GRAHAM GREENE AND THE IDEA OF CHILDHOOD

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GRAHAM GREENE AND THE IDEA OF CHILDHOOD

THESIS

Presented to the Graduate Council of the
North Texas State University in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

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Denton, Texas

June, 1966
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A marked preoccupation with childhood is evident throughout the works of Graham Greene; it receives most obvious expression in his concern with the idea that the course of a man's life is determined during his early years, but many of his other obsessive themes, such as betrayal, pursuit, and failure, may be seen to have their roots in general types of experience which Greene evidently believes to be common to all children. Disappointments, in the form of "something hoped for not happening, something promised not fulfilled, something exciting turning dull," and the forced recognition of the enormous gap between the ideal and the actual mark the transition from childhood to maturity for Greene, who has attempted to indicate in his fiction that great harm may be done by adults who refuse to acknowledge that gap.

It seems important to point out that Greene apparently regards the entire humanist tradition with distrust, if not contempt, because it is based on assumptions which allow us to hope that the ideal may

become actual. Chief among these assumptions is the heretical notion advanced by Pelagius, a British monk of the fifth century, that man is not inherently sinful, that he has the power to determine his own moral nature, and that grace is granted to all in a general way through the gift of free will. This opinion is, of course, in sharp contrast to the doctrine of St. Augustine, who placed heavy emphasis upon the idea that man is inherently wicked, unable to change his nature, and wholly dependent for his salvation upon the individually bestowed gift of grace.

It is to the Augustinian view that Greene is committed, for in it he finds an explanation of the ugly reality he has perceived about him since childhood: at the age of fourteen, he identified the pattern of existence as "perfect evil walking the world where perfect good can never walk again."\(^2\)

There are some difficulties in such a view for a novelist, however. Greene's efforts to reconcile the dogma of original sin with the doctrine of absolute free will and simultaneously with the demands of a fictional form which depends upon at least an appearance of psychological realism have not been consistently successful. It is interesting, if not surprising, to note that the reception of Greene's work by literary critics is not always determined by Greene's ability to achieve an artistically satisfying balance between opposed elements, between the freedom and the responsibility, the spiritual and the psychological natures of his characters.

Kathleen Nott, who identifies Greene as a member of a group of contemporary poets, novelists, and critics who are engaged in a full-scale war against the humanist tradition, calls him "successful . . . in so far as he remains a human realist." 3 Henry Morton Robinson, on the other hand, praises him for enlarging the spiritual dimensions of fiction to the great satisfaction of "an audience wearying of the inch-worm naturalism and the vernier-scale observations of psycho-analysis." 4

These contradictory views illustrate the degree to which concern with Greene's extra-literary purposes has served to confuse the critical evaluation of his work. Some of the same confusion surrounds the final significance of his preoccupation with childhood, which is regarded by some as the hallmark of his maturity and by others as a "deep sympathy with childhood, inimical to maturity." 5

If Greene has been subjected more frequently than most writers to attempts at linking his attitudes with specific incidents from his childhood, he has only himself to blame. The idea that childhood is the most susceptible and decisive period of life is one of his recurring themes, and

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5 Donat O'Donnell, Maria Cross (New York, 1952), p. 87.
in an essay on Dickens, he states his belief that "the creative writer perceives his world once and for all in childhood and adolescence, and his whole career is an effort to illustrate his private world in terms of the great public world we all share."^6 Although Greene has not identified any particular event in his own childhood as the deciding factor in his attitude toward life, "the most cursory reading of Greene's novels and entertainments is enough to establish that everything he writes is discoloured by an original hurt to his sensibility."^7

Greene has provided his readers very little autobiographical information—the prefaces to his two travel books contain some disconnected recollections, and there are two short personal essays in The Lost Childhood—but there is no doubt that he was desperately unhappy during his schooldays at Berkhamstead, where his father was headmaster. He was offended by the constant noise, the smells, and the lack of privacy, and his resentment was increased by the fact that his separation from the pleasant world of home and family was artificially enforced—he was allowed only on weekends and holidays to pass through the green baize door which led from the dormitory to his home. Furthermore, since

^6 Greene, The Lost Childhood, p. 54.

enforced from the friendly side of the border, he carried his resentment home with him. . . . There was a constant confusion of values, a permanent sense of injustice, and betrayal at the heart. 8

It seems reasonable to assert that Greene's outlook is not essentially Catholic, since it "exists at much earlier date than his conversion to Catholicism, which took place in 1926. It springs ultimately from the unhappiness probed by him in childhood." 9 Whatever the origin of Greene's strong sense of the presence of evil and of the inevitability of treachery, it is certainly true that "Roman doctrine, and particularly the doctrine of Original Sin, took into account the reality of that 'awful prison' he perceived about him in his childhood." 10 Greene has said of Samuel Butler that his creative vision was seriously affected by his hatred for his father, and that "the perpetual need to generalize from a peculiar personal experience maimed his imagination. Even Christianity he could not consider dispassionately because it was the history of Father and Son." 11 Greene's preoccupation with treachery has had a comparable effect upon his work; it has "led him to the archetypal story that he has been rewriting, with endless variations, since The Man Within; the story of Holy Week, the

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9 Allott and Farris, p. 23. 10 Stratford, p. 55.
11 Greene, The Lost Childhood, p. 127.
story of betrayal and sacrifice that, for Greene, is primarily the outrageously puzzling story of Judas Iscariot.\textsuperscript{12} Sean O\'Faolain, while agreeing that betrayal is Greene's central theme, finds that there is also

a strong suggestion of a sense of grievance in all his work, a certain sulkiness in his attitude toward life which reminds one of Claude Edmonde Magny's remark about Hemingway, that behind the mask of the hero there is the face of . . . a little boy whose bun was stolen by somebody when he was very young.\textsuperscript{13}

Some general statements about the children who appear in Greene's fiction may be helpful. First of all, it should be noted that, despite the frequency with which Greene employs childhood as a symbol of innocence, the innocence of most of his fictional children is comparative rather than absolute. This apparent incongruity has been explained in this way:

Greene goes along with innumerable poets and other writers in accepting a golden age of innocence in earliest years, but what he stresses is how soon it is threatened even in childhood . . . and how quickly and inevitably innocence and the capacity for simple, uncomplicated happiness leak away.\textsuperscript{14}

The children in Greene's novels are not happy, and they do not seem very young; they are rather like sad miniature adults, unattractive and apprehensive. Their apprehension certainly seems justified, for they are consistently disappointed, they are subject to terrifying nightmares,

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{13} Sean O'Faolain, \textit{The Vanishing Hero} (Boston, 1957), p. 57.
  \item \textsuperscript{14} Allott and Farris, p. 25.
\end{itemize}
and they are surrounded by violence and threats. Faced with the necessity of making their way through a hostile world, they lie readily and skillfully and often display ingenuity in protecting themselves and in furthering their interests.

If the children Greene chooses to portray have already surrendered their innocence and their happiness, it seems reasonable to hope that some of the adults who appear in his books will justify his references to childhood innocence and bliss by retaining the memory of their halcyon days, but there are few instances even of this. It is true that Francis Andrews, in The Man Within, and Arthur Rowe, in The Ministry of Fear, remember moments of happiness in childhood, but Andrews also remembers his terrible, terrifying father and the school he hated, and Rowe is troubled by what he remembers of a wounded rat. Almost all of Greene's heroes, although they may express nostalgia for their lost innocence, recall their childhoods with distaste, with bitterness, or with horror. Major Scobie, in The Heart of the Matter, provides no details from his early years, but he does say that he did not care much for school; Bendrix, the novelist in The End of the Affair, is realized almost entirely in the present; although we are not told what these two characters remember from their childhoods, we see that they, like other Greene adults, respond with pity to the appeal of helplessness wherever they encounter it—in children, in women of a certain type, or in ignorant savages.
It should be noted that Greene's heroines are often "plain, pathetic child-women"; they are "unusually courageous, cheerful, ingenious, surprisingly innocent, and willing to make the best of things." 

Allott and Farris point out the even more significant fact that their suffering resembles that of children who suffer without knowing why. The emotions they arouse in their men folk are more than anything the tenderness and pity felt for what is young and helpless, intensified by a compassionate knowledge of inevitable guilt and pain.

The natives who appear in Greene's books about Africa are also represented as essentially childlike—dependent, innocent, and vulnerable.

Members of all of these groups are frequently made to serve a particular dramatic function: they appear as objects of an overpowering pity which motivates other characters to assume responsibility for them. This responsibility may end with providing protection from physical or emotional pain, but in The Power and the Glory and in The Heart of the Matter it extends to a concern for the immortal souls.

In addition to the children who inspire pity and the adults who are driven by it, Greene has created another group of characters who feel no nostalgia and no pity. Ida Arnold, the "modern northern barbarian",

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17 Allott and Farris, p. 95.
of Brighton Rock, does not long for her childhood because she has never left it; she has never surrendered her childlike idealism, and she believes in the possibility of justice in this world. Willi Hilse, in The Ministry of Fear, and Pinkie Brown, in Brighton Rock, are incapable of pity; in fact they derive their strength from their inability to imagine the sufferings or the feelings of their fellow men. In The Ministry of Fear, a police lieutenant observes that "adolescents don't feel pity. It's a mature passion." 19

There is an apparent ambiguity in Greene's use of the word pity, which refers sometimes to a destructive emotion elicited by childishness and helplessness and sometimes to an essentially adult emotion which might be equated with Christian charity, for

charity does not discriminate, but is extended freely to all, to the guilty as well as to the innocent, to the smug and complacent as well as to the guilty. Charity is not condescending; it is not handed down to the unfortunate, but operates from the level of misfortune. It does not pretend to remove evil or grief by simply removing the apparent causes, but tries to enter into the other's suffering by assuming part of the misery. 20

It seems clear that the pity which leads Arthur Rowe, in The Ministry of Fear, to murder his wife, and the pity which destroys Major Scobie in The Heart of the Matter, is really a disguised and dangerous form of


20 Stratford, p. 220.
self-pity. It is equally certain that the whiskey priest in The Power
and the Glory, who is able to pity everyone he meets, including his
betrayer, has learned the secret of charity, which he expresses in this
way:

When you visualized a man or woman carefully, you could always
begin to feel pity . . . that was a quality God’s image carried with it . . . when you saw the lines at the corners of the eyes, the
shape of the mouth, how the hair grew, it was impossible to hate.
Hate was just a failure of imagination.  

In many of Greene’s novels and short stories, the hero is shown
in the process of choosing, or of living out the consequences of a choice,
between childhood and maturity, between the "agonizing boredom of
apathy" and the "pain inevitable in any human relationship—pain
inflicted and pain suffered." Those who choose to cling to childhood
are condemned to loneliness, and those who commit themselves to the world
can expect only betrayal, or perhaps the guilty knowledge that they have
betrayed someone else. Each of these characters is

faced with a decision between the selfish demands of the ego and
the demands of self-sacrificing love for his fellow human beings . . .
Every man who excludes the claims of others in favor of the claims
of self, Greene is saying, commits a treachery which ultimately
causes another to endure sacrificial suffering. Every man mature

In moral nature becomes ultimately either a Judas or a Christ. 24

In spite of his awareness of the evil which can be caused by the attitudes which his characters display, Greene tries to arouse sympathy for them through careful analysis of their backgrounds, and it is possible to argue that his insistence upon explaining the influences which have acted upon his characters denies significance to the choices they make.

CHAPTER II

FROM ROMANCE TO REALISM

In the title piece of the collection of essays called The Lost Childhood, Greene advances the idea that the books we read in childhood may have far-reaching effects upon the course of our lives. This essay, which appeared originally in The Listener under the title "Heroes Are Made in Childhood," will be of further interest in a later discussion of Greene's convictions about the idea of a "moment of crisis" when life may suddenly take "a new slant in the journey toward death." For the present, however, the description of his early fascination and later dissatisfaction with romantic adventure novels such as those of Rider Haggard, Percy Westerman, and Stanley Weyman is of particular interest because this pattern reappears in the course of Greene's literary development and serves as a theme for one of his novels.

He tells us that King Solomon's Mines had particular significance for him, that it "influenced the future" by developing in him an "odd

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1 See below, p. 32.


3 Ibid., p. 14.
African fixation, which resulted in his accepting a job in Freetown many years later and which also helped him to a recognition of the similarity between his childish fantasies and the primitive imagination.

Even at the age of ten, however, he found Rider Haggard's heroes "a little too good to be true. . . . these men were like Platonic ideas: they were not life as one had already begun to know it." It was when he was about fourteen that he found in fiction a description of the world which seemed to tally with his experience of it: the book was Marjorie Bowen's *The Viper of Milan*; Greene describes its significance for him in this way:

On the surface, *The Viper of Milan* is only the story of a war between Gian Galeazzo Visconti, Duke of Milan, and Mastino della Scala, Duke of Verona, told with zest and cunning and an amazing pictorial sense. Why did it creep in and colour and explain the terrible living world of the stone stairs and the never quiet dormitory? It was no good in the real world to dream that one would ever be a Sir Henry Curtis, but della Scala, who at last turned from an honesty that never paid and betrayed his friends and died dishonoured and a failure even at treachery—it was easier for a child to escape behind his mask. As for Visconti, with his beauty, his patience and his genius for evil, I had watched him pass by many a time in his black Sunday suit smelling of mothballs. His name was Carter. He exercised terror from a distance like a snowcloud over the young fields. Goodness has only once found a perfect incarnation in the human body and never will again, but evil can always find a home there. Human nature is not black and white but black and grey. I read all that in *The Viper of Milan* and I looked round and I saw that it was so.

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4 Ibid. 5 Ibid., p. 15. 6 Ibid., p. 16.
Greene tells us that from the moment of his discovery of this novel, he
began to produce imitations of it: "stories of sixteenth-century Italy
or twelfth-century England marked with enormous brutality and a des-
pairing romanticism." Indeed, his first three published novels--
The Man Within, The Name of Action, and Rumour at Nightfall--were
historical romances; the second and third were not included in the uni-
form edition of Greene's works issued by William Heinemann, and he
has asked that they never be reissued. Philip Stratford argues that all
three of these early books were based on a conflict between romance
and realism; he further suggests that this conflict, "although it is of-
ten submerged and does not break to the surface as in the early novels,
is a constant factor in Greene's imagination" and that it serves as the
theme of the entertainment The Ministry of Fear.

Although many of the themes and obsessions which appear in the
later novels--pursuit, betrayal, suicide--are to be found in The Man
Within, the central theme of this first novel is "the divided mind." 
Francis Andrews, the young hero, knows himself to be "embarrassingly
made up of two persons"; his actions have been consistently cowardly,

7 Ibid. 8 Stratford, p. 105.
9 Allott and Farris, p. 51.
and he is a superficial dreamer, a "lustful sentimentalist,"\textsuperscript{11} but he is aware of the presence within himself of an "uncomfortable questioning critic" which mocks the "sentimental, bullying, desiring child,"\textsuperscript{12} points out to him his willful self-deceptions, and urges him toward courage and toward nature acceptance of responsibility for his actions.

Andrews is tortured unremittingly by his cowardice; the major part of the action of this novel is concerned with his efforts to escape or conquer his fear. Elizabeth and Carlyon, the other two principal characters, represent two means of achieving this end; Carlyon offers escape from reality into a world of poetry, dreams, and romantic detachment, whereas Elizabeth supports the inner critic in demanding that Andrews surrender his illusions and commit himself to the real world.

Andrews's sexuality is another source of conflict; he regards his sexual appetite as an aspect of his lower nature, a reflection of his despised father, and his inability to ignore or to conquer his lust represents for him an offense against his mother.

It seems impossible to avoid discussing the Oedipus complex which Andrews exhibits in almost classic form; although it is not the central focus of the novel, it does help to explain Andrews's attachment to Carlyon as well as the motives to which he attributes his own final self-sacrifice. Andrews was strongly attached to his mother, who was "a quiet pale

\textsuperscript{11}Ibid., p. 68. \textsuperscript{12}Ibid., p. 23.
woman who loved flowers, "and he blames his father for his mother's death: "I think he broke her heart, if there's such a thing as a broken heart. He broke her body, anyway." Francis describes his father to Elizabeth as an ignorant, conceited bully, and when Elizabeth asks, sensibly enough in view of that description, why his mother married him, Andrews's only explanation is, "They eloped ... My mother was incurably romantic." He cannot admit the possibility of love between his father and mother until much later in the course of the novel, when he recalls that his father could be rather charming in a "rough, genial way" and that he had "what those who did not know him in his black moods called a way with him." This grudging admission does not, however, lessen Andrews's hatred for his father, whose only legacies to him were cowardice and a troublesome and insistent sexuality—even his father's ship, the Good Chance, and command of the smugglers who manned her, fell to Carlyon.

Andrews often thinks "how different it would have been if Carlyon had been his father ... Carlyon would have satisfied his mother's heart, and he himself would have been born with will and backbone." Andrews recalls that, from the first time he saw Carlyon, he was fascinated by him; he seemed to be "all the things which Andrews wished

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13 Ibid., p. 95. 14 Ibid. 15 Ibid., p. 96.
16 Ibid., p. 240. 17 Ibid.
to be—courageous, understanding, hopelessly romantic, not about women, but about life.\textsuperscript{18} Carlyon was apparently attracted to him, also, for he invited him to join the smugglers aboard the Good Chance. The boy's attachment to Carlyon grew quickly, for in the hours they spent together reading poetry or talking quietly, Andrews found the only peace he had ever known. Except for these moments, however, life aboard the ship was hateful to him; he was offended by the noise, the scurrying, the curses which surrounded him, and he was constantly reminded of his shortcomings by the other crewmen, who quickly realized that he lacked his father's bravery and cunning and merely tolerated him out of regard for his father. After three years with the smugglers, Andrews betrayed them; when the excise men attempted to act on the information they had received, one of the officers was killed, and all of the smugglers except Carlyon, Andrews, and one other were arrested.

One of the strengths of this novel lies in the realistic presentation of the shifting limits of Andrews's insight and self-knowledge. He wavers between recognition and rejection of the fact that by his act of betrayal he has forfeited Carlyon's friendship; so tempted is he to seek his peace in Carlyon's world of dreams that even in his panic-stricken flight from vengeance he often manages to overlook part of what he knows of Carlyon's character. This "romantic fool with an ugly face"\textsuperscript{19}

\textsuperscript{18}Ibid., p. 237. \textsuperscript{19}Ibid.
hated above all anyone "who gave him contact with a grubby earth."\textsuperscript{20} Andrews knows the exact nature of his crime against his friend: he has destroyed the sense of romance and adventure with which Carlyon had invested the smuggling operations. This is much more disturbing to Carlyon than a mere betrayal; Andrews hears him say to Elizabeth, "You will not understand how he has spoiled everything. . . . Doesn't it seem mean to you that a man should be shot dead over a case of spirit? What a dull, dirty game it makes it all appear."\textsuperscript{21}

Even with the knowledge that Carlyon can be merciless to those who threaten his illusions--he once murdered one of his henchmen who had offended his sensibilities by raping a young girl--Andrews sometimes finds it "impossible even in flight and fear to think of Carlyon as other than as a friend."\textsuperscript{22} At other times, however, he is aware that the promise of peace held out by Carlyon is a false one, for his inner critic argues that peace is "not cowardly nor sentimental nor filled with illusion."\textsuperscript{23} The argument of the inner critic is supported by the serenity of the brave and eminently reasonable Elizabeth.

Elizabeth, who "remains a vague, idealized creature,"\textsuperscript{24} is represented as lovely, chaste, kind, and wise beyond her twenty years; she is more attractive and more mature than most of Greene's heroines.

\textsuperscript{20}Ibid., p. 74. \textsuperscript{21}Ibid., p. 84. \textsuperscript{22}Ibid., p. 54. \textsuperscript{23}Ibid., p. 50. \textsuperscript{24}Stratford, p. 94.
and her function in the novel differs considerably from that of the plain, childish women of the later novels. It is through Elizabeth that a religious element is introduced into the novel; she not only attempts to explain life in religious terms, but she also functions symbolically to represent Grace.

With her clear vision, her "instinctive wisdom," Elizabeth helps Andrews to recognize the course he must follow if he is to conquer his fear. She protects him from Carlyon by refusing to tell Carlyon that Andrews is hiding in her cottage; when that immediate danger has been dealt with, she urges Andrews to demonstrate his courage by testifying against the smugglers in court, thereby openly identifying himself as an informer and running the full risk of vengeance. Driven by the hope of satisfying both Elizabeth and the inner critic, but still uncertain of his courage, Andrews goes to Lewes, where the trial is to be held. There, by a remarkable coincidence, he is recognized as one of the smugglers by the assistant to Sir Henry Merriman, the prosecuting attorney assigned to the trial. Confronted with Merriman's threat to have him arrested and to prosecute him along with the other smugglers unless he agrees to testify against them at the trial, Andrews realizes that he is "caught, and deep beneath his superficial fear he was thankful. The initiative had been taken out of his hands. He was being driven remorselessly along the right road, and it was no use to struggle any more."25

Andrews's childish self does continue to struggle, of course; his courage wavers on the night before the trial, and he considers the possibility of slipping out of the hotel when he encounters Merriman's mistress, Lucy, who offers herself to him in exchange for his testimony because she knows that the trial is important to her protector. She stipulates that he must wait until after the trial to collect his reward, and he agrees to her conditions. Although he is stricken with remorse when he reflects that he is doing for a bad motive what he hesitated to do for a good one, he does appear at the trial; however, his testimony is not enough to obtain a verdict against the smugglers, who enjoy great popularity among the citizens of Lewes, and they are released, threatening vengeance to Andrews for his betrayal and punishment for Elizabeth, who sheltered him.

In spite of an earlier decision to forego Lucy's reward and return immediately after the trial to Elizabeth, Andrews is unable to resist the temptation when Lucy renew her offer. The next morning, filled with remorse and a "terror of life, of going on soiling himself and repenting and soiling himself again," 26 he returns to Elizabeth's cottage to warn her of the threats made against her by the smugglers. This action requires great courage, because he suspects that the smugglers may be waiting to trap him, but his reunion with Elizabeth makes all

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26 Ibid., p. 235.
risk seem unimportant. They declare their love for each other and their intention to marry, but Elizabeth insists that they confront their enemies before setting out.

During the afternoon, Elizabeth goes into the village for food and returns with the news that authorities have found the Good Chance; she is sure that this is good news, but Andrews reacts with alarm, knowing that loss of the ship decreases Carlyon's power over the other men, power which would be useful in helping to protect Elizabeth from the wrath of Joe and Hake, the two members of the smuggling band most intent upon vengeance. Andrews's reflections at this point are interesting; this passage, with its emphasis on pity and tenderness for a disappointed child, foreshadows the development of this theme in later novels:

He looked up, and seeing her standing there so soon robbed of the exhilaration of her news, a pity and tenderness quite alien to desire filled him. He wanted to touch her, but only as one would touch a child who was sad at some pleasure taken away. What after all was his friendship for Carlyon compared with this? Love Carlyon who dared threaten this--child? Hate him, rather. ²⁷

As night approaches, Elizabeth persuades Andrews to leave the cottage for water; as he returns with the filled buckets, he sees Joe and Hake inside the cottage--and runs. His courage reasserts itself after a time, but the delay is fatal; when he returns to the cottage, he finds that Elizabeth has killed herself with the knife he has given her to protect herself.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 283.
Carlyon is there, too, stunned by the death of this woman he had respected and admired; he explains that she was dead when he reached the cottage, that she had stabbed herself when Joe tried to force her to disclose Andrews's whereabouts. Andrews knows, however, that it was her despair and disappointment at his failure to come immediately to her aid which drove her to suicide; since he is persuaded that his father made him a coward, he blames his father for Elizabeth's death. Knowing that Carlyon will probably be charged with murder if the police find him in the cottage with her, Andrews suddenly conceives the plan of taking the blame himself so that Carlyon can escape, and as he awaits the arrival of the officers, he realizes that his plan is "not simply an expiatory act offered to Carlyon for the earlier betrayal, but a way of defeating his father." With this realization comes the feeling of peace for which Andrews has always longed, and the novel ends with his suicide.

During the few hours he had spent with Elizabeth, Andrews was deeply affected by her calm faith in God, and although he had ridiculed her belief in spirits, he later expresses a "faint hope that might be a stirring of belief" in the possibility of immortality and resurrection. Stratford contends that, although Andrews was "too complex a character to enjoy conventional romantic bliss, his end was still a victory for a

\[28\] Allott and Farris, p. 60.

\[29\] Greene, The Man Within, p. 312.
perverse kind of romanticism, and he surmounted his disillusionment with life by entering into the adventure of death." 30

Greene's next two books, *The Name of Action* and *Rumour at Nightfall*, were also romantic novels, but in 1931 his "romantic-humanist period closed with a bang, as if something that had been gnawing at the foundations of his belief in man's power of self-purification brought down the wall separating him from an almost total despair of human nature." 31 Beginning with *Stamboul Train*, published in 1932, the historical settings, the "romantic vagueness" of Greene's earlier novels "give way . . . to the modern scene, painted with all that ruthless brutality, brassiness, brilliance, cruelty, sexiness, tartness, satire and so on which he would finally justify so magnificently in *The Power and the Glory.*" 32 In the first novels of this new phase of Greene's work, the pendulum swings "as far in the direction of a disillusioned cynicism of attitude as it had pressed towards an extreme of romanticism in *Rumour at Nightfall,*" 33 and when the theme of the divided mind, the hesitation between romance and realism which occupied the heroes of the first three novels, appears again in *The Ministry of Fear*, published in 1943, there is a significant difference in emphasis. Francis Andrews reluctantly surrenders his illusions and, aided by Grace, becomes

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30 Stratford, p. 98. 31 O'Faolain, p. 61. 32 Ibid.
33 Stratford, p. 105.
a (dead) realist; his death is demanded by the exaggerated importance attached to those illusions by Greene as well as by Andrews. The hero of The Ministry of Fear, Arthur Rowe, suffers the same disillusionment, but he is not granted an escape into death; he has to come to terms with reality, "to accept suffering and absurdity and unhappiness and the mediocrity of life." 34

The Ministry of Fear is divided into four books corresponding to the stages of consciousness of the hero, Arthur Rowe. In the first book, called "The Unhappy Man," we accompany Rowe as he becomes involved with a large and well-organized spy ring; we are also provided with significant details from his past and with the reasons for his unhappiness. He has poisoned his wife, who was incurably ill with cancer, and later reflection upon the matter has left him with serious doubts about whether he was motivated by pity for her suffering or by his own horror at having to watch her pain. Although he has been found guilty of murder, the court has suspended his sentence, and since his release to the world he has withdrawn into a routine designed to insure a minimum number of encounters with his adult past: he avoids his former friends, lives in rented rooms, and retains no possessions except his clothes and copies of The Old Curiosity Shop and David Copperfield, which he reads over and over again, "not so much because he liked them as because he had

34 Ibid., p. 109.
read them as a child and they carried no adult memories." On one of his solitary strolls through war-time London, Rowe happens upon a charity bazaar given for the benefit of Mothers of the Free Nations; he is drawn irresistibly toward the fete, which calls him "like innocence; it was entangled in childhood, with vicarage gardens, and girls in white summer frocks, and the smell of herbaceous borders, and security." He enters the gate, with the almost conscious desire to "mislay the events of twenty years," wins a cake intended for someone else, and sets out upon an improbable adventure.

The cake contains an important microfilm of naval secrets, and the clumsy efforts the enemy agents make to retrieve it from Rowe, which include an attempt to poison him with the same drug he used to kill his wife, anger him and arouse his suspicions. He begins a private investigation, which results, after much confused activity, in his injury in the explosion of a homemade bomb.

Book Two is called "The Happy Man." The blast has destroyed Rowe's memory of everything which has happened to him since his eighteenth year; he has been returned to adolescence. Under the name of Richard Digby, he is being cared for in a private clinic and is being aided in his efforts to regain his memory by Dr. Forester, the head of the hospital.

35 Greene, The Ministry of Fear, p. 11.
36 Ibid., p. 1. 37 Ibid., p. 5.
and by Dr. Forester's faithful assistant, Johns. It is Johns who helps to re-educate Digby-Rowe to the realities of a world at war by patiently explaining Hitler, Mussolini, and the rise of Nazism. He is allowed to read the daily papers and to ask any questions which occur to him; but Forester and Johns withhold from him any information about his personal past, with the explanation that his memory must be allowed to return at its own pace.

In spite of great curiosity about his identity, Digby realizes that he is unwilling to exert himself to regain his memory. "He was perfectly comfortable exactly as he was," and his impatience to find out what his profession had been, what kind of man he had been, is tempered with a reluctance to leave the nursing home, where he is constantly reassured that "the great thing . . . is not to worry." 39

After several months at the nursing home, he is allowed a visitor, a young woman named Anna Hilfe, whose brother is an important member of the spy ring but who had developed a fondness for Rowe in the few days they knew each other before his injury. She has been instructed to talk with Rowe at intervals to keep track of the progress he is making at regaining his memory; her willingness to carry out her instructions is based as much upon her reluctance to see Rowe burdened with knowledge of the sordid details of his past—in particular the murder of his wife—

38 Ibid., p. 84. 39 Ibid., p. 83.
as upon her desire to protect him from the physical danger which threatens if the foreign agents learn that his memory of their activities has returned.

The first conversation between Rowe and Anna in the nursing home provides an ironic commentary upon the great gap between the ideal and the actual, between childhood expectations and reality. Rowe tries to guess what his profession was and what kind of man he became, basing his speculations upon what he remembers of his interests and inclinations in childhood. (In a similar conversation with Johns, Rowe had recalled his early fondness for books on exploration—Stanley, Livingstone, Burton—and suggested that a check of old Colonial Office lists might reveal that as his occupation.) He confesses that he cannot see himself as a lawyer, a doctor, or a tradesman; when he reflects that "I suppose in a way I wanted to lead—a good life," Anne gently reminds him that "people don't always become what they want to be." 41

"Of course not," he replies, "a boy always wants to be a hero. A great explorer. A great writer. But there's usually a thin disappointing connection. A boy who wants to be rich goes into a bank. The explorer becomes—oh, well, some underpaid colonial official marking minutes in the heat. The writer joins the staff of a penny paper." 42

In a mood of adolescent rebellion against the doctor because he

40 Ibid., p. 90. 41 Ibid., p. 91. 42 Ibid.
been denied his morning newspaper and the companionship of Johns, Rowe undertakes an exploration of the wing of the clinic known as the "sick bay," where it is understood that violent patients are kept. He finds in this wing a squalid disorder which contrasts shockingly with the rest of the clinic; he also finds that a fellow patient named Stone is being kept there in a strait jacket. Stone's confinement is obviously the result of his discovery that Dr. Forester has mysterious secrets rather than of a deterioration of his mental state; as Rowe later explains to a detective, "he is a little mad, but quite gentle, not violent."

*43* After promising Stone to arrange for his freedom, Rowe returns to his room.

When Dr. Forester, who is more than a little psychotic himself, learns that Rowe has been to the other wing and has talked with Stone, he becomes so agitated and angry that he hands him a recognizable newspaper photograph with the legend "Arthur Rowe whom the police are anxious to interview..." and tells him that he is a murderer. Reeling under the emotional impact of this sudden disclosure and the partial return of memory which it precipitates, Rowe nevertheless manages to escape the clinic and make his way to Scotland Yard.

"Bits and Pieces" is the title given to the third book, in which Rowe is led to the recovery of fragments of his past--and to an understanding of the nature of his involvement with the espionage ring--by the

skillful questioning of a detective, Mr. Prentice. As the overwhelming complexity of the matter is revealed to him, Rowe is moved to ask, "Is life really like this? ... It isn't how I had imagined it. ... I thought life was much simpler and—grander. I suppose that's how it strikes a boy."  

Unable to translate into terms of human suffering the possible results of a failure to intercept the microfilm before it can be smuggled from the country, Rowe is somewhat guiltily conscious, as he accompanies Prentice and other officers in their swift maneuvers to apprehend members of the spy ring and to recover the microfilm, of a sense of exhilaration: he was happily drunk with danger and action, ... He didn't worry much about Stone; none of the books of adventure one read as a boy had an unhappy ending, ... And none of them was disturbed by a sense of pity for the beaten side, ... He didn't understand suffering because he had forgotten that he had ever suffered."

When Prentice and Rowe reach the clinic, they find Stone, Dr. Forester, and Poole, another of his assistants, dead; Johns, who worshiped the doctor, had shot the doctor and Poole when he discovered that they had killed Stone. Rowe is unmoved by the carnage until he sees the twisted body of Stone, who had been chloroformed while in his straitjacket:

This was the passage he had crept up, excited, like a boy breaking a school rule: in the same passage ... he grew up—learned that adventure didn't follow the literary pattern, that there weren't always happy endings, felt the awful stirring of

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44 Ibid., p. 126. 45 Ibid., p. 139.
pity that told him something had got to be done, that you couldn't let things stay as they were, with the innocent struggling in fear for breath and dying pointlessly. 46

Although still unaware that he is guilty of the murder of his wife, Rowe has been brought a long way along the road to reality; during the long night's search for the microfilm, he enters the room which he occupied as Digby and discovers in himself a great contempt for that other whom he now regards as "a rather gross complacent, parasitic stranger whose happiness had lain in too great an ignorance. Happiness should always be qualified by misery." 47 Here again, as in The Man Within, we find a deep reluctance to surrender the comparative security of childhood: "Pity stirred, but immaturity fought hard; the sense of adventure struggled with common sense as though it were on the side of happiness and common sense were allied to possible miseries, disappointments, disclosures." 48

In the last book, called "The Whole Man," Rowe follows up on an important bit of information he has withheld from the police and succeeds in tracking down Anna Hilfe and her brother Willi, who is the mastermind of the spy ring. Willi escapes once by making a bargain with his sister--and cheating--but Rowe pursues and corners him once more; in a last desperate gamble, the demonic young man offers to tell Rowe about Rowe's past in exchange for a gun with which to commit suicide. When

Rowe refuses, Willi is prompted by hatred to tell Rowe of the mercy-killing of his wife; the details of the affair return to Rowe in a rush of memory and pain. Unable to resist the pleading in Willi's eyes, Rowe gives him the gun, and Willi promptly shoots himself.

With knowledge of his past complete, Rowe returns to Anna; he remembers that "she had wanted him innocent and happy," and, moved by "an enormous love for her, enormous tenderness, the need to protect her at any cost," he tells her that Willi died without speaking to him. By pretending that he still knows nothing about the murder of his first wife, Rowe pledges both himself and Anna to a lifetime of deception, for he knows that she will make every effort to protect him from knowledge of his guilt. Although he knows that his life with Anna will be full of apprehension, by assuming responsibility for her he demonstrates that he has at last achieved maturity.

49 Ibid., p. 174. 50 Ibid.
CHAPTER III

FROM INNOCENCE TO EXPERIENCE

The idea that the course of a man's life may be profoundly affected by a "moment of crisis" during childhood or adolescence is frequently encountered in Greene's essays as well as in his fiction. In the title essay of The Lost Childhood Greene emphasizes the influence of early reading and expresses the belief that he "had been supplied once and for all with a subject" by his reading of Marjorie Bowen's The Viper of Milan. Here it is important to note his insistence that he was supplied with a vocation as well as a subject. After reading this novel, he decided at once to become a writer and "all the other possible futures slid away: the potential civil servant, the don, the clerk had to look for other incarnations." He says that when he learned to read he kept the fact a secret for a whole summer because of a half-conscious awareness that his new skill brought certain dangers with it, since "in childhood all books are books of divination, telling us about the future, and like the fortune teller who sees a long journey in the cards or death by water they...

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1 Greene, The Lost Childhood, p. 17.  
2 Ibid., p. 16.  
3 See above, p. 13.  
4 Ibid., p. 15.
influence the future."

The decisive moment "which shapes the balance of a man's lifetime" may be precipitated by objects and events as well as by reading; in The Power and the Glory, this explanation is offered for the situation in which Tench, the dentist, finds himself:

Mr. Tench's father had been a dentist too--his first memory was finding a discarded cast in a waste-paper basket--the rough toothless gaping mouth of clay, like something dug up in Dorset--Neanderthal or Pithecanthropus. It had been his favourite toy: they tried to tempt him with Meccano; but fate had struck. There is always one moment in childhood when the door opens and lets the future in. The hot wet river-port and the vultures lay in the waste-paper basket, and he picked them out. We should be thankful we cannot see the horrors and degradations lying around in our childhood, in cupboards and bookshelves, everywhere.

Although vocations may be found on bookshelves and in wastebaskets, the issue at stake during the moment of crisis is usually the much more general one of how the world shall be regarded; 'a child, after all, knows most of the game--it is an attitude to it that he lacks. He is quite well aware of cowardice, shame, deception, disappointment.' The question is not whether the child shall be corrupted and betrayed--that is inevitable--but how he will live with his knowledge of evil. Some

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5 Ibid., p. 13.
6 Catharine Hughes, "Innocence Revisited," Renascence, XII (Autumn, 1959), . 30.
7 Greene, The Power and the Glory, p. 15.
8 Greene, The Lost Childhood, p. 15.
of Greene's characters choose to retreat from life when they are forced to recognize its basic imperfectibility; some, the innocent idealists, retain their illusions by simply ignoring the evidence of evil about them. Henry Scobie, in *The Heart of the Matter*, is intellectually persuaded that suffering and unhappiness are inevitable in this life, but his resentment of this fact expresses itself in an overpowering pity which forces him to make desperate and disastrous efforts to protect from pain those for whom he is responsible. The fact that he chooses as the objects of his pity only those who are unattractive, helpless, and childish indicates that he may be incapable of anything more than sublimated self-pity.

A few of Greene's minor characters recognize that the world is inescapably pain-ridden and choose to "work life-long at short-term goals which may slightly mitigate its pain." These men are presented sympathetically, and they inspire admiration by their willingness to serve; Mr. Bryden identifies as Greene's real hero the "dutiful functionary who does not concern himself with justice or morals but simply with meeting the needs of the day in hand." When this sense of duty, this response to need, is not based on some form of romantic idealism, when it truly reflects acceptance of the basic imperfectibility of the world and is

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10 Ibid.
not informed with resentment or with hope of success, it is perhaps the best alternative to the religious view.

When knowledge of evil is accompanied by knowledge of God's power, the relative unimportance of temporal suffering is revealed. The truly religious man does not offer himself in meaningless sacrifice to human ends, but concerns himself with salvation; his moment of crisis may involve a choice between serving God and serving man.

Greene's well-known short story, "The Basement Room," is built upon the "conviction that one emotionally charged incident can leave its mark on the whole of later development."¹¹ Philip Lane, the seven-year-old protagonist, is forced to choose between commitment to life and assumption of responsibility or "retreat from life, from care, from human relationships."¹²

Philip is to be left for two weeks in the care of Baines, the butler, and Mrs. Baines; as his parents drive away and he realizes that he is free to go anywhere in the house, he is struck by a sense of adventure, a feeling that "this is life. All his seven nursery years vibrated with the strange, the new experience. . . . He was apprehensive, but he was happier than he had ever been."¹³ He looks into several rooms before he ventures into the basement, where the servants have their

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¹¹ Allott and Farris, p. 65.


¹³ ibid., p. 4.
quarters. The genial Baines entertains him with ginger beer and cake and with tales of his adventures in Africa; Mrs. Baines, however, disapproves of eating between meals and scolds them both. She disapproves of everything pleasant and proceeds methodically to spoil the mood of peace and relaxation into which Baines had slipped when his employers walked out of the house. Seeing Baines’s disappointment, Philip feels a faint stirring of pity and responsibility, "as if he were the master of the house and Baines an ageing servant who deserved to be cared for."14

In a rebellious mood after the quarrel with Mrs. Baines and still stimulated by the feeling that "it was life that he was in the middle of," Philip decides to go for a walk instead of taking a rest as he had been ordered to do. During his outing, he sees Baines having tea with a strange young woman; they seem to be arguing, and Philip watches them from the doorway of the shop with rapt attention. "Other people’s lives for the first time touched and pressed and moulded. He would never escape that scene. In a week he had forgotten it, but it conditioned his career."16 He joins the lovers at the table and is given a sweet cake, but he has frightened them by imitating Mrs. Baines’s voice, and the afternoon is spoiled. Baines asks Philip not to mention the young woman to Mrs. Baines, and he promises readily; however, Mrs. Baines, who

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14 Ibid., p. 7. 15 Ibid., p. 10. 16 Ibid., p. 11.
suspects that her husband is carrying on an affair, succeeds in tricking Philip into divulging the secret. Even as he grieves over his failure to keep his promise to Baines, Mrs. Baines asks him not to tell that she knows about the rendezvous and offers him a new Meccano set in return for his silence.

He turned his back on her; he wouldn't promise, but he wouldn't tell. He would have nothing to do with their secrets, the responsibilities they were determined to lay on him. He was only anxious to forget. He had received already a larger dose of life than he had bargained for, and he was scared. . . . He never opened his Meccano set again, never built anything, never created anything, died, the old dilettante, sixty years later with nothing to show rather than preserve the memory of Mrs. Baines's malicious voice saying good night, her soft determined footfalls on the stairs to the basement, going down, going down. 17

When Philip is awakened by an unusually cheerful Baines, who announces that Mrs. Baines has been called away, he watches Baines with uneasiness. Unwilling to be drawn in and surrender to Baines's mood of gaiety, he resists the temptation; "he was divided by the fear and attraction of life." 18

In celebration of Mrs. Baines's absence, Baines takes Philip on a long day's outing in Hyde Park, and for a while the boy manages to forget Mrs. Baines, but when they return home to find Emmy waiting for them, he is frightened. "He nearly told Baines what Mrs. Baines had said; but he didn't want to bother, he wanted to leave things alone." 19

17 Ibid., p. 16. 18 Ibid., p. 17. 19 Ibid., p. 19.
The three of them have a pleasant supper, and Baines and Emmy then see Philip up to the nursery; he is touched by their affection for each other and for him and feels safe because he can hear their happy, sleepy voices in one of the bedrooms nearby. He has "just had time to sigh faintly with satisfaction, because this too perhaps was life," when Mrs. Baines appears at his bedside demanding to know where Baines and Emmy have gone. As Philip recoils in terror, the sound of voices drifts up from the bedroom just below, and Mrs. Baines starts down the stairs on tiptoe to surprise her husband. Philip, driven by loyalty to Baines but terribly frightened, manages to scream a warning; after that, "he hadn't any more courage left for ever; he'd spent it all, had been allowed no time to let it grow, no years of gradual hardening." In her struggle on the stairs with Baines, who comes rushing out when Philip screams, Mrs. Baines falls over the banisters to her death.

In the confusion, Philip slips out of the house, hoping to escape the grown-up passion which has destroyed his peace by escaping from people altogether. Robbed of his courage, convinced against his will that love and acts of loyalty may end disastrously, he takes refuge in the garden, where he finds a momentary sense of security:

20 Ibid., p. 22.
21 Ibid., p. 25.
A kind of embittered happiness and self-pity made him cry; he was lost; there wouldn't be any more secrets to keep; he surrendered responsibility once and for all. Let grown-up people keep to their world and he would keep to his, safe in the small garden between the plane-trees. "In the lost childhood of Judas Christ was betrayed"; you could almost see the small unformed face hardening into the deep dilettante selfishness of age.

His sense of security is soon destroyed by thoughts of Mrs. Baines, however, and he leaves the garden to wander about the city for an hour or so until fatigue and fear defeat him and he allows himself to be taken in hand by a policeman. Philip is at the police station when Baines calls to report that his wife has been killed in an accidental fall, and the policeman who takes Philip home is given the additional assignment of reporting on the accident. Baines, confused by Philip's return in the company of the policeman, nevertheless tells the officer that Mrs. Baines fell on the basement stairs and that the body has not been moved; he silently implores the boy to keep just one more secret, but Philip closes his mind to the plea. "He loved Baines, but... the glowing morning thought, 'This is life,' had become under Baines's tuition the repugnant memory, 'That was life,'" and Philip, resentful, frightened, and, above all, not responsible, condemns Baines by blurting out what he knows of Mrs. Baines's fall and of Emmy.

Another of Greene's short stories, "The Hint of an Explanation," is built around a moment of crisis in the life of a small boy, but this

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22 Ibid., p. 26. 23 Ibid., p. 33.
story ends on a note of optimism so unusual for Greene that it is difficult to know exactly what to make of it. Most of Greene's literary output has illustrated his personal vision of the world as a battlefield of the conflict between good and evil and of humanity as "cannon fodder in a war too balanced ever to be concluded."24 In this story, however, he introduces a young man who is convinced that Satan, or "that thing, whatever it is, that seizes every possible weapon against God, is always, everywhere disappointed at the moment of success."25

The incident which has left the young man with this conviction is a story within a story; the narrator of the frame story describes himself as an agnostic; although he has "a certain intuition . . . that God exists," he believes that this intuition is untrustworthy, "founded as it may well be on childish experiences and needs," and he is "intellectually revolted at the whole notion of such a God who can so abandon his creatures to the enormities of Free Will." The narrator finds himself expressing these views in the course of a long conversation with a stranger on a train; the young stranger, although easily identifiable from his conversation as a Catholic, listens respectfully, displaying "none of the impatience or the intellectual arrogance I have come to expect from a Catholic."26 When the agnostic attempts to explain his disbelief by

26 Ibid., p. 136.
pointing to "what God—if there is a God—allows," he refers specifically to physical agonies and to the corruption of children; his companion answers this argument with the story of an incident from his childhood which seems to offer "the hint of an explanation."

The young man, whose name is David Martin, prefaceres his story with the explanation that it is not "scientific evidence—or evidence at all for that matter," but that support for belief in the existence in God may be found in "events that don't, somehow, turn out as they were intended—by the human actors...or by the thing behind the human actors." Although he refuses to give this "thing" a name because "the word Satan is so anthropomorphic," he says that he sometimes feels pity for it because of its apparent powerlessness: "it is so continually finding the right weapon to use against its Enemy and the weapon breaks in its own breast."  

David had been taught to serve at Mass in the Catholic church in his predominantly Protestant town; he was approached during summer vacation when he was about ten years old by one of the local bakers, a free-thinker named Blacker, who had devised an elaborate plan to "revenge himself on everything he hated": he hoped to persuade David

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27 Ibid., p. 137. 28 Ibid. 29 Ibid., pp. 137-38.
30 Ibid., p. 138. 31 Ibid. 32 Ibid., p. 140.
to steal a consecrated wafer during Mass. If his campaign were successful, Blacker could rejoice in the corruption of the son of a man he particularly hated and at the same time obtain for his nefarious purposes a bit of consecrated bread.

Blacker, "very ugly to look at, with one wall-eye and a head the shape of a turnip, with the hair gone on the crown," had planned his campaign with care, and he executed it with patience and skill. Using pastries as bait, he lured David into his parlor, where he had set up a small electric railway with an elaborate system of tracks, switches, and signals. He encouraged the boy to come often to play with it, and in spite of his distrust of Blacker, David was unable to resist the desire to control the little train. Near the end of the vacation, Blacker offered to give the boy the train in exchange for one of the wafers used in the Mass; thinking that he was interested in seeing how they were made, David offered to bring him an unconsecrated wafer, but Blacker would not settle for that. He demanded a consecrated wafer, saying, "I want to see what your God tastes like," and the intensity of his interest in obtaining what he at other times insisted was "only a bit of bread" made the idea of transubstantiation real to David for the first time.

Blacker explained to David how the theft might be accomplished and

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33 Ibid., p. 139. 34 Ibid., p. 143. 35 Ibid., p. 149.
threatened to slash him with a razor if he refused to follow instructions. David did as he was told--up to a point: he took the Host in his mouth as usual during Mass, quickly ducked into the sacristy on the pretext of getting something he had forgotten, removed the undissolved portion of the wafer from his mouth, and wrapped it in a piece of paper which he put in his pocket. Some confusion at home prevented David's taking the package to Blacker in the afternoon, according to plan, and soon after the boy's bedtime Blacker was beneath his window, begging, threatening, and wheedling in a desperate effort to persuade the boy to hand over the prize for which Blacker had waited with mounting impatience throughout the summer. David had changed his mind, however; he had suddenly become convinced that the Host was "something a man would pay for with his whole peace of mind, something that was so hated one could love it as one loves an outcast or a bullied child," and in order to protect it from Blacker, he swallowed it. When he told Blacker what he had done, the man "began to weep--the tears ran lopsidedly out of the one good eye and his shoulders shook."  

David concludes his account of the incident with this remark:

"When I think of it now, it's almost as if I had seen that Thing weeping for its inevitable defeat. It had tried to use me as a weapon, and now I had broken in its hands and it wept its hopeless tears through one

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36 Ibid., p. 147. 37 Ibid., p. 149.
of Blacker's eyes." The agnostic admits that it is an interesting story, but he fails to see what is explained by it until his young companion moves so that his clerical collar is exposed to view; "I suppose you think you owe a lot to Blacker," he remarks, and David's prompt reply is, "Yes... You see, I am a very happy man."39

A weeping one-eyed devil is not a surprising figure to emerge from a Greene story; a happy man is something else again. In The Heart of the Matter, which appeared in the same year as "The Hint of an Explanation," we find Major Scobie reflecting, "point me out the happy man, and I will point you out either egotism, selfishness, evil--or else an absolute ignorance."40 On the evidence presented in this story, we cannot judge David Martin guilty on any of these counts; we are left with the unsatisfying alternative of regarding him as the rule-proving exception.

An interesting refinement of the idea of the moment of crisis appears in England Made Me, which appeared in America under the title The Shipwrecked. In this entertainment, the principal characters are twins, Kate and Anthony Farrant; the point of view shifts rapidly among several characters, and the reader is given the opportunity of comparing Anthony's and Kate's recollections of a decisive moment in Anthony's

38 Ibid. 39 Ibid., p. 150.
childhood. The incident is first described for us in a conversation between the twins when Kate, in an effort to redeem her ne'er-do-well brother, insists that he accompany her from London to Stockholm, where she hopes to find a position for him with Krogh, her employer and protector. Both Kate and Anthony are reminded of a similar conversation they held many years before in a barn midway between their two schools; Anthony had written her that he planned to run away and had asked her to meet him there. She persuaded him to return to school, and although he assures her that the advice was sound, both of them are aware of the degree of his failure, and both are troubled by the suspicion that it was in that moment that the "pattern of his existence had been set—his deceits, his hopeless infantilism, his calculated interests."  

Reflecting upon the event somewhat later, Anthony is vaguely aware of a feeling of betrayal—"Kate sent me back and I trusted her"—but he remembers only that he was happy at having run away from the school, which he hated, and that he was miserable again when he returned. Kate has analyzed the significance of the incident with greater precision, however; she knows that by sending him "back from the barn to conform, to pick up the conventions, the manners of all the rest" she "made

43 Ibid., p. 133.
him unfit for the great world of affairs."\textsuperscript{44} Kate is also aware of the
effect of that incident upon her life, since her "efforts to help Anthony
now--the job at Krogh's, the settlement she exacts in return for her
agreement to marry Krogh--are attempts to repair the damage done
then."\textsuperscript{45}

In A Burnt-Out Case, Greene takes the idea of a moment of crisis
to the limit of its implications. Colin, the atheistic physician who works
at the leper colony, says, "I think of Christ as an amoeba who took the
right turning."\textsuperscript{46}

\textsuperscript{44} DeVitis, p. 77.  \textsuperscript{45} Allott and Farris, p. 108.
CHAPTER IV

FROM BOREDOM TO TERROR

In 1935, soon after he completed England Made Me, Greene traveled to Africa, where he undertook a journey of some 350 miles, mostly on foot, through the forests of Liberia. Greene's interest in the moment of crisis may be profitably considered as an aspect of his fascination with the similarity between the childish and the primitive, for he describes his African journey as a more or less conscious effort to discover "from what we have come, to recall at which point we went astray." He entered the forest with inadequate equipment, with an insufficient number of carriers, without even a clear idea of the route to be followed, in the vague hope of finding some confirmation of his belief that there is "a parallel between human development away from the primitive and the individual loss of innocence in childhood." Greene was sure that he would find seediness in the coastal areas where civilization had begun to encroach upon the primitive, and for Greene, "seediness has a very deep appeal. . . . It seems to satisfy

2 Allott and Farris, p. 120.
temporarily, the sense of nostalgia for something lost; it seems to re-
represent a stage further back.\textsuperscript{3} Greene's notions of what he might
encounter in the interior were less concrete, but the passages he quotes
from the rather odd assortment of books he read in preparation for
his journey—a British Government Blue Book on Liberia, a journal
kept by Joseph Conrad on an expedition into the Congo, and an unidenti-
fied work of Louis-Ferdinand Céline—evoke "a quality of darkness . . .
an unexplained brutality . . . a sense of despair."\textsuperscript{4} The violence which
seems to be an inevitable characteristic of a world in which instinct rather
than intellect guides men's actions has its own appeal, however, and
Greene points out that

our world seems peculiarly susceptible to brutality. There is a
touch of nostalgia in the pleasure we take in gangster novels, in
characters who have so agreeably simplified their emotions that
they have begun living again at a level below the cerebral.\textsuperscript{5}

He insists that he would not want to live on the level of instinct—that
he has "no yearning for a mindless sensuality"\textsuperscript{6}—but that "when one
sees to what unhappiness, to what peril of extinction centuries of cere-
bration have brought us, one sometimes has a curiosity to discover
if one can from what we have come."\textsuperscript{7} Greene went to Africa intent
upon discovering "not only his own lost boyhood but the lost childhood

\textsuperscript{3}Greene, \textit{Journey Without Maps}, p. 9. \textsuperscript{4}Ibid., p. 11.
\textsuperscript{5}Ibid. \textsuperscript{6}Ibid., p. 310. \textsuperscript{7}Ibid., p. 11.
of the modern human race." He hoped to identify the moment of crisis in the history of mankind.

It would be difficult to understand such nostalgia for the earlier stages of development if they had only violence and despair to offer, but Greene insists that there were times when he and the cousin who accompanied him on the trip were moved to great happiness by "the timelessness, the irresponsibility, the freedom of Africa." In addition to the great physical hardships of the trip, Greene was troubled by the apparent inevitability of having

moments of extraordinary happiness, the sense that one was nearer than one had ever been to the racial source, to satisfying the desire for an instinctive older gentler way of life . . . counterbalanced by the boredom of childhood too, that agonising boredom of "apartness" which came before one had learnt the fatal trick of transferring emotion, of flashing back enchantingly all day long one's own image, a period when other people were as distinct from oneself as this Liberian forest.

The relationship between the primitive and the childlike was brought home to Greene with great force when he witnessed the ceremonial dance of a bush devil. These bush devils do not correspond to anything in Christian theology; indeed, Greene expresses some concern that those of us accustomed to the concept of a war between God and Satan may find it difficult to comprehend that what is represented by these dancers is

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8Lewis, p. 236. 9Greene, Journey Without Maps, p. 162.

10Ibid., p. 193.
"neither good nor evil but simply Power."

As he watched the masked dancer, Greene was reminded of the witches which haunted his childhood dreams—they, too, were terrifying because they controlled power, but they were neither good nor evil—and he remembered also a Jack in the Green he saw dancing at a country crossroads in England when he was a child; he found that "here in Liberia again and again one caught hints of what it was we had developed from . . . . One had the sensation of having come home, for here one was finding associations with a personal and racial childhood, one was being scared by the same old witches."

Although all of the adults of the village knew that the masked dancer was Landow, the local blacksmith, they respected the power he represented; the children, however, did not know his identity, and they were fascinated and frankly terrified by him. Greene concludes that what is lost as individuals and civilizations mature is this instinctive terror in the presence of supernatural power; even the elders, who were no longer frightened by the devil, could "acknowledge the blacksmith without losing their faith in the dreadfulness he had practiced to represent."

Greene had known for many years that terror can be a useful weapon in the war against the boredom of childhood; as an adolescent he had discovered that by contriving a sense of terror, as he did by playing several games of Russian roulette, he could achieve an "extraordinary
sense of jubilation" which enabled him to take an interest in the world around him. Near the end of his Liberian journey, Greene had an experience which had a similar effect; he had contracted malaria and was badly frightened by his illness, and he reports that during the course of the fever he was surprised to discover that he had "a passionate interest in living." The discovery seemed very important to him at the time because it amounted to a "conversion" from his previously held conviction that death was desirable, and because it relieved for a time "the worst boredom of the trek." 

When Greene emerged from the jungle into the coastal area near Grand Bassa, he was physically and emotionally exhausted; his relief at having brought his party to its destination and his gratitude at being once more in touch with civilization--represented at Grand Bassa by "iced beer and a wireless set"--overshadowed for a time the regret he felt at leaving behind a world where "the sense of taste was finer, the sense of pleasure keener, the sense of terror deeper and purer." He had developed an affectionate regard for his carriers, and he envied them their close communion with nature and with supernature, symbolized for him by their ability to be swept along on an "unthinking tidal

14 Greene, The Lost Childhood, p. 175.  
15 Greene, Journey Without Maps, p 262.  
16 Ibid.  
17 Ibid., p. 279.  
18 Ibid., p. 277.
urge to joy" at the time of the full moon. In summarizing his impressions of Africa, Greene remarks that his journey, "if it had done nothing else, had reinforced a sense of disappointment with what man had made out of the primitive, what he had made out of childhood." Although he insists that he would not want to remain at the level of the savage or the seedy, he feels that "when one has appreciated such a beginning, its terrors as well as its placidity, the power as well as the gentleness, the pity for what we have done with ourselves is driven more forcibly home." 

There is a trace of longing in Greene's speculation on whether, if his sojourn in the forest had been longer, he "might have relearned the way to live without transference, with a lost objectivity." He had referred earlier to this objectivity while describing an event from his own childhood; he said that his earliest memory is of seeing a dead dog in the bottom of his pram and that "there was no emotion attached to the sight. It was just a fact. At that period of life one had an admirable objectivity." It seems, then, that Greene regards this ability "to live without transference" as a natural feature of childhood, and perhaps the feature which makes it possible for children to enjoy whatever happiness they do enjoy. Greene is confessing to nostalgia for the

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19 Ibid., p. 224. 20 Ibid., p. 277. 21 Ibid., p. 310. 22 Ibid., p. 194. 23 Ibid., p. 32.
relative painlessness of even the "agonizing boredom of apartness" when compared with the endless tortures which accompany the development of an imaginative sympathy. With the "fatal trick of transferring emotion" comes awareness of the pain suffered by other people, and with that awareness all hope of happiness is destroyed.
CHAPTER V
FROM MELODRAMA TO TRAGEDY

On his return to England, Greene entered a period of great productivity. In 1936, he published *Journey Without Maps*, an entertainment called *A Gun for Sale*, and *Brighton Rock*. Nine pieces, including "The Basement Room," from the collection of *Twenty-One Stories* were written during the period from 1936 to 1939, and in 1939, a travel book called *The Lawless Roads*, based on a trip to Mexico, and another entertainment, *The Confidential Agent*, were released.

The books of this period reflect an even greater interest in the relationship between childhood and adulthood than the earlier works, and Allott and Farris have noted that in earlier books Greene had been interested in the importance of childhood to an understanding of what goes on in the present, . . . but now this idea became at once both more powerfully significant to him and of wider application. *Brighton Rock* has the theme of salvation and damnation, but it is studied in the light of the assumption that what happens to us in our early years largely governs what we become.  

It is in *Brighton Rock*, also, that "an implicitly religious vision becomes explicit. . . . The gangster hero is given a Catholic conscience."

1 Allott and Farris, p. 119.

2 Stratford, p. 192.
Greene has said of Pinkie Brown that "one wanted to make a character who everyone would have said was destined to be damned, and yet leave the reader wondering if he couldn't be saved after all."\(^3\) In order to produce this doubt about Pinkie's ultimate fate, Greene attempts to arouse sympathy for Pinkie by describing his unhappy childhood, but he does not stop there; he also introduces the idea of the "appalling . . . strangeness of the mercy of God."\(^4\)

In order to establish his claim to leadership of a protection gang operating among Brighton Race Track bookmakers, seventeen-year-old Pinkie Brown plans the murder of Fred Hale, a newspaperman whose information led to the death of Kite, the former leader of Pinkie's gang, at the hands of a rival mob. Hale knows that he is being pursued by Pinkie and his men, and he attempts to frustrate their plans to kill him by attaching himself to Ida Arnold, a hearty, cheerful woman he encounters in a bar. Hale is unwilling to sacrifice his pride by making a frank appeal for protection, however, and he allows Ida to leave him alone for a few minutes—just long enough for Pinkie and his mob to overtake him, surround him, and hurry him away to his death. When Ida returns from her trip to the "Ladies," she is momentarily disappointed and surprised that Hale has broken his promise to wait for her, but she

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\(^3\) Ibid., p. 193.

has grown accustomed to such treatment through long years of casual
encounters and she gives the matter little further thought until she reads
of Hale's death in the newspapers several days later.

Ida's suspicions are aroused by some apparent inaccuracies in the
newspaper account of Hale's last few hours as they were reconstructed
at the inquest; her pity is aroused by the fact that Hale had no relatives
except a distant cousin, no one who cared enough to question the coroner's
verdict that Hale died of heart failure. Ida consults her Ouija board
for information about Hale's fate and interprets the enigmatic scrawl
it produces as proof that Hale was driven to his death by people to whom
he owed money and as a command to her to "make those people sorry
they were ever born."\(^5\) Ida accepts without question the responsibility
for tracking "them" down and avenging the death of her casual acquain-
tance of a few hours: "somebody had made Fred unhappy, and somebody
was going to be made unhappy in turn. An eye for an eye."\(^6\)

Greene began this book as an entertainment, "a melodrama of
murder and detection in which contingency and coincidence would be
allowed free play, the chase be exciting for its own sake,"\(^7\) and the
story of Ida's efforts to track down Hale's killers retains its emphasis
on melodrama. At the same time, a tragedy of sorts is distinguishable

\(^5\)Ibid., p. 58.  \(^6\)Ibid., p. 48.

\(^7\)Lewis, p. 243.
in the story of Pinkie and of the inevitable progression of events which begins with his decision to murder Hale. Colin Wilson has said that the fact that "Brighton Rock was conceived as an entertainment, and turned into a 'serious novel' . . . is precisely what is wrong with it." 8 R. W. B. Lewis, on the other hand, feels that "the relation between the detective story and the tragedy expresses exactly what Brighton Rock is finally all about," 9 since it may be read as a dramatization of the relation between Ida's world, where religion has degenerated into superstition, and Pinkie's world, dominated by religious forces, "the relation Greene had formulated for himself in Liberia, between the 'sinless empty graceless chromium world' of modern Western urban civilization and the supernaturally infested jungle with its purer terrors and its keener pleasures." 10 Pinkie's world is represented as infinitely superior to Ida's, and we are asked to accept the proposition that Pinkie himself, in all his wickedness, is superior to Ida because his Roman Catholic background has provided him with a theological standard by which to measure his actions. Ida is unworthy of attention—"she's just nothing," 11 Pinkie says—because words such as salvation and damnation have no meaning for her.

9 Lewis, p. 244.
10 Ibid.
Greene has said that the theme of *Brighton Rock* is "the incommensurable consequences of any single act," and it is here that Ida's story and Pinkie's story come together, for the entertainment and the tragedy share this theme, although with a significant difference in emphasis. In true detective-story style, the success of Ida's pursuit of Hale's killer depends upon attention to the minute details marking the trail which leads to Pinkie, but coincidence and luck attend Ida on her mission of vengeance. There is, however, an air of inevitability about Pinkie's story; as the action of the novel traces the consequences of his decision to murder Hale, another series of events is revealed. Through Pinkie's reflections and recollections and through Pinkie's occasional confidences to Rose Wilson and to the members of his mob, the reader learns of the sordid childhood which transformed Pinkie from a choir boy with dreams of becoming a priest into a vicious gangster with dreams of an empire of crime. "Pinkie's vision is to be an Alexander of crime, to be a man-god," and the murder of Hale is merely the first step in a ruthless campaign to realize his ambitions. "He was going to show the world... He trailed the clouds of his own glory after him: hell lay about him in his infancy. He was ready for more deaths."

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12 Stratford, p. 192.
Pinkie's dreams were shaped by his childhood, by the grinding poverty which surrounded him in the Brighton slum, by the cement schoolyard where he learned that inflicting pain can be pleasurable, by the disgust and loneliness which grew in him as he watched his parents in the bed across the room from his, so absorbed in their Saturday night copulations that they were oblivious to him. He is driven by a compulsion to escape that poverty, to avenge that abandonment, and a sense of fatality attends his "maturation as an agent of evil." He feels at times that he is "being driven further and deeper than he'd ever meant to go."

He pursues his dream of power with a desperate egoism, instinctively aware that his strength lies in the fact that "the imagination hadn't awakened. . . . He couldn't see through other people's eyes, or feel with their nerves." In an effort to maintain this objectivity, he shuns experience and avoids knowledge of other people's feelings. He holds himself aloof from the activities regarded by his associates as pleasurable: Pinkie does not smoke or drink, he does not eat chocolates, he never bets on the races--and he is a virgin. Sexual involvement seems to Pinkie to represent the final corruption, and he recoils from it in horror and disgust.

17 Ibid., p. 62.
It is true that Pinkie's total lack of imaginative sympathy gives him a strength which other people lack, but it has the additional effect of condemning him to "the hideous loneliness of innocence." Allott and Farris have called Brighton Rock "an extended argument for the reasonableness of 'the terror of life.'" As the details of Pinkie's childhood are revealed, it becomes possible to understand his desire to avoid being drawn into a world bounded by the sordid, the squalid, and the brutal, and to sympathize with his sense that he has been unjustly denied all knowledge of peace. "An awful resentment stirred in him--why shouldn't he have had his chance like all the rest, seen his glimpse of Heaven if it was only a crack between the Brighton walls?"

Pinkie is a victim of fierce pride, a product of the studied self-deception necessary for the preservation of his illusions; he is arrogant, overbearing, and extremely sensitive to real or imagined slights or insults, since they threaten to remind him of the great gap between his actual circumstances and his vision of himself as a powerful mob leader. His mob consists of Spicer and Qubitt, both aging, frightened men, and Dallow, who is strong and loyal, but stupid. A rival organization is rapidly gaining control of the territory protected by Pinkie's mob, and Colleoni, the leader of this organization, is so successful a criminal

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that he lives in the best hotels and is an accepted member of society; Pinkie's efforts to intimidate him are markedly unsuccessful—in fact, Colleoni refuses to recognize him as a threat. Weary of the unending necessity for calculation and planning, Pinkie is forced to this reflection:

Life was a series of complicated tactical exercises, as complicated as the alignments at Waterloo, thought out on a brass bedstead among the crumbs of sausage roll. Your clothes continually needed ironing, Cubitt and Dallow quarrelled, or else Dallow went after Billy's wife, the old box telephone under the stairs rang and rang. How could you think out a larger strategy under these conditions?

Pinkie's situation certainly calls for strategy; he must deal with the problem of Colleoni's rapid encroachment upon his territory and at the same time protect himself and his men from implication in the death of Hale. They believe that the most serious threat to their safety is posed by a young waitress named Rose, who has accidentally acquired information which could destroy their carefully constructed alibi. Pinkie pretends a romantic interest in the girl in order to keep track of her movements, and she is so hungry for affection that she responds eagerly to his attentions, in spite of the fact that he often bullies and ridicules her. Indeed, from their first meeting, when she served him in Snow's restaurant, "she seemed to find something agreeable about him which made her talk, something in common perhaps—youth and shabbiness".

21 Ibid., p. 159.
and a kind of ignorance in the dapper cafe."  

Her "blind willingness to be deceived" prevents her guessing the degree of Pinkie's contempt for her.

Although Pinkie conceals his origins, both he and Rose had been reared in Brighton slums, and in addition to youth and shabbiness, they share a background of Roman Catholicism; they share a vocabulary and a sense of sin. Pinkie knows that he is evil, and he takes a sort of pride in that knowledge; "credo in unum Satanum" he declares. In spite of his contempt for Rose, he realizes that she is good, and he feels that she complements and completes him: "what was most evil in him needed her; it couldn't get along without goodness."

The fact that Pinkie chooses eventually to marry Rose must be explained in some such mystical way as this, for there is certainly no practical necessity for this solution. Marriage to Rose provides Pinkie with no real guarantee of safety, for, although she could not be forced to give evidence against her husband, she could do so if she chose. In view of Pinkie's pathological aversion to the idea of sexual contact, it would seem more characteristic of him to murder Rose than to marry her--he does not hesitate to murder Spicer when it appears that Spicer has become dangerous.

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22 Ibid., p. 34.  23 Ibid., p. 129.  24 Ibid., p. 241.
25 Ibid., p. 179.
Rose and Pinkie have one thing more in common: they are together in opposition to Ida Arnold, whose dedication "to her Mission, to doing good, to seeing that evil suffered" has led her to pursue her investigation of Hale's death with dogged determination in spite of the official position that he died naturally. She succeeds in finding the answer to the question which has puzzled Pinkie and caused him much apprehension: Hale was strangled by Pinkie and his men; why should the coroner return a verdict of natural death in his case? Ida correctly deduces that Hale died of heart failure induced by fright as the mob led him away to a secluded spot in order to strangle him. She lacks evidence to support her theory, however, and she haunts Rose and Cubitt in an effort to get the proof she needs to have Pinkie arrested and charged with murder.

Both Pinkie and Rose are baffled by Ida's interest in the matter. When Rose asks Ida why she is interfering, the answer she gets is incomprehensible to her: "I'm like everyone else. I want Justice," the woman cheerfully remarked, as if she were ordering a pound of tea. Ida is equally puzzled by Rose's attitude toward her efforts to warn Rose of the danger of associating with Pinkie and to protect her from him; Rose's insistence that her love for Pinkie is not altered by the fact that he is guilty of two murders is shocking to Ida, but even more shocking is Rose's indifference to the possibility that her own life may be

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26 Ibid., p. 218. 27 Ibid., p. 288.
in danger, for Ida "took life with a deadly seriousness: she was prepared to cause any amount of unhappiness to anyone in order to defend the only thing she believed in."28 There seems to be no chance of communication between the two, and when Ida declares that Rose does not know "the difference between Right and Wrong,"29 Rose is unable to answer.

The woman was quite right; the two words meant nothing to her. Their taste was extinguished by stronger foods—Good and Evil. The woman could tell her nothing she didn't know about these—she knew by tests as clear as mathematics that Pinkie was evil—what did it matter in that case whether he was right or wrong? 30

Atkins has said that Ida is "as innocent as the new-born babe. (Each is guilty of original sin but does not know it.)"31 She is cut off from Rose and Pinkie by her ignorance of their theological vocabulary, and her efforts to talk with them are doomed to failure: "it was as if she were in a strange country: the typical Englishwoman abroad. She hadn't even got a phrase book. She was as far from either of them as she was from Hell—or Heaven."32

Puzzled and frightened by Ida's persistence, Pinkie decides to marry Rose in order to keep her from disclosing what she knows of events on the day of Hale's death. Considerations of strategy have already resulted in his capitulation to alcohol, leaving him with the feeling that he has suffered a loss of integrity. When, in preparation for his marriage

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28Ibid., p. 47. 29Ibid., p. 292. 30Ibid.

to Rose, he attempts to remedy his lack of experience in the sexual act by seducing Spicer's girl, he becomes "conscious for a moment of his enormous ambitions under the shadow of the hideous and commonplace act," and he recoils from the willing girl in fear and horror. It is only a few days later that Pinkie and Rose are married, and there is no doubt some validity in Kunkel's argument that the suddenness with which Pinkie conquers his aversion to sex is a weakness in the novel, that the "psychological block is overcome too easily." It must be remembered, however, that Greene has prepared for this development not only by emphasizing Pinkie's sense that Rose fulfills and completes him but also by the constant suggestion that Pinkie's decision to murder Hale set him upon a path which led inevitably to the events which followed. At any rate, "the marriage of Pinkie and Rose is the central incident in the book. It symbolizes their fundamental 'sympathy' and isolates their Catholic view of the world from the commonsense view of Ida." Both are convinced that their civil marriage is a mortal sin, and they share a sort of bravado in their mutual willingness to be damned. It should be noted, also, that both of them regard their marriage as the decisive step into adulthood. Pinkie "saw himself now as a full-grown man for whom the angels wept," and when Rose finds her new situation strange

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or frightening, she bolsters her courage with the thought that "she was married. She was a woman." 37

Immediately after the brutal consummation of the marriage, Pinkie is momentarily touched by "a faint feeling of tenderness... for his partner in the act," 38 but that feeling is soon swallowed by a more powerful emotion, a renewed sense of pride and energy. "Now it was as if he was damned already and there was nothing more to fear ever again... He felt an invincible energy—he hadn't lost vitality upstairs, he'd gained it. What he had lost was a fear." 39 Although released from fear of damnation, however, Pinkie is still concerned for his temporal safety, and when he discovers that Rose has lied to him about the fact that Ida had visited her, his trust in Rose is shaken, and he begins to plan her death. It occurs to him that her professed devotion to him might be exploited, that she might be willing to enter into a suicide pact with him. When he tentatively suggests the idea to her, with the assurance that this desperate course of action probably will not be necessary, she reluctantly agrees.

Ida continues to harass the two, and Pinkie decides to go ahead with his plan to drive Rose to a secluded spot, persuade her to kill herself, and then to delay his own suicide until he is "prevented" from taking his own life by his friend Dallow, who is expected to follow the trail Pinkie has carefully blazed by announcing the route he plans to take.

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to parking-lot attendants and a waiter.

As Pinkie and Rose drove into the country, stopping on the way at a hotel bar, images and influences from Pinkie's childhood crowd in upon him, reinforcing his determination to destroy Rose. A waiter at the bar is a former schoolmate of Pinkie's, and his presence brings back the memory of "a whole smoky childhood." It is interesting to note here the very effective use of a device commented upon by Kenneth Allott and Miriam Farris, who have said that in the books of this period, the "increased interest in childhood is reflected in the fabric of Greene's fiction by more frequent use of places, events, and memories important in his personal experience." In scattered passages in the travel books, details from Greene's childhood are revealed, and these details reappear as memories or attitudes of characters in the novels. One example of this technique is the use of the idea of "something outside that has got to come in." Greene used this phrase in *Journey Without Maps* to describe his earliest dreams, in which the presence outside was simply formless power, menacing because of its strength rather than because it was evil. In *Brighton Rock*, the idea reappears, but now the presence is identified as "pity" or "tenderness": as Pinkie urges Rose toward death, "he had a sense that somewhere, like a beggar

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40 Ibid., p. 334.
41 Allott and Farris, p. 119.
outside a shuttered house, tenderness stirred, but he was bound in a habit of hate." Later, as they resume their drive in the rain, an enormous emotion beat on him: it was like something outside trying to get in, the pressure of gigantic wings against the glass. ... He withstood it, with all the bitter force of the school bench, the cement playground, the St. Pancras waiting room, Dallow's and Judy's secret lust, and the cold unhappy moment at the pier.

Rose, too, is struggling with a good temptation; in spite of her determination to be damned with Pinkie and her fear that if she refuses to kill herself now she will forfeit "her chance of being damned too, of showing Them they couldn't pick and choose," she continues to hope that something will happen to make her suicide unnecessary. As she sits alone in the car on a lonely country road with the pistol Pinkie has handed her, she is haunted by moral maxims remembered from sermons and instructions heard in childhood which provide the orthodox answer to her dilemma; she must save her own soul first; then, if Pinkie is damned, she can "plead for him at the throne of God." It seems to Rose that accepting this solution would constitute a betrayal, a failure of love, but the voice is persistent. "If it was a guardian angel speaking to her now, he spoke like a devil--he tempted her to virtue like a sin."

Rose's hesitation on the brink of suicide saves her life, for Ida arrives with Dallow and a policeman. Pinkie, who had waited outside the car for Rose to shoot herself, attempts to defend himself with a bottle of vitriol, but the liquid flies back into his face and blinds him. He runs screaming over a cliff to his death in the sea.

Ida is well satisfied with the outcome of the affair; she congratulates herself for saving Rose's life and for bringing a murderer to justice. Rose, however, is left bewildered, possibly pregnant, and remorseful over her failure to accompany Pinkie into the Hell which she is sure awaits him. A priest reminds her that she cannot understand the "appalling . . . strangeness of the mercy of God" and urges her to "hope and pray" that Pinkie's love for her was genuine and that he may be redeemed by it. Rose is comforted by this thought and remembers that she may have proof of Pinkie's love: on their wedding day, Pinkie had, at her insistence, shut himself into a booth on Brighton Pier and made a recording of his voice; although Rose has had no opportunity to hear the record, Pinkie had told her that he recorded a loving message. What he really said, however, was "God damn you, you little bitch, why can't you go back home for ever and let me be?" The novel ends as Rose walks toward Pinkie's room to recover and play the record, and Lewis has said that "the implied denouement of Brighton Rock is

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47 Ibid., p. 357. 48 Ibid., p. 257.
as disagreeable as anything in modern fiction."

There seems to be no doubt that Rose will eventually win salvation, and it seems equally certain that Pinkie is damned; "they were both doomed in their own way." In arousing sympathy for Pinkie by pointing to his sordid childhood, Greene does not lose sight of the necessity for maintaining a delicate balance between the forces of environmental determination and free will. Allott and Farris feel that he succeeds in maintaining this balance:

Even Pinkie in *Brighton Rock* is not so completely determined by the accidents of his birth and his childhood in Nelson Place that he does not feel the tidal-pull of goodness at times, particularly on the final death ride. Rose, too, is there in the novel to show that Nelson Place can breed something very different from Pinkie's perverse egotism, in fact to show that real choices are made by the individual and that the determining force of environment is not compulsive.  

As the novel builds toward its climax in Pinkie's death, his immaturity is emphasized by insistent use of images of children and childhood; there is a touch of sentimentality in the repeated references to Pinkie's "breaking childish voice," his face "like a child's, badgered, confused, betrayed," his memory of "a cracked bell ringing, a child weeping under the cane." Even as he races toward the cliff, he is

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compared to "a schoolboy flying in panic and pain."\(^{55}\) Although we may sympathize with Pinkie because of his youth and because he has been denied "his glimpse of Heaven,"\(^{56}\) we cannot forget that he was willing to sacrifice Rose, to condemn her to an eternity of pain in order to guarantee his temporal safety. Rose points out, later, that "he knew what he was about. He was a Catholic too,"\(^{57}\) and his willful refusal to cooperate with grace leaves us persuaded that "there can be no doubt, finally, about the damnation of Pinkie Brown: except the enormous doubt that, according to Greene, must attend our every human judgment and prediction."\(^{58}\)

The conflict between Ida and Pinkie is representative of the conflict between religion and the secular, between a world where men's actions have significant consequences and one where coincidence and accident hold sway. The significance of the struggle is diminished somewhat, however, by Greene's failure to grant to Ida any shred of dignity. She is perhaps the least sympathetically drawn of all Greene's characters; no effort is made to explain her actions by referring to her childhood, and the question of her salvation does not vitally concern the reader; her complete absorption in the superficial, the sentimental, the superstitious, and the secular deprives her of spiritual status.

\(^{55}\) Ibid., p. 352. \(^{56}\) Ibid., p. 331. \(^{57}\) Ibid., p. 357.

\(^{58}\) Lewis, p. 248.
The implication is that Pinkie, although he is wicked, is superior to Ida because he has faced the issue of damnation and has made a choice for which he may be held responsible. It is further implied that in spite of his choice, God's grace is available to him and he may yet be saved. Hope for his salvation is strengthened by the idea that God is merciful and may be expected to consider the forces and pressures to which Pinkie was subjected.
CHAPTER VI

FROM SENTIMENT TO SUICIDE

Although there are obvious and enormous differences between Pinkie and Henry Scobie, the protagonist of *The Heart of the Matter*, they also resemble each other in several significant ways. Perhaps the most striking similarity between Pinkie and Scobie is the fact that both long for "peace" above anything else, and both recognize emotional entanglement with other human beings as the greatest threat to that peace. Pinkie ruthlessly suppresses any stirrings of tenderness or pity in himself in order to avoid entanglement; Scobie, although driven by his image of himself as "the responsible man" to make a dogged effort to arrange for the happiness of those in his care, is constantly aware that he would be better satisfied with his life if he were alone. Scobie's illusions are just as dangerous as Pinkie's because Scobie clings to them with the same desperate tenacity, and Pinkie's efforts to realize his dream of controlling vast power as an emperor of crime are no less destructive, finally, than Scobie's attempts to usurp God's authority in order to protect his charges from pain or unpleasantness.

Evelyn Waugh has said that "Scobie is the complement of Pinkie. Both believe in damnation and both believe themselves damned. Both
die in mortal sin as defined by moral theologians. Both Pinkie and Scobie have the feeling that they are driven along the paths they follow by forces over which they have no control, and both express their disbelief in the possibility of happiness.

The greatest superficial difference between them, of course, is the fact that Pinkie is a gangster and Scobie a policeman with a reputation for such absolute rectitude that his superior affectionately calls him "Scobie the Just." By the end of The Heart of the Matter, however, Scobie has been driven to betrayal of his official position, adultery, possible complicity in the murder of a faithful servant, and suicide. The reader must deal with the paradoxical notion that Scobie's defection is the result of his overdeveloped sense of pity and responsibility, and that it is the suppression of similar feelings which leads to Pinkie's damnation.

After fifteen years of faithful service as Assistant Commissioner of Police in Freetown, Sierra Leone, Scobie is passed over for promotion when the Commissioner retires. In an effort to comfort his wife, Louise, who is keenly embarrassed by his failure to win the promotion, Scobie promises to borrow money to send her on a long holiday to South Africa. Reflecting upon the rashness of this pledge, he concludes that

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1 Evelyn Waugh, "Felix Culpa?" The Commonweal, XLVIII (July 16, 1948), 324.
he would still have made the promise even if he could have foreseen all that would have come of it. He had always been prepared to accept the responsibility for his actions, and he had been half aware, too, from the time he made his terrible private vow that she should be happy, how far this action might carry him. Despair is the price one pays for setting oneself an impossible aim.

The next day, Scobie tries to borrow the money from the bank; when he is refused, he is conscious of a sense of shame, a feeling that "he must have failed in some way in manhood." He goes on about his work, however; his task for that morning is the inspection of a Portuguese ship, the Esperança, for concealed industrial diamonds and contraband mail destined for enemy territory. It is here that he takes his first step toward disaster. He finds a letter concealed in the captain's cabin; regulations require that he report his discovery at once and forward the letter unopened to Military Intelligence authorities, but the captain, explaining that the letter is intended for his daughter and contains no military information, pleads with Scobie not to report the incident, and as he pleads he keeps "wiping his eyes with the back of his hand like a child—an unattractive child, the fat boy of the school." Scobie is unable to resist this appeal, and, although he refuses a bribe offered by the captain, he reads the letter, judges it genuine, and destroys it. He feels his guilt keenly, knowing that he has "joined the ranks of the

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3 Ibid., p. 44.  
4 Ibid., p. 47.
corrupt police officers. They had been corrupted by money, and he had been corrupted by sentiment.\textsuperscript{5} The pattern of Scobie's future transgressions is revealed in this incident: motivated by a feeling which he identifies as pity for someone young and helpless or unattractive, Scobie finds himself "against the strictest orders . . . exercising his own imperfect judgment."\textsuperscript{6}

Several critics have noted that Scobie "has the ingredients of a genuine tragic hero"\textsuperscript{7} and that "his sense of pity, an image of his love for God, assumes the proportions of a tragic flaw,"\textsuperscript{8} but varying estimates have been offered of the degree of Greene's success in making of The Heart of the Matter a tragedy in the classical sense. Lewis feels that he was entirely successful,\textsuperscript{9} but Karl, who agrees that Scobie has many of the characteristics of the tragic hero, argues that the possibility of his finding salvation in spite of his transgressions "dilutes the tragic vision."\textsuperscript{10} An unusually high degree of uncertainty surrounds the question of Greene's intention in the portrait of Scobie, and "critical estimates of his character have run the gamut. . . . In judgments which mock consistency we hear him called a saint and a murderer, a self-sacrificing Catholic and a bad Catholic—in fact almost any pair of contraries

\textsuperscript{5}Ibid., p. 55.  \textsuperscript{6}Ibid., p. 53.  \textsuperscript{7}Lewis, p. 261.  
\textsuperscript{8}DeVitis, p. 102.  \textsuperscript{9}Lewis, p. 242.  \textsuperscript{10}Karl, p. 97.
that can be imagined." Part of the confusion surrounding Scobie is undoubtedly due to a peculiarity in Greene's use of the point of view in this novel. Although Allott and Farris recognize that most of the action is seen through Scobie's eyes, they point out that there is an occasional shift to the point of view of Wilson, a government agent posing as an accountant during his investigation of possible smuggling of commercial diamonds; Allott and Farris note further that some scenes which are supposedly seen through Wilson's eyes "could less strictly be described as observed by an ideal spectator." They point out that by this means the author can "raise or lower our degree of identification with the character who is our window into the action,"

Donat O'Donnell has also commented upon the occasionally indeterminate point of view in The Heart of the Matter. He points out that "one of the difficulties with Scobie is that one can never be sure whether the narration represents what he feels, or what he admits to himself that he feels," and contends that this uncertainty helps to obscure the true nature of Scobie's pity. O'Donnell agrees with other critics that "in the theological sense, the sense of its intent, the story of Scobie is the record of an attempt to imitate Christ. Scobie's 'pity,' his assumption of responsibility for all suffering, is a simulacrum of the Passion."
This scheme depends, however, upon the assumption that Scobie's pity can be equated with Christian charity, and it is difficult to accept charity as the motive for some of Scobie's actions; O'Donnell argues that Scobie is motivated instead by "a deep sympathy with childhood, inimical to maturity."\(^\text{16}\) Even Scobie's sense of responsibility is spurious, since it results from a compulsion to reduce those around him to the status of dependent children so that "he can be for them the adult he is so conspicuously dressed to resemble."\(^\text{17}\)

Philip Stratford has reported that in a private conversation with him, Greene spoke of Scobie "as an example of a character 'that one had loved too much,'"\(^\text{18}\) and Greene's special feeling for Scobie leads to a degree of irresolution in the presentation of the motives attributed to him. By leaving the point of view uncertain at several critical points, Greene makes it impossible for the reader to distinguish between Scobie's real motives and the rationalizations produced by his desperate efforts to retain his image of himself as a responsible adult.

A few days after the Esperanca incident, Scobie is dispatched to a neighboring district to investigate the suicide of Pemberton, the police commissioner there. He is accompanied on his night-long journey through the jungle by Ali, a steward who has served him faithfully

\(^{16}\text{Ibid.}, \ p. \ 87. \quad ^{17}\text{Ibid.}, \ p. \ 86. \quad ^{18}\text{Stratford, p. 237.}\)
for fifteen years and for whom he has particular affection. Scobie sleeps fitfully in the police van; he dreams at first of "perfect happiness and freedom. He was walking through a wide cool meadow with Ali at his heels: there was nobody else in his dream, and Ali never spoke."¹⁹ Later dreams are less pleasant; variations of the figure 200, the sum he needs for Louise's passage to South Africa, run through his head, and he is guiltily conscious during his periods of wakefulness that, in spite of the discomfort of the lurching truck, he is content to be traveling with Ali in execution of his duty: "if he had felt younger, if there had been no problem of 200 020 002, how happy he would have felt."²⁰

Scobie's investigation at Bamba discloses that Pemberton, a very young man, had hanged himself because he was hopelessly in debt to Yusef, a Syrian trader suspected by the authorities of diamond smuggling.
Pemberton's suicide note reminds Scobie of "a letter from school excusing a bad report,"²¹ and when Scobie looks at the body, he has the feeling that he is "looking at a child in a night-shirt quietly asleep."²² When Father Clay, the priest at Bamba, begins to explain the Church's position on suicide, Scobie interrupts him to say, "even the Church can't teach me that God doesn't pity the young."²³

¹⁹ Greene, The Heart of the Matter, p. 82. ²⁰ Ibid., p. 84.
²¹ Ibid., p. 89. ²² Ibid., p. 83. ²³ Ibid., p. 89.
Scobie is stricken with fever at Bamba, and as he tosses in a restless sleep, he dreams again: in this dream, "Pemberton and Louise were obscurely linked," and he himself is somehow identified with Pemberton. After a visit from Yusef, who admires Scobie because of his integrity and tries to win his friendship by offering him a loan, Scobie sleeps again. This time, he dreams that he contemplates his own suicide but rejects the idea because of the Church's position on the matter.

O'Donnell reasons that it is Scobie's immediate identification with the childish Pemberton which makes the situation so strongly affecting for him:

This boy had refused to accept responsibility at all: he had killed himself rather than grow up. On him, that is on Scobie himself as he might have been—on Scobie as he will be—the priest prepares to pronounce the ultimate censure. But Scobie interposes "pity." And the image of his hanged self is already in his dream not only himself but the present overt object of his "pity," Louise. And it will become the ultimate object and source of all "pity," Christ himself.

Scobie returns to Freetown reluctantly, knowing that he must tell Louise that he has been unable to raise the money for her trip to South Africa. She accepts the news calmly, tells Scobie not to worry about the matter any longer, and apologizes for having made an unreasonable demand. Scobie, who had expected a scene, is moved by tears by Louise's kindness, and it occurs to him, "as it hadn't occurred for years, that

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she loved him: poor dear, she loved him: she was someone of human stature with her own sense of responsibility, not simply the object of his care and kindness."  

Scobie goes to bed, feeling "oddly unmanned" by this exchange; soon he rises again and goes downstairs to tell Louise that she may go to South Africa. He has suddenly decided to borrow the money from Yusef, although he knows that to do so can result only in trouble.

O'Donnell's theory is helpful in analysis of this scene, for without it Scobie's actions are puzzling. Scobie attributes his sudden decision to pity for Louise, but it now seems important to ask why he should respond with pity in this situation. Louise has released him from a promise which he cannot keep without sacrificing his professional integrity, and she seems willing to make an effort to bear her disappointment bravely. Would not gratitude—or even relief—be a more reasonable reaction than pity? Scobie is incapable of responding reasonably, however, for "pitying others is necessary to Scobie in order that he may play his part as a grown-up." When Louise shows signs of maturity or independence, Scobie must act quickly to return her to a state of dependence. He knows the dangers inherent in accepting a loan from the unscrupulous Yusef, but he is willing to take the risk in order to protect

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27 Ibid., p. 98.  
28 O'Donnell, p. 86.
his threatened manhood. On the day of Louise's departure, she and Scobie attend Mass together, and Scobie thinks, "I've prayed for peace, and now I'm getting it. It's terrible the way prayer is answered. It had better be good, I've paid a high enough price for it."29

As Book Two opens, Scobie is at Pende, on the border between Sierra Leone and French Guinea, awaiting the arrival of a group of survivors from a torpedoed English ship. They had drifted for forty days in open boats before their rescue by a French ship, and all are suffering from exposure and exhaustion. There are two children among the survivors, one of them too weak to live, as well as a nineteen-year-old woman, Helen Rolt, whose husband of four weeks was lost when the ship sank. Scobie is deeply affected by the plight of these children, and Allott and Farris have pointed out that here Greene raises explicitly for the first time in his fiction "the problem of reconciling the existence of suffering with an omnipotent and merciful providence... His objection in round terms would be to the paradox of a creature more compassionate than its Creator."30 Scobie finds it incomprehensible that a child should have been allowed to survive the long weeks in the boat only to die after rescue, but he finds it impossible to believe in a "God who was not human enough to love what he had created."31

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29 Greene, The Heart of the Matter, p. 100.
30 Allott and Farris, p. 217.
In the evening, Scobie is drawn irresistibly to the temporary hospital set up for the survivors, and before he can protest, he is left to watch over the dying child for a few minutes while the nurse attends to some other duties. He thinks of his dead daughter, Caroline, and as the child before him struggles for breath, Scobie begins to pray:

"Father, look after her. Give her peace... Take away my peace forever, but give her peace." 32

Those who choose to regard Scobie as a saint find the strongest support for their position in this passage. There is every indication that Scobie himself is convinced of the sincerity of this prayer; he has already expressed his belief in the efficacy of prayer, and he is thoroughly convinced that he is capable of this degree of unselfishness. It is interesting to discover that Greene himself believes, or did believe, in Scobie's unselfishness. Lewis has quoted from a letter written by Greene to Marcel More, a French Christian existentialist:

Obviously one did have in mind that when he offered up his peace for the child it was genuine prayer and had the results that followed. I always believe that such prayers, though obviously a God would not fulfill them to the limit of robbing him of a peace forever, are answered up to the point as a kind of test of a man's sincerity and to see whether in fact the offer was merely based on emotion. 33

This passage will serve also to answer an objection of Evelyn Waugh's,

32 Ibid., p. 130. 33 Lewis, p. 262.
who has said that "the idea of willing my own damnation for the love of God is either a very loose poetical expression or a mad blasphemy, for the God who accepted that sacrifice could be neither just nor lovable."

Whatever the final decision about the theological implications of the matter, the child dies, and Scobie's situation deteriorates rapidly thereafter.

Allott and Farris have asserted that the key to "the mode in which Greene's preoccupation with childhood acts in *The Heart of the Matter*" may be found in Scobie's "irrational guilt at having failed to suffer enough directly for his daughter's death." As he watches over the dying child at Pende, Scobie remembers that "he had been in Africa when his own child died. He had always thanked God that he had missed that. It seemed that after all one never really missed a thing. To be a human being one had to drink the cup." It is true that Scobie's thoughts turn to Caroline on several other occasions, but it seems more reasonable to regard his feeling for her as an aspect of his subconscious identification with children than as the basis of that preoccupation.

During a blackout one evening soon after his return home, Scobie notices a light showing from one of the Nissen huts nearby. As he walks the two hundred yards or so to warn the occupant to cover the light,

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34 Waugh, p. 324. 35 Allott and Farris, p. 237.
he experiences an unusual sensation of peace: "it seemed to Scobie later that this was the ultimate border he had reached in happiness; being in darkness, alone, with the rain falling, without love or pity." When he reaches the hut, he discovers that Helen Rolt, the young widow from the shipwreck, has been released from the hospital and is living there. In an effort to comfort her in her loneliness, Scobie encourages her to talk; as she chatters eagerly about her school days, Scobie is struck by her youth, her innocence, and her absolute lack of preparation for the situation in which she finds herself. Helen is grateful for his obviously genuine interest in the details of her childhood, and both are conscious of an immense sense of security: "they were friends who could never be anything else but friends." When Scobie leaves her that evening, he has a feeling of "extraordinary happiness, but this he would not remember as happiness, as he would remember setting out in the darkness, in the rain, alone."

Scobie's involvement with Yusef is now beginning to prove troublesome; he is interrogated by the commissioner of police and a representative of the military intelligence agency on the source of his information about a small package of diamonds which was discovered in the possession of Yusef's rival, Tallitt. Scobie confesses that Yusef provided the clue which led to the discovery of the diamonds, and the mere fact

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38 Ibid., p. 142. 39 Ibid., p. 148. 40 Ibid.
that he is on speaking terms with Yusef is enough to produce some sus-
picion that Scobie has accepted bribes from Yusef. Although Scobie man-
ages to convince the investigating officers that he is innocent of any
transgression, he is unnerved by the interview, and he decides to call
upon Yusef to tell him that their relationship is formally ended.

On his way to Yusef’s office, however, he encounters a cable
censor named Harris, and the brief episode which follows, although
it seems to be a digression, provides support for O’Donnell’s extremely
interesting suggestion that Harris and another minor character, Wilson,
hibit characteristics which “are necessary to Scobie and would complete
him as a credible person. They are projected on the simplified and sor-
did personalities of Harris and Wilson for one purpose: the sanctifi-
cation of Scobie.” 41 Harris has been described by O’Donnell as "a case
of arrested development, a melancholy, middle-aged, minor-public-
school boy, full of ugly hates.” 42 He is more pathetic than obnoxious
in this scene, however, as he excitedly announces his discovery that he
and Wilson attended the same school—Downham—and that his name is
included in a list of alumni with whom the school authorities are trying
to establish contact. He insists that Scobie read the draft of the letter
he is writing in response to the plea for information about his whereabouts
and appears to feel some affection for the school, although he confesses

41 O’Donnell, p. 78. 42 Ibid., p. 65.
that it was not a very good school and that he was unhappy there. Scobie says "consolingly, 'I didn't much care for school myself'" and manages to escape from Harris, who is absorbed in his speculation about whether Wilson was happy at Downham.

In a later scene, Wilson reveals that he cared as little for school as Harris and Scobie; he shares with them "the loyalty we all feel to unhappiness—the sense that that is where we really belong." O'Donnell isolates "Wilson's duplicity, his romanticism, his melancholy lust, above all his self-pity" as the traits which would make Scobie a convincing character were he allowed to display them.

Scobie calls on Helen Rolt again, and although her youth and innocence, her childishness, are emphasized, and Scobie's feelings toward her are described as "sadness and affection and enormous pity," this visit ends in a sexual episode. Scobie immediately realizes that this act of love will have terrible consequences, for "he had sworn to preserve Louise's happiness, and now he had accepted another and contradictory responsibility." He feels that he has been betrayed by "an enemy who works in terms of friendship, trust, and pity."

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47 Ibid., p. 175. 48 Ibid., p. 173.
Less than a month later, Helen has already taken on some of Louise's more unpleasant aspects in Scobie's eyes; she has learned to nag and to whine. She complains about his constant caution, and in spite of his efforts to comfort and console her, she tells him to leave her for good. It occurs to him "how much easier life might be if he took her at her word," but he finds it impossible to abandon her to an uncertain future. In order to clear himself of the charge that his caution springs from cowardice rather than concern for her reputation, he writes a compromising letter which he slips beneath her door. When he visits her again to patch up their quarrel and learns that she did not find the letter, he can only hope that it did not fall into unfriendly hands.

To his worry over the letter is added the news that Louise is on her way home. Tortured and confused by the contradictory responsibilities he has assumed, Scobie thinks longingly of death and peace; he considers and rejects the possibility of suicide, but his reflections on the subject lead him to this startling conclusion: "Christ had not been murdered: you couldn't murder God: Christ had killed himself: he had hanged himself on the cross as surely as Pemberton from the picture rail."\(^{50}\)

The next evening Scobie and Helen attend the same dinner party, and when he sees her there, he is startled by her attractiveness and poise;

\(^{49}\)Ibid., p. 195. \(^{50}\)Ibid., p. 207.
he wonders if he would ever have loved her if she had looked like that at their first meeting, for he is well aware of his preference for the helpless and the unattractive. Upon hearing from Scobie the unsettling news of Louise's expected return, Helen pleads a headache and leaves the party before him; when he reaches his home, Scobie finds a letter from her releasing him from all of his promises to her. His reading of this letter is interrupted by Yusef, who reveals that he has possession of Scobie's indiscreet letter to Helen and threatens to have it handed to Louise as she lands unless Scobie helps him smuggle a package of diamonds out of the country. Scobie reluctantly agrees.

It should be noted that Scobie finds the childish misspellings in Helen's letter much more affecting than the mature and generous offer to release him from his promises to her which the letter was intended to convey. Once more he refuses to acknowledge the adult status of one of his charges, preferring to recognize only her childish aspects.

Book Three opens with Louise's return; as Scobie greets her, he reflects upon his complicated situation and upon his feelings for Helen and Louise. He reaches a new boundary in self-knowledge when he wonders, "Do I, in my heart of hearts, love either of them, or is it only this automatic terrible pity that goes out to any human need—and makes it worse? Any victim demands allegiance." 51

51 Ibid., p. 227.
Scobie is deeply troubled by Louise's suggestion that he accompany her to Mass the next day, although he does not guess that she has been told of his affair with Helen and that the suggestion is a test. He finds an opportunity to call on Helen, and he tries to explain to her that taking Communion without having confessed his sins and received absolution will result in his damnation; he is annoyed by her inability to recognize the gravity of his problem, but he is fair enough to see the logic in her argument that if he really believed in Hell he would not have entered into an adulterous relationship with her in the first place. The only answer he can give is that "against all the teaching of the Church, one has the conviction that love--any kind of love--does deserve a bit of mercy."\(^52\)

By pretending illness and the need for brandy, Scobie delays for a few days the necessity for the sacrilegious Communion, but eventually he finds it impossible to avoid the issue any longer without arousing Louise's suspicions. He goes to Confession, although he has no hope that the priest will be able to show him a way out of his dilemma, and he prays for a miracle, "O God, convince me, help me, convince me. Make me feel that I am more important than that child." It was not Helen's face he saw as he prayed but the dying child who called him "Father": a face in a photograph staring from the dressing-table: the face of a black girl of twelve a sailor had raped and killed glaring blindly up at him in a yellow paraffin light. "Make me put my own soul first. Give me trust in your mercy to the one I abandon."\(^53\)

\(^{52}\)Ibid., p. 231. \(^{53}\)Ibid., pp. 243-44.
Because Scobie finds it impossible to promise that he will avoid seeing Helen, the priest in the Confessional is unable to offer him absolution, but Scobie decides to take Communion anyway, in order to clear himself of suspicion in Louise's eyes. As he waits with Louise in the church during Mass, he reinforces his resolve with thoughts of his position:

"I am the Deputy Commissioner of Police: a hundred men serve under me: I am the responsible man. It is my job to look after the others. I am conditioned to serve. . . . I am the responsible man." As the consecrated wafer is placed upon his tongue, he makes "one last attempt at prayer, 'O God, I offer up my damnation to you. Take it. Use it for them.'"

Helen is unreasonable and cruelly sarcastic when Scobie calls on her again, but Scobie, remembering her generous letter, makes allowances for her in terms which could easily be applied to his own situation, so that he seems to be pleading his own case as well as hers:

Human beings couldn't be heroic all the time: those who surrendered everything--for God or love--must be allowed some time in thought to take back their surrender. So many had never committed the heroic act however rashly. It was the act that counted.

Helen does succeed in making him angry, however, by refusing to recognize or acknowledge that he has chosen to accept damnation rather than abandon her.

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54 Ibid., p. 248. 55 Ibid., p. 250. 56 Ibid., p. 257.
The knowledge that he himself has proved corruptible weakens Scobie's sense of trust in others, and he begins to suspect that Ali is spying on him. Scobie is drawn to Yusef, who has frequently expressed his wish to help Scobie in some way, and decides to visit him late one evening. On the way to Yusef's office, he encounters Wilson, who confesses that he is in love with Louise, criticizes Scobie for his unfaithfulness to her, and announces confidently that he would be able to make her happy. The ingenuousness of this claim at first touches Scobie, who remembers his own earlier confidence in his ability to arrange for Louise's happiness, but then "an irritation took him against the gangling romantic figure . . . who was so ignorant and yet knew so much." 57 He stalks away from Wilson and enters Yusef's office.

Yusef listens sympathetically to Scobie's recital of the reasons for his fear that Ali is no longer trustworthy and promises to determine whether the steward can be trusted. Scobie is "touched by uneasiness as though he had accidentally set in motion a powerful machine he couldn't control," 58 but at Yusef's request he hands over a token--his broken rosary--which will induce Ali to follow Yusef's servant to the wharf. When Yusef repeats his promise to take care of everything, "a kind of nursery peace" 59 descends upon Scobie; throughout the rest of the night, he makes only feeble efforts to find out what Yusef plans for Ali, and

57 Ibid., p. 268. 58 Ibid., p. 271. 59 Ibid.
when the boy is found murdered on the wharf at dawn, Scobie's grief seems real enough, but it is difficult to judge the degree of his surprise. O'Donnell argues that there is in the presentation of this incident "a curious kind of ambiguity: not the enriching ambiguity in which possible meanings are superimposed and intermingle, but an ambiguity of irresolution." Although it is strongly implied that Scobie guessed Yusef's plan, he tells Helen the next day that he doubted that Yusef intended Ali's death; "the reader is left to choose whichever interpretation he prefers, for this is not, or is only to a small extent, a psychological ambiguity in Scobie: it is an ambiguity in the facts as presented." This uncertainty about the degree of Scobie's implication in the murder of his trusted servant makes it possible for the reader to accept the paradox that pity can lead a compassionate man to commit a pitiless act, and it is this sort of double-dealing that leads O'Donnell to claim that the narrative emits "a constant hum of tender approbation for Scobie" no matter what he does.

Shocked by Ali's death, Scobie resolves to break off his affair and return to Louise and the Church, but when he sees Helen, she looks defeated and unhappy, and Scobie realizes that "Ali's death may also be the last straw for her." She has made a decision of her own and

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60 O'Donnell, p. 81. 61 Ibid., p. 82. 62 Ibid., p. 66. 63 Allott and Farris, p. 235.
announces to Scobie that they must part before she causes any further difficulties for him; his neurotic need to see her as a dependent being again prevents his accepting a sensible solution to his dilemma, however, and "Helen's despairing courage . . . destroys his own determination to end their relationship."64 Concluding that only through his death can the problem be resolved, he decides to proceed with his planned suicide.

By faking the symptoms of angina, he obtains a prescription for a potent sedative and also prepares Louise and Helen for his death. In order to avoid a suspicious shortage in the number of pills remaining after his death, he decides that he will have to wait for several days after obtaining the prescription in order to accumulate a fatal dose. He stops in at the church one day during this period and engages in a conversation with God, who tries to persuade him to reconsider his decision to commit suicide. Scobie, who begins the conversation by acknowledging that he is guilty of deliberately choosing to inflict suffering upon God in order to protect Helen and Louise from pain, since the suffering of God is less real to him than theirs, says that "this was what human love had done to him--it had robbed him of love for eternity."65 He insists that it is impossible for him to trust God to see that the two

64 Ibid., p. 236.
women do not suffer unduly, and tries to transfer some of the guilt to God: "If you made me, you made this feeling of responsibility that I've always carried about like a sack of bricks. . . . I can't shift my responsibility to you. If I could, I would be someone else." Allott and Farris have noted that this petulant tone is unusual for Scobie, since "ordinarily and more typically, he accepts entire responsibility for his actions."  

Like Rose in *Brighton Rock*, Scobie is tempted to abandon his plan and save himself, but thoughts of the suffering to be endured by Helen, by Louise, and by God as long as he is alive drive him to swallow the tablets late one evening. His efforts to make it appear that his death is due to natural causes are unsuccessful, however, and Louise, convinced that Scobie is damned, appeals to Father Rank for comfort. His response is reminiscent of that of the priest in *Brighton Rock*, and *The Heart of the Matter* ends on the same note of uncertainty as the earlier novel: Father Rank reminds Louise that the mercy of God is still available to Scobie and that "the Church knows all the rules. But it doesn't know what goes on in a single human heart."  

Like Pinkie and Andrews, Scobie longs for the peace which he could know if he were alone, but his primary emotional commitment is to

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the helpless and unattractive children with whom he identifies, and
his efforts to prevent their suffering are motivated by a disguised self-
pity. Scobie believes that he is motivated by love, or at least by unself-
ishness and pity, and in his thoughts he sometimes draws vague paral-
lels between himself and Christ. These are elements of pride and of
romanticism in Scobie's Godlike assumption of responsibility for the
happiness of his charges; although he thinks of his suicide as a sacri-
ifice aimed at preventing suffering in those for whom he is responsible,
it really reflects a final surrender of hope, a rejection of a world in
which pain is inevitable.

Although there can be no doubt that Scobie's pity is to be regarded
as a destructive force, the reader is urged to bestow upon Scobie an-
other kind of pity—one which seeks to understand his transgression and
forgive it, as we are led to believe that God will forgive it. The battle
between the religious and the secular, represented in *Brighton Rock*
by the conflict between Pinkie and Ida, is fought out within Scobie, whose
adult self, allied with the Church in a concern with the question of sal-
vation and damnation, struggles for ascendancy over his childish self,
which considers only temporal happiness.
CHAPTER VII

FROM IMAGINATION TO SAINTHOOD

The Power and the Glory, which appeared in 1940, has been called "one of Greene's finest achievements, possibly his masterpiece,"¹ and even Sean O'Faolain, who has expressed impatience with Greene's pessimism, regards it as "one of the finest novels of our time in any language."² The background of this novel is the persecution of the Catholic Church in Mexico during the nineteen-thirties--Greene had reported on this situation in an earlier nonfiction book, The Lawless Roads--and its hero is a nameless priest, the last representative of the Church in the state of Tabasco. His antagonist is a lieutenant of police, also nameless, whose official duty and personal pleasure it is to apprehend the priest; devoted to the elimination of everything which might remind him of his miserable childhood, the lieutenant is "a rebel against all the misery and injustice and unhappiness he associates with the rule of a greedy Church and its insistence on the unimportance of the human lot in this world,"³ and he relishes the thought of tracking down and destroying the last agent of the old order. The book is episodic

¹ Karl, p. 99. ² O'Faolain, p. 66. ³ Lewis, p. 253.
in construction, consisting of a series of encounters between the priest and various unrelated people he meets as he travels about in his efforts to evade his pursuers, and of short scenes which provide additional information about these people. A pattern is imposed upon this episodic structure by three widely spaced meetings of the priest and the lieutenant, who eventually acknowledge each other as good men.

Lewis, who has noted that *Brighton Rock*, *The Power and the Glory*, and *The Heart of the Matter* form a sort of trilogy, points out that the figures of criminal, priest, and policeman appear in all three novels, and they tend more and more to resemble each other. The three figures represent, of course, the shifting and interwoven attributes of the Greenean man: a being capable of imitating both Christ and Judas: a person who is at once the pursuer and the man pursued; a creature with the splendid potentiality either of damnation or salvation.

Some of the similarities between Scobie and Pinkie were commented on earlier; it is interesting also to remember Pinkie's forsaken dreams of the priesthood. Like Pinkie, the priest in *The Power and the Glory* is an outlaw; not only does he break the laws of the state by performing his priestly duties, but he has broken the laws of the Church as well. He is an alcoholic, a "whiskey priest," and he has a child, a little girl of seven, the result of "fear and despair and half a bottle of brandy and the sense of loneliness." The kinship of the priest

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and the American killer, James Calver, whose picture faces him in
the police station and through whom he is finally betrayed, is made ex-
plicit in the passage describing the priest’s unsuccessful effort to per-
suade the Yankee to confess and receive absolution for his sins before
his death: the priest reflects that, "at the best, it was only one crimi-
nal trying to aid the escape of another--whichever way you looked, there
wasn't much merit in either of them." 7

The priest shares Scobie's willingness and ability to sympathize
with others, to imagine and to share their sufferings; he also resembles
Scobie (and Rose, as well) in his willingness to sacrifice his own sal-
vation for the sake of another. It is the plight of his illegitimate daugh-
ter, Brigida, who seems even at the age of seven to be irrevocably set
toward damnation, which wrings from him the prayer, "O God, give me
any kind of death--without contrition, in a state of sin--only save this
child." 8

Part of the distinction of The Power and the Glory lies in the fact
that "the representative of the secular interpretation of life, the non-
religious, humanist view, is treated with a dignity and seriousness com-
parable to that accorded to the representative of the religious." 9 In-
deed, the lieutenant of police is superior in many ways to the priest;

7Ibid., p. 255. 8Ibid., p. 111. 9Allen, p. 207.
he is upright, ascetic, and sincerely devoted to the realization of his Utopian ideals; he is deeply concerned about the future of the children of his state, and he shares with the priest the notion that a child like Brigida "is worth more than the Pope in Rome." The difference between their points of view is that the policeman is concerned only with the material well-being of the people he serves, whereas the priest urges them to believe that their sufferings in this life are inevitable and perhaps even essential to their eventual salvation. The lieutenant (who sleeps, incidentally, in a room "as comfortless as a prison or a monastic cell," is willing to make any sacrifice in order to further the aims of the revolutionists; it is soon made plain, however, that the basis of his dedication is his memory of a childhood made wretched by poverty. Kunkel has identified some of the important points of resemblance between the lieutenant and Pinkie: "they share a feeling of childhood betrayal, enmity with God, soured virginity, neurotic pride, an ascetic life, apostasy, and passion for destruction." Greene's special concern with children and with childhood is particularly active in this novel; the adult characters frequently recall events and experiences from their childhoods and reflect upon the influence of these experiences on the course of their lives, and children participate

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10 Greene, The Power and the Glory, p. 102. 11 Ibid., p. 32.
12 Kunkel, p. 115.
directly in the action of the novel more often than they do in Greene's other novels. Greene's "sense of the vulnerability and sensitivity of childhood seems to have led him in this novel to use a number of variations on the theme 'a little child shall lead them," and on several occasions children serve to direct the priest toward his destiny.

An expatriate English dentist, Mr. Tench, introduces the priest in the first chapter; they talk and have a drink together while waiting for the arrival of a river steamer which could carry the priest to safety in the next state. A little boy appeals to the priest to attend his dying mother, and the priest abandons his plan to escape and follows the child into the interior, feeling like "the King of a West African tribe, the slave of his people, who may not even lie down in case the winds should fail." Various other characters are observed briefly before the priest appears again. The reader learns of the police lieutenant's unhappy childhood and of his determination to erase from his state everything which could remind him of "how it had once appeared to a miserable child." Luis, a boy of fourteen, listens impatiently and skepticaly as his pious mother reads aloud to him and his little sisters from one of a long series of romanticized biographies of Mexican martyrs; the whiskey priest has been a guest in their home, and Luis is aware that

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13 Allott and Farris, p. 100.
15 Ibid., p. 33.
priests may have imperfections. Padre Jose, an old priest who has
mixed his housekeeper and accepted a government pension in order to avoid execution, sits in his courtyard seeking a few moments of peace and some respite from the demands of his domineering wife and from the cruel taunts of the children who ridicule him all through the day. Captain Fellows, returning to his banana plantation after a trip to the city, sings merrily as he steers his boat up the river; he is "borne up on a big tide of boyish joy—doing a man's job, the heart of the wild: he felt no responsibility for anyone."¹⁶

Captain Fellows's daughter, Coral, displays the sad precocity typical of Greene's fictional children; her outstanding characteristic is her willingness to "accept any responsibility, even that of vengeance, without a second thought."¹⁷ There is an irritating vagueness about her fate—although when the book ends, it is clear that she is dead, the cause of her death is uncertain—but the reader gains a strong sense of her presence. When she is introduced, she is standing in a doorway watching her parents "with a look of immense responsibility."¹⁸ Coral has allowed the priest to hide in the barn and has lied skillfully and stubbornly to the police lieutenant to prevent his searching the plantation; when Captain Fellows arrives, Coral knows that she needs his aid in order to get the lieutenant to leave without searching the place, and she

¹⁶Ibid., p. 41. ¹⁷Ibid., p. 56. ¹⁸Ibid., p. 44.
operates cautiously and methodically to enlist it. She does not entrust him with the knowledge of the priest's presence until the lieutenant has gone, and she tells him then gently and obliquely, making it clear at the same time that she has involved herself deeply in the matter by lying to the officer; she counters all of her father's objections logically and gains permission for the priest to stay in the barn until after dark. She takes food to the priest, and as he eats she questions him "with the cold curiosity of a child" about the exact degree of his danger and about his motives for staying in the state. He explains that he will be shot if he is captured, that he is afraid of death, but that he stays because it is his duty to stay. Coral offers to shelter him at any time and begins to make elaborate plans for secret meetings and for messages in Morse code. The quality of "romantic Stevensonian adventure" evoked by these plans has been identified as the "only really childlike quality she has been able to retain." It occurs to Captain Fellows, during his conversation with the lieutenant, that his daughter has "more in common with the policeman than with himself." Coral, like the lieutenant, has rejected fairy tales and religion--"at the age of ten she had discarded both relentlessly" in

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19 Ibid., p. 52. 20 Zabel, p. 283.
21 Allott and Farris, p. 179.
22 Greene, The Power and the Glory, p. 46. 23 Ibid., p. 71.
favor of an energetic and straightforward approach to practical problems. Coral and the lieutenant resemble each other still more, however, in their sense of duty and in their lack of compassion for human frailty: Coral's "candour made allowances for nobody," 24 and the lieutenant "felt no sympathy at all with the weakness of the flesh" 25 or with any other weakness.

After leaving the Fellowses' plantation, the priest makes his way to the village where Brigida, his six-year-old illegitimate daughter, lives with her mother, Maria. Brigida is a less interesting character than Coral, probably because she never transcends her symbolic role; it is impossible to forget that she is the priest's "evil actual daughter," 26 standing in contrast to Coral, his "good spiritual daughter." 27 Part of the difficulty with Brigida is that although she is hardly old enough to behave wickedly, she must be made to appear entirely evil; this is accomplished, with marginal success, by emphasizing her "ugly maturity," 28 her ability to smile insincerely in order to gain favor, and the expression in her eyes, which makes her look "as if a grown woman was there before her time, making her plans, aware of far too much." 29 Just why Brigida's maturity is more ugly than Coral's, or why her insincere

24 Ibid., p. 48.  25 Ibid., p. 34.  26 Lewis, p. 251.
27 Ibid.  28 Greene, The Power and the Glory, p. 93.
29 Ibid., p. 91.
smiles are more reprehensible than Coral's lies, is not explained; even her mother is convinced, however, that "'she'll never be any good for anything . . . she'll go on the way she's begun.'" 30

This is the priest's first visit to the village since Brigida was an infant, and when he sees her again, he is immediately aware of a feeling of responsibility for her; he is aware, too, that he is powerless to protect her from the evil which lies in wait all about her. He reflects that "for years, of course, he had been responsible for souls, but that was different . . . a lighter thing. You could trust God to make allowances, but you couldn't trust smallpox, starvation, men . . . ." 31 The priest prays that the child may be saved and offers up his own salvation in exchange for hers; he is aware, however, even as he utters this prayer, that his willingness to suffer damnation for his own child is a failure of sorts: "one mustn't have human affections--or rather one must love every soul as if it were one's own child. The passion to protect must extend itself over a world--but he felt it tethered and aching like a hobbled animal to the tree trunk" 32 against which Brigida leans.

The priest stays in the village overnight and celebrates Mass early the next morning; the service is interrupted by a warning that the police are approaching. The priest joins all the other villagers when they assemble in the square as the lieutenant commands, but

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30 Ibid., p. 108. 31 Ibid., p. 96. 32 Ibid., p. 112.
the lieutenant fails to recognize him, and none of the villagers will betray him, although the lieutenant takes a hostage and threatens to shoot him if it is discovered that the priest has taken refuge there. Greatly troubled by the knowledge that his presence in any village endangers the lives of all the inhabitants, the priest heads first for Carmen, the city of his birth.

In a village on the road to Carmen, the priest stops to ask directions of a man lying in a hammock near the road; this man, a lazy and unscrupulous mestizo, or half-breed, guesses the priest’s identity and falls in beside him, planning to accompany him to Carmen, betray him to the police, and collect a reward. The priest manages to outwit the man and escape, but the mestizo capitalizes on the encounter by going to the police in the city and convincing them that he has seen the priest and can easily identify him; the police offer to supply him with food, beer, and a place to sleep if he will accompany them on their expeditions in search of the fugitive.

Convinced that the capital city is the only place he can go without endangering innocent people, the priest makes his way there. While trying to buy some wine for sacramental purposes and brandy for his own use, the priest is arrested and charged with possession of contraband, for all alcoholic beverages except the beer manufactured and distributed by the state are illegal under the new regime. The priest spends
one night in a crowded, filthy communal cell, and in the course of the long night he reveals his identity to his wretched fellow prisoners. No one is willing to betray him, however, and he is released the next morning after a hearing before the lieutenant, who again fails to recognize him even as he stands beneath his picture, which hangs on the wall of police headquarters opposite that of James Galver, an American gangster who, like the priest, is the object of an intensive manhunt.

After his release from prison, the priest returns to the banana plantation, hoping that Coral will be able to help him. He finds the Fellowses' house deserted, however, and he walks on in the direction of the mountains which separate Tabasco from the next state, knowing that his only chance for survival lies in crossing the mountains before the rains begin, since in fear of police reprisal no one in Tabasco will dare to offer him food or shelter. Not far from the banana station, he stumbles upon a group of Indian huts, deserted except for a woman and her three-year-old child, who has been wounded in a gun battle between the American gangster and the police. When the child dies, the mother indicates her desire to take him to a church for burial, and the priest, although he thinks it improbable that they can complete such a journey, agrees to accompany her.

The Indian woman ties her dead child to her back and leads the priest over a difficult path through the mountains; at the end of the
second day of their journey, they suddenly come upon a group of crude crosses in a clearing beside the path. At the sight of these crosses, the first Christian symbols he has seen openly displayed for over five years, the priest realizes that they have crossed the border into the next state. Leaving her child at the foot of one of the crosses, the Indian woman departs suddenly, and the priest presses on in the direction of safety. He manages to reach the home of Mr. and Miss Lehr, a brother and sister who found their way to Mexico by way of America after leaving Germany in their youth because of Mr. Lehr's opposition to compulsory military service.

The Lehrs exemplify a type which appears in many of Greene's later books—the innocent idealist; they have "combined to drive out savagery by simply ignoring anything that conflicted with an ordinary German-American homestead."33 Mr. Lehr's refusal to acknowledge the gravity of the religious persecutions in Tabasco makes him maddeningly insensitive; he speaks disapprovingly to the destitute and desperate priest of the wealth of the churches and the Catholic concern with "inessentials" such as fasting and eating fish on Friday. Miss Lehr is more considerate of the priest's feelings than her brother, but the degree of her detachment from the world is illustrated by a story she tells the priest. She says that once while waiting for a train in Pittsburgh she

33 Ibid., p. 220.
bought a newspaper called Police News: "I never knew such dreadful things were printed. Of course, I didn't read more than a few lines. I think it was the most dreadful thing that's ever happened to me. It . . . well, it opened my eyes." 34

In spite of their shortcomings, the Lehrs are basically kind, and they treat the priest very well during the few days he remains with them. As his strength returns, he makes plans for the journey to Las Casas, a city only a few days away where the Church has not been driven underground. Although he longs for the opportunity to confess his sins and receive absolution, he finds it difficult to believe in the possibility of peace; he is "aware of how happy he might have been if he had left nothing behind him across the range except a few bad memories," 35 but thoughts of his daughter constantly intrude upon him. On the morning of the priest's scheduled departure for Las Casas, the mestizo appears at the Lehre's gate with the wildly improbable story that the American gangster is near death from wounds inflicted by the police and that the gangster wants a priest to hear his confession. The priest suspects a trap and guesses that the police will be waiting for him on the other side of the border, but he decides to go anyway; the decision to return to the region where his duty—and his daughter—await him brings him a sense of relief, and he begins to feel cheerful and relaxed.

The American gangster, Calver, is still alive when the priest reaches him, but he is intent upon violence and revenge rather than repentance, and the priest is unable to arouse in him any sign of contrition; Calver dies reaching for his knife, and the priest, frustrated by this final failure of his ministry, finds it "horribly unfair that his uselessness should return with his danger."\textsuperscript{36}

The priest was correct, of course, in assuming that the police would be waiting for him; the lieutenant, who had considerately allowed him to talk with Calver in privacy, enters the hut soon after Calver's death and places the priest under arrest. During the several days required for the trip back to the capital city, where the priest is tried and sentenced to death, the priest and the lieutenant have several long conversations, during which each recognizes that the other is sincerely concerned about the people for whom he is responsible. The policeman believes that the elimination of poverty will result in the elimination of suffering, and the priest is convinced that suffering is inevitable and perhaps even essential for eventual salvation. The priest's statement that it is unwise to give a poor man power, that it is "better to let him die in dirt and wake in heaven—so long as we don't push his face in the dirt,"\textsuperscript{37} is "an answer that is obviously insufficient to the secular reader and to the lieutenant whose own brand of expedience is insufficient as

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\textsuperscript{36}Ibid., p. 252. \textsuperscript{37}Ibid., p. 268.
well."\textsuperscript{38} The lieutenant responds to the pain and misery he sees around him by trying to correct the cause of the suffering rather than by trying to reason that pain may be a good thing; in the presence of pain, says the lieutenant, "I want to let my heart speak."\textsuperscript{39} The priest reminds him that "the heart's an untrustworthy beast"\textsuperscript{40} and points out that his efforts to relieve pain have already resulted in injustice and cruelty, for he has shot three hostages in his efforts to track down the priest.

The priest is left alone in his cell on the night before his execution. Like Pirkie and Scobie, he is convinced that he is damned, and like Scobie and Rose, he offers up his damnation for the sake of another; he prays that his daughter may be saved. Even as he prays, however, he feels that his concern for Brigida represents a failure of sorts:

This was the love he should have felt for every soul in the world: all the fear and the wish to save concentrated unjustly on the one child. . . . He thought: This is what I should feel all the time for everyone, and he tried to turn his brain away towards the half-caste, the lieutenant, even a dentist he had once sat with for a few minutes, the child at the banana station, calling up a long succession of faces, pushing at his attention as if it were a heavy door which wouldn't budge. For those were all in danger too.\textsuperscript{41}

In spite of his fear, he sleeps for a few minutes, and he dreams of Coral Fellows; she watches him with a "stern, responsible, and interested gaze"\textsuperscript{42} as she serves him wine before an altar from which

\textsuperscript{38} Karl, p. 105. \textsuperscript{39} Greene, The Power and the Glory, p. 268.
\textsuperscript{40} Ibid. \textsuperscript{41} Ibid., pp. 280-281. \textsuperscript{42} Ibid., p. 283.
he feels excluded. When he awakens, the priest is conscious of acute disappointment at having accomplished so little; he reflects that "it would have been quite easy to have been a saint. It would only have needed a little self-restraint and a little courage." 43

The final section of the novel consists of three scenes which provide brief glimpses of Captain and Mrs. Fellows, Dr. Tench, and Luis, suggesting that the lives of all of these people were profoundly affected by their contact with the priest. The last scene, in which Luis indicates his disenchantment with the lieutenant by the fervor with which he greets a new priest who seeks sanctuary in his home, has been severely criticized. Karl says that this scene is "as false as the priest's former agony is real," 44 and Allott and Farris, while defending the right of a novelist to make "his characters and their experiences symbolic of his vision of life," 45 feel that Luis's behaviour "seems to be contrived to establish the enduring nature of the values represented by the priest" 46 and that the value of the book as a work of art is greatly reduced by this obviously symbolic episode.

In defense of the scene, it should be noted that even Allott and Farris find that "Luis is as convincing when he rejects the sentimentalism and responds to the heroics in the story of Juan the Martyr as

43 Ibid., p. 284.  44 Karl, p. 102.

45 Allott and Farris, p. 191.  46 Ibid.
when with half-reluctant fascination he fingers the lieutenant's gun."47

Atkins points out, also, that the ease with which Luis is swayed from admiration of the power represented by the lieutenant to the martyred priest is entirely realistic, and that "he hasn't yet learnt to admire a faith, only the men who die for a faith."48

Most of Greene's major ideas about childhood are expressed in The Power and the Glory. The inevitable corruption of childhood innocence hangs over Coral Fellows and Brigida alike; Mr. Tench, the dentist, identifies the "moment of crisis" which decided his future. The lieutenant of police demonstrates that "if the childhood fails the whole life may follow it into hell."49 He is unable to shake off the memory of the betrayal and deprivation he suffered in childhood, and he is devoted to the task of destroying the world he knew as a child and replacing it with something nearer his heart's desire. Despite his conviction that his motives are unselfish, it is possible to argue that the lieutenant's loyalty to his cause is really a loyalty to his own childhood. The priest succeeds at last in conquering his pride, and his defeat in this world is of no significance in the face of his triumph over immaturity and selfishness, which is expressed in his willing self-sacrifice.

47 Ibid.  48 Atkins, p. 127.  49 Ibid., p. 119.
CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION: FROM ORIGINAL SIN TO SALVATION

The works of Graham Greene have been profoundly affected by his convictions about the nature of childhood and about the difficulties and rewards of passing from childhood to maturity. In Greene's view, the process of maturation involves loss of the comparative innocence of childhood, the surrender of romantic illusions about man's nature and about the possibility of happiness in this world, and suppression of egocentricity in favor of sympathy and compassion. Maturity is difficult to achieve and promises only disappointment, pain, and probable betrayal, but those who retreat from it, those who refuse to commit themselves to reality, commit a great evil.

The children who appear in Greene's fiction are usually physically unattractive; they are generally unhappy and apprehensive, and whatever happiness they do enjoy springs from their lack of responsibility and from their inability to imagine the sufferings of other people. The comparative innocence of children lies in their attitude toward evil rather than in ignorance of its existence; the childish, romantic view is that evil will certainly be defeated; maturity comes with the realization that the outcome of the battle between good and evil in the souls of
men is always in question.

V. S. Pritchett has noted in Greene's work "an odd and frequent suggestion that romantic literature misled us."¹ All of Greene's fiction is colored by the sense of betrayal he experienced when he was forced to recognize the enormous differences between the real world and the world described in the adventure novels to which he was attracted as a boy, and his heroes are often shown in the painful process of giving up their romantic notion that man is perfectible by his own efforts.

Greene found in the Catholic doctrines of original sin and grace an explanation of the generally disappointing behavior of men and of the occasional acts of generosity and self-sacrifice of which they are capable. Although Greene has described himself as "a Catholic with an intellectual if not an emotional belief in Catholic dogma,"² Kathleen Nott has pointed out that the idea of original sin has great psychological appeal "because it is inseparably associated with the consoling idea of an all-wise and all-powerful Father, an authority which, though it may certainly punish, can also forgive, and it is therefore a profound security."³

The possibility of forgiveness is especially important for Greene,

²Greene, Journey Without Maps, p. 5. ³Nott, p. 313.
who has devoted much of his creative effort to the examination of the question posed by Henry Scobie: "If one knew . . . the facts, would one have to feel pity even for the planets if one reached what they called the heart of the matter." Greene tries to enlist sympathy for his characters by providing the facts, by analyzing the background and circumstances of their actions and choices, and in spite of his apparent efforts to portray his characters in the process of making genuine choices with significant consequences, he seems to be emotionally committed to the reduction of individual responsibility. Stratford reports a conversation in which "Greene admitted that he found it hard to believe in the reality of damnation" and this reluctance or inability to reconcile the concept of eternal damnation with the idea of a merciful and compassionate God leads to a degree of confusion about his views on the general question of moral responsibility.

In its ideal form, Greene's compulsion to analysis, his insistence upon pointing out the factors of birth and background which shape the attitudes and actions of his characters, might be identified as Christian charity, "the Christ-like identification of the author with his characters which operates to complicate any simple inclination towards judgment."  

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5 Stratford, p. 237. 6 Ibid., pp. 220-221.
The implication of the idea that "what happens to us in our early years largely governs what we become" is that if one knew the facts about any person, even one as obviously wicked as Pinkie Brown, it would be possible to pity him. Greene's further insistence upon the "efficacy and sufficiency of grace as the final test of value in character and conduct" has the effect of denying real significance to the moral choices made by his characters.

All of Greene's novels invite the reader to speculate upon the ultimate fate of the protagonist, and Herbert Haber has expressed the underlying question in this way: "Granted that there is a God and a metaphysical existence beyond the one that is admitted to our limited faculties, is there no rational relationship between the two worlds: is not earthly goodness rewarded by heavenly sanctity and worldly wickedness by damnation?"

The sinfulness of Greene's characters springs from their efforts to prolong their childhoods. Although the idea of sin is not emphasized in The Man Within, it is Francis Andrews's childish attitudes and impulses which result in pain and death. Arthur Rowe, in The Ministry of Fear, murders his wife because of his unwillingness to accept the

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7 Allott and Farris, p. 119. 8 Zabel, p. 291.
reality of suffering. Scobie, in The Heart of the Matter, accepts responsibility for the happiness of women, children, or anyone else who appeals to his special feeling for the weak and helpless. He is guilty of self-pity, for his sympathy with weakness and helplessness is really disguised sympathy with his own childhood, and of pride and self-deception, for to the end of his life he tries to preserve the illusion that he acts unselfishly and that he has the Godlike power and wisdom necessary to arrange for the happiness of those in his care. Greene seems to imply that, when compared with these failures in attitude, the murders and adulteries committed by his characters are of minor importance. The story of the whiskey priest in The Power and the Glory serves to make the same point in another way, for it is precisely by his attitude that the priest is redeemed. His faults are many and serious, but he is aware of and humbled by them, and he has learned to feel pity for everyone he meets.

While showing his characters on the border between childhood and maturity, Greene tries to describe the forces which influence their choices between childish egocentricity and mature willingness to suffer with and for others. This effort is in conscious imitation of Henry James, of whom Greene has said that "it is in the final justice of his pity, the completeness of an analysis which enabled him to pity the most shabby, the most corrupt of his human actors, that he ranks with the greatest
of creative writers." His emphasis on mercy, his eagerness to inspire pity in the reader, has left him open to the charge that he is guilty of "the kind of presumption or arrogance that has become a feature of recent religious fiction: namely, that neither conduct nor morals are of final importance to the believer." He has been faithful, however, to his conviction that it is the possibility of inspiring pity, and of exercising it, which lends significance to the creative act.

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