

GRAHAM GREENE'S HEROES: REGENERATION
THROUGH EXPERIENCE

by

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ABSTRACT

Criticism of Graham Greene often centers around what has been termed Greene's "obsessions." Much has been made of his "formula" of the hunted man. The suggestion usually is that Greene's "obsessions" and his "formula" are a blemish in his work. Since Greene's artistry in other respects is seldom questioned, it would seem to me that there is an explanation of what seems to be a blemish. The word "obsession" itself suggests an unconscious activity, an unconscious urge. It occurred to me that the recurrence of Greene's themes, and his "formula" could be explained as an unconscious urge translated into symbols which reflect his basic concern.

Drawing on Jung's theory of "the collective unconscious," and examining the theory of archetypal terminology in literary criticism as used by such literary critics as Northrop Frye, and Maud Bodkin -- in her Archetypal Patterns in Poetry -- I attempt to show that Greene's heroes are symbols in a mythic structure. This structure, with varying artistic differences, is what we see as Greene's individual novels and "entertainments." The novels and entertainments represent the fusion of Greene's literary artistry, his unconscious symbolism, and his conscious ordering of experience. Greene's heroes, his "archetypes," are recurrent images which evince his theme: that man can only be spiritually regenerated through experience. The word "recurrent" helps to explain the term "formula" which has been applied to Greene's plots. I attempt, too, to relate Greene's mythology to his "obsession."

The reason that Greene chooses to call some of his work "entertainments," and others "novels," is that these represent two different literary modes

which roughly parallel two general modes in art and literature: the comic and the tragic. The two entertainments examined here, The Confidential Agent and The Ministry of Fear, are discussed as representative of the comic mode, and the two serious novels, The Power and the Glory and The Heart of the Matter, are discussed as "tragic." The entertainments represent not comedy, but the integrative urge; that is, in comedy the tendency is to integrate the hero into his society. Both Arthur Rowe, the hero of the entertainment, The Ministry of Fear, and "D," the hero of the entertainment, The Confidential Agent, are reintegrated into their society through the love of women. On the other hand, the tendency in the tragic mode is to isolate the hero from his society. For example, the whiskey priest of The Power and the Glory, and Scobie of The Heart of the Matter, are in conflict with their society and are not physically reintegrated into it.

I also examine Greene's use of melodrama. I attempt to expose the link between his use of melodrama and the comic mode. The necessity for a happy ending in the comic mode is mainly the reason that Greene uses melodramatic formulae in his plot resolution in the entertainments. It soon becomes clear that Greene's use of melodramatic formulae is ironic. This is so because of Greene's basic theme that one should be aware of both good and evil in human nature. His heroes and the minor characters are his medium of expression of this theme.

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Literature does not exist in a vacuum,
but is rather, a continuum.

Northrop Frye, Anatomy of Criticism

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

It is virtually impossible to read any criticism of Graham Greene's works without being confronted with the question of Greene's "obsessions." These include what Calder-Marshall calls the "formula" of "the hunted man"; the "terror of life"; questions of loyalty, betrayal, and sin; and the divided soul. Calder-Marshall, seemingly one of Greene's least perceptive critics, frankly states that "Greene believes more strongly in evil than in goodness."¹ Some of the more perceptive critics, notably Allott and Farris (Graham Greene), and Walter Allen ("Graham Greene", Writers of Today), attempt to understand and explain these obsessions as recurring themes and images. Walter Allen notes: "Greene has been criticized because his novels tend to have the same formula, that of the hunted man. This does not seem to me serious: the hunted man is one of the oldest symbolic figures, and even in the entertainments* one is not far from symbolism" (p. 22). Allott and Farris see Greene's characters, incidents, and background as constituting "a mythology, which is the vehicle for Greene's obsessional ideas."

* Greene has divided his novels into "entertainments" and "novels." "Entertainments" are the thrillers which Greene writes chiefly, as he says, for making money. "Novels" are his more serious works.

The operative words for the purpose of this thesis are "symbolic figures", "symbolism", and "mythology" because it is in investigation of the symbolic use that Greene makes of his "hero" figures in the entertainments and of the spiritual chase in the serious novels, that the recurrence of the themes can be explained.

Greene's characters, incidents and background do indeed form a mythology, but, far from being merely the "vehicle for Greene's obsessional ideas", the mythology is the obsession and is the informing spirit of Greene's work. This is why Greene's characters seem so alike, and this is probably why certain themes, for example, the theme of pity, reappear. That "the working out of the formula [the hunted man] has been varied with each book and has enabled [Greene] always . . . to tell a story that is exciting in its own right as a story",² is a tribute to Greene's conscious artistry. Thus, Greene's mythology is both his unconscious vision and his conscious symbolism.

Discussion of symbolic usage of particular images and concepts in a mythic pattern touches, almost inevitably, upon the related concept of archetypes. Archetypes, though personal, are also universal in that they are part of what Jung calls "the collective unconscious." In Jung's view, the artist resorts to "mythology" to give experience its most fitting expression. The source of the artist's creativeness is the

primordial experience which cannot be fathomed and which requires "mythological imagery" to give it form. The artist is a visionary, but the vision is merely a "deep presentiment" that strives to find expression. Because it is merely a deep presentiment, the expression does not follow a sequential progression. Rather, the artist, in attempting to give shape to the "weird paradoxicality of his vision" uses imagery that is "difficult to handle and full of contradictions." As examples of these visionaries, Jung points to Dante, whose presentiments "are clothed in images that run the gamut of Heaven and Hell"; Goethe, Wagner, Nietzsche, and Blake, who "invents for himself indescribable figures." Psychology, says Jung, can "do nothing towards the elucidation of this colourful imagery except bring together materials for comparison and offer a terminology for its discussion. According to this terminology, that which appears in the vision is the collective unconscious." Jung defines the term as "a certain psychic disposition shaped by the forces of heredity" from which consciousness has developed.³ Archetypes, then, for our purpose here, are expressed in the symbols through which the artist communicates his vision. This unconscious vision cannot be totally divorced from the artist's conscious awareness because it is a combination of the two which gives the sum total of the experience of being. To Jung's "disposition shaped by the forces of heredity," perhaps it would be well

to add, "and the culture of the times." This would help to explain why artists in different centuries order the same symbols in ways that are meaningful to the age. For instance, when an artist like, say, Shakespeare, presents a pattern of regeneration, as in King Lear, it implies an aristocratic and national re-establishment of order. In this age of the individual, with its emphasis on the common man, an artist like Graham Greene sets much the same pattern with emphasis on the individual.

There is a logical connection between Greene's "obsessive" themes--most frequent are his themes of pity, fidelity, betrayal and salvation--and his unconscious "deep presentiment." It is through these symbols, these archetypes, that Greene communicates his reading of experience. By "reading of experience" I mean both his conscious awareness of the human condition and his unconscious primordial experience which is in great measure part of everyman's existence. It is Greene's creative artistry that enables him to express what we all feel, and it is his artistic skill that orders these symbols in a meaningful pattern. The relationship between Greene's unconscious urgings, his conscious awareness of existence, and his artistic skill will be examined here in the two entertainments, The Confidential Agent and The Ministry of Fear; and two of the more serious novels, The Power and the Glory and The Heart of the Matter.

In a letter dedicating his latest novel, The Comedians, to A. S. Frere, Greene warns against the frequently indulged tendency of seeing the characters in a novel as facsimiles of the author, especially when the novel is written in the first person. The "I", Greene says, is as much an imaginary character as are the minor players: "a physical trait here, a habit of speech, an anecdote--they are boiled up in the kitchen of the unconscious and emerge unrecognizable even to the cook in most cases." The experiences and observations of everyday life are committed to the artist's unconscious. Later, combined with the "psychic disposition shaped by the forces of heredity"--the collective unconscious--they appear as symbols representing the artist's reading of existence. Because the symbols are mainly unconscious and touch the very well-spring of the artist's existence and concern for the human condition, they tend to form a recurring pattern, or a "formula" which reflects the artist's concern. It is the artist's consciousness that re-orders the symbols and allows for the variety and excitement which is the hallmark of an author like Graham Greene. Critics, such as Calder-Marshall, therefore, who point out Greene's formulae and obsessions should make it clear that they are aware of their function and that such terms are not meant as censure.

A question can be raised about the validity of applying Jung's concepts of myth and archetypal symbolism to ^{criticism} ~~criticism~~ of

Graham Greene's work. Besides Jung's observations of the relationships between myth, literature and psychology, one can quote exhaustively from Greene's Journey Without Maps to hint at the mythopoeic bent of Greene's mind. Here, as well as in the autobiographical story, The Lost Childhood, we see a curious parallel between Greene's views about childhood as a link between the primordial past and the future, and Jung's view of the child as possessing unconscious intimations of ancestry. These intimations manifest themselves mainly in "dreams, narcotic states and cases of insanity" when there are "eclipses of consciousness."⁴ In The Lost Childhood and Journey Without Maps, Greene suggests that before the child is expected to, and is prepared to assume the responsibilities of everyday existence, his "world" is the world of the unconscious where are stored intimations of age-old existence. This is why he says in The Lost Childhood that he rejected quite early the heroes of romance. The child, "after all, knows most of the game--it is only an attitude to it that he lacks. He is quite aware of cowardice, shame, deception, disappointment" (p. 14). He himself rejected the illusion of the hero of romance who was "too good to be true" in favour of the reality represented by the symbolic "Gagool," the witch of King Solomon's Mines. She was real to him because, "didn't she wait . . . in dreams every night in the passage by the linen cupboard, near the nursery door?" (pp. 13-14). Greene

seems convinced also that it is in childhood that we choose our destiny. This conviction is made explicit in The Power and the Glory:

There is always one moment in childhood when the door opens and lets the future in . . . We should be thankful we cannot see the horrors and degradations lying around our childhood, in cupboards and the bookshelves everywhere (p. 15).

This can be compared with Jung's:

Childhood is . . . important not only because various warpings of instinct have their origin there, but because this is the time when, terrifying or encouraging, those far-seeing dreams and images appear before the soul of the child, shaping his whole destiny, as well as those retrospective intuitions which reach back far beyond the range of childhood experience into the life of our ancestors.⁵

The intention here is not to belabour the question of the validity of seeing Greene's work in its mythic framework. I am convinced, however, that the validity of such an approach will be enhanced by my noting some of Greene's comments in Journey Without Maps. These comments have unmistakable overtones both of Jung's concept of the collective unconscious, and of myth and ritual. Journey Without Maps is Greene's account of his journey to Africa. Once, while watching the ritual of "The Masked Blacksmith" of the African village of Mosambolahun, Greene says that he was reminded of "a Jack-in-the-Green" which he had seen when he was four years old. Like the ritual which he was witnessing, this Jack-in-the-Green dance "as late as the ninth century in England had religious

significance, the dance was part of the rites celebrating the death of winter and the return of spring". The important aspect of this is the effect that this rite in the African village had on Greene: "one had the sensation of having come home, for here one was finding associations with a personal and a racial childhood, one was being scared by the same old witches" (p. 104). In the sub-section entitled "Mythology", Greene again speaks of "the witch at the corner of the nursery passage." Here too, he says that he dreamt--echoing Scobie's feeling in The Heart of the Matter--that "someone was outside the door waiting to come in." This was a recurrence of his earliest remembered dream (p. 219). This is probably a wish fulfillment dream, the effort of the mind to make tangible the vague "warpings of instinct" because Greene had penetrated this "heart of darkness" for just this purpose. He concludes that what had astonished him about Africa was that it had never been really strange: "the 'heart of darkness' was common to us both. Freud has made us conscious as we have never been before of the ancestral threads which still exist in our unconscious minds to lead us back. The need, of course, has always been felt, to go back and begin again" (pp. 310-311). There is a distinct connection in Greene's words between childhood, dreams, the unconscious, and man's early beginnings. It is a matter of conjecture whether the psychoanalysis to which Greene says he was subjected in his youth⁶ made him more

conscious of this connection. In any event, dreams, and a pre-occupation with childhood recur in his work. They are "the two promontories in his work"⁷ says John Atkins, who claims to have counted sixty-three dreams in Greene's published output.⁸ It would be a mistake, therefore, to overlook these landmarks which may be signposts to understanding the paradox of Greene's vision.

The archetypal hero of myth is a symbol which has survived through the ages to the modern thriller--a term which has been applied to Greene's entertainments. In the fiction of successive ages, the hero's attitudes, methods, and weapons have been changed to suit both the age and the author's bias, but the modern hero still retains a notable symbolic affinity with such mythic heroes as Theseus, Watu Gunung, Siegfried, Arthur, and even a hero like Robin Hood.⁹ Lord Raglan in his study, The Hero, attempts to substantiate the concept of a monomyth as the prototype for all myths. Joseph Campbell, too, in The Hero With A Thousand Faces, suggests much the same idea. Basically, the common ground between the modern hero and the hero of myth is that they are surrogates acting in the interest of others. The importance of the concept of the hero as a symbol and archetype cannot be over-emphasized because of its relationship to the significant archetype of Fall, Rebirth and Regeneration which is in some ways basic to Greene's mythology. In the hero-myths "the over-coming of mortal dangers

leads in the end to a victory over the agents of darkness and to a rebirth in regenerated form."¹⁰ The hero-myths themselves parallel the function which the primitive myth and ritual served for early man in his attempt to plumb the meaning of existence and to establish order out of the chaos of an incomprehensible universe. As a symbol, the hero-myth, although presented as a physical battle, represents not a physical triumph, but a psychological one. Symbolically, the Fall represents a misguided deed which brings the threat of suffering and annihilation to the community. The hero faces the threat for the community and its welfare depends on his prowess. His ethical conduct is an example to the community, and he re-establishes a sense of order and of continuity.

Christianity has used and perpetuated much the same concept with the Judaeo-Christian myth of the Garden of Eden and Christ. It is easy to see, then, that these archetypes "are continuously present and active; as such they need no believing in, but only an intuition of their meaning and a certain sapient awe, . . . which never loses sight of their import." These archetypes are "partly a spiritual factor, and partly like a hidden meaning in the instincts."¹¹

The pattern of the hero-myths contains certain basic elements which are similar to the significant features of the myth and ritual of the Ancient Near East as outlined by Weisinger in The Agony and the Triumph.¹² These are: the

indispensable role of the hero who goes out of the community; the combat between the hero and an opposing power; the suffering of the hero; the momentary defeat of the hero (the symbolic death); the miraculous triumph of the hero (the rebirth); and the heroic procession when the hero returns to a relieved and contrite community. Like the rituals of the Ancient Near East, these hero-myths "not only . . . symbolize the passage from death to life, from one way of life to another, but they are the actual means of achieving the change-over; they mark the transition by which, through the process of separation, regeneration and a return on a higher level, both the individual and the community are assured their victory over the forces of chaos which are thereby kept under control."

The archetype of the antagonist is basic to the related archetypes of the hero and the Fall, the Rebirth and the Regeneration cycle. The antagonist represents evil and the forces of chaos. In Christian terms, the archetypal antagonist can be re-interpreted as the archetype of the devil, sin or temptation whose sole aim is the fall of man. First, in psychological terms, and second in theological terms,¹³ the archetype of the devil is an important aspect of Greene's mythology. Greene believes, as he says in The Lost Childhood that "goodness has only once found a perfect incarnation in a human body and never will again, but evil can always find a home there" (p. 15). His epigrammatic "human nature is not black and white but black

and grey" is the key to an understanding of the problems which his heroes face. Greene is aware of an extant evil which is part of the human condition. In his work, the archetype of the devil becomes, as Maud Bodkins puts it in her discussion of Othello¹⁴ "a persistent or recurrent mode of apprehension, . . . the devil is our tendency to represent in personal form the forces within and without us that threaten our supreme values." In his work, Greene has taken the concept of the hero beyond the hero-myth stage and has made it consistent both with Christian thought and with the age. His work is consistent with ^hChristianity because, as in Christian thought, the hero is partly responsible for his own regeneration. His work is consistent also with the age--the age of the common man--in that his heroes ^{is} ~~are~~ "one of us"; that is, he is neither superior to us nor to our environment as opposed to the mythic hero and the hero of romance, and "we respond to a sense of his common humanity."¹⁵ Because Greene presents the forces within as well as without us that threaten to overwhelm us, and because he was aware of the condition of evil in the world even before religion later explained it to him "in other terms," Catholicism cannot be seen as the informing spirit of his work. He is a humanist first and a Catholic second. He is what he says he is: not a Catholic writer, but a writer who is a Catholic. His Catholicism "has perhaps done no more than provide an intellectual basis for a temperamental predisposition."¹⁶

Greene has the deep sense of the religious and of the supernatural that is characteristic of the mythopoeic mind. That his Catholicism is "religious" rather than "Catholic" is attested to by the fact that so many labels have been applied to him. His Catholicism itself is controversial. Terms like Manicheanism and Jansenism have been applied to him. If labels need be applied, it is easier to agree with Rostenne in his Graham Greene: témoin des temps tragiques, that Greene, like Scobie in The Heart of the Matter, is a modern Prometheus and a visionary. With Greene, we are faced with the paradox that every man can be a hero, yet no one can be a hero because, as Greene says in The Lost Childhood, just when success seems certain, "the pendulum is about ready to swing." As opposed to the assured success of the mythic hero and the hero of romance, the most one can do is to continue the struggle and hope, because "despair", says Greene in The Power and the Glory, is "the unforgivable sin" (p. 83). Greene's is not the "simplified mythology" of the whiskey priest's before his enlightenment: "Michael dressed in armour slew a dragon, and the angels fell through space like comets with beautiful streaming hair because they were jealous" (p. 83). Rather, regeneration in his terms demands a realistic awareness of the truth of the evil that attends the human condition. This is what Greene's symbolic figures demonstrate.

What Joseph Campbell observes about all serious modern literature in The Hero With a Thousand Faces is true also of Graham Greene. As Campbell sees it, serious modern literature is devoted to "a courageous, open-eyed observation of the sickeningly broken transfigurations that abound before us, around us, and within."¹⁷ This is one reason why Greene scorns the happy ending. Greene uses the melodramatic conventions common to the hero-myth and its successor, the mystery-thriller, but even in the entertainments where the convention demands a happy ending, Greene permits only a partial "happy-ending." I have used the term "conventions of melodrama" specifically as is implied in Frye's description of melodrama: "in melodrama two themes are important: the triumph of moral virtue over villainy, and the subsequent idealizing of the moral views assumed to be held by the audience." Because of this "triumph" and this "idealizing of the moral views", the hero-myth, and the mystery-thriller, usually have a happy--and sometimes a contrived--ending. In Greene, this "happy ending" is often superficial, and, purposefully, only partially happy because Greene considers a happy ending to be an illusion. In The Confidential Agent, for example, Rose is aware that she has constantly to compete with the memory of "D's" dead wife. She has to be prepared to accept not a whole loaf, but what is left. She must be prepared to accept what is left "now" as she puts it. Again, in The Ministry of Fear, Arthur Rowe

and Anna Hilfe will never "live happily ever after" because, ironically, they must constantly perpetuate a lie to realize any happiness: she must keep his spirit young by avoiding any situations which might remind him of his mercy-killing of his wife and so avoid the pall of guilt which would once again drown his spirit. She does not know that her brother has already told him. He, in turn, must constantly be on guard to let her believe that he does not know. Ostensibly, then, The Confidential Agent and The Ministry of Fear have the conventional ending of melodrama in which the hero "gets the girl." Greene shows, however, that life is not like that. Life is a constant struggle. It took a more mature, more realistic, Arthur Rowe to see the necessity of replacing self-pity with love to experience even a vestige of happiness in life.

From this point-of-view, regeneration in Greene's terms is dependent on a frank appraisal of the human condition. As Greene sees it, one must constantly be aware of the condition of evil--without and within--and yet aspire to the "good way" as opposed to the "evil way." Here, a distinction should be noted between the coupled pairs "good-evil" and "right-wrong." Paul Rostenne makes the distinction that "good-evil" touches the very foundations of morality and the metaphysical roots of human conduct. "Right-wrong," on the other hand, applies mainly to specific social laws and attitudes and do^{es} not affect

the ultimate depths of being.¹⁸ Greene's mythology, then, has this in common with all important myths: there is an ethical, deeply spiritual element which has as its main function, the regeneration of man's spirit. This is not to say that Greene's work is allegorical, nor that it is didactic; rather, the mythology and the morality are so deeply seated that they are fused in the unconscious and become symbolic. This is why it is possible to say that Greene's obsessive formula of the hunted man is his mythology. Greene's spiritually haunted man is usually concerned with a state of lost innocence. His regeneration signals the attainment of a higher innocence.

In Greene, there are three distinct kinds of innocence. First is the higher, incorruptible innocence which faces evil without being corrupted by it. Second, is the innocence of childhood. Third is the innocence of the idealist. The higher innocence is the spiritual maturity, the regeneration attained by Greene's heroes. His heroes progress either from a prolonged innocence of childhood as in Arthur Rowe of The Ministry of Fear, or from the illusion of idealism as in "D" of The Confidential Agent. The whiskey priest of The Power and the Glory and Scobie of The Heart of the Matter progress from the innocence which attends a lack of awareness of self. The issue, however, is not as clear-cut as stated here, because the innocence of childhood and the illusion of idealism basically constitute a lack of awareness of self, that is, a

failure to recognize the fact of evil without and within the self. In Greene, the innocence of childhood is often the illusory state of innocence where the seed is sown either for spiritual maturity or for spiritual damnation. This is why Greene insists on the importance of childhood. If the illusory state of innocence flowers into the innocence of the idealist, this constitutes a branching-off into the wrong direction because this is a perpetuation of an innocence susceptible to use by the forces of evil. This is the reason that the idealist in Greene is an example of the wrong approach to life. The child, as Greene says in The Lost Childhood, "knows most of the game" of life, but there is a point where life ceases to be a game. The idealist is the "child" who continues the game. The regenerated, or spiritually mature individual is the man who adopts the right attitude to life: that the "cowardice, shame, deception and disappointment" are a fact of life in the face of which one must attempt to develop and nurture one's integrity. The Greene hero is tortured in the face of what "D" of The Confidential Agent calls "the guilt which clings to all of us." This guilt, in Catholic terms, is the direct result of original sin, of the original Fall. But this statement also suggests a community. The community with which Greene is concerned, however, is a community of spirit. The humanity of his symbolic heroes demonstrates this point. It is, then, a combination of Greene's

spiritual and human concern that maintains his obsessive themes and his basic archetype of regeneration through experience.

"NOVELS" AND "ENTERTAINMENTS"--THE MODES

Greene makes the distinction in his novels between "entertainments" and "novels." The distinction, surely, is not made on a thematic basis, because there are similar themes current through both the novels and the entertainments. Themes of salvation, pity, fidelity, betrayal; questions of conscience and responsibility; and the drama of meaningful actions taken in times of crisis are all common to Greene's novels and entertainments. The basis for the distinction must, therefore, be sought elsewhere. Examination of this distinction will show that the difference is mainly artistic. Greene devotes more of his artistic skill to the novel, thus making less frequent use of melodrama. Actually, there is a close relationship between the novels and the entertainments: they both express Greene's basic archetype of regeneration through experience. Proportionately, in the entertainments The Confidential Agent and The Ministry of Fear, the focus is more on the physical action than on the spiritual struggle. We are held more aware of the linear progress of the plot than we are of the spiritual struggle of the hero. In the more

serious novels, The Heart of the Matter and The Power and the Glory, the focus is on the spiritual or internal struggle of the protagonist. Even in The Power and the Glory where there is a physical chase, the physical chase forms the background for, and is secondary to the spiritual struggle of the whiskey priest. It would seem, then, that the distinction between "entertainment" and "novel" is a matter of focus and intensity. There is a greater emotional resonance to the common themes when they are treated in the novel as compared to the entertainment. This is because there is more careful characterization in what Greene calls the novel. This is especially true of The Heart of the Matter in which Scobie's propensity for compassion is so carefully delineated that his gradual immersion in this, his destructive element, is not surprising. In this way, the element of melodrama in such an important novel as this is minimized. The striking difference between novel and entertainment is that the plots and their resolution in the entertainments do make greater use of melodrama. In The Heart of the Matter, as is the case with the truly tragic, there is no resolution to the paradox of Scobie's fall. The drama of his struggle is presented from several oblique angles which defy a too hasty, too harsh judgment, as well as too easy an acceptance. For instance, Scobie is a "just man," an "Aristides," yet he commits adultery and is implicated in the murder of his faithful servant, Ali. As a Catholic, he dies

in disgrace as a suicide--the Catholic's damnable sin--yet Father Rank suggests that he loved God and is perhaps not damned. He dies to spare Helen and Louise the grief which he believes his continued existence would inevitably cause them, but he may have caused them more grief: his wife, Louise, as a Catholic, is bitter at his "damnable" act; Helen, his mistress, already a widow at eighteen after being married only a month, is cynical and spiritless after this second blow that life has dealt her.

The most instructive view of the melodramatic formulae which are part of Greene's mythology has been presented by Northrop Frye in his Anatomy of Criticism. In the sub-section "Comic Fictional Modes," he notes that Greene's "melodramatic formulas" could be classed as "ironic comedy addressed to the people who can realize that murderous violence is less an attack on a virtuous society by a malignant individual than a symptom of that society's own viciousness."¹⁹ More importantly, Frye writes that "in melodrama two themes are important: the triumph of moral virtue over villainy, and the consequent idealizing of the moral views assumed to be held by the audience."²⁰ Frye distinguishes between two general "modes" in literature: the "tragic" and the "comic." In the tragic, "the hero becomes isolated from society;" in the comic, "he is incorporated into it."²¹ Because this essential distinction between the tragic and comic modes seems applicable to discussion of Greene's

The Heart of the Matter and The Power and the Glory in the tragic mode, and the entertainments The Confidential Agent and The Ministry of Fear in the comic mode, the terms will be used here. Frye's views on melodrama in his theory helps to explain why, in the entertainments, there is even a partial happy ending which is absent from the serious novels under discussion.

Both The Confidential Agent and The Ministry of Fear depend heavily on melodrama for their plot resolution. Ostensibly, they both end fortuitously for the hero as was the case with the hero of the hero-myths and the hero of romance. As it was necessary in myth and romance for the hero to succeed to ensure a continuation and/or a re-establishment of order, so is it necessary for the Greene hero in the romantic entertainment to succeed. "D" of The Confidential Agent certainly withdrew himself from society after the murder of his wife. He is going through the motions of living, but he is spiritually dead. Rose knows this and tells him that she will not "go on loving a dead man" (p. 206). Although he is on a mission, "D" certainly is not a heroic envoy because he is spiritless. But he is "saved" at the end and returns with the heroine, Rose, perhaps to be reintegrated into the society of his fellow revolutionists. Seemingly, he has found a fairy godmother who makes it possible for him to disentangle himself from the web of intrigue which surrounds

him. Arthur Rowe, too, of The Ministry of Fear, is a social outcast and is spiritually dead after the "mercy killing" of his wife. He is "reborn" and is eventually "saved" by Anna Hilfe. In both cases, then, the hero is reintegrated into society. The melodramatic plot is functional. Both entertainments, on the surface, have the characteristics of the "romance." But here, with the token happy ending, the similarity to the romance ceases. Greene is true to his rejection of the hero of romance although he uses the convention in a particular way. He allows a partial happy ending and this, Frye suggests, is an "intellectualized parody of melodramatic formulas." Critics who censure Greene for his melodramatic formulae, then, should show that they are aware that the melodrama is only the veneer beneath which lies the paradox of Greene's vision. It is only through the love and the basic awareness and practicality of the heroines that the heroes do succeed. It is as Kunkel says in The Labyrinthine Ways of Graham Greene:²² In Greene, the relationship of the heroine to the men is basically a spiritual one. Their mission "is to swerve the outcast from bitter solitude, to comfort the seedy . . ." The Greene "hero," then, is a lost soul who, in the comic mode that is the entertainment, will be reincorporated into society in the specific terms of Greene's outlook. If Greene's treatment of the heroic pose is a parody, then the reader must look beyond the thoughts and actions of the hero

to understand Greene's attitude. It is in examination of the relationship of the heroine to the hero, and in the roles of the minor characters that Greene's ironic stance can be seen. Because the hero is a symbol in the network of Greene's mythology, what happens to him really represents practical rules for the guidance of the reader; in other words--and this is Greene's main concern--what happens to the hero supplies a pattern of spiritual and human values. It would be fair to apply to Greene what Jung says of Rider Haggard's fiction: ". . . the story is primarily a means of giving expression to significant material. However much the tale may seem to outgrow the content, the latter outweighs the former in importance."²³

The protagonists of The Heart of the Matter and The Power and the Glory become isolated from their society. This is especially clear in The Power and the Glory where the priest is even more a "wanted man" than is the American gunman, concern for whose soul causes the priest to take the decisive action which led to his own capture. The element of the physical chase in The Power and the Glory would, on the surface, tend to put this novel in the same mode as the entertainments. But, as has been noted, the physical chase is only the background for the priest's spiritual search. The seemingly melodramatic ending, in which the priest is "reborn" in the person of the new priest who is sheltered by the boy, Luis, does not

alter the tragic tone of the novel. This conclusion is a reconciliation much like the regeneration that emerges in Shakespeare's tragic patterns. The novel demonstrates once again Greene's basic archetype of salvation through experience: the whiskey priest may now be a "bad" priest, but he is a better man for it. Experience has earned him a compassion and a humility which he did not previously possess. He can now reaffirm his humanity and, fearfully, but humbly, rest on God's mercy in preference to the "certainty" of Church dogma. Frederick R. Karl²⁴ in A Reader's Guide to the Contemporary English Novel attempts to see this novel as a Greek tragedy. Karl finds that he cannot reconcile the ending to the "ironies and paradoxes" of the whole novel. He has attempted to superimpose a tragic framework on this novel and accuses Greene of deserting his paradox for "doctrine." He rightly states that the priest and the lieutenant "cross each other's paths as brothers, . . . one looking after the spirit, the other after the body," but he maintains that the tension between these opposing characters is lost when they see each other as "good" fellows in their particular ways. It would seem to me that Karl has chosen the very strength of the novel as its weakness. Greene's novel would descend to didacticism and the doctrine of which Karl complains had Greene not made the priest see that the lieutenant is as much a "priest" of the practical needs of living as he (the whiskey priest) is one of the spirit.

If the lieutenant is shown to be totally bad, the novel would then be a doctrinaire celebration of the Church's way. The lieutenant, too, must be made to realize that his fight is against the abuses of certain unfit men in the Church--there are unfit men in his own faction, too--and not against God because there are also good men serving God. The priest recognizes the lieutenant's basic goodness, but warns him that, as is the case with the Church, "there won't always be good men in the lieutenant's party" (p. 263). As a man of the world, the lieutenant succeeds over the priest's mortal life in this world. The priest is not sure of his spiritual victory. He must take a chance on God's mercy, because, as he says, he does not "know a thing about the mercy of God." We, the readers, do know that he has gained his victory in the person of the new priest; in the conversion of the boy, Luis; and in the hollowness which the lieutenant experiences after his victory over the whiskey priest.

Bringing together the body (the lieutenant), and the spirit (the priest) is Greene's way of showing that one must recognize the other. Goodness can retain its purity only by recognizing evil without being corrupted by it. From the conversation between the two men (pp. 261-269), it becomes clear that the lieutenant's seeming certainties are shaken in much the same way as the priest's previous pride in his priesthood is stripped from him. The stronger "body" overcomes the "spirit"

as it must in the spiritual wasteland of the novel, but the spirit, the priest, through harrowing experience and expiation, is regenerated symbolically in the person of "Father--" at the end of the novel. One does not have to be "a believer" in Church dogma as Karl suggests, to sense the tragic tone of the novel. The lieutenant and the priest are both good men. Both, in their chosen way of life are "right." That is, their motives are good. They both perform their duty as they see it. Yet the priest dies, and the lieutenant's is a hollow victory. The essential tension of the novel, then, is maintained. The novel does not become "meaningless as a work of art" because the reader can see that the lieutenant has become corrupted by his extreme idealism, and the priest, before his enlightenment, had permitted his attainment of the priesthood to give way to a pride which tended to stifle his spiritual growth. The novel remains ambiguous as far as doctrine, doctrine of Church against State is concerned. What emerges is Greene's basic concern: the spiritual regeneration of a human being. The political and religious issues at war in the novel in no way diminish its value as a work of art because of the constant tension that Greene maintains between and within the characters.

Both entertainment and novel, then, express Greene's basic archetype. The entertainment, because it is in the comic mode, has a superficial "happy-ending," and resembles

the romance. The emphasis is on speed and economy, and the melodramatic sequences give the illusion that all is well. But here, as in the novel, Greene's concern is still a spiritual enlightenment. The novel, on the other hand, has a greater intensity of characterization. The tone and the mode are usually different. Melodrama is at a minimum. The isolation of the individual is more than compensated for by his spiritual growth. In "entertainment" and "novel" Greene gives us both the "comic" and the "tragic" view of life. His entertainments give us ironic comedy because there is always a "catch", a reservation, to Greene's happy ending. This is part of Greene's realism, because the reader comes to realize that life seldom presents a happy ending.

CHAPTER II

THE CONFIDENTIAL AGENT

Greene's haunted-man theme is nowhere more evident than in The Confidential Agent. In this entertainment, "D," the hero, is a man with "worry like a habit on his forehead" (p. 7). Danger is "part of him." He is a man haunted by visions of a personal treachery as well as "an endless distrust" which touches all of mankind. Greene paints a setting which not only parallels the spiritual wasteland of his hero, but also sets the almost gothic tone. In this novel there is a touch of mystery, and vivid images of death abound which show the moribund mood of the hero:

The gulls swept over Dover. They sailed out like flakes of the fog, and tacked back towards the hidden town, while the siren mourned with them: other ships replied, a whole wake lifted up their voices--for whose death? The ship moved at half speed through the bitter autumn evening. It reminded D. of a hearse, rolling slowly and discreetly towards 'the garden of peace' the driver careful not to shake the coffin, as if the body minded a jolt or two. Hysterical women shrieked among the shrouds (p. 7)

(My underscoring).

"D's" ship is now approaching the harbour. He is on a mission to London to purchase coal for the Socialist faction in what is probably the Spanish Civil War. The Royalist faction, too, has sent an agent to negotiate for the coal

Defenceless under the night
Our world in stupour lies;
Yet, dotted everywhere,
Ironie points of light
Flash out wherever the Just
Exchange their messages:
May I, composed like them
Of Eros, and of dust,
Beleaguered by the same
Negation and despair,
Show an affirming flame.

W. H. Auden, September 1, 1939.

because possession of coal might be the deciding factor in the war.

Seen in its superficial plot, The Confidential Agent has the same basic units as any hero-myth. First, there is the separation from the community because "D" has left home to travel to London as an agent on a mission. Next, there is the struggle when "D" meets "L" and other opponents throughout the course of the novel. Then there is the coming into contact with a source of power when "D" has his interview with Benditch and his associates. Following from this interview there is the seeming defeat of the hero because "D" does not succeed in negotiating a contract. Finally, there is the triumphant return of the hero. In this case, it is "half a victory" (p. 194), because, although "D" does not get the coal, the enemy does not.

Despite the conventional plot, however, it soon becomes clear that Greene's novel is a parody of conventional melodrama. "D" is motivated only by a sense of duty (p. 26). Emotionally, and spiritually, he is engrossed in the condition of evil and guilt not only in his own country, but by "the guilt which clings to all of us without our knowing it" (p. 49). Again, he is an unlikely hero because he fears pain and abhors violence; "he didn't know the first thing about using his fists" (p. 23). When he is attacked by Captain Currie and "L's" chauffeur, "his mind remained a victim of the horror

and indignity of the physical conflict" (p. 35), leaving him defenceless. "D's" place is among "dead things": his dead wife and his Medieval Romance. His preoccupation with his dead wife and the effect of the quixotic tendency of the hero of romance, limit "D's" ability to survive in this world. First, preoccupation with his dead wife precludes his involvement with the living. Second, the quixotic hero, like Roland of The Song of Roland, despite having good intentions, is often an egotistical hero whose bravery can do more harm than good. Often, he destroys rather than integrates. This is why "D", when the time for action comes, can see his "lectures in Romance, The Song of Roland" as a "dead albatross" about his neck (p. 144).

On the positive side, "D's" basic human feeling and propensity for love is the key to his regeneration. This is part of Greene's paradox: "virtue" can often become a destructive element." This is in keeping, too, with critical views of Greene's treatment of pity as a "destructive virtue."

In this novel, Greene has used several symbols and minor themes in constant balance and contrast to establish his theme of regeneration. "D's" sense of corruption and treachery is balanced by instances of human feeling, and response to human kindness. More, melodrama is made to seem ridiculous by the constant contrast that is maintained between reality on the one hand, and, on the other, a stereotyped code

of honour--as in the case of Currie. Again, the unrealism of the happy-ending is contrasted with Rose's realism. Greene makes this explicit, too, by having "D" comment on the cinematic presentation of life--the happy ending. "D" says of this: "if we lived in a world . . . which guaranteed a happy ending, should we be as long discovering it?" (p. 66). Dr. Bellows' idealism and the heroism of The Song of Roland--"D" is an expert on this Medieval romance--is balanced by Rose's sense of the realities of life and by the hero's reawakening. In this novel, too, Greene uses the fog of the English autumn as an expanding image that parallels "D's" spiritual state. The melodramatic plot thus becomes a parody, and is merely the framework within which Greene gathers and orders his symbols to present the theme of his entertainments.

"D" is a man who is consciously aware of evil. When he first meets Rose, "it seemed to him immeasurably sad that anyone so young should have known so much fraud" (p. 18). Greene maintains this image of "D" throughout the novel. As a man alone, "D" finds that "there was no trust anywhere;" he is unhappy about Else because he finds that "she was preposterously young to have such complete knowledge of vice." Because he thought that the corruption in his country is caused by the war, he is surprised to find that the atmosphere of distrust is present in England too:

He had imagined that the suspicion which was the atmosphere of his own country was due to civil war, but he began to believe that it existed everywhere: it was part of human life. People were united by their vices: there was honour among adulterers and thieves. He had been too absorbed in the old days with his love and with the Berne MS. and the weekly lectures on Romance Languages to notice it. It was as if the whole world lay in the shadow of abandonment.

Here we have the reason that Greene's hero needs to be reintegrated into the society of the living. Life has been passing him by. It is as though he is seeing what life is like for the first time. "D" is aware of evil, but his awareness is inhibitive: he tends to withdraw in the face of evil rather than learn to live with it. He is an innocent in the sense that he is surprised by evil and his spirit suffers for its presence. His is a Christlike passion, his spirit moaning for the sins of others. Most importantly to Greene's theme, it is as though "D" expects perfect goodness in everyone. This is why he is so shaken by evidence of distrust and vice. Despite his being middle-aged, he is obviously ill-equipped to cope with life as it is. Unless he is to endure a living death, he must be helped. What "D" needs is a source of spiritual rejuvenation, a new source of fire. Artistically, Greene uses coal as a symbol of his hero's needs. On the human level, Rose and Else provide the human relationships that precipitate "D's" rejuvenation. It is "D's" basic goodness that causes Else to react to him as "a gentleman." It is her

trust that in turn causes him to trust her in the midst of the intrigue which surrounds him. Else and "D" both respond to genuine human feeling and this is their bond. But it is "D's" inexperience and his lack of the necessary artifice which alert Mrs. Mendrill, the manageress, and causes the murder of Else.

Greene's use of Else as a character in the novel is important to his theme. The combination of worldliness and child-like innocence which Else represents, is in contrast to "D's" middle-aged innocence. Even at her age, the child, Else, is better equipped to survive in this world than "D" is. "D" must realize that evil does exist as part of the human condition and one has to be on guard against it. In the novel, the manageress and "D's" other enemies are the archetypes of evil. "D" should have realized that no information which could point to his own destruction and that of Else should be given to them.

The mutual trust established by Else and "D", causes "D" once again to have a personal interest in a human being. Symbolically, Else becomes the sacrifice for "D's" regeneration. It is his involvement with her that stirs him to action after her murder. After her death "D" becomes "The Hunter" rather than "The Hunted." It is significant that the fog, symbolic of "D's" spiritual state, "had nearly lifted" (p. 115) once he set out to avenge Else's death. He is now, in his awkward way,

taking an active interest in life. He is now reborn, "he had been pushed about like a lay figure long enough" (p. 106). Else's death, then, signals the start of "D's" regeneration. Truly, with Greene, "even in the entertainments one is not far from symbolism" for here, beneath the superficial secret agent plot, we have a recurrent rebirth pattern not on a cosmic level, but on a meaningful interpersonal level.

It is Rose who enables "D" to complete the cycle. He has first to trust someone, a process begun with Else with whom he finds "a surprising relief at finding that, after all, there was a chance of discovering honesty somewhere" (p. 49). The role of regeneration of the hero seems to be reserved for the women in both entertainments dealt with here. In The Ministry of Fear, it is Anna Hiffé who saves the hero. Here, in The Confidential Agent it is Else and Rose Cullen. It is significant that it is only with Else and Rose that "D" feels and expresses any trust. On giving his hotel room key to Else for safe-keeping, "D" had said to her, "I trust you" (p. 41). When he had recoiled from killing "K" and Rose asked for his gun, he gave it to her and "it was his first action of trust (p. 146); later, "he . . . felt a tremendous gratitude that there was somebody in the warring crooked uncertain world he could trust besides himself" (p. 150). There is a suspicion, here, that his words to Else may have

been due to the expediency of the situation. By appealing to her need for trust, he thus further secures her loyalty. When he gives his gun to Rose, however, this is a genuine act of trust because by this time he is a fugitive from English law.

Like Else, Rose has a worldliness which, to "D", is incongruous with her youth. But, like Else, her worldliness enables her to survive in this fallen world which Greene depicts. She is realistic, but she remains basically good. It is her innate goodness which responds to "D's" basic goodness and facilitates their close relationship. Rose realizes more than "D" does, that he is unable to deal with vice. She falls in love with him perhaps because of his innocence: as she tells him, "go on being honest. That's why I love you." Throughout the novel she protects him. She saves him from several dangerous situations and points out to him that business-men like her father and his associates are impressed neither by sentiment nor by melodrama. Besides helping "D" to overcome his physical problems, Rose is to let him see the necessity for human love--not a generalized, "I love the whole world," idealistic love as in the case of Dr. Bellows--but a warm, personal love. For "D" this is necessary in his regeneration because, although he loved his dead wife dearly, he must now re-discover love for the living. After all, "it was the living who had to suffer from loneliness

and distrust" (p. 205).

Greene has skilfully handled this phase of "D's" regeneration. The sad, lonely, "D" does not suddenly forget his dead wife and fall in love with the young, attractive, Rose, but slowly, almost grudgingly, he comes to trust her and will probably come to love her. Besides the partial success of "D's" mission as an agent, there is the more important success of his regeneration or rejuvenation of spirit. At the end of the novel, on hearing Rose's voice, it is now possible for "D's" heart to miss a beat "like a young man's." The fact that "D" has to be content with half a victory will perhaps show him that life, real living, cannot be measured by ideal standards: on this side stands life, on the other, the ideal world of romance. This much should be clear to him because he himself, like Greene, had rejected the hero of romance. "D" found that Roland, the traditional hero of The Song of Roland was a "big brave fool" who sought the aid he should have sought in the first place only "when all his men are dead or dying." Roland had refused to blow the horn to summon aid because of "his own glory." His "heroism" had done more harm than good. "D" himself chose the realistic Oliver as the hero (pp. 61-63). "D" has only to apply this assessment of The Song of Roland to his own life to see that the extreme heroism of the hero of Romance does not necessarily apply to everyday living.

The view that Green parodies melodramatic formulae in this novel is readily shown in the thin line which Greene draws between comedy and melodrama. In many cases where the "hero" is involved in some physical action, the language is, purposefully I am convinced, stilted, comic and unreal. One could quote exhaustively to demonstrate the point, but the most striking example occurs when "D" is beaten by "L's" chauffeur with Currie in charge. Here, "D", who had borrowed Miss Cullen's car, is stopped by Currie, who wants to amend "D's" "wrongs"; "L's" chauffeur who is "L's" strong arm; and "L" who wants "D" beaten and searched for the identification papers without which he cannot bargain for the coal:

'I don't understand,' D. said, 'what you propose to do?' 'If I had my way, you'd go to gaol--but Rose--Miss Cullen--won't charge you.' He had been drinking a lot of whisky: you could tell that from the smell. 'We'll treat you better than you deserve--give you a thrashing, man to man.' 'You mean--assault me?' he asked incredulously. 'There are three of you.' 'Oh we'll let you fight. Take off your coat'

D. said with horror, 'If you want to fight, can't we get pistols--the two of us?'

'We don't go in for that sort of murder here.'

(p. 33)

This episode is well sustained, with the righteous Currie's public school stance well defined. After the beating, Currie "was embarrassed--he was like a prefect who has caned a boy and finds the situation afterwards less clear-cut" (p. 36). Later Greene is almost explicit about his intention. "D", before he becomes fully acquainted with Rose, suspects what she is one

of the enemy. When she calls him to arrange a meeting, he thinks: "surely they were not going to throw a mistress at his head--people didn't fall for that sort of thing except in melodrama. In melodrama a secret agent was never tired or uninterested or in love with a dead woman". Yet, "D" is in love with his dead wife and he is the hero.

In his onslaught against a limiting idealism, Greene presents "the absurd Captain Currie" as a stereotype of the English public school, with its code of honour. This public school code of honour is probably the last vestige of the romantic hero's ethic of conduct. Greene holds this stereotype up to ridicule in this entertainment as well as in The Ministry of Fear--Digby--and The Heart of the Matter--Harris and, to some extent, Wilson.

Another of Greene's stock characters which appears in this entertainment is the idealist, the one who loves all of mankind. Here, it is Dr. Bellows who has "love of all the world." It had "always been his dream to help." But "the rash unfortunate man" who "dreamt of universal peace" was unsuccessful and wretched (p. 42). To "D", Dr. Bellows is an object of pity. In Greene, these people are used by the unscrupulous for their own ends. In The Ministry of Fear it is Dr. Forester who is used by the forces of evil. In The Confidential Agent, Mr. "K" uses Dr. Bellows' Entrenationo School as a meeting place for intrigue. "D" wonders "how

much treachery is always nourished in little overworked centres of somebody else's idealism" (p. 73). People like Dr. Bellows "lived in an atmosphere of unreality . . . in an ivory tower, waiting for miracles" (p. 134).

The way is clear to "D" then, who "could love the dead and the dying better than the living" (p. 130). Unlike Dr. Bellows and his kind; unlike the facile and self-deluding Currie; and unlike the destructive but well-meaning hero of romance like Roland, "D" must come to face the realities of living and engage himself in life. The death of Else forces him to this action and with the help of Rose, he must attempt to meet life on its terms without sacrificing his essential goodness. "D" has been able to see the unreality of Dr. Bellows' idealistic view of life, so much so that he can pity him. Through the Berne MS. he can see that The Song of Roland is "tragedy" rather than "heroics." The Berne MS. is significant because in this version, Oliver strikes Roland down "with full knowledge He dies hating the man he loves." "D" finds that the Oxford version of The Song of Roland had been "tidied up to suit . . . the tastes of the medieval nobles who were quite capable of being Rolands in a small way--it only needs conceit and a strong arm." This "con" game that has taken place is important to Greene's theme. The question of "D's" ability to see the fault in others and not in himself--his refusal to face the fact of the

co-existence of good and evil--points out one of the ironic aspects of the title, The Confidential Agent. The irony operates on at least two levels. On one level, "D" is a confidential agent for his party, yet it is clear that his superiors have no faith in him. He, in turn, is aware of the distrust which has weakened the cause. On another, and more important level, "D" is a confidential agent without confidence, that is, he is a "confidence" agent in the vulgar sense of "con" man in that he is deluding someone--himself. He has permitted the lack of faith in humanity fostered by the atmosphere in his country to stifle his ability to relate meaningfully to another living human being. He could still cherish love, but only by withdrawing into love for his dead wife.

Here we have the key to this novel. The hero of the hero-myth served the purpose of saving the community thus, indirectly, celebrating the cause of the good, over the evil way. This is the same concept perpetuated by the Christian doctrine that the good will inherit the earth. In this novel, Greene has used the convention in a particular way to show that power, the power of meaningful existence, resides, not on the strong arm of an imaginary hero, but in meaningful interpersonal relationships. The atmosphere of evil and constant distrust which Greene so often presents, parallels the state of bondage of the community before the arrival of the

hero. It is to be equated also with "the fallen world" in Christian thought. In the hero-myth, the arrival of the hero represented the return to grace. This is paralleled in Christian thought by the advent of Christ. But each man, really, is partly responsible for his own salvation. Further, as Greene says in The Lost Childhood, goodness may never again find a perfect incarnation in the human body. As he sees it, although perfect goodness may never walk the earth again, the "grey" in human nature, if nurtured, may go a long way towards making this hell of earth into an approximation of the lost paradise where previously there was harmony and love. Thus, Greene is concerned with the recapture of a lost sense of community as suggested in Journey Without Maps. It is a generalized evil--"there was no trust anywhere"--that has disrupted the deep affinity shared by the loving and the loved, in much the same way as the prime archetype of evil, the devil, had shattered the harmony of Eden. But Greene's is not a paradise of peace and simplicity. His is a paradise that subsumes evil as a reality, and those who can transcend this evil can retain integrity, the higher innocence. "D" is a hero in this novel not because of his fighting skill and a cultivated ethic of conduct, but because he is one of those people "all over the world . . . who didn't believe in being corrupted--simply because it made life impossible" (p. 31). To him, and perhaps to Greene, this attitude is not so much a question of morality, as one of simply existing.

There is nothing more unhappy than that man
that has never been touched by adversity for
he has not had the means to know himself.

Seneca, De Clementia

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

Leon Bloy

Epigraph to Greene's
The End of the Affair.

CHAPTER III

THE MINISTRY OF FEAR

W. H. Auden, in "The Heresy of Our Time",²⁵ asserts that "in book after book, Graham Greene analyzes the vice of pity, that corrupt parody of love and compassion which is so insidious and deadly for sensitive natures." Pity, as Auden sees it, is essentially egotistical because, behind pity for another lies self-pity and, behind self-pity lies cruelty. This observation is true to some degree, and is, in part, applicable to discussion of Greene's entertainment, The Ministry of Fear. Auden's views, as used here, do not, however, take into account Greene's treatment of pity as a virtue. In this novel Greene deals with pity both as a vice and as a virtue all in the same context, and presents the reader with yet another paradox which seems to defy solution. In this novel, which, from its examination of the ambiguities of pity is a prelude to The Heart of the Matter, Greene has once again clothed an important aspect of the meaning of existence in the trappings of melodrama.

The Ministry of Fear is divided into four "books" which reflect its mythic framework. In Book One, "The Unhappy Man", we have the state of transgression. Here, we see Arthur Rowe as Greene's now-familiar haunted man who is seeking either a

lost peace of mind or an escape from his mental torment. At the end of this first book the hero succeeds, to some degree, in escaping from his mental torment; he "dies." In Book Two, "The Happy Man", Arthur Rowe is "reborn" in the person of Digby, who, psychologically, is the adolescent Arthur Rowe with the experiences of his most recent twenty years not totally erased, but forgotten; Rowe is suffering from amnesia caused by a bomb explosion. It is almost as if Rowe has been granted his death-wish to escape his mental anguish. Book Three of the entertainment begins the return of the hero. Here, we see Arthur Rowe slowly rediscovering life and reliving memories both pleasant and unpleasant. Greene's final "book" in this entertainment gives a hint of an explanation of his intention. This Book Four, entitled "The Whole Man" shows the new Arthur Rowe who is to be contrasted with the original Arthur Rowe and with the Digby/Arthur Rowe of the middle portion of the novel. The mythic framework of the novel, then, is relatively simple: the act of euthanasia which Rowe commits is the transgression for which he is to suffer; after many adventures during which he suffers, he is "reborn" thus being given a second chance. Greene even introduces the element of supernatural intervention in this entertainment. When Rowe goes to the fete where his adventure is to begin, "it was as if Providence had led him to exactly this point to indicate the difference between then and now" (p. 6). The "then" refers to

Rowe's youth when he lived vicariously through the pages of romance. The "now" is the reality of life, the emotions, relationships and actions which led to his tortured state.

The superficial plot of The Ministry of Fear is deceptively easy. In Second World War London, Arthur Rowe goes to a charity fair, and is mistakenly given the clue to the winning of a cake which contains microfilms of high security war plans. The spies, headed by Willi Hilfe, want to regain the microfilm, and the intrigue begins, ending with Hilfe's suicide.

Into and around this basic plot Greene weaves his drama of Arthur Rowe, a sensitive man who, as a child, "wouldn't hurt a fly" (p. 73). As a child, Rowe had relieved a rat of its misery by beating it repeatedly, and compulsively, on the head because "he couldn't bear the sight of the rat's pain any more" (p. 73). Now as a man he has killed his wife because he could not bear her suffering. He has been given token punishment by a sympathetic court, but he punishes himself more than it is possible for human justice to punish. Despite his crime, we get the impression throughout the novel that Rowe is basically good. Anna Hilfe, who has seen "a lot of killings" and "bad people," finds that Rowe does not fit in with the bad. Rowe tortures himself because, although his wife had been suffering, he "could never tell whether she might not have preferred any sort of life to death" (p. 103).

Then there is the question of intention: had his act been mercy to himself because he could not bear his wife's suffering? There is also Rowe's observation that "you shouldn't do evil that good may come" (p. 21).

Rowe's crime is monstrous to himself because he is basically good. For him, because of his basic goodness, there is the possibility of salvation. Unlike the unnamed, but obviously evil they who "can bear pain--other people's pain--endlessly" because they "don't care" (p. 118), Rowe does care. It is his caring that drives him to his "monstrous act", but it is also his caring that is his saving grace. Rowe's mental torment is his expiation, and the bomb explosion which causes his amnesia is a ritual death preparatory to his rebirth. When we next see Rowe, this time as Richard Digby, he is indeed reborn. Not only is his name changed, but his features are changed by a beard, and he has forgotten the events of the last twenty years of his life, including his killing of his wife. The setting is paradisiacal, and the first chapter of this Book is entitled, fittingly, "Arcady." Here there is peace and simplicity while the war continues outside the walls. But even in this paradise, there is a "Hell" represented by the sick-bay where there are cruelty and suffering. Until he sees the sick-bay for himself, Digby refuses to believe in its existence. To him, it "had no more reality than the conception of Hell presented by sympathetic

theologians" (p. 147). Digby is the innocent Rowe who had believed in a world order. To him, the world is black and white. For instance, he begins to lose respect for Dr. Forester when he finds inefficiently erased pencil marks in Dr. Forester's copy of Tolstoy's What I Believe. This moves him to action and defiance against Dr. Forester because, "you couldn't respect a man who dared not hold his opinion openly" (p. 157). To him this is dishonourable. His defiance eventually leads to his escape and his meeting with detective Prentice.

Rowe becomes a "whole man" only when, through shattering experience, he has learned to love, and to replace pity with "tenderness" (p. 267). Paradoxically, his love permits him to do something which an integrity of honour would not have permitted: he lies to Anna Hilfe. He lies to preserve her love. He desperately needs this chance to love someone and she needs him too. Rowe also sees the lie which he tells Anna as a continuing expiation to the dead, his wife. His replacing of pity with tenderness is what makes him a hero, not in the sense of high adventure where he rights wrongs by violence, but as a person suffering for and with the loved. Even before Rowe becomes the "whole man" and joins the Ministry of those who love, he finds it possible to reject the kind of happiness which he, as Digby, had found in Dr. Forester's Arcady. Digby, he finds later, was "a rather gross, complacent, parasitic

stranger whose happiness had lain in too great an ignorance." Happiness, he finds, "should always be qualified by a knowledge of misery" (p. 222).

In The Ministry of Fear, Dr. Forester is an example of how not to be; Willi Hilfe is another. Dr. Forester is an idealist who is "rich in abstract knowledge," in "the theories which lead one enticingly on with their appearance of nobility, of transcendent virtue." Dr. Forester, however, is lacking in "detailed passionate trivial human knowledge" (p. 222). Although Dr. Forester loved humanity, Rowe finds that it is necessary to love the individual person: "one can't love humanity." The evil, like Willi Hilfe, can always use people like Dr. Forester to their own ends, because they only have to appeal to the idealist's "virtues, his intellectual pride, his abstract love of humanity" (p. 223).

As it is the role of Rose Cullen in The Confidential Agent to recognize "D's" basic goodness and innate incorruptibility and rescue him from himself, so is it the role of Anna Hilfe in The Ministry of Fear to rescue Arthur Rowe. Anna Hilfe, who has seen suffering, cruelty and evil, and is herself involved in her brother's espionage, recognizes and is attracted by Rowe's innate goodness. She knows the circumstances of his killing his wife, but she sees Rowe as an object of love and she attempts to save him, much in the same way as an adult would rescue a child who has strayed too far

afield. The same love/protection situation which had existed between "D" and Rose Cullen lies between Rose and Anna Hilfe. She, like Rose, is basically a realist, one who has learned to live with evil without being corrupted by it. In the novel, she is Rowe's link with reality and sanity. In the end, she saves him from her brother. Anna has a single-minded purpose: her happiness and that of Rowe because she loves him. It will ruin her happiness and that of Rowe if he regains his memory, so she does not want his memory to return. Hers is not love of country or of an ideal, but love for a human being. With her, it is simply a matter of survival. In this sense she is a primitive. Her love for Rowe makes it possible for him to make the integrating sacrifice and commitment by his lying to her.

The many dream sequences in the novel serve to heighten the effect of Rowe's guilt. They also serve to show Rowe's need for an escape. Because reality is too scarring, Rowe attempts to retreat into childhood. The dream sequences also serve the function of a flashback through which we not only get details of Rowe's youth, but also the attitude to these details which experience has forced upon him. Through the details of his childhood, we get to know that the child, especially in Rowe's case, reflects the man. His childhood killing of a rat magnifies into his killing of his wife later on in life. His present attitude to his pastoral, peaceful youth is that it "isn't real life anymore." It is the

"thrillers" with their stories "about spies, and murders, and violence, and wild motor-car chases" that are real. The dream sequences show too, that although Rowe is not fully conscious of it, he is beginning to realize that life is not all peace and tranquility. He is to learn to live with the world as it is.

Greene's skill in using dream sequences in this novel is worthy of particular mention. There are two dream sequences in The Ministry of Fear and they are both functional. In Chapter Five, entitled "Between Sleeping and Waking," the epigraph from Yonge's The Little Duke reads: "they came to a great forest, which seemed to have no path through it." This suggests a sense of lost direction. It is just at this point in the novel that Rowe, thinking that the police want him for the murder of Cost, takes the cunning Hilfe's advice and goes "underground." Here he is in limbo, out of touch with familiar surroundings. It is here fittingly, that he has his first series of dreams (pp. 68-75). In this series of dreams his mind reaches back to familiar, pleasant childhood scenes. He is once again a child, confessing now to his mother that he has killed his wife. The dream wavers between dream and memory, ending finally in the nightmare of the present in which there are policemen and séances like that of Mrs. Belairs where he had become the scapegoat for Cost's "murder." The series of dreams here serve the purpose of a biographical sketch of the important highlights of Rowe's

character. Artistically, they also serve to deepen the pathos of Rowe's plight and the view that existence as he knows it, is "a madhouse." It is at "a madhouse" that Rowe has his next dream, "a kind of waking dream" in which he reasons about killing, damnation, and salvation (pp. 155-156). It is in this waking dream that he realizes the essential egotism of idealists. In this dream, which acts as a self-pardon, Digby/Rowe concludes that non-involvement is a way to save only one's own soul. Was it not better, he asks, "to take part even in crimes of people you loved, if it was necessary hate as they did, and if that were the end of everything suffer damnation with them rather than be saved alone?" He concludes that "for the sake of people you loved, and in the company of people you loved, it was right to risk damnation." This question is to be dealt with by Greene later in The Heart of the Matter. In this novel, The Ministry of Fear, it is this conviction that strengthens Rowe and initiates action--he attempts to shed his identity of Digby and seek his true identity.

As he had done in The Confidential Agent, Greene uses, in The Ministry of Fear, attitudes to life cultivated from the illusion of romance as contrast to cast the spotlight on the realities of life and human nature. Here, too, more so than in The Confidential Agent, the effects of childhood attitudes are brought into focus. There is an affinity drawn

between the essential innocence of the idealist and the innocence of childhood: they both have a distorted view of life. The analogy between the innocence of childhood and the innocence of illusion and how they contrast with life is best shown by two striking episodes in The Ministry of Fear. The passages are rather long, but must be quoted at some length for their full effect. The episodes are significant because the first one occurs when Rowe has reached the depths of despair and decides to commit suicide. He is taking a final look in retrospect at his convictions and certainties throughout his life. The second is equally important because Rowe has gone through his ritual death (the bomb episode and his subsequent loss of memory) and has to begin again.

In the first episode, just prior to his act of charity to the "bookseller," the act that is to give him second chance, Rowe reflects:

In childhood we live under the brightness of immortality--heaven is as near and actual as the seaside. Behind the complicated details of the world stand the simplicities: God is good, the grown-up man or woman knows the answer to every question, there is such a thing as truth and justice is as measured and faultless as a clock. Our heroes are simple: they are brave, they tell the truth, they are good swordsmen and they are never in the long run really defeated. That is why no later books satisfy us like those which were read to us in childhood--for those promised a world of great simplicity of which we knew the rules, but the later books are complicated and contradictory with experience; they are formed out of our own disappointing memories--of the V.C. in the police dock, of the faked income tax

return, the sins in corners, and the hollow voice of the man we despise talking to us of courage and purity. The little duke is dead and betrayed and forgotten; we cannot recognise the villain and we suspect the hero and the world is a small cramped place. The two great popular statements of faith are 'What a strange place the world is' and 'I'm a stranger here myself' (p. 102).

The second episode occurs when Rowe, who had lost his former identity and reappeared as Digby escapes from Dr. Forester's Mental Institution. As the psychologically young Digby, Arthur Rowe is much like Twain's Tom Sawyer who is all for high adventure and honour. From the time he escapes the Mental Clinic, and has to face again "the horror of returning to life" (p. 177), Rowe resumes his own name. He goes to Scotland Yard where he believes he is wanted for murder. When Prentice, the detective assigned to his case explains that Rowe had unwittingly become involved in murder and espionage, Rowe asks him if life "is really like this." To Prentice's reply that "this is life, so I suppose one can say it's like life," Rowe replies:

'It isn't how I had imagined it,' 'You see, I'm a learner. I'm right at the beginning, trying to find my way about. I thought life was much simpler and--grander. I suppose that's how it strikes a boy. I was brought up on stories of Captain Scott writing his last letters home, Oates walking into a blizzard, I've forgotten who it was losing his hands from his experiments with radium, Damien among the lepers' 'There was a book called the Book of Golden Deeds by a woman called Yonge . . . The Little Duke' 'If you were suddenly taken from that world into this job you are doing now you'd feel bewildered. Jones and the cake, the sick bay,

poor Stone . . . all this talk of a man called Hitler . . . your files of wretched faces, the cruelty and meaninglessness It's as if one had been sent on a journey with the wrong map' (pp. 193-194).

The relationship between childhood innocence and an illusory idealism about life is definitely established in these two passages. If the naive certainties of childhood are exchanged for the illusion of a world order as presented by romance, the individual is not prepared to face life because, when he comes face to face with life, the result will be bewilderment, disillusionment, and finally, despair. The individual will find that unlike the certainties of childhood, and unlike the clear-cut distinction between good and evil of the romance, "human nature is not black and white, but black and grey."

Greene's grappling with the emotion of pity is what raises this entertainment above the thriller-romance level. Here, again, as in The Confidential Agent, the subject outweighs the story. In his presentation of pity both as a vice and as a virtue, Greene's concern is the human being, not an abstract discussion of pity. As a vice, pity is "so much more promiscuous than lust" (p. 29), that it can grow to "monstrous proportions necessary to action" (p. 62)--such as Rowe's act of euthanasia. As such, pity can be "a horrible and horrifying emotion" (p. 73). As a virtue, pity is akin to charity, its theological equivalent: it is this very sense

of charity, "pity" (p. 107), which makes Rowe help "the bookseller" with his burden of books. Significantly, it is at the bomb incident which follows this act of charity that Rowe loses his memory and has a chance to take a new look at life. Again, when Anna Hilfe says to Digby/Rowe, "you had a great sense of pity. You didn't like people to suffer," she implies that this is a virtue. Once more, it is significant that it is Rowe's aura of innocence born from his sense of pity that awakens Anna Hilfe's love and protective instinct. Pity, then, is the wheel on which Rowe turns. But a wheel, which can be a great boon, becomes a destructive force when out of control. With a wheel, there is also the element of chance. Arthur Rowe, with the predisposition to a potentially good, and yet potentially destructive emotion, pity, must not encounter an adverse situation; but he does. His wife's suffering from an incurable disease moves him to pity and despair. Greene puts his "hero" in a fully human situation, one for which few can claim to have an easy solution. Greene's emphasis, however, is neither on the theological nor on the legal aspect of Rowe's act. His interest is on the emotion and the sense of human empathy which moved Rowe to his act. From the character sketch we have of Rowe, it is difficult to believe that he would commit murder in the legal sense of the word, because he is basically good. Greene makes

this clear: "it is only if the murderer is a good man that he can be regarded as monstrous. Arthur Rowe was monstrous" (p. 101). There must, therefore, be something insidious and evil in this human pity that drives Rowe to the ultimate transgression against humanity. But Rowe is acting out his nature. This serves to show that good and evil co-exist in man's very nature. Greene's seeming emphasis on the evil aspect of pity does not necessarily show that Greene believes more strongly in evil than in goodness. It shows, rather, that Greene tries to nurture the goodness that is intermixed with evil, by pointing out the evil that might be accepted in the guise of goodness. The "good" are those who have more "grey" than "blackness" in their natures; that is, those who have left more of the light (goodness) that was lost through the original Fall. It is through the original Fall that evil has crept into human nature. On the secular level, this becomes manifest in the visible evil which exists in the world. Fiction reflects this evil and is, in this way, an imitation of life. It is Rowe's degree of light, his charity, that makes him worthy of being saved in the "comic mode" of this entertainment.

The plot raises some interesting questions. First, there is the question as to whether or not Rowe's act had a selfish motive: was his killing of his wife mercy to her, or to his own sensitive nature? Second, and following from the

first, is the question: if Rowe could not bear to see his wife suffer, would it have been more acceptable to have committed suicide? Third, there is the question posed by Rowe himself: should one commit evil that good may come? Rowe's act is an assertion of self. He has the capacity for empathy with human suffering, and in an attempt to alleviate suffering, he acts. His empathy and compassion are godlike, but his action is human. By this I mean that a godlike grace motivates him; he is driven to assert this godliness, the strength of which sets him above the average being. Yet, his action is necessarily human, thus deficient, because he is human, not a god, and is subject to the miseries of being human. The paradox lies in this duality. By acting, he may be wrong, yet he must act because this is his nature. Because The Ministry of Fear is in the comic mode, the drama of Arthur Rowe is played ostensibly with a happy ending. In the specific terms of The Ministry of Fear, the expiatory suffering which Rowe undergoes is the reason that, symbolically, as a pardon, "Providence" leads Rowe to the fete; but it certainly is his innocence and his basic goodness that awakens a kindred spark in Anna Hilfe and causes her to love and help him. For Greene, this human interaction is most important because, as Rowe hopefully thinks at the end of the novel, "perhaps . . . one could atone even to the dead if one suffered for the living enough" (p. 268).

The pity which Auden refers to as a "corrupt parody of love and compassion," the pity which drove Rowe to kill, is to be distinguished from a pure pity--charity, compassion--which is a virtue. Perhaps this is the distinction that Rowe attempts to make with his observation that "love isn't safe when pity's prowling around" (p. 263). This suggests that pity and love are separable, and that love can be destroyed by pity. The puzzle still is not solved by this distinction because compassion and charity are necessary components of love and, surely, somewhere, even in a corrupt pity lies compassion. There is, then, at least this one common denominator, compassion, between pity and love. The haunted Rowe has to answer the question, whether the compassion he felt was, as he himself puts it, mercy to his wife, or mercy to himself (p. 36) because he could not bear the sight of her pain. Pity thus becomes self-pity. Mercy and the kind of "pity" which Rowe said that he felt for Henry Wilcox (p. 92) are suggestive of a distance which is not compatible with love. It would seem that part of Greene's answer to his probing of pity in this novel is that a generalized pity, like a generalized ideal of love--as is the case with Dr. Bellows in The Confidential Agent, and an idealism like Dr. Forester's in this novel--is insufficient. It is insidious and destructive because although it resembles love it can be the submerged rock on which love founders. A generalized

pity separates and destroys while a mature love integrates and bolsters. It would seem that the ratio which is in balance in this entertainment can be stated as this: mercy is to compassion and charity what pity is to love.

An interesting discussion on mercy and charity by M.D.H. Parker in The Slave of Life²⁶ might shed some light on this aspect of the novel. Parker quotes Seneca's distinction between clementia and misericordia. Clementia is defined as "a moderation of the mind which restrains the power of vengeance or a levity of the superior towards the inferior in determining punishment." Clementia here is equated with mercy. Misericordia is defined as "a sickness of the mind aroused by the sight of other men's miseries." Seneca identifies misericordia with weakness and has no sympathy with this. But it should be noted that Seneca was writing for a social purpose. His definitions are utilitarian, Stoic, and pagan. On this same definition, St. Thomas Aquinas makes the distinction that clementia is "mercy deserved", a philosophy of expediency; misericordia is mercy through charity and is Godlike. For our purposes here the two definitions of misericordia have a special interest. By definition it is the Senecan and Stoic misericordia, "the sickness of the mind" that is destructive while the Thomist and Christian view of misericordia, charity, is desirable. Arthur Rowe has both. As such a person, Rowe will always

remain a divided man. Yet, although his "sickness of the mind" is his destructive element, for him there will always remain the possibility of salvation because of his charity. Greene chooses to save him, but only on the terms which, he insists, is the realistic approach to life: a constant awareness of the co-existence of good and evil. We have here again Greene's view of the co-existence of evil and goodness, in the world generally, and in the one person of the symbolic Arthur Rowe. This is why at the end of the novel Arthur Rowe and Anna Hilfe are not shown on the threshold of a life together in which they will live happily ever after. Instead, they must constantly be on guard to preserve each other's happiness and grasp whatever happiness accrues from their shared efforts. Together, now, Rowe and Anna Hilfe are not off on a paradisiacal journey through life, rather, they are on the edge of their ordeal, like two explorers who see at last from the summit of the range the enormous dangerous plain" (p. 268). Happiness in Greene's terms is not deserved, but earned. At least, Rowe will never remain aloof, he will never be guilty of the crime of omission that Dr. Magiot in The Comedians suggests is anti-human; he will never "like an established society," stand aside and be indifferent (p. 273). The words of the priest in The Comedians who preaches the sermon at the service for the dead insurgents (pp. 270-271) have bearing on this entertainment

and on Arthur Rowe's act: "violence can be the expression of love, indifference never. One is an imperfection of charity, the other the perfection of egoism." From this, it would seem that Greene considers the sin of omission to be greater than the sin of commission.

Although, basically, this view of the complexities of Greene's use of pity in this novel seems valid, it is not altogether complete. To attempt to grasp only this "message"²⁷ from this novel, as is the wont of many of Greene's critics, would be to overlook Greene's particular skill and deny him what he says he gives to the reader here: "entertainment." This view of the operation of pity in The Ministry of Fear is complete only in so far as it encompasses Greene's whole entertainment. This is true because with Greene, the spotlight is not on the abstract thought but on the meaningful human action. Greene writes in symbolic terms rather than in philosophical abstractions: this is a novel in which he attempts to share a glimpse of his vision of existence, it is not a moral treatise.

The Ministry of Fear, like The Confidential Agent, makes full use of an atmosphere of unreality, of romance, and of melodrama. The drama of Rowe's expiation and rebirth is played always with war in the background. The title of the novel is a play on words which links the subject to the story. On the one hand, the word "ministry" suggests bureaucracy,

those in power. These are represented in the novel by Hilfe, the archetype of evil, and unknown amoral forces, "they". Hilfe and "they" rule by fear and violence. On the other hand, the word "ministry" suggests charity, service. Those who belong to this group, those who love, live in constant fear: fear that their charity, their service, their love can become a corruption. This why "the whole man" that Arthur Rowe becomes at the end of the novel can, with his love and tenderness for Anna Hilfe, reflect on the words "Ministry of Fear." He makes a distinction between "the small Ministry . . . with limited aims like winning a war or changing a constitution," and the one to which he now belonged, "a Ministry as large as life to which all who loved belonged. If one loved one feared" (p. 267).

In this novel Greene has shown that his main concern is not society, nor the abstract term humanity, but people--their passions, their vices, and their virtues--people in a fallen world, and, therefore, people in a state of sin. He has shown that non-involvement, and involvement from a distance are both undesirable. He has raised the question of the propriety of risking damnation for those whom one loves. With Greene there still remains what Rostenne calls the mystery of sin, the mystery of the sinner ("le mystère du pêche, le mystère de l'homme pêcheur").²⁸ Because this novel is in the comic mode, in Frye's definition of the term, Greene sees fit

to save his hero, thus giving an affirmative answer to his own question. But even here, there is only a partially happy ending. The principals, Arthur Rowe, and Anna Hilfe, have been able to see the dangers. But they have always to be on guard against these dangers, and against themselves and against each other. The reader will always remain in doubt about this kind of happiness. Because of this, Greene's seeming affirmative remains equivocal. As he portrays his characters, Greene delineates the thin line which divides virtue from vice, in other words, the line that divides goodness from evil. The line, as he draws it, is thin, but it is there and must be sought and cherished. As Walter Allen puts it in "Writers of Today," Greene presents the world as he sees it: "the seedy world of economic man at his most urbanised and atomised, a world in which the sense of community has been lost"29

In his myth, Greene rescues his hero from this "seedy" world. By showing the undesirable way, he implicitly shows the way back to the Ministry of love. The archetypal pattern of the return is in keeping with Greene's basic archetype of regeneration through experience. First, through the dream sequences, we have the image of Rowe's unconscious sense of unity, of a cosmic order and of love (pity and compassion). This, symbolically represents his birth. Next, we see the evil effects of pity, a corruption of this love. Then Rowe's

symbolic death at the bomb incident. Finally, there is Rowe's symbolic rebirth, maturity and a conscious sense of unity gained through a real love. This mature unity differs from the idyllic harmony of Rowe's early childhood because it incorporates experience.

I cannot praise a fugitive and cloistered virtue,
unexercised and unbreathed...

John Milton, Areopagitica

CHAPTER IV

THE POWER AND THE GLORY

Like most of Greene's novels, The Power and the Glory begins with descriptions and images which evoke the sense of a fallen world, a sense of evil and of decay. Greene uses images of "buzzards," "sharks," and "carrion" among others, to symbolize an atmosphere of evil, of struggle, and of failure. In one sentence Greene establishes the essence of the physical plot of the novel: "Mr. Tench went . . . past the Treasury which had once been a church," (p. 1). Here, the imagery is one of the material replacing the spiritual. This foreshadows the struggle between State and Church or, more specifically, between the Mexican lieutenant and the whiskey priest. The drama of this struggle forms the back-drop for the more serious, more intense spiritual struggle of the whiskey priest. It is clear that priority must be given to the spiritual struggle of the priest because he could have escaped or at least have taken the way of Padre José had it not been for his concern--through pride or otherwise--over his priestly obligations.

The Power and the Glory, although it lacks the intensive characterization of The Heart of the Matter is a novel with a strong tragic tone. The principals, the Mexican lieutenant,

and the whiskey priest, both in their own way are good men, yet they are at war with each other and destroy each other. In terms of the novel, the lieutenant succeeds in his sphere--the material world--over the priest. At the end of the novel, however, he is spiritless and cannot savour his victory. For the priest, a pattern of spiritual regeneration emerges dominant in the person of the new priest, in the recanting of the boy, Luis, and in hollowness of the lieutenant's victory.

The novel should not be seen as Greene's article of faith in Church dogma, because, if one chose, a similar limited case could be made for the secular struggle between Church and State with the State emerging victorious. Both views are necessarily limited because they tend to overlook both Greene's artistic skill and his main concern, which is that of a man who is engaged in a heroic attempt to assert his responsibility and his humanity. Here too, Greene's basic archetype of regeneration through experience is evident. The affinity between this novel and the entertainments, The Confidential Agent and The Ministry of Fear, is established by this basic archetype and by the element of the physical chase. The Power and the Glory, however, differs from the entertainments in mode and in scope. This novel has a tragic tone, although it seems to lack the tragic rhythm, the true sense of an unavoidable tragedy the The Heart of the Matter

presents. This may be so, first, because of the carefully prepared regenerative pattern established by the action which takes place between Luis, and his mother, with his mother reading to him about saints. At first the boy scoffs at this because his saint, his hero, is secular--the lieutenant. Later, he rejects the lieutenant and admits the new priest to the house. Second, despite the priest's anguish concerning the state of his own soul, that of his child, and that of his parishoners, the conflict is, on the one hand, between himself and the lieutenant, and, on the other, between the dictates of Church dogma and what he feels as an independent human being. His fight is not with God. In The Heart of the Matter, however, Scobie's fight is with God, himself, and human nature generally. We see Scobie as a man acting out his nature and yet, acting against his own nature. He is at once the victim and the offender. Although the priest's agony is engaging and moving, the feeling of terror, of an unbridgable void presented by The Heart of the Matter is absent.

The Power and the Glory resembles in many ways a ritual drama, with the priest both as the scapegoat and as the dying god-king. The priest is 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" (p. 25). When the "winds fail," in this case, the waning of religious spirit in his parish, the priest has failed and must die. Thus he becomes the

sacrifice, the dead "bull" (p. 295). The priest is the scapegoat for the Church and for the community of believers who can now, with his death, more firmly cherish their secret faith because they have yet another "saint" as Luis' mother suggests (p. 298). The priest is the scapegoat for his child, too, for whose salvation he offers his own damnation as propitiation. The minor characters, whose lives the priest had affected, form the chorus and all note the priest's passing. They all "come on stage" to voice this awareness when the final act of the priest's execution is played. They report the priest's death. The priest's tale is told as through a telescope. First, in the contracted lens we view the priest through Mr. Tench's eyes. Gradually, as the lenses are magnified, the priest is "on stage" as we see him in his flight and follow him through his capture. As the lenses again contract, the priest fades from our view and it is through the report of the chorus that we know of the priest's death. The effect of this artistic approach by Greene is to make the reader feel that he is a spectator viewing the acting-out of a drama on stage.

The use of the term "ritual drama" here should perhaps be explained. The priest undergoes the ritual of death which in itself subsumes the basic archetype of death and rebirth through experience. The priest is "reborn" in the person of the new priest because, after his fall from "grace," he has undergone humiliation and suffering. Added to this he has

finally been able to shrug off Church doctrine and stand as a culpable human being, perhaps not ready but willing to face the fearful mercy of his God. In this sense, the priest's actual death is a ritual because the regenerative principle has been prepared for as shown earlier. It is drama, too, because of the distance maintained between the principal action and the spectators (the readers) by Greene's telescopic approach. Again, by entering the priest's consciousness, thus unfolding his tale by revelation rather than by narrative, Greene maintains constant dramatic tension. We sense the pathos of the priest's struggles but we do not undergo it ourselves. At the same time, despite the distance, we share the priest's attainment of moral insight and derive pleasure from his regeneration. This ritual drama is, of course, Christian rather than pagan, and in the novel there are elements of a Christian Passion with the presence of the Judas-like mestizo who betrays the priest.

Within this artistic framework, Greene weaves his tale of a Catholic priest in a Mexican village who, because of persecution from the state, must either renounce his priesthood, escape or be hunted down and executed publicly. He does not yield, nor does he escape, although, we are led to believe, he could have escaped. He did not escape at first because of "pride" (p. 129), and later, because of an increasing sense of guilt and sense of duty. The priest stays and is hunted

down by the lieutenant, whose sole aim is "cleansing" the state of practising priests. The lieutenant's youthful association with the Church has been unpleasant, and he had harboured only visions of the Church's corruption.

Coincident with the priest's physical struggle for survival, and, I suggest, of greater concern to Greene, is the spiritual struggle of the priest. In the absence of Church shelter and control, he has succumbed to what he, as a "good" priest, would have described as weakness and lust. He has taken to drink and, in a night of lust has fathered a child by one of his parishoners. Greene's focus is on the sense of guilt which follows this act; on the conflict between this guilt and the priest's conception of his worthiness to perform his office; and on the priest's heroic attempt to secure some measure of pardon from God. It is the priest's fall from grace, a dubious grace in terms of the novel, that opens the way for the priest to become a better man after much soul-searching. In this sense, his fall is a "fortunate" fall. As such, Greene's priest's tale takes its place in the long tradition of myth. In reviewing the ritual and myth of the Ancient Near East from which Greek myth and others have crystallized, Herbert Weisinger in Tragedy and the Paradox of the Fortunate Fall³⁰ finds that these myths all stem from the theory of the fortunate fall. They all inculcate "the drama in which the cosmic and chaotic powers strive with one

another, and which ends in the victory of the creative God." This theory of the fortunate fall is related to, and actually stems from the theory of the divine king who "represents the hopes of survival of the community." When the winds fail, that is, when all is not well with the community, "the God dies that the people might live; through him they vicariously expiate their sins and pay their penance; in his suffering they suffer; and in his death is their life. In time, the dying God . . . in his own person undergoes the searing experiences of combat, suffering, and death." The elements of a Christian ritual drama in this novel are undeniable, then, in view of this discussion.

If The Power and the Glory is seen as ritual drama, its artistry becomes evident. The prepared regenerative pattern which might seem to be a flaw when this novel is compared with The Heart of the Matter, becomes its strength in its particular genre. In The Power and the Glory, Greene has written a novel with a regenerative principle much like the regenerative pattern that emerges dominant in Shakespeare's tragic plays. This novel, I find, is a preparation for the true tragic irony of Scobie's dilemma. Better still, The Heart of the Matter is an advancement on The Power and the Glory. In the priest's case, for example, as in most of Shakespeare's tragic plays, one can touch on the "flaw" which causes the priest's downfall. In the tragic irony of Scobie's

drama, we find that the positive values of his compassion and sense of responsibility cause his downfall.

By invading his characters' consciousness, Greene is able to fill in past details without the necessity of a long, sequential narrative. For instance, details of the priest's previous life are given in this way, and when we join the priest in his flight, we know that he is bearing a heavy burden of guilt. It is only later that we know of his addiction to drink and of his sexual indulgence. It is the priest's "sins" which become his salvation. Because of his "sins" he has lost the complacency fostered by his elevated position in the Church: "the good things of life had come to him too early--the respect of his contemporaries, a safe livelihood. The trite religious word upon the tongue, the joke to ease the way, the ready acceptance of other people's homage" (p. 29). By the priest's own admission, this homage had made him proud. By implicit comparison, he is like the priest whose execution the lieutenant recalls: "he was a monsignor, . . . he had a sort of contempt for the lower clergy, and right up to the last he was explaining his rank" (p. 33). In fact, it is this pride, this sense of invulnerability which, at first, caused the priest to defy the State's edict against the Church. The State had either closed down, or appropriated all churches, and had forbidden observance of the Mass. The priests were all to go into voluntary exile,

renounce their vows by marrying and accepting a pension, or be hunted down and executed if they defied the law. The priest's defiance of the law causes him, gradually, to shed the material symbols of his office (p. 82). By the time we first see him, he has left only a briefcase containing "a little brandy" and some papers. Later, he discards even this and is a man, unaccommodated, with only his faith and his burden of uncertainty concerning his fate. Significantly, the last vestige of his office, to be equated with his pride of position, is discarded when he meets his daughter by the "rubbish-tip" (p. 110). The silk-lined case represented "a whole important and respected youth . . . he had been given it by his parishoners in Concepcion on the fifth anniversary of his ordination" (p. 109). Through all his flight he had cherished this. In the face of the youthful corruption of his child, the living representation of his lust, however, he finally loses his pride. At the same time, he becomes just another parent concerned for the welfare of his child's soul. He is now no longer a priest concerned with a generalized love of every soul. His love is more personal, more meaningful and is in conflict with his position as world-father: "one mustn't have human affections--or rather one must love every soul as if it were one's own child. The passion to protect must extend itself over a world--but he felt it tethered and aching like a hobbled animal to the tree trunk" (p. 112).

The tree trunk near the rubbish is where he had said goodbye to his daughter. As one who "loves every soul," the priest can maintain a certain distance from the sinner, he can look down in pity and be a mediator between the sinner and God. But when the priest can see himself as a sinner, and can become a parent actively concerned over the welfare of his offspring, he becomes more than just a mediator. He becomes Christ-like in offering himself as a willing sacrifice for his daughter's salvation. He can pray silently, "O God, give me any kind of death--without contrition, in a state of sin--only save the child" (p. 111).

The priest's recognition of Brigida as his child rather than as the living symbol of his sin, is one of the climaxes of the novel and may actually be the most important single episode in the whole novel. Greene dwells at length on this episode as compared to the speed and economy of the rest of the novel. Greene devotes thirty-two pages (pp. 81-112) of this fast-paced novel to this episode, and every subsequent scene, especially the important episode of the priest's first imprisonment, harkens back to this scene of recognition. Significantly, too, it is in this village which he calls "home" and which he has been avoiding for six years that the priest had fathered Brigida. It is here that he indeed becomes a human father rather than a priestly father, and suffers the heart-ache of parenthood. It is here too, that when the

lieutenant would have captured him, his own "sin," Brigida, saves him by declaring him to be her father. It is here that the priest feels "the shock of human love" (p. 90). Gradually, we see the priest becoming human. From seeing Brigida simply as the result of "an act which horrified him" (p. 90), the priest becomes "aware of an immense load of responsibility . . . indistinguishable from love. This he thought, must be what all parents feel: ordinary men go through life like this crossing their fingers, praying against pain, afraid For years, of course, he had been responsible for souls, but that was different . . . a lighter thing" (p. 90). His interrupted sermon at the Mass in the village ends as a kind of self-pardon. Here, the priest equates pro-creation with love. It is at this Mass in the village that he felt God present in the body, the symbolic communion bread, "for the first time in six years" (p. 97). Later when the priest is about to say goodbye to Brigida, Greene makes the change from priestly father to parent explicit and moving: the priest "was a man who was supposed to save souls; it had seemed quite simple once, preaching at Benediction, organizing the guilds, having coffee with elderly ladies behind barred windows, blessing new houses with a little incense, wearing black gloves . . . it was as easy as saving money: now it was a mystery. He was aware of his own desperate inadequacy" (p. 111). The priest can now tell Brigida: "I love you. I am your father and I love

you . . . you are--so important." To him she is "more important than a whole continent" (p. 111). Recognition of his fallibility and his human limitation places the priest squarely back into the stream of humanity where he, too, is subject to the mystery of existence without all the answers. He no longer feels that he has all the answers provided by the Church and he becomes humble. He even becomes Christ-like in his treatment of the Judas, the mestizo whom he is certain is bent on betraying him (p. 133).

It is important to point out that the priest had never lost his faith in God. His doubts had been fostered by the conflict between Church doctrine and his human indulgence. It is his faith in God which enables him, a "sinner," to continue to give absolution to others in the name of God. Paradoxically, in recognizing himself to be human, the priest becomes more than human because he, even though fearfully, can emulate the Christ-like sacrifice. He can love his child to the extent of offering his damnation as propitiation for her corrupt soul: to love and forgive the sinful is to approach Godliness. In his person, the priest reaffirms the mystery of the God-Man relationship. At the same time that the priest becomes the sacrifice, he may secure his own salvation because, when he becomes human and accepts his "sin," he becomes subject to the sacrifice which Christ had made for the sinner. This is why he feels that he cannot place himself even above the

Judas-mestizo who is to betray him. As the priest sees it, "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?" (p. 133). By becoming humble and rejoining the universe of culpable human beings, then, the priest can now secure at least the possibility of salvation by making himself subject to Christ's sacrifice for fallen humanity. He can throw himself on the inestimable mercy of God, the extent and quality of which he knows "nothing" (p. 269).

Greene has placed the priest's agony and his attained humility in a positive light by implicit contrast with the other characters in the novel. These are, notably, the lieutenant; Padre Jose; the "pious" woman in the prison; the Lehrs; and the unseen martyr, Juan. The superstitious, blind faith of the more minor characters, too, is in contrast to the searching, probing faith of the priest. To these converts, the mass itself is a symbol of faith rather than the symbolized ritual that it is, in fact. The faith of the Indian woman stands as a challenge to the priest at the time when his faith in God is at its lowest ebb. He expects that a miracle should attend an act of faith such as the Indian woman's. Mr. Tench, at the same time that he is part of the chorus of this drama, is an irreligious spectator whose concern over the priest's execution is akin to what one feels on "seeing a neighbour shot" (p. 294).

The lieutenant, in his given sphere, is as much a priest of the secular, as the whiskey priest is of the spiritual, world. The lieutenant is a leader, an example to his men. He has "something of a priest in his intent observant walk--a theologian going back over the errors of the past to destroy them again" (p. 32). His quarters are "as comfortless as a prison or a monastic cell" (p. 32). He is a mystic, too, yet his view of existence is nihilistic. His view of existence is that human beings had "evolved from animals for no purpose at all" (p. 33). The lieutenant has a religious intensity of purpose and his asceticism is an implicit comment on the priest who lacks these "virtues". Because of this characterization of the lieutenant, the priest's degradation stands in stark contrast. The lieutenant is an example to the priest. But this, too, adds to Greene's basic image of a fallen world. This is a world in which material values supercede spiritual values. It is necessary that the basic, but misdirected virtues of the lieutenant should be recognized by the priest because there is some positive value in him. He is of lesser stature than the priest, however, because he has permitted his "secret passion" (p. 162), his desire to capture the priest, to become an end in itself. He is trapped by his own zeal. His passion causes him to destroy the very people whom he is dedicated to serve. Although the lieutenant means well to his people, his unbending ethic of duty precludes the tolerance,

humility, and compassion which become the priest's saving grace. The lieutenant can feel "no sympathy at all with the weakness of the flesh" (p. 34). Such an attitude will invariably result in pride, the inordinate self-esteem which had been the priest's failing previously. The end result of such a pride in the face of the frustrating lack of success which the lieutenant experiences, is despair. In the end, the lieutenant has no faith to rely on; he has had only faith in himself and his cause. This is the reason that at the end of the novel he is a hollow man. At the end, "the dynamic love which used to move his trigger-finger felt flat and dead" (p. 299). All his human passion has been spent in a messianic crusade for a cause that proves hopeless. His cause has proved hopeless because when the boy, Luis, who had previously esteemed him as a hero spits on his revolver-butt, this is a summary rejection of all that the lieutenant stands for. The boy, Luis, represents the new generation, and his action in sheltering the new priest, signals failure of the lieutenant's vow that life, for the new generation, "is never going to be again for them what it was" for him (p. 299).

Padre Jose stands out, first, as a balm to the lieutenant's bitter crusade. He represents, to the lieutenant, "a living witness to the weakness" of the faith of priests (p. 34). It is obvious that as a dedicated man himself, the lieutenant despises Padre Jose and holds a grudging admiration for the

whiskey priest who, by his very tenacity in the face of his fear, reaffirms the mystery of faith. Second, Padre José stands out to the priest as a continuing source of doubt as to whether or not it is better to take the line of least resistance. Is it better, he asks himself, to do evil that good may come? In terms of the novel, this means, is it worthwhile to risk the venting of the lieutenant's wrath on the villagers who shelter him so that he can continue to serve their spiritual needs? (pp. 88-89). Would it have been better to subject himself to the ridicule of religion of which Padre José is the incarnation? The answer is given by the lieutenant's grudging admiration of the whiskey priest; by the mockery of Padre José by the children of the village; and by Padre José's despair. Padre José "had lived for two years in a continuous state of sin" (p. 39). Because this has to do with his breaking of his ascetic vows, his "sin" is akin to the whiskey priest's. There is a symbolic difference, however, between Padre José's taking a wife and the whiskey priest's sexual indulgence. Padre José's sexual impotence (p. 39) is in contrast to the whiskey priest's virility. The whiskey priest can give life, Padre José cannot. The analogue here is to the whiskey priest's activity, his soul-searching for new spiritual life as opposed to Padre José's vegetable existence. For Padre José now, "there was never anything to do at all--no daily Office, no Masses, no confessions, and it was no good

praying any longer at all: a prayer demanded an act and he had no intention of acting" (p. 39). Padre José, we know from the whiskey priest's reminiscence, had never been a man of high aspirations. He had had the humility of office that the whiskey priest lacked. Because Padre José lacks the degree of self-assertion which the whiskey priest has, he can never fall as far as the whiskey priest. By the same token, however, he can never reach the height of spiritual attainment of the whiskey priest. Unlike Padre José, the whiskey priest will never be a bystander. In contrast, then, the whiskey priest's sins and his action to atone for these sins set him above Padre José.

The "pious", unnamed woman in the prison is the incarnation of the priest's former life. She represents the homage, and tendency to complacency which is opposed to truth, compassion, tolerance, and humility. She represents the lip service that is paid to religion without the true spirit of religion. From her conversation with the priest it is clear that this pious woman takes pride in her "Christian attitude." Hers is a world of white and black, that is, of "good and evil," and of "good" priests like the martyr, Juan, whose story Luis' mother reads to her children in the course of the novel. People like this pious woman "came to death so often in a state of invincible complacency, full of uncharity" (p. 172). If charity is a God-like grace, then the conclusion, here, must

be that complacency and the attendant uncharity, puts the holder further away from God. If God can make allowances, surely, a human being must. Significantly, the priest's advice to her "You must trust God, my dear, to make allowances" (p. 175), is what he himself has to do. The whiskey priest, for all his sins, is closer to God than is this pious woman.

The Lehr's represent an ethic of an ordered life in which preparation is made for every contingency (p. 222). They are frugal and Puritanical, and are "upright and idealistic" (p. 220). Mr. Lehr has about him "the thin rectitude of a bishop upon a tomb" (p. 234). Like Browning's "Bishop," for him, "peace, peace seems all." With his sister, he lives in an Arcadian state, cloistered from the struggles of the world. The Lehrs lived in peace and "had combined to drive savagery out by simply ignoring anything that conflicted with an ordinary German-American homestead" (p. 220). This, of course, sets the priest's struggle in worthwhile perspective because one does not improve a situation simply by ignoring it. An attitude such as that of the Lehrs conflicts with Greene's view of the need for a perpetual fight against sin and corruption. Here, idealism is again used by Greene as an antithetical example of his concept of the need for awareness. Mr. Lehr "had disapproved of militarism" in Germany, but had not fought against it: he had fled. This, along with Padre José's stand, constitutes, in this novel, a sin of omission

greater than the whiskey priest's sins of commission.

Coral Fellows is presented in this novel as an innocent. She is, however, the innocent without awareness, with all the certainties and simplicities of youth: "her candour made allowances for nobody: the future, full of compromises, anxieties, and shame, lay outside . . ." (p. 48). She dies a violent death, the details of which we are not told. She has a basic charity. Her act of charity to the priest is probably the turning point in her facing of the compromises of life. She finds that she has to lie to the lieutenant to save the priest. In some ways, she is a miniature incarnation of the priest. Like the priest, she is a guardian--she is more of a guardian to her parents than they are to her. The same principle of unity which attends the priest's death attends hers: she becomes the unifying principle between her weak father who tends to dissociate himself from misery, and her hypochondriacal mother. Mr. and Mrs. Fellows have drifted apart, and the feeling and civilities between them are superficial. They are united in the end. With the death of Coral, they feel that, "they had both been deserted. They had to stick together" (p. 290). Now that they no longer have Coral to depend on, they have to depend on each other. Even the whining Mrs. Fellows who is anxious to return to England, when Mr. Fellows refuses to go, can now say to her husband, "We've got each other, dear" (p. 291).

Artistically, Greene makes provision for a dramatic lull in the fury and agony of the priest's struggle. The priest finally crosses the border into Southern Mexico and, through border regulations, is safe from pursuit by the lieutenant. Here, in the state where the Lehrs lead their peaceful existence, the priest can celebrate a Mass in Mr. Lehr's barn. Here, he has communicants and respect: "he felt respect all the way up the street" (p. 226). This interlude is in striking contrast to the flight of the priest when he had been reduced to fighting with an aged, crippled, dog for its food--an old, rotting bone. Here, too, the priest can raise money by practising the simony that had so embittered the lieutenant. An example of this simony sees the priest bargaining with a woman about the price he will charge to baptize her children (pp. 244-245). The priest had tasted the depths of privation and now it was tempting to return to, and savour, the life of ease.

It is here, however, that Greene shows the essential virtue in the priest that makes him worthy of salvation and gives the reason for the regenerative pattern in the novel. The priest buys whiskey with the money, and his cunning matches that of the cantina-owner. His awareness of his continued state of sin shows, however, that he has not totally reverted, unthinkingly, to his former days. He decides, now that he himself has to revert to lies to outwit the cantina-

owner to get better whiskey value for his money, that "fear and death" are not the worst things. He marvels at "how easily one forgot and went back" (p. 228). The confessional at which he presides is really his wrestling with his conscience, because later, during the confessional, "suddenly, without warning, with an old sense of homesickness, he thought of the hostages in the prison yard . . . the suffering and endurance which went on everywhere the other side of the mountains" (p. 232). He finds that he can no longer give the penance mechanically, and he is irritated by the complacency of the communicants. When he says to one of these communicants "' . . . loving God isn't any different from loving a man--or a child'" (p. 233), the priest is equating human love with love of God and is actually affirming his acceptance of the responsibility of parenthood. The priest is torn between his ascetic vows and his humanness--the fact that he "loved the result" of his "crime" (p. 238). He cannot yet reconcile this love, "the thought of the child on the rubbish heap" which "came automatically back to him with painful love" with his ascetic vows. He cannot communicate with God, hence his journey to Las Casas where he can confess and be absolved is useless. He cannot confess and be absolved because, at the same time that he feels guilty of a crime because of his vows, he feels that giving life to the image of God, even in all its youthful corruption, is not a crime. This is the crux of the

priest's spiritual struggle: his humanity is at war with the Church's teaching.

I am convinced that there are two main reasons that the priest returns, Christ-like, with the Judas, the mestizo. One is that if he allows a man, even the American gunman, a murderer, to die in mortal sin, he will have failed God not once, but twice--the one being failure of duty, the other, his unresolved sense of sin. The second reason for his committing suicide (and this is really what he does by returning), is his giving way to despair at his inability to solve his conflict. He has decided to let God be the judge. The question has been plaguing him throughout his flight, and when he reads Coral's assessment of Hamlet's dilemma; "'the Prince of Denmark is wondering whether he should kill himself or not, whether it is better to go on suffering all the doubts about his father, or by one blow . . . ,'" the priest decides on the "one blow."

The priest's action in going to his death substantiates his role as scapegoat and as an assertive human being subject only to the Highest Judge. As a scapegoat, the priest offers himself as sacrifice in the name of God. As an assertive human being, he dies for his love of his child in defiance of ecclesiastic vows which had conflicted with human desire and passion. The view of the priest's double reason for returning can be seen from his words to the lieutenant.

'I don't know a thing about the mercy of God: I don't know how awful the human heart looks to Him.

But I do know this--that if there's ever been a single man in this state damned, then I'll be damned too.' (He said), 'I wouldn't want it to be any different. I just want justice, that's all' (p. 269).

The priest refuses to be damned for reneging on his duty. And, as to his own guilt, he is making God the judge.

It is now that the decision is out of his hands that the priest is ready for confession. He is refused the chance to confess by Padre José and attempts a confession alone in the prison on the eve of his execution. His attempts at contrition are presented with engrossing pathos. The priest is concerned not so much with his own soul, but with that of Brigida, his child. Greene presents the priest's epiphany in the form of a dream. This dream, one of several in the novel, is of greatest import because it takes the form of a miraculous revelation to the priest that he has been forgiven (pp. 282-283). Briefly, the dream is one of fruitfulness and a child in the dream, probably Coral, who had previously spoken to the priest about Morse Code, speaks to him now of "Morse" code and "news." Both of these are symbolic of communication and it is on awaking from this dream that the priest can finally communicate with God. For the first time he says an act of contrition, beautiful in its simplicity, expressing only contrition, no request. The distinct impression is that the priest has attained his forgiveness. He fades from our view and the final chapter is given to the chorus who report his death.

The Power and the Glory exemplifies, even more than do the entertainments, Greene's basic archetype of regeneration through experience. The need for a basic awareness of evil as well as the concept of the fortunate fall is abundantly evident in this novel: good can come of evil. As always in Greene, evil is spotlighted, but as usual, too, there ~~is~~^{are} goodness and charity to offset this evil. Greene's continuing use of characters set in balance and contrast is one of the reasons for the fast pace of his novels. This serves the purpose of saving the reader the tedium of a sequential narrative.

Perhaps it is in this novel with the deep sense of the religious, that the reason that Greene uses idealism as an antithetical example to communicate his basic archetype, may be seen. The whiskey priest observes, with reference to his daughter, that the love which he felt for her, "he should have felt for every soul in the world: all the fear and the wish to save concentrated unjustly on the one child" (p. 280). The word "unjustly", here, may be attributed to the priest's sense of guilt, of failure in what he considers to be his duty. He finds, however, that this is the way it is: he loves this one child more than a whole "continent." The rest of his observation, here, can perhaps be set against his previous words to the lieutenant that what God-like love man has is "the smallest glass of love mixed with a pint of ditch

water" (p. 269). It is only God who can love the whole world. The essential egotism of the idealist approaches divinity with insufficiency--"the smallest glass." It is impossible then, for the idealist to love the whole world. He is not being true to himself if he thinks he can. As has been shown here, in The Confidential Agent, and in The Ministry of Fear, the best one can do to approach Godliness is to love one person and show charity to all others. With this view, Greene is a realist. His realism, however, is not a social realism like the social realism of the late nineteenth century, but a realism of the "spiritual" nature of man. This has meaning in the context of all time, hence Greene's mythic pattern can refer even as far back as the original Fall.

Shall mortal man be more just than God?
Shall a man be more pure than his maker?
Job. 4:17

CHAPTER V

THE HEART OF THE MATTER

The critical controversy still rages over Greene's enigmatic presentation of Scobie, the hero of The Heart of the Matter. Scobie has been seen variously as a Christ-figure, as a Prometheus, as a coward, and as a man who "is guilty of a kind of emotional egoism," a man who has "a compulsion to take the whole load of cosmic suffering on his own shoulders."³¹ In "Graham Greene and the Catholic Press,"³² Donald P. Costello shows that the Catholic world has seized upon The Heart of the Matter as Greene's theological manifesto and/or his debasement of Catholic doctrine.

There certainly are elements of the Christ-figure, of the Promethean, and of the despairing coward in Greene's presentation of Scobie. Further, the fact that Scobie is a Catholic does have important bearing on this novel. To see Scobie from only one of these points of view, however, is to overlook the fact that Scobie is but an expanded symbol in the network of Greene's mythology. He is the symbol of a certain force, spiritual and human, which is in conflict not only with inimicable external forces, but within itself. Briefly, the external forces are represented by the "world" of the novel. The internal force is divine and human love which has been

corrupted into pity. Here, we find operating the same concept of pity as both a vice and as a virtue as was the case in The Ministry of Fear. The compassion which motivates pity and makes it a virtue, distinguishes Scobie from others in his environment. Pity is a vice when it becomes the breach through which one's integrity is overrun. The main differences between The Heart of the Matter and The Confidential Agent are the mode, the tone and the scope. In many ways, Scobie is none other than Greene's fixed symbol of the hunted man whom we have seen in The Confidential Agent, The Ministry of Fear and The Power and the Glory. In context, Scobie is an expanded symbol of this archetype and represents Greene's continuous probing of certain aspects of the spiritual and moral existence of man as he acts with and against the contradictions of life. Here, E. K. Brown's instructive view, in Rhythm in the Novel,³³ of the artist's use of the "fixed" symbol and the "expanding" symbol might shed some light on Greene's varied presentation of his basic archetype of the hunted man who secures, or is at least a symbol of, regeneration through experience. As Brown sees it:

the fixed symbol is almost entirely repetition; the expanding symbol is repetition balanced by variation; and that variation is in progressively deepening disclosure. By the slow uneven way in which it accretes meaning from the succession of contexts in which it occurs; by the mysterious life of its own it takes on and supports; by the part of its meaning that even on the last page of the novel it appears still to withhold--the expanding symbol responds to the impulses of the novelist who is aware that he

cannot give us the core of his meaning, but strains to reveal now this aspect of it, now that aspect, in a sequence of sudden flashes.

Greene's basic archetype has been seen in different contexts in the entertainments dealt with here, and in the novel, The Power and the Glory. In The Heart of the Matter we have yet another context. It is true that Catholicism forms part of the meaning of the novel, but Catholicism here is only part of the "variations" from which the novel "accretes" its meaning. In as much as Greene is concerned with the spiritual, as well as the human aspects of existence, questions which touch upon the spiritual motivation of man do have their place in his novel. If these questions happen to be Catholic, it is only that this is part of the artist's donnée as Henry James puts it in "The Art of Fiction."³⁴ James sees the main concern of an author to consist in his attempt to represent life. In doing this, the author must be granted his subject, his idea, his "donnée." What is left to criticism is the use the artist makes of these. We do not have to be Catholic to see that, in Scobie, Greene has presented a man acting in conflict with his own nature. The Catholic overtones are part of the context which Greene has had to create in order to concretize the internal and external forces which are in opposition.

The Heart of the Matter is neither Greene's article of faith nor his attempt to re-create a Christ or a Prometheus;

neither is it his attempt to present the anatomy of cowardice. The Christ image, the Prometheus image, and the image of the despairing coward, along with the Catholic element in the novel, are all part of the created context and must be examined, not singly, but as they relate to each other. It is left to us only to "see," as Henry James uses the term, what "use" Greene makes of the various literary and other elements which comprise The Heart of the Matter.

In this novel, Major Scobie, the protagonist, is caught between his highly compassionate nature and his concern over the disposition of his soul after death. His solution to this problem is an act of self-sacrifice and of despair. It is the balance which Greene maintains between Scobie's act as "sacrifice" and as "despair" which decides for us Scobie's moral stature. The Christ-figure image is evoked if Scobie's choice is a sacrifice of self. If Scobie dies sacrificing himself in defiance of an established order which he questions, he is a heroic, Promethean figure. If he commits suicide in despair under overpowering social circumstances, he becomes perhaps a coward, perhaps the unfortunate victim of these circumstances. If seen only as a victim of social pressures, Scobie is a pathetic figure who does not attain the stature of a tragic figure who has made a self-assertive choice. Greene has so carefully characterized Scobie as a man willing to shoulder his responsibilities, however, that the question that

societal influences are solely, or even mainly responsible for Scobie's final act must be ruled out.

Scobie's despair stems mainly from sources closely related to the image of him as a Christ-figure, and as a Prometheus. His despair stems from the conflict between his Christ-like compassion, and his human limitations. The tragic irony is that Scobie's Christ-like compassion and his sense of responsibility cause his downfall. Because of his compassion and his sense of duty, Scobie attempts what, for a human being, is an impossible task: he wants to secure happiness for all. An increasing awareness of the impossibility of this task forces Scobie to question the need for human suffering, and leads him to the depths of despair and the risk of damnation. But despair such as Scobie experiences, is realized only by the "good." Scobie is seen by his superior, the Commissioner who is soon to retire, as "Aristides the Just" (p. 18). Wilson, a man who hates and envies Scobie, sees him as being "too damned honest to live" (p. 126). Yusef, the devil archetype in the novel, speaks of Scobie as "a Daniel" (p. 87). To Helen, his mistress, Scobie is "good." Scobie is a man who "had always been prepared to accept responsibility for his actions" (p. 58). Scobie's commendable, but impossible aim to secure happiness for others is bound to fail, however, because "no human being can really understand another," and "no one can arrange another's happiness" (p. 81). At the same

time, Scobie does try even to the point of despair and suicide. His effort, and the resulting despair, set him above the evil man and mark him as a man of high moral stature. This is so because, although Father Clay suggests that suicide is the unforgivable sin (p. 84), and although "one is told" that despair, too, is an "unforgivable sin" (p. 58), Greene's authorial comment on despair is that despair is "a sin the corrupt or evil man never practises." The evil man "never reaches the freezing point of absolute failure. Only the man of goodwill carries always in his heart this capacity for damnation" (p. 59). The question of damnation places Scobie beyond human judgment because, as Father Rank says to Louise, no one, not even a priest, knows "a thing about God's mercy" (p. 263).

Briefly, the plot deals with Major Scobie, a Deputy Commissioner of Police in Sierra Leone during wartime. On the pending retirement of the Commissioner, Scobie his Deputy, has been overlooked as his successor. This does not bother Scobie, but Louise, his wife, considers this rejection a blow to her social image. She feels compelled to leave the colony for South Africa until she again feels capable of facing the malicious gossip of her "friends." In an effort to please her, Scobie, who up to this time had been an incorruptible official, borrows money from Yusef, a Syrian suspected of illegal dealings. During Louise's absence from the colony, Scobie

forms an adulterous relationship with Helen Rolt, a woman thirty years his junior. Helen is nineteen. On Louise's return, Scobie is harassed by his sense of loyalty and responsibility to each of these two women. Scobie finally decides on suicide, after anguished probing of the need for man's suffering.

Catholicism, in this novel, actually assumes the proportions of an adversary, and is the pivot around which many of the main questions in the novel revolve. From the Church's point-of-view, Scobie's despair, and his suicide, are unforgivable sins. From the Church's point-of-view, it would appear that Scobie is damned. Because of this, the view of Scobie as a scapegoat figure is invalidated. Again, at the end of the novel, Father Rank re-establishes the position of the Church as the centre of spiritual guidance: "The Church knows all the rules" (p. 264). But here, Father Rank admits that the Church "doesn't know what goes on in a single human heart." Only God can know this, and no one knows "a thing about God's mercy." The question, then, is whether or not God bends the rules for humane and merciful reasons. In part, Scobie dies offering his own damnation to God as propitiation for the "sins"--their guilt is part of the heritage of the Original Fall--of those whom he loves. Although Scobie dies convinced of his own damnation, there is the suggestion that God's mercy does transcend the rules of the Church, and that

perhaps Scobie has secured his pardon because of his basic goodness and because of his selfless, Christ-like sacrifice. When Scobie falls to the floor in death he is "the saint whose name nobody could remember" (p. 257).

The setting of the novel is a fallen world peopled by corrupt officials, corrupt natives, and social snobs. The recurring imagery of vultures scavenging at will reflects the human environment. The colony is "the original tower of Babel" (p. 14).

Against this environment, Scobie stands out as a man of integrity who consciously withdraws from this atmosphere of spying, gossip, and rivalry. He longs for peace, and wonders why he loves the colony as much as he does. His tentative answer is a comment both on the colony and the fallen world in general:

Is it because here human nature hasn't had time to disguise itself? Nobody here could ever talk about a heaven on earth. Heaven remained rigidly in its proper place on the other side of death, and on this side flourished the injustices, the cruelties, the meanness that elsewhere people so cleverly hushed up (p. 35).

Scobie is a man who, although he is acutely aware of man's sinfulness, thinks that despite his sinfulness, or perhaps because of it, man is deserving of pity. When Scobie gives a lift to Yusef, it is our first indication that Scobie values a humane act more than he does social image and promotion. Scobie is aware of Yusef's reputation for shady dealings and

bribery, but he sees Yusef as a man in need of help, and he offers it. This act of compassion, like every act of compassion which Scobie performs in the course of the novel, leads to a destructive relationship. Scobie's acts draw him into the stream of life. Previously, Scobie had been a man of virtue who attempted, by keeping a diary, to secure an ordered course of peaceful, routine existence that is divorced from the evil around him. This peace and order for which Scobie yearns are, however, inconsistent with his desire to secure happiness for others. As long as he continues to reject the challenges of life, Scobie will always remain a man unfulfilled. As Greene sees it, Scobie will never exercise his potential for heroism: the heroism of testing one's moral courage and moral worth. In terms of the novel, the conditions for this testing are adverse because this is a fallen world, but Greene puts his "hero" to the test.

It is when Scobie has faced the dangers of evil that he achieves enlightenment, as will be shown.

By the end of the first part of Book I of the novel, Scobie has committed another selfless act. Again, this is an act of compassion. He fails to report a concealed letter which he finds on a Portuguese ship. The Captain claims that the letter is a harmless one to his daughter. But she is in war-time enemy territory, Germany, so the letter should be censored. The Captain, in fear of being "blacklisted," appeals

to Scobie's mercy. Scobie does not promise to withhold the letter from censorship, and he rejects the attempted bribe. By the time he reaches his office, however, he is swayed. He secretly opens, reads, and destroys the letter. It is immaterial to Greene's greater purpose that the letter proves to be harmless. In his careful characterization of Scobie, Greene explicitly comments on the significance of Scobie's act. He shows that Scobie's seemingly perfect integrity is edged by the kind of compassion which causes him to break official orders:

The act was irrevocable, for no one in this city had the right to open clandestine mail. A microphotograph might be concealed in the gum of an envelope . . . Scobie against the strictest orders was exercising his own imperfect judgement (pp. 51-52).

In much the same way, Scobie's compassion for the suffering of others is to cause him to question the God who permits the suffering of human beings. At the same time that Greene shows Scobie's breach of his official authority, he secures our sympathy for his hero by indicating that Scobie's act was totally devoid of self-interest. Other officials who had broken the rules, had done so for gain. Unlike Scobie, "they had been corrupted by money, and he had been corrupted by sentiment" (p. 53). Their destructive element was greed, Scobie's is sentiment, and of the two "sentiment was the more dangerous because you couldn't name its price." Scobie's destructive element is pity, and because he continues to submit to it, the price to him is mental anguish and death. For

Scobie, pity is a destructive element because it is so akin to love that it can cause him to feel that his motivation is love. Scobie can "love" (pity) everyone who is pitiable, but this prevents him from seeing that only God can love everybody. Scobie confuses a general charity for everyone with love. He can thus consider himself a "just man" (p. 236) without realizing the self-deception which this can lead to.

As was the case with Arthur Rowe, Scobie is to come to realize that he did not really know what "boys are" (p. 236). This suggests that up to this time Scobie was immature. Pity, as we saw in The Ministry of Fear, is the immature equivalent of love. The positive value in pity, compassion, should be nurtured, and one should always be aware of the evil that is intermixed with goodness in the human being since the Fall. The ethical balance of good over evil should be maintained. Basically, this is a religious, Christian ethic. But Greene's Christianity has a firm humanistic bent. Greene's is not an abstract philosophy, but is, at least in his novels, a matter simply of moral existence. The point is that once evil gets the upper hand, moral existence becomes impossible. This is where Scobie stands as an expanded symbol. Scobie, even without realizing it, becomes an accomplice of the devil, Yusef. Scobie allows his compassion to cause him to compromise his integrity. With the compromise of his integrity, Scobie loses trust even in his faithful servant Ali. Yusef preys on this

to the point of making Scobie a tacit accomplice in the murder of Ali.

Pemberton's suicide at Bamba, which Scobie has been sent to investigate, introduces the issues of despair, damnation, and the Catholic's attitude to suicide. This in turn points out the significance of Scobie's final choice. Father Clay wonders if there is a possibility that Pemberton's death could have been murder rather than suicide. Suicide, he thinks, "puts a man outside mercy." Scobie makes the distinction between Pemberton, a non-Catholic on the one hand, and himself and Father Clay on the other. Scobie does not consider Pemberton's suicide a damnable act because the awareness which would make this an ethical and/or religious choice was absent.

'You are not going to tell me there's anything unforgivable here, Father. If you or I did it, it would be despair--I grant you anything with us. We'd be damned all right because we know, but he doesn't know a thing.'
 'The Church's teaching'
 'Even the Church can't teach me that God doesn't pity the young . . . ' (p. 84)

Here, we find Scobie questioning the teaching of the Church in favour of his view that, perhaps, God does bend the rules as He sees fit for merciful reasons. Scobie's final choice is ironically foreshadowed here, too, because he claims that any such act by him would be damnable. The conflict here is between Church doctrine and Scobie's basic humanism. In his fevered dream at Bamba, Scobie rejects the possibility of

suicide for himself. To this point he has not fully engaged himself in life and "no cause was important enough" to him (p. 89). Louise makes a matter-of-fact observation in Scobie's dream that no such thing as Pemberton's suicide could ever happen to them. This serves to deepen the irony and reinforce the Catholic attitude to suicide.

Louise's Catholicism and her desire for a favourable social image play a bit part in the web of circumstances which test Scobie's compassion. She is acutely unhappy because Scobie has been overlooked for the Commissionership. Even before this event, she is a figure of ridicule to her Club-members. They secretly call her "Literary Louise" because of her dilettante interest in literature. She actively tries to cultivate friendships, but succeeds only in alienating the others from her. If Scobie had succeeded in obtaining promotion, her social position would have been enhanced. She considers the present situation an unbearable blow to her social image. She feels compelled to take a trip until she can again face the gossips.

In an attempt to secure Louise's happiness--his "responsibility"--Scobie compromises his integrity. He is unable to secure a loan at the bank, so he borrows from Yusef, who has been obsessively offering his friendship. This is a deliberate, selfless act performed in full knowledge of the implications. Scobie knows that Yusef "was a man he must not

borrow from. It would have been safer to accept the Portuguese Captain's bribe." Scobie was not forced into the loan because Louise had offered to release him from this responsibility. He realized, however, that she would still be unhappy. The loan, although it does not constitute corruption, puts Scobie on friendly terms with Yusef. Scobie tries his best to maintain his distance from Yusef and makes it clear that their relationship is to be on a business basis--a four percent loan. He resists Yusef's increasing offers of closer friendship and of gifts, but it is not long before Yusef presumes on their friendship and uses Scobie as a pawn in framing his rival Syrian, Tallit. The loan, too, facilitates Scobie's adulterous relationship with Helen Rolt because it is in Louise's absence from the colony that she becomes Scobie's neighbour. All of these related factors seem to be beyond Scobie's control, but they are, certainly, the result of a conscious act: Scobie's attempt to secure Louise's happiness. Greene puts this act in its correct perspective: it was "the enormous breach pity had blasted through Scobie's integrity" (p. 109).

The suffering which Scobie witnesses among the survivors of forty days at sea in an open boat causes him to question, for the first time, man's relationship to God. Previously, saying his prayers had been as much of a habit to him as writing in his diary. To him "it was a formality, not

because he felt himself free from serious sin but because it had never occurred to him that his life was important enough one way or another" (p. 109). Before his crisis, Confession had for him "the awful langour of routine" (p. 145). Perhaps he had taken it for granted that God "was human enough to love what he had created" (p. 114). Now he sees the suffering six-year old girl near death. Scobie does not question the fact that she will die, but he does question the Providence that allows her to suffer through forty days and nights in an open boat. He finds this difficult to reconcile with the love of God. Here, the officer's information that the others in the boat had given up their share of water to her, offers, to Scobie, "the hint of an explanation--too faint to be grasped" (p. 114). This hint of an explanation is a foreshadowing of the paradox of Scobie's future tragic action. Paradoxically, the others prolonged the child's life by endangering their own. But by thus prolonging her life, they prolonged her suffering. Their action "gave them something to think about" (p. 114). Will their sacrifice be in vain? Scobie too, through pity, is to make the supreme sacrifice for Louise and Helen. The irony is that Louise is embittered when Wilson convinces her that Scobie had committed suicide. For Helen, life becomes meaningless after Scobie's death. But is his sacrifice worthless in the sight of God?

Helen had been one of the survivors in the boat. She, too, showed the ravages of such privation and her fate is in doubt. She lives, however, and is sent to the capital to convalesce and await transportation back to England if she so desires. She becomes Scobie's neighbour, and her careless showing of a light during the black-out brings him over to warn her. He recognizes her, although she had been too ill at Penda to have taken note of him. Scobie expresses concern over her comfort and, since his concern is sincere and is unlike that of the well-wishers who only see her as a survivor in need of sympathy, she feels comfortable in his presence. She talks freely about herself, her school life, and, more importantly to the kind of person that Scobie is, Helen talks of her inadequacy for self provision. This secures a second visit from Scobie, by which time they become friends. "It was astonishing to him how easily and quickly they had become friends" (p. 148), and "it seemed to him that he had not felt so much at ease with another human being for years" (p. 152). Ironically, Scobie thinks that they are safe from any destructive relationship because of their age difference, and because he thinks that his body has lost the sense of lust. Greene deliberately shrouds their initial adulterous act in mystery: "what they had both thought was safety proved to have been the camouflage of an enemy who works in terms of friendship, trust and pity" (p. 153). Whether or not this "enemy" is lust

or love, Scobie is willing to accept Helen's future happiness as his responsibility. In his relationship to Helen and Louise, Scobie seems to equate pity with love. He cannot distinguish between pity and love. Later, we are to see his attempts to weigh against each other his love and/or pity for Helen and Louise.

During the seven months that Louise is in South Africa, the relationship between Scobie and Helen blossoms into what seems to be a passionate love affair. For the first time Scobie shows concern for social opinion. His amateurish, unsuccessful attempts at secrecy are aimed at preserving Helen's reputation and keeping the knowledge of his affair from Louise's friends. He succeeds only in making Helen jealous because she thinks that his secrecy is only to protect Louise. There is a lover's quarrel, and Helen sends him away. At this point Scobie probably could have ended the affair without accepting any further responsibility. Despite his letter of protestation of love, Scobie is not presented as a lover pitying himself. His concern, rather, is for Helen's happiness:

I would never go back there, to the Nissen hut, if that meant she was happy and I suffered Inexorably the other's point of view rose on the path like a murdered innocent (p. 173).

In his effort to pacify Helen, Scobie's letter expresses love for her which exceeds his love for Louise and for God:

I love you more than myself, more than my wife, more than God I think I want more than anything in the world to make you happy (p. 173).

Scobie's rash and unnecessary inclusion of God in this context--unnecessary because Helen "would have been satisfied with 'more than Louise'" (p. 173)--shows that Scobie is willing to commit sacrilege for another's peace of mind.

Father Rank's visit which immediately follows Scobie's writing of the letter, serves to show that Scobie is aware that Father Rank is unable to bear for Scobie the burden of his guilt. Father Rank's visit precisely at this point maintains the tension between the Church's abstract view and Scobie's deep, personal concern. Father Rank will give Scobie the answers which he already knows. He will give Scobie the Church's view which Scobie will not be able to reconcile to his own nature. The Church's view is that "one should look after one's own soul at whatever cost to another" (p. 176). Scobie finds that he cannot, and will "never be able to do" this (p. 176). In the long run, then, when Scobie is faced with his choice he will have to make his appeal directly to God and justify his choice to Him.

Another of the ironies which surround Scobie's major actions in the novel is related to this letter. Helen and he are reconciled to each other although Helen does not receive the letter which Scobie had pushed under her door. The letter comes into Yusef's hands, and he uses it to blackmail Scobie into becoming his accomplice in smuggling a packet of "gem stones." Scobie now further compromises his integrity to regain the letter which Yusef threatens to give to Louise on her return.

Just when Scobie and Helen are happy in their relationship, Louise returns. Ironically, again, Scobie is unaware that the gossips had reached her in South Africa and that the knowledge of his affair had shortened her visit. The question might be raised: Was Scobie's complicity in the smuggling of the diamonds his first selfish act? Was it moral cowardice? I am convinced that Greene did not intend this because of the dramatic irony which he maintains. We know that Louise suspects Scobie's affair, but Scobie is not aware of her suspicions. He is anxious, therefore, to preserve for her the happiness of ignorance. Further, Scobie does not consider that the smuggling of these gems will constitute any great harm. Greene intends this as yet another rung in Scobie's fall from an untested virtue, not from selfishness or from pride, but from his destructive "virtue." By having Helen release Scobie from his promise to her, Greene again spotlights Scobie's sense of responsibility thus making Scobie's final decision a conscious choice and not the act of a moral coward who cannot bear the consequences of his actions. Helen, initially angry at the news of Louise's return, later writes to Scobie offering him complete freedom from his previous promises to her. As an alternative, she offers to be his mistress at his convenience. By this letter, she intends to make no claims on him. This succeeds only in further binding Scobie to her.

Now, Louise returns with the resolution that "everything will be different" (p. 198). She tells Scobie of her decision

to attempt to make him happy. More than ever, this draws Scobie closer to Louise, also. We see Scobie's ambivalence and his inability to decide whether what he feels for Louise and for Helen is the emotion of love or the sentiment of pity. For, Scobie, these two, love and pity, seem to demand equal responsibility and concern.

Can I really love her [Helen] more than Louise?
Do I, in my heart of hearts, love either of them,
or is it only that this automatic terrible pity
goes out to any human need--and makes it worse?
(p. 198).

Scobie here is on the verge of a major enlightenment. He does not pursue it and, be it pity or love, his actions show that he considers both Louise and Helen equally worthy of protection.

In an effort to bring matters into the open without telling Scobie of her suspicions, or perhaps because she hopes to end the affair, Louise insists on Scobie's accompanying her to Communion. As a Catholic, she knows that he has to go to Confession before he can take the Sacrament. She also knows what will be the Confessional priest's advice to Scobie: he will advise Scobie to give up his mistress. If Scobie refuses to go to Communion with her, she will know that there is a serious reason. Scobie, unaware, avoids Communion by pleading illness for as long as prudence permits.

Scobie now has to make a decision. We know that he can take the easy way out and abandon Helen in favour of Louise. He can salve his conscience by Helen's offer to release him from his promises. We also know that being the man Greene has

so carefully characterized, Scobie will not do so. For Helen, Scobie has a combination of pity, love, and his sense of responsibility. On the other hand, Scobie can leave Louise in favour of Helen. Here again, this decision will be inconsistent with his nature. He refuses to hurt either of them, so he decides to keep them both. He can satisfy Louise's Catholic mind by going to Communion. We see Scobie as a man tortured, a man in the throes of heart-rending anguish over the complications of his choice. At the Confessional, he cannot promise to desert Helen as the priest advises. His love of God will not permit him to make such a promise. To make such a promise after his decision would mean that he would have to do as other people who, presumably, "promised and went away and came back again" (p. 213). Scobie sees this as cheating God. He decides that he is not going to cheat himself or God by making such a promise. Because of this, he refuses, at the Confessional, to promise to leave Helen. The crux of Scobie's anguish is two-fold. He cannot bring himself to fail in what he considers to be his duty. For love of God, he finds that he cannot cheat God. Only a miracle can solve his problem, and he asks for one. But supernatural intervention has no place in this novel. Greene dispenses with melodrama in this arid drama. As Greene sees it, supernatural intervention takes the choice out of Scobie's hands. His act of will would then become less meaningful and would not be a moral choice.

Louise insists on their going to Mass, and even without having had the Absolution, Scobie decides to go with her.

Once and for all now at whatever eternal cost, he was determined that he would clear himself in her eyes and give her the reassurance she needed. (p. 215)

We see Scobie as a man in anguish. His act cannot be taken lightly because he knows that it is sacrilege. He prepares to take the Sacrament "with fear and shame" that "chilled his brain" (p. 215). It is clear that Scobie is a God-fearing man. Yet he is "desecrating God because he loved a woman-- was it even love, or was it just a feeling of pity and responsibility?" (p. 215). He cannot look only after himself because he is the responsible man, the policeman whose job it is to look after the others. In final anguished despair, Scobie looks at Christ's cross on the altar and blames Christ-- God--for his predicament. His agony, his despair, and his sense of futility have not been determined by his environment, but by his very nature: "looking up towards the Cross on the altar he thought savagely: Take your sponge of gall. You made me what I am. Take the spear thrust" (p. 216). Scobie sees himself as the Cross on which once more God is going to be crucified. God has moulded his nature, and according to this nature he has made his choice. God has not performed a miracle to save him, so God has failed in his responsibility. Scobie has lost faith in God's Providence. Here, Scobie is presented as the Prometheus who is going to battle for man.

In the same way that he is prepared to accept responsibility for his actions, God must now take the responsibility for His failure. Scobie's fear is that because God has failed him by not miraculously saving him from his sacrilegious choice, perhaps He will also fail the others. The God Scobie sees while he is at the altar rail is a God of vengeance, a God of war: "he saw only the priest's skirt like the skirt of the medieval war-horse bearing down upon him: the flapping of feet: the charge of God. If only the archers would let fly from ambush" (p. 217). Yet, to the last, he hopes. He "dreamed that the Priest's step had faltered" (p. 217), that the miracle had occurred. But it has not; God is indeed a God of vengeance who demands expiation, it seems to Scobie. To this point, Scobie's act of sacrilege is an act of self-immolation for those whom he loves. It had previously become clear that Scobie believes in original sin and redemption: "it seemed to Scobie that life was immeasurably long. Couldn't the test of man have been carried out in fewer years? Couldn't we have committed our first major sin at seven, have ruined ourselves for love or hate at ten, have clutched at redemption on a fifteen-year-old death bed?" (p. 51). Now he offers his damnation to a demanding God in expiation for Helen and Louise: "O God, I offer my damnation to you. Take it. Use it for them" (p. 217).

In the final days before his suicide we see Scobie as a man who acutely feels that he is damned. His torment is very real because, as he tells Helen, he believes that there is a Hell. We see Scobie now, as a man alone in spirit, unaccommodated. As a policeman, he has committed sacrilege. Scobie feels that he has put himself beyond God's reach forever. He thinks of God in terms of an alienated friend who is now an "enemy--there was bitterness between them" (p. 226). Immediately following his act of sacrilege, Scobie begins to lay plans for his suicide. He is prepared to go to the ultimate to secure happiness for Louise and Helen. Having provided for their welfare with God, Scobie now prepares to provide for their happiness on earth by removing himself, the object of conflict. Then, too, he thinks that his continued existence in his damned state causes pain to God. In this sense, Scobie is also dying for love of God.

Scobie carefully plans his suicide to make his death seem natural. His death has to seem natural because Louise, as a Catholic, will be unhappy if she knows that he has committed suicide. To this point, Scobie is a tragic protagonist who, by his risk of damnation for the sake of others, has acted in the conviction that he is right, and he accepts responsibility for that action. As such, he is a moral, responsible agent. The irony of his being offered the Commissionership only after he has compromised his integrity

serves to deepen the pathos of Scobie's plight. His stand is irrevocable by this time, because he has already lost more than the Commissionership: eternal peace.

Ali's murder is the regenerative action in the novel. Just prior to Ali's murder, Scobie was engaged with Yusef in a discussion of "trust," and it is significant that Yusef orders Ali's murder mainly as a result of Scobie's unreasonable loss of trust in Ali. When Scobie finds Ali's murdered body, he comes to realize that his own "killing" of God was an act more of loss of faith than of defiance, because then, he thinks:

Oh God . . . I've killed you: You've saved me
all these years and I've killed you at the end
of them. God lay under the petrol drums (pp. 238-239).

When Scobie searches for his rosary at the murder-scene, this is symbolic of his searching for his moral and spiritual strength. It symbolizes that Scobie now knows what was missing: his trust. This is the point, too, of Scobie's greatest despair because here he realizes that his untested virtue has been victimized. This is where Scobie realizes the full impact of his sacrilegious act. He had attempted to test God by asking for a miracle to solve his problems when he should have had faith in God's Providence. In much the same way, he should have trusted Ali who had served him so faithfully over the years. Later, in his mental monologue which is really an examination of his conscience, Scobie's "other voice," the

voice of his faith, asks him, "can't you trust me as you'd trust a faithful dog?" (p. 250). Scobie answers that he loved God but had never trusted Him. But can there be love without trust? In terms of the novel, the answer is, no. Ali's death is the case in point for Scobie and signals his enlightenment. From this view, Ali, the faithful servant becomes the instrument of Providence for Scobie because it is through Ali's death that Scobie sees his fault. On seeing Ali's body, Scobie says, "I love him" (p. 239), and significantly, Ali's is the last name which Scobie calls just prior to uttering his dying words, "Dear God, I love . . . " Scobie's tortured attempts to search his conscience in his final minutes of life, is an effort to find God again before he dies. He is humble and he is repentant. Earlier, he had voiced his repentance "O God My God, you'll never have more complete contrition" (p. 243).

Scobie's suicide, then, is an act of despair which re-establishes the mystery of the God-Man relationship. Like everyone else, Scobie is ignorant about the depth of God's mercy. He can be seen as a heroic, Promethean figure who challenges his Superior for those whom he loves, and suffers for them the risk of damnation. When he dies, however, he dies for love of God, because, as he sees it, his continued existence in a state of damnation causes pain to God. As such, he can be seen as a repentant Prodigal Son. Because his suicide is a

selfless sacrifice for God, Helen, and Louise, Scobie can be seen as a Christ-figure. All three views are consistent with Scobie's nature. Scobie has not solved the mystery of existence, neither is his suicide an affirmation of knowledge of God's ways. In Greene's view, Scobie's heroism consists in his having grasped the opportunity for heroic action.

The tragic tone of the novel is closely related to the concept of the Fortunate Fall. Because of his sacrifice Scobie attains heroic stature. His sacrifice is made at the risk of damnation. As spectators of his drama we view his questioning of God's Providence, his questioning of the Church's teaching, and his sacrifice as positive actions. At the same time, however, we fear that if God is indeed a God of vengeance, much of the hope offered by Christ's sacrifice would be lost, the meaning of Love would be lost. Artistically, Greene provides a regenerative pattern in the death of Ali. Ali's murder, which occurs partly because of Scobie's distrust, suggests to Scobie that he has been wrong not to trust God's Providence. Symbolically, Ali's death links the human and the spiritual. It symbolizes that human love, like love of God, should be based on trust. Scobie's "fall" results in a good for us, the spectators, because the drama of his experience and his enlightenment reaffirms positive human and spiritual attitudes. When Father Rank says that not even the Church knows the extent of God's mercy, he too, reaffirms the

surpassing glory of the mercy of God. In The Heart of the Matter, then, we have the kind of tragedy which Weisinger defines in The Agony and the Triumph:³⁵ "tragedy . . . occurs when the accepted order of things is fundamentally questioned only to be the more triumphantly reaffirmed." What is reaffirmed here, is the mystery of man's relationship to his Maker.

As is customary with Greene, the title of his novel is open to ironic interpretation. Scobie is not a hero because he has successfully probed the heart of the matter. The heart of the matter lies in what we make of Greene's equivocal presentation.

As myth, The Heart of the Matter in some ways, reflects the essence of the myth of Eden. God, who foresaw the fall of man, in His Providence decides to turn the evil of the devil into "a greater good": man's greater realization of existence. This, in brief, is the basis of the archetype of the Fortunate Fall. Man is tempted to evil, he falls, but he still retains a degree of divinity. His degree of divinity and his effort in nurturing this divinity are the key to his regeneration. The possibility of regeneration had been secured for man through Christ's sacrifice. Regeneration consists in the wisdom gained through sin. The Fall is Fortunate then, because, with this added wisdom, man is better able to withstand sin. In this sense, the devil is God's instrument. In the novel,

Yusef is the devil archetype. He persistently tempts Scobie until Scobie succumbs. But Yusef, too, is the instrument of Providence for Scobie's regeneration. Yusef has Ali murdered, but Ali's murder leads to Scobie's enlightenment. This is in keeping with Greene's basic archetype of regeneration through experience, because, had Scobie not succumbed to his destructive virtue, he would never have achieved heroic stature. Yusef becomes the reflection of the evil that is intermixed with Scobie's goodness.

The Heart of the Matter brings together much of the symbolism of the two entertainments, and the novel, The Power and the Glory, which immediately precede it. In Scobie, we see much the same conscious awareness of sinfulness we saw in "D" of The Confidential Agent. This entertainment, because of its mode, deals with the theme of the need for love and trust only on the human level while The Heart of the Matter operates on both a human and a spiritual level. "D" finds that human love and trust can partially fill the void caused by seeing the world as wholly evil. It is meaningful involvement which shows the goodness that exists side by side with evil. Scobie finds that love operates on trust as much as it operates on charity. The Heart of the Matter is even more closely related to The Ministry of Fear, the second of the two entertainments discussed here. I am convinced that despite the partially happy ending demanded by the comic mode of this

entertainment, Greene was not satisfied that the last word had been said on pity in The Ministry of Fear. The fact that Greene uses the theme of pity in The Heart of the Matter could show that he was still grappling with the concept and was presenting another stance with a broader scope. In some ways, The Heart of the Matter deals with some questions which are left hanging in The Ministry of Fear. Rowe, like Scobie cannot bear to see others suffer. Scobie's solution is suicide. If Rowe could not bear to see his wife suffer, would it have been more acceptable to have committed suicide? Next, there is the question posed by Rowe which is important in The Heart of the Matter: should one commit evil that good may come? Rowe's answer that one should, if necessary, risk damnation for the sake of those whom one loves seems to signal Scobie's decision. Such parallels between this novel and this entertainment recur. For instance, both Rowe and Scobie suffer as a result of acts motivated by compassion. The novel and the entertainment vary chiefly in the broader scope of The Heart of the Matter. They vary also in mode and, consequently, in their plot resolution. The artistic and modal difference between The Heart of the Matter, the tragic, and The Ministry of Fear, the comic, lies in what Susanne Langer has observed about tragedy and comedy in her Feeling and Form:³⁶ "comedy presents the vital rhythm of self-preservation, tragedy exhibits that of self-consummation." The earth-bound entertainment has been provided

with a partially happy-ending. Because The Heart of the Matter is in the tragic mode and ends in "self-consummation," Scobie's drama will have its ending in what happens to his soul when he faces the mercy of God. Its function as art will be realized in what the reader can make of Greene's paradox.

Apart from the fact that Catholicism is part of the context of both The Power and the Glory and The Heart of the Matter, there is yet another obvious similarity. Scobie is a policeman by vocation. The priest of The Power and the Glory is also a "policeman" of the soul. This is why he feels "that if there's ever been a single man in his state damned," he will be "damned too" (p. 269). The Power and the Glory, however, does not present the terror of unavoidable tragedy which is so striking in The Heart of the Matter. The whiskey priest at least has the duty to look after the welfare of the sinner's soul. He, like Father Rank of The Heart of the Matter admits that he knows nothing of the mercy of God, but at least he has to have a certain faith in the mercy of God, and throughout the novel, this faith remains unshakable. We know this is so, because his granting of absolution, in the name of God, and his performing the Mass, would be meaningless without this faith. Scobie, however, as a policeman, compromises his vocation; as a God-fearing man, he commits sacrilege. Yet these acts are the result of his sense of responsibility and his innate compassion which are themselves positive values.

In his despair, he can blame only God for his predicament:
"You made me what I am."

Greene's key in presenting his "heroes" is really a plea to "know thyself." Greene's heroes are "fallen" heroes. They suffer through this fall. But it is through suffering that they acquire wisdom. As such, their sins become "splendid" sins and reaffirm the meaning of the Fortunate Fall. In the entertainments, this archetype operates chiefly on the human level; in the novels, the archetype operates on the human and spiritual levels. Greene's heroes are symbols of a need for insight even when one is "virtuous." The innocence of idealism and the innocence of childhood are antithetical examples of the Greene hero, because neither the idealist, nor the child, has developed the right "attitude" towards life. Maturity comes with awareness. The mature awareness which Greene pleads for, is the awareness that good and evil coexist in this world and in every individual human being. The spiritually mature person is the one who is neither revolted by evil nor falls prey to it. The spiritually mature person, rather, nurtures goodness in himself and in others. Complacency, and pride have no place in this view, because, as Greene says in The Lost Childhood, "the sense of doom . . . lies over success--the feeling that the pendulum is about ready to swing." Greene's is a realistic view of life: evil is a fact of existence, and existence becomes impossible

if one turns away from this evil and if one is engulfed by it. As "D", and Rowe found, human love and trust make life possible, bearable. The whiskey priest, through love for his daughter, finds that life sometimes becomes impossible because of love. Scobie, too, finds life unbearable because of love. Yet, to them, and to us who view their drama, their lives are meaningful. As symbols of experience, they force us to consider the meaning of existence.

NOTES

¹Arthur Calder-Marshall, "The Works of Graham Greene," Horizon 1, No. 5 (May 1940), p. 372.

²Walter Allen, "Graham Greene," Writers of Today, ed. Denys Val Baker (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1946), p. 22.

³C. G. Jung, Psychology and Literature of The Collected Works, trans. R. F. C. Hull (London: Keegan Paul, Ltd., 1956), pp. 189-190.

⁴Ibid., p. 190.

⁵C. G. Jung, The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche of The Collected Works, p. 52.

⁶Graham Greene, The Lost Childhood and Other Essays (Penguin Books, 1962), p. 15.

⁷John Atkins, Graham Greene (London: Calder & Boyars, 1966), p. 244.

⁸Atkins, p. 135.

⁹Lord Raglan, The Hero: A Study in Tradition, Myth and Drama (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1936), pp. 178-80. See also Joseph Campbell, The Hero with A Thousand Faces (Meridian Books, 1960).

¹⁰Jolande Jacobi, The Way of Individuation, trans. R. F. C. Hull (New York: Harcourt Brace & World, Inc., 1965), p. 71.

¹¹Jung, The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche, pp. 221-222.

¹²Herbert Weisinger, The Agony and the Triumph: Papers on the Use and Abuse of Myth (Michigan State University Press, 1964), pp. 96-97. See also his Tragedy and the Paradox of the Fortunate Fall (London: Routledge & Paul, 1953).

¹³In The Lost Childhood Greene says that his "pattern" was established before religion explained the presence of evil to him "in other terms" (p. 15).

¹⁴Maud Bodkins, Archetypal Patterns in Poetry: Psychological Studies of Imagination (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), p. 223. The discussion here is on Othello: Iago as a devil archetype.

¹⁵Northrop Frye, Anatomy of Criticism (New York: Atheneum, 1967), pp. 33-34.

¹⁶"The Greenland Aboriginal," The New Statesman, 13th January 1961, p. 44.

¹⁷Joseph Campbell, The Hero With A Thousand Faces (Meridian Books, 1960), p. 27.

¹⁸Paul Rostenne, Graham Greene: témoin des temps tragiques (Paris: René Juillard, 1949), p. 29. "Le couple good-evil évoque des notions qui se rattachent aux fondements même de la morale, aux racines métaphysiques de la conduite humaine, tandis que le couple right-wrong s'applique plutôt aux superstructures particulières et variables des civilisations qui n'engagent pas les ultimes profondeurs de l'être, l'essentiel de la destinée humaine."

¹⁹Frye, p. 48.

²⁰Frye, p. 47.

²¹Frye, p. 35.

²²Francis Leo Kunkel, The Labyrinthine Ways of Graham Greene (New York, Sheed & Ward, 1959), p. 58. See also Rostenne, p. 161. "On voit apparaître ainsi, dans la plupart des romans de Greene, une femme, ou plus souvent une jeune fille, une adolescente même, dont le rôle, qu'il soit central ou épisodique, est toujours le même: tenter d'arracher un homme à la solitude qui l'enferme et l'étouffe . . . la mission métaphysique de la femme" .

²³Jung, Psychology and Literature, p. 182.

²⁴Frederick R. Karl, A Reader's Guide to the Contemporary English Novel (New York: The Noonday Press, 1962), pp. 85-106.

²⁵W. H. Auden, "The Heresy of Our Time," Renascence 1, 1949, pp. 23-24.

²⁶M. D. H. Parker, The Slave of Life, A Study of Shakespeare and the idea of Justice (London, Chatto & Windus, 1955), pp. 51-55.

²⁷Donald P. Costello, "Graham Greene and the Catholic Press," Renascence XII, No. 1, Autumn 1959, pp. 3-28.

²⁸Rostenne, p. 106.

²⁹Writers of Today, p. 19.

³⁰Herbert Weisinger, Tragedy and the Paradox of the Fortunate Fall (London: Routledge & Paul, 1953), p. 47 and following.

³¹David Lodge, Graham Greene (New York & London, Columbia University, 1966), p. 30.

³²Donald P. Costello, "Greene and the Catholic Press." See also A. A. De Vitis, "The Church and Major Scobie," Renascence X, No. 3, Spring 1958, pp. 115-120.

³³E. K. Brown, Rhythm in the Novel (University of Toronto Press, 1950), p. 57.

³⁴Henry James, "The Art of Fiction," in The Portable James, ed. Vint, Morton Dauwen Zabel (New York: The Viking Press, 1958).

³⁵The Agony and the Triumph, p. 103.

³⁶Susanne Langer, Feeling and Form (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953), pp. 351-366.

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