

CHAPTER II

THE MAJOR THEMES IN GREENE'S NOVELS



A. THE EFFECT OF CHILDHOOD ON ADULT LIFE

The theme of lost innocence, of the influence of our early impressions upon our later behavior, of children doomed to an early knowledge of corruption and evil, is recurrent in Greene's world. Pinkie, in Brighton Rock, seems to be the strongest actualization of this obsession. Pinkie is hardly more than a child, saddled prematurely with adult responsibilities. Under his apparently invincible strength, an immense weakness lies, a fundamental fear that compels him to refrain from getting entangled with the reality of life and suffering. His asceticism - no drink, no cigarettes, no women - is only one way of escaping the horror which had been the fundamental experience of the young child: a knowledge of poverty, hate, and the "Saturday night movements" - the "game" - lowering man to the level of an animal. The image constantly recurs like an obsession in his dreams and thoughts, and takes on a particular significance when he reaches puberty and begins to feel the prick of desire.

This early awareness of misery has given birth to a desire for vacancy, a monstrous solitude, and egotism. Pinkie makes a confession to Dallow who does not understand:

"When I was a kid, I swore I'd be a priest ... They know what's what. They keep away - his whole mouth and jaw loosened: he might have been going to weep: he beat out wildly with his hands towards the window - Woman Found Drowned, Two-Valve, Married Passion, the horror- from this."¹

¹Graham Greene, Brighton Rock (A Penguin Book), pp. 166 - 167.

Such was the "good temptation" felt by the choir-boy whose memory later on would still be filled with sacred music. But the child has grown up and the load of misery has grown too ; the call to priesthood was never answered, and Pinkie developed a terrible hatred of the world ----- and of his fellow men, as a refuge against the cracked bell ringing, the cement playground, the cruelty of other children. He gives way to sadistic instincts. Here again Greene's own experience can be adduced to explain the fiction. The horrifying cruelty he ascribes to Pinkie seems related to the confession made in Journey Without Maps : "Like a revelation, when I was fourteen, I realized the pleasure of cruelty ; I wasn't interested any longer in walks on commons, in playing cricket on the beach. There was a girl lodging close by I wanted to do things to ... I could think about pain as something desirable and not as something dreaded. It was as if I had discovered the way to enjoy life was to appreciate pain."² Pinkie had made the same discovery ; his repressed sexuality is perverted into a sad but cruel joy at the infliction of pain.

Then Kite appears, his role seems to be important in the Boy's destiny. The man who picks him up alone on the pier, and brings him back to Frank's, will be for the boy a father. But what a world it is into which he brings him! Pinkie needed Kite. "Such tits!" Kite said, and put a razor in his hand. He knew then what to do : they only needed to be taught once that he would stop at nothing, that there were no rules.³ Kite had freed him from his

²Graham Greene, Journey Without Maps (London : Heinmann, 1936), p. 14

³Graham Greene, Brighton Rock, p. 169.

world of fear, religious law compelling him to be good ; he had been given a tool to escape from the misery, "worth murdering a world." Thus were born the reckless revolt, the worldly ambition to outpace his rival, Colleoni, and the infernal pride in his successful enterprises.

This is about as far as we can go in reconstructing Pinkie's past, from his own thoughts and dreams. Kite is no longer there to protect him and tell him what to do, but Pinkie is going to take up his inheritance, and first avenges Kite's death in the St. Pancras waiting-room by the murder of Hale. Hell lies about him in his "infancy," driving him on to his end within a few weeks. The devils inhabit his soul, following his evil tendencies - the only habits he has ever developed - and having discarded all the rules, he is now enslaved to the law of sin and on the slippery slope to complete self-destruction and hell.

In The Power and the Glory, the priest's childhood has an effect on his life. His childhood, unlike Pinkie's, had been happy in Carmen, where his father was a store keeper, but already the misery of the laborers had struck him and had bred fear in his heart. Life had caught him, weak and unable to carry its load ; and he had looked for some easier way to security than the calculations and risks of a business career. To the child there seemed no easier way than the priesthood. "It had been a happy childhood, except that he had been afraid of too many things, and had hated poverty like a crime : he had believed that when he was a priest he would be rich and proud - that was called having a vocation."⁴ And he had become the complacent, successful priest, respected by his parishioners in Concepcion, comparatively

⁴Graham Greene, The Power and the Glory (New York : Bantam Books, 1968), p. 120.

innocent, not used to liquor, a fat youngish man enjoying the sound of his own voice, trying out vulgar jokes, moved by ambition, not humble like Padre José, a labourer by birth, whose hands shook at the Elevation of the Host. "He was not content to remain all his life the priest of a not very large parish,"⁵ but knew how to manage his business successfully.

Then came the evil days, the ten years long ordeal. The desire to postpone action dominated the fear, until he realized that he was the only priest left in the state. He felt suddenly glad to be freed from the last man who could disapprove of him, from any rules but his own. Ironically he found himself taking the easy way, as he had in his choice of vocation. "I didn't have to think about anybody's opinion any more. The people they didn't worry me. They liked me."⁶ His ambition becomes a devilish pride. Alone in the Godless State, with no one to ask advice from, he is gradually led, surrender by surrender, to mortal sin and to the complete disintegration of his being. 006997

Raven in A Gun for Sale exclaims : "This isn't a world I'd bring children into ... three minutes in bed or against a wall, and then a lifetime for the one that's born ... It was like you carry a load around you ; you are born with some of it because of what your father and mother were and their fathers ... Then when you are a kid the load gets bigger, all the things you need to do and can't ; and then all the things you do."⁷

Children are too sensitive and vulnerable ; they are not strong enough to carry the load placed upon their narrow shoulders ; they betray the truth perceived, harden

⁵Ibid., p. 87.

⁶Ibid., p. 80.

⁷Graham Greene, A Gun for Sale, p. 124.

to indifference or irresponsibility or hate, or die in their knowledge, like Else and Coral, like the pale child and Scobie's daughter.

In The Comedians, Greene gives an account of Brown's childhood. Brought up in a Jesuit College, he should have become a Jesuit priest instead of the owner and director of a hotel in Haiti in the Carribean. But the early experience in his childhood makes him so. There is going to be a college performance of Romeo and Juliet in French translation ; Brown is given the part of Friar Lawrence. This has an effect on him :

"... but I think my vocational grippe was already very nearly over, and the interminable rehearsals, the continual presence of the lovers and the sensuality of their passion, however muted by the French translator, led me to my breakout."⁸

Brown uses make-up to disguise himself in order to get into the Casino. He was lucky in a roulette-game ; and he had an affair with a woman fifteen years older than himself. When he returns to the college, he is caught and dismissed. He makes a journey to England and France. It is a difficult thing for him to earn his living, as he has never been trained in this way. Having received a post-card from his mother, he travels to Port-au-Prince and inherits a hotel from her. He is not successful in his business ; his knowlege of Latin verses and compositions does not help him.

These examples clearly show how the early experiences of childhood have an effect on adult life. Greene's vision of childhood is far from sentimental. The main common characteristic of each of his child figures, or accounts of

⁸Graham Greene, The Comedians, p. 60.

childhood, is the growing awareness of the degenerating effect of the world. To Greene, we may come trailing clouds of glory, but very soon the clouds are of sulphur.

B. DEATH

" A prey to boredom, melancholy; and disgust from an early age, Greene has evidently found death an alluring prospect of one whose imminence can revive the will to live."⁹

In his essay " The Revolver in the Corner Cupboard," Greene describes various suicidal experiments he made in youth. Years later, sick and lost in Liberia, he discovered in himself " a thing I thought I had never possessed : a love of life." In the Introduction to a new edition of It's a Battlefield he writes, " as one approaches death one lives ahead ; perhaps it is a hurry to be gone." Many of Greene's characters seem to be in a hurry to be gone. In The Man Within, with a feeling of despair, Andrews yearns for death. " He felt no fear of death, but a terror of life, of going on soiling himself and repenting and soiling himself again." But some like Fowler in The Quiet American find that " though my reason wanted death, I was afraid like a virgin of the act." Except for Loser Takes All, all Greene's novels involve the death of one or more characters ; and it is conspicuous that these characters do not die a natural death.

Many of Greene's characters kill themselves. In The Heart of the Matter, Scobie kills himself by drinking narcotic. He does not want to injure either Louise or Helen; therefore, he chooses to injure himself. Besides, if he dies Louise will get money from the life insurance company. In this way, he plans his suicide so well that it

⁹David Lodge, Graham Greene (New York : Columbia University Press, 1966), p. 9.

is like a natural death. People think he dies of a serious heart condition. In Brighton Rock, Pinkie blinds himself with his vitriol and then dashes over a cliff into the sea. He prefers drowning himself to being caught. Also in Brighton Rock, Annie Collins, a fifteen-year old girl, puts her head on the line and the train cuts off her head. She is going to have a child and she knows what it is like. She prefers death. In The Comedians, Marcel, Brown's mother's Haitian lover commits suicide just after her funeral. He hangs himself with his own belt from the centre-light at the end of Brown's mother's bed. Also in The Comedians, Doctor Philipot, the Secretary for Social Welfare, cuts his own throat in the dry bathing-pool of Brown's hotel. He has a political reason for killing himself. Greene's opinion about suicide seems to be that of Doctor Magiot in The Comedians.

" However great a man's fear of life," Doctor Magiot says, " suicide remains the courageous act, the clear-headed act of a mathematician. The suicide has judged by the laws of chance - so many odds against one that to live will be more miserable than to die. His sense of mathematics is greater than his sense of survival. But think how a sense of survival must clamour to be heard at the last moment, what excuses it must present of a totally unscientific nature."¹⁰

Also, Many of Greene's characters are killed violently. In A Gun for Sale, the Minister who has dedicated his energies to the prevention of war is killed by Raven. The act of killing is quite coldblooded : " he...shot the Minister twice in the back. The Minister fell across the oil stove ; ... Raven shot the Minister once more in the head, ..., driving the bullet hard into the base of the

¹⁰Graham Greene, The Comedians, p. 97.

skull, smashing it open like a china doll's." In The Quiet American Pyle, the American who decides that a third force is necessary in Vietnam, is stabbed and drowned in the mud by the Communists. In It's a Battlefield, a policeman is killed by a London bus-driver, Jim Dover, at a rowdy Communist meeting in Hyde Park. In A Burnt-Out Case, when Querry begins to find meaning in life again, he is shot to death by Rycker, who believes that Querry is the lover of his wife. In The Confidential Agent, Else, the little girl who helps D. is pushed out of a window of her bedroom. In The Heart of the Matter, Scobie allows Ali, his boy, to be murdered. While he is waiting for Yusuf, he hears a cry of terror. Though Ali has been faithful to him, he has to be killed because he knows too much. In Brighton Rock, Spicer is pushed down from the stairs by Pinkie. He is murdered because he is the one who has left Kolley Kibber's identification cards at various places in Brighton so that the time of Kibber's murder may not be fixed.

There is, thus, throughout Greene's novels a continued preoccupation with death in its more violent forms. The characters die in a casual and arbitrary way, not nobly or significantly, but as the victims of some kind of malicious fate. To a certain extent the way they die seems to be a further reflection of their author's religious awareness, a further emphasis that this world is nasty and brutish, and therefore there must be a better place than this.

C. THE THEME OF PURSUIT, OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HUNTER AND HUNTED

In The Man Within, a young man called Andrews is pursued across the bleak, befogged Sussex Downs by Carlyon and three other smugglers, because he has betrayed them to the authorities. He sees himself friendless and alone, chased by harsh enemies through an uninterested world.

Again in The Power and the Glory, Greene uses the theme of flight and pursuit. The Power and the Glory takes place in 1930 in Mexico, where the government is anti-clerical. It is believed that the Church supports capitalistic society, personal power and greed. The government tries to end the power that the priest held over the lives of ordinary people. It tries to break down all the churches and get rid of all the priests. The whiskey-priest in this story runs away from the civil authorities, pursued by the lieutenant.

The destiny of the whiskey-priest is implied from the novel's beginning, when in the police station the lieutenant places the priest's photograph next to that of the American gangster who assumes the role of Nemesis. The lieutenant says approvingly of the gangster, "He is a man at any rate."¹¹ The lieutenant looks at the priest's photograph, taken ten years before at a communion party; and he feels his responsibility keenly as he dedicates himself to his task of ridding his country of the pernicious influence of the priest's Church: "He had the dignity of an idea, standing in the little white-washed room with his polished boots and his venom. There was something disinterested in his ambition: a kind of virtue in his desire to catch the slick respected guest of the first communion party."¹²

¹¹Graham Greene, The Power and the Glory, p. 23.

¹²*Ibid.*, p. 23.

The lieutenant is described as "a theologian going back over the errors of the past to destroy them again."¹³ He is indeed the priest of the political order that promises as its sacraments; food, clothing, and security instead of misery, poverty, and superstition. And it infuriates him to think that there are people who believe in the myth of a merciful God. The lieutenant's life had begun for him on a day five years before the action of the novel when he had been ordained to destroy the canker of religion. And yet, for all his weaknesses, it is the priest who carries the seeds of redemption.

In his flight, though he is tired, the priest discovers a certain happiness.

He was feeling happy. It is one of the strange discoveries a man makes that life, however you lead it, contains moments of exhilaration : there are always comparisons which can be made with worse times : even in danger and misery the pendulum swings.¹⁴

The police drive him to Concepcion, the village of which he was once the priest. At Concepcion, while he is saying Mass, a peasant comes and informs him that the police are coming. Having tried to finish the Mass, he wants to escape. But the police are all round the village. Before he can hide, the lieutenant comes. He asks the villagers to help him to search for the priest. He says :

"You're fools if you still believe what the priests tell you. All they want is your money. What has God ever done for you ? Have you got enough to eat ? Have your children got enough to eat ? Instead of food they talk to you about heaven. Oh, everything will be fine after you are dead, they say. I tell you - everything will be fine when they are dead, and you must help."¹⁵

¹³Ibid., p. 25.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 168.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 169.

But no one helps him. Here at Concepcion, the lieutenant meets the priest for the first time, but he does not recognize him.

After the lieutenant has gone, the priest leaves the village and goes north. He goes to the capital city of the state and looks for wine. He is arrested for having a bottle of wine in his possession. He has to spend the night in a prison cell.

The next morning, while still in prison, the priest comes face to face with his antagonist, the lieutenant, for the second time - the first encounter had taken place in the priest's village. But the lieutenant does not recognize him either as a priest or as the man he had met in the village, the father of the child Brígida. Touched by the old man who has no money, the lieutenant gives the priest five pesos, ironically the price of a mass. Astonished, the priest says, "you're a good man."¹⁶

When he leaves the prison, the priest goes to the home of Coral Fellows, the child who had befriended him earlier, to discover that she has died. He goes on until he comes upon an Indian mother whose child had been shot three times by that same American gangster, whose photograph had been placed beside his in the police station. The rains come, and the priest is spiritually cleansed. He recognizes the primitive simplicity and the quiet beauty of the Indian mother's belief as she places a lump of hard,

¹⁶Ibid., p. 81.

brown sugar beside the body of her slaughtered child. Since his release from prison, the priest had fallen in a state of limbo; and his aimless wanderings indicate the searchings of his soul. Since his experiences in the prison had opened his heart to grace, the rain symbolizes his soul's state. Delirious, he is found by a peasant who takes him across the border into a province where there is religious tolerance.

Mr. and Miss Lehr nurse him to health ; and the priest decides that, since he has crossed the border and is no longer subject to the jurisdiction of the lieutenant, he will give up his life of wandering ministrant, go to Las Casas, and secure the formal forgiveness of his Church in confession. But he begins to fall back into the arrogant and slothful ways of his youth, and he forgets what he has learned from suffering. Appalled, he welcomes the mestizo and the betrayal that awaits him ; for after such knowledge as his, the priest knows there can be no forgiveness. The half-caste tells the fugitive that the American gangster has been shot by the police and is asking for a priest. The wounded man had written a note on the back of one of Coral's school exercises- an exercise concerning Hamlet's inability to act once he knows Claudius to be his father's murderer. The priest hums the song about a rose in a field that he had first heard while attempting to escape on the General Obregon at the novel's beginning. As the priest welcomes his Judas, he becomes the pursuer ; and his antagonist, the lieutenant, the pursued.

Over the body of the American gangster, the advocate of the religious order, for the first time in full command of his ministry, opposes the priest of the secular order. This is their third encounter. The lieutenant argues that the priest, although himself a good man is a danger to the well-being of the state and that his destruction is necessary to secure that well-being. He insists that the priest's religion does not free people from want and misery, and that

his does. "We'll give them food instead," he says, "teach them to read, give them books. We'll see that they don't suffer."¹⁷ To this the priest makes the only answer he can. The poor, he says, are in greatest favor with God, and the kingdom of heaven is theirs. He agrees with the lieutenant that the only certainty of life is death, but he disagrees with him as to what constitutes the essence of living. He points out that he who rules through power and fear is open to the temptations of power and fear ; and he insists that unless the minister of the secular order maintains his motives in honesty and truth, nothing but corruption can result from his office : " It's no good your working for your end unless you are a good man yourself. And there won't always be good men in your party. But it doesn't matter so much my being a coward - and all the rest. I can put God in a man's mouth just the same - and I can give him God's pardon. It wouldn't make any difference to that if every priest in the Church was like me."¹⁸

The difference in their beliefs comes down to the simple fact that the priest has perfection as his point of reference. " It's better to let the poor die in dirt and wake in heaven,"¹⁹ he says. The priest insists that unless authority begins from perfection, from God, it will breed corruption. And he goes on to point out that there will not always be good men in the lieutenant's party. Speaking with the authority of his church, the priest is nevertheless aware of his inadequacies as a man ; and he has found the mercy of God incomprehensible. " I don't know a thing about the mercy of God : I don't know how awful the human heart looks to him. But I do know this-that if there's ever been a single

¹⁷Ibid., p. 251.

¹⁸Ibid., pp. 252 - 253.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 258.

man in this state damned, then I'll be damned too ... I wouldn't want it to be any different. I just want justice, that's all."²⁰ The lieutenant's intelligence tells him that if there is salvation, the priest is saved. Impressed with the sincerity of the priest, the lieutenant promises to ask Father José, the conformist, to hear the whiskey-priest's confession, even if it means a "triumph for that old corrupt God-ridden world."

It is their pity for suffering that both the whiskey-priest and the man of power have in common; and they realize too that they will never be able to agree. The lieutenant in giving in to the priest's plea for a confessor feels his weakness, but the lieutenant refuses to acknowledge it as an index of his strength. The priest has lived in the shadow of plenitude, but the lieutenant has experienced vacancy. When Father José refuses to hear the fugitive's confession, the secular order seems to triumph; but strangely, the lieutenant experiences the sensation of vacancy as he never has before. The priest has touched the heart of the man; but in the pursuit of his duty the lieutenant is inflexible.

In Brighton Rock, Pinkie is pursued by the police, gangsters of an opposite group and Ida Arnold. Of all these pursuits, that of Ida Arnold's is the most significant as it comes from her own nature, from her love of justice, whereas the other two are superficial. The officers want him because he is against the laws; other gangsters want him because he is their rival. But for Ida Arnold, there is something more in her pursuit. "Somebody had made Fred unhappy, and somebody was going to be made unhappy in turn. An eye for an eye."²¹

²⁰Ibid., p. 259.

²¹Graham Greene, Brighton Rock, p. 37.

To Pinkie, the pursued, Ida's chase is a reminder of one of the more savage natural phenomena.

" The boy looked across the tea-room and the empty tables to where the woman sat. How she hung on. Like a ferret he'd seen on the Downs, among the chalky holes, fastened to the hare's throat. All the same this hare escaped. He had no cause to fear her now."²²

In his flight, Pinkie destroys ~~everything~~, even his friend and his wife Rose who really loves him.

" He thought : there'll be time enough in the years ahead - sixty years - to repent of this. Go to a priest. Say 'Father, I've committed murder twice. And there was a girl - she killed herself.'²³

In The Confidential Agent, Greene again uses the motif of flight and pursuit. Greene's hero is a middle-aged scholar sent by his government to negotiate a contract with the British mine owners for badly needed coal. He is pursued by counteragents and in the end defeated by them.

" He wasn't certain that he wasn't watched at this moment. He wasn't certain that it wasn't right for him to be watched. After all, there were aspects of economic materialism which, if he searched his heart, he did not accept... . And the watcher - was he watched ? "²⁴

During his flight and his trying to get the coal contract, he makes friend with Rose Cullen the daughter of the contractor for the coal and Else, a very young girl waitress at the hotel he is staying at. Helping D., Else is killed. At the girl's death, D. becomes the hunter

²² Ibid., p.230.

²³ Ibid., p.226.

²⁴ Graham Greene, The Confidential Agent, p. 8.

instead of the hunted.

" He thought of Mr. K. and the manageress and the dead child, and moving back into the stuffy female room which smelt of dead roses he swore that from now on he would be the hunter, the watcher, the marksman in the news."²⁵

In The End of the Affair, Bendrix attempts to fly from the grace of God, but God is too persistent a pursuer. Bendrix' spiritual dilemma amounts to an inability " to conceive of any God who is not as simple as a perfect equation, as clear as air."²⁶ One can notice again that a basis of Greene's awareness of the idea of flight, of hunter and hunted, is so often a spiritual one. This sense can perhaps best be explained by the theme of Francis Thompson's " Hound of Heaven ", a poem which was a particular favourite of his :

I fled him, down the nights and down the days;
I fled him, down the arches of the years;
I fled him, down the labyrinthine ways
Of mine own mind. :²⁷

²⁵Ibid., p. 113.

²⁶Graham Greene, The End of the Affair, p. 11.

²⁷Francis Thompson, " Hound of Heaven " in Longer Poems, Old and New, selected and edited by A.S. Cairncross (London : Mac Millan and Co., 1924), p. 209.

D. THE THEME OF TREACHERY AND BETRAYAL--" THE JUDAS COMPLEX "

In The Man Within, Andrews betrays to the authorities a gang of smugglers (previously led by his father, now by a man called Carlyon) of which he himself has been a member. The betrayal is an act of perverse self-assertion by Andrews, who has always felt himself to be despised and neglected. " 'He's a sort of Judas,' Carlyon said softly."

In A Gun for Sale Greene calls attention to the theme of treachery and betrayal more insistently than ever before. At the outset of the story the only value Raven cherishes is a belief in honor among thieves, and it is his disillusionment on this score that awakens in his twisted mind (itself partly excused by traumatic childhood experience) the first glimmerings of moral awareness. His sense of grievance colors his interpretation of Christmas, the season that forms a sad, ironic background to the story. Raven looks at a crib in a shop window, staring at the swaddled child with a horrified tenderness, " the little bastard," because he was educated and knew what the child was in for, the damned Jews and the double-crossing Judas and only one man to draw a knife on his side when the soldiers came for him in the garden."²⁸

In the allegory of The Power and the Glory the mestizo is the Judas of the allegory. The priest is betrayed by the half-caste Judas. When the priest is leaving Mr. and Miss Lehr for Las Casas, a place where the government is not against the Church, the mestizo comes. The half-caste tells the fugitive that the American gangster has been shot by the police and is asking for a priest. The wounded man had written a note on the back of one of Coral's school exercises. The priest decides to go to see the American, knowing that this is a trap.

²⁸ Graham Greene, A Gun for Sale, p.91.

He pulled the mule up and sat thinking, facing south. He was quite certain that this was a trap - probably the half-caste had suggested it : he was after the reward. But it was a fact that that American was there, dying. He thought of the deserted banana station where something had happened and the Indian child lay dead on the maize : there was no question at all that he was needed. A man with all that on his soul ... The oddest thing of all was that he felt quite cheerful: ... He began to whistle a tune - ... " I found a rose in my field " : it was time he woke up.²⁹

Having heard the confession of the dying man, he is captured by the lieutenant. The mestizo really betrays him to his antagonist because " You're the only one they've got who can recognize me, and they can't follow me into this state."³⁰

In The Quiet American, Fowler betrays Pyle. Though Fowler and Pyle are different kinds of persons, they respect and have a reciprocal understanding of each other's basic integrity and goodness.

" I wish sometimes you had a few bad motives," Fowler says to him, " you might understand a little more about human beings. And that applies to your country too ..."³¹

When Fowler begins to feel irritation with Pyle, his reasons are at first personal : a general dislike of Americans " with their private stores of coca-cola and their portable hospitals and their not-quite-latest guns,"³² and a resentment of Pyle's attempts to woo his oriental mistress Phuong away from him. But when Pyle proves responsible for a bomb outrage, Fowler decides that his

²⁹Graham Greene The Power and the Glory, p. 171.

³⁰Ibid., p. 169.

³¹Graham Greene, The Quiet American, p. 173.

³²Ibid., p. 40.

enthusiasm for the idea of a Third Force breaking the deadlock between Colonialism and Communism is not merely foolish but dangerous. In consequence, Fowler gives Pyle up to the Communists.

In reality, Fowler likes Pyle. Much of the novel's meaning centers on the genuine friendship that develops between these two people. "You cannot love without intuition,"³³ says Fowler ; and later he asks: "Am I the only one who really cared for Pyle ?"³⁴ He betrays Pyle, any way.

³³Ibid., p. 13.

³⁴Ibid., p. 19.

E. THE THEME OF BEING COMMITTED AND UNCOMMITTED

In A Burnt Out Case, in the Dedication to Docteur Michel Lechant, Greene states his intention clearly : "This is not a roman à clef, but an attempt to give a dramatic expression to various types of belief, half-belief and non-belief." Queryry, the hero of this novel, is an ecclesiastical architect of international reputation, successful lover, a Roman Catholic, middle-aged. He becomes bored with his success; he realizes that he was not born to be an artist : only a very clever architect.

At first Queryry has a belief in art, love and God.

" The boy grew up. He married properly and was rewarded by the King, although his only child died and he made no progress in his profession - he had always wanted to carve statues, as large and important as the Sphinx."³⁵

Later, he gives up his belief in God, whose existence he has once proved by " historical, logical , philosophical and etymological methods."³⁶ And he stops believing in love. " But when he discovered there was no such King as the one he had believed in, he realized too that anything that he had ever done must have been done for love of himself. How could there be any point any longer in making jewels or making love for his own solitary pleasure ? Perhaps he had reached the end of his sex and the end of his vocation before he made his discovery about the end of everything?"³⁷ However, he wonders if his non-belief is " after all nothing but a final and conclusive proof of God's existence."³⁸

³⁵Graham Greene, A Burnt Out Case, p. 159.

³⁶Ibid., p. 163.

³⁷Ibid., p. 163.

³⁸Ibid., p. 165.

In The Quiet American Fowler, an English newspaper reporter in Vietnam, is at first indifferent. Because of the disappointments of experience, he tries not to get involved in the business of life around him. "The human condition being what it was, let them fight, let them love, let them murder. I would not be involved."³⁹ However, he gets involved in the end. Fowler feels more and more irritation with Pyle, a young American working ostensibly with a medical mission in Saigon. His reasons are at first personal. He has a general dislike of Americans.

Later he is given more specific reason when Pyle, working for his "third force idea," helps to engineer a bomb outrage which kills a lot of people. Being trapped by his feeling of pity, he becomes involved to the point of conniving, half willingly, at the murder of Pyle by the Communists. Also, Fowler gets involved because he wants to remain a human being. "Sooner or later, one has to take sides. If one is to remain human."⁴⁰ According to Sartre's Existentialism a man exists only when he has engagement, but the moment of engagement may bring death. After his engagement in the plan of killing Pyle, with a sense of guilt, he feels flat or half dead. "Everything had gone right with me since he had died, but how I wished there existed someone to whom I could say that I was sorry."⁴¹

In The Comedians, Greene was obviously using the theme of being committed and uncommitted and being ready to die for one's belief. As the title indicates, the main characters believe in nothing. They are comedians. They are just actors going through the action, making a pretence

³⁹Graham Greene, The Quiet American, p. 12.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 194.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 37.

of being persons. They are simply acting out parts, they do not believe in anything enough. They are empty people. Their names, Brown, Jones, Smith, are impersonal names in English. Greene chooses them deliberately.

Brown, the rootless, cosmopolitan, middle-aged narrator, was brought up by the Jesuits, who believed most completely in the correctness of the Catholic religion. Brown nearly becomes a Jesuit priest, but the belief does not hold. Instead of changing his belief, he comes to believe in nothing. He is just a spectator of life. When he becomes a spectator, he sees life as a comedy.

"When I was a boy I had faith in the Christian God. Life under his shadow was a very serious affair, I saw him incarnated in every tragedy. He belonged to the *lacrimae rerum* like a gigantic figure looming through Scottish mist." ⁴²

Jones is a rootless person; he is not even certain of his nationality. He is unable to go to various places in the world; he is wanted for various crimes. He is a person who makes a fantasy of his own life. He says that he is a major and claims to have an adventurous and heroic war record. His own fantasy causes his death. He is forced to take over the leadership of Philipot's guerrillas, and he has the courage to go through his performance to the point of dying for it. This shows that Jones does at least require something to believe in.

The Smiths do not believe strongly enough in anything. They make an attempt to find enthusiasm or something to believe in. When they feel belief in something, it is trivial, a vegetarianism which they think can bring peace.

Greene tries to point out that in order to lead a meaningful life, one has to be committed ^{or} to believe in something.

⁴²Ibid., p.31.

F. THE THEME OF PITY

In The Confidential Agent, in the characterization of D., the hero, Greene enlarges on the theme of pity. D. is represented as an elderly scholar who had at one time discovered an important manuscript of The Song of Roland. The war, which seems to parallel the war in Spain, had cut short his literary activities and forced him to devote himself to his political party. He is alone, and the death of his wife at the hands of Fascists has paralyzed his feelings. He has nothing to hold on to, not even belief in God. He cannot be certain of the integrity of the cause for which he fights. "It's no good taking a moral line - my people commit atrocities like the others,"⁴³ he says to Rose Cullen.

Although he thinks he is past all feeling, D. is touched by the mute appeal of the child, Else, and by the unhappiness of the girl, Rose Cullen, the daughter of Lord Benditch, D.'s contact for the coal. He finds it impossible to feel love since the death of his wife ; but he can feel pity - and pity, according to Greene, can be a corrosive emotion. D.'s pity leads him, eventually, to a "happy" ending ; Rose follows him to the ship.

D. is aware of the evil in the world, but he is passive in the face of it until Else is murdered by the manageress of the hotel in which he lives. (D. had entrusted his identity papers to the child, and she is killed because she remains faithful to the trust.) Once D.'s humanity is aroused by the brutality and senselessness of the murder, he is no longer the pursued but the pursuer. And like Ida Arnold, he can indulge in the luxury of revenge :

"... If you believed in God, you could also believe that it (the body of Else) had been saved

⁴³Graham Greene, The Confidential Agent, p. 58.

from much misery and had a finer future. You could leave punishment then to God ... : But he hadn't that particular faith. Unless people received their desserts the world to him was chaos : he was faced with despair.⁴⁴

D. can indulge in the chase to satisfy his sense of outraged humanity ; and as long as he adheres to the world's dictum regarding right and wrong, he can allow himself the luxury of revenge, an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. There is no God, so vengeance is D.'s. Greene allows D. to escape the web of evidence that has connected him with the murder of Else, the death of K., the political intrigue in which the government is involved. D. is rewarded for a humanity which nothing has been able to destroy in him - nothing had been able to dry up the pity which responds to the pressure of Else's appeal.

In The Heart of the Matter, Greene employs the theme of pity. For Major Scobie, the hero of the story, pity is the keynote of human existence :

" What an absurd thing it was to expect happiness in a world so full of misery If one knew, he wondered, the facts, would one have to feel pity even for the planets ? if one reached what they called the heart of the matter ?"⁴⁵

Major Scobie is a middle-aged police officer in British West Africa, passed over for promotion. His wife Louise, for whom he feels only pity and responsibility urges him to allow her to go for a holiday to South Africa, to escape the malice of her "friends." To avoid making her unhappy, Scobie borrows from Yusef, a merchant suspected of diamond smuggling by Wilson, the British agent who fancies himself in love with Louise.

A torpedoed ship brings Helen Rolt into the pattern

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 119.

⁴⁵Graham Greene, The Heart of the Matter, p. 114.

of Scobie's unhappiness. He sees her carried on shore, after forty days in an open boat, clutching her stamp album like a child. And he falls in love with her because she is pathetic: "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."⁴⁶ The situation builds up into the eternal triangle. Scobie soon realizes that his love for Helen is only another facet of his pity. He realizes that Helen is Louise and Louise is Helen, and that he is equally responsible for the happiness of both :

" Pity smoldered like decay at his heart... . He knew from experience how passion died away and how love went, but pity always stayed. Nothing ever diminished pity. The conditions of life nurtured it "⁴⁷

After an argument he writes Helen a note : " I love you more than myself, more than my wife, more than God I think." ⁴⁸ The note falls into the hands of Yusef, who blackmails Scobie into smuggling diamonds for him.

When Louise returns from South Africa, Wilson blurts out that Scobie and Helen are lovers. To see whether or not Scobie has given up his mistress, Louise insists that he accompany her to Communion. How simple it would be, he thinks, if he could withdraw his pity from Helen, repent his sin in the confessional, and free himself of responsibility. But he is too honest to pretend a repentance he does not feel. His confessor, Father Rank, is merely an intermediary ; Scobie knows that the brief rests with God, and he will not add hypocrisy to his other sins. He knows

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 53.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 211.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 215.

that he must crucify either God or Louise. The suffering of God, however, is unreal, remote ; that of Louise is nearer - he can feel her pain and also Helen's. He chooses sacrilege and damnation by taking Communion without having received absolution at confession : ' Oh God I offer my damnation to you. Take it. Use it for them.'⁴⁹

Being desperate, he commits suicide after inventing that he has a serious heart condition, though he knows that his act points to complete damnation. But if he dies, his wife will get money from his life insurance, and Louise will be able to marry another man. He acts out of responsibility and pity, which cause his downfall.

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 272.

G. THE THEME OF EVIL

To define and objectify the evil, to extricate it from the relativity of values or abstractions arbitrary justice, impersonal humanitarianism and pity, right and wrong, good and bad - is the ultimate motive of Greene's work.⁵⁰

The theme of evil is found in many of Greene's work. In The Heart of the Matter, Yusef is the evil element. He is a Levantine trader, big, ugly and very crooked. He is a diamond smuggler. He tries to make friends with Scobie, lending him a sum of money. Though he likes Scobie, he blackmails him. In The Power and the Glory, there is evil in Brigida. The priest wants to save her, but there is no hope. The knowledge of the world lay in her like "the dark inexplicable spot in an X-ray photograph." The mestizo is also another evil element in the story. He betrays the priest to the lieutenant. In the prison, the priest sees evil very clearly. He finds that : "This place was very like the world : overcrowded with lust and crime and unhappy love : it stank to heaven ..."⁵¹

In Brighton Rock, the theme of evil is illustrated at its most open. Pinkie, the hero of the novel, is completely evil. First, to avenge Kite's murder, he causes Fred Hale's death. This murder leads to other evil acts. He murders Spicer, one of his men who has a part in the murder of Hale. Besides, Pinkie is a cruel person. "The word 'murder' conveyed no more to him than the words 'box', 'collar', 'giraffe'."⁵² He feels a terrible joy at the

⁵⁰Morton Dauwen Zabel, Craft and Character (London : Victor Gollanez LTD, 1957), p. 281.

⁵¹Graham Greene, The Power and the Glory, p. 76.

⁵²Ibid., p. 46.

pain inflicted on Spicer. " A long strip of sticking plaster lined Spicer's cheek : the Boy watched it from the doorway with a rising cruelty : he wanted to tear it away and see the skin break."⁵³ He marries Rose who knows a lot about the murder of Hale in order to keep himself safe ; a wife cannot give evidence. He marries her in spite of his consideration of marriage as corruption. Later, he tries to persuade her into a faked suicide pact with himself. If Rose were dead, " no more human contacts, other people's emotion washing at the brain - he would be free again : nothing to think about but himself." ⁵⁴With his selfishness, he refuses to take any responsibility. Rose wants a record of his voice as a souvenir from him. This is what he has recorded : " God damn you, you little bitch, why can't you go back home for ever and let me be ?"⁵⁵

Greene finds that evil comes in the form of beauty. Satan is the most beautiful among the angels. The whiskey-priest says :

" 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. Oh, no they were just as quick and light and..."⁵⁶

And in The Third Man : " Evil was like Peter Pan - it carried with it the horrifying and horrible gift of eternal youth."

Greene's interest in evil made him travel to coastal Africa. In Journey Without Maps, he talks about his descent to the heart of darkness :

" It isn't a gain to have turned the witch or the masked secret dancer, the sense of supernatural evil, into the small human viciousness

⁵³Ibid., p. 121.

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 136.

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 179.

⁵⁶Graham Greene, The Power and the Glory, p. 123.

of the thin distinguished military gray head in Kensington Gardens with the soft lips and the eye which dwelt with dull lustre on girls and boys of a certain age... They are not, after all, so far from the central darkness... when one sees to what unhappiness, to what peril of extinction, centuries of cerebration have brought us, one sometimes has a curiosity to discover if one can from what we have come, to recall at which point we went astray."⁵⁷

An echo clearly sounds here from a passage in T.S. Eliot's essay on Baudelaire :

" So far as we are human, what we do must be either evil or good ; so far as we do evil or good, we are human ; and it is better, in a paradoxical way, to do evil than to do nothing : at least, we exist. It is true to say that the glory of man is his capacity for salvation, it is also true to say that his glory is his capacity for damnation. The worst that can be said of most of our malefactors, from statesman to thieves, is that they are not men enough to be damned."⁵⁸

For Greene, evil has spiritual glamour, and spiritual goodness is often connected with moral weakness. The strength and omnipresence of evil is one of the main repetitive themes in his work. His awareness, of this aspect of life is based on a combination of his religious sense (as a Catholic he would have a more acute sense of the positive damning effects of evil) and of his own personal psychology.

⁵⁷Graham Greene, Journey Without Maps, p. 49.

⁵⁸Morton D. Zabel, Craft and Character, pp. 282-283.