THE MORAL THEMES

In Graham Greene's Major Novels

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Degree in English Literature

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This thesis aims at the discussion of the moral themes in Graham Greene's literary work, particularly exploring his four novels:

1. Brighton Rock  
2. The Heart of the Matter  
3. The End of the Affair  
4. The Power and the Glory

Then it compares these works and the included ideas with Greene's actual life and thinking, and the effect of that in the making of his characters.

There is in the beginning the attempt to measure Greene's literary work, particularly these four novels before us, against the recognized limits in the definition of literature and the features known to distinguish it from other forms of knowledge or writing.

That measuring in the thesis leads to the discussion of the accusations of subversiveness or racialism aimed at Greene in his literary work.

The thesis has been divided into four chapters:

**Chapter One**: takes the attempt to define literature and recognize its aim (or rather effect), then an attempt to
measure Greene's work against that.

**Chapter Two**: includes the moral features of the characters in the four novels, and is divided into two sections:

Section One: the moral features of Greene's heroes, generally.

Section Two: the suicidal spirit in his heroes or their sickness unto death.

**Chapter Three**: gets to a detailed discussion of the moral problems, in

the following sections:

Section One: knowledge and experience.

Section Two: right and wrong vs. good and evil.

Section Three: hope and despair.

Section Four: Judas complex; the theme of betrayal.

**Chapter Four**: discusses the accusations aimed at Greene in his literary work, including two sections:

Section One: the accusation of subversiveness.

Section Two: the accusation of racialism.

The way of looking at the problems mentioned in these chapters is by taking the four novels concerned in the thesis as the base of forming any of the ideas, but other works are
referred to when they are involved in the discussion. Sometimes the subject is taken generally and then it comes with examples from the four novels and a detailed discussion of Greene's treatment of the subject.
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Chapter Two

The Moral Features of Greene’s Characters

Section One : Greene’s Type of Heroes :

Graham Greene is still classical and Aristotelian in the features of his tragic heroes in spite of the shocking realism in the characterization of his novels. Aristotle’s hero ‘ is not a man of flawless perfection , nor yet one of consummate villainy ; by which we must not understand that he has merely average or mediocre qualities. He rises, indeed, above the common level in moral elevation and dignity, but he is not free from frailties and imperfections.’(Watson,1989:260)

Scobie’s character in The Heart of the Matter applies to Aristotle’s limits of ‘… like ourselves’ (1972:XIII,last note)_with all the qualities of every man . He begins as a good man , faithful to his wife , and clear in his job of any of the dirty business that is going on around him . The cause of his degradation is his passion . His moral flaw is that he thinks he is responsible for things he is in fact never responsible for . His feeling of responsibility extends to include even things like his own feelings . Had he left his wife , Wilson would have filled that gap , or had he left Helen , Bagster would have come along as immediately as
they actually did after his sudden death. Scobie directed his feelings towards pity and responsibility unaware of the others’ being ready to forget him whenever he withdraws from the scene, leaving them behind. One of them would do that if he chose the other, particularly Helen, the responsibility he feels towards whom is merely delusion to vindicate his act in a kind of self-deceit. He is unable to end his affair with Helen or face the society, illustrating the moral (hamartia), ‘a fault or error where the act is conscious and intentional but not deliberate … committed in anger or passion.’ (Watson, 1989:217)

The whisky priest in *The Power and the Glory* is also Aristotelian in the sense that he is like ourselves. He was put by Greene between the martyr whom the mother was reading to her children about and who was too good to be real, and the other example of Padre Jose who gives up his faith.

Sarah in *The End of the Affair*, is an ordinary person. She is also condemned to exist and be defeated by the surrounding circumstances that she knew would make her break the vow she has taken upon herself if she lived any more. That is why she prays to God not to let her live like that, with Bendrix chasing her, and she with all her love to Bendrix _wants to stay faithful to a husband who is sexually impotent_. Bendrix knew it from the beginning, with the
mind of an author who knows well the logical order of cause and sequence in the actual plot of life, and he knows that all he needs is to find Sarah and she falls back upon him.

Implying the basic Aristotelian limits of a tragic hero, Pinkie in *Brighton Rock* does not fulfill that. He is not like ourselves, but rather bad than good. Such characters are like Macbeth, who 'does not start with criminal purpose. In its original quality his nature was not devoid of nobility, but with him, the primal defect is the taint of ambition, which

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under the prompting of a stronger character than his own and a will of inflexible force works in him as a subtle poison. In a case such as this, tragic fear is heightened into awe, as we trace the growth of a mastering passion, which, beginning in a fault or frailty enlarges itself in its successive stages, till the first false step has issued, and has engendered fresh crime.' (Watson, 1989:322) But interpreting Aristotle’s tragic flaw in such a very wide sense as to include characters like Macbeth (Ibid.:323) and our Pinkie, is a matter of exaggeration and dragging Aristotle towards ranges and limits he never allowed. His ideal tragic hero is ‘not a man of flawless perfection, nor yet of consummate villainy.'(Ibid.:260)

In *Brighton Rock* there is still part of the plot to be
fulfilled, the reversal of the situation; the moment when Rose hears Pinkie’s words on the tape and then the moment of remorse when she realizes that everything was nothing. This rather makes Rose typical as Aristotle’s heroine.

The question whether Greene’s characters are convincing as real characters or not, is a question of how much realism there was in his characterization. His plots are logically convincing because he tends to life and its circumstances rather than the acts of the characters to be prolongers for the events in the narrative. But their psychology is not that stable as to be above their circumstances. It is changing with the events, but always around one centre: rejecting life as it is, and seeking some way out. But when it is said that Pinkie is not Aristotelian among Greene’s heroes, it doesn’t mean that he is too bad to be real. Such evil characters exist and they are seen everywhere in every-day life. What the readers don’t want is getting involved, with the writer, in the complicated psychology of such characters, exploring the dark spots of their minds and dissecting the body of the society looking for the causes of the development of such a consummate villainy.

Greene’s characterization is different in that he mixes
the heroes’ circumstances with their state of mind. Here, along with the circumstances of a modern mixed up world, he brings the aspect of destiny from the ancient dramatic plots where the hero’s character is his destiny: his persons’ characters determine their qualities that form their acts. They are deprived of their free will and led to the end absolutely by the action of the tragedy that is controlled by their destiny. Aristotle wrote in his *Poetics*:

> Tragedy is an imitation, not of men, but of an action and of life, and life consists in action, and its end is a mode of action not a quality. Now character determines men’s qualities, but it is by their actions that they are happy or the reverse... Again without action there cannot be a tragedy. (1972:VI,9-11)

Greene brought that together with the early twentieth century literature of psychology and analysis where it is inside the human brain that significant battles of life take place, and mental conflicts have a subtlety and intensity, and an importance far beyond what might be expected from mere external examination of a human being. Some of the famous figures who represented this modern movement were D.H. Lawrence, E. M. Forster, and Christopher Isherwood, besides others

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some of whom are of no less importance.
But Greene used images from every-day life to feed the realism of his characters and action. His characters are very like the inhabitants of Eliot’s *Waste Land* where there is the Fisher-King whose death brings relief for people left behind. There is always the theme of the renewal of life through death, but some times with Greene’s dying heroes it is life and hope to other people than themselves. Greene’s being chiefly influenced by T.S. Eliot and his images is unquestionable; Michael Shelden wrote on this subject:

*Eliot argued that one way to reach his level of intensity is to establish a “juxtaposition of the matter-of-fact and the fantastic.” Of course this is exactly what he does with great effect in The Waste Land, placing sordid realities within a visionary framework dominated by the figures of Tiresias and the Fisher-King. It is also similar to an approach that Greene uses in several works. Into the sordid lives of Pinkie, Scobie, Maurice Bendrix and the whiskey priest or “the hollow man”, as he is once described _ Greene brings intense visions of heaven and hell ... but there was no point in writing poems like Eliot’s when the opportunities were so much greater for fleshing out The Waste Land in poetic prose. (1994:100)*

The religious theme in the thinking and as a background of the moral choice of Greene’s characters, adds a new dimension to the intensity of their psychology. They all turn around the question of the existence of a merciful God, and there are always the religious post-climax questions of
‘goodness ’ in completely evil characters (Pinkie’s example), the salvation of the damned (Scobie), the conversion of the hating agnostic

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(Bendrix), or even the martyrdom of a priest with a bottle of brandy and a bastard child. Greene is non-romantic in the moral structure of his heroes: they are not like Conrad’s strong men who are representatives of the neo-romantic movement heroes: ‘fantastic, heroic, or superhuman characters.’ (Megan, 1985:73) Although Conrad’s heroes’ inner thought is shown in a way that makes them convincingly real, they still suffer, as romantic heroes, the lack of subjective personality. Greene’s heroes are more convincing as real modern-life, and even universal characters because of their unstable psychology and state of mind when their circumstances and society deprived them of their free will and undermined their stability and rectitude.

The school of impressionism and stream of consciousness, with representatives such as Virginia Woolf, Proust, and James Joyce, is chiefly concerned with the mental life of the individual, but they are generally detached from the social, political or ethical problems. Theirs are different from Greene’s heroes in that Greene’s are condemned to live their every-day life and undergo
degradation day after day, created by the circumstances of their work or social relations. The change with Greene’s characters is linked with factors as love, secrecy, revenge, jealousy, need, and such social and material aspects of life. The writers of this school ‘are concerned with the way the human brain reacts to its external stimulations, even the most trivial. To them a cup of tea or a hand clasp may be as important as the fall of an empire.’ (Ibid.:92)

However, Graham Greene stuck to his classical realistic style in his

characterization and narrative, although he used both that and the exposition of the deep and complicated psychology of his characters, but he always kept his distance from the use of modern techniques like ‘stream of consciousness’ and such vogues of the modern age.
Section Two: Greene's Suicidal Heroes:

Greene’s suicidal heroes all share the psychology of sickness unto death. In Greene’s actual life this theme had been obvious since his boyhood and through his youth, and he was fond of suicidal games like Russian roulette (Shelden, 1994:7-8). Whether that story about Russian roulette was true or not, the theme of suicide occupied Greene’s thinking and adventures all along his life. His adventures in Vietnam as a correspondent of *Life* in 1951 witnessed his playing with death; now following French troops into the town and then accompanying a pilot in a bombing mission, and so on (Ibid.:387), whatever the
motives were. There is also the fascination of dying in Africa, as Michael Shelden mentioned in his biography:

... but there is a strong possibility that Greene never meant to survive his journey without maps. He was half in love with the idea of dying in Africa. For much of his youth he had been fascinated by the 'Dark Continent', and his imagination thrived on the romantic images of death which filled many accounts of European adventures in Africa. In a letter written to the Times Literary Supplement in 1966, Greene argued that many Victorians who went to the Continent—from Dr. Livingstone to General Gordon—were acting out a “death wish”. (Ibid.189)

In his novels, Greene introduces his type of suicidal heroes whose self-destructiveness is a result of complete despair. They always hoped to fulfill what they had failed to achieve here in this life, elsewhere after their death, or maybe their death itself is hope for the others and a way of escape for them. Gangeshwar Rai, in his book: Graham Greene, An Existential Approach, quoted Kierkegaard:

*The despair which is conscious of being Despair, as also it is conscious of being a self where there is after all something Eternal, and then is either in despair at not willing to be itself, or in despair at willing to be itself.* (1954:180)
But the problem with most of his characters is that in spite of their being granted death by Greene at moments of impossible situations, they also lack the needed confidence when they move to that eternity. The final form of the situation they leave behind may decide the form of their being in eternity. This may not be different from the case with other characters who are condemned to live on in suffering, being brought back to life; as Rose in *Brighton Rock* and Maurice Bendrix in *The End of the Affair*. Michael Shelden remarks:

*The tragedy of so many characters in Graham Greene’s books is that they must struggle to live with guilt and pain that can never be assuaged. The only escape is death and even that might not do the trick. As Maurice Bendrix fears in *The End of the Affair*, eternity might simply be 'the endless prolongation of the moment of death'. Scars form, but the wounds are never forgotten.* (1994:60)

What Maurice Bendrix feared about eternity is that the renewal of life which they sought through death might be only a revival of the old life, when the wounds outlive everything else. The same thought came in the priest’s mind in *The Power and the Glory*, at the moment of his execution when ‘tears poured down his face; he was not at
the moment afraid of damnation _ even the fear of pain was in the background. He felt only an immense disappointment because he had to go to God empty-handed, with nothing done at all.’(1962:210)

The act of suicide was brought in different forms, even when some characters pray to God for immediate death, there is no difference between that and killing oneself, it is only in the terminology of the laws we are taught.

Greene depicts his suicidal heroes as Christ figures when their death is redemption for people who, in general, were completely indifferent. Then he even attributes the act of suicide to Christ: in *The Heart of the Matter*, Scobie thought to himself:

> The priests told you it was the unforgivable sin, the final expression of an unrepentant despair, and of course one accepts the Church’s teaching. But they taught also that God had sometimes broken his own laws, and was it more impossible for him to put out a hand of forgiveness into the suicidal darkness and chaos than to have woken himself in the tomb, behind the stone? Christ had not been murdered: you couldn’t murder God: Christ had killed himself: he had hung himself on the cross. (1966:181-2)

The exception here is Pinkie’s death, which is a mad reaction when he witnesses the collapse of all his plans to destroy the others and run away with his crimes; but even
when that was the case, there is some resemblance in it in the sense that it comes to save many lives.

Scobie and Sarah share the same idea of withdrawing from the scene which they think had got complicated and incurable. Both knew very well had they lived, their affairs would have been impossible to end. Both of them prayed to God for immediate death. Sarah, in her last letter to Bendrix, wrote at the end:

*I pray to God he won’t keep me alive like this.*

(Greene, 1970:144)

The same thing was prayed for by Scobie:

*I don’t want to plan any more,*' he said suddenly aloud. '*They wouldn’t need me if I were dead. No one needs the dead. The dead can be forgotten. O God, give me death before I give them unhappiness.*' (Greene, 1966:192)

Sarah’s prayer is answered, but Scobie’s is not, but that makes no difference. She was braver in her decision to end the affair with Bendrix, but she doesn’t take that step towards death that is taken by Scobie.

The most significant of all is the priest’s death in *The Power and the Glory*; he gives his life to his enemies when he had a good chance to escape and start a sort of good life.
again. That was the first Christ-like feature in him. His desire to be himself—not to practise any sort of self-deceit—culminates when he meditates his present state and feels that he is one of Eliot’s hollow men:

... almost as if he had died there with the old man’s head on his shoulder and now wandered in a kind of limbo, because he wasn’t good or bad enough ... Life didn’t exist any more.

(Greene, 1962:147)

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After the long journey exploring his world, the priest’s death becomes more significant because he had seen enough of the evil of the world and even in himself he experienced that evil; and the fact that the people around him were either betraying him, hunting for him, or indifferent, gives his death more significance. However good or bad he is, or either feeling none of these, he is the last one of ‘them’; the priests who gave up their faith and conformed to the new secular rules of the state. The moment that indicates his greatness and his deep understanding of the philosophy of death, was when he thought to himself:

*It was for this world that Christ had died: the more evil you saw and heard about you, the greater glory lay around the death. It was too easy to die for what was good or beautiful, for home or children or a civilization— it needed a God to...*
die for the half-hearted and the corrupt .’
(Greene, 1962: 201)

Michael Shelden, in his biography The Man Within, exerted all his strength to prove that the priest is merely a hollow man and that his death is insignificant, while he was trying to explain how Greene’s borrowing from T. S. Eliot had extended to include The Power and the Glory, which ‘is merely a prose extension to Eliot’s The Hollow Men’. Then he goes to the evidence in the novel, observing:

Very early in the novel, before the reader has learned the true identity of the whiskey priest, the character is referred to as “The Hollow Man”. His world has much in common with Eliot’s vision of a “cactus land”

peopled by lost souls who find themselves surrounded by broken images of

an abandoned faith ... The Hollow Man in Greene’s novel finds that he is the last representative of God in a land which recognizes neither His Power nor His Glory. Churches have been demolished and no priest dared to remain in the area except the Hollow Man, who has lived in isolation for so long that he has created his own version of Catholicism ... as he explains near the end of the novel, he is possessed by the same sort of pride that caused Lucifer’s fall. He stays in the Godless land not because he is brave, but because he
wants to live by his own rules ... As a whiskey priest, he can see his weakness as strength. He may be a drunk, but at least he is God’s drunk. Because he is the last priest, God is stuck with him, whether He likes it or not. But as the Hollow Man, he knows that he represents nothing. The old religion has been vanquished, and his whiskey and card tricks are a pitiful substitute for the Power and the Glory ...

He is such a failure that he cannot face his own death with dignity ... Greene reinforces the ignominy of the priest’s death by presenting it from the point of view of the dentist Mr. Tench, in an ordinary novel such a major event would be seen through the eyes of either the victim or his enemy, but Greene filtered every detail through the eyes of a distracted bystander. (1994:263-6)

Then he brings more and more evidences to what he sees of the character of the priest, including the priest’s admiration of the night he spent in prison with criminals, seeing everything as beautiful, even the bad smells and sounds. (Ibid.:267)

First of all let’s take the moment of the priest’s death, which Shelden

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mentioned near the end of his attack on the character of the priest, because it is dramatically more important than the other
events in the novel. What Michael Shelden has missed is that in such a narrative it is the moment of decision that is more important and more significant than the moment of actual death. In the Gospel the Last Supper and Christ’s prayer in Gethsemane, followed by the moment when he was arrested, are more significant than the account of events at the moment of crucifixion. It makes greater the glory and significance of his death when he is left alone by those whom he died for.

The pride of being the last and the ‘only’ one of ‘them’, to which Shelden referred, is just self satisfaction after a long experience with ‘mortal’ sins, not the pride of a film star whose every step is marked by perfumes and flowers. Here it is death that is following every step and even the moment of the priest’s death is surrounded by people here and there away from the yard of execution, either indifferent or afraid to show themselves up and ready to deny him at any time.

The scene of the moment of death, which Shelden considered as a major event, is just like the scene of Christ being left alone at that moment. Who would witness and tell about it other than someone indifferent like Mr. Tench here in the novel and, in the story of the crucifixion, like the woman who pointed at Peter as one of Christ’s followers and he denied him three times. In the Gospel we are told that 'all
the disciples left him and ran away.' (St. Mark, 1991: 14:50) If that

was not that important, why then was it told in such detail of his being left alone by all, unless that it reinforces the significance of the cause and the fulfillment of death as redemption for people who are indifferent or at least afraid to be described as his followers. The humiliation the priest receives and his last words make no difference, since he had said his word at the moment of decision. Shelden used the priest’s last word ‘Excuse’ against him, assuming that ‘it is a hopelessly ambiguous word,’ (1994:267) while there is absolutely nothing to blame the priest for or criticize his character at that complicated circumstance; these last words may actually belong to another world; that the moment of death cannot be fully understood or explained except by the dead themselves. Greene put it like that:

*He was trying to say something: what was the phrase they were always supposed to use? That was routine too, but perhaps his mouth was too dry, because nothing came out except a word that sounded like 'Excuse'*(1962:216)

Christ’s last words, ‘Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?’ which mean: My God, my God, why did you abandon me? ’ (St. Mark, 1991:15:34), were either to be interpreted in
another way than their literal meaning, or attributed to Judas the traitor, who was on the cross after God had given him the likeness of Jesus Christ when the soldiers came to arrest him, by those who completely reject the idea of crucifixion.

In fact, it was Greene himself who was bored by two things that he wanted the priest to be saved from: the empty decency and secularism of the materialistic modern world, and the tough rules of the Church and daily religious practice. So he brought the death of the priest between two patterns: the life of Padre Jose, and the death of the young martyr in the story that the mother was reading to her children. Greene’s martyr is neither the one who gives up his faith obeying the state; nor is he the unreal one whose story is full of relics and smiles at the moment of death. The interesting thing about the priest is that he broke the rules of the Church sleeping with a woman and consequently having a child in the days when priests like Padre Jose were certainly in a state of easy conformity, but when the state persecuted religion and made the priests marry and give up religious practice, he came to be the only one left, disobedient and stubbornly sticking to his faith. All
the priest’s journey is a journey of self realization, so, the beginning is different from the end. Maria Couto discussed this idea when she wrote:

Greene called The Power and the Glory a pilgrimage and there are flashbacks along the novel 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 a 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.” (Greene, 1962:21-2) ... Pursued by his conscience, by fear of God and the law, the priest descends to abysmal depths ... The narrative does not deride the frailty of the whiskey priest and of Padre Jose but presents their experience as 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 realization and enables him to perceive his own earlier complacency when he was free to practise his duties in security and comfort. ’ (1990:70-2)

So, the idea of the whiskey priest being only a hollow man whose death is nothing, may apply to the early
days of his journey. His debate with the Lieutenant is rather a kind of self criticism and a reflection of thoughts he was obsessed with long before his meeting with the Lieutenant. His death at the end comes as a result of a train of thoughts about the value of his life and death and of the world he is dying for. He had a strong desire to live for the people and, at the end, to die for them. When he comes to practise his duties in remote villages and on tops of mountains among the poor people, he himself hungry and worn out by travelling, he feels that he isn’t worthwhile, and that every thing which happens to the villagers for his sake is something he doesn’t deserve, so he prays to God to 'send them someone who is more worthwhile to suffer for,' when it 'seemed to him a damnable mockery that they should sacrifice themselves for a whiskey priest with a bastard child.’ (Greene, 1962:136) But Greene chose him for his martyr and he accepted it because he realized the suffering he is bringing upon the villagers in return for some religious rites that he sees as useless and hollow.

Pinkie’s death in *Brighton Rock* is similar to that of the heroes in the other novels in one way: that it is an escape from a
circumstance that had become impossible to overcome. It is so selfish and desperate because if he found anyone else to sacrifice, he would wait. But this does not mean that he liked or enjoyed life at all. Life meant nothing to him but a biological recycling of bodies, and their existence a mere process of reproduction, living miserably and dying slowly. Once, Rose said to him that life was not so bad, he answered:

Don’t you believe it ... I’ll tell you what it is. It’s gaol, it’s not knowing where to get some money. Worms and cataract, cancer. You hear ’em shrieking from the upper windows _ children being born. It’s dying slowly. (Greene, 1970:266)

As that is what Pinkie thinks of life, he doesn’t have the least desire to live or enjoy his life. His adaptability to any new sort of life is zero. The thing that makes him want to run away with his crimes and even commit more crimes is his fear of the least thought of being defeated. Even his death is an escape from the scene of his weakness and complete failure.

Among Greene’s characters and in Greene land, one may die for the life of the others, as is the case with Scobie, Sarah, and the whiskey priest. Even suicide may be forgiven or vindicated there, but one can’t accept to live upon the death of the others unless he is absolutely self-centered, such as the example of Pinkie. But Greene never granted any
his characters such a secure escape through death unless he or she

deserves and fully appreciates its value. Even poor Rose was punished by
Greene, for her ignorance, with more life, while Sarah’s prayer was answered and Scobie and the priest were allowed to escape.
Chapter Three

The Moral Problems in the Novels

Section One: Knowledge and Experience:

In *The Heart of the Matter* Scobie thought to himself:

*The trouble is, ... we know the answer — we Catholics are damned by our knowledge.* (Greene, 1966: 211)

What troubled Scobie here is a problem that is found generally in religious teaching. The individual begins to measure his acts against what he was taught. The difference between the religious and the moral (non-religious) teaching is mainly that a religion gives definite and clear order of the acts, setting them into classes beginning with mortal sins and going down according to the punishment imposed by
God in the hereafter or penances now. This is how one is damned by his knowledge: he knows the answer; he knows when committing a certain sin not only that he is being sinful, but also how very sinful he is being.

The meaning of knowledge and experience with which this section of the thesis is concerned is the moral awareness of the individual, whatever the source of that awareness is, religious or experiential.

The suffering that man had brought, and is bringing, upon himself as a result of knowledge, began with the existence of man on Earth. In the Bible there is the story of Adam and Eve when they disobeyed God and ate from the forbidden tree:

*The Lord God said, 'Now the man has become like one of us and has knowledge of what is good and what is bad. He must not be allowed to take fruit from the tree that gives life.'* (1991:3:22-23)

We are also told that they were not aware of their being naked—not embarrassed by the sight of any of the parts of their bodies—and when they ate from that tree they became aware of the difference and tried to hide from God, feeling ashamed of their nakedness.

The question here is: were Adam and Eve not good
when they were not morally aware of their being naked or any such things? No one would deny that it was a kind of bliss that they had been in before they disobeyed God, otherwise it would not be considered punishment to be taken away from a worse state. It was, then, better for them to have been unaware. There was no suffering in that age of innocent ignorance. But, in the same time, is it bad having acquired a kind of knowledge that God had kept for ages? Of course: no; but man is not really equipped to have the all-knowledge that God has, nor was he ready in Adam and Eve’s prelapsarian age to have the least of what he has now. But after all, knowledge is the inevitable change that man had to undertake to face life. Adam was given knowledge about two aspects, so he was prepared to understand himself and what is going on around him; first when God taught him the names of things and then when He let him know about himself. The first aspect he discovered in himself was sex. Greene

brought these two factors together as accelerating factors towards knowledge and experience: love as the inward factor, and secrecy as the surrounding social circumstance; which create the reaction made by the individual when they act in him. In *The Heart of the Matter* Scobie thought of Helen:
How much older she is now than she was a month ago. She hadn’t been capable of a scene then, but she had been educated by love and secrecy: he was beginning to form her. He wondered whether if this went on long enough, she would be indistinguishable from Louise. In my school, he thought wearily, they learn bitterness and frustration and how to grow old. (Greene, 1966:171)

To Greene, the results of such an experience wrought by the emotions of the individual and the surrounding social factors, are bitterness and frustration.

Pinkie in *Brighton Rock* liked to preserve his ignorance of married and sexual life, but Greene never left him alone; he made him marry and face that experience which he hated for a long time. When he and Rose got married and just after the wedding:

*They felt as if they were shut out from an Eden of ignorance. On this side there was nothing to look forward to but experience.* (1970:171)

It may be said that what was basically loathsome to Pinkie is poverty and the mindless search for sexual joy, especially in married life, and the consequential coming to life in such conditions. It is true that Pinkie hated poverty, but what he always remembered of the whole circumstance that brought him to life was the movement of the bed at
night. It is like when a patient rejects some kind of food during the time of his illness; naturally he does not like the times of his illness, but he may continue to be disgusted by every thing related to that. This reminds us of the genre of ‘the Garden’ that praised the prelapsarian age in the Garden of Eden in times before man had a woman to accompany him there and forever. But more obvious here is the sense of existentialism: in the 1960s J. D. Salinger wrote his novel: *The Catcher in the Rye*, with the hero at the end wishing he was a catcher in the rye; to save the innocent from falling into experience.

What is existential here about Greene is that, besides what he thinks of knowledge and experience as the cause of frustration and bitterness, he also attributes happiness to absolute ignorance on the side of the good and innocent, otherwise to egotism and evil, he wrote in *The Heart of the Matter*:

*Point me a happy man, and I will point you either egotism, evil _or else an absolute ignorance._* (1966:117)

The good should suffer, damned by his Knowledge. It isn’t a rule that Greene always followed, but a phenomenon in his novels that most of his happy characters are either selfish and evil, as Pinkie usually is, as well as the mestizo in *The Power and the Glory* who betrays the priest for money, and many officers in *The Heart of the Matter* who
are corrupt and socially uncaring. Either this, or ignorant as Louise in *The Heart of the Matter* who is unaware of the others’ boredom and her husband’s cold feeling towards her. Rose in *Brighton Rock* is partly like that; when

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she doesn’t know of Pinkie’s hatred and the reason why he had married her. Yes, she was aware of Pinkie’s evil character, but the thing that she didn’t know was that he married her because she was the only witness of the murder he had committed in the beginning of the novel. She was happy with Pinkie because she was neglected before his coming in her life, and he showed his unreal love as long as he could pretend. Although he was sometimes harsh and cruel with her, but he was always trying to convince her of his love. What she thought of Pinkie and his love of her wasn’t misunderstanding, it was sheer deceit from him and sheer ignorance from her. The tragedy here is in her social ignorance when she accepted a ‘kind of love’ that came in a time when she was absolutely neglected, and Pinkie was even ready to pay that big sum of money her father asked for. Greene seriously introduces the question of knowledge in the way of Rose’s happiness when he makes up the scene of the tape at the end. He leads her at the end towards knowledge to which Kurtz in Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*
referred as ‘the horror’. That horrible shock is so treated in the scene in the last lines of the novel:

There was something to be salvaged from that house and room, something else they wouldn’t be able to get over _ his voice speaking a message to her: if there was a child speaking to a child. 'If he loved you, ' the priest had said, 'that shows ... ' (… there was some good) She walked rapidly in the thin June sunlight towards the worst horror of all. (Greene,1970:246)

Rose wanted to be ignorant to the end _ all her hope depends on that, but she wasn’t left to hope:

‘I want to hope,’ she said (to the priest) ‘but I don’t know how.’ _ the priest said:‘If he loved you, surely, that shows there was some good ... ’ (Greene,1970:246)

To Greene, if she was left either to her choice to be damned with Pinkie or else left to hope for his salvation, she would be happy then. First when she was with Pinkie she felt happy because they were together, however, damned or not. When she saw people coming out of the Church, she thought to herself:

They had their salvation and she had Pinkie and damnation. (Ibid.:194) Then she is again full of hope and fresh happiness when the priest tells her that there was a chance:
A sudden feeling of immense gratitude broke through the pain. (Ibid.:247)

Gangeshwar Rai didn’t get the irony in the last scene, when he considered Rose’s ignorance ‘a capacity to receive the unexpected’ and then:

With the sudden conviction that she carries life, a feeling of immense gratitude breaks through the pain and Rose gets the “sight of a long way off of life going on again” and walks to face “the worst horror of all”, the revelation that the phonograph record holds for her. But this wouldn’t destroy her as she has faced unexpected facts before. (1983:39)

But in fact it wasn’t her capacity to receive any thing unexpected that made her receive the fact that Pinkie is a professional criminal who has a gang working for him or even that he would commit capital crimes such as murdering one of his men. Such things were predictable from the atmosphere of the customary wedding that didn’t take place in the Church, which is illegal in the religious teaching she received since she was a child, and she was aware from the beginning that she was considered in mortal sin. All this acceptance was based on what she had believed of Pinkie’s love. When at the end she discovers that Pinkie had hated her all that time, that can be called ‘the unexpected’, because she received whatever
she received and accepted every thing for the sake of that love. If there was any kind of capacity, it would be based on the vagary of his love. Every thing is to come down when that belief is brought down at the end.

The other question of gratitude here is nothing, some may say that when she discovers that he hated her she will still be grateful to him for his treatment. They forgot that there is what Ida Arnold had told her in the very beginning about her being so treated because she is the only witness to his crime; the murder of Hale the journalist. Another thing is that Greene seems to have deliberately brought the word ‘loved’ not ‘treated kindly’ or ‘noticed’, when the priest told her if so, there was some good in him; some hope.

Rose’s ignorance is not as well looked after as Louise’s in *The Heart of the Matter* by both Scobie and Greene himself, nor is she like Henry in *The End of the Affair*. Louise sometimes feels that she is being kept satisfied by Scobie’s words of affection while she could almost realize sometimes that they were only words with nothing behind. There was nothing mentioned of any feeling of loss at the death of her husband. The fact is that she wanted only to be loved and cared for. Scobie is the only one who has goodness and experience together: the compound of
depression. His experience showed him that his goodness will not last long, so he was to have a quick decision either to end it all (commit suicide) or carry on with everything until he becomes like the others around him.

Henry in *The End of the Affair* wasn’t all that ignorant. He was just trying to ignore, or to look after his ignorance forever. In that scene when Bedrix tries to make him know about Sarah’s mysterious visits to that third man in those days, Bendrix wrote (the narrative is in the third person):

“Surely you’d have liked her cleared.” I said.
“There was nothing to clear, I want to go, please.”
“I think you ought to read the reports.”
“I’ve no intention...” ...so I handed him the last report. He put it straight into the fire and rammed it home with the poker...
“You haven’t got rid of the facts.”
“To hell with the facts.” Henry said. (Greene, 1970: 62-3)

Like Scobie, Sarah wanted to stay clear, after she had made that vow to God to leave Bendrix although she loved him. She was aware of the critical position she is in; with a persistent lover hunting only for a chance to meet her and sure she would immediately fall back upon him, pushed by her love to him and the reality of having a husband who is sexually impotent. She was either to go on like that and certainly repeat every thing all over again, or choose to withdraw from the stage.
In Greene’s novels, ignorance—however innocent or deliberate and selfish—is the secret of survival and happiness, and knowledge and experience are the cause of all the suffering whose only end is either tormented life or desperate death.
Section Two : Right and Wrong Vs Good and Evil :

The problem about this theme with Greene is that he is still practising his double agency there. In his actual life as well as in his novels he is deeply fascinated by the theological concept and use of the terms of good and evil. When he was asked about the reason behind his conversion to Catholicism he answered:

*I had to find a religion ... to measure my evils against.*

(Shelden, 1994: 125)

The religious sense of evil was Greene’s compass in his journey into the heart of darkness. He liked to be a Kurtz who has no restraint, but in the same time has a measure to tell him how far he has gone. Despite his revolt against the traditional teaching of the church and his boredom about the routine of religious practice, he chose the company of the religious sense of evil and good, despising the conventional morality of the modern age and being fascinated by concepts and terms such as ‘sin’, ‘hell’, ‘damnation’ And so on. He didn’t want his sins to be cold
and insignificant. He even once went as far as to lie with one of his mistresses in a church so as to be in God’s view. (Ibid.:388)

In his literary work, Greene led a campaign against the traditional teaching of the Church; in *The Power and the Glory* the priest thinks to himself:

*It was one’s duty, if one could, to rob them of their sentimental notions of what was good.* (1962:127)

But again he preferred to retain the religious terms in the face of the use

in the modern age of the insipid measures of ‘right’ and ‘wrong’.

Faith was always what mattered to Greene, not belief or the laws taught by the Church. His priest in *The Power and the Glory* also retains the use of religious terms but he feels that he had lost the religious standard against which he could measure the evil and good of himself and his society. Sometimes it comes as doubts about his own teaching – once he thought to himself:

*Pedro, the man from the cantina was there too, ... He looked a good man: Perhaps he was a good man: perhaps, the priest thought, I have lost the faculty of judging _ perhaps that woman in the prison was the best person there.*
(1962:177)

The same thing happens at the end when he sees the Lieutenant as a good one, even after what the Lieutenant had said about God:

"You are all alike, you people. You never learn the truth that God knows nothing."

... The priest held the coin in his fist—the price of a mass. He said, with astonishment, "You are a good man." (Ibid.:140)

Greene rejected the materialism of the age and never cared about the modern sense that replaced right and wrong for good and evil. He always showed it as tasteless in comparison with the religious use of the terms: good and evil. Pinkie in *Brighton Rock* boasts about measuring his evils against religious standards:

"It's not what you do," the boy said, "it's what you think."

He boasted. (Greene, 1970:127)

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It gives a spiritual dimension to one’s acts, either good or bad, to be measured against a constant and organized standard of a religion.

Ida Arnold in *Brighton Rock* represents the age with all its attractions and contradictions. Once she is shown as triumphant over Rose and her religious heritage:
“I know one thing you don’t know. I know the difference between Right and Wrong. They didn’t teach you that at school.” Rose didn’t answer, the woman was quite right: the two words meant nothing to her. Their taste was extinguished by stronger foods—Good and Evil. (Greene, 1970: 199)

When here Ida looks that stable and triumphant, like her modern age in its reaction against faith, and its replacement by decency and rationalism. First, her thoughts appeared stable and neat:

_But it did no one any harm, it was just human nature, no one could call her really bad—a bit free-and-easy perhaps, a bit Bohemian. It wasn’t as if she got anything out of it, as if like some people she sucked a man dry and cast him aside… She knew what was right and what was wrong. God didn’t mind a bit of human nature_ what he minded _ and her mind switched away from Phil in pants to her mission, to doing good, to seeing that the evil suffered. (Ibid.: 151)_

But again all that logic was shaken and she, representing her age, longs for more stable ideas and the stronger foods which were displaced:

_Fun…human nature…does no one any harm…Regular as clock work_

_the old excuses came into the alert, sad and dissatisfied_
Greene’s description of Ida's ideas as ‘the old excuses’ refers to the state of the mind of the age when in the beginning it was the fashion to reject the religious ideas of good and evil and then instead of carrying on with that, every excuse becomes dry and insipid.

When Helen in *The Heart of the Matter* asks Major Scobie to explain the contradiction between his religious beliefs and his non-conformity to his Catholicism, he had in mind the idea of measuring his deeds against religion, but he couldn’t explain it, Helen asked him:

‘... If you really believed you wouldn’t be here.’ _‘But I do believe and I am here.’_ He answered with bewilderment, ‘I can’t explain it, but there it is. My eyes are open. I know what I am doing.’ *(Greene, 1966:223)*

What Scobie couldn’t explain was explained by Greene when he was asked about his conversion to Catholicism and he said that he had to find a religion to measure his evils against *(Shelden, 1994:125)*. This answer makes the reader understand all what Greene tried to show in his novels of his being fascinated by the religious concepts and terms in measuring a person’s acts, which are more significant and full of meaning in an age that imposed a conventional practical morality of what is right or wrong to do and not what is evil or good to do or believe. That is just as what
Sarah came to in *The End of the Affair* when she found that a religion and a kind of belief is the only way out, after she had felt that every thing was tasteless. Her sense of right and wrong provides her at the beginning with all the conventional excuses for her sexual affair with Bendrix and her responsibility towards her husband. But still Greene is trying to bring the reader to hate Henry, her husband, and his empty trust in Sarah with his materialistic mind and modern decency of the age. It is Sarah’s leap into a new idea of good and evil, which is completely spiritual, than the substantial idea of right and wrong, that makes her at the end give up her affair with Bendrix, when she comes to believe in God.

It is a habit of Greene to try always to drag the reader who is Greene’s first target to be disappointed towards sympathizing with an evil which is pure and faithful to its source and end; a special evil which makes sense, forgetting the bare morality of the age whose big slogan is right and wrong. Michael Shelden wrote discussing *Brighton Rock*:

*By making Ida look vulgar and insensitive, Greene attempts to shift the reader’s sympathy in the direction where most*
readers would not willingly go _ that is , in Pinkie’s
direction... feeling more sympathy for him than the
colourless Rose or the flamboyant Ida . It is Greene’s
pleasure to practise the same crafty seduction on the reader
that Pinkie practises on Rose. Before we know it, we are
tempted to sympathize with Pinkie’s hatred of Ida and
Rose... This may help to explain why Greene once said that
he is Pinkie’s ‘accomplice’. (1994:239-40)

But Shelden here is criticizing with the spirit of a
schoolmaster ; in an instructive way of referring to aims and
encouragement and acceptance and so on. This question of
the aim of literature and the accusation of

subversiveness is discussed in a separate chapter , but
Shelden’s remarks on Greene’s treatment of Ida are not
absolutely convincing . What Greene did was to put Pinkie
and Rose on one side and Ida Arnold on the other ,
illustrating the conflict not between the evil of Pinkie and the
goodness of Ida and Rose , but between the measures and
beliefs of Pinkie and Rose , considering themselves as fallen
angels , with all their spiritual measures of good and evil ,
and on the other side Ida Arnold depending on the
knowledge of what is right or wrong to ‘do’ and not to
‘believe’ . It is not a matter of good against evil , it’s good
and evil against right and wrong. Greene made it clear at a point in *Brighton Rock* when he put it so (about Rose and Pinkie):

*She was good, he’d discovered that, and he was damned: they were made for each other.* (1970:126)

It was Greene who brought them together under one roof, because it made no difference to him what one is like; good or evil, what makes the difference is what makes sense and gives another dimension: a spiritual one, to a person’s deeds, not just the rational choices of the morality of the modern world. This is what he meant in *Brighton Rock*:

*Good and evil lived in the same country, spoke the same language, came together like old friends, feeling the same completion, touching hands beside the iron bedstead.*

(Ibid.:127)

Michael Shelden expressed half of the truth when he mentioned Greene’s being fascinated by the Catholic concepts of good and evil

(particularly: evil). He wrote about Greene’s use of that as a background

for his literary work:

*Dozens of critics have made wonderfully complicated efforts*
to explain the Catholic significance of Greene’s work. They can even explain how a Catholic can learn to love sin. And Greene himself could easily muster support for the idea that Christianity was really about sinning. For the epigraph to ‘The Heart of the Matter’, he quoted Charles Peguy: “The sinner is at the heart of Christianity.” Greene had a point, of course. One could almost say that religion needs sin as much as needs virtue, though the whole point of Christianity is lost when so much emphasis is placed on the former.’ (1994:127)

It is true that the whole point of religion is lost when much emphasis is placed on sin, but at the same time the whole point of literature is lost when much emphasis is placed on virtue. Shelden at last got the literary point in Greene’s use of Christianity:

*What one finds in his work is an eccentric mixture of simple but powerful assumptions ... What Catholicism gave to all this was the right background. It gave him rules to break and props to knock at ... Greene could dispense with the theology, but he could not do without the garish plaster statues, the ghostly candle flames, the stale communion wafers, the wine in the chalice, the rosary beads, the Latin phrases, the stuffy confessionals, the figure of Christ hanging above the altar, with his painted wounds.* (Ibid.:127-8)

The aim of this section is not to discuss Greene’s beliefs, but to discuss his use of religion, with the nature of its
teaching and its

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corcepts, particularly of good and evil, as a good background, in his life and in his literary work. Although he needed to place more emphasis on evil than good, and that was what annoyed some critics like Michael Shelden his biographer, he was amazingly able to bring the sense of good, whose absence those critics lamented, just in the folds of his characters' complicated psychology and views of life and religion.
Section Three: Hope and Despair:

The simple religious concept of despair is that it is the unforgivable sin. Why unforgivable? Because when one surrenders to despair, this means one doesn’t believe much in God’s Mercy which is considered a mystery and one of the biggest questions in man’s life and his relation with God.

That is just one of the two concepts of the theme of ‘despair’ treated by Greene in the four novels before us. There is also in the novels the other meaning of despair; the positive despair that leads to hope: it isn’t a complete loss of hope, but rather a kind of self-criticism. This other concept of despair that leads to hope, is rather existential whether Greene was aware of it or not. He brought that second meaning of despair in his literary work along with the two types of hope: the mature type that is born of despair as a tendency towards negation, and the other type of hope which is just built on ignorance. For Greene, there isn’t a clear distinction between the religious concept and the existential. Gangeshwar Rai explained that existential
despair in his book: *Graham Greene, An Existential Approach*; he wrote:

>The inefficiency of techniques, the impotence of the individual effort against totalitarianism and the anonymity to which industrialism condemns the individual _ all induce despair_. Marcel’s reaction to all this is contained in his short book, *The Philosophy of Existence*, and in *Homo Viator*. Despair, he says, is an expression of “the will ‘to negation’, as applied to being.” Despair is the discovery not only of a flawed world but

_of a completely broken one ... “the truth is that there can, strictly speaking, be no hope except when the temptation to despair exists. Hope is the act by which this temptation is actively or victoriously overcome.”* (1983:31-2)

In *The Power and the Glory* there is a big difference between the despair of Padre Jose, which leads him to giving up his faith, and that of the whiskey priest which is his way to hope. This is the point that Gangeshwar Rai missed when he thought that Greene brought both two kinds of despair together without any distinction. The fact is that Greene put the priest’s despair on one side as the anxiety to be himself, while Padre Jose’s is an anxiety to be another self. The whiskey priest fumbles in the darkness of circumstances and his complicated case to find himself and
be true to it. He wants to step on his failures like dead bodies in a battlefield to cross to the other side and escape to himself. Both of them were aware of their points of weakness, but for the whiskey priest it’s different:

*Five years ago he had given way to despair _ the unforgivable sin _ and he was going back now to the scene of his despair with a curious lightening of the heart. For he had got over despair, too _ , but every failure dropped out of sight and mind: somewhere they accumulated in secret _ The rubble of his failures. One day they would choke up, he supposed, altogether the source of grace. Until then he carried on _ with a shameful lightness of heart._ *(Greene, 1962:60)*

Padre Jose is aware of his failure _ but he wants to be another self. In him there exists the priest who is well aware of his standpoint, but what

he wants to do is to escape, away from all that and from himself. To Greene, this is the unforgivable sin because Padre Jose sees it as the end and doesn’t want any way out:

*A lifetime of self analysis enabled him to see himself as he was, fat and ugly and old and humiliated ... He knew he was in the grip of the unforgivable sin, despair._ *(1962:49)*

His anxiety to be another self is very clearly understood
when the whiskey priest comes to him seeking shelter, he answers:

*Go ... go. I don't want martyrs here. I don't belong any more. Leave me alone. I'm alright as I am.* (Ibid.:118)

The whiskey priest’s despair—his anxiety to be himself—becomes the clearest when he is shaken by the sense of his own worthlessness, he prays to God to send someone who is more worthwhile to suffer for. It seemed to him a damnable mockery that they should sacrifice themselves for a whiskey priest with a bastard child (Ibid.:136). This prayer represents part of the priest’s hop, and when his prayer isn’t answered, he retains his faith and goes on, being the only one left. His hope was not to escape from the police or the mestizo, his betrayer, but he hopes to escape from his present condition and the whole of this world, and find an excuse after all. He thinks that he isn’t worthwhile.

Scobie’s anxiety to die—in *The Heart of the Matter_* comes of his will to negation. He wishes he was the old major of police and the faithful husband, in a world that is dragging him towards corruption and

adultery. Both Scobie and the priest know very well that they had gone so far in self destruction, and then that it
extended to include other people. Scobie’s case is not a mere clinical depression. All his meditation about his life and his soliloquy on his idea of religious issues and his relation to God, all of that indicates that his life had got mixed up. When he sat thinking, he recalled some of his ‘acts of despair’ _ By which he refers to his giving in to corruption. It wasn’t at all something clinical, it was a result of a chain of mistakes that led to his loss of hope, and at the end: to suicide:

*Scobie sat down on the window-ledge and watched his hand tremble on his knees. He thought: so all this need not have happened. If Louise had stayed I would never have loved Helen: I would never have been blackmailed by Yusif, never have committed that act of despair. I would have been myself still _ the same self that lay stacked in fifteen years of diaries, not this broken cast.* (Greene, 1966:219)

The result that Scobie came to in his life is that it is impossible to keep human feelings from fading or human nature from changing, not with the passage of time, but with the succession of the different dehumanizing factors:

*One must be reasonable, he told himself, and recognize that despair doesn’t last (is that true?), that love doesn’t last (but isn’t that the very reason that despair does?)* (Ibid.:211)

Also through Scobie’s meditation, despair is shown as the first step towards self-knowledge, and as the realization
the dehumanizing factors in life. It is a feature of Greene’s ineffectual Hamlets. Scobie thought to himself in *The Heart of the Matter*:

> Despair is the price one pays when setting oneself an impossible aim. It is, one is told, the unforgivable sin, but it is a sin the corrupt and evil never practises. He always has hope. He never reaches the freezing point of knowing absolute failure. Only the man of good will carries always in his heart this capacity for damnation. *(Ibid.:58)*

This last sentence refers to the point of complete loss of hope: when one expects nothing to do but more wrong. Here he used the word ‘damnation’ to refer to the point of despair; realization of complete defeat.

The themes of failure and damnation are connected in the four novels with the theme of despair. This connection comes from Greene’s thinking. This last piece quoted from *The Heart of the Matter* is not in the praise of the corrupt and evil. It is for despair he is speaking. That hope of the evil and corrupt is nothing, nor is that of the ignorant when they are still good and unaware of any evil. What makes sense is the kind of post-despair hope; of those who are capable of damnation and have approached the end point in the
realization of the evil in themselves and in the world around them. Any sort of hope that is not an overcoming of despair is not considered any advanced step towards final escape. This will be understood through what Shelden wrote about Greene:

*He was especially impressed by Eliot’s statement: “Most people are only a very little alive; and to awaken them to the spiritual is a very great responsibility: it is only that when they are so awakened that they are capable of real good, but at the same time they become first capable of evil.* (1994:126-7)

Rose’s hope in *Brighton Rock* never changed anything at the end. She hoped for the salvation of Pinkie but she couldn’t save him from his evil, even that hope which was given by the priest at the end had a very difficult condition: Pinkie’s love of her. She hoped that she was damned with Pinkie when he was the only one who loved her and cared for her, then she came to hope for his salvation. But her hopes were ruthlessly killed by Greene, because they were not preceded by the necessary despair. When Ida Arnold with her mission was not able to awaken Rose’s mind to the reality of her position, Greene brought the scene of the tape which is her last hint of hope, to create the first and greatest
feeling of despair in her life.

The problem with Rose is that every thing in her life is half solutions: when her religious convictions are tested at the beginning in the face of Pinkie’s love and care, she soon gives in and chooses to be damned with Pinkie. Then when again her choice comes to be tested, she fails to go on, afraid to kill herself.

The strange thing about the despair prescribed by Greene to lead to hope is that its end is always death. Life for his characters who have experienced such a despair has become no longer a place for hope with their irretrievable mistakes: Sarah in *The End of the Affair*, the whiskey priest in *The Power and the Glory*, and Scobie in *The Heart of the Matter*; all have that chance of starting a kind of good life again, but after their long despair they saw that it was not only impossible, but also meaningless. There are crossroads waiting for each one of them if they live on, with choices so difficult to have and circumstances impossible to overcome. The priest hates that good life of piety with all its luxuries after his long journey of self-realization and his ideas which become very obvious in his long debate with the Lieutenant.
Scobie sees that his feelings have turned to pity rather than love, and even that act of adultery which is his expression of a kind of revolt, was infected by that feeling of pity and responsibility. He is consequently unable to leave either his wife or his mistress.

Sarah is sure that Bendrix will be stoutly chasing her until they just meet and every thing is as it used to be. Greene generously grants them that precious death, and those others who are kept alive have either to live on in ignorance or in complete selfishness, or suffer the same despair that saved their predecessors.

The religious question with which they are obsessed is always God’s mercy, or the existence of a merciful God. That question was brought straight by Sarah when she thought to herself:

*He can’t exist. You can’t have a merciful God and this despair.* (Greene, 1970:91)

Also at the end of *The Heart of the Matter* there is that dialogue

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Louise and Father Rank, about God’s mercy and what Scobie thought of that, Louise said:

“*And at the end this _horror. He must have known that he was damning himself.*”
“Yes, he knew that alright. He never had any trust in God’s mercy _ except for other people.”

“It’s no good praying ...”

Father Rank... said furiously, “For goodness’ sake, Mrs Scobie, don’t imagine you _ or I - know a thing about God’s mercy.”

“The Church says ...”

“I know the Church says. The Church knows all the rules. But it doesn’t know what goes on in a single human heart.”(Greene,1966:263-4)

In 1961, in his novel: A Burnt-Out Case, Greene showed that he himself suffered a long despair, particularly in his literary career, when first in the dedicatory note to the novel, he quoted a line from Masefield, ‘The long despair of doing nothing well.’ Michael Shelden wrote in his biography, after he had mentioned the story of the novel:

*Unfortunately, it was Greene’s fate to suffer this despair for many years. Like Querry, he knew that his political structures were shaky, and his great Cathedrals were never intended for worshipping God.* (1994:435)

The novel tells the story of Querry, an architect who, when acclaimed for designing beautiful Catholic churches, admits that it was indecent of him to do such work when he had no faith in God. He tries
designing public buildings but he has no faith in politics, and his work looked absurd. Whatever he did, he began to repeat himself. Afterwards, this architect tries to explain himself to a local young woman in Congo, where he retired to, using a long allegory about an old jeweller who made exquisite gold and enamel eggs, with crosses on top, for the “King”. The jeweller was rewarded for his efforts with great wealth and fame, and his worldly rewards led him to believe that he could get away with anything. He broke all the king’s rules but he continued to prosper, and his prosperity made everyone assume that he was good as well as great. But he grew weary of his work and began to make less impressive jewellery to amuse only himself. He thought these were funny, but everyone else took them seriously, and soon he gave up making anything.

However, the theme of despair and hope is dominant in all the novels before us, and Greene’s treatment of that comes from the fact that he experienced long despair, being always chased by doubts and an unstable mind in every aspect of his social, religious, or political life. He always sought ways of escape out of the sense of boredom that never left him, in spite of the luxuries he was surrounded by during the second half of his lifetime.
Section Four : Judas Complex ; The Theme of Betrayal :

In Greene’s life, the theme of betrayal was a central point for the understanding of most of what was going on in his relations, his political activities, or his espionage career which dominated a long part of his life. Michael Shelden explained in his biography *The Man Within* how Greene’s family was full of spies: his uncle Sir William Graham Greene, Graham’s oldest brother Herbert, and Graham’s younger sister, Elizabeth, who joined the Secret Intelligence Service (better known as MI 6) and later married a colleague. Then in 1941 Elizabeth recruited Graham into the regular ranks of the service, and he served as a full time officer until 1944. His younger brother, Hugh, may also have done a little spying. In any case, he shared the family’s fascination for espionage, as can be seen in the anthology which he and Graham edited in 1957, *The Spy’s Bedside Book*. As an epigraph for their volume, they agreed on a long quotation from Balzac which begins, ‘The trade of a spy is a very fine one.’ (1994:19-20) Then he discussed Greene’s
qualifications to be a good spy, and that strange choice by a man who never needed such a kind of service and even despised it, he writes:

*It helped that he was famous for his independent political views. He was obviously his own man and it was difficult to imagine that he would want to give his service to any government... Why would a famous and prosperous novelist want to get too close to such business? He could easily do without extra money or extra trouble... More important, how could the author of Our Man in Havana (1958) see any great value in a spy's job? No book has ever made spies look so ridiculous.* (Ibid.:29-30)

There is also the surprise at his being often in a certain place at a certain time without a convincing excuse; in Prague just in time for the communist overthrow of the government, Moscow, Warsaw, East Berlin, Bucharest, Havana, Belgrade and most in times of conflict or political change, as was the case with his visits to Vietnam, Cuba, and even Liberia in Africa. (Shelden,1994:30-2)

His being so involved in the business of espionage can be even when it is proved attributed to Greene’s continuous search for subject and characters for his novels, roaming the streets of different towns at night, and visiting places where he can completely be unknown. Such acts were the same to
him as serving as a spy.

But that was not all what was there, Greene enjoyed the service of espionage for personal joy. It is in his nature to like the life of a spy which is full of doubts and fears, especially of his fellow men. Even when he got involved in such a business he wasn’t satisfied until he had betrayed his government, or any government, or at least witnessed such an act of double agency. His praise for Kim Philby’s treason (Philby was an SIS man who worked for the Soviet Union in the same time and eventually defected to Moscow in 1963) came in the same year (1968) when he gave his important speech on The Virtue of Disloyalty, and the same year also saw his highly sympathetic introduction to Kim Philby’s memoir My Silent War. (Ibid.:41)

Greene himself tried twice to act as a double agent, first for the

Germans and for the French, early in Oxford when he was in his twenties, but a peaceful settlement ruined his plans (Shelden,1994:87-8).

It wasn’t Greene’s espionage career or his double agency that mattered much, but exactly what Michael Shelden wrote:
The whole truth about Greene’s spying can never be known, but the important thing to establish here is its deep influence on the way that he approached the real world and his fictional one. (Ibid.:43)

Greene revealed his odd and contradictory ideas about this theme in his novels, but in *The Power and the Glory* he used it in its original meaning when he created the character of his ‘Judas’, the half-caste, who, from the beginning, is planning to betray the priest; waiting for the chance that the priest is completely out of the hands of the police: so as not to claim that he was caught by them or anyone else. Like Jesus Christ, the priest is aware of the sense of betrayal about the half-caste from the very beginning; in their way to Carmen:

*He was determined not to sleep _ the man had some plan_: even his mind ceased to accuse him of uncharity. He knew he was in the presence of Judas. (1962:91)

The theme of betrayal in this novel is so direct, just bringing the priest and his betrayer together in about twenty pages at the end of chapter one in part two, meeting for the first time and having a short dialogue. To Greene, there is sometimes a point where betrayal is necessary for life to go on. There cannot be any sort of life without
betrayal, but whom you betray and what for is the question:

*The priest prayed silently: “God forgive me.”* Christ had died for this man too: how could he pretend with such pride and lust and cowardice to be any more worthy of that death than this half-caste? This man intended to betray for money which he needed, and he had betrayed God for what? Not even for real lust. (1962:99)

In another part, Greene reveals his admiration for betrayal when he brings the priest’s meditation on the mestizo’s act, remembering a scene in the past about Judas’s betrayal of Jesus:

... it seemed to him a good thing that the world’s traitor should be made a figure of fun. It was too easy otherwise to idealize him as a man who fought with God—a Prometheus, a noble victim in a hopeless war. (Ibid.:91)

Through the priest, Greene presents the idea of betrayal as if it was a law of natural selection; unless you betray, you will be betrayed. That is what the priest meant when he told the villagers:

*I did my best ... It’s your job to give me up. What do you expect me to do? It’s my job not to be caught.* (Ibid.:87)

But the half-caste’s betrayal of the priest doesn’t make that sense made by the other scenes of loyalty and betrayal in the novel and in the other three, even the priest feels pity for him:
Poor man, the priest thought, he isn’t really bad enough.

(Ibid.:184)

The priest thinks that he betrayed God when he had committed his sins,

and the Lieutenant thinks that the priest had betrayed the state; it was a question of either to betray God and give up his priesthood, marry and conform to the law of the state, as Padre Jose did, or betray the state and stick to his faith. The priest betrayed the state for the sake of the poor and ignorant people, and the Lieutenant did all what he did for the same cause, but the half-caste betrayed a man who is travel-worn and as poor as himself or more. The description as ‘the half-caste’ or the Spanish correspondent ‘mestizo’ that Greene uses for the betrayer, reveals his position among the other betrayers in the novel: he is incapable even of the long journey of betrayal, we are told just in the lines that follow those of the priest’s pity for him, that ‘he wasn’t strong enough either for this journey.’ (Greene,1962:184) He is unlike the stubborn villagers who refuse to tell about the priest even when they are caught and shot, nor is he like the Lieutenant who is open and ready to discuss everything with the priest. The
The triviality of his case culminates when he resembles Judas the traitor, in his use of a sign to let them identify the priest, he stood at the door of the hut where the American was dying and the Lieutenant was waiting, and said the word ‘Father’. This reminds us of Christ’s only words to Judas:


The half-caste is then never brought into the scene again, while the significance is in the dialogue of the two loyal opponents: the Lieutenant and the priest, who have something to stick to and to defend, with Greene trying to bring the two opponents under the idea of loyalty to a cause, any cause. Although Greene was fascinated by the idea of loyalty to whatever one thinks is worth that, he still sticks to his basic rule all along his life; that faithfulness is destructive and disloyalty is the secret of survival.

In Brighton Rock, Rose’s loyalty to Pinkie was leading her towards death, until at last she was saved by her betrayal of Pinkie, choosing to live and waiting for ‘something’ to happen. Even Ida’s continuous chase for justice is not as praised by Greene as Rose’s choice to be damned with
Pinkie. But Greene never left Pinkie alone to enjoy the peace he is expecting as a result of his betrayal: it is with his own law that he is judged:

*To throw away the gun was betrayal; it would be an act of cowardice: it would mean that she chose never to see him again for ever ... The evil act was the honest act, the bold and faithful.* (1970:242-3)

She was torn between the beauty and significance of mortal sin and the cowardly choice to live, to carry on, with the hope that something would happen.

If Scobie, in *The Heart of the Matter*, was a little selfish as to betray one of these: His Catholic God, Louise, or Helen, he would live as happily as the others did. When he committed suicide, it was for all of them. His loyalty to them all is what Greene stressed as the theme of self-destructive faithfulness; his choice to destroy himself in order to escape the inevitable betrayal of any of the others. Here and in *The End of the Affair* there is the theme _which is very autobiographical_ of betraying a husband or a wife through divorce, as it actually happened in Greene’s affair with Catherine, when he tried relentlessly to make her leave her
husband, Henry, and marry him [throughout the late 1940s and early 1950s] (Shelden, 1994:371). It is in *The Heart of the Matter* when Helen complains to Scobie that if he really loved her, he would leave his wife and marry her: Catholicism stands between them, as well as his feeling of pity and responsibility towards Louise. But in *The End of the Affair*, although he meant to mock at the real Henry, he puts Henry of the novel in the margin of the events. The conflict is between Bendrix and God. In the beginning, there was no need to question Sarah’s loyalty to both of them, Bendrix or Henry, because Henry her husband was sexually impotent and her feeling of responsibility and respect to him did not threaten her affair with Bendrix. Bendrix’s jealousy actually begins when God interferes. The scenes of disloyalty continues in the novel into some days after Sarah’s death, and Henry and Bendrix come to live together as if nothing had happened.

Everywhere in all the four novels we have here, there are scenes of shocking disloyalty; Louise, in *The Heart of the Matter*, and just after Scobie’s sudden death, is starting a serious affair with Wilson, and Helen is enjoying a new one.

Greene was careful in *The End of the Affair* not to be burnt by the fire
that he had set, because it obviously illustrated his affair with Catherine. But he didn’t hesitate to use his own home and wife in his story *The Destructors*, about a gang of boys destroying a grand eighteenth-century house and locking the owner in an outdoor toilet till the foundation is weakened and the entire structure creaks, and is at last struck by a vehicle, accidentally, and the boys escape. When the story was published, many readers of *Picture Post* found it offensive and some accused Greene of being cruel and sadistic, but Greene calmly answered that something might have just gone wrong in the writing and that he meant it to be funny. But his wife, Vivien, was the one reader who received the greatest shock, real betrayal, for by the time *The Destructors* appeared, they had been legally separated for several years, but Vivien still had a sentimental attachment to the house in London they shared together with their children in the late 1930s, which resembled the house in the story. Vivien wrote:

... *It was to me very cruel* ... *It was as if he enjoyed the destruction* ... *I felt the story was a repudiation of the responsibility of family.* *(Shelden, 1994:11-12)*

Loyalty in Greene’s work is like Conrad’s ‘fascination of the abomination’, either to succumb to or fight it. It is a link that you form and it comes to destroy you, or at least reduce
your chance of happiness. One should betray in order not to be betrayed.

In the epigraph to *The Human Factor*, the novel inspired by the case of his friend and ex-boss, Kim Philby, the double agent, Greene quotes Joseph Conrad:

*I only know that he who forms a tie is lost. The germ of corruption has entered his soul.*

So, Greene’s common theme in his literary work, and particularly the four novels concerned in this thesis, is the “rage of personality”, a phrase that he borrowed from Henry James, about the blinding uncontrollable pull which all those awkward human factors exert on some lives, the force that makes it impossible for the “personality” to sustain any connection beyond itself. (Shelden, 1994:43)
Chapter One

An Evaluation of Greene’s Work
Against the Definition of Literature

The question whether Graham Greene’s fiction is worthy of academic consideration involves the question whether it falls into the category of literature. In this thesis I hope to make the case that the particular examples I take from the Greene corpus of writings suggest that it does. This is based on the view that literature among other marks (good prose style) is also a form of knowledge. Not of course a form of knowledge after the nature of chemistry and physics. These two latter _in addition to others such as medicine, pharmacy, etc._ require a specialized training before any one can
engage in contributing to them. This is not so with literature.

Because of that, professor Helen Gardner, in her inaugural lecture before the University of Oxford on the occasion of her taking the Chair of English, could say:

*English literature is “open to all searchers” at whatever age they turn to it. Some think that it is to the discredit of English as a university subject that so many distinguished English scholars did not read the subject at university. It is on the contrary the main glory of the subject I profess that it is the concern of all educated Englishmen and that the study of it can never be made a closed shop, however hard some try to make it so. (1967:12)*

Literature has an interdisciplinary dimension to it both in its making and in understanding and appreciating it. It is, one might say, like the living of human life itself. Human life cannot be exhausted within any one narrow category: scientific, aesthetic, political, religious, or whatever. Literature deals with life as Aristotle recognized in the *Poetics* in the role of *mimesis* (imitation). The reader, viewer, or hearer, is moved to associate what is being presented with his or her life experience.

The attempts to define literature began with Aristotle’s
exploration of the limits of drama in its two categories: tragedy and comedy, both referred to as poetry. And to distinguish poetry from other fields of study or aspects of writing, he took poetry as the use of narrative as it ‘should’ have happened, or ‘might likely’ have happened. This gives literature the prescriptive aspect which is not found in other fields of knowledge. The different theories of literature over the ages may be given different and even contrary titles: the expressive theory, which is considered completely personal, and then the impersonal theory that followed, and the old theories that followed Aristotle and came long before our modern age — although they seemed contradictory in the terms they used and in the subject and objects of expression in each theory, but in their deep meaning they are all describing and waiting for a kind of reaction, an emotion to be aroused. So, the final concept of literature comes out with all these features because we find that each of these aspects in the recognition of literature is there. Even though some certain features may be prominent in certain theories or works, but the other features are still unsurpassable.

When we have distinguished literature from other forms of writing, or human heritage, we now need norms to
recognize it from within. Laurence Lerner wrote in his essay *The Truest Poetry*:

*In short, our question (What is literature?) is partly a
descriptive and partly a normative question: for the concept
of ‘literature’ is partly descriptive (literature is not science,
not propaganda, not law) and partly normative (literature
is the achievement of something, and books which do not tell
the truth, do not succeed in expressing emotion, or do not
arouse the right response, are not literature.) (1960:3)*

This truth mentioned here is what Aristotle wrote in the
definition of tragedy as an imitation of an action that is
‘serious, complete, and of a certain magnitude.’ (1972:VI,2) If we take the word ‘serious’ to include the irony
in comedy as well, it will indicate the human condition
which is meant by the word ‘action’ _not ‘character_ as it is
found in the *Poetics* in the same chapter.

Literature being considered as a form of knowledge is
the answer to why certain works come to be looked at as
unquestionably literature and certain writers as immortal
figures, or terminally: ‘classics’. Again Aristotle’s
‘imitation’ is the key word to understanding the secret
behind the survival of literature as literature and not to be
torn into branches of science (for science fiction), history
(for the most realistic narrative), philosophy (for the
metaphysical poetry), or merely music (for lyrics and most
poetry). The really amazing thing about literature is that it
brings under its roof the most serious novels and plays along with lyrics and ballads that resemble a dance and tend towards mere music. The secret behind this is the vast variation of the human condition itself, which is being imitated here and there, all brought in ‘words’. This shows the ability of the man of letters, over the ages, to keep his literary work from being mixed up with science, history, philosophy, or law, even at its most serious points or with music and fine arts at points of choosing the rhyming of words and rhythm of lines. In the conclusion of his essay, *The Truest Poetry*, Laurence Lerner wrote:

> It is no accident that kinds of literature can be arranged in a scale, according to how appropriate it seems to consider them as knowledge, the novel, the furthest from music, the one which overlaps most of the sciences of man, the mixed form which gives most place to sober and generalized explanations; the novelist needs less of the perfect mastery of his own nuances of emotion found in a Marvell or a Yeats, and more knowledge of the world, experience of people, field work, and thought. At the other extreme stands the lyric... a use of language that is as
specialized in its way as science is in the other ...

And here we are at the very heart of the motivation of all theories of pure poetry, of emotive language, of literature as tending towards music or resembling the dance. For such theories, the language of the novel, trying to do so many things at once, is hardly literary language at all: the cognitive interferes with the expressive, the dramatic with the lyrical, the human with the perfection of the aesthetic...

But the mixture of functions which they dislike is also the characteristic of man’s archetypal creative act, the most basic and the most far-reaching, the act of speech. (1960:220-1)

Thus, words are the basic element in the making of literature that distinguish it from fine arts. But to distinguish it from philosophy and history we need to consider the first aspect: the cognitive, because both might share the didactic aspect with it. But each one of philosophy or history is a specialized recognition of a specialized human aspect; action in the latter and thinking in the former. But literature is an exploration of the human condition without any distinction between one field and another. To distinguish it from science, we need to bring the second aspect; the didactic along with the cognitive. Both are cognitive, yes, but in science there are facts built on facts, while in literature the facts are mixed with fiction. That fiction is an imitation of everyday life — either these facts are events,
thoughts, or emotions. The didactic aspect in literature distinguishes it better from science because literature may describe what the writer sees is likely to have happened, while the scientist does not have the right to change the facts he has found out.

The novel, being the truest form of literature to this definition, is the most likely form to be taken as an exploration of the human condition. The novelist meditates the conditions of society and the individual—he himself is part of that—and his reaction comes in his novels. The first complicated process of the act of all the personal experiences: family life, and the reality of the writer’s society, in his thinking and emotions that feed his imagination to conceive the themes, plot, character, and action that come in the form of words in the making of the novel. That process was described by Jean Paul Sartre as the ‘interiorisation’ of totalities, while the other process of bringing that in the form of a literary work (the novel here), is an exteriorisation of what was being mixed inside the writer. In the introduction by David Caute to Sartre’s *What Is Literature?* he writes:

*The general proposition explored is that the writer interiorises the historical totality, but in a manner dependent on temperamental qualities which require to be explained by personal and family relations. The finished*
The degree of the first process of mediating the different experiences, personal or social, affects that of the process of exteriorising what was interiorised before. The novelist, as if unconsciously, brings his personal or family life in his writing, along with the images from the life of his society. But the degree of that goes up and down from one writer to another.

When it comes to discussing the exploration of the human condition through literature, we need to see to what extent Greene's personal and family life showed up in the four novels concerned in this thesis: *Brighton Rock*, *The Heart of the Matter*, *The Power and the Glory*, and *The End of the Affair*. The different characters in his novels wore Greene’s masks from his amazingly mixed up life and ideas.

The first character is Scobie in *The Heart of the Matter*, whose conversion to Catholicism was just to marry his wife Louise. The same story comes from Greene’s life — in his biography, Michael Shelden wrote:

*But the young convert gleefully informed Vivienne of every detail, and made it very clear that he was expecting a reward for his exemplary action. As a new Catholic he*
would be needing a great deal of guidance and encouragement. It was almost a matter of religious duty for her to marry him. (1994:130)

When he surrendered to complete despair, Scobie thought of his case:

... it’s only because I’ve done these things that success comes. I am of the devil’s party. He looks after his own in his world. I shall go from damned success to damned success, he thought with disgust. (Greene, 1966:219)

This belief in the devil was to Greene the heart of the understanding of religion. Shelden mentioned this point in his biography when Greene says in a review of T. S. Eliot’s *After Strange Gods*:

*To be Catholic ... is to believe in the Devil*  
(Shelden, 1994:126)

There is also that suicidal spirit, not only in Scobie’s case and character, but also in all his heroes in the four novels. That theme comes from Greene’s actual life and character, as it was mentioned in chapter one, in the discussion of the theme of sickness unto death.

Of Greene’s married life there is, again, something in Scobie’s. In his biography _ when Shelden mentioned Greene’s journey to Liberia, he wrote that the trip had involved a thirty-year-old man leaving behind his wife and infant child, so that he could spend three months in close company with an attractive woman of twenty-seven
(Ibid.:191-2). That’s exactly what is there about Scobie, who travelled to that African colony leaving his wife at first with the child that died in England before Louise’s going to Africa to join her husband there.

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There is also Greene’s relationship with prostitutes even during his married life in his biography, Shelden wrote that according to his private reckoning, he had developed some sort of relationship with no less than forty-seven prostitutes during the 1920s and 1930s. This is besides his affairs with women of rank some of which continued to the last days of their lives. There are names like Catherine Walston, Dorothy Glover, and Jocelyn Rickards, who especially Catherine occupied most of his emotional and sexual life, leaving his wife in the margin (1994:357,277,409). This theme is brought in *The Heart of the Matter* in Scobie’s affair with Helen, and in the scenes about the officers’ visits to brothels.

In *The Heart of the Matter* there is also the strange tendency to killing things. He found an odd sort of freedom in killing things. When he was young he was told to find snails in the garden and dispose of them, he carried out his mission with considerable zest. He put them in a bucket, poured salt on them, and watched them turn into foam. For
every hundred snails he destroyed, he received a small amount of money. There was also cash to be had from eliminating cabbage-white butterflies. These killing sprees gave him such satisfaction that he made a great game out of it in adulthood. During his wartime stay in Sierra Leone, he enjoyed a glorious slaughter when he managed to kill more than three hundred flies in a four-minute period. According to Malcom Muggeridge, Greene also liked to buy ant farms and wipe them out with boiling water. (Ibid.:47)

In *The Heart of the Matter*, the same thing happens in Harrison’s

13 room, when he shows Wilson, his friend and sharer in the place, the game of killing cockroaches, in a very detailed scene about scores, figures, symbols, tactics, and even an invitation to Wilson to make a match of it. (Greene, 1966:65-6)

The other mask of Greene’s is Pinkie in *Brighton Rock*: both share the same idea of believing in hell and hesitating to believe in heaven, fascinated by the thought of damnation and being in conflict with God. Michael Shelden quoted George Orwell, about Greene:

*He appears to share the idea, which has been floating around ever since Baudelaire, that there is something*
distinguishing in being damned; Hell is a sort of high-class night club, entry to which is reserved to Catholics only. (Shelden:350)

The same thing is in Pinkie’s dialogue with Rose:

“What else could there be?” He went scornfully on ... “It’s the only thing that fits. These atheists, they don’t know nothing. Of course there is Hell. Flames and damnation,”... “torment.”

“And Heaven too,” Rose said with anxiety ...

“Oh, may be,” the boy said, “may be.” (Greene,1970:)

Also through Pinkie, Greene again brought the scene of ruthlessly killing insects:

He went to the window and threw it open on the vista of grey wall. A leather-jacket buzzed up the pane and the boy caught it in his hand. It vibrated like a tiny watchspring in his palm. He began to pull off the legs and wings one by one. “She loves me,” he said, “she loves me not. I’ve been out with my girl, Spicer.”

“The one from Snow’s?”

The boy turned the denuded body over on his palm and puffed it away over Spicer’s bed.” (Greene,1970:95)

Concerning his attempts to distinguish between faith and belief and his boredom about religious duties, he reflects that in an interview with him in the Tablet by John Cornwell. The interviewer wrote:

At one point he described himself as a “Catholic agnostic”.
What could he have meant? He was at pains to draw a distinction between belief and faith. “We all love the Faith,” he said at one point, “the problem is believing in it.” He did not give the impression that he was retreating from Faith... In his younger days he had been interested in Catholic theology. In old age the details seemed to bore him... Again, the appeal to Catholic piety rather than to catechetics. (13 Apr. 1991)

In *The Power and the Glory*, the priest is bored with the repetition of the same confession:

> How often the priest had heard the same confession _Man was so limited: he hadn’t even the ingenuity to invent a new vice: the animals knew as much._ (Greene, 1962:97)

At another point the priest thought to himself:

> It was one’s duty, if one could, to rob them of their sentimental notions of what was good. (Ibid.:127)

The whisky priest’s habit of drinking was once Greene’s habit during his years at university. He amused himself at Oxford by trying to stay drunk for long periods of time. He was content that he had remained sauced for a single university term. In the pursuit of this goal, he did not meet any resistance from his tutor, who was rather fond of drink himself. (Shelden, 1994:90)

At last, we have the typical Greene: Maurice Bendrix, in *The End of the Affair*, the writer who is unstable in his
character and extremely full of hate and jealousy and so many contradictory feelings: rather psychopathic. He tries to compete with God in Sarah’s love while he in fact couldn’t distinguish between love and hate in what is going on inside him. The first thing which is worth noticing is the narrative of the novel in the first person, which made it easy for Greene to feel like himself while writing according to Bendrix. Recording the rooted theme of hatred in him, Bendrix writes on the first page:

For why should I have spoken to him? If hate is not too large a term to use in relation to any human being, I hated Henry. I hated his wife Sarah too. And he, I suppose, came soon after the events of that evening to hate me: as he surely at times must have hated his wife and that other, in whom in those days we were lucky enough not to believe. So this is a record of hate more than of love, and if I come to say anything in favour of Henry and Sarah I can be trusted: I am writing against the bias because it is my professional pride to prefer the near-truth, even to the expression of my near-hate. (Greene, 1970:7)

This strong feeling of hatred towards whoever one knows and however innocent or not, is a permanent theme and even a game that Greene used to play. Shelden wrote about that:

It should be obvious that Greene and Conrad Drover had a great deal in common. They are especially alike in their passion for hating indiscriminately. Conrad ... calls it a
'devilishly clever method’. In his private life Greene called the game by a more direct name: ‘Hating people’. At first, he played it by himself, but later shared it with a few friends. (1994:180)

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The novel as a whole is an imitation of Greene’s actual affair with Catherine Walston. But he very shockingly brought even the name of her husband, Henry, as the name of Sarah’s husband in the novel. He even dedicated the book to Catherine, and created scenes like when Bendrix asks Sarah to leave Henry and stay with him, or to spend more time with him than with her husband. All of this is found in Greene’s demands in his affair with Catherine; he came to be much attached to her that he complained about her spending a short time with him, or he was suddenly depressed when they were together (Shelden, 1994:369). And then throughout the late 1940s and early 1950s his ambition was to marry Catherine and he tried insistently to make her leave Henry and marry him. (Ibid.:371)

Another aspect from Greene’s life is that of espionage. Greene’s family was full of spies and agents in the Secret Intelligent Service (MI6), and he himself at last got involved in the business of espionage. That was mentioned in detail in Greene’s biography by Michael Shelden in a private chapter (Ibid.:19-20). That subject appears in The End of the Affair in ‘Book 2’ and goes on in ‘Book 3’, in the account of
Bendrix’s using a professional spy to give him a full account of Catherine's mysterious relationship with a third man.

Thus, the four novels before us are largely autobiographical, especially *The End of the Affair*, reinforcing the fact that Greene’s work, as typical work of literature, is actually an exploration of the human condition.

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In the following chapters, those four novels are the subject of a more detailed exposition through the discussion of the moral themes and the criticism of Greene's literary work concerning certain moral aspects.
Section One: Subversiveness:

That campaign accusing Greene of being subversive in his literary work was mainly led by Michael Shelden, his biographer, who directly accused him of attempting to arouse unnatural feeling of sympathy or hatred in the wrong direction. He wrote about Brighton Rock:

*Brighton Rock is an audacious book. In trying to turn a devil into a heroic spiritual character, it makes a powerful assault into our basic assumptions about art and morality.*
*Like Ida we want the world to make sense, and we will go to great length to create reasonable explanations for things*
that defy conventional reasoning. As readers we like to think that the author is our friend, and reading improves the mind by filling it with wise thoughts about the human condition. Most of us do not mind dark portraits of humanity, because we can see them as cautionary tales. Every thing can be turned into a reassuring slogan. Even nihilism is fine. We can give it a name and agree with the author that life sometimes looks overwhelmingly bleak. But Brighton Rock goes beyond all these acceptable notions. It does not simply tell us that the world is evil. It rubs our noses in the evil and makes fun of us for trying to understand it. And Greene does this with such brilliance that we cannot help being amazed. Rarely has sheer nastiness been served so well. (1994:243)

Then in another part of his biography, Shelden mentioned an interview with Greene, as a confession by Greene about that accusation:

In a profile from 1978, V. S. Pritchett described Greene as “genially subversive” and suggested an appropriate maxim for such men: “The world is too complacent. Let’s catch it out.” (1994:7)

At last, Shelden’s witness was Greene himself in a parody that Shelden mentioned which was part of Greene’s contribution to Why Do I Write?, a book which also featured essays by Elizabeth Bowen and V. S. Pritchett. The
only useful social function for the writer, Greene said, was to be as subversive as possible. Greene wrote:

_We who can be disloyal with impunity should keep that idea alive._ (Ibid.:17)

Before discussing the accusations by Shelden or Pritchett, let’s look at the meaning of subversion in the last quotation here. A writer’s task is basically to question the things that people take for granted in everyday life, without noticing or in the least degree criticizing what they routinely come across. An ordinary man thinks only about the things before him. Criminals, for example, mostly are motivated by the feeling that society neglected them at least in one of the stages of their life, or treated them unjustly in another while society sees no convincing excuse for them to turn to criminal life even with that being the case. The fact is that the first side never experienced the circumstance that created criminals, and the second side never lived the worries of society about their lives or safety.

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It is the writer who brings all these to be seen to those who care: his mission is to question, through casting doubts, shaking the convictions of the individuals who are ‘too complacent’ with
what they think or view in their side of the world.

What Shelden complained about is what was experienced by other people. Before any step into this complicated area of Greene’s work, or literature in general, let Greene himself, as one of us, and as a writer who sees the world, not in a different way but, as a highly sensitive observer, tell about his boyhood and the experience of different feelings during his schooldays and at home (his father was the headmaster of the school and they lived there):

I was an inhabitant of both countries: on Saturday and Sunday afternoons of one side of the baize door, the rest of the week of the other. How can life on a border be other than restless? you are pulled by different ties of hate and love. For hate is quite as powerful a tie, it demands allegiance. In the land of skyscrapers, of stone stairs and cracked bells ringing early, one was aware of fear and hate, a kind of lawlessness — appalling cruelties could be practiced without a second thought; one met for the first time characters, adult and adolescent, who bore about them a genuine quality of evil. There was Collifax who practised torments with dividers; Mr Cranden with three grim chins, a dusty gown, a kind of demoniac sensuality; from these heights evil declined towards Parlow, whose desk was filled with minute photographs — advertisements of arts photos. Hell lay about them in their infancy. There lay the horror and the fascination. I escaped surreptitiously for
an hour at a time: unknown to frontier guards, I stood on the wrong side of the border looking back _ I should have been listening to Mendelssohn , but instead I heard the rabbit restlessly cropping near the croquet hoops . It was an hour of release _ and also an hour of prayer . One became aware of God with an intensity _ time hung suspended _ music lay on the air ; anything might happen before it became necessary to join the crowd across the border. There was no inevitability anywhere ... faith was almost great enough to move mountains ... the great buildings rocked in the darkness.

And so faith came to me - shapelessly , without dogma , a presence above a croquet lawn , something associated with violence , cruelty , evil across the way . I began to believe in heaven because I believed in hell , but for a long while it was only hell I could picture with intimacy _ the pitch pine partitions of dormitories where everybody was never quiet at the same time ; lavatories without locks : “There , by reason of the great number of the damned , the prisoners are heaped together in their awful prison ...”; walks in pairs up the suburban roads ; no solitude anywhere at anytime . The Anglican Church could not supply the same intimate symbols for heaven; only a big brass eagle , an organ voluntary , “Lord, Dismiss Us with Thy Blessing” , the quiet croquet lawn where I had no business , the rabbit , and the distant music . (1982:13-4)

Then Greene links between that early background of his
life and the modern life of the age _ nothing had changed , just the symbols and names , he wrote :

Those were primary symbols ; life later altered them ; in a modern city , riding in trams in a winter past the Gothic hotel , the super-cinema , the sooty newspaper office where I worked at night, passing the single professional prostitute trying to keep the circulation go under the blue and powdered skin , I began slowly , painfully , reluctantly , to populate heaven. The Mother of God took the place of the brass eagle : I began to have a dim conception of the appalling mysteries of love moving through a ravaged world _... It remained something one associated with misery , violence , evil , “all the torments and agonies” , Rilke wrote , “wrote in scaffolds, in torture chambers, mad-houses, operating theatres, underneath vaults of bridges in late autumn ... ’’ (1982:14-5)

That life Greene described here , is not to be taken separately from his work , or his work separately from that . He is the novelist in The End of the Affair who was stripped of his will _ and therefore he is not prescribing , but only reflecting what is going on inside himself , as a production of complicated circumstances . And he is a Pinkie whose eccentric character was formed as early as his childhood .

What Shelden criticized in Brighton Rock is first that
Greene’s depicting Ida Arnold in that vulgar appearance and with that vulgar behaviour, and Pinkie full of life and meaning, is an open invitation or even dragging the reader towards sympathizing with Pinkie and hating Ida. But what if Ida and Pinkie came from the reality of everyday life in the modern age? We can see how he described a life of a school boy and the cruelty and depression which accompanied such an important phase of his life. The good meanings of family, education, and many other were linked with those ugly images, even in the Church he describes how bad and reversed the impression was, when he viewed the brass eagle that

couldn’t reveal heaven at all.

When literary critics introduce the question of the aim of literature, no one can easily reject its didactic role. It will not be rejected as a natural result that literature opens the eyes, may be without direct teaching. Such a question is not a point of actual dispute. But more practical is the question of what is to be taught or introduced, is it what delights the reader, or only what the writer believes, whether it satisfies the audience or not? The writer himself is rather exploring than inventing, scenes and issues through the characters he
imaginatively creates, and something in us responds to this.

Of course not any one of the readers or writers will disagree about things like killing the innocent, or exploiting the love of a young neglected girl to try to get rid of her as the only witness of a murder, as in *Brighton Rock* — the question, then, is: how does a writer teach? When we have agreed that he does, whether he liked it or not.

Here is not a discussion of the best way to teach, but a matter of introducing the cognitive nature of literature. Laurence Lerner wrote:

*If we say then that literature moves its readers by opening their eyes, its didactic effect can be based on its cognitive nature.* (1960:3)

The ways that writers use are very different. The reader may get upset at the end of one book, but it is at the same time as natural in actual life to have such shocking ends as we have good ones. The strategy of just pleasing the reader is not true to the cognitive nature of literature since

the days when Shakespeare began first by his every-day life characters, then his mixture of comedy and tragedy, which enabled him to illustrate human condition in its nearest to actual life.
In modern literature, we have figures like Ibsen, whose introducing very critical questions in our life is well known. He didn’t describe crime the subtle way Greene did, but he did more than that: introducing the question of the choice between truth and happiness, and the theme of the saving lie, as in *The Wild Duck*. Nearly the same accusation was pointed at Ibsen and Arthur Miller, but in a milder form of ‘doing more harm than good’. (Lerner, 1960:12)

Concerning the character of Ida in *Brighton Rock*, there is a basic question: was Greene really trying to shift the reader’s sympathy towards Pinkie by depicting Ida in such a way that Shelden felt so sly and deliberate? The fact is that she wasn’t made all that disgusting. She was really made natural and spontaneous. And if she was boring, it is because she always spoilt the scenes Rose had created for herself based on Pinkie’s supposed love. Even the praise of criminal life Greene makes here and there, why doesn’t it form part of the controversy there about what we make of good and evil: many of us link between ‘good’ and ‘boring’, which is an impression created in us mainly by the ‘good’ themselves.

The problem which we need to understand as readers of Graham Greene is that he noticed what he experienced since his early life, then,
and now in the modern world. the strange thing is that Shelden himself had discussed *Brighton Rock* as a prose piece of Eliot’s *Waste Land* in the way they describe the meaninglessness of the modern life and in many of the scenes they described, he wrote:

*Like the young Eliot, he set himself the task of exploring that world, turning over its fragments to see what lay underneath. The things he discovered were every bit as terrifying as Eliot’s “handful of dust”.*

*It is not idle speculation to say that if the young Eliot had given up poetry for fiction, he might have been tempted to write something like *Brighton Rock*. In *Brighton Rock* he produced the modern masterpiece that Eliot was trying to imagine.* (1994:100-1)

What the writer does is to describe his world, and he is not to be blamed however deep and precise this description might be. The resemblance between the characters in Greene’s work and his actual character himself, is a great evidence that his work didn’t come of nothing. It is a live experience of a mixed up world and not a matter of mocking at the reader. He may have exaggerated here and there in depicting the evil of Pinkie, the persistent chase of Ida for justice, the innocence of Rose, and to many readers the
miracles of Sarah. But all what he brought shows a reality of a world which is full of contradictions.

The modern world, especially after the First World War, was characterized by a feeling of disillusionment everywhere, which was very obvious in Eliot’s social poetry in Britain and works like Faulkner’s *The Sound and the Fury*, Hemingway’s *Farewell to Arms*, and many others in America, whose main theme was the people’s disappointment in the values of the modern world.

Even when we go back a bit to the Victorian age, we find the works of Charles Dickens showing many criminals full of pity and reason, and the realism of his work which is mostly a reflection of his bitter experience as a boy and his subtle observation as a writer.

It is in the nature of literature that a certain work may teach (describe and prescribe) in a delighting form, or delight in a teaching form, but the thing that makes some critics or readers frown at certain literary works is that one of the aspects may dominate to a point that the other aspect is almost obscured, but the fact is that there is always a kind of opening of the readers’ eyes, and a kind of relief when they
see characters like themselves and circumstances like their own, being explored. In our actual life, no one tries to control the stories one is being told, or reject any facts for being depressive or disappointing. Literature is an exploration of that life: in every work of literature we come across different characters with different destinies, just quoted from our vast world, an ideal sample of space, time, and events.

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Section Two: Racialism:

Like Joseph Conrad, Greene explored in his novels the European psychology and even small European groups in non-geographical journeys; describing and analyzing the European individual and society in different spots of the world: In England in The end of the affair and Brighton Rock, and Africa in The Heart of the Matter. The only novel among Greene's work that dealt with a non-European hero is The Power and the Glory, about a Mexican priest during the anti-clerical purge. Greene only slightly touched characters of other races than his European natives in the novels set in Africa. There are critical reactions to this aspect
or his treatment of other races in his novels. Some critics accused him of racialism in his work, mainly Michael Shelden who wrote:

As Greene sees it, almost every thing the Mexicans have to offer is inferior. … Again and again, Greene finds that “hideous” is the best adjective for things Mexican. … And, yes, the people are hideous. In no time at all, the author of The Lawless Roads forgets his call for improving economic conditions in Mexico, and begins to talk about how much he hates the country and its people. (1994:259)

In another place in his biography, Shelden discusses what he called Greene’s ‘anti-Semitism’, bringing his description of Jews. He mentioned The Name of Action and then other novels:

In 1930, when his book came out, anti-Semitic remarks were not only voiced in public, but were also regarded in some circles as fashionable. For literary inspiration he could look to Eliot, who used Jews as symbols of modern degradation. … It is difficult to believe that a man in Graham Greene’s position would deliberately stir up hatred for people who had done him no harm, but who were in harm’s way themselves. … Brighton Rock is the best known example, though it is not the worst. the rich gangster who controls most of the criminal action in
Brighton has an Italian name: Colleoni, but for no obvious reason Greene makes him Jewish, and does his best to imply that Jews have a natural talent for shady dealing...

In The End of the Affair, the heroine’s mother remarks in passing that she was once married to a Jew, and adds that if people think that Jews are “generous”, they are very much mistaken. Her husband, she says, “was a mean man”. (1994:146-52)

Yes, Greene in his work presented characters like Colleoni in Brighton Rock, but he was only describing as a writer. Before Greene, Shakespeare created the character of the Jew in a whole play about him; The Merchant of Venice, and he was not so fiercely attacked. It was just the description of a reality in the society in those days as it is in the modern age. This part of the thesis is not a discussion of the description of certain races, but the question is why shouldn’t we blame Greene for the description of the Europeans in The Heart of the Matter who are made fake and evil. Why should we criticize him for the description of other nations when he himself has written England Made Me. It isn’t at all contradictory to describe the Mexicans as hideous or the Africans as naïve, and come to call for their interest. Greene’s Africa and Mexico are the simple, primitive civilizations on lands left untrodden by the
modern invasion of the developed world. Yes, he describes the natives in *The Heart of the Matter*, ‘like insects’, but that is because they collect round the European intruders whom he considers as corruptors. He despises the ‘Creole’ as Conrad did when the latter called them ‘the prophets of light’ _ ‘When he discusses “Uncle Remus”’, Maria Couto wrote:

... a plan for the defence of apartheid in South Africa in which USA, West Germany and England are involved, his loyalty and idealism surfaces: “I don’t like the idea of Uncle Remus any more than you ... My Africa was a sentimental Africa. I really loved Africa ... the Chinese don’t, nor do the Russians, nor the Americans ... How easy it was in the old days when we dealt with chiefs and witch doctors and bush schools and devils and rain queens...The Emperor Chaka was better than Field Marshall Amin Dada.” (The Human Factor, p. 55). (1990:48)

This shows that Greene had a rather romantic view of Africa than the imperialistic one of Joseph Conrad’s.

Greene’s description of Colleoni in *Brighton Rock* is required only for the narrative, or else no one would blame a writer for the fitting description of a character. Shelden then mentioned Greene’s altering of the word ‘Jew’ for ‘tycoon’ in the late editions of *Brighton Rock*, but even that change did not satisfy him when he called...
it a 'cover-up' which was 'largely successful'. Then he observed that a few critics had complained about the anti-Semitism in the old editions of *Brighton Rock* and no one had questioned the ethics of quietly altering a published text to eliminate unpleasant facts. (1994:152)

The strange thing about Shelden’s attack on Greene’s racialism is that he neglected Africa and never mentioned any thing about what Greene wrote in the description of the Indian woman in *The Power and the Glory* with ‘the broken snub-nosed face’. (1962:155)

Shelden mentioned the interview with Greene by Maria Couto in the late 1980s, considering her ‘one of the few people who directly confronted Greene about the basic issue of anti-Semitism’ (1994:152), then he mentioned Greene’s answer:

*During those years we did not think in those terms, and I meant the term “Jew” to be descriptive. When I reread it later because the anti-Semitic idea was pointed out to me, I could see that it could be regarded as anti-Semitic, and I replaced it by “tycoon”. But it was not meant to be anti-Semitic.* (Ibid.:152)
It seems that the concern of Shelden’s criticism was only ‘anti-Semitism’ and not the wider ‘racialism’. He stopped at that while Maria Couto, in another interview with Greene, which is printed in her book: *Graham Greene _On the Frontier*, went further and asked him about his views concerning Africa, it goes as follows:

*Couto*: What I find engaging about your work is your sensitivity to other cultures and civilizations. But your fiction does not confront British Imperialism except by indirection and suggests that the British Empire was superior to American hegemony.

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*Greene*: I was never even a British imperialist. It was lucky probably that I went to Africa when I was young; If I had gone ten years later I might have had my fixed ideas and been looking for things which I had already somehow established in my mind... Scobie in *The Heart of the Matter* did have great sympathy for the Africans and was uneasy about being part of the ruling side...

*Couto*: ... but your criticism of the Creole is not justified because the Creole in many ways has combined two cultures and has identified himself with national aspirations. By Creole do you mean Western-educated or does it have connotations of colour?

*Greene*: Not of colour. I’ve used the word in the sense used
in West Africa of Africans who have lived for some generations in the West and then returned to Africa ... It does not apply to people who have not left their country and still belong to a tribal society.

My first encounter with the Creole was in Liberia and I did not like what I saw. He had taken control of a tribal country and was not very nice to his fellow-country men, even in the case of the Krus, selling them into slavery. (1990:218-9)

Maria Couto herself, discussed that in the same book and came to the following conclusion:

Greene was apparently sensitive to such charges. In the revised edition of Brighton Rock, for instance, the word “Jew” has been sometimes replaced by “tycoon”. A careful reading of the texts reveals that Greene was at pains to distinguish between the Jew as the embodiment of capitalism and the Jew as a human being with a particular cultural identity. This is an important theme in Stambul Train but Fisch ignores this novel altogether presumably because it runs counter to his theory ... Myatt emerges neither as Saint nor as Devil, but as an ordinary human being in a portrayal where his Jewishness, in fact, dominates his perception of himself and the relation of his fellow-passengers with him, far more than it does in the case of Colleoni and Sir Marcus ... Through
them Greene appears to be conveying the ethos of a period when the Jews did indeed control much of big business so that the argument is really against industrial capitalism and against those who manipulate human lives under the cover of market forces. The intention is not to present the Devil-Jew.’ (1990:41-2)

Then she quotes Chinua Achebe of Nigeria and Ngugi Wa Thiong’O of Kenya who agreed that 'one cannot include the work of all writers within the blanket terms of “imperialism” and “racism”.' Then Achebe said that Greene ‘is immensely superior to Joyce Cary, for instance, although the latter lived and worked in Africa for several years. Greene is not merely the greater artist; his insights are valued because he does not presume knowledge but writes tentatively as an outsider in his work set in Africa.’ And Wa Thiong’O recalled his student days in Kenya in the 1950s:

He was God for many of my friends and I have the greatest admiration for his work … his imagery for colonial activity remains the most powerful and expressive of the economic and material aspects of the relationship.’ [an interview by Maria Couto, September 1986] (Ibid.:16)

The thing that made some critics, such as Shelden, misunderstand Greene about this theme is that they didn’t get the unity of the picture of
the world in Greene’s mind while describing the images of everyday life everywhere, and the state of great anarchy in which the world came to be. That picture was there in Eliot’s *Waste Land*; but by using universal figures, legendary and real, Eliot had a better chance to show it. A novel doesn't give that chance because it rather sticks to reality and the plot requires much logic, so it took Greene a whole literary heritage, which is not at all inferior to Eliot's, to express what he saw or thought.
Notes


2. *Poetics*, XIII _2 last note.


4. Ibid., p.322.

5. Ibid., p.333.


9. Ibid., p.92.


11. Ibid., p.387.

12. Ibid., p.189.


20. Ibid., p.201.
22. Ibid., p.267.

**Notes**

7. Ibid., p.246.
8. Ibid., 194.
13. Ibid., p.388.
15. Ibid., p.177.
16. Ibid., p.140.
18. Ibid., p.199.
19. Ibid., p.151.
20. Ibid., p.151.
24. Ibid., 127.
29. Ibid., p.49.
30. Ibid., p.118.
31. Ibid., p.136.
33. Ibid. , p.211 .
34. Ibid. , p.212 .
36. Ibid. , p.58 .
38. The End of the Affair , p.91 .
40. The Man Within , p.435 .
42. Ibid. , pp.29–30 .
43. Ibid. , pp.30–32 .
44. Ibid. , p.33 .
45. Ibid. , p.41 .
46. Ibid. , pp.87–8 .
47. Ibid. , p. 43 .
48. The Power and the Glory , p.91 .
49. Ibid. , p.99 .
50. Ibid. , p.91 .
51. Ibid. , p.87 .
52. Ibid. , p.184 .
55. The Man Within , p.371 .
56. Ibid. , pp.11–12 .
57. Ibid. , p.43 .
Notes
10. Ibid., p.114.
11. Ibid., see pp. 357,277,409.
12. Ibid., p.47.
16. Ibid., p.95.
19. Ibid., p.127.
24. Ibid., p.371.

**Notes**

2. Ibid., p.7.
3. Ibid., p.417.
7. Ibid., p.12.
9. Ibid., p.259.
10. Ibid., pp.146–152.
16. Ibid., pp.41–2.
17. Ibid., p.16.
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Summary and Conclusion

Greene's Work and the Meaning and Aim of Literature:

Since literature is a form of knowledge that differs from other forms in the sense that it includes imagination built on facts from our actual life, it then has two aspects in its nature: the descriptive and the prescriptive aspect. The first distinguishes it from religious books, moral teaching, and books of law and legislation, and the second distinguishes it from science and history where the writer has no right to suggest what 'should' have happened. Hence, it is the writer's world that shows up in his literary work however different he sees it. It is there after all, with all the images of life around him. In Green's literary work, we can see very clearly an exploration of his life and a reflection of his character and ideas.

The Moral Features of Greene's Characters:

Greene's characters are rather understood by their moods than their motives. They are Aristotelian in the sense that their character and attitude create the acts they commit. But the touch of Shakespeare's characters is very obvious in them; they are everyday-life characters who got Involved in such complicated circumstances that they became stripped of their will. The task of bringing such characters in a modern
sense of today's life was very difficult, but Greene could act it well because he himself is the centre of his characters; they are initially a reflection of his sophisticated character and mixed up world. The new thing about his characters is that they may shift at any point from an attitude to another, showing their modern world at its clearest, with virtue and vice never pure or distinguished, open to turn or mix at any time.

The Moral Problems in the Four Novels:

Knowledge and experience are shown as seeds of bitter fruits. Greene accuses experience of being responsible for suffering and ageing with the passage of time. The more the characters are full of religious knowledge or moral awareness, the more life to them gets harder and harder until the circumstance is impossible to overcome. What is mainly under focus here is religious teaching, moral sensitivity, and the experience of the innocent trying to cope with his circumstances.

There is always complete despair and incomplete hope; a kind of hope that Greene usually connected with death. That death is Greene's gift to those he pities as victims of complete despair. The idea of eternity then seems to be there
in his mind, but it's a deformed eternity in which the wounds may never heal and the suffering goes on without an end.

In the general atmosphere of the four novels there is a dominant theme which comes from Greene's actual life and thinking; the theme of betrayal and a kind of disloyalty to any sort of human considerations. Sometimes it comes in an ugly form, sometimes Greene shows it as natural or a bit cold and uncaring, and other times even necessary for life to go on.

**The Accusations Aimed at Greene's Works:**

The life that Greene experienced in his boyhood and the world that he became part of when he grew up are the main source of what we see in his literary work. This one of the reasons why it is difficult to accuse Greene or any other writer of basically being subversive or accomplice in the crimes of his characters. If there is any thing to blame, it is the world that created that psychology and ideas and consequently the novels and characters that illustrate them.

Another reason is in the nature of literature itself, particularly the novel, that it is an exploration of human condition; the descriptive aspect that basically makes the audience respond to a literary work that has aroused a kind of emotion in them. This includes the subtle description of
vice and the remarks about certain people or races. But also the writer is responsible to some extent about for the kind of words he may sometimes use to refer to the physical appearance or such sensitive areas of description connected with racialism. Yes, he is free to choose any spot in the world with its characters, but some remarks will form a menace to the writer's universal task to which he had set himself.
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