REALISM AND RELIGION IN GRAHAM GREENE

by

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Preface

Aristotle is called a "realistic" philosopher though to a modern mind he might seem "idealistic." To avoid any confusion of terms, I have capitalized "Realism" and usually qualify it by the adjective "empirical." At the outset, I should like to make it clear that I do not refer to "realism" in the Aristotelian connotation but to a specific quality that characterizes much of modern, English and American literature.

A list of some of the important works of the major Realists is provided in Part IV of the Bibliography.

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Chapter One. Introduction

There have been few writers in the English language as provocative as Graham Greene and this perhaps may partially explain the widespread critical attention which his writings have received in recent years. For the most part, his critics seemed to have missed one of the important features in Mr. Greene's writing, an aspect which only literary critics could be expected to discern.

Broadly speaking, Mr. Greene uses, in his novels, "entertainments" and plays, a method or approach known today as "Realism;" broadly speaking, this is almost the same thing as saying that he writes in a "Realistic style." Realism however, is more than a "style" in the customary sense of that word, as for example when one says that Seneca and Cicero wrote in different "styles." The Realistic style in modern literature is usually symptomatic of a

whole philosophy of life and, if past experience is any criterion, it would seem that the Realistic style is most effectively employed by someone who supports, at least in his writing, an empirical outlook on life. The use of the term "Realism" in this study refers to that tradition of "empirical Realism" which has characterized much of the writing of plays and novels in the twentieth century. The succeeding chapter attempts to synthesize those varied forces that, in my opinion, shaped empirical Realism, and thereby to render a cumulative definition of that phenomenon. It might be advantageous at this point however, to define empirical Realism as "an attitude to life characterized by a belief in only those facts about human existence that can be scientifically ascertained or verified by the experience of a writer who will put all assumptions to the test of experience." Realistic "techniques" are simply those that have been created and developed by a group

of authors whose view of life is that of empirical Realism. It should be noted however that, in recent years, these techniques have been used by authors who may reject the tenets of empirical Realism; one of these is Mr. Graham Greene. Mr. Greene supports a more spiritual view of human existence than is compatible with empirical Realism. The paradox lies in the fact that Mr. Greene's writings reflect certain traits of that general attitude to life which characterizes the empirical Realists.

Generally speaking, the works of the empirical Realists represent an attitude to life which is the antithesis of that more spiritual outlook underlying the fiction of the early nineteenth and Victorian period in England. Empirical Realism was born in the Victorian period but has really only dominated literature in this century. It is a reaction against the spiritual assumptions of earlier literature.

Those modern authors who reject empirical

Realism seem nonetheless to be curiously attached to some of its aspects; Mr. Greene is one example. The result is a puzzling ambiguity for the reader who must somehow separate in the works, the rejection of empirical Realism from its acceptance by the author. It is the making of such a separation that is the task of this study.

A critic in the New York Times Book Review once wrote:

> Before Greene, religion played a minor role in the English novel. Except for Mark Rutherford and the lesser novels of George Eliot, it has had its external manifestations in the country parsons of Fielding and Sterne, its whipping boys in Butler and Shaw, and stock characters in Jane Austen and Trollope. However, in its innermost forms it exists in the great tradition of poetry from Donne and Herbert to Eliot and Auden. [1]

Like most sweeping statements, the above admits of some qualification. One might ask: if George Eliot can be included why not Aldous Huxley or Evelyn Waugh ? Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress together with a number of lesser known English novels written in the nineteenth century, not

[1] George Mayberry, "Mr. Greene's Intense Art," New York Times-Book Review, October 28, 1951, p. 5.

to mention the deluge of popular, religious novels in the Lloyd Douglas tradition.

In general though, it seems true to say that it has long been appropriate for verse to carry religious content whereas the novel for the most part, has been regarded as a vehicle for things secular. Because it emerged at a later period than verse, the novel did not enjoy that favour of the Christian Church which was extended to verse in the Middle Ages and in the seventeenth century. As to whether or not Mr. Greene has altered the course or enlarged the scope of the English novel, only succeeding generations can tell. Certainly, any such claim on Mr. Greene's behalf, should be made only with reference to the English tradition as the particular effort made by Mr. Greene has already been made in France by Mr. François Mauriac and others.

It can justly be said, I think, that Mr. Greene at least has, consciously or otherwise, focused attention upon the limitations inherent in the empirical Realistic novel. In a different way, Aldous Huxley in his

later novels, also pointed to the disadvantages of empirical Realism.

The novel today is absorbing fresh data from all of the branches of knowledge. Previous to this age, it did not have to cope with such an enormous output of facts about human existence. The conscience of the Realistic artist requires that these facts be assimilated because they are facts as opposed to the mysteries of intangible reality. A contemporary novelist, Virginia Woolf has written in opposition to the above viewpoint: " 'The proper stuff of fiction' does not exist; everything is the proper stuff of fiction, every feeling, every thought; every quality of brain and spirit is drawn upon; no perception comes amiss." [2] The empirical Realists generally exclude the "quality of spirit" from their works or, if this is included, it is represented as an aberration of the human personality, something that is unworthy of belief, something that is not a fact.

Virginia Woolf sees the tradition of the

[2]Virginia Woolf, "Modern Fiction," in The Common Reader (New York, 1953), p. 158. Further references will be to this edition.

English novel as having excluded much that is pertinent to the human condition: "English fiction from Sterne to Meredith bears witness to our natural delight in humour and comedy, in the beauty of earth, in the activities of the intellect, and in the splendour of the body" (p. 158). Her point is not that this record is poor in itself but that it fails to embrace large areas of human experience. In her opinion, the English novelists possess "the instinct to enjoy and fight rather than to suffer and understand" (p. 158).

On modern English literature, Virginia Woolf writes of the Realistic techniques used by James Joyce:

> But it is possible to press a little further and wonder whether we may not refer our sense of being in a bright yet narrow room, confined and shut in, rather than enlarged and set free, to some limitation imposed by the method as well as by the mind. Is it the method that inhibits the creative power? (p. 156).

This statement might well be applied to a number of Realistic authors. Is it possible that the Realistic outlook and techniques are

too narrow a chamber for an ambitious imagination or a wider vision of reality than seems compatible with empirical Realism? The so-called "stream of consciousness" technique used by Joyce is distinctly a Realistic one, an attempt to reproduce a quasi-facsimile of the operations of the mind. But if we can abstract ourselves from the contemporary scene, it is possible that we may ask ourselves not only how well this quasi-facsimile is executed but whether or not there is any real advantage to the making of such a reproduction, even one that is made well. Is this the function of literature?

It is not the purpose of this enquiry to answer this question; but it is one of the points of this study to suggest reasons as to why the question should be asked. I have already hinted that the influence of empirical Realism on modern literature may hamper an individual writer's presentation of his view of reality. If this is the case for a given writer (as I believe it to be so for Mr. Greene), that writer would seem to have two choices;

either to reject the context (outlook and techniques) of empirical Realism entirely (this has not yet been done successfully), or to push back the limitations of that context. It is the latter that characterizes Mr. Greene's writing.

The problem that empirical Realism poses for a writer whose vision transcends it, is that it doesn't seem to be realistic enough (embracing all reality, both factual and ideal). Such a writer will ten to be dissatisfied with a view of reality that is limited to evidence provided by the senses and may well find himself with an extremely affirmative sense of life that must somehow take shape in what has proven to be a conspicuously negative vehicle; I refer here to the outlook and techniques of empirical Realism.

The best-seller novelists like James T. Farrell and John O'Hara do not appear to be searching for a way out; the modern reading public seems to have an enormous and morbid appetite for Mr. Farrell's kind of empirical Realism. This type however, is becoming decadent;

the public is not as easily shocked as it was in the nineteenth century. A refining of empirical Realism in literature, such as is taking place today, seems to lead to sensationalism and a delight in perversity; it is just as perverse to see the world as all evil as it is to see it as all good; there seems to be a tendency for the former in the works of the Realists; to a certain extent one can see this tendency in Mr. Greene.

This study is mainly concerned with a segment of Mr. Greene's creative work. These are the "religious works" which include the novels: Brighton Rock, The Power and the Glory, The Heart of the Matter and The End of the Affair; also included are Mr. Greene's two plays, The Living Room and The Potting Shed.[3] By the term "religious works" is meant that these are ostensibly concerned with religious issues and that the religious awareness of the characters is central to the human drama, as it is offered by Mr. Greene.

[3] See Bibliography.

Chapter Two. Empirical Realism

Empirical Realism emerged with the upsurge of science in nineteenth century England. It is, as I see it, a combination of scientific findings that seemed to undermine the "old order" of ideas as well being a general sense of revolt by a few, nineteenth century authors, towards the assumptions of the old world of gentility as these are brought out for example, in the novels of Jane Austen. The scientists may be called those who supported empirical Realism in theory, the creative writers those who put it into practice.

What follows is a detailed discussion of particular men who represent, I think, the major influences that have served to shape empirical Realism in modern literature. We shall later examine in some detail, any similarities that there may be, between the empirical Realists and Mr. Greene, with a view to appraising their significance in relation to his religious content.

I. Scientific and Philosophical Background

The revolutionary hypotheses propounded by Charles Darwin reverberated within a restless literary world in nineteenth century England. Perhaps if that scientist had not been so capable an author, the impact of his ideas would not have been as pronounced at it was. Darwin made explicit, inferences in his scientific theories that can justly be called philosophical, even though the steps which led to these conclusions are scientific rather than philosophical. To many, Darwin seemed to have pulled man from his pedestal:

> I have given the evidence to the best of my ability; and we must acknowledge, as it seems to me, that man, with all his noble qualities, with sympathy which feels for the most debased, with benevolence which extends not only to other men but to the humblest living creature, with his godlike intellect which has penetrated into the movements and constitution of the solar system -- with all these exalted powers man still bears in his bodily frame the indelible stamp of his lowly origin.[4]

The Victorian reader might notice in the above

[4] Charles Darwin, The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex, 2 vols.(New York, 1874), II, 387. Further references will be to this edition.

statement a balance of the lofty and the low nature of man; the same reader seems to have noted that man's lowly nature was no longer attributed to original sin but rather to his origin in the lowest species of animal life. On the whole, there is an optimistic tone in Darwin; man is in a process of evolution; he has come a long way and his future shows promise; he is the most highly developed of the animal organisms. Some of the Victorians noticed however, the absence of man's "soul" in the discussions on evolution. To some readers, the image of man's stature had diminished; gone was Shakespeare's view of the magnificence of man. Darwin's view of man is reflected in the writings of the empirical Realists but they do not seem to share his optimism.

Thomas Huxley's view is perhaps closer to the empirical Realists; of man he wrote:

> He is a brute, only more intelligent than the other brutes, a blind prey to impulses, which as often as not lead him to destruction; a victim to endless illusions which make his mental existence a terror and a burden, and fill his physical life with barren toil and battle. [5]

[5] Thomas H. Huxley, Science and Christian Tradition (New York, 1896), p. 256. Further references will be to this edition.

Apart from their animalistic treatment of man, the empirical Realists reflect in their writings two notions which are included in Mr. Huxley's statement. The first of these is man's being a "victim to endless illusions;" the second, his "mental existence" being a "terror and a burden."

Man's actions were to be judged in Darwin and Huxley by empirical standards rather than a religious code. Darwin writes in his Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex: "The development of the moral qualities . . . lies in the social instincts, including in this term the family ties"(II, 374). In the works of the empirical Realists, man's moral conduct is judged by his society's code of morality, rather than by God's law.

The traditional belief in a "good God" was shaken; Darwin wrote:

> I am aware that the assumed instinctive belief in God has been used by many persons as an argument for His existence. But this is a rash judgment, as we should thus be compelled to believe in the existence of many cruel and

> malignant spirits, possessing only a little more power than man; for the belief in them is far more general than that of a beneficent Deity. The idea of a universal and beneficent Creator of the universe does not seem to arise in the mind of man until he has been elevated by a long-continued culture."(op. cit. II,377).

It is important to note in the above that a God does not present Himself to the mind of man as either good or bad but that the belief in a good God arises from man's thinking without God's assistance and as part of a cultural phase, without any necessary reference to the objective reality of such a God. The religious life of man plays an essentially subjective role in those characters created by the empirical Realists; the practice is also true to some extent in Mr. Greene's writing.

On miracles (of which we have examples in Mr. Greene's writing), Huxley writes:

> The belief in the efficacy of prayer depends upon the assumption that there is somebody somewhere, who is strong enough to deal with the earth and its contents as men deal with the things and events which they are strong enough to modify or control; and who is capable of being moved by appeals such as men make to one another (op. cit. p. 133).

It is curious how suggestive language can be;

Huxley has not openly stated his opinion concerning the above but one has the feeling that the "efficacy of prayer" will not turn out to be very much. The statements import though, is paralleled in much of modern literature where man is left to himself, without recourse to God. In the works of the empirical Realists, the agnostic appears as "hero;" he was a virile character in the Victorian age; he is portrayed as fatigued and bored with existence in recent, Realistic fiction. Mr. Greene's characters are not always agnostics but they seem to share agnostic character's view of existence.

II. Literary Background

A. Wordsworth

One may not accept Wordsworth's conviction that it is nature (non-human) which gives man his real worth (by implication, without such a conviction man's worth diminishes), but one must also recognize the underlying humanism in The Prelude and what we have of The Recluse. Wordsworth grew out of his early romanticism whereas the empirical Realists do not as yet seem to have matured. Because they do not accept the reason

for Wordsworth's reconciliation with man's dignity (man valued as part of the total beauty of nature), the empirical Realists seemed to have turned to skepticism.

It has been said nonetheless, that the Realistic "tendencies of Romanticism in its early stages are well illustrated in the poetry of Wordsworth, and his doctrine that the diction of poetry should be a selection of the language used by real men." [6] Wordsworth's significance as a reformer was in his abandoning what had come to be a decadent poetic diction; the language of the poets had been imitating poetic convention and not men. Language in the novel was in a somewhat similar position and to the ear of the Realist who heard no such language spoken by real men, the effect was pretentious and untrue to life. It seems true to say that the Realists have interpreted "the real language of men" in a more literal and therefore less imaginative sense than Wordsworth did.

Some of Wordsworth's attitudes have been reflected in the empirical Realists. One of these is the poet's attitude to books and the scholarly

[6] H.S. Davies, Realism in the Drama (Cambridge, 1934), p. 90.

life.

The restlessness of Wordsworth's residence at Cambridge and his feeling that books give the reader an unreal picture of life have their counterpart in that scorn for academic pursuit which is spoken by many characters in the works of the empirical Realists. The result is anti-intellectualism which seems to be supported by a belief that the academic life is cut off from the turbulent flow of real life. In a disguised form, the same tendency is present in Mr. Greene's writing.

B. Ibsen

Henrik Ibsen was a rebel with a cause; his cause was the exposure of the big lie which he felt characterized his society; he was going to tell the truth about this society; he was not going to be troubled by the traditional "decorum" of literature; the long accepted standards of gentility and the power exercised by nominal Christians were to be strictly tested in Ibsen's writing. Ibsen endeavoured to expose the evil and pretentiousness that often underlay "human dignity."

George Bernard Shaw has said of Ibsen's contribution:

> We then have our society classified as 700 Philistines and 299 idealists, leaving one man unclassified. He is the man who is strong enough to face the truth that the idealists are shirking. He says flatly of marriage, "This thing is a failure for many of us. It is insufferable that two human beings, having entered into relations which only warm affection can render tolerable should be forced to maintain them after such affections have ceased to exist, or in spite of the fact that they have never arisen." [7]

In the average nineteenth century novel, it is probably true to say that a sentimental courtship often took precedence over marriage and this can lead to an unreal awareness of life. As we shall see later, Mr. Greene's portrayal of human love and marriage bears many of the marks of Ibsen's view.

Ibsen's technique was to shock his readers into an awareness of the way reality really was, to force them to look around themselves and see how unfulfilled were the promises that had been made to them in their reading of literature. Ibsen crusaded against

[7] George Bernard Shaw, The Quintessence of Ibsenism (New York, 1908), pp. 24-25. Further references will be to this edition.

conventional thinking and was in favour of a more personal and individualistic view of life. As is illustrated in his play, An Enemy of the People, he supported the man whose personal sense of truth opposed the general thinking of society, when society was wrong; Ibsen's reformer-characters did not share the complacency of their fellow citizens. There exists a similarity in this respect between Ibsen's view and Mr. Greene's attitude to the "pious and complacent." Ibsen's characters, especially Hedda Gabler, epitomize the repudiation of duty, the rebellion against what society expects from them; these traits are usually reflected in the empirical Realists and in Mr. Greene.

Ibsen urges the recognition of all facts. Ibsen saw violence in life and there are moments of violence in the lives of his characters. One cannot help but notice the presence of violence in the lives of those characters created by the empirical Realists as opposed to the noticeable tone of urbanity that prevailed in earlier fiction. As we shall later see, violence is everywhere in Mr. Greene's

world. Like the American, Pyle, in Mr. Greene's novel, The Quiet American, there is the picture in Ibsen of the idealist-villain. This is part of the tendency for anti-intellectualism to which reference has already been made.

A noted critic has commented:

> Ibsen turned to village politics for exactly the same reason that his contemporaries and his successors have, each in his own way, sought out some aspect of the common man and his common life -- because, that is to say, here was at least something small enough for him to be able to believe.[8]

Ibsen's sympathies were with the common man with common abilities and common emotional reactions; the empirical Realists have followed in this pattern. Our critic adds: "We say, as Ibsen would say, that the problems of Oswald Alving are more 'relevant' to our life than the problems of Hamlet, that the play in which he appears is more 'real' than the other more glamorous one."[9]

Shaw concludes that "Ibsen himself is kinder to the man who has gone his own way as a drunkard than to the man who is respectable

[8] Joseph Wood Krutch, The Modern Temper (New York, c1929), p. 89.

[9] Ibid., p. 90.

because he dare not be otherwise" (op.cit., p. 140). The import of this assertion echoes through all of Mr. Greene's writing.

C. Balzac and Zola

It has been said that Balzac was "the first to illuminate the mechanism of the struggle for existence and of the human passions consumed in this unending battle."[10] Both Balzac and Zola saw the human drama as "mechanistic;" this view is reflected for the most part, in the writings of the empirical Realists; Mr. Greene compromises with this view in that he upholds to a noticeable extent, the primacy of "free will" in man, at the same time acknowledging those pressures of mechanistic existence which can hamper the exercise of free will. The second point to notice in the quotation is the attention given to "human passions." In the empirical Realists, and there is the same tendency in Mr. Greene, passion in all of its forms, is regarded as the true picture of man with his mask lifted, with the cloak of urbanity shrugged off.

Zola has been called the scientist of

[10] Marcel Aymé, "Balzac: The First Modern Novelist," in Highlights of Modern Literature: A Permanent Collection of Memorable Essays from the New York Times Book Review, ed. Francis Brown (New York, 1954), pp. 234-237.

fiction. "He was trying to create a new type of fiction ruled by scientific laws, based on scientific observation, and written, so far as possible, by scientific methods; if successful, he would recapture for himself, and for literature some of the prestige that had begun to surround the great scientists."[11] Zola wanted to be a camera, to promote a factual recording of human experience; this was the novelist as observer. As experimentalist, Zola thought that the novelist should juggle his photographs of life, add a catalyst (usually a strong passion) to make the plot come alive and then wait for the human situation to resolve itself chemically.

The "sociological novel" was conceived by Zola; he wrote in on deterministic principles. External environment not only shapes but manipulates the lives of Zola's characters; many of them were victims of their environment. Apart from the tyranny of external environment, there arose with Zola what might be called the despotism of internal environment, if we can still imagine man's inner life as a microcosm.

[11] Malcolm Cowley, The Literary Situation (New York, 1955), p. 75. Further references will be to this edition.

This inner determinism results from the neuroses and psychoses in man which have been brought to light in our time and this leads us to a discussion of Freud.

D. Literary Influence of Freud

It has been said of the second half of the nineteenth century:

> The truth was that writers were eager for an approach to characterization that avoided the gentility of Jane Austen, the sentimental heaviness of Dickens, and the socially diverting realism of Howells. They felt that sex was their problem; that they had but recently discovered it under layers of social restriction. [12]

Sex was there all right and, more and more, fictional characters were discovering what a difference it made in their lives. The telling point however, was not that the existence of sex could be openly confessed but that it seemed to control many other aspects of the human personality. Freud's theory of the "libido" being the source of human behaviour, often replaces in our literature, those nobler motives that had previously been used to interpret it. In the empirical Realists, it

12 Frederick J. Hoffman, Freudianism and the Literary Mind (Baton Rouge, Louisiana, 1957), p. 74. Further references will be to this edition.

is no longer folly that makes man a slave to his passions but fact. The conviction that man was forced to be promiscuous by coercion from within led in our century to the belief in this century that opposing such promptings would be thwarting nature's purpose. Along with this conviction came the loss of a belief in free will and responsibility, in effect a loss of the sense of sin. Mr. Greene has restored the latter.

In the empirical Realists, the sexual passions are freed from the fetters of convention; one change from earlier fiction is that the portrayal of human love includes a strong quality of violence. The new characters spoke and thought less discreetly and gracefully than their predecessors; their virtue was that they brought with themselves a directness and a power which helped to revive a somewhat suffocated reading public. The disadvantage is perhaps the fact that human love came to be pictured in only its physical aspects; in addition, the Realists and Mr. Greene have a tendency to view physical love in its uglier and more sordid aspects.

In his Freudianism and the Literary Mind,

Mr. Hoffman concludes:

> If psychoanalysis contributed anything worth preserving or even studying in the literature of this period, it is not to be found in extravagant demonstrations of sensuality or adolescent attacks upon the mores, but rather in its sponsorship of, or at least its concessions to, introspection. [13]

Perhaps the "stream of consciousness" technique is the most conspicuous example of the modern novelist's preoccupation with "introspection;" Mr. Greene uses this technique to some extent. There is less external action, more exploration <u>in</u> the minds of modern characters than was true of earlier fiction. In Mr. Greene's terms, the human struggle becomes one of faith rather than action.

Like the poet, Wordsworth, Freud saw childhood as the crucial phase in the development of the man; the trends in literature since Freud testify to the fact that many a character can trace what he is as an adult to the experience of his childhood. In the empirical Realists, the emotional life of the child appears in the adult life of the character, but by a curious inversion, in Mr. Greene's works, the life of the adult appears in the child. Mr. Greene's characters are not childish, nor are they

[13] Op. cit., p. 75.

innocent. They are old before their time and they do not seem ever to have known the joys of childhood. It is apparent from Mr. Greene's essays that he himself does not appear to have experiences these joys.

Chapter Three. Graham Greene and Modern Literature

Thomas Hardy and Samuel Butler seem to be the first, major, English novelists to exhibit some of the features of empirical Realism as we have seen it. Of Hardy, G.K. Chesterton writes: "Mr. Hardy has the honour of inventing a new sort of game, which may be called the extravagance of depression." [14] The seeds of empirical Realism were sown however, before Mr. Hardy wrote.

So romantically imagined a figure as Charlotte Bront wrote the following in answer to the "carping" critics of Jane Eyre:

> Conventionality is not morality. Self-righteousness is not religion. To attack the first is not to assail the last. To pluck the mask from the face of the Pharisee is not to lift an impious hand to the Crown of Thorns . . . . appearance should not be mistaken for truth . . . . The world may not like to see these ideas dissevered, for it has been accustomed to blend them; finding it convenient to make external show pass for sterling worth -- to let white-washed walls vouch for clean shrines. It may hate him who dares to scrutinize and expose, to raise the gilding and show

[14] G.K. Chesterton, The Victorian Age in Literature (London, c1913), p. 145.

> base metal under it, to penetrate the sepuchre and reveal charnal relics; but hate as it will, it is indebted to him. [15]

The notion of "unmasking" is important in this quotation. Modern authors are apt to be more sophisticated in their approach but the same, fundamental attitude seems to underlie their writing, an effort to show the basic unreality and harmfulness of people who are duped by their own pretensions and by the pretensions of their fellows.

In addition to Charlotte Bronte's view there exists in modern literature a strong sense of disillusionment; behind this is usually a dark sense of man's insignificance in the universe. It is a feeling that man is helpless and beyond correction. What perhaps makes the feeling hard to bear is the sense that this condition in man is a matter of fact.

Theodore Dreiser is a good example of what I mean. Dreiser's laconic and matter-of-fact presentation makes the horrors that he describes all the more horrible. Dreiser's

[15] Charlotte Bronte, "Preface," to Jane Eyre, 2nd ed. [1847] (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1953), pp. vi-vii.

heroes would have been cast in another age as villains or fools; even though occasionally capable of great feats of will, they are always the victims of some stronger power.

In Dreiser, our sympathies are drawn to the failures of the human race; in this respect, a similar tendency can be witnessed in Mr. Greene's writing, particularly in the character of Major Scobie in The Heart of the Matter.

Someone has observed that: "Dreiser was the man from outside, the man from below, who wrote with the terrible literalness of a child." [16] There is more than a passing similarity between the empirical Realist and the child who cried out that the Emperor had no clothes on. The Realist may have part of the child's point of view but he has lost the child's innocence and forgotten the child's optimism. Mr. Colin Wilson writes that "the schoolboy has his own viewpoint: he feels that the adult acceptance of an unheroic world may spring from too much contact with the realities of that world." [17]

[16] Alfred Kazin, "Theodore Dreiser and His Critics," in The Anchor Review, ed. M.J. Lasky, no. 1 (New York, 1955), p. 177.

[17] Colin Wilson, The Age of Defeat (London, 1959), p. 18.

Recent examples of Realistic fiction show an even greater emphasis on the psychological life of man than was true of writing at the turn of the century. This emphasis is apparent in Mr. Greene's work as we have seen.

We continue to witness the paradox of an author who is fundamentally idealistic (like Mr. Tennessee Williams or Mr. Graham Greene), writing in the style of empirical Realism and within the Realistic outlook. For a man of Mr. Greene's religious faith, disillusionment would seem to the reader, too facile a state of mind for him to accept although many of his characters bear the marks of disillusionment. It may be that Mr. Greene's dark outlook on life has been conditioned more by his own experience than by any philosophical attitude; there is certainly ample evidence for the autobiographical view in a number of his essays. In general though, Mr. Greene's brand of Realism, although it bears a distinct signature, is part of an outlook on life that has been communicated in the tradition of the empirical

Realistic writers.

Aldous Huxley, an accomplished novelist in his own right, has focused upon a literary curiosity that seems to be associated with the empirical Realists:

> The great obvious truths have often, in the past, been stated with a repellent emphasis, in tones that made them seem -- for such is the almost magical power of artistic incompetence -- not great truths, but great and frightful lies. But never in the past have these artistic outrages been so numerous as at present . . . . On some of the most sensitive and self-conscious artists of our age, this state of affairs has had a curious and, I believe, unprecedented effect. They have become afraid of all obviousness, the great as well as the little. [18]

It is Mr. Huxley's observation that artists today have skirted worn, central truths and that they are busy exploiting what might be called fringe truths. Provided that the artist does not pretend that these fringe truths are central truths, there seems little danger; unfortunately this is not always or even often the case and the reader may be left with an

[18] Aldous Huxley, "Art and the Obvious," in Music at Night and Other Essays (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1950), pp. 24-25.

an unbalanced view of reality and therefore an inferior art.

Mr. Greene seldom offers us fringe truths but there is something of the same tendency in his art. For example, it is claimed on behalf of his characters, that the sinner has within himself a capacity for a fuller and more admirable sainthood than that which avails the ordinary, good man; Mr. Greene seems to share some of Ibsen's contempt for the man who is conventionally good. Mr. Greene so bends over to make his point that it appears to the reader as if the non-sinning good man can at best expect a mediocre and rather inferior kind of saint-hood. The central truth (which is certainly clear in St. Augustine), is that the man who has the capacity to become a <u>great</u> saint also has it within himself to become a <u>great</u> sinner and vice versa. At the same time, St. Augustine, for example, would be the last person to suggest that great sinning is a necessary program for great sainthood. In Mr. Greene's Realistic view, it is brought out (quite rightly), that sinners often make better material for sainthood than the "pious

or complacent." On the other hand, it is a central truth that there are more kinds of people in the world than those who can be classified as simply "sinners" or as the "pious and complacent." It seems to be because of Mr. Greene's didacticism that his vision in this respect, is not wider. Like many of the empirical Realists, he has something startling to teach us. He tells us that the grievous sinner is at the heart of Christianity; but he does not seem to care whether or not the good man is at the heart of Christianity. It seems to have been forgotten that although he may not be a prodigal son of God, the good man in the Christian tradition is a son of God all the same.

Here are two statements that deserve comparison, the first about Dreiser, the second about Mr. Greene; the first is by Joseph Warren Beach who is something of an authority on twentieth century literature:

> In his attitude toward this jungle life of human beings, Mr. Dreiser is not a satirist . . . . He is in deadly

> earnest. He does not take a tone of superiority or set himself apart from his characters. He does not regard them as philistines or as sinners . . . . And whether they are winners or losers in the struggle, he is pretty closely in sympathy with them, even though, in his wider vision, he may see them in their littleness, helplessness, and futility. [19]

Beach adds that Dreiser "is entirely innocent of any intention concerning point of view. He keeps himself, on the whole, pretty well out of the story." [20]

The second statement is an indirect quotation by a critic, of something that Mr. Greene is reported to have said:

> I write about situations that are common -- universal might be more correct -- in which my characters are involved and from which only faith can redeem them, though often the actual manner of the redemption is not immediately clear. They sin, but there is no limit to God's mercy. [21]

It seems true that both Dreiser and Mr. Greene evoke human situations that are common, though the characters involved in

[19] Joseph Warren Beach, The Twentieth Century Novel: Studies in Technique (New York and London, 1932), p. 324.

[20] Ibid., p. 329.

[21] See Joan Madden, "With Crooked Lines: Greene's Living Room," America, XC (March 6, 1954), 601.

these situations are, in Mr. Greene's case, decidedly uncommon, if not in life certainly in the English novel of this century. What makes Mr. Greene's characters different is the fact that although they appear to carry the burden of this world, they are really (often unknowingly and unwillingly) in the service of a Foreign King and the sign of this King's burden is the sign of the cross.

Beach has pointed out, and I think validly, that Dreiser does not see his characters as sinners; this is at least true of his novel Sister Carrie. Dreiser's heroes are victims, not morally responsible, we are led to believe, for the evil that befalls them. Mr. Greene's heroes are sinners; it is true that they seem to sin in much the same way as those characters created by most of empirical Realists. There is a difference however; Mr. Greene's characters know that they sin and they know the consequences of their sins; unlike Dreiser's characters, they are not victims. They realize that their conscious actions are basically the result of a free choice which they have made, no matter what grim circumstances surround these actions.

Dreiser is said not to have a point of view but he does have one; it is fatalism. Mr. Greene seems to have a point of view and he does; it is the opposite of fatalism.

Modern characters seem to be conspicuous more by what they do not believe than by what they do believe. They do not believe in the free enterprise system or the value of human love as it is found in the world or in themselves or they do not feel that society is merciful. Dos Passos and Dreiser seem to fill their books with characters who entertain these depressing sentiments.

There is something of the same pessimism in Mr. Greene' writing but it is offset to some extent by the intelligible, religious beliefs of the characters, or what might be called their religious awareness. For the most part, Mr. Greene's characters hold beliefs that are clear-cut and usually meaningful and in this, they are to say the least, anomalies in contemporary fiction. They do not seem at first sight to reflect the spirit of the age.

On closer examination however, the characters are seen to bear many of the marks of

this age and are in many cases, as we shall see, as subject to the spirit of the age as they are to the spirit of Catholicism. When the coexistence of these two spirits causes conflict within a character, as sometimes happens in Mr. Greene, the reader is a witness to a drama that is both meaningful and relevant; when the two spirits dovetail, the reader may catch a glimpse of the interesting duality that underlies Mr. Greene's vision.

Chapter Four. Language and Techniques

Language, as it is used in the empirical Realists, creates the illusion of being more like that used in real life by real people than could be said of earlier fiction, where the language of literature was considered to be a thing distinct from the language of real life; earlier writers did not consider it necessary or even advisable to bridge the two kinds of language. In the empirical Realists, there seems to be no limit as to how low language can become but it is rarely lofty, unless the writer is trying to ridicule the character whose speech is elevated.

The idiom chosen by Mr. Greene might be called middle-class; it seldom sinks into dialect (as it does for example in William Faulkner), and it is never illiterate. Mr. Greene usually appears to remain detached from what is thought and said in his books and this gives his work an observer's objectivity (the opposite of Proust), a quality that serves to separate the author from his work. As observer, Mr. Greene's techniques are more sophisticated than Zola's though they seem to keep the writer at the same distance from his work.

Some of his critics seem to feel that Mr. Greene missed his calling as a preacher. The criticism throws light on the modern problem of stating things directly in the novel. In general, nineteenth century novelists could, without feeling uncomfortable or self-conscious, offer their views on life within the novel but this practice appears to conflict with the tenets of the empirical Realists who feel that the artist may be an observer and an experimentalist but should not impose his view upon the human characters and situations that are his creations. The modern novelist is not supposed (judging from those contemporary novels I have read) to interpret the lives of his characters; or at least he does not seem to do this. The interpretative function of the novel would seem to have been curtailed in this age.

In reality though, many of the empirical Realists have simply gotten around the problem. Aided particularly by the "stream of consciousness" technique, the modern novelist inhabits the souls of his characters, reproducing not only their thoughts and

thought patterns but the physical operations of the brain as well; this clinical approach leaves the reader with the impression that the novelist is sticking to the facts and is up to date on his medical knowledge. At the same time, the interpretative thoughts of the novelist emerge from the mind of the character; they are not imposed upon the character by an intrusive author speaking in the third person. Mr. Greene uses this technique in moderation and on the whole, very capably.

There are exceptions in Mr. Greene's case however; a compulsion to bring out his meaning sometimes prevents him from surrendering to the inner life that would otherwise be in his characters. For example, the reader finds the same point of view and many of the same symbols recurring in the novels, The Power and the Glory and The Heart of the Matter as had appeared earlier in the travel books, The Lawless Roads and Journey Without Maps. In the novels, the sentiments arise through the

minds of the characters whereas in the travel books they are Mr. Greene's direct observations.

The problem for the modern writer is how to compromise his particular vision of reality with a surrender to the objective life (apart from his own life) of his characters. The modern reader prefers (the critics at least seem to prefer) that the novelist's beliefs and points of view should pass by unobserved. As much as he uses skilfully the usual Realistic techniques to accomplish this, Mr. Greene would not be called a "preacher" were it not for his subject-matter.

If the points of view and actions attributed to a character are consistent with his general make-up and if these are artistically credible (using Aristotle's standards of artistic credibility), it would seem unfair to criticize any novelist for being a "preacher." As a dramatist though, Mr. Greene makes himself vulnerable to this kind of objection.

In a variety of ways, the drama imposes requirements upon a writer's resources that

would not apply to the novel. In a play, the interpretative parts (either to throw light on the speaker or the dramatist's point of view or both), are convincing only when they are expressed in concrete terms and in language that would suit the character more than it might, the author. Mr. Greene's plays seem to fail in this respect. In The Living Room for example, the psychiatrist-lover, Michael, having told his wife that he intends to run off with the young girl, Rose, says: "It's easy to get over other people's pain. I know. I deal with it all day long. Pain is my profession." [22] These lines are moving and yet they would never have been written by the empirical Realists. A Realist would probably have found them somewhat pretentious, too abstract for the drama and unverifiable, therefore unreal sentiments. The lines betray an idealistic rather than an empirical view of reality. The pain referred to by Michael is seen by him as real and it is spiritual not physical pain.

[22] Graham Greene, The Living Room (London, 1953), p. 55. Further references will be to this edition.

The point is that the empirical Realist could not easily imagine someone like Michael speaking as he does in real life. In addition, it is implied in the play and it emerges in lines like the above, that there is a moral law at work in the universe and that pain results when this law is violated; the empirical Realists have not shown that they accept this point of view.

In general, the frequent stating of moral and philosophical views has an unfortunate effect upon Mr. Greene's plays; they are static. The Realists have written better drama on the whole than that which Mr. Greene has presented. The Realist offers his audience a picture of life as lived actually, here and now, concrete and spontaneous, leaving the audience to draw its own conclusions on the significance of the play. A case may be made for the superiority of Mr. Greene's subject-matter in comparison with the Realists but his plays seem to have very little else to offer.

In his descriptive language, Mr. Greene is noticeably less literal and copious than many of the Realists. He uses description succinctly and mainly for its symbolic value and to create a desired mood. There is not the padding or artistically unwarranted detail which one finds in the Realistic novels of Dreiser, Dos Passos or Cozzens. In his descriptive passages, Mr. Greene seems very much unlike the "camera" novelist visualized by Zola who indiscriminately accumulates the details of life.

The symbols chosen by Mr. Greene seem to be intended to illustrate "the moral chaos of the modern world." [23] Characters are frequently described in animalistic terms or associated with brutal aspects of animal life. The symbols for external nature reflect starkly the Realistic mood of the century; Mr. Greene's landscape is ugly, sterile and sordid. One critic has summarized its features:

> . . . the landscape of Greeneland -- the rat crouching on the bathtub, the flapping vultures and the yellow skull,

[23] Malcolm Cowley, The Literary Situation, op. cit., p. 61.

> treachery and bad teeth and the smell of onions and damp pity under a mosquito netting and the Host trembling on the liar's tongue -- and the obsessed man moves across it with black authority. [24]

One feels of the above that the critic has parodied as well as represented his view. Mr. Colin Wilson's view of Mr. Greene's technique deserves mention:

> He begins by portraying his characters and the world they live in with an apparently ruthless frankness. There is a heavy emphasis on sex, sordidness and humiliation. The reader has a feeling that Greene is turning to him periodically and asking: 'Am I trying to fake anything? Have I told any lies?' And the reader, crushed and impressed, answers: 'No, go on.' The picture builds up with appalling inevitability, selecting details of human sin, weakness and misery -- and entirely omitting any reference to the strength or poetry of human existence. [25]

It is Colin Wilson's opinion that the author uses this technique as part of a confidence game in which Catholicism is offered to the reader as the only possible redeemer for mankind's dark existence. There seems little in the works however, to substantiate this

[24] Richard Hayes, "A Novelist's Theater," Commonweal, LXV (March 15, 1957), 613.

[25] Age of Defeat, op. cit., p. 100.

charge. Catholicism is not portrayed attractively as a religion or as a Church; the author's sense of a character's individualism in working out his salvation (seemingly without the help of the organized Church) and of God's individualism (opposed to His role in and through the organized Church) -- these things serve to offset the tide towards the Church as a structural organism.

Mr. Wilson's argument is worth noticing though, in one respect. It is probable that Mr. Greene's descriptive symbols do create the sort of wasteland which gives artistic credibility to the need for God.One cannot say that his characters get along satisfactorily without God. The entrance of God into the world is prepared by revealing the emptiness and frustration and meaninglessness of the world without Him.

Many typically Realistic moods are created and a number of Realistic techniques used to construct the image of the dark world. Miss Anne Fremantle has

observed of Mr. Greene's novels: "All the twentieth-century techniques are used: the flashback, the stream of consciousness, the interior monologue, the dialogue carrying action forward a la Hemingway." [26]

Mr. Greene's "cine-camera" technique produces distinct plates of the landscape but is somewhat different from Zola's camera technique. As in a film, Mr. Greene is intensely selective of the materials at hand and throws shadows and moods about a place instead of rendering a detailed description of the terrain. The same applies to his outward description of character; the details rendered are usually striking and rarely forgotten by the reader in recollection of a character. For example, there is Raven's hare-lip in A Gun For Sale and Bendrix's limp in The End of the Affair.

The opening lines of The Power and the Glory may help to illustrate the "cine-camera" technique in constructing the dark

[26] Anne Fremantle, "In Pursuit of Peace," Saturday Review of Literature, XXXIV (Oct. 27, 1951), 11.

landscape and the subtle description of character by associating it with the landscape:

> Mr. Tench went out to look for his ether cylinder, into the blazing Mexican sun and the bleaching dust. A few vultures looked down from the roof with shabby indifference: he wasn't carrion yet. A faint feeling of rebellion stirred in Mr. Tench's heart, and he wrenched up a piece of the road with splintering finger-nails and tossed it feebly towards them. One rose and flapped across the town: over the tiny plaza, over the bust of an ex-president, ex-general, ex-human being, over the two stalls which sold mineral water, towards the river and the sea. It wouldn't find anything there: the sharks looked after the carrion on that side. Mr. Tench went on across the plaza. [27]

The "thriller" technique is the most obvious example of Realism in Mr. Greene's writing. It must be remembered that the detective story and thriller were conceived and nurtured during the upsurge of science in nineteenth century England. The scientific method is the heart of the thriller and the scientist himself may aptly be termed a "sleuth." Both the scientist and the detective have "pursuit" as their occupation;

[27] Graham Greene, The Power and the Glory (London, 1949), p. 1. Further references will be to this edition.

both deal in facts or in the instance of the thriller, there is at least the illusion of being factual. Mr. Greene is an accomplished thriller writer and the direction that the pursuit takes in his novels is usually convincing.

In The Power and the Glory, it is made clear that the pursuer is really God and the pursued a man running from God, symbolizing that pattern which characterized Francis Thompson's poem, The Hound of Heaven. There are other symbolic characters in this novel; for instance, the half-caste bears a resemblance to Judas. It is interesting that the hero of the novel, the whiskey-priest, is never named by the author; this has the effect of making him as Realistic as journalism, as insignificant as printer's type and yet more universal than any man ever named except Christ, to Whom he bears some resemblance.

Many of Mr. Greene's novels are narrated from the point of view of the journalist or the detective or the government agent whose eyes skim from human

events that which is superficially violent and evil, producing an impression of starkness in the reader because of the impersonal and factual manner of presentation. Many of the empirical Realists are adept at this technique but most of them fail to support it with symbolism that is as meaningful as that offered by Mr. Greene.

In The End of the Affair, the end of the pursuit is peace (usually through death in Mr. Greene's works), and this takes the preliminary form of capture by the police. It is ironic that it should be the anti-Christ, the atheistic Lieutenant, who delivers the priest into the hands of God. This is a fine artistic touch by Mr. Greene and one whose meaning is fundamental to any understanding of Mr. Greene's vision. It is God's use of sin in the dark world to achieve the ends of grace. Theologically sound, this paradox nonetheless buffets the thinking of the ordinary Christian and it seems to be part of the Realist's reformation which is intended to weed out conventional thinking.

There is one other point. Mr. Greene's concentration on theological rather than merely moral issues sometimes recalls Zola's method of "experimentation;" the experimental approach has a tendency to submerge character in an attempt to isolate the mechanical or chemical reactions of the human situation. Mr. Greene's characters sometimes seem too easily manipulated, too obviously in the hands of their creator, perhaps because the author is preoccupied with bringing out the intended symbolism, first and foremost. I think this is a problem which is peculiar to modern writers. It arises from the strenuous effort by some writers to be symbolic at any cost.

The novel may originally have involved merely the telling of a tale (whose symbolism would be implicit, if any); today however, there seems to be an impatience with simply narrating a story (both Freud and the modern critics have sponsored, consciously or otherwise, the mania for symbolism); a few authors have shown that they want to go further than this.

The consciously symbolic novelists run the risk of slipping into allegory and this danger is inherent in Mr. Greene's writing. There is no problem in The Power and the Glory which offers the reader a blend of narration and underlying symbolism together with an artistic surrender to character. The problem arises though, in The Heart of the Matter. For example, Major Scobie is prodded into an affair with a young girl, in an effort by the author to produce a situation involving adultery. The Major's rather hasty movements in this situation seem quite unlike his characteristic indolence.

I am trying to say that there is a difficult paradox in Mr. Greene's writing. On the one hand, the characters follow their inclinations to evil acts; this practice can be found in almost any Realistic novel although Mr. Greene's characters are more aware of their sinfulness. On the other hand, they are often pushed by the author into a theological crisis; they are pushed by the exigencies of the plot. The plot in Mr. Greene's case is a theological one and it requires, sometimes too despotically, that the characters meet a

given theological situation as theological characters and sometimes only as theological characters; this is what I mean by the danger of slipping into allegory.

In Mr. Greene's world, the effect of the above is stark and quite Realistic. Pinkie's race with hell in Brighton Rock conveys this starkness. The experimental, theological novel has within it, dangers equal to Zola's experimental, naturalistic novels. Both novelists risk sacrificing character to situation. The tendency in empirical Realism for stark characterization makes this a formidable problem to overcome. Mr. Greene has at least overcome it in The Power and the Glory.

Chapter Five. Stature of Characters

A number of thinkers in our day have lamented the decline of the noble figure in literature. They look enviously at the culture that produced Sophocles and with even greater envy at the culture which yielded the fruits of Shakespeare's genius. Mr. Joseph Wood Krutch has written: "To Shakespeare, robes and crowns and jewels are the garments most appropriate to man because they are the fitting outward manifestation of his inward majesty, but to us they seem absurd because the man who bears them has, in our estimation, so pitifully shrunk." [28]

It is worth noting that the stature and qualities which many of the empirical Realists relegate to their tragic characters are those that were attributed to the comic characters in Shakespeare's plays. None of Shakespeare's characters are gods. Though of a tainted and imperfect nature, they have within themselves the capacity for greatness and realized or not, it is a belief

[28] The Modern Temper, op. cit., p. 91.

in this potentiality which separates Shakespeare from the empirical Realists. Mr. Greene's characters are not naturally gifted to an extent which would make them comparable to Shakespeare's characters; they do however have the capacity for supernatural greatness or sainthood; it is the latter which separates Mr. Greene's characters from those created by the empirical Realists.

Most of Mr. Greene's characters are in touch with the evil of life; they respond to it and participate in it both sensually and spiritually; many are tempted by evil; some are consumed in it. In general, the characters see little good in life around them. They are wary, suspicious and those who are not, are betrayed. Life through their eyes is shabby and disappointing. Their attitudes are distinctly Realistic and reminiscent of something that Bernard Shaw once wrote: "Just as the liar's punishment is, not in the least that he is not believed, but that he cannot believe anyone else, so a guilty society can more easily be persuaded that any apparently

innocent act is guilty than that any apparently guilty act is innocent." [29]

Mr. Greene's leading characters give the impression of having accumulated most of the experience that life has to offer and are subsequently waery and bored with it. For example, the fiendish teen-ager, Pinkie, has been exposed from a tender age to the sordid realities of existence which in the empirical Realists seem to be the only realities. Mr. Greene shares the Realist's approach when he gives the reader the impression that his characters have "been around," have in Zola's sense, "observed" life in all of its degradation. The argument in favour of this approach would probably be that it makes the Realist's picture of life more convincing and supports the illusion of factualness. Mr. Greene's characters cannot by themselves, elevate their level of existence. Here, empirical Realism in Mr. Greene both begins and ends.

Shaw once wrote of Ibsen's plays that:

[29] Shaw, Quintessence of Ibsenism, op. cit., p. 13.

"Since it is on the weaknesses of the higher types of character that idealism seizes, his examples of vanity, selfishness, folly, and failure are not vulgar villains, but men who in an ordinary novel of melodrama would be heroes." [30] Analogously, Mr. Greene's heroes seem captivated by failure, especially the whiskey-priest and Major Scobie. "Scobie is like so many of his forerunners in that he loves failure . . . . When Scobie is passed over for promotion it was not he who suffered but his wife, Louise. When the decision was reversed it was she who exulted in it and immediately recovered her desire to live, while he found himself hating her." [31] The author's evident sympathy with his failure-characters draws attention to that duality which is at the bottom of his vision. As a Realist, he may sympathize with them because their failure makes them incapable of the deceit of pretentiousness; as a Christian, he may sympathize with them in imitation of the way Christ sympathized

[30] Shaw, Quintessence of Ibsenism, op. cit., p. 130.

[31] John Atkins, Graham Greene (London, 1957), p. 161.

with failures, as people who have very little merit to claim for themselves. In The Heart of the Matter, Scobie's wife, Louise, blames his failure to advance himself for what seems to her a degrading and unrespectable home. The notion of failure in Mr. Greene's novels is clearly related to the general picture of fallen human nature, to the Realistic repudiation of conventional ideas of success and to the logical need for redemption.

Ibsen and the empirical Realists have shown a measure of contempt for book readers and those who favour things intellectual; Mr. Greene is no exception. Scobie's wife "who is represented as an almost complete fool, reads poetry, while the detective who is sent by the Field Security Corps to spy on Scobie writes poetry." [32] The Lehrs with whom the whiskey-priest takes refuge in The Power and the Glory are presented as well-read evangelists, civilized to an extent that makes the whiskey-priest seem animalistic by comparison. The author observes of Mr. Lehr: "The idealistic face turned his way: it wore a look of innocent craft" (p. 208). The Lehrs are not portrayed

[32] George Orwell, "The Sanctified Sinner," New Yorker, XXIV (July 17, 1948), 62.

attractively; they seem sterile. The reader feels that their polite idealism like that of Pyle in The Quiet American is immature and out of touch with reality; and yet, in an earlier age, the Lehrs and Pyle could easily have been visualized as suitable heroes for the novel.

In the outlook of Realism that binds Ibsen and Mr. Greene, idealists may be treated with contempt but they usually seen as dangerous. In The Quiet American, Pyle's good-natured intrusion into Fowler's life and into the touchy politics of the east causes chaos and evil wherever he goes,and he carries himself through it all with a boyish grin on his face and stars and stripes in his eyes.

The virtuous people in Mr. Greene's novels and plays seem to be on the whole a sterile and mediocre lot. They are the "pious and complacent;" they are often without charity and may even be cruel. Louise shows both of these qualities when she forces her husband to receive Communion with her in order to test his faithfulness; Scobie commits a sacrilege rather than offend her. In The Living Room, the crippled priest

speaks contemptuously of goodness "that sits and talks piously and decays all the time"(II,1, p. 46).

Bernard Shaw has commented that the advantage of the Realist test is that "it would act impartially, and set the good side of the Pharisee above the bad side of the Bohemian as ruthlessly as it would set the good side of the Bohemian above the bad side of the Pharisee." [33] For the most part, modern writers have managed to accomplish the second part of Shaw's test; Mr. Greene is once again no exception but his work does admit of some qualification in the light of Shaw's remarks. The priests for example (except in The Power and the Glory), are not portrayed as either Pharisees or Bohemians. They are presented as good and sensible men though impotent as priests because they seem unable to influence the souls in their care. Often, they are aware of this impotency (as is Father Browne in The Living Room), and the resulting agony

[33] Quintessence of Ibsenism, op. cit., p. 139.

is portrayed with sympathy by the author. Nonetheless, their goodness, though it is viewed sympathetically and justly recognized, seems little to affect those who most need to feel its presence.

In modern empirical literature, characters die in this world, never to rise; their course through life is turbulent perhaps but inevitably nihilistic; the death of the body os the death of the total personality. In that fiction which preceded Realism characters could look forward to the life of their souls after death (heaven, hell, purgatory); the personality was not seen to perish with the body. Also present in that earlier literature was the implicit view that men were quite capable of natural greatness, here and now, independently of any future state which their souls might enjoy; this was humanism. We might call the latter "secular greatness" to distinguish it from the greatness of sainthood for example.

The idea that man was "naturally good" made its entrance with Rousseau and had

considerable influence upon the nineteenth century novel. In Rousseau's estimation, man could achieve a tangible happiness in this world and would, without being disciplined, reveal his fundamental goodness in a climate of complete freedom. We find no such "naturally good" characters in Mr. Greene's world; left to themselves their "natural" inclination is to evil. There is a convincing attraction to evil in his characters that would probably have been abhorred in earlier fiction. In Brighton Rock for example, Pinkie does not view his evil life as a mistake of any kind but regards it with a diabolical affection.

In an article on Mr. Greene, George Orwell writes that the "conflict not only between this world and the next world but between sanctity and goodness is a fruitful theme of which the ordinary, unbelieving writer cannot make use." [34] Pinkie, Scobie, Sarah, the whiskey-priest and the others inhabit the world of empirical Realism but have another mode of existence as well.

[34] George Orwell, "The Sanctified Sinner," op. cit., p. 61.

The shadow of salvation or damnation hovers over their lives and gives each of their human acts a significance that is unparalleled in modern fiction. One critic has said that "Greene's own development as a novelist has revealed above all an attempt to restore these two qualities -- religious sense and the importance of the human act -- to the English novel." [35]

Mr. Greene's characters possess a capacity for greatness that is distinct from that "secular greatness" to which we have referred; theirs is a potentiality for sainthood or damnation both of which are to be considered "great" when compared to the most important act performed by an empirical character. Eternity is awesome in comparison with time and an act in time that can decisively influence one's eternal destiny thereby shares in the magnitude of eternity. Hamlet almost committed such a "great" act when he stole behind his kneeling uncle and contemplated whether or not to kill him; he had already committed the act

[35] Francis Wyndham, Graham Greene, in Writers and Their Work series, no. 67 (London, 1955), p. 7.

in his soul.

Mr. Greene's characters do not seem able to attain natural greatness; they are not gifted in the humanistic sense and they seem to prefer failure to worldly success. Their mode of existence is elevated by grace only, grace that steals upon them so unexpectedly and often so uninvited.

Chapter Six. Sin

I. Sin For the Moderns

A reviewer of The Living Room has illuminated, I think, Mr. Greene's relation to his times:

> What made the play a failure in New York, in your observer's opinion, is recognition of sin. In the contemporary New York theatre, sin is an almost forbidden word, rarely mentioned except in mockery. In The Living Room sin is not treated as a joke. A specific sin, adultery, is given a close study, its nature and consequences examined, as under a microscope, against a background of Christian morals. [36]

For various, cultural reasons, many of them intimately associated with the influence of empirical Realism, it is no longer generally believed that man is capable of choices that might result in his eternal damnation.

It might be objected that there need be no relation between sin and hell or rather that a belief in sin does not necessitate a belief in hell, that a belief in sin may be simply a belief in man's corrupted nature. In this alternate view, the stress would be laid upon the relation between man's choices

[36] Theophilus Lewis, "Post Mortem Report," America, XCII (Jan. 8, 1955), 386.

and the corruption or improvement of his nature. In both views, the stress is upon the importance of man's free choices; this is the point of Mr. Greene. It is opposed to that view which inderlies much Realistic writing in our time whereby man's corrupted nature compels him to sin and that, in sinning without the practical possibility of choice, he demonstrates how corrupted his nature really is; the argument is a circular one.

Through centuries of fiction, very little effort has been devoted to a study of the sinner with the possible exception of Hawthorne's Scarlet Letter and a few others. The following statement has been applied to Mr. Greene's work:

> Paradox presumes that the most startling if not the most effective way to present virtue is to dwell on its opposite. The emptiness of vice, the hell of the soul isolated from its divine affinity, the burning sense of loss which terrifies so many of Greene's characters jolt even the unwary reader into a realization that man has a kind of existence, but no real being, apart from God. [37]

[37] Francis X. Connolly, "Inside Modern Man: The Spiritual Adventures of Graham Greene," Renascence, I (Spring, 1949), 18.

The observation, one feels, could have been aptly applied to The Faerie Queene in which vice, as a personification, is doomed to defeat from the start. Mr. Greene's handling is different in many respects. The reader does not assume, as in Spenser, that the effect intended is allegorical. Mr. Greene does not seem to be manipulating evil or its expression in vice; rather he appears to be offering a study of evil as it inheres in some human beings. With Spenser evil emerges usually as the temporary weakness of characters who are predestined by the poet towards good; with Mr. Greene we are reminded that man can possess a love for evil that is every bit as forceful and absolute as his love for good, a constitutional need for disorder, death and nothingness as well as for life. It is clear that, unlike Spenser, Mr. Greene does not seem to be principally concerned with the triumph of virtue over vice or good over evil; but he does show dramatically that a sinner who damns himself (like Pinkie in Brighton Rock), finds no happiness in his evil.

Referring to the French poet, Baudelaire, T.S. Eliot once commented:

> The possibility of damnation is so immense a relief in a world of electoral reform, plebiscites, sex reform, and dress reform, that damnation itself is an immediate form of salvation -- of salvation from the ennui of modern life, because it at last gives some significance to living. [38]

Mr. Greene is opposed to the culture of the moderns in much the same way as Baudelaire was opposed to his. Both see and interpret life through the wider lens of eternity.

In The Living Room, where the girl, Rose, falls in love with a married man, "the view which we are led to take of that situation is a religious and moral one, and not, as is the case in most of the current literature of adultery, sociological or psychological." [39] The above satisfactorily illustrates Mr. Greene's divergence from the pattern of empirical Realism.

II. Determinism Versus Free Will

We have seen that Darwin, T.H. Huxley and Freud on the theoretical plane and a

[38] T.S. Eliot, "Charles Baudelaire," in Points of View (London, 1941), pp. 123-124.

[39] Sam Hynes, "Religion in the West End," Commonweal, LIX (Feb. 12, 1954), 477.

host of writers in the creative arena helped to create the popularly accepted image of man's being tossed about by his environment and preyed upon by a flood of passions within himself. In the empirical Realists, man is shown to be at the mercy of that violence which is everywhere and which is beyond his ability to control.

Mr. Greene's characters live on the frontiers of violence and squalor. The whiskey-priest is hunted through an atheistic wasteland; Scobie is surrounded by degradation in man and nature; Pinkie started off on the wrong side of the tracks and never gets much further.

The effects of environment on personality are strongest in Brighton Rock but they are evident elsewhere. Pinkie's view of life is that of a personality which has been trampled upon; he has never known goodness in those around him and he comes not to believe in its existence as for instance when he parodies the opening lines of the Creed: "'Credo in unum Satanum.'" [40] His history comes vividly to the surface

[40] Graham Greene, Brighton Rock (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1943), p. 168. Further references will be to this edition.

when he "beat out wildly with his hands towards the window: Woman Found Drowned, two-valve, Married Love, the horror -- 'from this' . . . . Dallow watched with astonishment this sudden horrified gift of tongues" (p. 167). Pinkie's cynical view of love which reflects in his relationship with Rose, has been conditioned by a traumatic exposure to sex while still a child at home.

Childhood plays an important, deterministic role in the novels. Mr. Greene's man in Havana muses: "Childhood was the germ of all mistrust. You were cruelly joked upon and then you cruelly joked. You lost the remembrance of pain through inflicting it." [41] In A Gun For Sale, Raven recalls that "he had been marked from his birth for this end, to be betrayed in turn by everyone until every avenue into life was safely closed." [42] In Brighton Rock, it is remarked of Pinkie that "hell lay about him in his infancy" (p. 69).

[41] Graham Greene, Our Man in Havana (London, 1958), p. 32.

[42] Graham Greene, A Gun For Sale (London, 1947), p. 220.

Malcolm Cowley has noted of recent, Realistic fiction:

> Lately a change has been evident in the leading ideas of many naturalistic writers. Their novels still follow the pattern established by Crane, Norris and Dreiser -- that is, their heroes are still victims, betrayed by circumstances into criminal follies that lead to disasters -- but now the follies are likely to be excused in a new fashion . . . . In recent years heredity has played a rather small part in naturalistic novels and social environment isn't so often presented as the only reason why the heroes or heroines were victimized. Instead of being ruined by poverty or wealth or racial prejudice, they are in many cases deformed by some traumatic experience in childhood. [43]

Pinkie's premature exposure to sexual life leaves an ugly scar upon his mind that makes him despise the idea of human love. In general, Mr. Greene's characters appear to be influenced in their childhood towards good or evil in a permanent manner. Sometimes it seems as if childhood is fatalistic, dooming a character to a particular kind of manhood.

[43] The Literary Situation, op. cit., p. 82.

Alongside this determinism is a tendency that seems to contradict it. The characters are usually conscious of using their will in responding to situations in spite of the fact that they seem to be predestined to react in a given way in a given situation. They appear to know clearly what they are doing and what are the consequences of their choices; they are fully aware that they are playing for eternal stakes.

Pinkie's seemingly irresistible tendency to evil is offset by the reflection that ". . . his temporal safety in return for two immortalities of pain. He had no doubt whatever that this was mortal sin, and he was filled with a kind of gloomy hilarity and pride. He saw himself now as a full-grown man for whom the angels wept"(Brighton Rock, p. 171). Rose shares this awareness with Pinkie: "'I went and rang the bell and asked for Father James. But then I remembered. It wasn't any good confessing. I went away.' She said with a mixture of fear and pride:'We're going to do a mortal sin'"(p. 169). Both are gambling that death will not take them before they can get to confession, fully

conscious of the consequence of losing. This is exciting enough for any reader but supported by the author's stark techniques conviction is lent to the belief that "Mr. Greene knows the trick of making the friction of ideas as exciting as a brawl on Pier A." [44]

Mr. Greene avoids, I think, the pitfalls of empirical Realism that result from a popular practice of presenting the hero as victim; instead, he creates characters whose self-awareness and consciousness of sin and fundamental free will make them active agents of their own destinies. On first sight, Pinkie seems to be a character straight out of Eugene O'Neill but he is really more like the conscious malice of Shakespeare's, Richard III. Even for Pinkie though, there is grace, if only "a crack between the Brighton walls."(p. 230).

III. Levels of Sin

Together with the modern sense of man's insignificance there is the feeling that even his sins are rather unimportant. For example, through endless repetition in the

[44] Theophilus Lewis, "The Potting Shed," America, XCVI (Feb. 23, 1957), 595.

modern media of communication, the portrayal of murder has lost the respect which it once commanded; the modern reader or auditor has come to accept murder as something that is commonplace and even prosaic. Perhaps aware of this attitude contemporary writers have refined the portrayal of murder (and in so doing subtracted the essence of the deed), so that it is no longer the deed itself which evokes awe but the manner in which it is executed. The act of murder for Hamlet was awesome in itself and the manner of execution was seen to be incidental by both Hamlet and the Elizabethan audience.

In Mr. Greene's context of heaven and hell, due importance is restored to the act of murder; he places the stress not upon the consequences of murder in a legal or social sense but upon the destinies of the souls of both the murderer and his victim. The same applies to his handling of the act of adultery. It is committed under God's eye and its significance lies in its being a betrayal of God and perhaps another human being rather than for its violation of a society's code or a particular judicial system. In The Heart of

the Matter, Scobie "had a sudden picture before his eyes of a bleeding face, of eyes closed by the continuous shower of blows: the punch-drunk head of God reeling sideways." [45]

Ida, the prostitute in Brighton Rock, is set off sharply against Pinkie and Rose; she is the pagan sinner, symbolic, it is implied, of the ethics of our civilization. Ida is despised by both Pinkie and Rose for her lack of insight. Her philosophy of life is summed up by the author: "She dug down into her deepest mind, the plain of memories, instincts, hopes and brought up from them the only philosophy she lived by. 'I like fair play,' she said. She felt better when she'd said that and added with terrible lightheartedness: 'An eye for an eye.'"(p. 77). Ida's sense of goodness like her sense of evil is represented as pagan and sentimental: "A day, she thought, that's all he's been gone, and I dare say there's not another soul but me thinking about him: just someone he picked up for a drink and

[45] Graham Greene, The Heart of the Matter (London, 1948), p. 256. Further references will be to this edition.

a cuddle, and again the easy pathos touched her friendly and popular heart"(p. 34). At one time Rose says to Pinkie somewhat clannishly: "'You're a Roman too. We were all Romans in Nelson Place. You believe in things. Like Hell. But you can see she doesn't believe a thing.' She said bitterly: 'You can tell the world's all dandy with her'"(p. 92).

Mr. Greene has more than once been accused of displaying a kind of snobbery in picturing those capable of damnation as members of a very exclusive club. There is some justice in the criticism. It may well be true that Pinkie, Scobie and the others are more aware of sin and this sometimes in its deepest theological sense. Ida however, is a little too glib to be true. Mr. Greene does seem to view with contempt the non-Catholics in his novels. It may be argued rightly that at least in this life both Catholics and non-Catholics face more or less the same human problems; Mr. Greene has admitted that the problems faced by his characters are common to everyone. Allowing that a non-Catholic may not be as

able to explain human suffering as the Catholic or Christian, nonetheless his drama though a frustrating one, can be just as intense as that of the Christian who has the answers. Mr. Greene could well have been more charitable to the non-Catholics in his novels. Even the Christian-but-non-Catholic Lehrs in The Power and the Glory, though they have the possibility of insight, are portrayed as out of touch with reality; they cannot accept the implications of the Incarnation.

The point is that, in casting non-Catholics aside, the universality of Mr. Greene's work has been seriously restricted. Artistically, non-Catholic characters serve as a convenient contrast but one feels that they are somewhat too contrived. That human nature which binds both Pinkie and Ida is overlooked in a somewhat specious treatment of the latter. The reader cannot quarrel with the particular portrayal of Ida or the Lehrs as characters but both want a more sympathetic treatment especially in the light of what they generally represent; as it is they are only caricatures.

On the other hand, Mr. Greene has used Ida quite effectively to depose the myth of the "naturally good" man or woman, a practice that seems to characterize some of the less hedonistic Realists. The usefulness of contrasting Ida with Pinkie is to distinuish the real Christian (though a sinner) from the sentimental and ruthless platitudes of the fake Christian who is actually a pagan.

The Greeks were conscious of the intimate relationship between the tragic and the religious or the moral. The tragedy of Oedipus derives its dignity and universality from a sense of the consequences which follow a violation of the laws and oracles of the gods. The really tragic characters in literature have always tampered with or ignored the moral law of the universe. Mr. Greene's characters reflect this association between the religious and the tragic unlike most of the empirical Realists for whom nothing is sacred and as a result, nothing is tragic. Some of the Realists have tried to write tragedy but they inevitably seem to produce only pathos.

As opposed to most of the Realists, the guilt for sin, in Mr. Greene, is not laid at society's doorstep; it is seen as the responsibility of the individual but with just recognition for those pressures that may oppress the personality. For instance, the characters are not forced into promiscuity by Freudian compulsion; but there are Freudian pressures. Here is no vague sense of guilt but a sharp realization of having sinned. Even those characters who do not choose it, realize that redemption is within their field of choice; many choose despair rather than make this choice.

Ironically, there is hope for the characters even in their despair. The author suggests frequently that the throbbing of a subterranean faith in the souls of his characters makes complete despair impossible; hence Scobie's half-uttered prayer in the act of suicide. We have passed through and beyond empirical Realism.

Chapter Seven. Faith

I. The Characters as Believers

In Balzac's Eugénie Grandet, Eugénie and her mother seem to use religion as a means of sublimating their unwanted powers of love. For the most part, the empirical Realists view the presence of religious faith in their characters as a psychological aberration. Of that semi-Realist, Graham Greene, it has been noted:

> There are people of unimpeachable piety who think that a Christian's whole duty consists of abstaining from personal sin and denouncing it in others, ignoring the problem of unbelief. To them much of Mr. Greene's play will be tedious and seem irrelevant to their faith, and they may recoil from the scene in which a bibulous priest appears, as an insult to their religion. To Mr. Greene, a convert, the problem of unbelief -- is obviously more important.[46]

Whether or not it is because he is a convert, Mr. Greene does place an enormous importance upon the theological virtue of faith. The notion of faith as a theological virtue is quite different from that amorphous sense of intangible reality which is contained in the writings of many of the empirical Realists. It is also distinct from pagan hope; faith for

[46] Theophilus Lewis, "The Potting Shed," op. cit.,pp. 594-595.

Mr. Greene's characters is not the same for example, as the sort of animal faith which underlies Hemingway's, The Old Man and the Sea. After having been repeatedly pushed under by fate, the old man, at the end of the book, doggedly resolves to strike out to sea once more, and we are witnesses with Hemingway to a moving account of the indestructibility of man. Fate in Hemingway is blind though, and so then are those who grapple with it in spite of their courage. In Mr. Greene's vision, it is because God sees that we are able to see; a man can strive to turn his luck and he may be successful; a man cannot strive successfully to be a believer; faith is above all in Mr. Greene, a gift to man and therefore beyond his efforts to obtain. Mr. Greene's characters seem unable to move themselves either in or out of the rays of faith; the fact that their faith is seen to come not from themselves but from God makes them powerless to control it. They may have faith but in Mr. Greene's view they never possess it; it possesses them.

The anonymous priest in The Power and the Glory is a good example of Mr. Greene's view of faith. He ventures on wearily, distributing the Sacraments, always on the verge of despair and yet supported by a faith that he cannot control:"Now that he no longer despaired it didn't mean of course, that he wasn't damned -- it was simply that after a time the mystery became too great, a damned man putting God into the mouths of men"(p. 141). The priest goes on because of faith in God's Will but he cannot here and now understand that Will.

The Lieutenant informs the captured whiskey-priest towards the end of The Power and the Glory:""You're a danger. That's why we kill you. I have nothing against you, you understand, as a man.'
'Of course not,' the priest replies, 'It's God you're against. I'm the sort of man you shut up every day -- and give money to'"(pp. 250-251). Here is a distinction between the priest's humanity and the permanent stamp of service as a priest that is on his soul and which drives him on. Mr. Greene's approach to faith is

not apologetical or in any was a defense of the reasonableness of the Catholic faith. Those characters who sometimes have the strongest faith seem most aware of its mystery. I am not saying that Mr. Greene considers the faith of his characters to be irrational but simply that its rationality does not much concern the author or his characters.

In The Heart of the Matter, Scobie is disturbed by the death on arrival of a child who had spent many days at sea in an open boat: "Not that the child would die -- that needed no explanation. Even the pagans realized that the love of God might mean an early death, though the reason they ascribed was different; but that the child should have been allowed to survive the forty days and nights in the open boat -- that was the mystery, to reconcile that with the love of God"(p. 121). Faith, in Mr. Greene's characters gives them only "the hint of an explanation."

The fact that Mr. Greene chose to stress the faith of his characters rather than their works has produced some controversy.

His emphasis on faith seems to be analogous to the practice of the empirical Realists where there is a pronounced concentration upon the inward and subjective life of characters rather than upon exterior action. We have seen that the empirical Realists became wary of the motivation behind "good works;" they often managed to uncover some form of hypocrisy.

The well-known French novelist, François Mauriac wrote of The Power and the Glory: "In this false, bad priest it is not virtue that appears as the opposite of sin, it is faith -- faith in that sign he received the day of his ordination, in the trust that he alone (since all the other priests have been massacred or have fled) still bears in his hands, unworthy but yet consecrated." [47] Mauriac goes on to contrast the faith of the characters with the Church as an apostolic structure: "We feel it is that hidden presence of God in an atheistic world, that subterranean flowing of Grace which dazzles Graham Greene much more than the majestic façade

[47] François Mauriac, "Graham Greene," in Men I Hold Great, trans. Elsie Pell (New York, c1951), p. 126.

which the temporal Church still erects above the peoples." [48] Some of the comments on Mr. Greene in this respect have been less complimentary. Helen Gardner was irked by "the inverted snobbery of Mr. Graham Greene, who has an odd contempt for 'works' and seems to feel a lurking sympathy for Luther's 'Pecca fortiter.'" [49]

The whole question of a balance between faith and works in Mr. Greene is tied up with the author's extreme emphasis on grace. Bernard Shaw has said on many occasions that the traditional view of virtue in English literature is that of perfect self-denial. Because of the novel's rise through the ranks of the Puritan, middle-class, the observation seems at least applicable to this genre. Mr. Greene's conception of virtue is an about-turn from the tradition referred to by Shaw.

In The Heart of the Matter, Scobie, in one of his many, introspective moods,

[48] Mauriac, "Graham Greene," op. cit.,p.126.

[49] Helen Gardner, "Francois Mauriac: A Woman of the Pharisees,"in Penguin New Writing, no. 31 (London, 1947), p. 101.

reflects: "He didn't drink, he didn't fornicate, he didn't even lie, but he never regarded this absence of sin as a virtue"(p. 115). The really, serious offences for Mr. Greene are not sins of the flesh or even those against justice (like murder); rather they are sins against charity, the betrayal of God, of another human being and of oneself. In The Power and the Glory, the whiskey-priest, in the presence of the Lehrs, says of the American gunman: "He's only killed and robbed. He hasn't betrayed his friends"(p. 230). One should notice here that the gunman is thought to have friends in a real sense, not merely party-members in an evil confederacy.

I have referred to Mr. Greene's emphasis on grace. His characters are generally burdened with the various pressures of the empirical Realist's world; in many cases the sin-traps that hold them have been set by themselves. An existentialist in this matter, Mr. Greene seems to feel that the guilt for a habit of sin is irrelevant when here and now the chance

to cooperate with grace presents itself; grace is sometimes tiny, like Pinkie's "crack between the Brighton walls"(Brighton Rock, p. 230).

The effort towards cooperation with grace by the habitual sinner may be a feeble one but upon that faint act, it is implied, may hang salvation. In The End of the Affair, Sarah is able to perform such a feeble act and we are left with the impression that her painful conversion has put her within reach of salvation; anything more spirited would have strained the Realist's code of probability. Sarah is not a St. Augustine. At the same time, the reader is aware of what it cost her to end the affair with Bendrix. The point is that, for Mr. Greene's characters, there is no set norm of action which can be called virtue in the usual sense.

The same virtuous acts needed for salvation do not appear to be required alike of Father Rank and Scobie. The human situation of each is considered; in Mr. Greene's existentialist view, only through each, unique situation is the

salvation of each is to come. In The Living Room the crippled priest remarks that "it was often the sinners who had the biggest trust. In mercy"(I,1,p.16).

Mr. Greene's conception of faith is a more active one that is normally held. In The Heart of the Matter for instance, the notion of commitment includes inferences for the characters that go far beyond philosophical reflection. Scobie "had committed himself to a belief"(p. 53). Scobie observes that "one must sometimes exercise the faculty of belief if it is not to atrophy"(p. 48). Along with most of the Realists, Mr. Greene has helped to reveal the amount of action that can take place within the soul. Those who would want him to give the attention to works that he gives to faith must realize that for Mr. Greene the inner battle must be fought first. The end of the affair is a long time in coming; it seems long until Sarah acts; but the empirical Realist's sense of defeat is behind us after she does act.

II. The Faith of the Reader

The English novelist, Evelyn Waugh, has said of The Heart of the Matter that:

> Its hero speaks of the Church as "knowing all the answers," but his life and death comprise a problem to which the answer is in the mind of God alone, the reconciliation of perfect justice with perfect mercy. It is a book which only a Catholic could write and only a Catholic could understand, I mean that only a Catholic can understand the nature of the problem. [50]

Mr. Waugh's is an extreme view and one that is not uncommon. Another critic has taken a different viewpoint, observing that "it is Greene's most signal triumph that even the 'pagan' reader identifies himself with the priest " in The Power and the Glory. [51]

All art is in a way illusory; it is not the "real thing," though it may resemble the "real thing." An empirical Realist like Zola may intend to offer the reader a scientifically, objective picture of life but he belittles the obvious imprint of his own imagination on this picture. The

[50] Evelyn Waugh, "Felix Culpa?" Commonweal, XLVIII (July 16, 1948), 322.

[51] Henry Reed, Since 1939 (London, 1949), p. 74.

artist, I think, presents the reader with a picture of life and says, "Accept this, as if it were true;" it is only in this way that art can communicate its real value. No one for a moment suspects that a man exactly like Shakespeare's Lear ever lived; but his story and his character have their counterpart in reality and once the resemblance is seen it seems trivial and ungrateful to complain that one has never encountered such a person. In the reading of any work of fiction, what is immediately important is not what the author believes but what the characters believe; in this spirit the reader must first accept the existence of the beliefs and make-up of a character whether he agrees with these or not, if anything of value is to be communicated through a work.

Mr. Greene is in many important ways, a Realist. The strain of trying to portray the actual is ever present in his writing. He has managed to capture the simultaneous touch of the moment of time and of eternity in the lives of his characters; he has pinpointed the axis of their existence.

In his political novel, The Quiet American, Mr. Greene has managed to stir up just as violent a tempest as that which succeeded each of his "religious works." It seems probable that Mr. Greene's aptitude for causing controversy springs not from that fact that his main characters are Catholic but rather because he, himself, is an extremely, provocative writer. Critical reaction has demonstrated that he is just as controversial among Catholic readers as anyone else.

As an author, Mr. Greene deals in "illusions," as we have seen; we have also seen that a reader must first accept the characters as they are presented if anything of value is to be communicated. The problems which confront Mr. Greene's characters are not essentially different from those which may face any human being. Sin is as commonplace as humanity and as worthy of respect; belief in something (even if one professes to believe in nothing) is just as ordinary. Mr. Greene's real power is as an artist rather than as a philosopher or theologian; moreover, he is

possessed of a compelling and deeply imaginative view to life. In him, the Realist and the Catholic meet in the artist.

Chapter Eight. Miracles

T.H. Huxley's attitude to miracles is reflected implicitly in the empirical Realist's picture of the world. Huxley writes that it is "not upon any a priori considerations that objections, either to the supposed efficacy of prayer in modifying the course of events, or to the supposed occurrence of miracles, can be scientifically based. The real objection, and, to my mind, the fatal objection, to both these suppositions, is the inadequacy of the evidence to prove any given case of such occurrences which has been adduced." [52] Zola describes the experimental novelist as one who "leaves to philosophers the other ideal, that of the 'why,' which he despairs of determining." [53]

Mr. Greene's view of miracles or rather their significance in his writing is somewhat elusive; his most recent work indicates that he is no longer as preoccupied with miracles as he once was. What miracles

[52] Huxley, Science and Christian Tradition, op. cit., p. 135.

[53] Zola, "The Experimental Novel," op. cit., p. 39.

there are manifest the author's curious mixture of Realism and Catholicism. One approach to miracles is delivered by the whiskey-priest in The Power and the Glory when he is talking to the Lieutenant:

> "I suppose," the lieutenant said, scowling ahead, "you're hoping for a miracle."
> "Excuse me. What did you say?"
> "I said I suppose you're hoping for a miracle."
> "No."
> "You believe in them, don't you?"
> "Yes. But not for me. I'm no more good to anyone, so why should God keep me alive?"
> "I can't think how a man like you can believe in those things. The Indians, yes. Why, the first time they see an electric light they think it's a miracle."
> "And I dare say the first time you saw a man raised from the dead you might think so too " (p. 260).

This kind of conversation could only have taken place after the scientists and sociologists had shaken Christianity. It is very modern and very Christian. It proves nothing but it says a great deal for belief. The Lieutenant might have retorted that medical science will answer the priest's objection one day; but this is not the point. The point as far as the reader is concerned is that the whiskey-priest believes in miracles and that this belief for him is as unquestionable as it is unprovable. The question of evidence

is obviously more pressing to the Lieutenant than it is to the priest. We are left with the impression that the priest has all of the evidence he wants.

The miracle in The Potting Shed has caused some controversy among the critics. The play concerns the vow of a priest to sacrifice his faith if a child is brought back to life. The child is brought back to life and we are led to believe that the priest loses his faith. A critic in The Dublin Review has attacked the authenticity of the alleged miracle:

> The concept of divine faith shown in this play will not square with what the magisterium of the Church has to tell us, especially in the Vatican Council. This narration would seem to rest divine faith upon an entirely subjective experience of the mind -- as though it were the fruit of so much human consideration of certain propositions. [54]

As to the priest's sacrificing his faith for the boy's life, the writer continues: "Sacrifice is not a 'deal' with God, nor is prayer. Neither can impose conditions on God which He Himself has not freely

[54] T.H., "The Potting Shed: Figmentum Fidei," Dublin Review, CCXXXII (Spring, 1958), 72.

assumed in our regard"(Ibid., 73). Furthermore:

> Divine Providence cannot be so constrained by an intensity of human emotion as to cut the lifeline of an innocent soul.
>
> Mrs. Callifer, therefore, according to this solution, would be right in calling the God of The Potting Shed a cruel God. He does not exist. The 'narration,' for all its reliance on Catholic terminology and a Catholic character, is not Catholic (Ibid., 73).

Mr. Greene's view of the play had been reported previous to T.H.'s article:

> Discussing the religious issues in Potting Shed, Greene explains that the priest's offer to give up his faith in return for his young nephew's life is "a contract made in the dark." When the boy lives, the priest only imagines that God has accepted his offer. But faith is "a gift from God, not a merit, and therefore was not his to give away," as is proved when he recovers faith. Greene admits that his point may not be too clear but adds that if his play were all crystal clear, it would be a "dull thing indeed.[55]

On the whole, I am inclined to endorse Mr. Greene's view of the play, not because he is the author but because his view seems closer to the meaning that is in the play. He has posted signs of his intention through-

[55][Anon.], "A Spiritual Suspense Story," Life, XLII (April 1, 1957), 68.

out the play and has subtly (perhaps at the expense of clarity) left his meaning behind a situation that appears to be what it is not.

The priest believes that his faith, by his own pact with God, has been taken from him as a result of the boy's having been restored to life or in other words because a miracle has taken place; the priest's belief in his loss of faith is necessarily (for him) supported by his belief in the miracle. Moreover, the priest laments a number of times during the play, God's having taken his faith from him, a situation which is obviously ironic and which, if it does not mean that he still retains belief, at least implies belief in a God who could take away his faith. Another sign of belief in the priest is the fact that James comes to faith after seeing the priest. This unacknowledged belief has simply to express itself in the soul of the priest who recovers faith at the end of the play.

Faith in this case seems to follow the empirical Realist's pattern of complete subjectivity without a reference to God as He exists outside the mind of the priest.

Left here, the issue could easily be handled by the psychoanalyst as so often happens in modern fiction; but it is significant that the miracle itself, outside of the priest's consciousness, is never really disproved. The author suspends it before the reader like a great question mark.

In The End of the Affair, the miracles are more straightforward with one of them occupying the last fifty pages of the book. It is my opinion that those last fifty pages should not have been written and that they spoiled what could have been the most mature expression of Mr. Greene's vision. The failure of this novel can be illustrated by Colin Wilson's comments on Zola's Realistic novel, Therese Raquin: "One is inclined to suspect that Zola's imagination failed him. He was challenged to show the effect of freedom on two people who had lived in an invisible prison. The feat was too much for him."[56] The development of Zola's novel seems to resemble that of The End of the Affair. Mr.

[56] Wilson, Age of Defeat, op. cit., p. 93.

Wilson continues:

> Up to this point, the novel moves with tremendous force, and the reader feels that Zola is fulfilling all the functions of a great artist. He has projected himself into the situation of a frustrated woman, and has shown that frustration being swept away . . . . But now Zola suddenly withdraws and writes a conventional tragedy of conscience . . . . it seems too contrived, too deliberate. [57]

The similarity between the two novels is that both are artistically satisfying up to a point and then they seem to break down. In The End of the Affair, that point is reached with the death of Sarah. One of the miracles in this novel is brought out only in the conversations that follow Sarah's death, in which it is discovered that she had been secretly baptized as a child and that this accounts for her conversion. Sarah's mother says of her deceased daughter's baptism: "'I always had a wish that it would 'take.' Like vaccination!'" [58] The latter part of the novel is poorly written; there is too much talk. The action ceases with the death of

[57] Wilson, Age of Defeat, op. cit., p. 93.

[58] Graham Greene, The End of the Affair (London, 1951), p. 201. Further references will be to this edition.

Sarah. The miraculous power that Sarah's baptism seems to have had and the ensuing conversion of Bendrix are stale and academic.

The other miracle in The End of the Affair is the saving of Bendrix from death during an air-raid because of a promise by Sarah to God that if he is saved, she will give him up. This miracle resembles to some extent the one in The Potting Shed; but because Sarah's pact with God includes implications that must influence her action in the future, the effect is, on the whole, more dramatic. The outcome is not as inevitable for the reader as in The Potting Shed.

The manipulation of coincidence is a basic technique in the Realistic thriller; Mr. Greene uses it skilfully in his "entertainments." Something of the same nature has unfortunately been applied occasionally to his novels and the effect seems artificial. There is a little too much coincidence behind Sarah's conversion.

In general, Mr. Greene's miracles are ambiguous and I think, deliberately so. The self-deception which underlies the

characters' contracts with God shows a convincing, Realistic approach but clouds the point of presenting the miracles. The ambiguity is frustrating not in itself but because the reader feels that Mr. Greene is trying to imply that miracles have taken places.

In order to be convincing, it seems to me that the portrayal of a miracle in modern fiction must be so affirmative that it almost seems commonplace; this was the success of The Power and the Glory. In The End of the Affair and The Potting Shed however, the cautious spirit of Realism seems to overshadow the force of the miracles. Mr. Greene does not carry conviction while he worries over his miracles.

Chapter Nine. Love

I. Sex

George Orwell has written that "in a Graham Greene novel there is a tendency for people to go to bed together almost at sight and with no apparent pleasure." [59] Like most, modern novelists, Mr. Greene pays considerable attention to sex but the point raised by Orwell is that the characters fail to enjoy it.

Here are some examples. "In his picture of the Boy, that satanic child who dominates the book [Brighton Rock] he gave among other things, a complete commentary on the possible effect of Puritanism on an adolescent's attitude toward sex. He said, in effect, that there is a kind of chastity, warped and misinformed, whose effect can be worse than any lust." [60] In The End of the Affair Sarah says: "'I hated the statues, the crucifix, all the emphasis on the human body"(p. 130). In The Power and the Glory

[59] Orwell, "The Sanctified Sinner," op. cit., p. 62.

[60] Harry Sylvester, "Graham Greene," Commonweal, XXXIII (Oct. 25, 1940), 12.

the Lieutenant "felt no sympathy at all with the weakness of the flesh"(p. 26).

Of Pinkie in Brighton Rock, Thomas Merton makes this perceptive observation:

> Therefore his fear of sex is more than just a glib trick of the author in characterizing him: it carries with it the notion of chastity turned inside out into a kind of Satanic sterility, which is a compulsion imprisoning him in evil yet liberating in him one terrible power: to kill people swiftly and almost surgically, with complete coldness. All this is comprehensible in terms of the doctrine of "corruptio optimi pessima" and the whole thing has implications that are important for our society which worships a kind of surgical sterility itself, but cannot connect up that worship with all the dirt and cruelty and misery that are forced, harder and harder, upon the poor. [61]

In the Realistic tradition of the century, most of Mr. Greene' characters are isolated, shut out from one another; they prefer to live alone, even in marriage. Sex, on the other hand, draws them together, forcing them to become "involved" with one another; this is perhaps why they hate it, as Pinkie hates it.

[61] The Secular Journal of Thomas Merton, (New York, c1959), p. 30.

The isolation of sex from its primary purpose (procreation) by some of Mr. Greene's characters throws into relief the larger isolation of man from his purpose. As Catholics, the characters know that sex is forbidden outside of marriage. Scobie, Sarah, the whiskey-priest, Pinkie, Rose and the others are all involved in illicit affairs. Their awareness of sin constitutes a burden of guilt; they cannot please and sin with one another at the same time.

In The Living Room, Rose's sin is that she puts her love to Michael before anything else and the results of this choice, it is suggested, can only be tragic. Her pitfall is in thinking that love and sex exist for the sake of the lovers and that they can be enjoyed outside of marriage. There is not a moment in the affair with Michael that is free from pain; sin, for Mr. Greene's characters, carries its own punishment.

It is the fact that sex is not enjoyed by the characters inside marriage that may lead the reader to suspect something unhealthy in Mr. Greene's vision. In this

respect, Sarah is not happily married; Scobie's marriage is a failure; no one in Brighton Rock enjoys physical love in marriage. In The Potting Shed, James and his wife are not adjusted sexually so that although they love each other, there seems to be no enjoyment in conjugal love.

In his treatment of sex, Mr. Greene is in some important respects out of the Catholic tradition, which regards sex as something good and designed to give great pleasure when used in marriage. His severity and repugnance for physical love seem more like the spirit of the New England theocracy in Hawthorne's Scarlet Letter. Mr. Greene is inside the Catholic tradition in portraying the effects on people who use sex selfishly and without regard to its purpose but his failure to present sex in any other way seems to bring him closer to the Puritan than to the Catholic tradition. The Catholic view is that sex is not sordid but rather sin is sordid. The distinction is unfortunately not made by Mr. Greene. On the other hand, his portrayal of sex opposes,

effectively I think, the hedonism of Realists like D.H. Lawrence.

II. Pity

It has been said that the "extreme unlovableness of some of the characters whom Balzac managed to sympathize with and find pleasure in considering is notorious." [62] This tendency is noticeable in many of the Realists; Mr. Greene is no exception.

In The Power and the Glory the whiskey-priest remarks: "'I know -- from experience -- how much beauty Satan carried down with him when he fell. Nobody ever said the fallen angels were the ugly ones"(pp. 168-169). In The End of the Affair, Sarah, in prayer, recalls the deformed man, Smythe: "I couldn't tell him I envied him, carrying the mark of pain around with him like that, seeing You in the glass every day instead of this dull human thing we call beauty"(p. 147).

Of Balzac and the empirical Realists, it may be said that they sympathize with

[62] Crawford, "Introduction," to Eugénie Grandet, op. cit., p. 7.

unlovable characters; of Mr. Greene it may be said that both the author and his characters sympathize with unlovable people. This inclination expresses itself in pity. One critic has said that for Mr. Greene "the presence of evil is the first thing we apprehend. Beauty is too often a deceiving trick of the devil, tempting us by the appearances of what we only desire for ourselves, charming our intelligence or senses. We must not forget that Satan was the most beautiful among the angels." [63]

Scobie's pity for his wife and for Helen Rolt seems superficially a virtuous thing. In The Heart of the Matter Scobie reflects: "These were the times of ugliness when he loved her, when pity and responsibility reached the intensity of a passion" (p. 14). In the same novel it is observed that against "the beautiful and the clever and the successful, one can wage a pitiless war, but not against the unattractive: then the millstone weighs on the breast"(p. 48).

It is the confusion of love and pity

[63] Marie-Béatrice Mesnet, The Heart of the Matter: An Essay (London, 1954), p. 11.

in Scobie's soul that eventually leads his love-pity to become something grotesque. He thinke to himself: "He was desecrating God because he loved a woman -- was it even love, or was it just a feeling of pity and responsibility"(p. 240)?

Scobie's pity for others is fraught with evils that even he doesn't suspect; it is a weakness rather than a virture and it is a weakness that is distinctly that of the Christian for it is a curious parody of Christ. It is the pity of Christ in the soul of a man who is handicapped by the imperfect wisdom of his humanity. The point is well grasped by one of Mr. Greene's commentators who writes that pity "is, even more than most abstractions of human feeling, an indication of a frontier between conflicting states of mind. And both frontier and conflict are peculiarly the creations of Christianity, the religion that exhorted its followers to love without the aid of admiration or desire." [64]

[64] Donat O'Donnell, Maria Cross (London, 1953), p. 63.

W.H. Auden discusses the problem at length in relation to Mr. Greene's novel, The Ministry of Fear:

> . . . 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.
>
> The secret war in The Ministry of Fear is between those who pity and those who can bear pain -- other people's pain endlessly, the people who don't care. Yet both have murdered . . . Behind pity for another lies self-pity, and behind self-pity lies cruelty. [65]

The impression we have of Scobie is that of a man with good intentions who causes a surprising amount of evil; there is no deliberate malice in Scobie, only weakness. This weakness often amounts to passion, not in the same sense but with as strong a force as that which overtook many of the characters created by Balzac and Zola.

Scobie's weakness is that he cannot endure human suffering in others.This would appear to make him a good man but the evil results from the fact that he will sacrifice God, another human being or himself rather

[65] W.H. Auden, "A Note on Graham Greene," Wind and the Rain, VI (Summer, 1949), 53-54.

than see human suffering prolonged. He sends his wife away rather than see her suffer; he commits adultery with Helen out of pity; he commits a sacrilege to prevent himself from being the cause of suffering to his wife; the whole thing culminates in the murder of his servant, Yusef. Scobie's sacrifice of all things to the altar of human suffering is paradoxically selfish, though he, himself, does not realize it. This unawareness, it is implied, minimizes the subjective evil (in Scobie) of the situation but the evil is nonetheless, objectively there.

III. The Mystical Body of Christ

Mr. Greene's is a kind of inverted Mystical Body. That grace which the "good" characters have does not seem to penetrate those who are involved in evil. The good people are too often the "pious and complacent." In The Power and the Glory, the whiskey-priest reflects that the pious "came to death so often in a state of invincible complacency, full of uncharity" (p. 164).

Mr. Greene offers the reader a Mystical

Body of sinners. The whiskey-priest "was just one criminal among a herd of criminals . . . he had a sense of companionship which he had never experienced in the old days when pious people came kissing his black cotton glove"(Power and the Glory, p. 166). In Brighton Rock "there seemed to be a companionship in mortal sin"(p. 195).

In The Mystical Body, members (the baptized) have the power to further the salvation or damnation of their brethren. In The Power and the Glory, the whiskey-priest, in thinking of his illegitimate daughter, "thought of his own death and her life going on: it might be his hell to watch her rejoining him gradually through the debasing years, sharing his weakness like tuberculosis"(p. 84). This passage reveals Mr. Greene's duality in that it includes the spirit of Realistic determinism and the power for good or evil that members of the Mystical Body exercise on their brethren. Conversely, the reader is conscious of the saving powers of the characters, especially female characters. It is Rose's power with Pinkie; it is Sarah's influence that brings

Bendrix to faith.[66]

Mr. Greene's portrayal of human love can be distinguished from that usually offered by the empirical Realists in that his characters are aware of a significant responsibility towards those whom they love. Scobie is so conscious of this that he is willing to abandon his own soul rather than fail in this responsibility; he "was aware of an immense load of responsibility: it was indistinguishable from love"(Heart of the Matter, p. 81). Only a Catholic novelist could have written these lines; they represent "the heart" of the Mystical Body; they symbolize its union.

The pious characters are treated with some contempt by the author because they are not conscious of their responsibility to others. Father Rank in The Heart of the Matter and Father Browne in The Living Room are aware of the responsibility but are powerless to do anything about it. In Mr. Greene's world only a sinner can help a sinner.

[66] For woman's role of salvation in Mr. Greene see Bernard G. Murchland, "The Religious Mission of Woman in the Novels of Graham Greene," unpubl. diss. (Ottawa Univ., 1958).

Pain is the animating and the communicative principle in Mr. Greene's Mystical Body and it is their lack of pain that seems to make the pious people ineffectual and "complacent." "Better to hate God, much better, says Greene, than not to know Him at all. For you can hate God only when you are in pain -- and if you can stand the pain without drugs, it may turn into love." [67] This observation reflects the pattern of Bendrix's attitudes towards God in The End of the Affair. Scobie is bound to his wife and to Helen by pain; the whiskey-priest is bound to his people by love, through pain. Sin, hate and pain, rather than virtue, pious love and joy, are the principles of life in Mr. Greene's Mystical Body and ironically, the very means by which grace is communicated.

In The Mystical Body as it exists for Mr. Greene's characters, it may be said that the law of man under God, is love; but also that love is the law and involves the characters in a web of eternal responsibility.

[67] [Anon.,] "Shocker," Time, LVIII (Oct. 29, 1951), 63.

Chapter Ten. Happiness

I. In This World

Happiness in this world seems unattainable for Mr. Greene's characters and this is possibly alleviated by the fact that none of them expect to find happiness here. Mr. Greene's "dark" picture of the world seems to be partially under the sway of empirical Realism in this respect, an outlook that has been marked by a growing disillusionment, crowned by two world wars. A Realistic view of the Second World War is offered by the author in The Ministry of Fear and A Gun For Sale. There is a religious reason for the "dark" world; it is the author's sense of the universal devastation caused to man and nature by original sin.

In a way, it is the Realistic tendencies that dominate the picture of this world, for although it is seen to have been darkened by original sin, the world here and now does not seem to have improved appreciably since the Resurrection of Christ. Christians do not expect to have their heaven on earth

but they do believe that Christ and His Church have made a significant difference to the world, here and now, even though the fulfilment of Christian Revelation is not expected to occur in this world. Grace may impart hope to the whiskey-priest but it does not seem to produce joy.

Mr. Greene's contribution to the literature of our culture has been to show the absurdity of temporal happiness as a goal of life. His writing is a witness to the futility of the hedonism which underlies so much of our modern literature. The difference between hedonistic literature and Mr. Greene's works can be illustrated by a remark made by George Orwell: "The spirit behind Housman's poems, for instance, is not tragic, merely querulous; it is hedonism disappointed. The same is true of Hardy, though one ought to make an exception of The Dynasts." [68] Some of the characters fall under the sway of hedonism. In The Living Room, Rose's life

68. George Orwell, "Inside the Whale," in Inside the Whale and Other Essays (London, 1940), p. 154.

ends tragically, not only because she has been duped by the here-and-now pleasure philosophy but because, as a Catholic, she is conscious of the evils that stem from such a philosophy of life. She cannot cope with the tension between desire and conscience and she withdraws from the struggle. She is driven by a disguised pride and selfishness to demand of those around her, that her happiness be given priority over all other considerations. She wants Michael here and now, no matter what the cost, even to him.

It is this ulmimatum by Rose for her happiness that causes the tragedy, although our sympathies as human beings (capable and desirous of love no matter what the cost) are with the heroine. Rose's situation may possibly be understood more clearly by Catholics than by others but her inclination to sin is commonly human in that it is so indistinguishable from the good and innocence that is in her.

Towards the end of The Power and the Glory the captured whiskey-priest realizes

"that at the end there was only one thing that counted -- to be a saint"(p. 273). Those readers who might expect a certain joy to accompany this spiritual awakening are unfortunately disappointed. The priest spends the night in his cell finishing off a bottle of brandy; he is so unsteady on his feet that he has to be propped up before the firing squad. The Realistically painted, exterior world, swims by over the priest's soul which is quite alone at the bottom of the world. Happiness, it is suggested, is not to be found here; one must look elsewhere.

Christ's presence in the world is felt only when the characters experience pain. In The End of the Affair, Sarah writes in her diary: "I thought I am kissing pain and pain belongs to You as happiness never does. I love You in Your pain . . . . You might have killed us with happiness, but You let us be with You in pain"(p. 147).

As a fitting epitaph to this discussion, we may turn to Scobie's thoughts on happiness in The Heart of the Matter: "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 meannesses that elsewhere people so cleverly hushed up. Here you could love human beings nearly as God loved them, knowing the worst"(p. 30). The reader may reply that although the world is not a bed of roses, nonetheless there are roses in it.

II. Out of the World

If there is any happiness to be found by Mr. Greene's characters it would seem to lie out of this world. This somewhat distinguishes Mr. Greene from the Catholic tradition in literature where characters usually take a cautious but cheerful attitude to this world; in it they have a tendency to see everywhere, the Face of God, in men and reflected on the landscape. For Mr. Greene, the Face of God in men is the Face of Christ on Calvary; the landscape of the world is a reflection of nature as it responded to the Crucifixion on Good Friday. The Risen Christ seems not

to be present in the faces of Mr. Greene's characters.

Unlike most of the Catholic writers and like the empirical Realists, Mr. Greene does not presume to cast any certainty over the graves of his characters. Their destinies are as inscrutable and ambiguous as their lives were. We are though, given "the hint of an explanation." It seems as though the whiskey-priest went to heaven; it seems as though Scobie may have gone to purgatory; it seems as though Pinkie (unrepentant to the last) merited hell; it seems as though Sarah were saved. To suggest anything more certain, it is implied, is to go beyond the scope of the novelist and outside the powers of judgment of any human being.

The reader may remember a piece of conversation between Pinkie and Rose in Brighton Rock (p. 92):

"'Between the stirrup and the ground, he something sought and something found.'

'Mercy.'

'That's right: Mercy.'"

Mr. Greene's whole point is that it is presumptuous of us to calculate the extent

of God's mercy. After Scobie's suicide in The Heart of the Matter, "Father Rank clapped the cover of the diary to and said furiously, 'For goodness sake, Mrs. Scobie, don't imagine you -- or I -- know a thing about God's mercy'"(pp. 296-297).

In an intensely Realistic play, The Iceman Cometh by Eugene O'Neill, Larry Slade, an ex-anarchist, says: "'What's before me is the comforting fact that death is a fine long sleep, and I'm damned tired, and it can't come too soon for me.'" [69] The idea has its counterpart in the minds of a number of Mr. Greene's characters, most of whom are tired of the fight and want to rest. The characters are Christian in that they expect an eternity of heaven or hell (union with God or separation from Him) but the images that occur to them seem notably Realistic; they imagine eternity as an annihilation or a euphoric peace after the pain of life.

There is an explicit relation brought out between human suffering and eternity;

[69] Eugene O'Neill, The Iceman Cometh (New York, 1946), p. 10.

in a rare sermon the whiskey-priest exhorts his villagers to: "'Never get tired of suffering . . . . that is all part of heaven -- the preparation'"(Power and the Glory, p. 86). On the images of eternity as annihilation, once Pinkie has dropped from the cliff "it was as if he'd been withdrawn suddenly by a hand out of any existence -- past or present, whipped away into zero -- nothing"(Brighton Rock, p. 245). In the same novel, the Boy's "slaty eyes were touched with the annihilating eternity from which he had come and to which he went"(p. 21). In The End of the Affair, death is "the shattering annihilation that would prevent for ever the getting up, the putting on of clothes"(p.80).

Though the comparison with O'Neill's play seems to show in Mr. Greene a noticeable, Realistic tone, in this matter, the images of annihilation can be related to something that is specifically Christian. This is the stripping of the human personality by God of all things that are not Himself. In a conversation with God, Sarah says in The End of the Affair: "You were there, teaching us to squander, like you

taught the rich man, so that one day we might have nothing left except this love of You"(p. 105). The severe pain experienced by the characters and their images of eternity seem to be related to the stripping of their personalities of egotism; once this has been done, it is suggested, and only then, is happiness possible.

In The End of the Affair, there is this entry in Sarah's diary: "In misery we seem aware of our own existence, even though it may be in the form of a monstrous egotism: this pain of mine is individual, this nerve that winces belongs to me and to no other. But happiness annihilates us: we lose our identity"(p. 52).

For the empirical Realists like Eugene O'Neill, death seems to thought of as the annihilation of the total personality. For the whiskey-priest, Scobie and Sarah, death is the annihilation of the egotism that gives identity to their personalities and hence of the suffering that results from this egotism. This kind of death is what Scobie, Sarah, Bendrix, Pinkie and the whiskey-priest all long for; the happiness that follows death is anonymity in God.

Chapter Eleven. Conclusion

Graham Greene is an anomaly in the stream of contemporary, English literature. He is the one, modern, English writer to yoke religious content with an outlook and techniques that are, in some important respects, quite opposed to the religious commitment. At times, as we have noticed, there emerges an impressive and convincing coexistence of Realism and religion, whereas at other times, there seems to be a basic antagonism that usually results in the dominance of one of the two aspects. On the whole, it is difficult to judge whether the religious content corrects and elevates the Realism or whether the Realism undermines the religious emphasis.

Mr. Greene has been called an "idealistic Realist," a phrase that seems superficially to contradict itself.[70] The boundaries of empirical Realism have evidently been extended in Mr. Greene's writing and in a singular manner, embodying his religious emphasis and the distinct signature of his art and vision. His characters are "believers"

[70] See Harold C. Gardiner, Norms For the Novel (New York, 1953), pp. 8-88.

and their beliefs are unusually (for modern fiction) intelligible. Their engagement with evil is universally relevant and dramatically portrayed.

It is always a bit difficult though important for the reader to discriminate between Mr. Greene's religious vision and the melodramatic side of his work. His play The Living Room contains both aspects, trimmed at the same time with a Realistic hem. Parts of the play seem to represent an excursion into melodrama. Rose's suicide is an example. The reader or auditor may question the probability of someone as romantic and self-centered as Rose taking her own life, though she may threaten to do it.

The one, fortunate exception in Mr. Greene's writing, to the imperfections of much of his work, is The Power and the Glory. In my opinion, this superbly written and disarming novel deserves to rank with the best in our century.

We have seen a number of ways in which Realism and religion have found expression in Mr. Greene's novels and plays;

it is sufficient, in conclusion, to point out that the coexistence of these two elements constitutes a modern, literary revolution.

Whether or not the result will, in succeeding generations, be judged a first-rate success, nonetheless a vital problem has been given a notable examination. This is the problem of restoring "idealism" to the English novel. We seem to be faced today with the ironic situation wherein a writer whose outlook is "idealistic" will not accept that idealism in himself or in his art but will assume unto himself the outlook and techniques of empirical Realism, perhaps because the latter is better received by modern readers. I am not saying that this applies to all modern authors but it seems to me to fit a number of the important ones, among them Mr. Tennessee Williams and Mr. Graham Greene.

On a more optimistic note, it seems to me that the intellectual climate of the times is slowly changing; for the first time since the end of the nineteenth century,

writers are again discussing the possibility of the unity of all knowledge and experience. Since the intellectual climate of the time had much to do with the forming of empirical Realism, it is probable that certain cultural changes will have to precede its general improvement and enlargement. From the unity of knowledge, it is a natural step to the unity of man. In the empirical Realists and in Mr. Greene, man seems to have disintegrated; his body is separated from his soul.

The reconstruction of the shattered image of man in literature is not by any means inevitable. If it is to take place however, it will be accomplished by writers who have thrown off the present chains of empirical Realism and given a fuller representation of truth and therefore a better art. Mr. Greene has not thrown off the chains of Realism but he has stretched them in an impressive way.

Bibliography

Note: The bibliography includes not only those works to which reference has been made in this study, but all works consulted in preparation for the study. The bibliography excludes Mr. Greene's poetry and stories for children, as these are outside the scope of this study. In the categories presented however, the bibliography of Mr. Greene's writings is fairly complete. The material about Mr. Greene is a fairly complete listing of printed books and articles, which have appeared in the English language. A few university theses have been included as well. A moderate attempt has been made to include the more outstanding contributions by French writers. Entries are drawn from material that has been available to me up until the end of December, 1959.

An asterisk at the end of an entry in Part I, Section A, indicates that the book is an "entertainment" (a classification imposed by Mr. Greene), rather than a novel. The sign "#" at the end of an entry in Part III, indicates that the work includes material on Mr. Greene, although he is not the main subject of the work in question. The bibliography is arranged alphabetically, rather than chronologically. For entries of works by Mr. Greene, the original date of publication is indicated by square brackets. This is followed by a description of the edition used in this study.

Part I. By Graham Greene

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