# GRAHAM GREENE'S MAIN HERO – LONELY INDIVIDUAL FIGHTING TO FIND PEACE AND COMFORT IN THE WORLD THAT HAS LOST ITS ABSOLUTE VALUES AND TRADITIONS

## Contents

## Introduction

Graham Greene wrote in Ways of Escape: *"The main characters in a novel must necessarily have some kinship to the author, they come out of his body as a child comes from the womb, then the umbilical cord is cut, and they grow into independence. The more the author knows of his own character the more he can distance himself from his invented characters and the more room they have to grow in.*" According to the statement readers should know some facts about the writer to understand his books.

Evelyn Waugh wrote about him: "*Mr. Greene is a story-teller of genius. Born in another age, he would still be spinning yarns...His technical mastery has never been better manifested than in his statement of the scene - the sweat and infection, the ill-built town which is beautiful for a few minutes at sundown, the brothel where all men are equal, the vultures...the snobbery of the second-class public schools, the law which all can evade, the ever-present haunting underworld of gossip, spying, bribery, violence and betrayal...the affinity to the film is everywhere apparent. It is the camera's eye which moves from the hotel balcony to the street below, picks out the policeman, follows him to his office, moves about the room from the handcuffs on the wall to the broken rosary in the drawer, recording significant detail. It is the modern way of telling a story."*..[1]

William Golding said: "*Graham Greene was in a class by himself...He will be read and remembered as the ultimate twentieth-century chronicler of consciousness and anxiety"*[2].

According to Paul Theroux, Graham Greene was "*just such a subversive hero, self-consciously seeking out (in Browning's words) "the dangerous edge of things," who lived everywhere and nowhere, a man whom few people ever knew. "One of fate's fugitives," in the words of his biographer, Greene published two memoirs, "A Sort of Life" (1971) and "Ways of Escape" (1980), which are notoriously reticent, not to say misleading. Though he was more hospitable to being interviewed than he admitted, he allowed only the highest standard of interviewer. V. S. Pritchett, Anthony Burgess and V. S. Naipaul all made their way to Greene's home in Antibes to genuflect to the master and subsequently say nice things about him in Sunday newspapers. Greene must have known that such men would not spill the beans about his irregular life or ask awkward questions, though Burgess famously teased him for being a God-botherer and a poseur, and was banished*"[3].

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[1] Sherry Norman, The Life of Graham Greene, Penguin Books, London 2000
[2] http://books.guardian.co.uk/authors/author/0,5917,-78,00.html
[3] Theroux P., Damned Old Graham Greene, The New York Times, October 17, 2004

Needleess to say, Graham Greene is one of the greatest novelists of the 20th century. Hs success is connected with the protagonist he created - lonely individual fighting to find peace and comfort in the  world that has lost its absolute values and traditions. The person similar to each reader.

## Chapter 1. Graham Greene - biographical context

*"The more the author knows of his own character the more he can distance himself from his invented characters and the more room they have to grow in."(Graham Greene)* [4]

Henry Graham Greene was born on October 2, 1904 to Charles Henry and Marion Raymond Greene. His birthplace was Berkhamsted, Hertfordshire. "The future novelist was born into three small worlds - the town of Berkhamsted, one hour north of London by train, the family home attached to the school, and Berkhamsted School itself- the last being a world into which he was gradually absorbed. His father, who was thirty-nine, was second master at the school and housemaster of St John's house, and his mother, then thirty-two, apart from looking after her family, was responsible for the catering at St John's where Graham Greene was born and where, at first, he lay, 'Behind the tight pupils that have never opened on the world of chairs and walls"[5]

On Sunday 13 November, five weeks later, the child was baptised in the school Chapel by the headmaster, Dr Thomas Charles Fry, he whom the school's historian was to call 'the magnificent' and whom the baby he baptised was, much later, to describe as 'my father's sinister, sadistic predecessor'.[6] The baby was called Henry after his father and Graham after his uncle Sir Graham Greene and Graham Balfour, a descendant of Robert Louis Stevenson, his mother being first cousin to Stevenson. The small group assembled for the baptism must have been rather lost in the Chapel. One of the baby's godfathers was Colonel Henry Wright. Colonel Wright's wife, the baby's great-aunt Maud, had introduced Robert Louis Stevenson to his 'first great love, Mrs. Sitwell'.[7] The Wrights lived at II Belgrave Road, and on visits to London the Greene family usually had lunch with them. The other godfather was a Mr. Herbert, who was to be housemaster of St John's at Berkhamsted when Henry Graham Greene was a boarder there.

The fourth of six children, Greene was a shy and sensitive youth. He wasn't the only person who succeded in the family. Charles (his father) was the Head Master of Berkhamsted School. Charles Greene had a brilliant intellect. Originally he had intended to become a barrister. However, he found that he had liking for teaching and he decided to stay at Berkhamsted. Often his history lessons were less lessons than comments on the crack-up of Liberalism. Marion (Graham's mother) was a first cousin of the author Robert Louis

[4] http://books.guardian.co.uk/authors/author/0,5917,-78,00.html
[5] Sherry N., The Life of Graham Greene, p.p.3
[6] Muggeridge Malcolm, Like it Was, Selected Diaries, ed. John Bright-Holmes, Collins, 1981, p. 374
[7] A Sort of Life, Penguin edition, 1974, p. 43.

Stevenson. Graham's brothers were succesful , too. Hugh went on to become a Director General of the BBC, and Raymond, an accomplished mountaineer involved in the 1931 Kamet and 1933 Everest expeditions[8].

In August 1914, during the summer holidays, Graham Greene was staying at his uncle Graham's home, Harston House. Graham Greene, aged nine, remembered during that holiday being sent out with a basket of freshly picked apples from Harston's orchard for some weary soldiers resting on Harston Green. It was a gesture in the tradition of charity from the big houses to the needy in Victorian and Edwardian times (though George V was then on the throne), but it had deeper significance. Those soldiers were being sent to a bloody war but their young benefactor was to begin his own kind of warfare in the following months which eventually was to destroy his idealism and bring him to a state of 'knowing' - an experience which, set against the devastation of Europe during the next four years and its effect on Berkhamsted School, was minor, though not to the boy with the apples.

The period of the war was a testing time for Graham's father also - perhaps his most testing time. Many of his best masters were lost to the war machine and he managed the school by bringing people out of retirement and, according to Ben Greene, taking on women teachers, many of them 'extraordinarily tough and frightening', and a certain number of drunken curates. He had to recruit staff wherever he could find them and he held the school together with difficulty, but the greatest pain came from the deaths of boys he had only so recently taught.

H. G. Greene was educated at the Berkhamstead School where he had a pretty torrid time in Berkhamstead, having to balance all the time between his father and his schoolmates. At Berkhamsted School, St John's was a boarders' house, opened by Dr Fry in 1890 — rather different from an ordinary home. Yet, although both his parents were involved in school life, the ethos and pressures of St John's, or for that matter of the school itself, do not seem to have impinged on his early consciousness; but of course he was not quite six years old when the family left St John's. His earliest memory, if he has it right, dates from his second week of life, perhaps an understandable exaggeration given the circumstances in which he wrote about it, but obviously a very early and possible memory. To his child's imagination, his home was 'England', the garden 'France' and to cross over from one to the other was an

[8] Sherry N., The Life of Graham Greene, pp.7

adventure, involving danger and secrecy but also affording the safety of a hiding place and of knowing that home was not far away. Certainly the mould was being formed.

He disliked sports and was often truant from school in order to read adventure stories by authors such as Rider Haggart and R. M. Ballantyne. Hopelessly physically uncoordinated as he was, Graham Greene was in trouble when he entered the senior school at the age of ten and a half and joined the O.T.C. He hated military uniforms and could never learn to put on his puttees neatly — he was unable to tie a necktie until he reached University. Any under-officer of the O.T.C. who had money was allowed to buy specially shaped puttees which looked smart, but Graham did not reach the rank of under-officer, nor would his father have given him permission to buy them, as this might have been construed as a special dispensation and Charles Greene would never have tolerated anything that smacked of nepotism: the Greene boys - Raymond, Graham and Hugh - could receive worse treatment than others but never better. Unlike Raymond who became a senior prefect, head of his house, and was looked up to by other boys, Graham genuinely fumbled. He dreaded parades. He would get out of step forming fours and botch fixing his bayonet. A very sensitive boy, the fact that his physical awkwardness could not be hidden and therefore was obvious to others, filled him with intense shame[9].

These years "had a deep influence on him and helped shape his writing style. The recurring themes of treachery and betrayal in Greene's writing stem from his troubled school years where he was often tormented for being the headmaster's son. After several suicide attempts, Greene left school one day and wrote to his parents that he did not wish to return. This culminated in his being sent to a therapist in London at age fifteen. His analyst, Kenneth Richmond, encouraged him to write and introduced him to his circle of literary friends which included the poet Walter de la Mare.

He studied modern history at Balliol College, Oxford. He wrote in his autobiography that he had spent his university years drunk and debt-ridden. However, it was here that Greene gained experience as an editor at *The Oxford Outlook*; developed an interest in politics after joining the Communist Party (more for amusement than for for principle); and honed his skills at writing, with one novel *Anthony Sant* complete before he graduated.

He wrote quite regularly in Student Magazines, and was an editor of *The Oxford Outlook*. His first work, a collection of apparently forgettable poems, *Babbling April*, was published during his last year at Oxford.

[9] Sherry N., The Life of Graham Greene, pp. 58

After graduating with a B.A. in 1925, Greene was employed as a subeditor at the Nottingham Journal after two abortive positions at other companies. His dislike of Nottingham's seediness manifested in his later novel *Brighton Rock.*

He had a natural talent for writing, and during his three years at Balliol, he published more than sixty poems, stories, articles and reviews, most of which appeared in the student magazine *Oxford Outlook* and in the *Weekly Westminster Gazette*. In 1926 he converted to Roman Catholicism, later explaining that "*I hand to find a religion... to measure my evil against*." When critics started to study the religious faith in his work, Greene complained that he hated the term 'Catholic novelist'. He was baptized a Catholic in February 1926. In March, he returned to London, as the Sub Editor for *The Times*. He worked for *The Times* of London (1926-30), and for the *Spectator*, where he was a film critic and a literary editor until 1940.

In October 1927 he married Vivien Dayrell-Browning. He had met her in early '25, after she had written correcting a small mistake ( Greene had talked of '*worshipping*' the Virgin Mary, and Vivienne felt he ought to have used the word 'venerated' ) in one of his *Outlook* articles. He had a daughter, Lucy Caroline, and a son Francis. During this time, he wrote a political novel, *The Episode*, which was rejected by publishers.

Greene had always been interested in Catholicism, and when he married Vivienne Dayrell Browning, a Catholic convert, he converted as well. Yet nothing—love, religion, foreign travel, intrigue—could ever quiet some deep restlessness within Greene. It was not mere youthful bravado that made him write to Vivienne during their courtship: "The only thing worth doing at the moment seems to be to go and get killed somehow in an exciting manner." He had played Russian roulette at home after his psychoanalysis and perhaps later at Oxford"[10].

Greene wasn't a good family man. He wrote four children's books, but he once stated in a letter: *"How I dislike children*." He had some relationships, after the collapse of his marriage, among others with the Swedish actress Anita Björk in the 1950s, whose husband, also a writer Stig Dagerman had committed suicide. During the 1920s and 1930s Graham had, some sort of relationship with many prostitutes. In 1938 he began an affair with Dorothy Glover. She was a theatre costume designer. They were closely involved with each other[11].

Greene's first novel, *The Man Within*, came out in 1929, to public and critical acclaim. "He finally succeeded. The success of the book led Greene to make a difficult decision: leave his much-loved job at *The Times* and become a self-employed writer. He came

[10] Royal Robert, The (Mis)Guided Dream of Graham Greene First Things, November 1999, p. 16
[11] Sherry N., The Life of Graham Greene, vol. 2, pp. 156

near to reneging this decision with the failure of his next two novels (*The Name of the Action* and *Rumour at Nightfall*). Living on his publisher's advances, he moonlighted as a book reviewer for *The Spectator*. The financial strain made Greene write *Stamboul Train*, an escapist novel that was deliberately intended to please the public"[12].

In 1932 he published two books: *Stamboul Train* and *Orient Express* , which subsequently became a motion picture under the same title. *It's a Battlefield* was published in early 1934. Greene started "travelling extensively in 1934 brief trips to Germany, Latvia and Estonia preceding an arduous journey overland through Liberia, in the company of his cousin Barbara, which was chronicled in *Journey without Maps*. He returned in April 1937; *England made Me*, written before he had left, was published soon after. *A Gun for Sale* came next,in 1936.

In 1935, he added films to his book reviewing work at *The Spectator*. He continued to review films for over a decade, and is widely regarded one of the finest critics of his time, the Shirley Temple fiasco notwithstanding ( His review of a 1937 film, *Wee Willie Winkie*, contained disparaging remarks about Ms. Temple's precocious body and it's alleged exploitation by Hollywood movie moghuls. The review led to a messy lawsuit, and possibly the closing down of *Night and Day*, for which Greene had written the piece )"[13].

Greene visited Mexico in 1938 to report on the religious persecution and brutal anti-clerical purges that began in the late 1920s with President Calles and his socialist revolution. Calles sought to limit foreign influence in the oil industry but succeeded in remaining on good terms with his American neighbours. A number of social reforms, including land redistribution and nationalisation of the oil companies, were instituted by Calles's successor, President Cardenas, during whose time Greene visited Mexico, but the postwar era ushered in increasing American investment and influence in the republic. Greene's insights into the 'phony revolution' and the relationship between the two countries are not unjustified particularly since most governments in Mexico since the Second World War have been fundamentally right wing though less overtly dictatorial than during the interwar period.[14]

"Greene began his world-renowned traveling in part to satisfy his lust for adventure, and in part to seek out material for his writing. A trip to Sweden resulted in *England Made Me*. A exhausting 400-mile trek through the jungles of Liberia not only gave Greene a near

[12] Royal Robert, The (Mis)Guided Dream of Graham Greene First Things, November 1999, p. 16
[13] ibidem
[14] Couto Maria, Graham Greene. On the Frontier, Macmillan Press, London 1998, p.19

brush with death, but provided fodder for *Journey Without Maps*. His journey to Mexico to witness the religious purges in 1938 was described in *The Lawless Roads*. Greene's horror of the Catholic persecution in Mexico led him to write *The Power and the Glory*, arguably the best novel of his career. It was both acclaimed (being the Hawthornden Prize winner in 1941) and condemned (by the Vatican)[15].

During World War II Greene worked "*in a silly useless job*" as he later said, in an intelligence capacity for the Foreign Office in London, directly under Kim Philby, a future defector to the Soviet Union. In August, 1941, Greene joined the SIS, and was assigned to Freetown, Sierra Leone, in December. The job was by and large boring, and Greene livened it up by coming up with some innovative plans to recruit spies; one proposed a travelling brothel and another involved tricking a Left Wing official into escaping form Freetown prison with British agents, letting them cross over into Vichy Territory, and then luring him back to blackmail him into becoming a double agent. Unfortunately he did not obtain approval for these schemes. One mission took Greene to West Africa, but he did not find much excitement in his remote posting - "This is not a government house, and there is no larder: there is also a plague of house-flies which come from the African bush lavatories round the house," he wrote to London. In early 1943, Greene returned to London, to a job in Section V. He was assigned to Counter Intelligence, Portugal, and reported to Kim Philby, who was then in charge of the area. They became good friends - after Philby's defection to the erstwhile USSR, his memoirs, *My Silent War*, contained laudatory references to Greene and Greene wrote it's Introduction"[16].

Greene returned to England in 1942. After the war he travelled widely as a free-lance journalist, and lived long periods in Nice, on the French Riviera, partly for tax reasons. With his anti-American comments, Greene gained access to such Communist leaders as Fidel Castro and Ho Chi Minh, but the English writer Evelyn Waugh, who knew Greene well, assured in a letter to his friend that the author "is a secret agent on our side and all his buttering up of the Russians is 'cover'."

"An interesting sidelight of Greene's tenure in the SIS is the story of 'Garcia'. A double agent in Lisbon, he fed the Germans disinformation, pretending to control a ring of agents all over England, while all he was doing was inventing armed forces movements and operations from maps, guides and standard military references. Garcia was the inspiration for Wormold a character in Our Man in Havana.

[15] Theroux Paul, Damned Old Graham Greene, The New York Times, Ostober 17, 2004
[16] Sherry N., The Life of Graham Greene, pp. 336

Greene left the Service in May 1944, and joined the Political Warfare Executive, editing a literary magazine intended for France. After the War, Greene was commissioned to write a film treatment based on Vienna, a city occupied by the Four Powers at the time. He collaborated with Carol Reed in writing The Third Man, a skillful tale of deception and drug trafficking. The film went on to win the First Prize at Cannes in 1949". [17]

In the 1950s Graham Greene's emphasis switched from religion to politics. He was in Kenya reporting the Mau Mau upraising in 1953, and in 1956 he spent a few weeks in Poland (Stalinist that time), trying to help a musician to escape to the West. "In Ways of Escape Greene told a story about the Other, who called himself Graham Greene, but whose real name was perhaps John Skinner or Meredith de Varg. In the 1950s the Other lost his passport in India, and was sentenced to two years rigorous imprisonment. A decade later he was photographed in a Jamaican paper with "Missus drink", an attractive woman. "Some years ago in Chile, after I had been entertained at lunch by President Allende, a right-wing paper in Santiago announced to its readers that the President had been deceived by an impostor. I found myself shaken by a metaphysical doubt. Had I been the impostor all the time? Was I the other? Was I Skinner? Was it even possible that I might be Meredith de Varg?" *"[18]*

Greene continued the globetrotting until he was physically unable to do so in his later years. He sought out all the world's "trouble spots": Stalinist Poland, Castro's Cuba, Vietnam during the Indochina War, Kenya during the Mau Mau outbreak, and Duvalier's Haiti among others[19].

Although Greene always declared himself to be apolitical as a writer, he enjoyed being politically connected and appearing to be a supporter for the oppressed.

Aside from his exotic trips, Greene also achieved notoriety in his personal life. Greene's financial success as an author enabled him to live very comfortably in London, Antibes, and Capri. He associated with many famous figures of his time: T.S. Eliot, Herbert Read, Evelyn Waugh, Alexander Korda, Ian Fleming, Noel Coward, among others. He had many extra-marital affairs, and confessed he was "a bad husband and a fickle lover", although he never revealed his affairs in his two autobiographies. He separated from his wife in 1948 but they never divorced.

"In a 1987 speech Greene gave in Moscow, he claimed to have observed a new thing: "We are fighting—Roman Catholics are fighting—together with Communists, and working

[17] Theroux Paul, Damned Old Graham Greene, The New York Times, Ostober 17, 2004
[18] Sherry Normah, The Life of Graham Greene, Penguin Books, London 2000
[19] Theroux Paul, Damned Old Graham Greene, The New York Times, Ostober 17, 2004

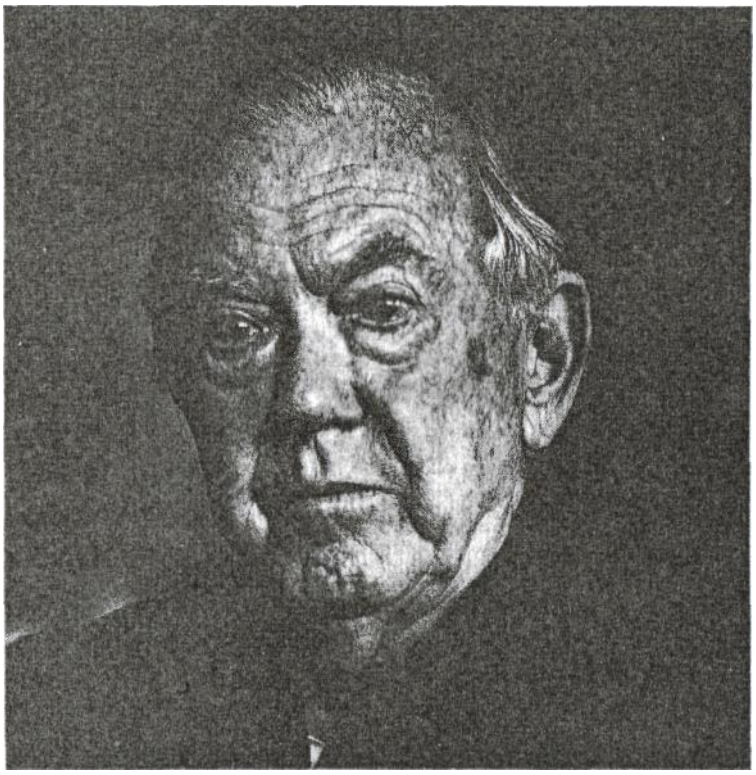
together with Communists. We are fighting together against the Death Squads in El Salvador. We are fighting together against the Contras in Nicaragua. We are fighting together against General Pinochet in Chile." Gorbachev, who was present at this speech, was only two years away from pulling the plug on the Latin Communists, their Catholic sympathizers, and his own USSR. Greene concluded: "I even have a dream, Mr. General Secretary, that perhaps one day before I die, I shall know that there is an Ambassador of the Soviet Union giving good advice at the Vatican."

W. J. West raises the possibility that Greene may have been working as a double agent with British Intelligence all this time, giving the impression of left-wing sympathies for information-gathering purposes. But that seems quite improbable on West's own showing. Just before the re-election of Ronald Reagan in 1984, for example, Greene told a Spanish priest that, if he died, he wanted it known that he would have become a Communist if Reagan were returned to office. Around the same time, Greene told Malcolm Muggeridge that Russia only destroyed the Church's body, while America destroyed its soul. Norman Sherry remarks, "How could his subtle mind engage in such intellectual folly?" [20]

In the end, it's baffling. Greene's insight into the human soul could be as acute as any contemporary's. But his trajectory presents a cautionary tale. Before communism started to break up, Greene had openly admired those Polish Catholics who collaborated with the Communist regime. Such political misjudgments, along with his desire to absolve himself for his own sins, made him unsympathetic to the vision of the human person held up by John Paul II. It comes as no surprise that Greene characterized the Pope's views on sexual matters as "unimaginative and unkind."

[20] Royal Robert, The (Mis)Guided Dream of Graham Greene First Things, November 1999, p. 16

**Photograph 1.** ***Graham Greene***



Massie Alan, The Novel Today. A Critical Guide to the British Novel 1970-1989, Longman, London 1990 , p. 23

Towards the end of his life, Graham Greene lived in Vevey, Switzerland with his companion Yvonne Cloetta. He died there on April 3, 1991.

Greene was a great novelist of a special kind. Unlike many writers in last century, he did not experiment with language, subvert traditional narrative, or choose exotic subjects. He simply used his powerful imagination. It led him to speak of his work as a "guided dream." That imagination—fired, at least during the great middle years, by intense moral and religious perception—made Greene's fiction the best-realized portrayal in its time of the drama of the human soul.

# Chapter II. Modern Period of Literature

## *1. Contemporary British Fiction*

What does it mean contemporary British fiction? For ease of study, literary scholars divide British and American Literature into segments referred to as "periods." While the exact number, dates, and names of these periods vary, the following lists conform to widespread acceptance.

The **Modern Period** applies to British literature written since the beginning of World War I in 1914. The authors of the **Modern Period** have experimented with subject matter, form, and style and have produced achievements in all literary genres. Poets of the period include Yeats, T.S. Eliot, Dylan Thomas etc. Novelists include James Joyce, D.H. Lawrence, Virginia Woolf. Some works of Graham Greene also belong to the period.

Following World War II (1939-1945), the **Postmodern Period** of British Literature developed. *Postmodernism* blends literary genres and styles and attempts to break free of modernist forms. While the British literary scene at the turn of the new millennium is crowded and varied, the authors still fall into the categories of *modernism* and *postmodernism*. However, with the passage of time the Modern era may be reorganized and expanded[21].

Graham Greene, for instance, published his first novel in 1929 and his twenty-fifth in 1988. Anthony Powell's first novel, *Afternoon Men,* appeared in 1931; *The Fisher King in* 1986.

Clearly Greene and Powell arc exceptional examples of longevity and the survival of talent. Death, illness, insanity, liquor, financial failure, disappointment, the malediction of critics, loss of ability, or the decay of ambition, truncate many careers. Nevertheless, in spite of all, a writing life of thirty or forty years is common. Any survey of two decades must at least take note of many writers whose reputation was established long before the commencement of the period under review[22].

[21] Massie Alan, The Novel Today. A Critical Guide to the British Novel 1970-1989, Longman, London 1990, , p. 21

[22] O'Prey Paul, A Reader's Guide to Graham Greene, Thames & Hudson, London 1988,

### *2. Man is nothing except what he makes of himself*

It is one of the central paradoxes of contemporary British fiction that much of it is concerned with other times and other places. During the last thirty years the contemporary has been linked to a sense of endless change, to the rapid turnover of novelties, to the co-modification of artistic experiment; attitudes to the past have been influenced by marketing, by a consumer demand for the retro, by an investment in history reproducible as style. British fiction has reflected this behaviour as mechanically as any other art form, but it has also recovered a quite different sense of direction, an alternative vocation, which is that of the historical novel. Fiction concerned itself with the attempt to understand the individual's relationship to these narratives, with the extent to which individual experience confirmed or denied their meanings[23].

According to John Brannigan this textual equivalent of the experience of *deja vu* is a structural principle of much twentieth-century writing; 'haunting', he says, 'is a constituent element of modernity.' The haunted self embodies a project of denial: it suggests how the construction of civic identity involves the repression of certain aspects of the self, the disavowal of memories that will nonetheless reassert themselves. These are ghosts that can never be exorcized or ignored, since the alternative to being haunted is to deny the history of one's own being. Barker, Swift or Greene allow their work to be haunted by the memory of historical upheavals. For Barker, it's the First World War, for Swift and Greene, the Second. History figures in both *oeuures* largely as trauma that needs to be acknowledged and worked through.

The use of psychological models to account for the pattern and significance of historical events is particularly well suited to the structure of the post-nineteenth-century novel, resulting in the especially compelling fictions of crisis and trauma that characterize the work of Barker, Swift, Ishiguro and Caryl Phillips. An alternative template, in which the organizing tensions of the writing are still primarily psychological in their mode of operation, comes from the cultural historical version of Oedipal conflict[24].

Powel's achievement, unmatched by any contemporary, and indeed unique in the English novel since Henry James, was to render social reality convincing, in a rich expressive prose, while at the same time revealing the inadequacy of any attempt to

[23] Massie Alan, The Novel Today. A Critical Guide to the British Novel 1970-1989, Longman, London 1990, , p. 21

[24] Howe Irving, Politics and the Novel, New Left Books 1961, p. 24.

understand human nature, and the human condition, only in such terms. Adroit in his deployment of factual detail, the accumulation of which makes every page ring true to life, scenes of social, army and business life all being presented with fidelity to common experience, Powell nevertheless, by the vividness of his imaginative perception, bathes the world he has called into being in the golden light of timeless myth. At its simplest level, this is the personal myth — the "vi e w of self-which each of us forms and which, if maintained, enables us to get satisfactorily, or at least tolerably, through life. But at a more profound level all his characters are seen to be enacting certain symbiotic roles in the lives of others, and hence in the reader's imagination also[25].

One of the most difficult of the novelist's tasks is to make those characters whom he has called into being with a few strokes of the pen achieve a semblance of autonomous life; and it is Powel's peculiar and double triumph to have brought this off, while at the same time suggesting to us that we all take on alternative lives in the minds of others, and that indeed the whole of experience may be a dream dreamed by some Great Unknown. The Spanish philosopher Jose Ortega y Gasset asked whether 'human life in its most human dimension was not a work of fiction. Is man a sort of novelist of himself?' This is the experience of Powel's characters, or rather perhaps it is the experience we have when reading of them. He contrives to make them more real than people we know - more real because they are presented with an authority we do not encounter in 'real' life - while reminding us that they are only so because he has imagined them. Like Pirandello, he 'pretends that the familiar parlour is not real as a photograph, but a stage containing many realities'. Yet he never sacrifices common sense. His myth is always an alternative interpretation, not forced on the reader.

Powell has tackled, more effectively than any other writer of our time, the essential problem of the novelist: how to achieve a balance between what he sees out of the window and what goes on in his head. Only those who strike such a balance can convince us that their view of life is both valid and interesting.

He has another attribute, the possession or lack of which is one useful test of a writer's quality: the unmistakable personal voice. The writer who lacks this may have

[25] Howe Irving, Politics and the Novel, New Left Books 1961, p. 24.

many virtues, but is likely to be forgotten because a common voice suggests common observation.

The individual voice is perhaps the only quality which Graham Greene, Iris Murdoch, Muriel Spark and Kingsley Amis share. They may be considered, with Powell, to constitute the senior quintet among post-war novelists who are still writing. All have a body of work to their credit which impressively coherent[26].

*The Honorary Consul* (1973), set in Argentina, deals in subtle and penetrating fashion with the origins and morality of political terrorism. It is his wisest and most tender novel, which may be seen as the culmination of Greene's life's work, but also as going beyond anything else he has written. Its theme is expressed in the epigraph, taken from Hardy: 'All things merge into one another - good into "evil, generosity into justice, religion into politics.' Whereas the lonely and perturbed heroes of earlier Greene experience pity as something corrupting, new, in a sense that Hardy would have recognized, pity is revealed as the emotion which makes life tolerable. There is no condescension in this pity, for Charley Fortnum, the weak and foolish hero who has nevertheless survived, finds himself extending pity to the young wife who has cuckolded him, and knows that the emotion springs from his own sense of unworthiness. So: 'in an affair of this kind it was the right thing to lie. He felt a sense of immense relief. It was as though, after what seemed an interminable time of anxious waiting in the ante-room of death, someone came to him with the good news he had never expected to hear. Someone he loved would survive. He realized that never before had she been as close to him as she was now.'[27]

Pity is the dominant note in *The Human Factor* (1978) also. Superficially this novel of the Secret Service may seem a slighter thing, for m it Greene plays again with genre fiction and employs many of the tricks of sleight of hand that characterize the thriller. But the heart of the novel is of the utmost seriousness: Castle, the hero, is Jed to justified treachery by his experience of pity and love. U is a bleak novel, with an ending that is as miserable as anything Greene wrote. His characters are at the mercy of malign forces as far beyond their understanding as their control; and yet at the end one is left with a conviction of the strength and durability of love and pity.

[26] Howe Irving, Politics and the Novel, New Left Books 1961, p. 24.
[27] Massie Alan, The Novel Today. A Critical Guide to the British Novel 1970-1989, Longman, London 1990, , p. 21

A great writer's achievement is more that the sum of individual novels. A great writer's achievement is more that the sum of individual novels. Greene's is a world where men are heroes without hope continually betrayed to self-destruction by whatever is best in themselves. Profoundly conscious of the fragility of civilization and the corruptibility of the heart, Greene is nevertheless an affirmative writer. It is said that he has been denied the Nobel Prize because certain members of the Swedish Academy do not believe his work is 'of an idealistic tendency', which the conditions of the prize stipulate as a necessary qualification[28]. Yet what can be more idealistic than his affirmation of the value of love and pity in a world given over to fraud and violence?

***2. A belief in situational ethics—no absolute values.***

Graham Greene's early work reveals a search for justice and the moral order in the shifts of political commitments and ideologies. The passions and declamations of political spokesmen like the rites and ritual of religious protagonists are described not for the significance or truth in themselves but to bring out the anguish of the human condition and the permanence of the moral order - inexorable as death. The confrontation between justice and loyalty, cooperation and exploitation, the selfishness that dies and the love that lives -the permanent battlefield between man and his intimate enemy - is described, as it is in every age, in the myths of its time.

*It's a Battlefield* (1934) for instance, presents a dominant political milieu of workers' socialism and *Stamboul Train* (1932) is fuelled by the passions of a leader who believes in the Revolution that will rid governments of their brutalities. In these, as in other novels, faith - political and religious - reveals the plight of the human condition on both sides of the battlefield. 'At its best [ says Irving Howe] 'the political novel generates such intense heat that the ideas it appropriates are melted into its movement and fused with the emotions of its characters.' The early novels are set in a pre-war world, a time of futile hopes and poignant dreams recreated in the way the desire for peace and justice is soon to be trampled by the nemesis of approaching war[29].

Graham Greene's career as a novelist began at a historical time of crisis and social upheaval when, after the First World War, a whole generation matured with a sense of the loss of an ordered world and faced the realities of the 1930s. The years between 1933 and

[28] ibidem
[29] Howe Irving, Politics and the Novel, New Left Books 1961, p. 24.

1937 were a time when 'private lives disintegrated as the enormous battlefield was prepared'.[30] The struggles of that decade form the matrix of the early novels where without indulging in socialist propaganda and overt political debate the narrative unfolds a world of gangsters and saboteurs and their relationship to business wheeler-dealing, revolution, trade unions, armament sales and international spy rings. It is the underside, as it were, of the myth of Empire - the Pax Britannica of progress, development and civilisation – achieved through capitalism and war.

The most important novel of this period is It's a Battlefield which Greene calls his most political novel. It was welcomed by Viewpoint (later Left Review) as a step in the portrayal of revolutionary struggle: 'Graham Greene . . . has some conception of the basis of class struggle which he depicts against a wide and varied social background.'[31] It was on the basis of these early novels that Orwell called Greene 'our first Catholic fellow-traveler'.[32] The shifts in focus between religion and politics and Greene's admirable use of such ambiguities as indeed there are in most men's lives may have baffled his contemporaries and certainly confounded his critics in any attempt to categorise his fiction in the context of a generation of writers committed to taking sides openly.

In his discussion of the work of novelists of this period Richard Johnstone accentuates the importance of belief in relation to their artistic expression. They sought, he says, 'not simply to subsume their personalities and their art to a cause larger than its components but rather to reassert the strength and purpose of the individual through the medium of belief.'[33]

Disloyalty to Catholicism as indeed disloyalty to all isms, helped him to liberate human experience from confines of ideological or theological moulds: 'Loyalty confines us to accepted opinions: loyalty forbids us to comprehend sympathetically our dissident fellows; but disloyalty encourages us to roam experimentally through any dimension of sympathy.'[34] His art as a novelist rests, one suspects, on his understanding of the subleties of human experience. His appreciation of clear-cut systems like Catholicism, Marxism and the missions that sustained Empire contributes to narrative tension and demystification through characters whose lineaments are derived from the systems they represent. However, the characters transcend the limitations of these systems through a realisation of the facts of existence.

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[30] Ibid, p. 21.
[31] Greene G., Ways of Escape , The Bodley Head, 1980, p. 34.
[32] Willis D. A., New Life for the Novel, Viewpoint ,April-June 1984, p. 14; also Samuel Hynes, The Auden Generation, p. 138.
[33] Johnstone Richard, The Will to Believe: Novelists of the Nineteen Thirties, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1984 , p. 3.
[34] Greene Graham, Why Do I Write , p. 47-8.

Greene's search for a moral order cannot be understood by merely looking for answers within Catholicism as expressed in his fiction. For one thing there was little of it in evidence in the early years except in the two novels suppressed by Greene - *The Name of Action* (1930) and *Rumour at Nightfall* (1931). Johnstone, in fact, concludes that the Catholicism of these works contains little that could be seen as a solution for the crisis of Greene's generation:

*The gulf separating the modern Englishman from the consolation of faith is emphasized by Greene's placement of his self-questioning heroes in conventional adventure-story settings - the romantic nineteenth-century Spain of Rumour at Nightfall, and the equally romanticized Palatine Republic of the twenties in The Name of Action. The opposition of scepticism and Catholicism thus corresponds to the opposition of realism and romance, of relevance and irrelevance. Catholicism maintains a shaky presence in the novels by its association with the mysterious and romanticized settings, but by virtue of this association, it also seems to have no connection with the predicament of the modern hero. As Greene began to abandon what may be termed serious romantic fiction, and to concentrate more closely on the reality of the thirties, it became increasingly difficult to maintain even this balance.*[35]

The following analysis of the novels of the early period - *The Man Within* (1929); *The Name of Action* (1930); *Rumour at Nightfall* (1931); *Stamboul Train* (1932);*It's a Battlefield* (1934); *A Gun for Sale* (1936) and *Brighton Rock* (1938) - illustrates the points made above. Brighton Rock traditionally grouped as a 'Catholic' novel is included here for reasons other than purely chronological. The story of Pinkie and Rose is an intense expression of poverty, squalor and petty crime that grips and destroys many lives. It is held together by these realities rather than by their shared belief. The discussion of good and evil, right and wrong, that so overwhelmed critics at the time of its first publication and has coloured most interpretation of Greene's work ever since, develops in relation to the problem of survival in this world.

During almost his entire career Greene had close associations with the cinema. More of his work was translated to film than that of any other major modern novelist, and for four and a half years before the war he reviewed films weekly in *The Spectator* and *Night and Day,* laying claim to be one of the most influential British film critics ever.

He also wrote a number of original screenplays, most notably *The Third Man* and *The Fallen Idol*. However, before these, in the 1940s, he wrote a treatment for a film that was never made. The treatment, called *The Tenth Man,* was finally published in 1985 amid a great

[35] Johnstone R., The Will to Believe, pp. 66-7.

deal of publicity, for Greene himself had forgotten about it and the manuscript came to light only when it was sold to an American publisher by MGM, who owns the rights.

The plot of *The Tenth Man* is complicated and far-fetched. Chavel, a French prisoner-of-war who in normal life is a rich lawyer, is chosen as one of ten men whom the German soldiers will execute as a reprisal for Resistance attacks. Unlike the other nine, Chavel is unable to meet death coolly, and persuades Janvier, a fellow prisoner, to face the firing squad in his place in exchange for his house in the country and all his wealth. Janvier agrees to this bargain in order to provide for his mother and sister and to fulfil a dream of dying a rich man. It is a deal that earns Chavel the hatred and contempt of the other prisoners and after his release he returns, humiliated and destitute, to his estate. There he finds Janvier's Miss Haversham-like mother and his sister Therese, who is full of hatred for Chavel and lives in hope of one day taking revenge on him. He gives his name as 'Charlot' and she employs him as an odd-job man and, ironically, as a lookout for Chavel, for he claims to have known Chavel and she wants someone who will be able to recognize him if he appears so that she can spit in his face. As irony is heaped on irony, a conman arrives at the house claiming to be Chavel and the story ends with the real Chavel, who has fallen in love with Therese, trying to prove to her that he is Chavel, the man she hates, and that the other man is an impostor[36].

Although somewhat sketchily and loosely written, *The Tenth Man* is extremely evocative of certain atmospheres: particularly the mixture of fear and boredom in the prison scenes and the sense of exhaustion and hopelessness of people reeling from the effects of war. It is the story of a whole society of 'reluctant heroes' whose lives are dominated by international politics, a society in which disguise and impersonation are made easy because of the toll taken on everyone's faces by the war: after six years of suffering everyone's passport photograph is out of date. Greene is presenting here a different view of the effect of war on society from the one presented earlier in *The Ministry of Fear*, where even the Blitz is described in almost festive terms (the flares above Rowe came 'sailing slowly, beautifully, down, like clusters of spangles off a Christmas tree') and people walk around with cheerful faces, as if it were a national holiday[37].

Many of Greene's major themes are incorporated into the story in miniature, as it were: betrayal, forgiveness, the moment of weakness or cowardice 'which happens to

[36] O'Prey Paul, A Reader's Guide to Graham Greene, Thames & Hudson, London 1988, p. 44
[37] Ibidem, p. 45

everyone once' and 'when it happens, you know what you've been all your life'. It is also, like *The Ministry of Fear*, the story of a man changing his identity[38].

Although *The Tenth Man* may yet prove to be an excellent film, in printed form it is a disappointment. The fact that it is written in story form at all, rather than as a screenplay, is a technical matter. In spite of this, *The Tenth Man* is the one that best proves the statement: **man is nothing except what he makes of himself, because there are no absolute values.**

[38] ibidem

# Chapter III. Lonely individual fighting to find peace and comfort in the world that has lost its absolute values and traditions

### *3.1.Monsignor Quixote*

Greene reclaims the religious sense by developing the symbolic language of belief to illustrate the mysteries and the vitality, the validity and the futility of life. He sometimes expresses faith as radical doubt. His vision rests less on otherworldly hope than on an expression of humanity through a moral life within the community. In commenting on Greene's novels, therefore, these factors, political and spiritual, are more to the point than details of orthodoxy just as a commentary on Cervantes' work is enriched by cognition of life in sixteenth-century Spain rather than by detailed appreciation of the minutiae of chivalry. The comparison is not misplaced particularly since Greene's work has been brought to a resonant culmination with the publication of *Monsignor Quixote* (1982) which subverts orthodoxy and ideology to understand history and humanity[39].

In *Monsignor Quixote* Graham Greene steps out into the open to look at faiths that have influenced him and the world. The result is a mellow and invigorating mixture of old themes finally resolved: the hunted but innocent man; religious faith and its expression in life in tones that shade into the idealism of Communism. The novel's protagonists are Monsignor Quixote, 'a poor priest-errant travelling God knows where' and Enrique Zancas (alias Sancho), the ex-Mayor of El Toboso and avowedly a Communist. Together they set off on a journey to escape from an authoritarian Bishop and the election victory of a right-wing opponent. They discourse along the way on life's constraints and its possibilities for freedom and their spirited dialogue is considerably enlivened by wholesome country wine and cheese.

Though disturbed by intrusions from the *Guardia civil* and what look like members of the *Opus Dei* the measured pace of a conversation, filled with wisdom, verve and good humour is kept up till the last section. Here the abrupt entrance of Professor Pilbeam researching the life of Ignatius Loyola in the Trappist monastery where Monsignor Quixote finds refuge, introduces the world of 'intellectual speculation' only to give it short shrift.

Monsignor Quixote's parish of El Toboso, the town of which Zancas was until recently the Mayor, is not a place of desperate poverty and repression, as for instance the countryside

[39] Edward W. Said, The World, the Text and the Critic, Harvard, 1983, p. 224.

where Father Rivas's congregation lives. Yet the absence of dire realities contributes to the allegorical frame of the novel and enhances the journey of this 'holy innocent' into the modern world, along which he encounters enticements that he cannot even begin to comprehend: sex and money; a brothel, a blue film, a condom, religious processions where money buys a vantage seat on the journey to salvation.

The connections with Cervantes's classic are insistent: they travel in Monsignor Quixote's old Seat 600 Rosinante and their adventures recall, indirectly, the intentions of the original - to examine the essential nature of human life and man's greatest metaphysical problem, that of illusion and reality. Like its classic original Greene's novel, as indeed all his work, has a wide appeal and holds a deeper meaning for those that wish to see it. What emerges from this homespun combination is not ideology and orthodoxy but life viewed in its pristine beauty and bounty. The text expresses every-one's right to the simple and good things in an effective combination of funny episodes reminiscent of *Travels with my Aunt* with which it shares its picaresque form. Underlying the hilarity this time rests a difference: ideology is consciously set against human needs, theological argument against faith that transcends it. The bond between the travellers is strengthened by the implicit awareness that their respective faiths have: "not done away with either nationalism or imperialism. It's these two that cause the wars. Wars are not merely for economic reasons - they come from the emotions of men, like love does, from the colour of the skin, or the accent of a voice. From unhappy memories too"[40].

What was a paradox in the 1930s when Orwell called Greene 'our first Catholic fellow-traveller'[41] appears to be resolved here. Faith *is* expressed as realisation of life within the community in terms of its needs, as the realisation of humanity. The form of the novel as an account of a friendship and the endearing zest of the travellers makes the process of bridging the gulf that theoretically separates them appear a practical and entirely plausible affair. As they meander across the countryside of a remote district of Spain each interprets the beliefs and texts of the other in relation to the business of living. A tongue-in-cheek juxtaposition of the Gospels, the breviary and the Communist Manifesto, the Roman Curia and the Politburo, the Protestant and the Euro-Communist, Torquemada and Stalin, the Cross and the Hammer and Sickle, creates a devastating blend of humour and insights into life and the world[42].

[40] Greene G., Monsignor Quixote, Bodley Head; London1982 , p. 107
[41] Orwell, G., The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters, edited by Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus, Secker & Warburg, London1968, p. 209
[42] Cassis, A. F., Graham Greene: An Annotated Bibliography of Criticism The Scarecrow Press, London, 1990, p. 309

The encrustations of theology and ideology obscure the fundamentals of religion and politics, and with the hair splittings motivated by selfishness and avarice, Greene also includes the posturings of the power blocs, explicitly that of the United States but implicitly that of the Soviet Union. His premise of doubt works as a creative strategy; it successfully challenges dominant modes and subverts ideological structures of injustice and oppression. The politics of faith, immanent and yet transcending continents and cultures, illumines his world with grace, charity and humanity.

*Monsignor Quixote* celebrates fundamentals of humanism perceived in *Brighton Rock,* and expressed in *The Power and the Glory* and *The Honorary Consul.* The novel is a moving apotheosis where fact and fiction, belief and faith converge into an acknowledgement of doubt as part of the fabric of belief, as the humanising factor that sustains and nourishes religious and political certainties, and rational solutions.

In *Monsignor Quixote* Graham Greene abandons the narrative of action to present a distillation of his vision. With an old man as protagonist he wrestles with the worlds of money and power. The life and death of Monsignor Quixote illustrate extreme commitments: selfish absorption with worldly goods and power on the one hand and on the other, a life shorn of everything except humanity laced with the innocent joys of living - friendship, conversation, wine, cheese.

### *3.2. The Quiet American*

Graham Greene wrote on *The Quiet American:* **"**When my novel was eventually noticed in the *New Yorker* the reviewer condemned me for accusing my 'best friends' (the Americans) of murder since I had attributed to them the responsibility for the great explosion - far worse than the trivial bicycle bombs - in the main square of Saigon when many people lost their lives. But what are the facts, of which the reviewer needless to say was ignorant? The *Life* photographer at the moment of the explosion was so well placed that he was able to take an astonishing and horrifying photograph which showed the body of a trishaw driver still upright after his legs had been blown off. This photograph was reproduced in an American propaganda magazine published in Manila over the title "the work of Ho Chi Minh" although General Thé had promptly and proudly claimed the bomb as his own. Who had supplied the material to a bandit who was fighting French, Caodaitsts and Communists?

…Perhaps there is more direct *rapportage* in the *The Quiet American* than in any other novel I have written. I had determined to employ again the experience I had gained with *The End of the Affair* in the use of the first person and the time shift, and my choice of a journalist

as the "I" seemed to me to justify the use of *rapportage.* The Press conference is not the only example of direct reporting. I was in the dive bomber (the pilot had broken an order of General de Lattre by taking me) which attacked the Viet Minth post and I was on the patrol of the Foreign Legion par as outside Phat Diem. I still retain the sharp image of the dead child couched in the ditch beside his dead mother. The very neatness of their bullet wounds made their death more disturbing than the indiscriminate massacre in the canals around."[43]

*The Quiet American*[35] illustrates the following propositions:[44]

- to be human is to be political,
- the politics of today is inseparable from living, from the essential issues of freedom and dignity basic to life.

Greene proceeds on the very assumptions of civilisation and in the process expose the hypocrisies of power blocs and establishments to reveal the fleeting, precarious and inestimable value of freedom and dignity. In a way the so-called gentle reader is jolted into recognising the threat to his own reality.

In *The Quiet American* the situation where confrontation of basic issues moves at several levels is Vietnam. It is a novel set in the context of national liberation emerging from the death-throes of the old imperialism only to be nearly exterminated by the new and more insidious imperialism of the superpowers[45].

Although all the novel discussed here attacks American foreign policy directly or tangentially, individual Americans are presented as naive or innocent, and as unable to appreciate the dangers of official ideology. Thus the power of *The Quiet American* rests on the innocence and decency of Pyle, the American of the title, who is completely convinced of the morality of what he believes; he is not devious nor underhand as the Englishman is. He is honest and direct. His idealism is manipulated by the system he represents.

The subject of Greene's satire has always been American foreign policy which pretends to protect the 'free world' but wraps materialistic doctrines in the language of spiritual aspiration, and then uses the package to spread its power throughout the world. Talk of the 'free world' in fact often means only one objective: American interests, her security and trade, and the dissemination of cultural modes dedicated to feverish consumerism. Communism is distrusted without regard to some of its ideals. More to the point

[43] Greene G., Ways of Escape, pp.139-140
[44] Evans, R. O. (ed.) Graham Greene: Some Critical Considerations, Lexington, Kentucky: University of Kentucky Press, 1983, p.87
[45] Pryce-Jones, D., Graham Greene, Oliver & Boyd, London 1993, p. 92

is the fact that talk of the 'free world' does not really concern itself with democracy and justice in its satellite nations.

A running theme in Greene's work - the promise of socialism - is first expressed with compassion in *It's a Battlefield.* The novel exposes the devious working of an establishment which would like to brand every worker asserting his rights a Red. *The Quiet American* and subsequent fiction focuses on the need for revolutionary mobilisation against foreign intervention and domestic tyrannies. The novel discussed illustrates how every government that seeks a degree of autonomy from American hegemony is branded a liability, its sovereignty given short shrift, its power destabilised.

The fact that Greene takes sides against American hegemony has less to do with his being pro-communist than with his commitment to ideals of dignity and justice for societies where politics are the realities of hunger, degradation and death - the kind of repressions normally associated with Communist regimes by members of the 'free world'. More than once has he said that his interest in politics is not where elections and votes determine the degree of income tax, but where the issue is life and death.

For the writer who interpenetrates the temporal with the spiritual, the city of man with the city of God, and in particular for the 'Catholic writer', the demands on artistic expression are not easy - the supernatural has to be conveyed in terms of the natural order. Anthony Burgess considers this situation generally as one where the Catholic writer expresses the vision of the supernatural order in terms of a conservative and pristine framework of the natural order. In Greene's fiction, however, it is the natural order that tends to be subverted[46]:

"once a Catholic lays open his soul to the corruption of the great world of commitment, he must accept a kind of empiricism if he is not to be damned, drawing from the natural order what may conceivably further the terrestrial ends of the supernatural order. In Greene's fiction, however, there is little flavour of empiricism. ...There are instead paradoxes and anomalies - the sinner who is really a saint, the philanthropist who is really a destroyer."

Burgess has correctly conveyed the situation of the religious or indeed Catholic writer. But he tends to interpret the natural order as one of dogma and ritual, the sacramental conveying by a kind of allegory the ineffable or the divine immanent in reality. Hence by this definition the frame of reference of the natural order is coterminous with religious dogma. Both have to be fixed so that the progress of plot and

[46] Burgess, A., Politics in the Novels of Graham Greene, in Urgent Copy: Literary Studies , Jonathan Cape, London 1968, p.47

characterisation proceed through an ordered aesthetic. By this definition a religious writer has to be conservative and orthodox like Evelyn Waugh and Francois Mauriac.

It is true that the religious writer projects the supernarural through the natural order but this does not mean that the natural order which he accepts is one of conservatism or of orthodoxy. In fact religious writers like Greene and Waugh do convey a unified sensibility of the soul struggling in isolation for grace and redemption. Where Greene has advanced the argument is in his use of the natural order in its wider cosmos of politics and history. He moves away from the traditional reference points of the landed gentry as in Mauriac and Waugh to the experience of professionals and the urban proletariat, the ex-colonial officers, the new power groups and those 'outside the pale' whose experience defines the religious sense.

The novel describes the world of the second part of the twentieth century in the widest and narrowest sense of the term as comprising nation-states, power blocs, communities, cultures, and individual human beings. It concerns itself with survival rather than class struggle, with the bare limits and precarious existence of the many for whom 'life is gaol'. Lack of freedom and dignity is explored at an individual level as also at a national level with nations controlled by an unseen iron fist that lends its power to repressive regimes which are, in turn, mere pawns in global strategies.

In this sense Russian hegemony has an edge: it does not pretend to be disseminating the idealism of a 'free world'. More importantly, it has in this century created a less unequal society. The fact that spiritual values are openly and actively resisted under Communism saves it from the bigger hypocrisy committed an ideology which admits freedom of religion yet produces societies immersed in materialism with soul-destroying vigour[47].

To call Greene anti-democratic or pro-communist is to simplify the issues that engage him: power and responsibility: moral choices for individuals and governments; not forms of government but the quality of human life; not confrontation between superpowers but the repercussions of the endless Cold War on people's lives[48].

In *The Quiet American* Greene sets the Vietnamese scene as consisting of groups or camps: the Chinese quarter of Cholon whose inhabitants plot quietly and work unobtrusively but with passionate dedication to the cause; Vigot, the police inspector at

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48 Lodge, D., Graham Greene, Columbia University Press, New York and London 1986, p. 43

the French Surete who is unable to protect the civilian quarters from the hazards of the battlefield; the front line as seen from the relative safety of headquarters at the battlefront; and the rice fields nearer to the action when Fowler manages to slip further than authorised. These are concerns of an ingenious narrative that come to a head not merely in the scenes of devastation like the canal at Phat Diem or the bombs in a public square, but in the tiny space of a watch-tower where Fowler, Pyle and two Vietminh guards seek refuge. The long conversation here between the two outsiders about the fate of Vietnam is particularly poignant: the outsiders survive and the Vietminh guards get killed.

*The Quiet American* suggests with controlled indignation the point of view of the Vietnamese, both human and national. 'How many dead colonels justify a child's or a trishaw driver's death when you are building a national democratic front?'[49]. Although the narrative exposes political realities through the perspective of Fowler's 'objectivity', it slips into a pattern of male paternalism in the account of the relationship between Fowler and Phuong, the Vietnamese girl, who has been a hostess at the Grande Monde until she moves in with him.

Phuong exists as others see her yet neither Pyle nor Fowler can ever fathom her and she is described as 'owning herself completely'[50]. Both she and her elder sister who works for the American Embassy appear to take their ideals from Western models of consumerism and materialism. Phuong knows Piccadilly, and the Empire State Building. These constitute her dreams of escape. Her sister's most cherished ambition is an American husband for Phuong. The dominant point of view, however, remains always that of Fowler who defines her in terms of his need[51]:

"she was the hiss of steam, the clink of a cup; she was a certain hour of the night and the promise of rest. . . To take an Anamite to bed with you is like taking a bird: they twitter and sing on your pillow. There had been a time when I thought none of their voices sang like Phuong's. I put out my hand and touched her arm - their bones, too, were as fragile as a bird's".

No glimpse of her inner life is offered and yet her character serves a purpose beyond the obvious one of the story-line. Phuong accentuates the nature of the relationship between the subject-race and the outsider. When they come together as human beings the level of the relationship expresses the political situation: entertainer and entertained, service loyally

[49] Greene G., The Quiet American, p. 163
[50] Ibid., p. 32
[51] Ibid., p. 12

rendered and affection protectively bestowed. Phuong's mask of survival is foolproof. She glides in and out of Fowler's life and back again revealing no hint of her emotions though the narrative suggests that she enjoys the company of Pyle and the promise of escape he represents. Though Fowler's actions and motives are utterly selfish in his personal life, he is remarkably sensitive to the aspirations of the Vietnamese in the public context.

Phuong in one sense represents the urban intermediary at the lowest level of the power structure, manipulated and exploited by all, including Fowler, but better off than the peasant in the rice field whose reality is more stark. Her cultural baggage is well concealed, her literal baggage nonexistent; she poses no threat to anyone and has learnt to survive yet preserves her innocence through an age of experience gained in her young life. Her innocence embodies, indeed, the main point of Greene's narrative: 'She might lie from politeness, from fear, even for profit, but she would never have the cunning to keep her lie concealed' [52].

Fowler relies for inside information on Dominguez, his assistant who, as a fellow-Asian, has the trust of the Vietnamese community and thus enjoys a freedom denied to Fowler. Sources of information can sometimes be innocent, such as Fowler's conversations with Phuong who collects gossip on her daily encounters in shops, on the streets, or among old women who chat at doorways. This is how she inadvertently confirms Fowler's suspicions about the real nature of Pyle's work. Although ostensibly employed in the American Economic Mission he represents interests that wish to substitute French colonialism with a Third Force for Democratic Freedom to be supported by American aid - a move designed to stifle Vietnamese nationalism which has aligned itself to Communist leadership for a base. Fowler attempts to educate Pyle in the realities of Vietnam[53]:

“They want enough rice . . . They don't want to be shot at. They want one day to be much the same as another. They don't want our white skins around telling them what to do”.

Greene's journalism describes the hierarchy as dominated by the USA. The novel pays less direct attention to the Catholic Church than to General The, once the leader of the Caodaists whom the Americans try to instal, in the narrative, as leader of the Third Force. Although the character of the intermediary at this level of power is not explored the text defines the nature of the role in the hierarchy of exploitation. Fowler's perception holds these various strands together although his credibility as a witness is flawed. His jealousy of Pyle colours his motives and this too is no simple matter. In danger of losing Phuong to Pyle he is, nevertheless, fair enough to recognize that Pyle has more to offer her: youth, marriage, security. The whole

[52] Ibid., p. 82
[53] Ibid., p. 94

affair becomes more poignant when Pyle saves Fowler's life. Such irony deepens the plot into a humane exploration to reveal dimensions of experience that lift the novel to a level other than that labelled by critics as anti-Americanism.

The narrative represents Pyle as the more caring and concerned for Phuong though in a simple-minded, conventional way. Fowler is selfish, but aware of complexities and depths. Pyle is the romantic idealist, Fowler the cynical realist who manages to slip into condescension:

"It's a clichĕ to call them children - but there's one thing which is childish. They love you in return for kindness, security, the presents you give them - they hate you for a blow or an injustice. They don't know what it's like - just walking into a room and loving a stranger. For an aging man, Pyle, it's very secure - she won't run away from me so long as the home is happy."[54]

Such perceptions are clouded by benevolent paternalism which persists in Greene's work despite the progression in subsequent novels towards articulating the hopes and aspirations of the ruled and the oppressed. Thus, in *The Honorary Consul,* Fortnum marries the prostitute Clara to protect her.

Greene has found the film technique enriching and often transposes from this medium the intense focus of the close-up. The relaxed narrative that precedes and follows such direct scrutiny allows the ideas accentuated to sink into the reader's consciousness. Such a scene takes place in the middle section of *The Quiet American* when Fowler and Pyle take shelter in a watch-tower already occupied by two young Vietnamese soldiers who are terrified by the intrusion. The conversation between Fowler and Pyle in the quiet of the night as they worry about their chances of survival develops into a passionate and ironic discourse on motives and values. The novel comments on the domino theory: 'I know that record. Siam goes; Malaya goes; Indonesia goes. What does 'go' mean?'[55]. It often attacks Western liberalism but at its best it illuminates human experience:

"who cared about the individuality of the man in the paddy field -and who does now? The only man to treat him as a man is the political commissar. He'll sit in his hut and ask his name and listen to his complaints; he'll give up an hour a day to teaching him - it doesn't matter what, he's being treated like a man, like someone of value. Don't go in the East with that parrot cry about threat to the individual soul. Here you'd find yourself on the wrong side - it's they who stand for the individual and we just for Private 23987, unit in the global strategy."[56]

[54] Ibid., p. 104
[55] Ibid., p. 95
[56] Ibid., p. 97

The politics of Greene's fiction should be linked to the ideals of conservative Liberals in the early years of last century. There began a distrust then of the compromises being made by the Liberal left to placate the younger generation who sought more radical solutions. An interesting insight into the situation is revealed in Claud Cockburn's autobiography which discusses the deep conservatism and radical idealism of his father who worked in China, Korea and Japan. His account is specially interesting when it distinguishes between his father's candid rejection of the hypocrisies of the colonial encounter and his stubborn loyalty to the idea of Empire. Claud Cockburn was a fellow-student at the school Greene has mythicised in his fiction and a favoured student of the head-master for his skills in chess. The headmaster, of course, was Graham Greene's father - Charles Greene - whose historical insights into life and literature have been described with affectionate understanding and loyalty by both Claud and Graham.[57]

The early sections of Cockburn's autobiography, *I Claud,* recount the values of the fathers, their sense of a crumbling, chaotic, disintegrating world dominated by Bolsheviks and the new liberals. The comforting options of the latter group seemed to them to dispense with cherished values in the search for a new order, and this choice tarnished the dream. With such influences in their formative years some of the sons - Cockburn and Greene among them - sought the moral life in political journalism and art. Cockburn became a Communist and stayed the course. Both he and Greene joined the Communist Party while at Oxford, and Greene later joined the ILP but membership of both for him did not last more than a few weeks or months. To constrict the politics of Greene's fiction into right-wing or left-wing moulds is misleading. His writing reveals a radically conservative mind which seeks realisation of human potential in the most humane and liberal sense of the term. 'Conservative' here refers to the preservation of life-enhancing values, not to party politics[58].

### *3.4.The Power and the Glory*

*The Power and the Glory* (1940) marks a development in Greene's writing: it explores morał values beyond frontiers previously perceived. The shift to the symbolic language of Catholic orthodoxy, the change of scene from England and Europe to Mexico, the return to Sierra Leone during the war, and the new contexts of the postwar world lead Greene's artistic imagination to realities outside England and in modern Europe eventually resting the scene

[57] Lodge, D., Graham Greene, Columbia University Press, New York and London 1986, p. 161
[58] Ibid.

within the framework of world politics[59]. Experience of political and spiritual realities in Mexico resulted in keener understanding of the meaning of faith. He writes:

"I read and listened to stories of corruption which were said to have justified the persecution of the Church under Calles and Cardenas, but I also observed for myself how courage and the sense of responsibility had revived with persecution - I had seen the devotion of peasants praying in the priestless churches and I had attended Masses in upper rooms where the sanctus bell could not sound for fear of the police."[60]

These aspects of the church and religion in lived experience, are discussed in many Greene's book*s: The Power and the Glory (1940), The Heart of the Matter(l948), The End of the Affair* (1955) and *A Burnt-Out Case* (1961).

*The Power and the Glory* (1940) has a Catholic priest as protagonist in confrontation with a representative of the State whose official theology has no place for religion. Belief then is part of the structure of the text. Belief is inseparable from characterisation in the novel discussed here. *The Power and the Glory,* where the human aspect of priesthood is an important theme, illustrates individual struggle with two sets of apparently contradictory beliefs juxtaposed and realises the conflict through protagonists who are nameless. They are known only by their roles - the priest and the lieutenant - and are presented with the integrity characteristic of Greene's fiction which is fair to both sides. Parallel construction enhances the irony of a situation where the lieutenant is endowed with a moral character and sense of purpose traditionally associated with priesthood, Greene writes:

"As for the idealism of my lieutenant it was sadly lacking among these shabby revolutionaries . . . I had not found the integrity of the lieutenant among the police and *pistoleros* I had encountered - I had to invent him as a counter to the failed priest: the idealistic police officer who stifled life from the best possible motives; the drunken priest who continued to pass life on."[61]

An important feature of *The Power and the Glory* is that it expresses confrontation between the themes of social justice and faith. Greene's later novels attempt to resolve these tensions by integrating the theme of personal faith with political struggle. But here religion and politics, the Church and the State, are in opposite camps. The priest is a member of the

[59] Boardman, G.R., Graham Greene: The Aesthetics of Exploration, University of Florida Press, Gainesville, Florida, 1991, p. 115
[60] Greene G., The Power and the Glory, Introduction, Collected Edition, Heinemann, London, 1971, p. 3,
[61] Greene G., The Power and the Glory, Introduction, Collected Edition, Heinemann, London, 1971, p., 4

establishment to be wiped out so that social justice can prevail; the lieutenant, member of another establishment, leads the crusade.

Their awareness of the unfair demands of their professional duties balances the contrast between the priest and the lieutenant. Both hate the role and feel enslaved by the demands of office: The priest is 'shaken by a tiny rage' and feels 'a monstrous bitterness' at being denied the chance to escape to freedom when a child requests that he attend his sick mother. The pressures of existence stretch the demands of duty to limits neither anticipated. The narrative elaborates qualities which differentiate the hunter from the hunted - pride and humility, confidence and fear - until in the final chapters the two antagonists face each other as human beings, and shed briefly the trappings of the role each has endured. The priest first appears as he ‘sat there like a question mark, ready to go, ready to stay, poised on the chair. He looked disreputable in his grey three-days beard, and weak . . . [he had] an air in his hollowness and neglect, of somebody of no account who had been beaten up incidentally, by ill-health and restlessness - dark suit, sloping shoulders, serious mouth.’’[62]

Later he is 'in torn peasant clothes', 'a man in a shabby drill suit' with his 'eyes to the ground and the shoulders hunched as though he felt exposed'[63] . In contrast the lieutenant walks proud; a dapper figure ‘whose gaiters were polished and his pistol holster; his buttons were all sewn on. He had a sharp crooked nose jutting out of a lean dancer's face; his neatness gave an effect of inordinate ambition in the shabby city’[64].

The purity of their ideal and the questionable conduct with which they pursue it - the lieutenant through violence and repression, the priest through dissolution - heightens the parallel characterisation. Human inadequacy and the claims of duty are vividly juxtaposed when the priest is on the run with the lieutenant in pursuit. He emerges famished and exhausted by sleeplessness at a little village where his arrival is greeted with a mixture of fear and relief by the villagers. They fear the reprisals should the presence of the priest in their midst be betrayed but are glad of the opportunity to participate in ritual that the law has denied them. Dazed with fatigue, hunger and lack of sleep, in fact in a state of semi-consciousness he finds himself compelled to hear the confession of a whole village whose members have sheltered him for the night. Even though some of these details exaggerate the practice of believers to incredible limits, the irony in these sections contributes to the power of the narrative.

[62] Greene G., The Power and the Glory, Penguin, London, 1979, p. 14-15
[63] Ibid., p. 20
[64] Ibid., p. 20

It links idea and action: the priest as human being and in his role as the last priest in the region; as the last hope amid the hopeless who, paradoxically, do not give up hope; the intangibles of faith that compel the villagers to risk the lives of able-bodied men to protect the priest. The realities of survival that involve both parties to this relationship in a surreal haggling over 'fees' to be paid by the impoverished 'congregation' to the equally deprived priest.

The demands of his profession burden the lieutenant equally. As he walks in front of his men he appears 'chained to them unwillingly - perhaps the scar on his jaw was the relic of an escape'[65]. His superior, like that of the priest, fails in his role: the Bishop escapes to safety; the Chief of Police takes his duties lightly, concerning himself with toothache rather than with the struggle for a just society, and reveals himself as the best customer for illicit liquor.

Greene calls *The Power and the Glory* a pilgrimage and there are flashbacks along the journey to a time when the priest acted out his role in a state of freedom as a respected member of society. He was then 'a youngish man in Roman collar . . . You could imagine him petted with small delicacies . . . He sat there, plump, with protuberant eyes, bubbling with harmless feminine jokes . . . a well-shaved, well-powdered jowl much too developed for his age. The good things of life had come to him too early'[66].

Pursued by his conscience, by fear of God and of the law, the priest descends to abysmal depths. He becomes not merely a whisky priest but a cowering animal who simultaneously attains a comprehension of his humanity with a relentless consciousness of his own actions.

Contrasts other than the major one with the lieutenant accentuate his predicament. The first of these, the idealized portrait of a martyred priest whose story is carefully integrated into the main story-line, is recounted by a pious mother to her children. The narrative tone emphasises the unreality of this tale with its emphasis on saintliness and superhuman sacrifice rather than human inadequacy and courage. The young son rejects so hallowed a vision of heroism; his little sisters lap it up as they would a fairy tale; life, says the narrative voice, is not like that. Spiritual values must be grounded in life and action and not in remote visions of martyrdom and eternal glory. The life of Padre Jose, who satisfies the demands of the State by getting married, provides the second contrast. The narrative does not deride the frailty of the whisky priest and of Padre Jose but presents their experience as

[65] Ibid., p. 20
[66] Ibid., p. 21-2

means for human qualities to surface. It helps them to transcend roles, to grow into self-knowledge, and to proceed from belief to faith. The extent of the moral decline of the priest opens the way to self-realisation and enables him to perceive his own earlier complacency when he was free to practise his religion in security and comfort. When he is cast into prison he finds a sense of companionship which he had never experienced in the old days when pious people came kissing his black cotton glove. Later, when he finds a safe place to stay he catches himself slipping into the old habits where values are often platitudes and belief a habit of piety:

"He could hear authority, the old parish intonation coming back into his voice, as if the last years had been a dream and he had never really been away from the Guilds, the Children of Mary, and the daily Mass"[67].

The narrative in *The Power and the Glory* follows the descent of the priest into a life of humiliation and degradation when he is pursued both by his own weakness and by the power of the Socialist Republic that has declared a war on religion. It is less important to ask why he has chosen to stay behind and face persecution when he could so easily have escaped than to understand that Greene does not intend his character to die a martyr in the idealised and ritualised sense: such heroic action is not the stuff of common experience. The disintegration of the priest when the supportive structures are destroyed leads to the question of faith and to the revelation that it is not the structure that gives meaning to the role but faith. Paradoxically, only the denial of both structure and role creates a self-awareness in the individual. The death of the priest at the end is not intended as martyrdom but as retribution for moral lapses, a fact of which the priest is well aware[68].

The lieutenant, in contrast, is left unsullied to the last. His spartan nature, single-minded vision of socialism, and high level of personal integrity does not seem to conflict with the violent course of his actions. When he faces the priest as human being without his Roman collar, the characters spring to life with all the complexities of human response. For example, the lieutenant breaks his official code when he gives the priest, whom he has not recognised, some money for food and shelter when he leaves the prison for the first time. More poignantly, the second encounter reveals the lieutenant offering to fetch Padre Jose, should he agree, to hear the priests last confession. He also smuggles some brandy into the cell so as to

[67] Ibid., p. 167
[68] Sharrock, R., Saints, Sinners and Comedians, University of Notre Dame Press, Indiana: Notre Dame, 1994, p. 211

make the priest's last night before his execution comfortable. In breaking professional codes the actions emphasise human values of the two protagonists.

The lieutenant's passion for justice and a better society for the children he encounters on the streets is as deep as the priests terrified acceptance of faith. But the triumphs of his role give him neither joy nor peace. To him belongs the honour of seeing the 'last' priest in the State put to death, yet his success leaves him feeling empty. His struggle for justice in society awakens him to a different perspective of justice and human ties in the relationship he establishes with the priest, his prisoner. The patterns of thought and the movement of the narrative cohere with powerful intensity which makes this Greene's most effective evocation of some of the themes that permeate his work.

Greene uses the techniques of dream narration to fill in gaps. Two dreams at the end of *The Power and the Glory* deepen the main thematic concerns of social justice. The structure of text and idea jointly suggest the meaning of faith in life and of religion in the context of human relationships. Physically and morally exhausted by his pursuit of the priest, subconsciously undermined by his role as purger of human beings supposedly inimical to the State, the lieutenant falls asleep and dreams. All he can recall of the dream is 'nothing but laughter, laughter all the time, and a long passage in which he could find no door'[69]. The dream is nihilistic and our view of the lieutenant that of a man with a final sensation of void. After purifying the State for socialism 'the dynamic love which used to move his trigger finger felt flat and dead' - Greene's final answer to ideologies devoid of spiritual dimensions.

It would be wrong to conclude, however, that the narrative accepts the premises of the Catholic Church and its authority on human conduct as final. The priests dream is equally radical in its impact precisely because it subverts accepted codes. In his dream Coral Fellows, the child who once sheltered him, appears to help him in the same responsible and wise manner as she had once protected him from the lieutenant. Her efforts this time fulfil his most basic needs: food and drink. They talk in their private language - the Morse Code - which Coral tries to teach him. The message encoded is love and trust among men. There is a Mass in progress but the whisky priest is oblivious of the priest at the altar. All he can see clearly is the child who feeds him and teaches him Morse. Her taps are echoed by an invisible congregation and the message of this private language is decoded by Coral. The narrative line here authenticates the importance of human connections without which neither belief nor ideology have any meaning.

[69]Greene G., The Power and the Glory, p.p. 207

Greene considers *The Power and the Glory* his most successful attempt at myth-making. The reason is clear: the plot is subsidiary, at all times, to the central idea of belief and struggle; the one flows from the other and it is the passionate illustration of the idea as expressed in life that gives the novel its legend.[70]

### *3.5. The heart of the Matter*

*The Heart of the Matter* extends the scope of belief by expressing it in social and personal relations. The main hero, Scobie, the Assistant Commissioner of Police in Freetown, Sierra Leone, commits a series of transgressions for reasons that are more complex than can be explained away by the given fact that he is easily moved to pity. The novel does not explore the unnatural condition of his work, his awareness of the contradictions which he embodies in his professional life as arbiter of law and order when his very presence in Sierra Leone rests on an unjust premise and hence 'the futility of all effort'. The text in fact is stripped of all ideologies and the character of Scobie examined both in terms of his professional role and as human being inexorably divesting himself of the diktats of religion and society to live, as he thinks, a moral life by discharging his responsibilities.[71]

Later Greene wrote: ”My experiences in Sierra Leone were rich enough, but I have never been satisfied with what I made of them. My critics have complained, perhaps with justice, that "I laid it on too thick," but the material was thick. The real fault, as I have written, lay in the rustiness of my long inaction. What I was engaged in through those war years was not genuine action – it was an escape from reality and responsibility**…**I had found myself so out of practice and out of confidence that I couldn't for months get the character Wilson off the balcony in the hotel from which he was watching Scobie, the Commissioner of Police, pass down the unpaved street. To get him off the balcony meant making a decision. Two very different novels began on the same balcony with the same character, and I had to choose which one to write.

One was the novel I wrote; the other was to have been an "entertainment." I had long been haunted by the possibility of a crime story which the criminal was known to the reader, but the detective was carefully hidden, disguised by false clues which would lead the reader astray until the climax.

[70] Lodge, D., Graham Greene, p.p. 99
[71] Sharrock, R., Saints, Sinners and Comedians, p.p. 181

The story was to be told from the point of view of the criminal, and the detective would necessarily be some kind of undercover agent. M.I.5 was the obvious organization to use, and the character Wilson is the unsatisfactory relic of the entertainment, for when I left Wilson on the balcony and joined Scobie I plumped for the novel.

It was to prove a book more popular with the public, even with the critics, than with the author. The scales to me seem too heavily weighted, the plot overloaded, the religious scruples of Scobie too extreme. […]

Maybe I am too harsh to the book wearied as I have been by reiterated arguments in Catholic journals on Scobie's salvation or damnation. I was not so stupid as to believe that this could ever be an issue in a novel.

Besides I have small belief in the doctrine of eternal punishment (it was Scobie's belief not mine). Suicide was Scobie's inevitable end; the particular motive of his suicide, to save even God from himself, was the final twist of the screw of his inordinate pride. Perhaps Scobie should have been a subject for a cruel comedy rather than for tragedy…"[72]

Greene's grasp of life in society contributes to action that weaves personal life with the colonial situation and the larger international framework of the war. Scobie's actions are impelled as much by the pressure of events as by his character. The result is a complex portrayal of a weak but heroic man who betrays shades of moral superiority and allows himself to be overwhelmed by the demands of human relationships. This leads to transgressions of professional, moral and religious codes. What is worse is that all who come in close contact with him are more or less tainted by his perception of them as objects of pity or scorn. The only exceptions are Ali, the black boy who has served him loyally for fifteen years and whom he loves, and Yusef, the trader and diamond smuggler, whose oily self-assurance elicits no pity.

The novel introduces Scobie after fifteen years of colonial service, a man broken by the circumstances of his life - the death of an only child, and the lack of communication with his wife. The fact that he is just and has proved incorruptible is represented as just another burden of 'reputation'. His daughter's death is revealed gradually, with understatement, although its inexorable consequences provide much of the psychological motivation in the narrative. Scobie's first transgression - he destroys the letter he confiscates from the Portugeuese ship instead of handing it in, and begins a whole chain of lies to cover up the transgression - takes place because he is disorientated as a result of a conversation that

[72] Greene G., Ways of Escape, pp.99-102; http://members.tripod.com/~greeneland/heart.htm

takes place in the Captain's cabin. When appealing to Scobie for help the Captain discloses that the letter is addressed to his daughter and is therefore a harmless piece of writing: ' "If you had a daughter you'd understand. You haven't got one" ' he accused, as though there were a crime in sterility'[73]. Scobie appears to lose control, in fact, to lose faith in the whole 'act' demanded of him by his profession, and he destroys the letter less to help the Captain than as an expression of exhaustion. This first subtle indication of Scobie's emotional and psychological state takes place when the reader knows nothing of his child and at this stage Scobie's action seems incomprehensible given his reputation for good work and integrity. Only much later does the narrative disclose the bare fact recorded in his diary - C died.

Actions such as this reveal his inner life. Much of the depth of this life rests on the pain of death - the trauma of loss never quite confronted by a weak and good man - which in turn draws him into traps laid by life's coincidences. The fact that his subsequent transgressions are also provoked by the memory of death and vulnerability - a suffering child, a defenceless and childlike widow -merges with the idea of responsibility to be discharged. This sense of responsibility makes up, perhaps subliminally, for the void in his own life. Greene creatively inhabits this consciousness and communicates the intensity of feeling even when objectively attacking the morality of Scobie's actions[74].

Death can develop a bond among those left behind but in the case of Scobie and his wife, Louise, it deepens the chasm. His relationship with the 19-year-old Helen Rolt widowed after one month of marriage, a child in relation to his own age, begins with their joint sense of tragedy. They are surrounded by death from their very first meeting at the makeshift hospital where the survivors from the accident are sheltered, and later by her isolation which reaches out to his: ‘they came together over two deaths without reserve’ and it is to her that he confides an anguish he had not been able to share with his wife[75]. Scobie's actions are explored as expressive of the truth of feeling and it is in his breaking official and religious codes that the deeper meaning of life in society is illustrated.

Scobie's burning of the letter initiates a whole process of disintegration. From this point his transgressions are rapid and integrated into the structure of the novel which revolves round Scobie as keeper of the law, and his personal life as husband and lover. Greene's ability to blend the various strains, pulls and duties in the life of the Assistant Commissioner is the secret of the novel's narrative power. It is easy to understand the

[73] Greene G., The Heart of the Matter ,Penguin 1971, p. 50
[74] Sharrock, R., Saints, Sinners and Comedians, p.p. 181
[75] Greene G., The Heart of the Matter, pp. 156

weakness which led him to borrow money from the smuggler Yusef so as to pay for his wife's holiday. The politico-economic machinations of modern society as well as the strains of colonial life are interwoven to create the need for this further transgression. Had the sympathetic bank manager, for instance, given Scobie the loan he needs so desperately Yusef would have been out of the picture altogether.

Corruption sets in. The diamond-smuggler is invested with power and his demands implicate Scobie in a plot to frame his business rival, Tallit. Yet, the relationship between Scobie and Yusef has a warmth and a dimension that stretch beyond these sordid transactions. Greene's skills humanise the 'villain' who is presented as an affectionate scoundrel. Although Scobie's character is overburdened as repository of the novel's argument he comes alive as a human being, and particularly so in his dealings with Yusef who instinctively understands the man's weakness and integrity. Because Yusef needs no pity, Scobie is most himself in Yusefs company where the paradoxes and hypocrisies of his professional life do not have to be disguised. Both men stand unmasked: the lawbreaker and the upholder of the law. With his 'unashamed villainy, his sophistry, his crooked arguments, and his genuine need for love and company, and his respect'[76] Yusef is a perfect example of Greene's ability to understand human relationships.

Scobie's love affair with Helen, doomed as much by his own furtive guilt as by the attitudes of the colonial group to which they belong, furthers the complications. Professional spies, informers, and gossips together conspire to destroy individual peace. Scobie's poignant awareness of the consequences of his actions illustrates the religious sense with greater conviction than the academic elaboration of Scobie's guilt in relation to the sacraments of confession and communion and the matter of his suicide. Father Rank's statement at the end suggests the movement from belief to faith, and the fact that such matters are beyond human judgement:

"For goodness sake, Mrs Scobie, don't imagine you - or I - know a thing about God's mercy. . . I know the Church says. The Church knows all the rules. But it doesn't know what goes on in a single human heart"[77].

Despite the power of the narrative the web of lies and deception in which Scobie finds himself enmeshed exhausts not merely Scobie but our own willingness to accept some of the contradictions of his character: he is both selfless and self-absorbed. Haunted by his inadequacy he nonetheless feels sufficiently superior to think he can take on responsibility for

[76] Kulshrestha, J. P., Graham Greene: TheNovelist , Macmillan, New Delhi 1997, p. 45
[77] Greene G., The Heart of the Matter pp. 272

all the 'objects' of his pity. Pity is thus rendered as the destructive element, the obverse side of pride, the negative side of compassion. Too deeply wounded to care about anything until he meets Helen Rolt he seems capable only of pity and his feeling for Helen is clouded by this.

When pity is extended to the black population under his jurisdiction, it communicates itself as thinly-veiled paternalism. And when at the end of the novel Scobie plays into the hands of Yusef to become an accomplice in the death of Ali, the boy who had served him with loyalty and affection, little can be said to extenuate his conduct. There is some presumption in the narrative tone in descriptions of the rulers and the subject race. Scobie sees himself as morally superior to both, hating the one and sorry for the other, unable to escape from either. In fact he is unwilling to escape because Freetown with its familiar shapes has become home. Yet it is an uneasy home; he can do little to improve his situation or that of the poor and the destitute, nor does he try. He moves, instead, in a state of moral exhaustion from one problem worthy of his pity to the other. At one level the narrative suggests that personal responsibility to his wife and mistress overwhelm him and ultimately destroy him.

A disjunction in the narrative arises from the two contrary strands: one that links the human motives to a subconscious but plausible reaction to life's traumas, such as the death of the child, which provokes the first transgression; the other that describes the action as motivated by pity and is the novelist's actual intent:

“I had meant the story of Scobie to enlarge a theme which I touched on in *The Ministry of Fear*, the disastrous effect on human beings of pity as distinct from compassion. I had written in *The Ministry of Fear*: "Pity is cruel. Pity destroys. Love isn't safe when pity's prowling round." The character of Scobie was intended to show that pity can be the expression of almost monstrous pride. But I found the effect on the readers was quite different. To them Scobie was exonerated, Scobie was "a good man," he was hunted to his doom by the harshness of his wife.Here was a technical fault rather than a psychological one. Louise Scobie is mainly seen through the eyes of Scobie, and we have no chance of revising our opinion of her. Helen, the girl whom Scobie loves, gains an unfair advantage. In the original draft of the novel a scene was played between Mrs. Scobie and Wilson, the M.I.5 agent who is in love with her, on their evening walk along the abandoned railway track below Hill Station. This put Mrs. Scobie's character in a more favourable light, for the scene had to be represented through the eyes of Wilson, but this scene – so I thought when I was preparing the novel for publication – broke Scobie's point of view prematurely; the drive of the narrative

appeared to slacken. By eliminating it I thought I gained intensity and impetus, but I had sacrificed tone. In later editions I reinserted the passage."[78]

What comes through is the portrait of a man growing into deepening self-knowledge: the spiritual journey of a weak and good man who is not destroyed by pity but led into selfhood by his humanity.

Apart from Yusef, the characters surrounding Scobie are insufficiently realised. The Scobies rarely function in normal human terms since there is always a feeling of condescension and continual judgement which both share - they judge each other and the colonial society in which they live. Subconsciously they despise each other and the company they keep. Everything is tainted by this and the tension introduced after Scobie's involvement with Helen is an artificial one revolving round adultery as sin, the need to go to confession, the consequences of sacrilegious communion, all of which are part of the apparatus of belief, not the expression of it. More realistic is the concern Scobie feels for the shipwrecked Helen and the child who dies as he is reading a story to him - a tender passage with Scobie as father-figure and the child bringing back memories of his own dead.

Except in one scene omitted in the earlier editions Louise's point of view is rarely given a chance. She is not allowed to emerge beyond her role as the Assistant Commissioner's wife, afraid of rats, anxious for promotions, self-conscious at the Club, or scrupulous about observing the rules of her religion without much evidence of its spirit in her relations with people. She is described as smug and self-absorbed by those with whom she comes in contact and the immature Wilson's devotion to her is not particularly flattering. Her lack of feeling is suggested by making her seem apparently untouched by the death of an only child, a tragedy that has scarred Scobie for life. Yet it was she who kept watch at the child's dying. In the scene that has been restored in the Collected edition (Chapter II, Part II, Book I) her spirit and moral sense penetrate to the surface[79].

Greene often comments on the importance of the craft of fiction, of the effects achieved with a skilful use of point of view. In restoring the scene he corrects as he says 'a technical fault rather than a psychological one' and gives Louise a chance to establish her perspective even if briefly:

"In the original draft of the novel a scene was played between Mrs Scobie and Wilson, the MIS agent who is in love with her, on their evening walk along the abandoned railway track below Hill Station. This put Mrs Scobie's character in a more favourable light, for the scene

[78] Greene G., Ways of Escape, pp.99-102; http://members.tripod.com/~greeneland/heart.htm
[79] Collected edition, Heinemann, London 1971

had to be represented through the eyes of Wilson, but this scene - so I thought when I was preparing the novel for publication - broke Scobie's point of view prematurely; the drive of the narrative appeared to slacken. By eliminating it I thought I gained intensity and impetus, but I had sacrificed tone. In later editions I reinserted the passage."[80]

Scobie's identity is realised almost wholly in terms of his role which he detests and finds ineffective. A later section of this book discusses his role in the political sense with reference to the colonial set-up. Although he works with conscientiousness he has no belief in human justice:

"Round the corner, in front of the old cotton tree, where the earliest settlers had gathered their first day on the unfriendly shore, stood (he law courts and police station, a great stone building like the grandiloquent boast of weak men. Inside that massive frame the human being rattled in the corridors like a kernel. No one could have been adequate to so rhetorical a conception. But the idea in any case was only one room deep. In the dark narrow passage behind, in the charge-room and the cells, Scobie could always detect the odour of human meanness and injustice - it was the smell of a zoo, of sawdust, excrement, ammonia, and lack of liberty. The place was scrubbed daily, but you could never eliminate the smell. Prisoners and policemen carried it in their clothing like cigarette smoke"[81].

In this view of justice and the ineffectiveness of his role is paradoxical since Scobie's refuge is his office. It is there that he finds the peace and security that eludes him at home. This is quintessential. Greene weaving contrary strands of story-line and narrative tone so as to accentuate the ambiguities of life and the fact that 'home' and 'identity' are indeed a complex matter particularly in a war-torn world. The idea extends to the destruction of Helen Rolfs 'home' ' and her new identity as a married woman before it could even be constructed.

Scobie stands revealed as a man overwhelmingly conscious of his office in the sense of responsibility. The novel does not explore the ineffectiveness of his role as arbiter of justice but develops the theme of the disintegration of a marital relationship and of the man himself due to the constraints of exile and weakness of character. The validity of this completely plausible situation is undermined by Scobie's flawed perception of his wife. Even at home the professional life is in control: impending promotions, claims for holidays which his salary can ill afford, the constraints of having to socialise with colleagues and their wives with whom he has little in common, are the details that colour our perception of social relations in the novel. Pity, his only link with Louise, is complemented by an alarming sense of responsibility for her happiness and well-being. Greene's immersion in Scobie's emotional conflicts is so intense, that the narrative

[80] Introduction to Collected edition, pp. 3
[81] Greene G., The Heart of the Matter pp., 15

communicates a real residue of feeling between husband and wife, even if it is only the comfort that comes from habit. These contradictions and complexities where the artistic imagination transforms the writer's intention make *The Heart of the Matter* a powerful novel.

The novel's achievement is the recreation of a spiritual journey through indirection which was not the novelist's obvious intent or why else should the paraphernalia of religion have been given so insistent an elaboration? What the narrative finally reveals is that Ali's murder is the major crime and Scubie's awareness of these depths is, in a sense, his redemption. In the eyes of the world his suicide, and his friendship with Yusef are unpardonable transgressions but the religious sense points elsewhere. These subtleties, suggested but not sufficiently defined, underlie the skilfully controlled ambiguity which heightens narrative tension and deepens existential truth but has led to misinterpretation of the text. Greene has commented on his sense of shock at the public response to the novel and its protagonist. What he clearly intended as exposure of pride founded on pity was received as the sad portrayal of a sympathetic figure involved in a human dilemma brought on by a hard and insensitive wife. The emphasis on pity and the fact that the novel was indeed written at a time of great personal anguish to Greene when his own personal problems had rough parallels with Scobie's is undoubtedly responsible for the novel's weakness - an excessive focus on religious scruple[82].

Since Greene dislikes the novel and judges it harshly one ought, perhaps, to look at its good points. The thematic argument - the necessity of taking on responsibility - is here set down as dogma in Greene's view of the world. That the power of this argument is somewhat distorted by the weakness of the protagonist and by Greene's own preoccupation with religious scruple, belief, and faith, is indeed a pity: it obscures the real point of the novel which suggests that Scobie's implication in the murder of Ali is the most grievous of his transgressions. When the novel abandons the perspective of the religious sense to sentimentalise over the idea of sin, ,and to examine religious 'regulations', it fails to enthuse despite the intensity with which subjective experience is rendered.

### 3.6. The Third Man

*The Third Man (1949)* is not a novel. This is a screenplay. It set a particular style for British films, a combination of realism of background and penetration of character, based on the two main qualities of the British wartime cinema, a feeling for documentary detail and social purpose. Carol Reed explained the success of the film, shot in 1949, by saying that it was

[82] Johnstone, R., The Will to Believe, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1984, p. 76

one of the first British films allowed to be made chiefly on location. Until that time, making films in studios had falsified and glamourised all. In this film, the wet, brooding labyrinths of ruined and occupied Vienna express the traps and ambiguities facing people there, the harsh and shifting choices forced on the survivors of the war. Men plot out their little schemes in front of an arras of urban disaster. Harry Lime scuttling across the bomb-sites, the small operator trying to get rich on the surface of a total waste, is the symbol of the futility of shrewdness in the face of devastation. Lime tries to exploit war and shortages. He dilutes the life-giving penicillin until it gives death. But he is caught in the same vicious circle and in a closed city; as the British Military Policeman Calloway says, "A rat would have more chance in a closed room without a hole and a pack of terriers loose". War and its aftermath crushes all individuals, however clever they may be.

Originally, Greene was sent to Vienna to find a contemporary story there, which he grafted onto an old idea about meeting a dead man called Harry. He began by writing the screenplay as a story. "One cannot make the first act of creation in script form," he declared, "one must have the sense of more material than one needs to draw on." After writing the story, he worked closely with Reed on the script, which Reed changed in the shooting and editing of the film[83].

### 3.7. Conclusion

Greene's novels present characters often in close-up, in extreme situations, at dramatic moments, to accentuate that there is no true religion, nor the moral life without its embodiment in politics, and there is no true politics without religious underpinning. His protagonists are similar to each other. They are **lonely individuals fighting to find peace and comfort in the world that has lost its absolute values and traditions**.

The frontiers of experience explored in the novels cannot be ignored and have to be confronted to unravel the significance of Greene's achievement. The fact that the fiction does not follow any political idea through to its ideological conclusion has been responsible for the general neglect of this area of study. But it is this fact that they do not conform to an ideological mould which accounts for the freedom, humanism and perhaps the permanence of his achievement. Graham Greene's novels illuminate the moral sense by structuring the narrative within a framework of political consciousness and the religious sense. They

[83] http://www.filmsite.org/thir.html

illustrate that religion and politics, traditionally seen as antagonistic forces, Church and State, sacred and secular, God and Caesar, are elements of the same reality.

## SUMMARY

Graham Greene has often declared himself to be a political novelist, not a Catholic novelist but a novelist who happens to be a Catholic. This is not to say that he is comfortable with the word 'politics' in relation to art and indeed prefers not to be drawn into any discussion of the politics of his noyels.[84] Greene is neither a polemicist nor a political activist. The politics of his fiction is the politics of life itself . The novels do not offer a system but life as it is lived in our world with contradictions and complexities that characterise human relations. The incoherence and inconsistency of behaviour and thought are emphasised in order to arrive at the possibility of truth.

Critical estimates of Graham Greene centre on the obsessions and fixations attached to Catholicism, the theme of betrayal, lost innocence corrupt human nature. They illustrate the skill of the craftsman, the sensibility of a writer of his time influenced by the popular form of the thriller and film. All these reveal the art of the writer without comprehending his vision. My interpretation of Greene's work recognises the religious and political bases of his novels to trace the development of a vision in which the topical and the contemporary accentuate the fundamental and the enduring. Both aspects are seen to combine creatively so that a sense of the eternal permeates the human and the 'now' to contribute to the complexity of experience.

[84] http://members.tripod.com/~greeneland/index.htm

# Appendix

Graham Greene wrote lots of books. Here's the list of his works[85]:

1) 1925 *Babbling April*. Oxford: Blackwell
2) 1929 *The Man Within*. London: Heinemann; New York: Doubleday
3) 1930 *The Name of Action*. London: Heinemann; New York: Doubleday
4) 1931 *Rumour at Nightfall*. London: Heinemann; New York: Doubleday
5) 1932 *Stamboul Train*. London: Heinemann;
6) 1932 *Orient Express* New York: Doubleday
7) 1934 *It's a Battlefield*. London: Heinemann; New York: Doubleday
8) 1934 *The Old School*. London: Jonathan Cape
9) 1935 *England Made Me* London: Heinemann; New York: Doubleday
10) 1935 *The Bear Fell Free*. London: Grayson
11) 1935 *The Basement Room & Other Stories*. London: Cresset Press
12) 1936 *Journey Without Maps*. London: Heinemann; New York: Doubleday
13) 1936 *A Gun For Sale*. London: Heinemann; *This Gun for Hire* New York: Doubleday
14) 1938 *Brighton Rock*. London: Heinemann; New York: Viking
15) 1939 *The Lawless Roads*. London: Heinemann; New York: Viking Press
16) 1939 *The Confidential Agent*. London: Heinemann; New York: Viking Press
17) 1940 *The Power and the Glory*. London: Heinemann; *The Labyrinthine Ways* New York: Viking Press
18) 1942 *British Dramatists*. London: Collins
19) 1943 *The Ministry of Fear*. London: Heinemann; New York: Viking Press
20) 1946 *The Little Train*. London: Eyre and Spottiswoode; New York: Lothrop, Lee and Shepard
21) 1947 *Nineteen Stories*. London: Heinemann; New York: Viking Press
22) 1948 *The Heart of the Matter*. London: Heinemann; New York: Viking Press

[85] http://members.tripod.com/~greeneland/biblio.htm

23) 1948 *Why do I Write?* London: Percival Marshall; New York: British Book Centre

24) 1950 *The Third Man*. London: Heinemann; New York: Viking Press

25) 1950 *The Fallen Idol*. London: Heinemann; New York: Viking

26) 1950 *The Little Fire Engine*. London: Parrish; New York: Lothrop, Lee and Shepard

27) 1951 *The Lost Childhood and Other Essays*. London: Eyre and Spottiswoode; New York: Viking Press

28) 1951 *The End of the Affair*. London: Heinemann; New York: Viking Press

29) 1952 *The Little Horse Bus*. London: Parrish; New York: Lothrop, Lee and Shepard

30) 1953 *The Little Steamroller*. London: Parrish; New York: Lothrop, Lee and Shepard

31) 1953 *The Living Room*. London: Heinemann; New York: Viking Press

32) 1953 *Essais Catholiques*. Paris: Editions du Seuil.

33) 1954 *Twenty-One Stories* London: Heinemann; New York: Viking Press

34) 1955 *Loser Takes All*. London: Heinemann; New York: Viking Press

35) 1955 *The Quiet American*. London: Heinemann; New York: Viking Press

36) 1957 *The Spy's Bedside Book* London: Rupert Hart-Davis

37) 1957 *The Potting Shed*. London: Heinemann; New York: Viking Press

38) 1958 *Our Man in Havana*. London: Heinemann; New York: Viking Press

39) 1959 *The Complaisant Lover*. London: Heinemann; New York: Viking Press

40) 1961 *A Burnt-Out Case*. London: Heinemann; New York: Viking Press

41) 1961 *In Search of a Character: Two African Journals*. London: Bodley Head; New York: Viking Press

42) 1963 *A Sense of Reality*. London: Bodley Head; New York: Viking Press

43) 1964 *Carving a Statue*. London: Bodley Head

44) 1966 *The Comedians*. London: Bodley Head; New York: Viking Press

45) 1967 *May We Borrow Your Husband? And Other Comedies of the Sexual Life*. London: Bodley Head; New York: Viking Press

46) 1969 *Collected Essays*. London: Bodley Head; New York: Viking Press

47) 1969 *Travels with My Aunt*. London: Bodley Head; New York: Viking Press

48) 1971 *A Sort Of Life*. London: Bodley Head; New York: Simon and Shuster

49) 1972 *Collected Stories*. London: Bodley Head and Heinemann; New York: Viking Press

50) 1972 *The Pleasure Dome*. London: Secker & Warburg; New York: Simon & Schuster

51) 1973 *The Honorary Consul*. London: Bodley Head; New York: Simon and Schuster

52) 1974 *Lord Rochester's Monkey*. London: Bodley Head; New York: Viking Press

53) 1975 *An Impossible Woman: The Memories of Dottoressa Moor of Capri*. London: Bodley Head; New York: Viking Press

54) 1975 *The Return of A.J. Raffles*. London: Bodley Head; New York: Simon & Schuster

55) 1978 *The Human Factor*. London: Bodley Head; New York: Simon & Schuster

56) 1980 *Doctor Fischer of Geneva or The Bomb Party*. London: Bodley Head; New York: Simon & Schuster

57) 1980 *Ways of Escape*. London: Bodley Head; New York: Simon & Schuster

58) 1981 *The Great Jowett*. London: Bodley Head

59) 1982 *J'Accuse: The Dark Side of Nice*. London: Bodley Head essay Nice

60) 1982 *Monsignor Quixote*. London: Bodley Head; New York: Simon & Schuster

61) 1983 *Yes and No*. London: Bodley Head;

62) 1983 *For Whom the Bell Chimes*. London: Bodley Head

63) 1984 *Getting to Know the General: The Story of an Involvement*. London: Bodley Head; New York: Simon & Schuster

64) 1985 *Collected Plays*. London: Penguin Books

65) 1985 *The Tenth Man*. London: Bodley Head and Anthony Blond; New York: Simon & Schuster

66) 1988 *The Captain and the Enemy*. London: Reinhardt Books; New York: Viking Press

67) 1989 *Yours etc.: Letters to the Press*. London: Reinhardt Books; New York: Viking Press

68) 1990 *Reflections*. London: Reinhardt Books; New York: Viking Press

69) 1990 *The Last Word and Other Stories*. London: Reinhardt Books; Toronto: Lester & Orpen Dennys; New York: Viking

70) 1992 *A World of My Own*. London: Reinhardt Books dream diary

71) 1993 *The Graham Greene Film Reader: Mornings in the Dark*. Manchester: Carcanet Press

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13. Greene G., The Power and the Glory, Penguin, London, 1979, p. 14-15
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