically the gloomy Catholicism of Rose and Pinkie, adds a whole new dimension to Greene's universe, and, as we shall see, gives a new meaning to the problem of alienation. Raven is isolated from society and from himself, but Pinkie is isolated from God. Ultimately for Graham Greene, alienation becomes a religious concept. Northrop Frye writes:

> Alienation and progress are two central elements in the mythology of our day, and both words have been extensively used and misused. The concept of alienation was originally a religious one, and perhaps that is still the context in which it makes most sense. In religion, the person aware of sin feels alienated, not necessarily from society, but from the presence of God, and it is in this feeling of alienation that the religious life begins.²

This different degree of alienation is essentially the difference between Raven and Pinkie, and one central difference between the entertainment, *A Gun for Sale*, and the novel, *Brighton Rock*. Yet both Raven and Pinkie have similar natures, full of hatred and bitterness, and both are men with a mission, seeking if only subconsciously for a connection on a plane above the phoniness and insecurity of ordinary society.
James Raven is a hired killer. As the book opens we watch him perform a grisly murder completely without emotion. He is a cold, efficient automaton, "... a man who could be depended on." He is the perfect hired killer, since he takes pride in his job, such as it is, and could not care less who is his victim as long as he is paid. Like all of Greene's major figures, however, he has a strong sense of justice. When he is paid for his job in counterfeit money, he completely abandons his own safety in order to wreak vengeance on his double-crossing employers.

The underlying theme in *A Gun for Sale* is the gradual thawing of Raven's frozen and ice-hard heart and soul. At the beginning of the book he feels nothing because he has been overwhelmed by pain, misery, and hatred to such an extent that in order to survive he has had to shut off every emotion. Raven suffers, but only far below the surface of his icy exterior. As he walked down the street to meet Mr. Cholmondeley, the obese pay-off man with the emerald ring and the penchant for chocolate parfaits, "... he felt no pain from the chip of ice in his breast." Since the age of six when Raven's father was hung and his mother cut her throat with a carving knife in the kitchen, Raven has been on his own, surviving a bleak and bitter youth in a government home, alienated from the other children by his harelip, which brands him as an outsider, and by the quiet brooding intensity which marks all of Greene's
central figures. He worked the races for a while, after 'graduating' from the orphanage, and it is here that the connection is made between Raven's and Pinkie's world. It was Raven's gang that killed Battling Kite, Pinkie's boss and substitute father, and although Raven and Pinkie were on opposite sides, they were from the same world, and both on the wrong side of the law.

Raven's sense of justice is only stirred when he is betrayed by those he considers to be his own kind; he expects no justice from the law. When he is double-crossed by a crooked doctor, whom he visits to have a hasty job done on his tell-tale lip, he is stunned and outraged.

> He was touched by something he has never felt before: a sense of injustice stammered on his tongue. These people were of his own kind; they didn't belong inside the legal borders; for the second time in one day he had been betrayed by the lawless. He had always been alone, but never so alone as this.\(^5\)

It is ultimately the injustice of it all, and the need for some underlying sense of fair play, that drives all four of the major figures in both *A Gun for Sale* and *Brighton Rock*. Anne Crowder and Ida Arnold are seeking for an impersonal, social kind of justice, while Pinkie and Raven are searching for a much more personal justice, a justice which will give meaning to their bitter existence. Like Pinkie, Raven too is "... harrassed, hunted, lonely ... he bore with him a sense of great injustice and a curious pride."\(^6\)
Greene justaposes his characters in an interesting pattern in *A Gun for Sale*. On one extreme there is Raven, the criminal, the man who is outcast from and hunted by the social system; in the middle is Mather, the big, slow Scotland Yard detective who tracks Raven down; and on the other side is old Sir Marcus, the head of Midland Steel, and the man who hired Raven to kill the Czech war minister to promote the chances of war, always a profitable phenomenon for a munitions maker. Like Raven, Sir Marcus operates beyond the confines of the law, but there the similarity between the two ends. Sir Marcus controls; Raven is merely a victim of the heartless social mechanism. Mather, however, is completely opposite to Raven; he is part of the masses, a social cog, whereas Raven is a loner and an individual. Mather wants nothing more than "... to be on the side that organizes ... He did not want to be a leader ... he liked to feel that he was one of thousands more or less equal working for a concrete end." He hunts Raven down out of a sense of duty, much as Ida pursues Pinkie, although Ida's concept of 'duty' is far more dubious than is Mather's. Mather and Ida are the representatives of society, and as Greene sees it, society inevitably ends up crushing the individual, bitter and warped though he may be. But between Mather the organization man and Raven the anarchist comes the figure of Anne Crowder, girlfriend of Mather, another pursuer of justice who gets tangled in the dual hunt, as Mather pursues Raven who is in turn pursuing his double-crossing bosses, Cholmondeley and Sir Marcus.
The crux of *A Gun for Sale* is the relationship between Anne and Raven. Greene, like Hemingway in this regard, usually involves his central male characters in relationships with women, not in order to reveal the depths of the other sex, but to expose the workings of the man's psyche on a deeper level, to force the man into a situation in which he will have to make a momentous decision between two warring factions of his own nature.

When Raven sets off from London to Norwich on the trail of Chomondeley, Anne is on the same train, bound for another part in a second-rate provincial chorus line, hating to leave the security of Mather and the big city. She is alone and scared, yet tries to maintain an air of experience and cheerful bravado. When Raven takes her as a hostage as they both leave the train, the incongruity of Raven's deadly seriousness and Anne's attempts at lighthearted repartee only serve to point out her fear. Yet Raven is attracted to her by her courage. Anne, through her quick-wittedness, escapes, but not before learning that Raven's bosses were somehow implicated in the assassination of the war minister that has brought Europe to the brink of war. In her idealistically innocent fashion, she sets out to see if she can expose this murder and prevent the war, partly in order to halt the senseless killings, and partly to hold onto Mather and security, since if war were declared he would have to enlist. So Anne has a mission as much as Raven has, although since she is part of
the social system, she naturally wants to protect it and her place in it. Raven, however, is completely outside it, and a war between nations means nothing to him. As he says more than once, "... there's always been a war for me." Anne sides with Raven in order to prevent war, although she knows she is aiding a criminal and going against the whole social code which Mather stands for. "If only Jimmy were here," she thinks. "But Jimmy, she remembered with pain, was on the other side; he was among those hunting Raven down. And Raven must be given the chance to finish his hunt first."

Anne is another of Greene's innocents, the kind of person whose vision goes beyond the short-sightedness of normal society because of its freshness and clarity; but at the end of the novel, with Raven dead, she has traded her innocence for something more tangible -- security. She has a kind of naivete about the workings of the world that makes her more courageous than most, and when Cholmondeley, who turns out to be one of the backers of her 'play', attempts to rape her in a hideous little room in North Norwich, she blurtily accuses him of double-crossing Raven. When Raven finds her bound and gagged in the little room a few days later, sure that she was dead, and amazed that Anne, a 'skirt', had not betrayed him to the police on her first escape, his frozen and insensate nature begins to thaw. "When he could feel her breathing under his hand it was like beginning life over again." For the first time there is somebody that matters outside the flaming bitterness
of Raven's mind; a casualty of the mental and physical battle-field of modern life, hardened beyond feeling by betrayal and suspicion, he gradually begins to believe in Anne.

It is in chapter five, the central chapter of the book, that Raven finally decides to trust Anne completely and to share with her the bitter experiences of his past. As they huddle together in a tiny shack, surrounded all night by the police, Raven experiences a sense of peace that is completely new to him. "'It is a sort of -- good in here', Raven said, 'out of the way of the whole damned world of them. In the dark'." He pours out his bitterness to Anne, and she accepts his confidences -- his miserable upbringing in institutions, his drifting into the world of crime. Like Pinkie he is shocked by most people's casual acceptance of sex: "They have a good time and what do they mind if someone's born ugly? Three minutes in bed or against a wall, and then a lifetime for the one that's born."

Gradually he trusts her with more and more of the sordid details of his life; confession to her is like the sacrament, and Greene here and elsewhere allies it closely with the Catholic rite. "He brooded over his memories with a low passionate urge towards confession. There had never in his life been anyone he could trust till now . . . . He said: 'this is the best night I've ever had'." The culmination of Raven's confession comes when he admits to murdering the old war minister; his need for confession and absolution drives him to this final
pouring-forth of his crime. He finally trusts Anne with everything and puts his survival in her hands, but she cannot respond the same way. Horrified and repulsed, she loses all sympathy for Raven. "She saw that he had no sacks to cover him, but she felt no pity at all. He was just a wild animal who had to be dealt with carefully and then destroyed." Raven's first and last real attempt at communication on a deep level with another person is a spiritual experience which gives him a sense of communion that goes beyond the person of Anne Crowder, but ironically enough, Anne, the catalyst that enables Raven to experience a feeling of absolution, cannot accept the horror of his crime and subsequently betrays him to the police.

Raven manages to escape from the police blockade, and then kills Cholmondeley and Sir Marcus within the labyrinth of the Midland Steel works, but he is unable to shoot Mather, swinging on a cable outside the window, even though he knows now that Anne is Mather's girlfriend. He dies betrayed and hated, in pain, and yet his death is also a release, and painful because it is like birth.

Death came to him in the form of unbearable pain. It was as if he had to deliver this pain as a woman delivers a child, and he sobbed and moaned in the effort. At last it came out of him and he followed his only child into a vast desolation.

The character of Raven owes a great deal to the tradition of the haunted, romantic and often tragic hero in 19th century
and 20th century fiction; great figures like Heathcliff, Ahab, Raskolnikov and Steppenwolf stand behind the lonely, bitter figure of James Raven, and although these characters dwarf him in power and magnitude, they belong to the same race of alienated men, searching for some sort of communication with something other than their own lonely minds.

If Greene is, as I think he is, trying through his writing to explore the possibility of creating a modern tragedy, A Gun for Sale is perhaps his first real attempt, even though he labels it an 'entertainment'. Raven does not have the stature and depth to be a tragic figure in his own right, but for Greene the basis for tragedy seems to lie in the inhumanity of the social structure around Raven, of which he is a victim. However, Raven's growth of conscience and moral stature, his growing need for trust and confession, and his sudden betrayal and obliteration does point to a tragedy of some sort, and to complete the pattern, the final chapter seems to act as a catharsis, in which all the subsidiary characters sink back into their roles once more, after the death of the central figure. "It was as if life had sunk again to the normal level, was flowing quietly by once more between its banks." 16

One critic writes that A Gun for Sale " . . . would have been a good novel with the last chapter omitted . . . it is flawed by a happy ending that can only satisfy the most wilfully sentimental reader." 17 But the ending is a purge rather than a sentimental conclusion. Anne is haunted by her betrayal
of Raven and it is only the sight of London, an image of safety and warmth, that temporarily drives Raven's face out of her mind.

In order to have any kind of tragedy, at least in the Aristotelian sense, the protagonist must have the strength to be able to stand out and cast an individual shadow on the world around him. He must have some sense of purpose, and must finally be made aware of the inevitable disparity between dream and reality. In A Gun for Sale one begins to see the rise of the individual, a process which culminates in Greene's later novels.

In Raven's case, his purpose is just the simple one of revenge, and yet in the last stages of the chase, after he leaves Anne, his feeling of personal bitterness and hatred towards Cholmondeley and Sir Marcus changes into something quite different. He has confessed and in a way been absolved, although not by Anne. "He hugged the automatic to his hip with a sense of achievement and exhilaration. There was a kind of lightheartedness now about his malice and hatred that he had never known before; he had lost his sourness and bitterness; he was less personal in his revenge. It was almost as if he were acting for someone else." His mission now seems to transcend the spirit of revenge; it is almost as if Raven has become an agent of justice, acting for a higher power. Raven's strange journey from enclosed bitterness to the final melting of his icy being is strange even
to him: "he . . . felt the ice melt at his heart with a sense of pain and strangeness as if he were passing the customs of a land he had never entered before and would never be able to leave." Even though Anne finally betrays him, she acts as a lever to bring him out of his calcified hatred.

Greene is a writer obsessed by man's condition, as he sees it, and all of his novels are concerned with one man trying to make sense of his own existence. Many of his protagonists cannot make sense of their existence in time, but as they grow in stature and individuality, their strivings become more profound and illuminating. Walter Allen writes:

From the beginning he has been obsessed with the plight of fallen man . . . . As a Christian, he sees his characters, even in the less serious novels he calls entertainments, under the aspect of eternity, so that in his work, as he has said of Trollope's, 'we are aware of another world against which the actions of the characters are thrown in relief'.

* * *

**Brighton Rock** occupies a central place in the study of Greene's development as a novelist; it stands in a crucial position between his earlier purely secular thrillers and his later and deeper explorations of character and morality. It is the first of the so-called 'Catholic' novels, in which the main character, a Catholic, lives inside a universe that is often more metaphysical than actual, a universe driven by the Catholic vision of life and death and eternity, or more precisely
by Greene's own particular version of the Catholic vision. A. A. DeVitis calls *Brighton Rock* a "medieval allegory" in which "Greene for the first time relates the theme of corrupted innocence, the theme of betrayal, the motif of the chase, and his own symbols of evil to a specifically religious theme: The Roman Catholicism of the central characters."²¹

It is with *Brighton Rock* also that the reader comes face to face with Greene's essentially Baudelairean world view, in which the universe is driven alternately by fear and boredom, where evil is strong and desirable and good is pallid in comparison. Sartre, in his perceptive study of Baudelaire, seems to illuminate Greene's own experience of living when he analyzes the obsessions and inner turmoils of the French poet's existence. The first moment of terror, as Greene and his characters well know, is the instant when the child realizes that he is a separate individual:

> The child has undergone a purely negative experience of separation and her experience assumes the form of universal subjectivism. What can we make of a discovery which frightens us and offers nothing in return? Most people contrive to forget it as quickly as possible. But the child who has become aware of himself as a separate being with a sense of despair, rage and jealousy will base his whole life on the fruitless contemplation of a singularity which is formal.²²

Like Baudelaire, like Sartre and the alienated individual which is his subject, Greene and his protagonists suffer from this intense self-consciousness. Sartre writes:
The man who wants to make himself useful chooses the opposite direction to Baudelaire . . . . But if you have begun by sampling to the point of nausea this consciousness, which has neither rhyme nor reason and which has to invent the rules which it proposes to obey, usefulness ceases to have any meaning at all. Life is nothing more than a game; man has to choose his own end without waiting for orders, notice or advice. Once a man has grasped this truth -- that there is no other end in this life except the one that he has deliberately chosen -- he no longer feels any great desire to look for one.

Pinkie, the central protagonist of *Brighton Rock*, knows this truth. He is a child in an adult world, desperately trying to hold his surrogate father's kingdom together. His seedy underground world of Brighton, the race tracks, a world of violence, razors, sordidness, is the only world Pinkie knows. Pinkie's harsh childhood has inculcated within him a distrust of everyone, a sense of disgust towards sex and women, a fierce bitter asceticism and a powerful ambition to control, to rise above his conditions of poverty and abjection to a position like Colleoni's, the successful rival mobster. He wants to know how 'to play the game', but fears the process of growing up and entering the long dreary avenues of adult life. His basic search is for freedom, freedom from other people, from social involvement, from the problems of adolescence: he seeks peace in a narcissistic world where he has only to confront 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 word echoed hygienically on among the porcelain basins, the taps and plugs and wastes. 24

Pinkie is an outsider from birth, alienated from his parents, then orphaned, left to fend for himself in a hostile world; he models himself on a petty criminal, Kite, who for some whim­sy or out of some compassionate reason takes Pinkie home with him. Like Kite, who is subsequently murdered by Colleoni's mob at the railway station, 'carved' and left to die, Pinkie abstains from smoking and drinking, bites his nails to the quick, and fights a losing war against Colleoni's impersonal and highly organized syndicate.

Pinkie sets out to revenge Kite's death, and as the novel opens we see Hale, the victim, being slowly pursued through the streets and tunnels of Brighton. He dies, but not before his own self-appointed agent of revenge, a fortyish, big-breasted woman of 'blown charm' named Ida Arnold takes up his cause. She professes to believe in Justice, in Right and Wrong, but is more concerned with excitement and titillation. She pursues Pinkie throughout the novel, enjoying her inexorable pursuit, serving right against wrong, yet failing to see the individual harm she is doing by driving Pinkie to desperation, murder, and suicide. Even one of her 'admirers', Phil Corkery, who is visibly drained and rendered impotent by her good'natured passion, is aware of the possibilities of destruction in Ida's attitude. He tries to tell Ida to leave Pinkie alone; it is not their business:
She broke off to set him gently right. You couldn't let a friend have wrong ideas. 'It's the business of anyone who knows the difference between Right and Wrong'. 'But you're so terribly certain about things, Ida. You go busting in . . . Oh, you mean well, but how do we know the reasons he may have had? . . . And besides', he accused her, 'you're only doing it because it's fun. Fred wasn't anyone you cared about'.

She switched towards him her large and lit up eyes. 'Why', she said, 'I don't say it hasn't been exciting'. She felt quite sorry it was all over now.

Brighton Rock is at its heart a battle between two views of morality -- the eternal and the social. Pinkie sees the world through the light of Good and Evil, whereas Ida Arnold is the upholder of the social law of right and wrong, and is uninterested in the eternities of salvation and damnation which haunt Pinkie. If one can see the novel as a juxtaposition of two incompatible world views, it is not surprising that Greene as a Christian would attempt to explore the relationships between these two worlds, accentuating the deep, dark, fearful world of Pinkie Brown against the limited day-to-day existence of mass humanity, represented by a big-breasted middle-aged blond, Ida Arnold.

Pinkie and Rose, both Catholics, exist in an apocalyptic world which the adults cannot enter. They are outsiders in a secular world; they see their actions and their behaviour in a completely different light. At one point, when Ida is trying to 'save' Rose from Pinkie's malign influence, Ida says:
'I know one thing you don't. I know the difference between Right and Wrong. They didn't teach you that at school.'

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

Pinkie's brand of Catholicism is really a kind of Manich-eism. He believes in the existence of Hell and eternal damnation because to him it is the only rational explanation for the horror he experiences in the world around him. When Rose, the young, innocent waitress who becomes Pinkie's child wife, asks him whether he believes in the Catholic vision of the world, he replies:

'Of course it's true', the Boy said. 'What else could there be?' he went scornfully on. 'Why', he said, 'it's the only thing that fits. These atheists, they don't know nothing. Of course there's Hell, flames and damnation', he said with his eyes on the dark shifting water and the lightning and the lamps going out above the black struts of the Palace Pier, 'torments'.

Rose and Pinkie are united by a bond, by the strange attraction between good and evil, and Pinkie is aware of this growing bond, from which he desperately tries to escape. He realizes that they share a world which isolates them from the world of the adults.

She was good, he'd discovered that, and he was damned; they were made for each other.
Rose, however, in spite of her innocence and timidity, is able to accept the world around her; she has patience, and a humility that separates her from Pinkie, who longs for peace but can only give and receive pain. "He was like a child with haemophilia: every contact drew blood."29 Ida and her type, on the other hand, lives as if in a foreign country.

She was as far from either of them as she was from Hell -- or Heaven. Good and evil lived in the same country, spoke the same language, came together like old friends.30

However different Rose and Pinkie are, they are inextricably linked by their moral viewpoint, just as Ida is excluded because of hers. This seeming favouritism on Greene's part has long been a bone of contention among critics. Walter Allen feels that:

In many ways, as his first fully mature work, Brighton Rock may be taken as the archetypal Greene novel in which the sinner seems nearer to God, more likely to receive the visitations of Grace, than the innocent humanitarian.31

Perhaps Greene, however, is concerned with the intensity of felt experience as the quality needed for salvation rather than the usual rating on the moral scale. Both Rose and Pinkie, living under the awesome sky of eternity, have far more intensity and passion than the outwardly passionate 'humanitarian', Ida, who, as Greene scathingly remarks, "... bore the same relationship to passion as a peepshow."32

Charles Peguy, one of the Catholic writers who influenced Greene a great deal, indirectly throws some light on the bond
between Pinkie and Rose, and the exclusion of Ida from their world, in the following passage:

The sinner, together with the saint, enters into the system, is of the system of Christianity. He who does not enter into the system, he who does not hold out a hand, he it is who is not a Christian . . . .

It is a city. A bad citizen belongs to the city. A good stranger does not . . . .

What is most contrary to salvation is not sin but habit.  

Intensity, whether of evil or good, is in a way more desirable than the bland self-assurance of the Ida Arnolds of this world. In his famous essay on Baudelaire, Eliot writes:

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

In Brighton Rock, and ultimately in his works as a whole, Greene is studying exactly that: man's capacity for both salvation and damnation, and the distinction between the two. Pinkie, the spoiled priest, haunted by images of hell and damnation, whose password like Baudelaire's is 'Credo in Unum Satandum', is trapped in his own vision of an eternity of pain to such an extent that the only thing he can do is to take pride in his damnation and try to rebel more and more against God, the ultimate force of spiritual authority. In Freudian terms Pinkie seems to suffer from a bitter hatred of the father
figure, and in the final conclusion all his murders and acts of cruelty can be seen as nothing more than a childish tantrum.

Greene is primarily concerned with people who seemingly live in a country which is alien to the mass of humanity. His compassion lies with the outsiders, the criminals and the failures, the moral outcasts who live and suffer on a deeper emotional plane than the crowd. To these characters, life is trauma, a torment of unfulfilled desires, shattered hopes and an agonizing sense of guilt. The greatest need is for expiation, for peace, and surely this is why the theme of suicide is so prominent in Greene's works as a whole. As he writes in *The Heart of the Matter*: "We are all of us resigned to death: it's life we aren't resigned to." 35

Pinkie, who lives in this alien country, absolutely refuses to resign himself to life. When Drewitt, Pinkie's seedy classics-spouting lawyer, quotes from Marlowe's *Faustus*: "'Why, this is Hell, nor are we out of it', "36 Pinkie, hearing his own unspoken philosophy coming from Drewitt's mouth, stares "... with fascination and fear." 37 He himself sees life as a long drawn-out Hell which must be avoided at any cost. His greatest horror is of life going on interminably, while one slowly sinks from growing corruption to eventual indifference.

Life to Pinkie is inextricably tied to his disgust of sexuality, which emerged from what Freud calls the 'primal scene', in which the small child listens to or watches his parents making love and mistakes the love-making for violence.
Dallow, Pinkie's faithful bulldog-like shadow who supposedly serves as the 'muscle' to back up Pinkie's 'brains', is amused that Pinkie has a girlfriend:

'An' you got a girl', Dallow said with hollow cheeriness. 'You're growing up, Pinkie -- like your father.'

Like my father . . . . The Boy was shaken again with his nocturnal Saturday disgust. He couldn't blame his father now . . . it was what you came to . . . you got mixed up, and then, he supposed, the habit grew . . . you gave yourself away weekly. You couldn't even blame the girl. It was life getting at you . . . there were even the blind seconds when you thought it fine.  

Pinkie's only defense against the world of sexuality and experience -- the world which the adults, Cubitt, Dallow, Ida, accept as right -- is violence. The only way of preserving his bitter and 'soured virginity', his sense of self, is by lashing out more and more wildly at the world around him. He sees Rose specifically as a temptation that the world is offering to him:

He watched her with his soured virginity, as one might watch a draught of medicine offered that one would never, never take; one would die first -- or let others die.

Greene makes it clear to the reader that there is a motive for Pinkie's hatred and violence: he is not just an incarnation of evil and destruction, but is a child to whom the slash of a razor and the snapping of a neck is the only way to keep the world at bay. As Pinkie courts Rose, solely in order to stop her testifying against him, he realizes that:
... one needed help for the nerves. His own were frozen with repulsion: to be touched, to give oneself away, to lay oneself open -- he had held intimacy back as long as he could at the end of a razor blade.

It is not surprising that Pinkie as a child wanted to be a priest.

'What's wrong with being a priest?' the Boy said. 'They know what's what. They keep away' -- his whole mouth and jaw loosened; he might have been going to weep; he beat out wildly with his hands towards the window: Woman Found Drowned, two-valve, Married Love, the horror -- 'from this'.

Pinkie is in spite of his murderousness an innocent in a corrupt world. But, as Greene develops more fully in The Quiet American, innocence can be far more destructive to the world around it than corruption, because the 'innocent' does not have any rules; he does not know how to play the game, corrupt game though it may be. He acts without sympathy, without compassion, because these qualities are only learned through experience. The world of innocence tends to be a closed world, with little in common with the rest of humanity. Even Rose, whose 'goodness' counterbalances Pinkie's 'evil', has nothing but contempt and disdain for Ida (who incidentally saves her life), and the world that Ida represents. Both are willing to 'damn' themselves in their own eyes and in the eyes of the world in order to escape its clutches, and the link between sex and violence and death which takes place in Pinkie's mind points out his essential desire to reject the burdens of life.
Pinkie lives under the shadow of eternity, and his vision of eternity is just the extension of the torture he has suffered throughout his short life, yet even Pinkie dreams vaguely of mercy and salvation. He tries to recall some religious lines from his childhood:

'You know what they say -- "Between the stirrup and the ground, he something sought and something found"'.

'Mercy'.

'That's right: Mercy'.

But his overwhelming desire to escape the horror of Sweeney's 'birth, copulation and death' -- the cycle of man's life that to Pinkie is disgusting and pointless -- negates any vision of salvation that he might have. In the revealing passage following, Greene implies that Pinkie's 'damnation' is essentially his refusal to become a part of the fabric of human life.

She got up and he saw the skin of her thigh for a moment above the artificial silk, and a prick of sexual desire disturbed him like a sickness. That was what happened to a man in the end: the stuffy room, the wakeful children, the Saturday night movements from the other bed. Was there no escape -- anywhere -- for anyone? It was worth murdering a world.

Pinkie tries to do just that; one is reminded of Raven, who shoots Cholmondeley as if he were shooting the whole world:

... and so he was. For a man's world is his life and he was shooting that: his mother's suicide, the long years in the Home, the race-course gangs, Kite's death ... There was no other way: he had tried the way of confession, and it had failed him for the usual reason. There was no one outside your own brain
whom you could trust: not a doctor, not a priest, not a woman.

Pinkie and Raven are both defeated by a lack of faith in life itself. Both outsiders, both criminals from the Brighton race tracks, hunted by representatives of the contented masses of humanity, they direct their own destinies straight towards extinction. They wish idly for peace and absolution but are so terrified of life that, as Raven expresses it: "... the only problem when you were once born was to get out of life more neatly and expeditiously than you had entered it."

Greene's protagonists seem always to be poised between involvement with and rejection of life: one of the central questions in most of his novels is the question of suicide. Is death the only solution to a lifetime of pain? Can some commitment to life be made without corrupting and destroying oneself? Is suicide the ultimate destruction of the self? In the ways in which Greene answers these questions one can see how his artistry develops from shallowness to depth, from melodrama to truth. Harry Andrews' suicide is pure melodrama. Scobie's is in some ways a tragedy, a death which creates the reverberations of true art, which allows us a glimpse into the human soul which few modern authors have rendered more movingly and realistically.

Pinkie too, chooses death to life, but significantly he seems to have less of a real choice than Scobie, and therefore
is less of a tragic figure. In Greene's later novels the characters do discover some commitment to life within themselves and their world -- this is essentially the progression I see occurring in Greene's fiction -- but it is not a simple linear development. It is not until Greene's heroes are capable of making a moral choice, rather than being merely victims of a fatalistic world, that the question of rejection of life can have tragic possibilities. Unlike Scobie, who makes a moral choice through his own will to end his life, characters in earlier novels (for example Anthony Farrant in *England Made Me* and Harry Andrews in *The Man Within*) are simply so hounded by their environment that death by murder or suicide is ultimately indistinguishable; both Anthony, who is murdered and Harry, who commits suicide, are fatally doomed to die by the very nature of the world they live in.

*Brighton Rock* is a pivotal novel in this development because Pinkie is seen both as a victim of his environment and as a human being with a soul capable of being saved or damned. This tension within the novel tends to make Greene's portrayal of Pinkie at times ambivalent, but it also points to a deepening awareness of the complexity of man's existence, which is developed more fully in the novels immediately following *Brighton Rock*.

Pinkie himself, as he is driven further into evil and murder, and closer to his own death, sees himself being trapped, being isolated from a sense of hope and freedom
and peace that he knows is impossible to reach:

... inexplicably, the Boy began to weep. He shut his eyes to hold in his tears, but the music went on -- it was like a vision of release to an imprisoned man. He felt constriction and saw -- hopelessly out of reach -- a limitless freedom: no fear, no hatred, no envy. It was as if he were dead and were remembering the effect of a good confession, the words of absolution; but being dead it was a memory only -- he couldn't experience contrition -- the ribs of his body were like steel bands which held him down to eternal unrepentance.

Only later does he realize that "... only death could ever set him free..." and:

... more than ever yet he had the sense that he was being driven farther and deeper than he'd ever meant to go. A curious and cruel pleasure touched him -- he didn't really care so very much -- it was being decided for him, and all he had to do was to let himself easily go. He knew what the end might be -- it didn't horrify him: it was easier than life.

It would seem from the above quotation that Pinkie accepts a fatalistic view of life in order to evade the moral consequences of his actions, since he really prefers the peaceful vacuum of death to the continued anguish and terror of life, but Greene himself implies that Pinkie really has no possibility of making a moral choice: his whole being has been shaped by his sordid impoverished upbringing. Pinkie can't conceive of mercy, or redemption, or choice, because:

... a brain was capable only of what it could conceive and it couldn't conceive what it had never experienced; his cells were formed of the cement school playground, the dead fire and the dying man
in the St. Pancras waiting room, his bed at Billy's and his parents' bed. An awful resentment stirred in him -- why shouldn't he have had his chance like all the rest, seen his glimpse of Heaven if it was only a crack between the Brighton walls?

When Kite is murdered at the St. Pancras station, Pinkie tries desperately to assume Kite's role in order to avoid the horror of having to fall back on his own insignificant self. "Kite had died, but he had prolonged Kite's existence -- not touching liquor, biting his nails in the Kite way, until she came and altered everything."  

When he becomes involved with Rose, who intuitively knows and shares his squalid background, his religion, and his insecurities and fears, he is made to confront himself, and to live through himself rather than through Kite's image. Rose represents hope and love, but she also represents for Pinkie, who tries desperately to harden and corrupt his own innocence in order to be an equal in the underground world, something he cannot stand to be reminded of. She reminds him of his own childhood and of his own terror and insignificance which is totally antipathetic to his ambitious dictatorial dreams. He begins to realize that the central issue is the developing relationship between himself and Rose; the other forces and events in his life -- Ida Arnold, his murders, his gradual entrapment by 'Justice' -- are becoming more and more external and almost forgotten.

The whole origin of the thing was lost: he could hardly remember Hale as a person
or his murder as a crime -- it was all now him and her.

The success or failure of the relationships between the central male and female characters directly contribute to the ultimate fate of the 'hero' in almost all of Graham Greene's novels. The force of love is a strong and positive one; it allows the outsider the possibility of redemption and of union with the moral and physical world around him. But all too often the protagonist rejects the love that is offered, or destroys it by being unable to return anything but pity or even hatred.

Scobie's sense of pity is ultimately his undoing; Pinkie's hatred of Rose and her love for him mirrors his rejection of life itself. If he 'opens up', he feels he will be destroyed. Towards the end of the book, Pinkie's attitude to Rose begins to undergo an interesting transformation, but the power of love, which seems also to symbolize the sense of religious grace or mercy, is unable to crack the prison walls of Pinkie's tormented mind. Although Pinkie's message engraved on the record -- "'God damn you, you little bitch, why can't you go back home forever and let me be?" -- is perhaps "the worst horror of all" that awaits Rose after Pinkie's suicide, that is not really Pinkie's feeling towards Rose and the awesome questions of love, grace and mercy that revolve in his mind as his death comes closer.

It was quite true -- he hadn't hated her; he hadn't even hated the act. There had been a kind of pleasure, a kind of pride, a kind of something else . . . 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 huge havoc -- the confession, the penance, and the sacrament -- an awful distraction, and he drove blind into the rain.\(^54\)

In both *A Gun for Sale* and *Brighton Rock* there is a glimpse of salvation, a salvation that would save the outsider from the bitter intensity of his own lonely self, and it is Rose and Anne Crowder who indirectly at least offer this peace. Rose's love for Pinkie offers him a kind of absolution and communion, but although he longs for some sort of escape from his burning hatred he is too afraid of life to accept the love she offers him. Raven, on the other hand, joyously accepts the communion and trust Anne offers him, but it is she who fails him. So it would seem then that in these two books the desperate protagonist who longs to feel a part of something or somebody other than himself fails to maintain any real contact, and consequently Raven and Pinkie die alone and empty, victims of themselves and of society. And yet there has been some kind of development; the possibility of hope and love begins to emerge. Perhaps the beast -- whatever it is -- will smash the glass and allow the protagonist to escape from the confining walls of his self-imposed prison. The quality of fatalism that grips Greene's fictional world, although it continues to thwart and destroy
the central figures, is beginning to lose its omnipotence; there is a chink in the armour somewhere; it is up to the characters to find it.

With Pinkie's suicide leap off the cliff into the blackness of the English Channel, the sea which has served as a symbol of despair and emptiness throughout the novel, the torment of Pinkie's twisted consciousness is finally brought to an end, and perhaps he finds the peace which he so desperately wants -- the peace which he himself gradually understands to be a desire for cessation and death. Greene's attitude to Pinkie at the point of his death is one of compassion: Pinkie is not completely evil; he is not entirely damned. Brighton Rock ends, like The Heart of the Matter and one of Greene's plays, The Living Room, with an act of confession and the words of a priest: "'You can't conceive, my child, nor can I or anyone -- the appalling . . . strangeness of the mercy of God'."55

The role of the priest is an interesting one in Greene's fiction; he often serves to point out the ambiguity of life and the impossibility of making sense out of the horror and chaos of existence. More a philosopher of man's condition than a religious representative, the priest can only offer a kind of comfort and absolution to the wrecked survivors of the tumult.

Despair is the ultimate enemy of Greene's protagonists; they wage a constant and often losing battle with this force of emptiness and nullity which mirrors the Existentialist 'ennui' and Roquentin's 'nausea'. Greene as a novelist is driven
"... by a terror of life, a terror of what experience can
do to the individual, a terror of a predetermined corruption.
..." to explore the depths of man's despair. As he develops
as a writer, and explores this no-man's-land of terror and emp­
tiness more and more convincingly, he begins to find that even
there, in the darkness and fear that surrounds all of his main
characters, there exists some kind of hope -- some faint glimmer­
ing of love and optimism. I am not implying that there is a
straight progression from despair to hopefulness in Greene's
fictional vision: first he must plumb the depths of despair,
confront it and understand its causes, as he does in The Heart
of the Matter. Only then can the power of life latent in Greene's
vision and in the minds of his characters, rise above the search
for death, however shaky that emergence may be. The tension
between hope and despair is always present in Greene's protag­
onists, but only when the world of despair is fully opened can
any hope break through. It is here that the role of love in
Greene's works operates as a releasing, life-giving force.

As John Atkins writes:

> In his fiction most values are discovered
to be hollow but there is always someone's
love that remains sound: Rose's in *Brighton
Rock*, Scobie's in *The Heart of the Matter*,
and Bendrix's in *The End of the Affair* --
or looking backwards, Kate's in *England
Made Me*. The love is usually battered,
even warped (as was Bendrix's) but it is
still recognizably love.57

*Brighton Rock* explores this vision of despair through
the eyes of Pinkie, who is essentially a child, even though
he is capable of murder. As Pinkie comes closer to his destruction, he seems to regress from his superficial adulthood:

She could see his face indistinctly as it leant in -- over the little dashboard light. It was like a child's, badgered, confused, betrayed; fake years slipped away -- he was whisked back towards the unhappy playground.58

The adult world is too much for him, and we see him at the end flying backwards into the abyss of non-existence, burning not with the flames of hell-fire that he always believed were waiting for him, but ironically with his own favourite weapon -- the bottle of vitriol that explodes over his face with the smashing blow from the policeman's night-stick. Unable to accept the hope that Rose's love offers, and conditioned into fatalism by his harsh and barren environment, Pinkie remains beyond the pale, unable to return to the warmth of the human fold. He is an outsider from birth, hopelessly lost in an alien world. Perhaps one could say the same of the protagonists from Greene's earlier novels, but Brighton Rock differs from the earlier novels because of its scope and intensity, and its focus on the environmental forces that indelibly fix the image of life onto the child's mind. To quote John Atkins again:

As Greene's conviction grows that the real power of creation derives from the persistent pressure of childhood fears and misgivings, and as he learns to draw on them more easily, so his fiction improves and its intensity deepens.59

With Brighton Rock the first phase of progression in the novels of Graham Greene is brought to a close. The 'outsider
as victim' theme is given perhaps its final rendering, and the search for some kind of redemption -- either personal, moral or religious -- begins. This is not to say that the oppressive power of the environment and the fatalistic manipulation of the protagonist cease to be a part of Greene's world; what does occur, however, is a shift in emphasis, from the ever-deepening exploration of fatalistic despair to a cautious but perhaps increasingly hopeful analysis of man's condition. His characters will still suffer from despair, but they will be able to act, to choose, to have some kind of free will to create their own destiny, for better or for worse. One could perhaps define this progressive change in Greene's vision as a novelist as a shift from naturalism and determinism to a wider and more inclusive realism, which not only offers more scope for his dissection of the human condition, but also contains the possibility of nobility and tragedy that a fatalistic world view would not.

In Greene's next two novels, The Power and the Glory and The Heart of the Matter, his characters rise above the force of environment specifically because in the final moment they do have free will; they can make a moral choice which separates them as individuals from the often hostile and empty worlds they live in. It is a fairly widely held critical opinion that, as one critic writes, Greene's characters:

... are merely products of their environment, something important is left out ... They are created by their environment.
The inevitable result is that they tend to be regarded as inferior to the environment, as emanations of it and therefore illustrations of it. The classical heroes were emphasized by environment. Now the character emphasizes the world he lives in . . .

I believe this theory is essentially correct up to and including Brighton Rock, but from The Power and the Glory onwards, the protagonist slowly begins to emerge as a larger, more rounded and fully developed character, and it is from this point that Greene has made his greatest contribution to the 20th century British novel.
CHAPTER THREE

THE RISE OF THE INDIVIDUAL

Greene, whose vision of man and his existence evolved during the 1920's and 1930's, was very much a part of the intellectual and artistic climate of his time. Like other representative figures of this era -- Eliot, Auden, Huxley, Sartre -- Greene continues to search throughout his writing for some kind of personal meaning in a chaotic world, for some set of values which will enable one to survive spiritually in the modern wasteland. The end of the thirties was a crucial period in the literature of the twentieth century: the excitement, the sense of social purpose, the idea that art could change the political and spiritual consciousness of a generation, died during the late thirties and early forties, and each writer turned in his own way from contemporary dissections of man in society to a more personal and perhaps more individual exploration of the possibilities of personal salvation or redemption. Richard Kostelanetz describes this process of 'turning inward' as a general movement in modern literature:
The great modern writers have, in general, progressed from a concern in their early works with the real world, a concern which usually involved a protest against its harshness and deceit, to an emphasis upon the essence of man outside of history — a development exemplified in literary careers as diverse as those of Thomas Mann, T. S. Eliot, Samuel Beckett and James Joyce.¹

David Pryce-Jones, speaking specifically of the writers of the thirties, feels, however, that this withdrawal from the real world weakens their art. He writes:

The failure of the nineteen-thirties then, has come to this, that its surviving and still creative writers, frightened by the suddenly accelerating deterioration of human life . . . have withdrawn from the impotent activity of relating social experience to life or to art . . . In Greene's writing . . . the withdrawal from experience has led to a personal world seemingly unrelated to externals, which, interesting as its delimitations may prove, has become an absolute in itself.²

Certainly a change takes place in Greene's fiction after Brighton Rock, and in some ways it is depressive change: his novels on the whole become more restrained in tone, more static and 'formal', more theological and philosophical in nature and perhaps in consequence more depressing, considering the gloomy nature of Greene's moral and ethical framework. In his fragmentary autobiography, A Sort of Life, Greene diagnoses his condition: "A manic-depressive, like my grandfather -- that would be the verdict on me today, and analysis had not cured my condition."³
Perhaps one can see Greene's writings of the 1940's as part of a depressive phase in his character. As Pryce-Jones suggests, Greene does delve more and more deeply into a 'personal world' in his three novels of the forties, and at times the emphasis on Catholicism becomes just another part of the mysterious private symbolism passed between Greene and his characters and excluded to some extent from his readers.

In these three novels, however, one can see the author searching more penetratingly than before for individual solutions to the problems of human existence, and since he is trying to discover 'the essence of man outside of history' it is not necessarily a sign of artistic decay that Greene seems less concerned with the portrayal of the spectrum of an unjust and oppressive social world. Like Eliot's later poetry and Huxley's novels after Brave New World, Greene's novels of the forties are more directed towards the exploration of human values and the possibilities of discovery contained in this exploration, than towards the presentation of a 'realistic' view of the contemporary world, which seems only to lead to despair.

The wasteland is still present in these novels; this passage from Eliot's The Waste Land presents exactly the image of decay and sterility that Greene gives us in The Power and the Glory:
Dead mountain mouth of carious teeth that cannot spit
Here one can neither stand nor lie nor sit
There is not even silence in the mountains
But dry sterile thunder without rain . . .

However, although the landscape remains as oppressive and fatalistic as before, a new kind of optimism, perhaps a new capacity for life, a new spiritual strength, seems to emerge. One can see this change taking place in writers as diverse as Eliot, Auden, Huxley and Greene. The rebels of the twenties and thirties become the theologians, the philosophers, the mystics of the forties and fifties.

The importance of theology, specifically Catholic theology, in Greene's writings is often overemphasized, however. After The Power and the Glory, Greene's most obviously religious and most static, forced novel -- "I think The Power and the Glory was the only novel I have written to a thesis . . ." -- the following novels become less and less concerned with presenting an orthodox religious allegory and much more centred around an existentialist concept of man's existence, in many ways similar to Camus' definition of the absurd. Camus writes: "Man stands face to face with the irrational. He feels within him his longing for happiness and reason. The absurd is born of this confrontation between the human need and the unreasonable silence of the world."

Perhaps Greene, in spite of his English background and his Catholicism, finally has more in common with a writer like
Kafka or Camus than with T. S. Eliot or Aldous Huxley. To quote from Maurice Friedman:

Kafka knows that the person does not exist as a self-evident, self-sufficient reality. . . . The person in the modern world exists as pure paradox: responding with a calling of which he is never sure to a call which he can never clearly hear. For Kafka it cannot be a question of overthrowing the 'authoritarian' in favour of the 'humanistic', as it is for Erich Fromm, but of discovering the human again and again in the very heart of the bewildering social hierarchy, personal meaning in the midst of the impersonal absurd.

This is what I feel lies at the heart of The Power and the Glory; only on one level is it a religious allegory, a battle between the spiritual and material realms. At the true centre of the book Greene gives us a picture of one lost man's search for meaning and commitment, a man who courageously confronts the void that he knows by another name — despair.

* * *

The Power and the Glory is Greene's first novel with a tropical setting, and yet one feels that one has been there before; and one has, in all his earlier novels, since the setting comes more from Greene's obsessed inner world than from any real place. His art is personal and instinctive, and reaches one first on the intuitive emotional level. In his recent autobiographical volume A Sort of Life, he describes: " . . . the memories of flight, rebellion and misery during those first sixteen years when the novelist is formed . . . ."
his own years in school were much like Kurtz's plunge into the heart of darkness, or the whiskey priest's staggerings through the jungle:

I had left civilization behind and entered a savage country of strange customs and inexplicable cruelties: a country in which I was a foreigner and a suspect, quite literally a hunted creature . . . .

His novels are essentially explorations of his childhood world, which focus on the unconscious fears, dreams and symbols that tormented and obsessed Greene as a child and as an adult. Like Eliot, and perhaps like all creative artists, Greene attempts through his art to return to his beginning in order to accept it and understand it, and so to learn a personal and perhaps universal truth from his own torments. Herbert Marcuse describes a process which takes place in art as 'the return of the repressed'; in Greene's fiction the unconscious dredge plunges and hauls continually from one book to the next, as he traces from his own sources and personal myths a picture of the modern world which often rings deep and true. He writes out of "... a desire to reduce a chaos of experience to some sort of order . . . ." and perhaps one sees, through the frameworks, structures and skeletons of his fictional creations the essential movement of twentieth century art -- the search for oneself. Only by remaining true to oneself, to one's own response to the ever-changing world around one can the author create genuine art, which goes beyond dogma and creed. In an essay entitled "The Virtue of Disloyalty", Greene writes about
the necessity of being true to the deepest part of one's being if one is to be a great artist, even if this means being 'disloyal' to one's country, one's religion, or one's outer self:

Isn't it the storyteller's task to act as the devil's advocate, to elicit sympathy and a measure of understanding for those who lie outside the boundaries of state approval?

If only writers could maintain that one virtue of disloyalty -- for them more important than charity -- unspotted from the world . . . .

If they don't become loyal to a church or a country, they are apt to become loyal to some invented ideology of their own, until they are praised for consistency, although the writer should always be ready to change sides at the drop of a hat. He stands for the victims and the victims change.

Loyalty confines you to accepted opinions; loyalty forbids you to comprehend sympathetically your dissident fellows; but disloyalty encourages you to roam through any human mind: it gives the novelist an extra dimension of understanding."

Greene, perhaps the most widely travelled of all modern British authors, felt a strong attraction towards primitive countries: in the depths of Mexico, Africa and East Asia he felt close to the primeval heart of man, closer to the passion and everpresent sense of evil that he perceived at the core of humanity, and once there he felt he could observe human nature undisguised by the false veneer of civilization. In Journey Without Maps he writes of his journey into the heart of Africa, and into the heart of mankind:
This journey, if it had done nothing else, had reinforced a sense of disappointment with what man had made out of the primitive, what he had made out of childhood. Oh, one wanted to protest, one doesn't believe, of course, in 'the visionary gleam', in the trailing glory, but there was something in that early terror and the bareness of one's needs, a harp strumming behind a hut, a witch on the nursery landing, a handful of kola nuts, a masked dancer, the poisoned flowers. The sense of terror deeper and purer.\footnote{12}

Perhaps one can try, as Greene did with Henry James, "\ldots to track the instinctive, the poetic writer back to the source of his fantasies."\footnote{13} "In all writers", Greene wrote in an essay on Henry James, "\ldots there occurs a moment of crystallization when the dominant theme is plainly expressed, when the private universe becomes visible even to the least sensitive reader."\footnote{14} Greene's moment of crystallization came in childhood, immediately upon reading Marjorie Bowen's \textit{The Viper of Milan}:

\ldots she had given me my pattern -- religion might later explain it to me in other terms, but the pattern was already there -- perfect evil walking where perfect good can never walk again, and only the pendulum ensures that after all in the end justice is done.\footnote{15}

So one begins to see his adoption of the Catholic religion not only as an attempt to define and support his instinctual vision of life, but also as a means of returning to the world of childhood, since religion recreates the terror, the anxiety and excitement, and the sense of evil within a larger, more ritualistic and symbolic framework. Greene's novels are far
more about his own fears and fantasies than about twentieth
century life and religion, as Greene implies of Henry James
in talking about "... the source of James' passionate
distrust in human nature, his sense of evil...":\(^{16}\)

> It is true that the moral anarchy of the age gave him his material, but he would not have treated it with such intensity if it had not corresponded with his private fantasy.\(^{17}\)

His characters also seem far more at home, or perhaps less out of place, since Greene's characters never really seem to be at home, in the oppressive tropics than in the modern Western world, since the non-white world is another objective correlative for the ominous and fearful world Greene discovered as a child and his been trying to survive in ever since. Even when his books are set inside modern urban society -- the gaudy Brighton of *Brighton Rock*, the bomb-splintered London of *The End of the Affair* -- they still pulse with the primitive passions of the jungle, and one soon realizes that life everywhere is a jungle for Graham Greene.

The Mexico of *The Power and the Glory* is a world of carrion, divided between the vultures and the sharks. It is a world of the dead and the dying, and on the surface at least an unmitigated vision of despair. The first paragraph, which focuses on Mr. Tench, the exiled English dentist at the Port, immediately sets the tone of the whole narrative:

> Mr. Tench went out to look for his ether cylinder, into the blazing Mexican sun and the bleaching dust. A few vultures
looked down from the roof with shabby indifference: he wasn't carrion yet. A faint feeling of rebellion stirred in Mr. Tench's heart, and he wrenched up a piece of the road with splintering fingernails and tossed it feebly towards them. One rose and flapped across the town: over the tiny plaza, over the bust of the ex-president, ex-general, ex-human being, over the two stalls which sold mineral water, towards the river and the sea. It wouldn't find anything there: the sharks looked after the carrion on that side.  

It is a world where man is insignificant and more than a little absurd, where the environment is actively hostile, oppressive and mind-numbing. Fate hangs like an ominous cloud over this novel; the characters are trapped in a life they long to escape from but cannot. Tench himself has unwittingly committed himself to an irrevocable future by playing with an old discarded tooth-cast as a child. "They had tried to tempt him with Meccano, but fate had struck." For Greene a man's ultimate fate can often be traced to one seemingly trivial childhood act:

There is always one moment in childhood when the door opens and lets the future in. The hot wet river-port and the vultures lay in the wastepaper basket, and he picked them out. We should be thankful we cannot see the horrors and degradations lying around our childhood, in the cupboards and bookshelves, everywhere."

In *A Sort of Life* Greene again reminds us that everything we will be springs from our childhood world. He writes of his own future: "If I had known it, the whole future must have lain all the time along those Berkompsted streets . . . ."
The whiskey priest, the central figure of *The Power and the Glory*, is introduced almost incidentally, and only gradually does the reader realize that he is a priest on the run in a state where the Catholic Church has been officially outlawed. He is an unprepossessing figure, small and nervous, with a rather irritating giggle, and badly rotting teeth. "He gave an impression of unstable hilarity, as if perhaps he had been celebrating a birthday . . . alone." The priest has come to the river port in the hope of taking the steamer General Obregon up the coast to Vera Cruz where he will be safe, but fate has him as firmly snared as all the others. A Mexican child comes for him so that the priest can give absolution to the child's dying mother. The priest cannot refuse. "He said sadly, 'It always seems to happen. Like this'." He can see the long arm of fate steering him back into the forest, where he has spent so many years moving from one poor village to another avoiding the authorities, away from the waiting boat which is his only means of escape. "'I shall miss it', he said, "I am meant to miss it'. He was shaken by a tiny rage." As the priest follows the child back into the jungle at the end of Chapter One, he prays that he will be caught soon, so that the suspense and terror will end. Yet he is harnessed to a purpose larger than himself, an unwilling martyr who must go on and on until that purpose has been fulfilled. "He had tried to escape, but he was like
the King of a West African tribe, the slave of his people, who may not even lie down in case the winds should fail."²⁵

Greene makes clear that The Power and the Glory was different from his other novels in that it was written, as has been noted already, 'to a thesis' -- to a foreordained plan, a central guiding idea, which Greene was never so consciously aware of at the start of his other novels.

To quote again:

I think The Power and the Glory was the only novel I have written to a thesis: in The Heart of the Matter Wilson sat on a balcony in Freetown watching Scobie pass by in the street long before I was aware of Scobie's problem -- his corruption by pity.

But I had always, even when I was a schoolboy, listened with impatience to the scandalous stories of tourists concerning the priests they had encountered in remote Latin villages (this priest had a mistress, another was constantly drunk), for I had been adequately taught in my Protestant history books what Catholics believed; I could distinguish even then between the man and his office.

Now, many years later, as a Catholic in Mexico, I read and listened to stories of corruption which were said to have justified the persecution of the Church under Calles and Cardenas, but I had also observed for myself how courage and the sense of responsibility had revived with persecution -- I had seen the devotion of peasants praying in the priestless churches and I had attended masses in upper rooms where the sanctus bell could not sound for fear of the police.²⁶

Our first impression of the priest, however, is one of a pitiful tramp, who exudes death and decay. For Tench the
dentist, "... the man's dark suit and sloping shoulders reminded him uncomfortably of a coffin, and death was in his carious mouth already." He is another of Greene's outsiders, but this time he represents a force greater than his own weak and fearful person. He wears his priesthood 'like a birthmark', unable to renounce his role because it is beyond his power to do so. He has a curious habit of speaking obliquely, so that a seemingly offhand remark reveals a heartfelt belief. Always conscious of the irony of his position, the whiskey priest fences throughout the novel in the attempt to disguise his identity to others yet to remind himself continually of it. As Tench and the priest stand idly on the dock, Tench asks:

'You a doctor?'

The bloodshot eyes looked slyly out of their corners at Mr. Tench. 'You would call me perhaps a -- quack?'

'Patent medicines? Live and let live', Mr. Tench said.

As a quack stands in relation to a doctor, so a whiskey priest stands in relation to the piety and self-denial of a real priest -- a doctor of the soul; yet it is because the whiskey priest is weak, and is humble and fearful in his weakness, that his struggle to follow his conscience is so gripping. His heroism lies in that very weakness, and in the final uneasy victory over his human frailty. He becomes an individual rather than a victim, as so many of Greene's earlier protagonists are, not only because he eventually chooses
his own fate, but ultimately because he refuses to see himself as the victim of a fatalistic universe: he has a purpose, a meaning, even though he is all too aware of his own absurdity.

The whiskey priest's chief opponent is the police lieutenant at the state's capital. He is everything the priest is not -- neat, ascetic, chaste: indeed he seems to be much more like the stereotype of a priest than the priest himself. Just as the whiskey priest feels shackled to his often uncaring parishioners, so the lieutenant is chained to his men and to his chief, contemptuous as he is towards them. He has nothing but distaste for his fellows, yet he is inevitably linked with them, against his will.

They are both loners; the lieutenant by choice, the priest by necessity: and they both stand out from the rest of the despairing crowd because of the faith they have in their particular vision. The lieutenant is a fascist, but a fascist with an extraordinary love for his people. He wants so much for them to be happy and well provided for that paradoxically he will kill them to attain this end. When his drunken billiard-playing chief informs him of the necessity of capturing the priest, who is apparently the only one left in the whole state, his whole being thrills. It gives him a purpose, something better to do than strutting about the decrepit streets and jailing drunken peasants on Saturday nights, for
above all, he is a man of purpose. But we must go back to the lieutenant's childhood to find his real reason for wanting to get rid of the last priest. He looks at an old photo of the priest:

Something you could almost have called horror moved him when he looked at the white muslin dresses -- he remembered the smell of incense in the churches of his boyhood, the candles and the laciness and the self-esteem, the immense demands made from the altar-steps by men who didn't know the meaning of sacrifice. The old peasants knelt there before the holy image with their arms held out in the attitude of the cross: tired by the long day's labour in the plantations they squeezed out a further mortification.

To the lieutenant the priests are a disease that must be wiped out. He sees himself as a realist, and to him life is a matter of economics. The life of the spirit is meaningless to him, so he sees religion as something useless and costly that robs the poor while the clergy grows fat and rich. In his own way, he too is a priest, but a priest of emptiness, of negation. He denies the right of the peasants to a religious life, yet he wants to teach the children his own arid atheistic creed:

He was a mystic, too, and what he had experienced was vacancy -- a complete certainty in the existence of a dying, cooling world, of human beings who had evolved from animals for no purpose at all. He knew.

The lieutenant's vision is one of annihilation; suffering as a child made him want to wipe out the forces that guided and ruled his childhood. "He wanted to destroy everything: to be
alone without any memories at all." And this hollow, loveless, negative world is the one he wants to pass on to the children of his state.

By keeping both the whiskey priest and his opponent the lieutenant nameless, Greene seems to be suggesting that *The Power and the Glory* is more than a psychological, tautly realistic novel: it is on another level an allegory -- a parable. Seen in this way, the novel is basically an argument between the materialistic and religious worlds, in which Greene tries to balance the character of the lieutenant, the representative of the atheistic, materialistic world, against the whiskey priest, who cares less for the social advancement of the peasants than for their spiritual involvement. And yet Greene has to some extent reversed the typical roles, since seemingly the pious idealism belongs to the lieutenant and the corruption and decay to the priest. In a revealing sentence from Greene's autobiographical introduction to the Collected Works edition of *The Power and the Glory*, Greene writes of the lieutenant:

> I had not found the integrity of the lieutenant among the police and pistoleros I had encountered -- I had to invent him as a counter to the failed priest the idealistic police officer who stifled life from the best possible motives: the drunken priest who continued to pass life on.

In this paradoxical statement lies the essential core of the novel: faith, no matter how faulty, however ineffectually given and received, brings life, while nihilism, no matter how
well disguised in ideas of progress and prosperity, brings death. Greene reverses the usual characteristics of his two main characters for two reasons: to emphasize the dramatic possibilities of the paradox, and most importantly, to distinguish between the man and his office. To Greene at this stage in his career as a novelist the individual man means only as much as the force or philosophy he upholds. The lieutenant, although Greene describes him as essentially a 'good' idealistic man, is allied to the forces of repression; his 'goodness' as an individual is perverted to evil because his strength is channelled by an evil force. In a similar way, the whiskey priest's weakness is turned to final strength by the power of salvation whose representative he is. Greene's belief that a man's strength or weakness can be reversed by his alliance with a particular philosophy of living is dramatically represented in the novel by the gradual weakening of the lieutenant's idealism and strength in almost perfectly inverse proportion to the rise of the priest's strength and faith.

Between the two polarities of the lieutenant and the priest are what Greene calls the bystanders, those who, like the great majority of mankind, live on the edge of things, uninvolved in the drama of living. Being uninvolved, they are empty, scarecrow figures, abandoned and frightened by their own shadows in an alien and menacing world.

Tench the dentist is the first one of these -- like Minty in England Made Me, or like Scobie in The Heart of the Matter,
he is an exiled Englishman, trapped in a country he cannot understand, unable to get out. He tries to take some pride in his profession, but the heat and emptiness conspire against him. "'A man must try to deep abreast of things'," he says, but even that statement is too much of an effort. "His mouth fell open: the look of vacancy returned: the heat in the small room was overpowering. He stood there like a man lost in a cavern among the fossils and instruments of an age of which he knows very little." When the monthly boat pulls away from the harbour with his ether cylinder still on board, he shouts once and forgets about it: "... a little additional pain was hardly noticeable in the huge abandonment."

Then there is the Mexican family, abandoned by their Church, and unable to practise the religion which is the only thing that lifts them above the drudgery of their everyday existence. "She said, 'I would rather die'. 'Oh', he said, 'of course. That goes without saying. But we have to go on living'."

Padre Jose is an old priest who has renounced his faith and has accepted a government pension rather than face a firing squad. He is forcibly married to his old housekeeper, and is the laughing-stock of the village. His self-respect shattered, his mind burning with an ever-present sense of sin and shame, he is an image of pure despair. Fat and impotent, he knows he blasphemes against the holy sacrament of marriage, while his life itself is the embodiment of sacrilege to the sacred office of the
priesthood. He thinks of himself as: "... an obscene picture hung here every day to corrupt children with." The village children mock him day and night:

Their little shameless voices filled the patio, and he smiled humbly and sketched small gestures for silence, and there was no respect anywhere left for him in his home, in the town, in the whole abandoned star.  

Perhaps the most important of the bystanders are the Fellows, an English family who own a plantation many miles up the river from the nameless, seedy port. They typify Greene's abandoned tropical settlers, who arrive full of hopeful dreams -- a new land, a new life -- and end up slowly and despairingly rotting into the dank soil, doomed always to be foreigners. Mrs. Fellows is essentially the same character as the later Mrs. Scobie, self-pitying, demanding, and frightened to the core of her being by this gradual burial in the heart of nowhere.

Terror was always just behind her shoulder: she was wasted by the effort of not turning round. She dressed up her fear, so that she could look at it -- in the form of rats, fever, unemployment. The real thing was taboo -- death coming nearer every year in this strange place: everybody packing up and leaving, while she stayed in a cemetery no one visited, in a big above-ground tomb.

Captain Fellows, his hearty, boisterous disguise failing to hide his despairing ineffectuality, tries vainly, like Scobie, to shield his wife from the emptiness of their lives; like Scobie also, he is attached to his wife by a far more desperate bond than love -- that of pity. "'It's not such a bad life, Trixy. Is it now? Not a bad life?' But he could feel her stiffen:
the word 'life' was taboo: it reminded you death."\(^{40}\)

The Fellows are trapped by fate, unable to come to any decision about their lives, which grow more barren by the year. Only their daughter Coral has enough inner strength to survive, and she literally keeps her parents alive by her own bright will to live. Yet even she is not invulnerable to the destructive forces in life. "Life hadn't got to her yet; she had a false air of impregnability."\(^{41}\) Still she is not yet one of the bystanders, who have all uniformly given up on life.

It is this ubiquitous sense of defeat that separates the bystanders from the lieutenant and the whiskey priest. In fact the whole novel can be seen as a treatise on hope and despair. Despair takes over when one has no real purpose in living, when one just lives to survive, without hope or direction. The lieutenant and the priest are not of the despairing because they are committed; they have a purpose to fulfill and a sense of duty to their own conscience.

Hope, however, can only arise when man is committed to the inexhaustible power of life rather than the final rigidity of death -- the central distinction between the priest and the lieutenant. Greene writes: "Hope is an instinct only the reasoning human mind can kill. An animal never knows despair."\(^{42}\)

As the priest makes his dark journey from harmful complacent innocence to a 'corrupt' compassion, he begins to realize that the one thing that shuts out God's love is the kind of egotistical rigidity behind piety. "God might forgive cowardice and
passion, but was it possible to forgive the habit of piety? Salvation could strike like lightning at the evil heart, but the habit of piety excluded everything . . . . "43 The priest's final commitment is towards life, even though ironically he must die to bring this about. He realizes that despair is ultimately an avoidance of life and hope.

One begins to see that the ever-present sense of fatalism in Greene's world is at least partially self-imposed by the characters within this world. Like Joe Christmas in Faulkner's *Light in August*, Greene's characters project their own futility and paralysis onto the world around them and feel that their own sense of entrapment defines the nature of the universe. However, while Greene's world is undeniably harsh, he continually searches in his novels for a chink in fate's armour, an opening where love and acceptance can sift into the tormented inner machinery of the fortress. Greene is perhaps best known for his dramatizations of man's failure to live, his characters' fear of life itself -- one thinks of Pinkie's terror of the Beast, which is hope and love, that threatens to break the glass of his splintering bitterness -- yet one of Greene's great concerns is the search for inner freedom, which when found can give man the strength to stand up to his fate, to act out of principle rather than terror. As Marie-Beatrice Mesnet writes:

> We are conditioned by our environment, our past our nature too, but we can assume them, being simultaneously immanent and transcendent to history. Our attitude must be one of commitment, by which we accept to
face our present, while assuming our past and preparing our future. Until we are truly attentive to the inner critic (and this calls for courage), we do not really exist. Greene reveals with compassion the world of those who seem unable to stand outside the plot. His sympathy goes out to the most miserable of men, so weak that they cannot apply their will to free the 'inward man' in them, those who are caught in the mud.

The whiskey priest fights throughout the book to free this 'inward man' that lies within him. Obsessed by his own corruption, by the presence of evil everywhere -- a virtuous man can almost cease to believe in Hell, but he carried Hell about with him. Sometimes at night he dreamed of it. Evil ran like malaria in his veins. He shares what R. W. B. Lewis calls a 'tragic fellowship' with the rejected and the outcast, and is desperately aware of man's need for a spiritual life. Many times as he wanders from village to village the whiskey priest is tempted to leave the state, to go back to the complacent pious priesthood across the border, but to do so would be to deprive his future existence of that meaning with which his present, however tenuously, is invested.

When he was gone it would be as if God in all this space between the sea and the mountains ceased to exist. Wasn't it his duty to stay, even if they despised him, even if they were murdered for his sake? Even if they were corrupted by his example?

The whiskey priest seeks not for physical survival but for the survival of the human spirit in a despairing wasteland. In his book The Picaresque Saint, R. W. B. Lewis speaks of a new kind of hero emerging in the second generation literature of
the twentieth century, a hero much like Greene's corrupt priest. He writes:

In the second generation . . . the hero has tended to be an apprentice saint or a saint manqué . . . the fictional saints of the second generation fiction are men dedicated not so much, or not immediately, to a supernatural God as to what yet remains of the sacred in the ravaged human community.

In Part Two of *The Power and the Glory* the priest returns to his home village after six years of wandering. It is here that " . . . five years ago he had given way to despair -- the unforgivable sin -- and he was going back now to the scene of his despair with a curious lightening of the heart. For he had got over despair too." Five years ago, in a moment of weakness, drunk on sacramental wine, the priest had had intercourse with one of the village women who subsequently bore his child. His daughter Brigitta, " . . . sharpened by hunger into an appearance of deviltry and malice beyond her age . . . " is a living witness to his fall, yet the priest loves her with an excruciatingly painful force. Despair and love, however, are not all he has to face:

It was as if he had descended by means of his sin into the human struggle to learn other things besides despair and love, that a man can be unwelcome even in his own home.

Threatened by reprisals from the lieutenant, even the priest's own people reject him, yet he still remains aware of his duty as a priest. As the lieutenant and his soldiers
close in around the village, the priest attempts a hurried
Mass, while trying to explain to his frightened congregation
that suffering is as integral a part of life as joy.

'Pain is part of joy' . . . . For a matter
of seconds he felt an immense satisfaction
that he could talk of suffering to them
without hypocrisy -- it is hard for the
sleek and well-fed priest to praise poverty. 51

He eludes the lieutenant and his men at the village, even
though " . . . a delusive promise of peace tempted him . . . " 52
to declare himself to the lieutenant. He has been reprieved
once more, but the strain begins to wear deeply.

More and more the priest begins to realize that his own
wishes and desires are secondary to his duty to God and his
people. He personally does not want to stay in the state, and
the peasants, fearing the lieutenant's vengeance, beg him to
leave.

'Don't you understand, Father? We don't
want you anymore'. 'Oh yes', he said.
'I understand. But it's not what you
want -- or I want . . . .'. 53

He gains a new humility, and although desperately aware
of his own inadequacy he has a more profound sense of his
commitment as a priest.

At La Candellaria he runs into the mestizo, or half-breed,
who will ultimately be the instrument of his capture and death.
The half-breed immediately suspects that he is a priest, and
follows him with the idea of informing on him and claiming
the reward money. At first the priest tries to allay his own
suspicions of the ragged yellow-fanged mestizo -- "... it was the general condition of life that made for suspicion ... "\[54\] -- but he soon realizes that the man is his Judas, his betrayer. Eventually he openly admits to his priesthood, and accepts the only future open to him now -- capture and death. As the priest moves inexorably closer to his final destiny, he begins to appreciate more deeply the mystery of the Redemption and to realize more acutely that in the Divine plan of Salvation all men are born truly equal.

Christ had died for this man too: how could he pretend with his pride and lust and cowardice to be any more worthy of that death than this half-caste? This man intended to betray him for money which he needed, and he had betrayed God for what? Not even for real lust.\[55\]

Journeying through his dark night of the soul, the priest begins to realize the true nature of the world, and the nature of the God he serves:

How often the priest had heard the same confession. Man was so limited he hadn't even the ingenuity to invent a new vice: the animals knew as much. It was for this world that Christ had died; the more evil you saw and heard about you, the greater glory lay around the death. It was too easy to die for what was good or beautiful, for home or children or a civilization -- it needed a God to die for the half-hearted and the corrupt.\[56\]

With his acceptance of the nature of man, the priest slowly learns that God is not an alien figure that waits in judgement far above man's world, as Scobie supposes, but a force, a quality, within man himself: "God was the parent, but He was also the policeman, the criminal, the priest, the maniac, and
the judge." The priest also confronts man's desire for chaos and destruction, and sees that man's 'rage for chaos', to use Morse Peckham's phrase, encompasses the need to destroy the godlike quality, the life force, that every man possesses:

It was odd, this fury to deface, because, of course, you could never deface enough. If God had been like a toad, you could have rid the globe of toads, but when God was like yourself, it was no good being content with stone figures -- you had to kill yourself among the graves.

The whiskey priest is the first of Greene's major figures to rise above the despairing sense of fatalism and victimization that haunt Greene's earlier protagonists: he commits himself to a cause because he cannot reject what he has learned about the nature of man, of life, and ultimately of himself. He becomes an individual rather than a faceless victim because, aware of his own insignificance and absurdity, he can still accept life in all its terror and try to communicate to life's other prisoners the spark of hope that they are unable to see. Even though his commitment to life, hope and belief ironically bring about his death, he does not reject life like Pinkie, Raven or even Scobie, but seeks to intensify his union with the true world around him.

As he lies in the foul crowded prison cell at the capital, arrested, ironically enough, for illegal possession of liquor, he sees about him the world in microcosm:
Through his awareness, however, of his own corruption and loss of innocence there gleams the beginnings of grace. In the prison yard he sees the hostages that the lieutenant has gathered, and prays, "'Oh God, send them someone more worthwhile to suffer for'. It seemed to him a damnable mockery that they should sacrifice themselves for a whiskey priest with a bastard child."

Throughout the whiskey priest's ordeals, Greene constantly compares the young, innocent but complacent priest as he was ten years previously with the whiskey priest as he is now, corrupted, weak, unwanted. But now, through humble recognition of his own unworthiness, he has come to love humanity as he never did as a pious young man. In one of his many paradoxes Greene seems to reverse Blake's concept of innocence and experience, showing that innocence sometimes breeds evil and inhumanity to man, while experience and its attendant suffering can bring a man closer to love, to grace and to God. Essentially the same sort of paradox occurs in a later novel, *The Quiet American*: Alden Pyle, the innocent young American, brings about bloodshed and death in Viet Nam through his naive idealism. *The Power and the Glory* charts the whiskey priest's journey from innocence to experience, and at the end the priest
has gained a new, more durable innocence. He pushes away all pretence: "... one was pledged to truth."\(^61\)

When he confesses to being a priest to the inmates of the cell, he realizes like so many other Greene protagonists that confession brings peace: one has revealed the worst and still one goes on living.

It was like the end: there was no need to hope any longer. The ten years' hunt was over at last. There was silence all round him. This place was very like the world: overcrowded with lust and crime and unhappy love, it stank to heaven; but he realized that after all it was possible to find peace there, when you knew for certain that the time was short.\(^62\)

In the whiskey priest, as in both Pinkie and Scobie, there is the desire for cessation, for the vacuum of life after death which will put a stop to the incessant hunt, the desperate need to escape: Pinkie, however, is driven to his death by the forces of society, Scobie by his own sense of desperation and worthlessness. Only the whiskey priest demonstrates the true freedom of his conscience, while both Pinkie and Scobie in different degrees remain victims of their own, to use a phrase from Maurice Friedman, 'psychological compulsion'. They are both monomaniacs, obsessed with their own basically egotistical visions of life, unable to face the pull of complex external forces which threaten to disintegrate their own concept of reality. Only the whiskey priest is able to overcome the death-welcoming shouts of his own ego, for unlike Scobie, he is saved by his growing sense of compassion, not corrupted by his sense
of pity.

After being released from the prison, his identity still unknown to the authorities, the priest, completely abandoned, wanders through a dead and dying land. For him it is the dark night of the soul; death haunts him with visions of peace and tranquillity; but he carries on, for he realizes, unlike Scobie, that death is too easy a way out. Somehow he stumbles out across the border, back into the peace and ease of the life he experienced before he was outlawed. But fate, and fate's messenger the mestizo, force him to choose between this cocoon of security with its spiritual aridity, and certain death back across the border. The mestizo, who has followed him across into the 'safe' state, tries to lure the priest back. He brings with him a note from a dying American gangster holed up in an abandoned village, asking the priest to hear the gangster's last confession. The priest knows he cannot refuse, even though he is fully aware that he is being lured into a trap. It is his final decision. Rather than drift into ease and pious complacency in Las Casas, he chooses to fulfill to the letter his priestly role, to commit himself finally and irrevocably to his beliefs, unto death. He realizes finally that piety and the kind of moral rigidity it implies corrupts the spirit far more readily than the 'evil' it denigrates. "God might forgive cowardice and passion, but was it possible to forgive the habit of piety? Men like the half-caste could be saved, salvation could strike like lightning at the evil heart, but the
habit of piety excluded everything."\textsuperscript{63}

Ironically the American gangster is far more concerned with helping the priest to escape than with gaining absolution for his sins, and the priest is captured, brought to the capital and executed, his last duty left undone and his death seemingly meaningless. On his last night before the dawn shooting squad, ". . . even the fear of pain was in the background. He felt only an immense disappointment because he had to go to God empty-handed, with nothing done at all."\textsuperscript{64} He, at the end, does not welcome death as a way out of life's continual torment: instead, he is ashamed that he has not done more with the life that God has given him.

Both the whiskey priest and the lieutenant have the intense self-consciousness and sense of purpose typical of Greene's heroes, but through their held convictions the two men are polarized in the religious vision pervading the novel. In \textit{The Ministry of Fear}, Greene writes:

\textit{. . . the devil -- and God too -- had always used comic people, futile people, little suburban natures and the maimed and warped to serve his purposes. When God used them you talked emptily of Nobility and when the devil used them of Wickedness, but the material was only dull shabby human mediocrity in either.}\textsuperscript{65}

Even if the whiskey priest and the lieutenant do share this all-levelling mediocrity, there is one thing that does distinguish them -- their attitude to pain. The lieutenant hates pain and suffering because it reminds him of his hateful child-
hood. Like so many of Greene's characters he wants to make suffering cease everywhere because he, himself, cannot bear it. His sense of pity for his people is so strong that paradoxically he murders them to stop them suffering.

He stood with his hand on his holster and watched the brown, intent, patient eyes: it was for these he was fighting. He would eliminate from their childhood everything that had made him miserable, all that was poor, superstitious and corrupt. They deserved nothing less than the truth -- a vacant universe and a cooling world, the right to be happy in any way they chose. He was quite prepared to make a massacre for their sakes . . . He wanted to begin the world again with them in a desert.66

Ultimately, he is afraid of life, so he wants to cut half of it away, to be left with vacancy, peace, emptiness . . . death. He wants to give the children the whole world, but he has nothing but a desert to offer. The priest on the other hand is not afraid of suffering; he accepts it because he knows that it is an intimate part of life, that to attempt to eradicate it would lead eventually to the lieutenant's despair or to Scobie's suicide. The whiskey priest is the first Greene hero to accept life in all its facets; he realizes that suffering can ennoble, that hate is just a failure of imagination, that you cannot solve the dilemmas of life by death. The lieutenant, after he had captured the priest, "... felt without purpose, as if life had drained out of the world."67 Because he wants to shut out the life that he sees, and is unable to, despair assails him. The whiskey priest learns through suffering that life cannot
be shut out, that hope can only come when one accepts the world in all its terror. The 'inward man' has at last emerged; terror of life has at last given way to acceptance. Although the priest acquieses in his own death, he is motivated by hope rather than despair; to seek life, to abandon his commitment would have meant the death of the priest within him, to him a more terrible, spiritual death.

The whiskey priest's final wish before dying is to become a saint — "He knew now that at the end there was only one thing that counted -- to be a saint..." and yet he feels that he has failed. Significantly, however, the whiskey priest is the first main protagonist in Greene's fictional world to consciously accept life rather than reject it, and to die for the continuation of life rather than to embrace death as a final escape from the fear of living. As R. W. B. Lewis writes:

> A belief in the act of living is not something given to the contemporary novelist as his natural legacy, as it has been in less disturbed generations. It is something achieved by a desperate struggle, and the successive phases of the struggle provide the representative plot of the contemporary novel.

The whiskey priest achieves the struggle, but is crucified for his efforts. His individual sense of commitment to the spirit of life and grace, however, and his tentative discovery of his own meaning in the absurd world that surrounds him, strongly differentiates him as a character from Greene's earlier heroes, who are victimized not only by society but by their own inner
Ill despair and sense of emptiness.

* * *

It is enlightening, I feel, to see *Brighton Rock*, *The Power and the Glory*, and *The Heart of the Matter* as a trilogy, which centres around the traumatic relationship between a man, his God, and the world around him, and the effects that this relationship has on the three quite different protagonists. Pinkie, rejecting the figure of authority and life-giving power that the Catholic God represents for him, embraces death as a final evasion and rebellion. The whiskey priest embraces life and man through God. Scobie must become his own God, his own judge and executioner, and it is he who emerges as the most Faustian and tragic of all Greene's heroes.

All of the three major protagonists of *Brighton Rock*, *The Power and the Glory*, and *The Heart of the Matter* commit differing forms of suicide: Pinkie, the whiskey priest and Scobie all bring about their own death, but it is their reasons for giving up life, and the forces that make them do so, that distinguish them from one another. Suicide is a significant aspect of Greene's vision of existence. One critic, describing the temptation of Greene's characters to take their own life, writes:

Suicide emerges not simply as a live option to these unhappy people, but as the only possible means of escape from a world in
which being human means that one must drink the cup of suffering... so whether suicide is undertaken as a means of escape from an ugly and hopeless world, or whether it is the inevitable consequence of the life of suffering love, it is the almost certain end for those who become engaged in existence.

Scobie is Greene's best-known 'suicide', and perhaps the most finely drawn portrait of a sinking man in all of Greene's often lugubrious gallery. Like The Power and the Glory, The Heart of the Matter depicts an internal moral drama, centred in the lonely heart of the protagonist. Both the whiskey priest and Scobie live and die according to their own personal code; bullied as they are by external circumstances, victimized by their own weakness and the hard-heartedness of the world around them, they strive desperately to live according to their own sense of ethics. Both the whiskey priest and Scobie are tragic heroes rather than victims: the difference is vital in an understanding of Greene's growth as a novelist. They are individuals in that they have moral choice. Although not heroes in the old sense of being 'larger than life', they are in many ways admirable and heroic, in spite of, or perhaps because of, their many flaws. They are not totally manipulated by their environment, and they can act, a significant development over Greene's earlier protagonists. Greene realizes that with the possibility for tragedy comes the possibility for hope, and it is this seeming contradiction that makes The Heart of the Matter, especially, more than just a study in despair.
However, although Scobie is a tragic figure, he is by no means absolved; he corrupts and destroys himself, and to see him as a modern-day saint, as some critics have done, is a misinterpretation of Greene's purpose. Greene himself, in a new introduction to *The Heart of the Matter*, writes:

The character of Scobie was intended to show that pity can be the expression of an almost monstrous pride. But I found the effect on the reader was quite different. To them Scobie was 'a good man', he was hunted to his doom by the hardness of his wife . . . Suicide was Scobie's inevitable end; the particular motive of his suicide, to save even God from himself, was perhaps the final twist of the screw of his inordinate pride. Perhaps Scobie should have been a subject for cruel comedy rather than for tragedy.  

In *The Power and the Glory* the whiskey priest attains a measure of meaning in his life, surrounded as he is by the absurd, empty world of Mexico: a sense of moral order surrounds him at his execution: he will not die completely in vain. Scobie too has his moral purpose -- superficially at least the same religious commitment -- but the moral system he has created is ultimately too isolating, too egotistical, to allow for any growth, any fluidity. Is is precisely this alienating inflexibility in Scobie's nature which eventually destroys him. His sense of ethics is an extension of his ever-present sense of guilt. Psychologically compelled to suffer, his life is narcissistically based upon repeating the ultimate Christian symbol of suffering -- the Crucifixion.

With Scobie, however, Greene is back on familiar territory,
and perhaps that is why the protagonist of *The Heart of the Matter* is, as Francis Wyndham suggests, "... truly three-dimensional in a way that no other character has been in Greene's work to date." Scobie is a failure -- a failure in his own eyes, in the eyes of his wife, and finally in the eyes of the community -- and failure, after all, is Greene's medium. He is wary of the very mention of success, of happiness, or of peace. As Arthur Rowe says in *The Ministry of Fear*, "... it wasn't failure he feared nearly so much as the enormous tasks that success might confront him with."

Scobie is an assistant police commissioner in a West African colony, middle-aged, married to another of Greene's tropical wives, with a reputation for justice that is his undoing. He feels a terrible responsibility for his wife, and later, for his mistress as well -- a responsibility motivated by an overwhelming sense of pity. Pity is an emotion that fascinates Greene; he sees it as a corruption of love, as a destructive agent which reflects the emotional paucity of the individual whose life is guided by it. In *The Ministry of Fear* he writes: "Pity is cruel. Pity destroys. Love isn't safe when pity's prowling around." To Greene, "Pity is the worst passion of all: we don't outlive it like sex."

Like the lieutenant, Scobie dedicates himself to eradicate suffering, without realizing that it is his own suffering which he wants to end. Scobie is a man whose downfall stems from a lack of trust in the God in whom he professes to believe.
He takes upon himself the fates of his two charges, presuming that he and he alone must be responsible for their happiness. Greene, ever alert to the paradoxes inherent in human nature, portrays in *The Heart of the Matter* a man whose fatal flaw lies in what seem to be his good qualities -- compassion, responsibility, moral rectitude. But virtues for Greene are often passive abstractions, and like innocence, when taken to excess or used in the wrong milieu, encourage vice. As he writes in *The Ministry of Fear*, another, lighter, study of the evil effects of pity on man's nature: "Courage smashes a cathedral, endurance lets a city starve, pity kills... we are trapped and betrayed by our virtues." Scobie, like Arthur Rowe, suffers from "... that sense of pity which is so much more promiscuous than lust..." but Rowe at least has a sense of trust. He realizes that "... it is impossible to go through life without trust: that is to be imprisoned in the worst cell of all, oneself." This is Scobie's predicament: he is alone, trapped and ultimately defeated by his overweening sense of responsibility for the two women, neither of whom he can really trust with his inner feelings. His suicide is the inevitable end of a man who, in the attempt to control the happiness of others, loses control of his own life. Like Sisyphus of the Greek myth, he rolls his burden ceaselessly to the summit only to have to begin all over at the base again; but it is not only his own load he carries, but the burden of the world -- the world of the weak and
suffering, the unattractive and unsuccessful.

He had no sense of responsibility toward the beautiful and the graceful and the intelligent. They could find their own way. It was the face for which nobody would go out of his way, the face that would never catch the covert look, the face which would soon be used to rebuffs and indifference that demanded his allegiance. The word pity is used as loosely as the word 'love': the terrible promiscuous passion which so few experience.

If The Power and the Glory is, as I have tried to show, a study of one man's deviating ascent to a tentative commitment and wholeness, a journey through the jungles of the ego to some kind of selflessness, The Heart of the Matter is a step by step revelation of Scobie's descent to emptiness and despair. Even his office in the police barracks show this. It is his home far more than the house he shares with his wife, Louise:

... to a stranger it would have appeared a bare uncomfortable room but to Scobie it was home. Other men built up the sense of home by accumulation ... Scobie built his home by a process of reduction.

He longs desperately for peace, and his happiest moment occurs after Louise has been sent to South Africa, and he is left completely alone.

Except for the sound of the rain, on the road, on the roofs, and the umbrella, there was absolute silence: only the dying moan of the sirens continued for a moment or two to vibrate within the ear. It seemed to Scobie later that this was the ultimate border he had reached in happiness: being in darkness alone, with the rain falling, without love or pity.
Scobie is a curious amalgam of both the priest and lieu­
tenant, for although a Catholic, he seems to share the lieu­
tenant's feeling of emptiness, within and without. He desires
peace and uninvolvment, yet he involves himself inextricably
in the lives of two suffering people. His terrible sense of
pity makes him want to stop suffering at all costs, yet he
seems to cause it whatever he does, and he ends up crucifying
himself, usurping Christ's role, because he feels that he alone
is responsible, that he alone can solve the situation. Caught
between his pity for his wife and pity for his young mistress,
and unable to commit himself wholly to either, his indecision
forces him to see death as the only way out. "He said, 'I
can't bear to see suffering, and I cause it all the time. I
want to get out, get out'.'82

Like the whiskey priest, Scobie is introduced into the
novel as if by accident. On the surface, like other human
beings, he seems ordinary and completely without distinction.
Wilson, the baby-faced new accountant at the colony who is
actually a government spy, and who will soon become youth­
fully infatuated with Scobie's pathetic wife, literary Louise,
could see no particular interest in the squat grey-haired man
walking alone up Bond Street. This is precisely Greene's
intention: he is not concerned with creating characters
larger than life, but with exploring the fates of the invis­
ible people who are manipulated and twisted by forces larger
than themselves, the anonymous faces in the crowd which with an
artist's insight reveal the whole pathos and suffering of humanity.

Scobie, after fifteen years in the colony, is a tired man, mentally and physically. He has almost given up trying to impose an alien force of justice on the native population; and whatever love he has had for his wife has corroded into pity and the burden of responsibility. "The less he needed Louise the more conscious he became of his responsibility for her happiness." For Scobie, Louise has no reality as a living being with an entity of her own: his pity has turned her into an object. Only very infrequently does he realize that: "... she was someone of human stature with her own sense of responsibility, not simply the object of his care and kindness." Love has been burned out of Scobie, but he is unable to abandon the pretence of loving. Like Arthur Rowe, "... it broke his precarious calm to feel that people suffered. Then he would do anything for them. Anything." Images of loads, weights, burdens constantly describe the condition of Scobie's harrowed consciousness. With a deep sense of guilt for his wife's miserable existence, and later his mistress's, he attempts unsuccessfully to absorb, like a well-soaked sponge, their suffering into himself. As he watches his wife sink into sleep each night, he feels the burden of consciousness slipping from her. "The load lay beside him now, and he prepared to lift it."
His ubiquitous sense of pity even spreads into his work. One of Scobie's wartime duties is to search outgoing ships for smuggled diamonds and hidden documents, and on searching one captain's cabin he finds a concealed -- and doubtless incriminating -- letter, which he burns out of pity for the captain, who would lose his position if were reported. No one notices Scobie's action: "Only his own heart-beats told him he was guilty -- that he had joined the ranks of the corrupt police officers . . . They had been corrupted by money, and he had been corrupted by sentiment." 87

When Scobie sends chronically unhappy Louise to South Africa on money secretly borrowed from Yusef, the crooked Syrian trader and smuggler who has intense admiration for Scobie, he reaches a new level of corruption and despair. He has always laughed at bitter taunts that he is in the pay of the Syrians, and now in a sense he is; he is in debt to Yusef, and his reputation as a just and incorruptible man is in the Syrian's hands. Yet he knows that his total investment in Louise's happiness will lead to this. "Despair is the price one pays for setting oneself an impossible aim." 88

The parallel between Scobie and Yusef is an interesting one. Yusef, a curiously ingratiating figure of evil, worships Scobie because he seems to be the antithesis of Yusef's own character -- honest, just, unbribable. But these virtues offer Scobie no comfort in a world that runs on corrupt practices. A just man in a corrupt world is easily assailed by a sense of futility and
despair.

It is, one is told, the unforgiveable sin, but it is a sin the corrupt or evil man never practices. He always has hope. He never reaches the freezing-point of knowing absolute failure. Only the man of good-will carries always in his heart this capacity for damnation.89

Greene, always aware of subtle distinctions, certainly recognizes, however, the difference between a man of good will and a good man. If The Heart of the Matter depicts, as one might be led to suspect from a hasty reading of the novel, the tragic fall of a good man, Scobie's 'goodness' is strangely hollow at its centre, for Scobie lacks not only trust but courage: his horror of hurting anyone, which is the ostensible cause of his suicide, is, ironically for a man who seems so full of integrity, a refusal to accept personal responsibility for his involvement with mankind. Although Scobie assumes the role of God by casting judgement upon himself, and sentencing himself to death, he refuses to allow for the humanity and sense of mercy which might lie outside his own power -- in Helen, Louise, or his God. Without the courage to open himself, perhaps to let others judge him, he cannot act in any life-giving way, but can only cease living, with no hope of breaking the deadlock that enchains him.

The only really human relationship Scobie has, a relationship which is not shared between one who pities and one who is pitied, is with Yusef, and one can trace the path of Scobie's fall through his successive meetings with the corpulent Syrian
trader. Protagonist and antagonist, they begin at opposite ends of the scale, but as Scobie's weakness and sense of pity implicates him deeper and deeper in the world of corruption, their paths begin to converge, until Scobie comes to see their relationship as a kind of marriage. Early in the novel Scobie says: 

"I don't think the time's ever likely to come, Yusef, when I shall need your pity."

90 Much later, as Scobie sits through a long night in Yusef's airless office, half knowing that his faithful servant Ali is going to be killed by Yusef's arrangement yet unable to act since his own lack of trust has engendered Yusef's plan, he does become an object of Yusef's pity.

He had told all his worries now -- all except the worst. He had the odd sense of having for the first time in his life shifted a burden elsewhere. And Yusef carried it . . . 91

Scobie, however, can never go through the cleansing ritual of confession, even with Yusef, who perhaps of all the characters in the novel comes closest to Scobie's inner self, even to the point of reflecting the darker side of Scobie's own nature to himself.

After Louise leaves, Scobie's pity soon finds another object to attach itself to -- Helen Rolt, a young English girl whose husband has just died in a shipwreck. She survives the forty days at sea in an open boat, and stays on, thin, unwanted and friendless in the colony. They become friends through their shared suffering, and gradually Scobie's pity for her becomes
so strong that he thinks it is love. Above all, he feels responsible for her, and now his conflicting responsibilities, to Louise, to Helen, and to God, begin to grind away at his being, pushing and pulling him in several directions at once.

He had sworn to preserve Louise's happiness, and now he had accepted another and contradictory responsibility. He felt tired by all the lies he would sometime have to tell: he felt the wounds of those victims who had not yet bled. Lying back on the pillow he stared sleeplessly out towards the grey early morning tide. Somewhere on the face of those obscure waters moved the sense of yet another wrong and another victim, not Louise, nor Helen. Away in the town the cocks began to crow for the false dawn.

He has not only, like Peter, betrayed God, but he knows that his betrayal of every intimate relationship he lives for is inescapable.

Like Scobie, Greene is concerned with the ultimate consequences of human action; he is not swayed by the temporary conditions of happiness and love but focuses unceasingly on the final catastrophe -- loss of youth, loss of love, breakdown, death. A tragic vision of loss, to Scobie, is 'the heart of the matter'. "In human love," Greene writes, "as in life itself, there is never such a thing as victory: only a few minor tactical successes before the final defeat of death or indifference." Scobie is trapped in a fallen world, where happiness for the sensitive man is impossible, and where the central fact of the universe is emptiness and absurdity. As Scobie says:
Point me out a happy man and I will point you out either egotism, evil -- or else an absolute ignorance . . . 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?94

When Louise returns, armed with the rumours that were already circulating about Helen Rolt and Scobie, he is trapped; unwilling to cause unhappiness on either side, he is caught in the narrowing ring of despair. When Louise urges him to receive Communion as a test of his faithfulness, he does so, knowing he is damning himself by receiving the sacrament in the state of mortal sin, but accepting his damnation because as he says he cannot see God suffer. He damns himself to convince Louise of his innocence: to tell her the truth would be unthinkable. "Once and for all now at whatever cost, he was determined that he would clear himself in her eyes and give her the reassurance she needed."95 Completely bogged down by his conflicting loyalties and unable to extricate himself, to make a choice or take a stand, Scobie loses hope; he realizes that " . . . he had only left for his exploration the territory of despair."96

Scobie's suicide is no surprise; it runs like a threat through the entire book. When young Pemberton hangs himself at Bamba -- burdened by a large debt to Yusef, like Scobie, and defeated by the barrenness of life in the tropics -- Scobie is shocked: " . . . it suddenly occurred to him that this was an act he could never do. Suicide was forever out of his power -- he couldn't condemn himself for an eternity -- no
cause was important enough.\textsuperscript{97} This is before his overriding sense of pity corrupts his basic values and warps his judgement. As Scobie comes closer and closer to planning his own suicide, he finds more precedents and excuses for committing it. "Christ had not been murdered: you couldn't murder God: Christ had killed himself: He had hung Himself on the cross as surely as Pemberton had done from the picture-rail."\textsuperscript{98}

For Scobie suicide becomes philosophically and psychologically inevitable. Albert Camus writes:

There is but one truly philosophical problem, and that is suicide. Judging whether life is or is not worth living amounts to answering the fundamental question of philosophy.

Scobie judges his own life a failure and decides to end it: true to form, even in his last deception -- his attempt to disguise his suicide as a natural death -- he fails.

Though Scobie has been considered by critics a kind of martyr, a man who, "... like Othello ... loves not wisely but too well ..."\textsuperscript{100}, there is an essential difference between the chosen, though reluctant, martyrdom of the whiskey priest and the presumptuous self-elected martyrdom of Scobie. The whiskey priest learns how to love: Scobie, incapable of love, can only pity. As John Atkins writes, "... when separated from love, pity actually becomes destructive, a negative sharing of failure, whereas love is creative."\textsuperscript{101} Scobie, whose character contains the possibility of tragedy, is ultimately pathetic. Although there is something heroic in his desperate inner struggle and his final misguided decision, Scobie lacks passion,
lacks the desire to live, so that his seemingly altruistic suicide is finally seen as an escape from the horror of human contact. His failure is "... the failure of the will to live, and it is absolute." Even Scobie's creator, Greene himself, looking back on the novel refuses to see Scobie as a hero but as a lesson, which was perhaps too rigidly told.

It was to prove a book more popular with the public, even with the critics, than with the author. The scales to me seem too heavily weighted, the plot overloaded, the religious scruples of Scobie too extreme. I had meant the story of Scobie to enlarge a theme which I had touched on in The Ministry of Fear, the disastrous effect on human beings of pity as distinct from compassion.

Just before Scobie commits suicide, Greene creates an internal dialogue between his protagonist's mind and soul -- the mind which demands extinction, and the soul which never ceases to hope. The mind despairs of living: "... everybody has to die. We are all of us resigned to death: it's life we aren't resigned to." Scobie's soul, or the God within him which "... spoke from the cave of his body ... " replies: "So long as you live ... I have hope." Yet Scobie rejects this voice, and succumbs to the forces of despair inside himself and in the world around him. This is the essential difference between the whiskey priest and Scobie, who represent the opposite poles of Greene's world -- so near yet so far apart.
CHAPTER FOUR

LOVE AND COMMITMENT

Graham Greene is in many ways a traditional novelist, not only in form and philosophy, but in subject matter. Although over his long career he has been described, perhaps accurately on all counts, as a romantic, a moralist, even, in his later career, an existentialist, his literary touchstones are not Joyce, Woolf, Celine, Sartre, or the avant-garde 'modern' novelists, who Greene feels have lost the sense of the profound meaning of any and every human action, but the darker, older writers of the turn of the century, James and Conrad, and the European 'religious' novelists, among them Mauriac and Bernanos. In an essay on Francois Mauriac, Greene writes:

... with the death of James the religious sense was lost to the English novel, and with the religious sense went the sense of the importance of the human act. It was as if the world of fiction had lost a dimension ... .

However:

... Mauriac is a writer for whom the visible world has not ceased to exist,
whose characters have the solidity and importance of men with souls to save or lose, and a writer who claims the traditional and essential right of a novelist, to comment, to express his views.

By *The Heart of the Matter* Greene's novels have reached this kind of maturity: his characters have become individuals with souls to save or lose; and, although his novels are not as profound as Conrad's *Lord Jim* or *Victory* or as intricate and subtle as James' *The Ambassadors*, Greene at his best, from *Brighton Rock* to *The Comedians*, seven novels and twenty-eight years apart, has added a significant chapter to 'second generation' modern British fiction. Although one cannot compare his work on equal terms with the novels of Joyce, Conrad and Lawrence, those early twentieth century figures who continue to tower over contemporary British and American fiction, Greene's compassionate analysis of the traumatic emotional life of human beings is sufficiently powerful and dramatic to ensure that his fiction will last, and will continue to be read long after his death.

Greene's characters, however, have never had the mythic power and depth of a character like Stephen Dedalus, or Lord Jim, or Rupert Birkin. They are small men, alone and forgotten, desperately trying to hope and to love, yet knowing that despair is always waiting to claim them. They live in a world that is not only indifferent and hostile but inherently evil; this is one of the main differences between Greene's world view and the view of 'naturalism'. In Greene's fictional
universe his characters are more than just fatalistic victims of their deterministic environment: they are pawns in a moral battle between Good and Evil, and it is this symbolic nature of Greene's vision that separates him from the naturalistic school, with which he has much in common.

At the centre of Greene's art lies a belief that he attributes to Henry James in an essay on the master:

> There was no victory for human beings, that was his conclusion; you were punished in your own way, whether you were of God's or the Devil's party. James believed in the supernatural, but he saw evil as an equal force with good. Humanity was cannon fodder in a war too balanced ever to be concluded.  

Greene himself, in an important essay entitled "The Lost Childhood", describes his childhood revelation upon reading Marjorie Bowen's *The Viper of Milan*:

> ... she had given me my pattern — religion might later explain it to me in other terms, but the pattern was already there — perfect evil walking the world where perfect good can never walk again, and only the pendulum ensures that after all in the end justice is done.

It is this 'pattern' that reveals the basically symbolic nature of Greene's fictional world: the determination of fate and character in this world becomes infused with the element of the supernatural, and his characters in order to attain any kind of free will or individuality have to come to terms with this force of evil at the heart of the universe. They have to reach out for the positive values of love, and commit themselves
to life and action in order to escape the fatalism and despair that the evil nature of the world inspires.

Greene's basic concern as a writer, like Mauriac's, is not only to create 'characters who have the solidity and importance of men with souls to save or lose', which in his maturity he usually does, but to point out that human existence is made up of suffering, a kind of suffering that is not ennobling but degrading: in this world only anger can move men to action.

Frank Kermode, although not an admirer of Greene, is close to the truth when he describes him as "... a novelist of the Decadence, writing not as a Catholic but as a neo-Romantic. His heroes, all maudits, know nothing of the happiness and hope that are, after all, part of religion; his world is one in which only Faust can be saved, and the victimized postures of his heroes are ultimately Faustian."^5

Greene's heroes are rebels, even to the point of rebelling against God, as Bendrix does in The End of the Affair. Bendrix, Faustian in his anger, is in his own eyes a failure in his life, which centres around his relationship with Sarah, yet Greene's portrait of him, rather than being 'decadent' or 'neo-Romantic', is the stuff of true art. In the opinion of William Faulkner, The End of the Affair is "... for me one of the most true and moving novels of my time, in anybody's language."^6

Greene in his later novels unstintingly refuses to back away from the void at the heart of things; in much of his work
his focus is on failure and loss rather than on fulfilment. Like most serious artists of our era, he refuses to provide bromides for a troubled world. Leslie Fiedler, in his essay "No! In Thunder", says this about serious fiction: "... to fulfill its essential moral obligation, such fiction must be negative." He writes:

... works of art are about love, family relations, politics, etc.; and to the degree that these radically imperfect human activities are represented in a perfectly articulated form, they are revealed in all their intolerable inadequacy. The image of man in art, however magnificently portrayed -- indeed, precisely when it is most magnificently portrayed -- is the image of a failure. There is no way out.

Greene is aware of the inescapable nature of life, and the gap between man's aspirations and his actual situation, the gap which is Eliot's 'Shadow', Camus' 'Absurd', "... born of this confrontation between the human need and the unreasonable silence of the world." As Fiedler writes:

The vision of the truly contemporary writer is that of a world not only absurd but also chaotic and fragmentary ... a universe in which our perceptions overlap but do not coincide, in which we share chiefly a sense of loneliness: our alienation from whatever things finally are, as well as from other men's awareness of those things and of us.

Greene cries 'No! in thunder' at the fate of man, yet his later heroes -- Bendrix, Fowler, Querry, Brown -- all go beyond Scobie's despair, in their own ways, to an uneasy,
angry, confused and often only partial acceptance of life: at least they can still go on living in an absurd world. Perhaps they learn to understand and adapt, however fragmentarily, to the emptiness around them. In their ability to cope with their harsh, negative world one sees the growing power and scope of the individual in Greene's fiction.

Greene's fiction from its beginnings to the present (at the age of sixty-eight, it is conceivable he will produce other novels yet) is fascinating because, in its development as a totality, one can chart the development of Greene not only as an artist but as a human being, a modern man forced to come to terms with his existence, forced to search for his own meaning in a world which will not provide one for him. This essay has tried to portray the progression of Greene's hero: in his earlier works, he is a victim and an anarchist in a world which has no values other than brute power and corruption; in his 'religious' novels, specifically The Power and the Glory and The Heart of the Matter, different as they are, the protagonist becomes no longer a mere victim of circumstance, but an individual capable of moral choice, a tragic figure in a world which is inimical to moral commitment. After the Catholicism of the whiskey priest and Scobie, the world of Greene's hero becomes more secular: man's condition is seen as something close to the concept of absurdity that Camus defines, and yet because his characters, freed from the Catholic framework to some degree at least, need no
ultimate 'static' values and are not bound by a rigid code of morality, they are able to cope with the traumas of existence, and even survive in the harsh world around them. While Greene does not become an absurdist or an existentialist in the strict sense of the word -- as one critic writes about Jean Genet, "... his characters are not haunted by metaphysical impotence; rather their efforts, no matter how strong, are doomed to failure..." -- he does, however, begin to see other possibilities, besides complete failure and death, for his protagonists, his fictional alter-egos. One critic describes 'the dialogue of the absurd', a phrase which comes close to describing the feeling of Greene's later novels, as: "... an open-minded and courageous standing one's ground before a world which man cannot image and to which he can ascribe no independent, objective meaning." It is this transformation, from man as tragic and doomed to man as absurd yet resilient, that is the final development of the Greene hero; and before ending this essay I would like to touch briefly on this development.

In his book Problematic Rebel, Maurice Friedman, in a section entitled "A Depth-Image of Modern Man", talks of a transformation he sees in the modern concept of the hero -- from the modern Promethean to the modern Job:

For modern man meaning is not accessible either through the ancient Prometheanism that extends man's realm in an ordered cosmos or through the Renaissance Prometheanism that makes man a little world that
reflects the great. Still less is it accessible through the Modern Prometheanism that defies what is over against man while striving at the same time to control, subdue, or destroy it, as Ahab strives to destroy Moby Dick. Today, meaning can be found, if at all, only through the attitude of the man who is willing to live with the absurd, to remain open to the mystery which he can never hope to pin down. In the world of "the plague" no room is left for the self-deifying postures of a Faust, an Ahab, or a Zarathustra.

Greene's fiction from The Man Within to The Heart of the Matter is concerned largely with the creation of the tragic hero, an individual who has enough scope and power to exert his own will on the formation of his destiny, who is not merely a victim of a hostile world but a man whose principles remain even though the gap between his principles and the corruption and destruction of the world outside bring about his death. Scobie, although he is far from 'Promethean', is a genuinely tragic figure, a victim of his own self-created flaw -- his misguided sense of pity. Although Scobie is a far more fully realized character than Pinkie, who is still more victimized than tragic, they do share finally the same despair. Like Pinkie, Scobie cannot face the compromises, the shifting allegiances, the eternal mistrust of human existence, and like the lieutenant of The Power and the Glory, and Pinkie, Scobie shares both the asceticism and fatalism that drives both of the lesser characters to despair -- the fatalism that results from the isolation and alienation of the protagonist whose egotism convinces him that he should
control his will and deaden his true emotional response, either through violence, hollow humanitarianism, or pity. None of the three above-mentioned characters are capable of love; although Scobie tries desperately to love, he is only capable of a much more selfish emotion -- pity.

The new hero that one sees emerging in Greene's later books, however, does seem capable of love and some kind of commitment to life. Perhaps Kierkegaardian in his ability to make the leap of faith, to believe that there is some meaning in life that one can reach, the new hero above all survives, and does not totally despair. Maurice Friedman, using the hero of Camus' novel *La Peste* as an example, writes about a similar kind of hero whom he calls the 'Modern Job', in many ways a similar figure to R.W.B. Lewis' 'picaresque saint'; he writes:

Rieux, the protagonist of Camus' *La Peste*, even while he accepts the never ending struggle with the plague as the inescapable human condition, also affirms that some meaning may emerge from that struggle. Standing one's ground before what confronts one rather than giving way before it or trying to escape it mark the Modern Job as much as they do the original one.¹⁴

The whiskey priest, realizing the absurdity of his own self and position, yet capable of love and self-mockery, is a glimpse of the new hero who emerges more fully after Scobie, who realizes, perhaps only unconsciously, "... that he must have failed some way in manhood."¹⁵ Bendix, the protagonist of *The End of the Affair*, who through most of the novel rages
against the God who has stolen Sarah, the only woman he has ever been able to love, becomes towards the end of the novel capable of a kind of understanding, both of Sarah, and himself, and perhaps of God's motives as well, and although Bendrix describes his narration as: "... a record of hate far more than of love..." even Scobie realizes that: "... love was the wish to understand." In the character of Bendrix one begins to see the transformation that occurs in the later Greene hero, from a man whose tragic egotism makes his incapable of love to a man who begins to understand the mystery of love in the void, who realizes that God, who seems to be his enemy, is actually attempting to force him to learn how to love -- something Scobie's despair blocked completely. Bendrix, as narrator, writes in the closing paragraph of the novel:

I wrote at the start that this was a record of hate, and walking there beside Henry towards the evening glass of beer, I found the one prayer that seemed to serve the winter mood: 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 forever.

Learning how to love is perhaps the most difficult thing of all for the Greene hero, yet Greene realizes that love, between both man and woman and man and his God, sparks both faith in and commitment to life itself. It is out of commitment that faith arises, and only in faith and trust can love exist. As Dr. Magiot, a pivotal figure in The Comedians,
writes in a letter to Brown, the narrator of the book who finally commits himself to the revolutionary forces against Papa Doc in Haiti:

Catholics and Communists have committed great crimes, but at least they have not stood aside, like an established society, and been indifferent. I would rather have blood on my hands that water like Pilate . . . If you have abandoned one faith, do not abandon all faith. There is always an alternative to the faith we lose. Or is it the same faith under another mask? 13

Greene's later characters, Bendrix, Querry, Fowler, Brown, although completely aware of the harshness and absurdity of life, do begin to understand the meaning of faith: even if they cannot have complete faith in life, they do realize that loss of faith leads to despair and alienation, to the burnt-out case, to the comedian whose commitment to nothing signifies the death of the inner self. Yet these later heroes will not make martyrs of themselves. They are committed above all to life, not to the glorious vacuum of death that attracted so many of the haunted, frightened shadows of Greene's earlier novels.

Greene himself, in his own transition from youth to age, seems to develop as a human being much like his successive protagonists do, from the romantic desperation of Francis Andrews through to the aware 'realism' of a character like Fowler in The Quiet American or the individualistic integrity of Brown in The Comedians. Greene also, significantly, develops a sense of humour: both Our Man in Havana and
Travels With My Aunt reveal a facet of Greene not often seen, a sardonic, witty lightheartedness that can only come from the recognition that life is not necessarily tragic or horrific, but absurd, and it is from this recognition of life's absurdity that Greene can create the kind of situation that Wormold is thrown into in Our Man in Havana.

Greene's writings taken as a whole, however, can be seen as one man's exploration of himself and the way in which he perceives the world. As he writes in his autobiographical book A Sort of Life:

> And the motive for recording these scraps of the past? It is much the same motive that has made me a novelist: a desire to reduce a chaos of experience to some sort of order, and a hungry curiosity ...

Greene's obsession with the past, with the traumatic childhood years which form the adult mind, with the world of dreams -- "Dreams have always had an importance for me. Two novels and several short stories have emerged from my dreams..." are all important aspects of one whole: the search for an understanding of Greene himself as a human being, and perhaps from there an understanding of the world around him. He uses some words of Kierkegaard's to stand as an epigraph for his most nakedly personal book, A Sort of Life: "Only robbers and gypsies say that one must never return where one has once been." Perhaps another fitting epigraph would have been from T. S. Eliot's "Little Gidding":
We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.\textsuperscript{23}
FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER ONE


4 *The Man Within*, p. 17.

5 Ibid., p. 36.

6 Ibid., p. 4.

7 Ibid., p. 17.

8 Ibid., p. 56.

9 Ibid., p. 53.

10 Pryce-Jones, p. 111.

11 *The Man Within*, p. 142.

12 Ibid., p. 225.

13 Ibid., p. 105.

14 Ibid., p. 185.

15 Ibid., p. 184

16 Ibid., p. 50.
17 Ibid., p. 245.


21 Stamboul Train, p. 127.

22 Ibid., p. 99.

23 Ibid., p. 128-9.

24 Ibid., p. 173.

25 Ibid., p. 191.

26 Allott and Farris, p. 84.

27 Pryce-Jones, p. 17.

28 It's a Battlefield, p. 30.


30 It's a Battlefield, p. 25


32 Ibid., p. 153.

33 It's a Battlefield, p. 31.


35 It's a Battlefield, p. 29.

36 Ibid., p. 206.

37 Ibid., p. 184.

38 Ibid., p. 47-8.
39 *It's a Battlefield*, p. 98.

40 Ibid., p. 220.

41 Ibid., p. 230.


43 Ibid., p. 15.

44 Ibid., p. 105.

45 Ibid., p. 112.

46 Ibid., p. 113.


48 Allott and Farris, p. 15.

49 *England Made Me*, p. 11.

50 Ibid., p. 194.

51 Ibid., p. 205.


53 Stratford, p. 192.


CHAPTER TWO


4 Ibid., p. 12.
Ibid., p. 30.
Ibid., p. 30.
Ibid., p. 38.
Ibid., p. 48.
Ibid., p. 56.
Ibid., p. 101.
Ibid., p. 120.
Ibid., p. 124.
Ibid., p. 129.
Ibid., p. 132.
Ibid., p. 174.
Ibid., p. 179.


Ibid., p. 173.
Allen, p. 224.


Ibid., p. 30.

Brighton Rock, p. 234.
Ibid., p. 225.
Ibid., p. 201.
Ibid., p. 53-4.
28 Ibid., p. 128.
29 Ibid., p. 152.
30 Ibid., p. 128.
31 Allen, p. 226.
36 Brighton Rock, p. 212.
37 Ibid., p. 212.
38 Ibid., p. 222.
39 Ibid., p. 89.
40 Ibid., p. 135.
41 Ibid., p. 167.
42 Ibid., p. 92.
43 Ibid., p. 93.
44 A Gun for Sale, p. 172.
46 Brighton Rock, p. 182.
47 Ibid., p. 190.
48 Ibid., p. 209.
49 Ibid., p. 230.
50 Ibid., p. 221.
51 Ibid., p. 221.
CHAPTER THREE


5 Graham Greene, Introduction to the Collected Works Edition of the Power and the Glory, reproduced by The Vancouver Sun, July 30, 1971, p. 29.


9 Ibid., p. 72.

10 Ibid., p. 9.
11 Graham Greene, "The Virtue of Disloyalty", an address given by the author upon the acceptance of the Shakespeare Prize in Hamburg, reprinted by The Vancouver Sun, January 13, 1973, p. 31.


14 Ibid., p. 111.


17 Ibid., p. 117.


19 Ibid., p. 11.

20 Ibid., p. 11-2.

21 A Sort of Life, p. 11.

22 The Power and the Glory, p. 9.

23 Ibid., p. 16.

24 Ibid., p. 17.

25 Ibid., p. 19.

26 Introduction to the Collected Edition of The Power and the Glory, p. 29.


28 Ibid., p. 10.

29 Ibid., p. 22.

30 Ibid., p. 24-5.

31 Ibid., p. 25.

33 The Power and the Glory, p. 13.

34 Ibid., p. 13.


36 Ibid., p. 28.

37 Ibid., p. 29.

38 Ibid., p. 30.

39 Ibid., p. 32-3.

40 Ibid., p. 38.

41 Ibid., p. 33.

42 Ibid., p. 141.

43 Ibid., p. 169.

44 Mesnet, p. 46-7.

45 The Power and the Glory, p. 176.

46 Ibid., p. 63-4.


48 The Power and the Glory, p. 60.

49 Ibid., p. 63.

50 Ibid., p. 62.

51 Ibid., p. 71.

52 Ibid., p. 76.

53 Ibid., p. 78-9.

54 Ibid., p. 87.

55 Ibid., p. 99.

56 Ibid., p. 97.
57 Ibid., p. 101.
58 Ibid., p. 102.
59 Ibid., p. 132.
60 Ibid., p. 135.
61 Ibid., p. 126.
62 Ibid., p. 125.
63 Ibid., p. 169.
66 The Power and the Glory, p. 58.
67 Ibid., p. 207.
69 Lewis, p. 28.
71 Introduction to the Collected Works Edition of The Heart of the Matter, as reprinted by The Vancouver Sun, August 6, 1971.
73 The Ministry of Fear, p. 131.
74 Ibid., p. 263.
75 Ibid., p. 206.
76 Ibid., p. 83.
77 Ibid., p. 29.
78 Ibid., p. 44.
79 The Heart of the Matter, p. 152.
80 Ibid., p. 15.
81 Ibid., p. 128.
82 Ibid., p. 224.
83 Ibid., p. 21.
84 Ibid., p. 91.
86 *The Heart of the Matter*, p. 43.
87 Ibid., p. 53.
88 Ibid., p. 52.
89 Ibid., p. 58-9.
90 Ibid., p. 89.
91 Ibid., p. 233.
92 Ibid., p. 154.
95 Ibid., p. 214-5.
96 Ibid., p. 214.
97 Ibid., p. 89.
98 Ibid., p. 182.
99 Camus, p. 3.
100 De Vitis, p. 103.
101 Atkins, p. 166.
103 Introduction to the Collected Works Edition of *The Heart of the Matter*, p. 30A.
CHAPTER FOUR

1 Graham Greene, "Francois Mauriac", Collected Essays, p. 91.
2 Ibid., p. 92.
3 "The Private Universe", Henry James, p. 121.
4 "The Lost Childhood", Collected Essays, p. 17.
6 William Faulkner -- this quote is taken from the back cover of the Penguin edition of The End of the Affair.
8 Ibid., p. 537.
9 Camus, p. 21.
10 Fiedler, p. 546.
11 Kostelanetz and Cott, p. 364.
13 Ibid., p. 490.
14 Ibid., p. 486.
15 The Heart of the Matter, p. 45.
17 The Heart of the Matter, p. 245.

18 The End of the Affair, p. 187.


20 A Sort of Life, p. 9.

21 Ibid., p. 30.

22 Ibid., frontispiece.

BIBLIOGRAPHY


Doyle, L. F. "Graham Greene as Moralist," America, XCI (September 18, 1954), 604.


Eliot, T. S. Four Quartets. London: Faber and Faber, 1944.


Glicksberg, Charles I. "Graham Greene: Catholicism in Fiction," *Criticism*, I (Fall 1959), 339-353.


