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EXISTENTIALISM IN THE NOVELS OF GRAHAM GREENE

of

MARILYN E. PILKINGTON

A thesis submitted to
the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

Department of English

Carleton University

Ottawa, Ontario

December 1, 1988

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ABSTRACT

This thesis identifies in the novels of Graham Greene certain elements of existentialism, namely abandonment, lack of meaning in outer world, alienation, freedom, anguish, and authenticity.

Chapter One discusses the absence of God and shows a gradual progression towards atheist existentialism in Greene's work. Chapter Two examines the lack of meaning in everyday life, and refers to the existential concept of absurdity. Chapter Three focuses upon the inevitable alienation of the individual in a world that has no central point of reference for him. Chapter Four discusses freedom and determination, points to a conflict in Greene's early work but concludes his characters do have freedom to choose. Chapter Five deals with anguish as a universal phenomenon. And in both Chapters Six and Seven the means by which one may attain authenticity are dealt with; Chapter Six focuses on reunion with God, Chapter Seven on Sartre's ethic of action and self-commitment.

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Introduction

Although Graham Greene is considered by many critics to be a "Catholic" writer, a close reading of his novels reveals them in fact to be rich in suggestions of existentialism. His unflinching portrayal of the tragedy of the human condition, his depiction of a world in which meaning and values seem to have disappeared, his characters' tortured questioning about the existence of God, their feelings of abandonment and isolation, their search for dignity and significance in spite of the chaos and absurdity around them, and their anguish and despair in the face of the odds against them are embodiments of existential themes well-known to the twentieth-century reader. Even the earlier novels, such as Brighton Rock, The Power and the Glory, The Heart of the Matter and The End of the Affair, recognized mostly for their theological overtones, contain elements of existentialism that cannot be denied as Greene attempts to come to terms with the vision of an all-powerful, loving God who allows sin and suffering to go unchecked in a world He has apparently abandoned to itself. In later novels, A Burnt-Out Case, The Quiet American, The Comedians and The Honorary Consul being chief among them, the bent towards existentialism first noticed in the earlier novels is more clearly elucidated, which indicates a definite progression towards the existential philosophy as

Greene's writings mature. And although the existential stance in Greene's novels is never clearly defined, in that from one novel to the next he vacillates between an atheistic position and a theistic one and does not discriminate between one branch of that school of philosophy and another, the existential concerns highlighted in his novels are significant in that they reflect the voice of a lost generation desperately seeking answers to the social, political and moral dilemmas of its time.

Although existentialism is considered to be a fairly modern school of thought, having found the fullest expression of its beliefs during and after World War II, early influences on the movement can be traced back at least to nineteenth-century philosophers, Søren Kierkegaard and Friedrich Nietzsche. Kierkegaard, who bitterly attacked the Christian community of his day for being complacent and hypocritical and not having any real understanding of what being a Christian meant, left his mark upon the existentialists who followed in his wake by insisting that becoming a Christian involved more than blindly accepting the doctrine handed down and that it indeed necessitated a lifelong struggle. Such a struggle, he stressed, was an intensely personal experience, often filled with dread and despair, requiring one to strip oneself of all illusions and so-called objective proofs of God and to make a giant leap of faith concerning the truth of His existence. Nietzsche's

contribution to the movement, and to the atheist or humanist branch of the philosophy in particular, was his emphasis upon the importance of individualism and intuitive thought as opposed to the common-good-for-all and reason-above-all-else approaches of his day. Like Kierkegaard, he too unleashed a scathing attack upon the Christian community of his day, for Nietzsche considered Christianity to be a coercer of individual freedom in that it preached that mass conformity to the Christian faith was the only means of salvation. For that reason, he called upon his followers to renounce the Christian ethic and assert the "will to power", and claimed that only by exercising one's individuality can one unlock the creative forces waging within.

Today the existentialist school of philosophy numbers among its members the German philosopher, Martin Heidegger, the French novelist-philosopher, Jean-Paul Sartre, Karl Jaspers, Paul Tillich, Gabriel Marcel, Miguel de Unamuno, Jacques Maritain, Nicholas Berdyaev and Martin Buber. Generally speaking, the movement has been split into two camps--the religious existentialists occupying one side, the atheist or humanist occupying the other. And while there are widely divergent views between the two branches of the philosophy--as, indeed, there are among the various proponents of the philosophy--there are nevertheless significant points of convergence, elements of existentialism with which all existentialists would agree.

A precise definition of existentialism is somewhat difficult to give as the term has been so broadly and loosely applied. For the existentialists, however, the starting point is man himself and at the centre of their concern is the restoration of human dignity in a world precariously on the brink of self-destruction.

To the existentialists of the twentieth century, God is dead, hidden or absent from the world. The lawlessness of modern society, the internal strife affecting many countries of the globe, the famine, the sickness, the absurdity often underlying human life--all are evidence that God does not exist or does not take an active interest in human affairs. Accordingly, with no God to bestow meaning upon the world, with no point of reference to enable the individual to say with certainty that there is a significance to all human life, man stands alone in an alien universe.

The growing extent of alienation in the contemporary world is of primary concern to the existentialists. Man, they claim, has been removed from the source of his being and is unable to function except on a superficial level. In an era when mass conformity is desired to facilitate goals for the common good of all, when the individual is constantly assailed by various media telling him how to think and act, when technological advances are such that life as we know it can be extinguished in less time than it takes to ponder such a possibility, the individual becomes disassociated

from the matters at the very heart of existence and simply immerses himself in the demands of everyday living.

Central to the concept of existentialism is the inherent freedom of man, a belief that man is--and only is--that which he makes himself. With no God to give meaning to the world, man becomes the source of all values and he creates those values by the life choices he makes. True, sociological, political, economical and psychological factors do determine him to some extent, but it is the choice within the situation that makes the man. A man may choose to do nothing, to allow others to dictate his mode of life to him, but nevertheless, in doing so, he has inadvertently chosen and must assume full and complete responsibility for the choice he has made. On the other hand, he may choose wisely and he may not, but he alone is responsible for his actions, whether or not those actions have achieved the desired result. To this extent, the philosophy of existentialism is often a harsh philosophy. No opportunities for evasion of responsibility exist.

Also at the core of existential philosophy is the phenomenon of anguish, which the existentialists insist is central to human life. Anguish, they argue, takes many forms and may be found in every time and place; it is an inevitable part of the human condition. More specifically, anguish may be seen as the result of the political turmoil to which we seem to be particularly susceptible or it may be

a manifestation of an indefinite fear of a worldwide catastrophe (Williams 101). Anguish may arise in the face of the freedom with which we are endowed or from an awareness of the meaninglessness on almost every level of everyday life. Anguish, too, emerges with the knowledge of the inevitability of death and our reluctance to accept our own mortality. However, to the existentialists man must come to terms with this phenomenon; to attempt to evade it or ignore it only results in inauthentic living.

One of the basic precepts of existentialist thought is that existence precedes essence. Man exists, but his life otherwise has no meaning until such time as he takes positive action to bestow meaning upon it. In Sartre's terminology, man at the outset is nothing, since he is a creature merely of consciousness. He begins to exist as he begins to will. To will is to leap from nothingness towards existence, so that man is nothing else than that which he wills himself to be (Williams 24-25). To the religious existentialists, existence precedes essence in the sense that man's essence is coincident with a true communion with God and it is not until he begins to find his way back to God that his life assumes a significance hitherto denied to him.

Whether atheist or theist, the search for authenticity requires an ongoing, personal, subjective process, a stripping away of illusions that only serve as barriers to

authenticity. It also requires coming to terms with one's past, place, environment, with death and with one's fellow man (Williams 139-40) and realizing that there is no one truth for all, only a plurality of truths that are as individual as the self. It necessitates an acceptance of the anguish and absurdity underlying human affairs and an affirmation of life in spite of them. For the theist, it also involves a leap of faith, an unconditional acceptance of the existence of God; for the atheist, commitment to a belief or an aim beyond himself and positive action to realize it.

The existentialists are well aware that the path to authenticity is a lonely one and may lead to a greater sense of anguish and despair. They also believe, however, that the individual who undertakes this journey may discover that he is capable of standing on his own or that some other hope exists outside himself (Michalson 13). In any event, it is a journey that one must take if life is to have any meaning at all.

Chapter One

The Absence of God

When Nietzsche declared in the nineteenth century, "God is dead", he was expressing the belief that for the people of his period God was no longer a living reality. Although Nietzsche was not an existentialist, much of his work found its way into twentieth-century existentialist thought. In particular, in the aftermath of two world wars and the growing threat of global extinction, Sartre, echoing Nietzsche's view, suggested that God is either dead or so silent in the affairs of man that man alone is responsible for his existence. Man, says Sartre, has been abandoned, although he hastens to add, "when we speak of 'abandonment' . . . we only mean to say that God does not exist, and that it is necessary to draw the consequences of his absence right to the end" (Existentialism & Humanism 32-33).

Not all of the existentialists share the atheistic stance usually adopted by Sartre, but many do in fact point to the precarious situation of civilization in general, and the modern western world in particular, as evidence that God has forsaken the world. Heidegger, who does not deny the reality of God, affirms his absence; Jaspers speaks of the "concealment" of God, Tillich the "non-being" of God, and Bultmann the "hiddenness" of God (Williams 62). To Marcel, as to Kierkegaard, the problem lies not so much in God

having forsaken the world as in man having forsaken God, in man having become so estranged from God that God has ceased to have any real meaning in the temporal world.

The works of Graham Greene clearly reflect an existentialist concern about the godlessness or god-forsakenness of modern society. In Journey Without Maps, for example, Greene notes that "Today our world seems peculiarly susceptible to brutality" (21) and at the beginning of The Lawless Roads he places a telling quotation from Cardinal Newman, which ends:

. . . either there is no Creator, or
this living society of men is in a true
sense discarded from His presence . . .
if there is a God, since there is a God,
the human race is implicated in some terrible
aboriginal calamity. (Frontispiece)

In portraying the tragic predicament of man, Greene often draws upon the social and political upheavals found in every corner of the globe. The underworlds of Brighton Rock and A Gun for Sale, war-torn Vietnam in The Quiet American, the reign of terror of Papa Doc Duvalier in The Comedians, the persecution of the priests under Mexican leader President Callas in The Power and the Glory, the personal hell of Scobie in The Heart of the Matter--these and others portray a fallen world from which God is notably absent.

Greene's obsession with God the absent Father is sometimes explored symbolically through the absent-father motif that occurs with some regularity throughout his works.

Brown in The Comedians is uncertain who his father is.

Abandoned by him before birth--and later abandoned by his mother--he is raised by the Jesuits in whose care he half believes for a while he may be heading for a vocation. Such was not to be, however. "As other boys fought with the demon of masturbation," he says, "I fought with faith" (59). Significantly, he continues:

I find it strange to think now of my Latin verses and compositions--all that knowledge has vanished as completely as my father. (59)

In The End of the Affair, Greene again juxtaposes the Heavenly Father with an earthly one. Sarah Miles has also had to live with an absent father, and cannot even recall ever having had one (115). This is of course word-play on Greene's part. Sarah cannot recall her father (i.e., the ultimate Father) because she was brought up without faith, despite being baptised a Catholic at an early age. It is not until many years later, through a series of events, that she encounters Him.

Perhaps the concept of the absent father is best portrayed in The Honorary Consul. In that novel, the three chief protagonists, Plarr, Rivas and Fortnum, all "seem to live with dead fathers" (271) in a land where social and political horrors are the order of the day. Dr. Plarr's father, an idealist with rebel sympathies, had disappeared without a trace when the doctor was a young boy. It is significant that Plarr, raised a Catholic, is at the end of the novel uncertain of his beliefs, for he had spent most of

his life in limbo and had not known if his father were dead or alive, if he had been a man who had abandoned his family or the victim of an atrocious crime. Charley Fortnum, the honorary consul, is an atheist who had hated his dead father, who perceived him as a selfish autocrat who neither understood his son nor cared a nickle about him. "All the same," he says, "I was bloody lonely when he died" (115). And León Rivas, the ex-priest, exhibits little respect for his father, "one of the richest of the bourgeoisie in Paraguay", who always seemed to serve the rich faithfully while the poor around him suffered (217). Not surprisingly, Rivas leaves the priesthood to turn revolutionary because of his inability to reconcile with his beliefs the horrors he was forced to face.

The absence of God is more often than not perceived as abandonment in Greene's novels, and nowhere is this more strikingly obvious than in The Power and the Glory. Mexico, under the anti-clerical purge of President Callas, is depicted as a land without hope, a country under the sentence of death. The power of the Church has been all but eradicated--there is one remaining little "whiskey" priest on the run--and yet the appalling conditions of poverty, for which the Church had been blamed, still remain. Denied the comforts of religion, the people have no respite from the vacancy that pervades all. To Padre José, gazing at the stars in the silence of the night, it seems as though the

whole world has been abandoned:

The glittering worlds lay there in space like a promise--the world was not the universe. Somewhere Christ might not have died. He could not believe that to a watcher there this world could shine with such brilliance: it would roll heavily in space under its fog like a burning and abandoned ship. (29)

The imagery of abandonment in The Power and the Glory extends to everyone and everything. Mr. Tench, the dentist, patiently awaiting the ether cylinder that never comes, is abandoned to a life of vacancy in a land far from home. Padre José, the only married priest in the state, is abandoned to a life of despair; the whiskey priest's child to corruption and evil; and the Fellows' dog--left behind on an abandoned plantation--to a lingering death. Even the murdered Indian child, to whom God denies a miracle, becomes "just a useless object abandoned at the foot of one of the crosses" (185). And with violence everywhere, "it was as if man in all this state had been left to man" (178).

Similar refrains are echoed in The End of the Affair and The Confidential Agent. In the former, noting the wasteland wrought by the blitz of London, Bendrix remarks: "It was as if the shutters were going up on the whole world; soon we should all of us be abandoned to our own devices" (68). In The Confidential Agent, D., too, reflecting on the passing of peace and trust from the world, feels that man has somehow been abandoned:

He had imagined that the suspicion which

was the atmosphere of his own life was due to civil war, but he began to believe that it existed everywhere: it was part of human life. . . . It was as if the whole world lay in the shadow of abandonment. (64)

The theme of abandonment is further explored in Loser Takes All, albeit humourously. In that novel, specific references are made to the God-like nature of the Gom (the Grand Old Man), Bertram's employer and so-called benefactor. Chaos is created when the Gom, acting in a moment of unprecedented generosity, arranges a lavish honeymoon for Bertram and his bride, only to forget about the couple once they reach their honeymoon destination. As a result, Bertram, who is completely unable to pay the extravagant hotel rates on his meagre salary, is forced to take to the roulette tables in Monte Carlo in an attempt to survive. This in turn almost costs him his marriage and, understandably, resentment against the Gom builds for placing them in such an untenable position:

. . . the Gom, that egotistical bastard on the eighth floor who has let us in for all this because he's too great to remember his promises. He makes the world and then goes and rests on the seventh day and his creation can go to pot that day for all he cares. (680)

Greene's earlier novels, in particular, contain overtones of Kierkegaard and Marcel by suggesting that the god-forsakenness of modern man is a direct consequence of man having first abandoned God. Certainly, as A.A. DeVitis, one of Greene's critics, suggests, in The Power and the

Glory, the priest's flight is "a flight from God" (90). Reluctant to become a martyr of the Church, the priest is on the run, ostensibly to avoid being tried and convicted of treason against the state. His true treason, however, is not against the state but against God, whom he has betrayed by abusing the holy office assigned to him. In stark contrast to Padre José, who in their younger days had been "filled with an overwhelming sense of God" (The Power and the Glory 111), the priest had been filled with ambition and pride. When the political climate changed and it was no longer easy to be a priest, he all but abandoned the rituals of the Church:

. . . the years behind him were littered with . . . surrenders--feast-days and fast-days and days of abstinence had been the first to go: then he had ceased to trouble more than occasionally about his breviary--and finally he had left it behind altogether at the port in one of his periodic attempts at escape. Then the altar stone went--too dangerous to carry with him. (PG 70)

The priest further betrays God's trust by falling into despair and in that despair taking a village woman as his lover. Through this illicit union the child Brigida is born, but it is not until the dark night in the prison cell, when he realizes he cannot repent of his sin because he loves the fruit of it, that his abandonment of God--and hence, estrangement from God--is complete:

It was the oddest thing that ever since that hot and crowded night in the cell he had passed into a region of

abandonment--almost as if he had died
there . . . and now wandered in a kind
of limbo. . . . (PG 174)

In The Heart of the Matter, Scobie's estrangement from God is symbolized at the outset by the broken rosary lying in his desk drawer. The source of his estrangement is unknown, although it may possibly be connected to the death of his only child. The usually perceptive Louise suggests he became a Catholic just to marry her and that his faith does not mean a thing to him (25), but his subsequent anguish and despair belie her words.

Scobie, like Padre José, is filled with "an overwhelming sense of God", but he is also filled with a sense of man's insignificance in the universe. He prays out of habit, adding the act of contrition as a mere formality, "not because he felt himself free from serious sin but because it had never occurred to him that his life was important enough one way or another" (115). Through a series of events, culminating in the death of the child who had survived forty days and nights in an open boat only to die senselessly upon reaching the shore, he begins to question whether all human life must be of any consequence to God. His faith in a caring God further deteriorates when he finds himself involved in an extramarital affair with the child-widow, Helen. Knowing that his adulterous behaviour is surely damning him, he is nevertheless unable to extricate himself from the affair, but neither is he able to

leave his wife, Louise. Convinced that he alone is responsible for their happiness, he is unable to trust God to see that their suffering would not be too great if he should leave one for the other. Accordingly, unable to believe in a God who takes a personal interest in the affairs of man, he appropriates unto himself the responsibility for the well-being of others, with disastrous consequences.

Scobie's sin against God is the sin of pride, born of his conviction that he alone is willing to assume the responsibility that belongs by right to God. By attempting to usurp God's rightful place and by exhibiting such a complete lack of trust in Him, he abandons Him and possibly puts Him out of his reach forever. The full extent of this abandonment is illustrated by the death of Ali, his long-time and trusted servant, in whose murder Scobie is implicated. As he looks down at the body, Ali and God merge into one:

The fumes of petrol lay all around in the heavy night and for a moment he saw the body as something very small and dark and a long way away--like a broken piece of the rosary he looked for: a couple of black beads and the image of God coiled at the end of it. Oh God, he thought, I've killed you: you've served me all these years and I've killed you at the end of them. God lay there under the petrol drums and Scobie felt the tears in his mouth, salt in the cracks of his lips. You served me and I did this to you. You were faithful to me, and I wouldn't trust you. (247-48)

Greene's obviously sympathetic portrayal of both the whiskey priest and Scobie, however, suggests that in their abandonment of God, they may be Promethean figures--men who dared to defy God, noble victims in a hopeless war. In the final analysis, their sins are similar: each puts human love before the love of God. The whiskey priest realizes that the love he felt for his daughter "was the love he should have felt for every soul in the world: all the fear and the wish to save concentrated unjustly on the one child" (PG 247). And Scobie, offering up his soul for damnation by taking the host in his mouth in a state of mortal sin, thereby places his love of God second to the love of those for whose happiness he feels responsible. Despite their defiance of God, however, Greene leaves the door open on whether they are irrevocably damned; both The Power and the Glory and The Heart of the Matter contain overtones first expressed in the earlier written Brighton Rock, that one cannot conceive the "appalling . . . strangeness of the mercy of God" (308).

In the earlier novels, Greene attempts to incorporate the Catholic beliefs he has embraced, and it was primarily these novels that earned him the reputation of being a Catholic writer.¹ Nevertheless, the underlying existential

¹ It is perhaps significant that Greene was not comfortable with this reputation. "Many times since Brighton Rock I have been forced to declare myself not a Catholic writer but a writer who happens to be a Catholic," he writes in Ways of Escape (58).

concerns expressed in these novels create a tension when pitted against the Catholic nature of the novels. This tension eventually gives way to a more existentialist bent as Greene's writings mature.

In Contemporary Existentialism and Christian Faith, J. Rodman Williams writes that "existentialism [is] a reflection of the era in which the reality of God is seriously doubted" (62). Although the reality of God, in spite of His apparent absence in the temporal world, is not called into question in Brighton Rock (1938), The Power and the Glory (1940) and The Heart of the Matter (1948), the first expression of existential doubt regarding His existence can be found in The End of the Affair (1951). Even that novel, however, retains an aura of Catholicism as Bendrix, flying in the face of his self-avowed atheism, takes a leap of faith. The conversion was not an easy one. Ironically, while blaming God for robbing him of his mistress, Bendrix resists belief in a God with every fibre of his being. It is not until the cards are stacked against his favour that he grudgingly admits there must be a God, but even then the conversion is perhaps done more out of hate than of love.

What is just as important as Bendrix's conversion, though, are the concerns raised about the nature of God, and the first real departure in Greene's work from Catholic theology. David Pryce-Jones, a Greene critic, puts it

succinctly:

. . . if God has made Bendrix and the world as they are, but yet demands quite impossible behaviour from them, He is to be regarded as the origin of pain, confusion and misery, the deliberate and rather sadistic mocker of our existence. (86-87)

By the time of the writing of The Honorary Consul in 1973, Greene is reflecting on the "night-side of God". Where once an intrinsic belief in God had given way to existential doubt in the face of the irreconcilable paradox of an all-powerful, loving God who allows sin and suffering to go unchecked, his characters now are evidencing signs of a complete denial of Him in an attempt to explain the absurdity underlying human affairs. In The Honorary Consul, for example, Plarr berates León for going through with the sham of a mass when they are about to murder Charley Fortnum, and says:

You can't believe yourself in all this mumbo-jumbo, León. You are fooling them like you fooled that child who killed his sister. You want to hand them sweets at Communion to comfort them before you murder Charley Fortnum. I've seen with my own eyes things just as bad as any you've listened to in the confessional, but I can't be pacified with sweets. I have seen a child born without hands and feet. I would have killed it if I had been left alone with it, but the parents watched me too closely--they wanted to keep that bloody broken torso alive. The Jesuits used to tell us it was our duty to love God. A duty to love a God who produces that abortion? It's like the duty of a German to love Hitler. (226)

He then posits the views: "Isn't it better not to believe in that horror up there sitting in the clouds of heaven than to pretend to love him?" (226)

Doctor Fischer of Geneva or The Bomb Party, one of Greene's latest novels, once again reflects on the malevolent nature of God. The protagonist, Jones, is an atheist, who has no trouble at all living his life without a God. Through his wife, Anna-Louise, he falls into the clutches of Dr. Fischer, a toothpaste millionaire and his father-in-law, whose one joy in life is giving parties at which his guests are invariably humiliated. In this black comedy, Fischer is compared to God (24, 29) and the stage is set. What emerges is the portrait of a God totally uninterested in human affairs (28-29) but greedy for our humiliation (62), who exhibits pride, contempt of the world and cruelty (10), and demonstrates overt harshness in the face of real or imagined betrayal (40).

Throughout the novel, Jones manages to maintain a distance from Fischer (God). He attends the doctor's parties but does not become involved. When Anna-Louise tragically dies in a skiing accident, however, Jones, sick with grief, frantically searches for a half-belief in something beyond the temporal world: "Anna-Louise was dead. She could only continue to exist somewhere if God existed" (132). Clinging to this half-belief, he plans to commit suicide at the earliest opportunity, but nevertheless

decides to attend one last party so that he might openly humiliate the man who had caused so much suffering. As the tragic events of the evening unfold, it is not Jones who lies dead, though; it is Fischer, from a self-inflicted bullet wound to the head. Looking at the body, which now has "no more significance than a dead dog" (141), Jones realizes the futility of taking his own life:

. . . I had lost all hope of ever seeing her in any future. Only if I had believed in a God could I have dreamt that the two of us would ever have that jour le plus long. It was as though my small half-belief had somehow shrivelled with the sight of Doctor Fischer's body. Evil was as dead as a dog and why should goodness have more immortality than evil? There was no longer any reason to follow Anna-Louise if it was only into nothingness. (142)

In the final analysis, then, God is dead and man has been abandoned to his own devices.

After the publication of Doctor Fischer of Geneva of The Bomb Party, Greene presented his readers with the portrait of a good and kindly priest in Monsignor Quixote, a man totally in communion with his God and his world. Although in that novel Monsignor Quixote professes occasionally to entertain doubts about the existence of God, Greene has infused the character with such an overwhelming sense of God that his doubts cannot be taken seriously. Furthermore, Monsignor Quixote cannot be considered to be a synthesis of Greene's works as a whole for it begs a great many questions raised in the earlier novels and does not

embody to any significant degree the images of abandonment and isolation that form such an integral part of his work.

Accordingly, what is most important to remember is that throughout his writing career, Greene vacillates between an atheistic and a theistic position, which in itself is an expression of the existential doubt of our age. Showing such obvious respect for characters such as Colin in A Burnt-Out Case and Fowler in The Quiet American, he acknowledges that "it's possible for an intelligent man to make his life without a god" (BOC 82), but for Greene the question of God never quite disappears. Even Fowler, perhaps the most Sartrean of all his characters, in acknowledging his responsibility in the death of Pyle, says "how I wished there existed someone to whom I could say that I was sorry" (QA 87).

Chapter Two

Lack of Meaning in Outer World

A primary concern of the existentialists is the lack of meaning in the outer world. God is dead, or at best absent from the affairs of man--and, as Nietzsche argues, "With God, meaning and value systems depart from the world" (Breisach 41). Existence itself becomes meaningless. It is, in the words of Sartre, "de trop", it is "pure contingency", it is absurd (Reinhardt 157). Robert Olson explains:

The atheistic existentialists say that since God alone could conceivably give meaning to being and since he does not exist, being is totally meaningless. The Christian existentialists say that although it is permissible to believe on faith that God exists and that for him being has meaning, the "radical incommensurability" between God and man makes it impossible for us even to guess what that meaning is. (Olson 36)

To use a term of Heidegger's, it is as if man were "thrown" into a world which in itself has no meaning and to which he must impart whatever meaning he can.

In his novels, Greene deals with the loss of meaning on almost every level of human existence, which he characterizes by the disappearance of values from the everyday world, the senseless cruelty that is sweeping the globe, the inability of men to communicate effectively one with the other, the absurdity of existence itself, and the

loss of faith in a caring God who might otherwise bring order to the world.

Although Kierkegaard had expressed existentialist concerns almost a century earlier, the philosophy of existentialism as espoused by Sartre first found its voice after the Second World War. Its emergence must in fact be attributed in no small part to the two world wars that distinguished the first half of the twentieth century. With the onslaught of the First World War, it seemed as if the face of the world had changed forever; with the Second World War, the very fact of existence itself was suddenly threatened with total annihilation.

In The Ministry of Fear, Greene looks at how the world has changed since the first great war. Arthur Rowe, half-dreaming, half-musing, argues with his dead mother:

This isn't real life any more. . . .
Tea on the lawn, evensong, croquet, the
old ladies calling, the gentle
unmalicious gossip, the gardener
trundling the wheelbarrow full of leaves
and grass. People write about it as if
it still went on; lady novelists
describe it over and over again in books
of the month, but it's not there
anymore. (65)

He continues:

I'm wanted for a murder I didn't do.
People want to kill me because I know
too much. I'm hiding underground, and
up above the Germans are methodically
smashing London to bits all round me.
You remember St. Clement's--the bells of
St. Clement's. They've smashed that--
St. Jame's, Piccadilly, the Burlington
Arcade, Garland's Hotel, where we stayed

for the pantomime, Maples and John Lewis. It sounds like a thriller, doesn't it, but the thrillers are like life--more like life than you are, this lawn, your sandwiches, that pine. You used to laugh at books Miss Savage read--about spies, and murders, and violence and wild motor-car chases, but dear, that's real life: it's what we've made of the world since you died. (65)

Greene's somewhat holocaustic view of modern existence is primarily to be found in what has been classified as his "entertainments", although critic David Pryce-Jones rightfully points out that it is a misnomer to place the earlier secular novels, such as A Gun for Sale, The Confidential Agent, The Ministry of Fear, among the so-called entertainments. As he says, these novels are more than that--they are "presentations of a social scene" (76). And that presentation is one of a world in the throes of disintegration.

The Ministry of Fear, The End of the Affair and A Confidential Agent are all set in war-torn London. Here, the nightly air-raids, the bombings, the burning buildings, and the bodies buried under piles of rubble provide the images of a crumbling world. Existence is precarious; one never knows what the day will bring. It is even questionable as to "whether a telephone bell would ring at all, because overnight a building might have ceased to exist" (MF 70-71). And far from the peace and security they once knew, for the people of London the underground becomes a part of everyday life:

. . . the sirens were sounding the All Clear. One or two people in the shelter sat up for a moment to listen, and then lay down again. Nobody moved to go home. They were quite accustomed to sleeping underground; it had become as much part of life as the Saturday night film or the Sunday services had ever been. This was the world they knew. (MF 68)

One is reminded of the philosophy of Jaspers: "The only certainty is that all I experience is in a state of flux and I am in the middle of it" (Breisach 112).

War brought with it a certain loss of innocence. As D. remarks in A Confidential Agent:

You learned too much in these days before you came of age. His own people knew death before they could walk--they got used to desire early--but this savage knowledge that ought to come slowly, the gradual fruit of experience. . . . In a happy life the final disillusionment with human nature coincided with death. Nowadays they seemed to have a whole lifetime to get through somehow after it. . . . (64)

The war is also credited with bringing about the disappearance of values. The life of the individual diminishes in significance; the life of a stranger counts for nothing. D., who is on a secret mission to England to buy coal for his continental government which also has a civil war on its hands, decides to carry out his assignment at any cost, because after all "you couldn't count strangers' lives in the balance against your own people's" (CA 174). He particularly notes: "When war started the absolute moral code was abolished; you were allowed to do

evil that good might come" (CA 174).

Treachery and fear replaced the old-fashioned values of honesty and trust. Again in A Confidential Agent, D.'s people have been sold out by their leaders. He himself instinctively feels that he has been betrayed in the course of his mission but is unable to name the betrayer. As a consequence, his life is darkened by suspicion: "You could trust nobody but yourself, and sometimes you were uncertain whether after all you could trust yourself" (10).

In a world where treachery and violence mark the course of everyday life, people soon become de-sensitized to the suffering of others. When D. realizes that he has lost his bid for the coal he desperately needs, and that the rebels are the victors, he goes directly to the English coal-miners to plead with them to refuse to work the pits. Having been out of work for some time, the miners are starving, but his entreaties that the delivery of the coal will mean death to his people, including the murder of innocent children, fall upon deaf ears. The attitude of the workers is best summed up in the words of a coal-miner's young daughter: "You're crazy. Why should we care?" (CA 166)

Perhaps the best example, however, of what may be referred to as "social amnesia"--whereby we become so de-sensitized to violence that it almost ceases to have any effect on us--may be found in The Ministry of Fear. In the passage in question, Arthur Rowe is in a sanitorium, because

of the anmesia he suffered when a bomb exploded. As a victim of violence himself, he is totally immune to the suffering in the outside world:

On the tray lay always the morning paper. Digby [Rowe] had not been allowed this privilege for some weeks, until the war had been gently broken to him. Now he could lie late in bed, propped comfortably on three pillows, take a look at the news: 'Air Raid Casualties this Week are Down to 255', sip his coffee and tap the shell of his boiled egg: then back to the paper--'The Battle of the Atlantic'. The eggs were always done exactly right: the white set and the yolk liquid and thick. Back to the paper: 'The Admiralty regret to announce . . . lost with all hands.' There was always enough butter to put a little in the egg, for the doctor kept his own cows. (119)

In such a world, where there is a complete breakdown of the moral order, the sense of cruelty is heightened. In A Confidential Agent, innocent children become pawns in a game of international intrigue. In A Gun for Sale and The Third Man, countless lives are lost because of the capricious greed of a bunch of capitalists who will stop at nothing to make a profit. In the former, an idealistic Minister of War is assassinated in an effort to boost the armaments industry; his death then results in the death of thousands more, for the war cannot be stopped. In The Third Man, the name of the game is the penicillin racket, which on the face of it seems harmless enough but is horrific when held up to closer scrutiny. In order to supply black-market penicillin at the cheapest price, the racketeers began to dilute the

penicillin with coloured water and, in the case of the penicillin dust, with sand. Not only did it render the stuff useless, but as the narrator says:

You can be immunized from the effects of penicillin. At the best you can say that the use of this stuff makes a penicillin treatment for the particular patient ineffective in the future. This isn't so funny, of course, if you are suffering from V.D. Then the use of sand on a wound that requires penicillin--well, it's not healthy. Men have lost their legs and arms that way--and their lives. But perhaps what horrified me most was visiting the children's hospital here. They had bought some of this penicillin for use against meningitis. A number of children simply died, and a number went off their heads. You can see them now in the mental ward. (507-08)

Greene makes it clear, however, that the disintegration of moral order is not just a war-time phenomenon belonging to a certain time and place. In later novels, he goes on to highlight the horrors perpetrated under the reign of Papa Doc Duvalier (The Comedians), the atrocities committed under Stroessner in Paraguay (The Honorary Consul), the havoc wreaked in the name of democracy in Vietnam (The Quiet American), and the unbridled persecution of the priests under Mexican leader President Callas (The Power and the Glory). To some extent his works refute the claim by critics of existentialism that the philosophy, mainly arising as it did out of Sartre's war-time experience, therefore "expands a unique situation into a universal theory" (Greene 98). In The Comedians, in particular, Brown

points out that the situation in Haiti is not abnormal. He says:

It belongs to human life. Cruelty's like a searchlight. It sweeps from one spot to another. We only escape it for a time. (162)

The meaninglessness of everyday life is further characterized by one's inability to communicate with another on an effective level. In The Heart of the Matter, neither Scobie nor Louise can say anything of any significance to the other. Their lives are filled with platitudes and comforting little lies designed to avoid the infliction of pain. Further, Greene's novels are filled with misunderstandings and bunglings of both a personal and political nature. The entire plot of The Honorary Consul rests on the bungled kidnapping of Charley Fortnum, brought about because information was not properly given or was misinterpreted in the process.

Greene's war-time novels, in particular, present the vision of a whole world turned upside-down. As yet another bomb is dropped upon London and Rowe lands in the basement kitchen, the chair above his head in his own room on the first floor, he calls out in a rage: "It's beyond a joke: it's beyond a joke" (MF 29). Later, in his dream where he is talking to his mother, he describes his life in a mental institution. There, he says, everyone was very kind. As he tries to distinguish the "madhouse" from the world in which he now finds himself, it is very clear that the world at

large has been inverted: there was sanity in the madhouse; there is nothing but insanity outside (MF 66).

The tragi-comic nature of several of Greene's novels further points to the absurdity of human existence. As Plarr says in The Honorary Consul, "You would almost think there was a great joker somewhere who likes to give a twist to things" (237). In A Confidential Agent, D. realizes the absurdity of his relationship with Rose:

He suddenly realized how absurd it all was. He was a confidential agent employed in an important coal deal on which the fate of a country might depend; she was a young woman, the daughter of a peer whose coal he wanted, and the beloved, apparently, of a Mr Forbes who also controlled several mines and kept a mistress in Shepherd's Market (that was irrelevant); a child had been murdered by the manageress of Mr K.--acting, presumably, on behalf of the rebels, although they were employed by his own people. That was the situation: a strategical and political--and criminal--one. Yet here they were talking to each other down the telephone like human beings, jealous of each other, as if they were in love, as if they had a world at peace to move about in, and the whole of time. (131)

Further, he realizes the futility of trying to plan ahead. What was the good, he asks, "when life took you like a high sea and flung you. . .?" (175)

The absurdity of life has even more tragic consequences for Scobie. Passed over for promotion, he feels he has failed Louise, and his pity for his wife and his desire to ensure her happiness set off a chain of events that

culminates in his eventual suicide. Yet, towards the end, Scobie is granted the promotion previously denied to him and he cannot help being struck by the ultimate meaninglessness of the whole state of affairs:

He thought: so all this need not have happened. If Louise had stayed I should never have loved Helen, I would never have been blackmailed by Yusef, 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. (228)

In Graham Greene, Pryce-Jones remarks:

It is the sense of an absurd yet induced pattern in human affairs that have led some critics . . . to think of Greene as an Existentialist. . . . (75)

The final absurdity, according to Sartre, is death itself. Death, he says, does not bring life to a sensible conclusion but instead nullifies all possibilities (Williams 72).

In The Heart of the Matter, Sartre's thoughts seem to be echoed as Scobie ponders the tragic suicide of young Pemberton and later questions why a child should be allowed to survive for forty days and nights in an open boat, only to die shortly after reaching the shore. As senseless as these deaths are, however, it is clear from the novel that the greatest exemplification of the absurd is Scobie's own subsequent suicide. While his death attempts to settle the chaos surrounding the last few months of his life, it in fact settles nothing. Ali is dead and cannot be brought

back to life, so in a sense Scobie's guilt over the affair is a "useless passion". Certainly neither Louise nor Helen have benefited by Scobie's death. On the contrary, Louise must live with the torturing knowledge that her husband has committed suicide, with all the ramifications that entails, and Helen has indeed been abandoned to Bagster. And Scobie, whose longing for peace was so long his driving force, may have merely traded temporal pain for eternal pain, although once again Greene leaves the door open on the extent of God's mercy.

As well, in A Burnt-Out Case, Querry's death seems to be the embodiment of the absurd. For most of his life, he has been guilty of infidelity: to the women in his life, to his art, to his God. When finally, in the heart of the Congo, he comes to terms with his wasted life and finds again a reason for living, his life is wiped out by a jealous husband, who wrongly believes Querry has seduced his wife. As Querry lies dying he is laughing--laughing at the whole absurd situation, the "innocent adulterer" dying for an indiscretion he did not commit, when so many indiscretions he did commit went unpunished. Yet while acknowledging the absurdity of it all, Greene, somewhat in conflict with Sartre's position but in keeping with that of the Christian existentialists, who maintain that man cannot know what awaits him at the end of this life and can only accept on faith that God exists (but is nevertheless plagued

by doubts that nothingness lies at the end of existence), purposely leaves the ending ambiguous. Whether in death Querry is being given over to the absurd or to some greater plan of a divine order is not known. He is heard to say, "Absurd . . . this is absurd or else . . .", but as Greene points out, "what alternative, philosophical or psychological, he had in mind they never knew" (196).

In the "entertainments", which perhaps embody Greene's blackest vision of the world, God is notably absent. For the most part, the characters in these novels are atheists: for some, like D. in A Confidential Agent or Kate in England Made Me, God has never been a part of the world they have known; for others, like Raven in A Gun for Sale, He has long been a symbol of betrayal and therefore best obliterated from the mind. God cannot bestow order to their disorderly lives, because the very fact of the chaos and meaninglessness in which they wander is proof that He does not exist. Thus in these novels there is the emergence of a new "faithless generation", products of a disillusioned world.

In the novels "proper", which may perhaps be classified as "quasi-religious" novels, even characters like Scobie, who never doubt the existence of God, rage at his willingness to let human suffering go unchecked. That God could create a world and allow it to fall into disorder and despair--"that was the mystery, to reconcile that with the

love of God" (HM 121). It is a mystery that is totally incomprehensible; and because it is so incomprehensible, it leads to a wavering of faith, a disbelief in a caring God whose job it is to bring order and meaning to the world.

In his essay, "Faith as Existential Choice", James M. Edie suggests the word "absurd" in existential terms is tied in with:

The evolution of a human life or the development of history involves a complex dialectic of sense and nonsense, of meaning and non-meaning, not only because we find much that is due to chance, much that is botched, much that is unfulfilled in human existence, but primarily because much of what we experience as meaningless or absurd does not yet have meaning. (Earle 9)

Although all the existentialists agree that alienation is an indisputable fact of man's existence, they are somewhat divided on the source of that alienation. Kierkegaard, for example, concentrates on the individual's estrangement from God, whereas Jaspers is concerned about man's alienation in a system that tends to view him impersonally in a political, technological and economical way. Buber sees man's tendency to objectify his fellow man, to be ruled by the I-It relationship, as the central source of his alienation, while Sartre views it as his willingness to immerse himself in the life of the crowd, his reluctance to use the freedom that is ineluctably his to surge up in the world and define himself. For the most part, in his novels where Christian theology predominates, Greene sees the alienation of man in terms of his alienation from God, but in his other, more secular novels, alienation is viewed mostly in a Jasperian way, where man is estranged from the source of his being by an increasingly dehumanizing world.

Kierkegaard's philosophical approach, which shows a "deep rift between man, a finite being, and God, the absolute" (Breisach 193), dominates such novels as Brighton Rock, The Power and the Glory, The Heart of the Matter and A Burnt-Out Case.

Greene's Pinkie in Brighton Rock is without doubt the most chilling example the author gives of total alienation from God. Although Pinkie was reared as a Catholic and once

served as a choir boy, like Milton's Satan he seems to have been hurled from the heavens into an annihilating existence. He moves through Brighton Rock with "the smell of gunpowder on his fingers, holding the Mother of God by the hair" (23), and when he recalls Latin phrases of the hymns he had sung in childhood, it sounds as though curses are pouring from his mouth. Estranged from the love of God, he is unable to feel love for any human creature; even the sexual act itself is viewed with loathing and disgust. A perversion of all that is good, Pinkie moves with "poison in his veins" (81) and callously eliminates anyone who gets in his way. Human life itself--God's greatest creation--has no value for him: "The word murder conveyed no more to him than the words 'box', 'collar', 'giraffe'" (52). Pinkie is in fact so alienated from God that heaven has no meaning for him; he can only believe in hell and he cannot "picture any eternity except in terms of pain" (118).

Sin, of course, is the primary cause of alienation from God and it is through their sins that both the whiskey priest in The Power and the Glory and Scobie in The Heart of the Matter have become estranged.

The priest's sin was originally the sin of despair. Five years before he had become a lonely figure roaming Mexico, he had fallen into despair, taken a village woman as his lover, and fathered a child. Unlike the Good Thief in the parable, however, he finds that he is unable to repent

of his sin because he loves the fruit of it. By putting the love of his child before the love of God, he becomes even further estranged from Him and soon is unable any longer to feel any meaning in prayers. As a result, he wanders in a state of limbo, far removed from the source of his being, feeling totally abandoned and alone.

Scobie's alienation from God is symbolized by the broken rosary lying in the drawer of his desk. Although he is alienated from God to some extent at the outset--he prays merely out of habit (115)--his sense of alienation deepens as he becomes more and more involved in his affair with Helen. Consumed by guilt, he at first tries to find comfort in the Church, only to discover that his prayers have become meaningless utterances:

Scobie, with his eyes fixed on the cross, prayed--the Our Father, the Hail Mary, the Act of Contrition. The awful languor of routine fell on his spirits. He felt like a spectator--one of those many people round the cross over whom the gaze of Christ must have passed, seeking the face of a friend or an enemy. (152-53)

Like the whiskey priest, Scobie feels guilty but cannot repent his adultery. He tells Helen: "'I can regret the lies, the mess, the unhappiness, but if I were dying now I wouldn't know how to repent the love'" (210). Because he is unable to repent, he initially refuses to defile God further by taking the sacraments in a state of mortal sin. Louise, however, insists they attend Sunday mass together,

but once there Scobie feigns illness to avoid having to go to the communion rail. Nevertheless, his alienation from God is keenly felt when Louise is about to receive the host:

The priest had reached Louise in his slow uninterrupted patrol, and suddenly Scobie was aware of the sense of exile. Over there, where all these people knelt, was a country to which he would never return. (213)

Scobie's estrangement from God is complete when he later relents under Louise's pressure and takes communion in a state of mortal sin. Feeling the "pale papery taste of an eternal sentence on the tongue" (255), he realizes that he has possibly damned himself forever. Thus, when he commits the final act of despair--the taking of his own life--his action is almost anti-climatic in that he genuinely believes he already has entered the land of no return, far removed from the grace of God.

Marcel, who closely follows Kierkegaard's teachings, sees man's estrangement from God in terms of his estrangement from being. Certainly this philosophical approach seems to characterize Querry in A Burnt-Out Case.

When the novel opens, Querry has just arrived in a leper village in the heart of the Congo, stopping there only because "the boat goes no farther" (20). He himself is likened to one suffering from leprosy; he is referred to as a "burnt-out case", he--like the lepers--is suspicious of society, and he is in an acute state of alienation. "I suffer from nothing," he says. "I no longer know what

suffering is" (16).

As the novel progresses, it is learned that Querry was once a world-famous Catholic architect, renowned for the cathedrals he had built. He has long since abandoned his trade, however, for boredom had set in and he could no longer find pleasure in his craft. He has also retired from relationships; the suicide of a former mistress has convinced him that he is incapable of loving another human being and he is therefore reluctant to cause another to suffer on his behalf. And perhaps more importantly, he has forsaken his belief. When the so-called "proofs" of religion--the "arguments historical, philosophical, logical, and etymological" (153)--fail him, he ceases to believe altogether. Denying that he is a Catholic, or even a Christian, he tells Rycker: "I have no belief whatever in a god. . . . No belief in the soul, in eternity. I'm not even interested" (144).

Querry's sin against God is the sin of his success, which Dr. Colin refers to as "a mutilation of the natural man" (197). As David Pryce-Jones says:

Success makes people love themselves,
people loving themselves do not love
God, therefore failure is beloved of
God, and the nearest approximation to
love of God. (112)

Instead of building his cathedrals to glorify God, Querry built them to satisfy his own ego. He writes in his journal:

What I have built, I have always built
for myself, not for the glory of God or
the pleasure of a purchaser. Don't talk
to me of human beings. Human beings are
not my country. (51)

Querry's alienation must be understood in religious terms, for he--despite all his protests--is not an atheist. He himself wonders if perhaps the total vacancy he feels might not be "his punishment for the rules he had wilfully broken" (158), and Colin points out that he is too troubled by his lack of faith to qualify for the "atheist corner" (192). His estrangement is, first of all, an estrangement from God; then it is an estrangement from humankind; and finally it is an estrangement from the self.

Querry's estrangement from God was undoubtedly precipitated by trying to objectify God, which Kierkegaard claims is a futile effort because man can come to know God only through a subjective experience (Greene 21). Further, by immersing himself in a life of pleasure, relating to the world in what Kierkegaard refers to as an "aesthetic way" (Borowitz 32), he shuts himself off from true communion with God and alienates himself from the very source of his being.

In less ecclesiastical terms, but nonetheless agreeing with the Kierkegaardian approach, Marcel also sees the alienating effect of a life of pleasure. As J.V. Langmead Casserley explains in Christianity and Existentialism:

Marcel sees clearly that the root causes
of the dehumanizing maladies which
afflict and are characteristic of
contemporary Western society preceded in

time the emergence of both mass democracy and the totalitarian state. For Marcel man's alienation from his own being in the modern world, and his consequent tendency towards an apathetic acquiescence in his brutal and brutalizing immersion in the life of the mass, is to be traced to the earlier preoccupation of the Western bourgeoisie with property. For him the traditional preoccupation of the middle classes with property is a tragic substitution of having for being. (Michalson 91)

After A Burnt-Out Case, Greene moves away from novels dominated by theology and into a political climate dominated by the expediencies of mass democracy. Consequently his focus on the alienation of the individual shifts from a basically Kierkegaardian approach to more of a Jasperian approach. It should be noted, however, that this shift is by no means abrupt. Earlier novels, albeit the "entertainments", also dealt with the alienation of the individual in an increasingly technological society and little attention, if any, was given to man's alienation from God. However, Greene's depiction of the new faithless generation, first represented by C., Rose, Anthony and Kate, expands in later novels to encompass such mature characters as Brown, Fowler, Castle and perhaps even Plarr. This would perhaps suggest that in an increasingly complex society, an increasingly godless society, the alienation of the individual can no longer be attributed simply to his estrangement from God. Rather, modern man has to some extent replaced the God of old with his technological

advances, and Greene would seem to be suggesting that we must now face up to the forces that are threatening to extinguish us all.

In Existentialism: An introduction, guide and assessment, John Macquarrie says:

The existentialist is on firm ground when he points to the growing extent of alienation that is appearing in the contemporary world, among the young, the intellectuals, the artists, the underprivileged. To some degree existentialism is the voice of this alienated group, for one the basis of its own account of history, it must be seen as itself a historical phenomenon. It brings to expression a profound undercurrent of the contemporary mind. (237)

David Pryce-Jones refers to characters such as D. and Rose, Anthony and Kate, Minty and Krogh, Pinkie, Anne and Raven as

. . . a growing band of emotionally dispossessed, fretful and fretted social orphans, unable to stabilise themselves in a vast game of snakes and ladders played by unseen strangers throwing invisible dice. Trust of a human being in those circumstances is stupid, trust in God an imponderable. Very small arrangements--the settling of scores--are the best any of them can hope for, in the absence of wider human relationships. (64-65)

Belonging to nothing and nobody, these characters walk as strangers in a world that has no point of reference for them. Like Rose in A Confidential Agent, who claims "I haven't got a people" (63), and D., who "didn't believe in a God, [who] had no home" (141), they belong in the realm of

No Man's Land. Like Farrant and Minty, they are exiles, "the refuse of a changing world", firmly caught in the middle of it:

They hadn't the resources to hold their place, but the world had so conditioned them that they hadn't the vigour to resist. They were not fresh enough, optimistic enough, to believe in peace, co-operationn, the dignity of labour, or if they believed in them, they were not young enough to work for them. (EMM 180)

In a world where values are lacking, and where justice, honour and trust seem to be remnants of a former age, many of the characters are infused with nihilism, an attestation to the degree of alienation to which they are subjected. Pinkie, for example, whose "grey eyes had an effect of heartlessness like an old man's in which human feeling has died" (BR 5), is so alienated from the world that he sets out on a one-man tour of destruction. Raven, too, who is described as "dark and thin and made for destruction" (GFS 13), at first holds no value in human life, no belief in honesty and goodness and justice, and like Pinkie, he too sets out to exert a sort of revenge upon a world that has shunned him and has long since cast him aside. Even Anthony Farrant, who certainly displays no psychopathic tendencies but drifts from place to place with an air of camaraderie, is so alienated from the world that "behind the bright bonhomie of his glance, behind the firm hand-clasp and the easy joke, lay a deep nihilism (EMM 51). And

ironically, to this dispossessed generation nihilism has its positive side as well. As Arthur Rowe, for instance, watches the sleeping Hilfe,

. . . he could realize a little of the force and the grace and the attraction of nihilism--of not caring for anything, of having no rules and feeling no love. Life became simple. . . . (MF, 203)

As noted before, Karl Jaspers attributes the alienation of the individual to the "dehumanization of man" in a "world that has tended increasingly to view man as merely an impersonal factor politically, economically and technologically" (Williams 28).

In both England Made Me and A Gun for Sale, Greene pursues the theme of what David Pryce-Jones calls "the unprincipled machinations of international capitalism" (62). In both cases the stakes are high: Krogh of England Made Me, a megalomaniac Swedish financier, is manipulating the stock market and illegally inflating the value of certain companies' shares, in an effort to expand his financial empire; and Sir Marcus of A Gun for Sale, the principal behind the contract killing of the Minister of War, is seeking to boost the armaments industry for personal gain. Both men, representatives of the capitalist regime, are bulwarks of the financial community--eminent, respected and successful. Behind this facade, however, are two men who act with total disregard for human life, human suffering and human dignity.

Krogh, for example, sitting in his sound-proof room, "enclosed . . . by a double thickness of glass" (EMM 34), is far removed from the plight of his workers. Lower wages simply mean higher profits, so in the interests of economy operating costs are cut to the bone. With the wages of the workers below subsistence level, one man, upon learning that his wife was going to bear another child, promptly went off his head and killed them both (EMM 154). Old Andersson, a long-time employee of Krogh's, is framed for dismissal when he protests the undercutting of wages in America, and Anthony is of course murdered when it is learned that he is aware of the double-dealings in the stock market.

Similarly, Sir Marcus also acts in a vacuum, without any concern for human life. When Raven angrily confronts him with the deaths he had ordered, the old man remains unmoved:

The deaths he had ordered were no more real to him than the deaths he had read about in the newspapers. A little greed (for his milk), a little vice (occasionally to put his old hand inside a girl's blouse and feel the warmth of life), a little avarice and calculation (half a million against a death), a very small persistent, almost mechanical, sense of self-preservation: these were his only passions. (GFS 165)

In later novels, such as The Comedians, The Honorary Consul, The Quiet American and The Human Factor, Greene focuses his attention on man's insignificance in the political structure.

Particularly in totalitarian countries, he suggests, where the political aims of the state take precedence over the rights of the individual, where any enemy of the existing regime is persecuted for the so-called common good of all, the insignificance of a single human life assumes alarming proportions. In The Comedians, for example, Joseph, Brown's long-time servant, has been crippled as the result of an unfortunate "encounter" with the Tontons Macoute, Doctor Philipot, the Secretary for Social Welfare, ruthlessly driven to suicide by his fear of the President's bogey-men, and Brown himself savagely beaten for being unable to answer their persistent questions. Similarly, in The Honorary Consul, Plarr's father, supposedly for subversive activities, years before the novel opens had been taken from his family and confined to various jails around the country, tortured systematically and made an old man long before his time. Aquino, too, the young revolutionary with poetry in his heart, had become a victim of the harsh regime, his freedom snatched from him and his body mutilated. Others, like Charley Fortnum and Castle of The Human Factor, become pawns in the political process--useful but expendable, with no lasting significance. Yet atrocities such as those committed under the regimes of Papa Doc Duvalier in Haiti, General Stroessner in Paraguay, and under the apartheid regime in South Africa, are permitted to go unchecked, he suggests, because it is politically

expedient. Papa Doc, for example, is described as a "bulwark against Communism" (C 232) and is therefore automatically aligned with the Western forces who want no disturbances in the Caribbean. For similar reasons, and also for reasons of trade, the military dictatorship of General Stroessner and the apartheid policies of the South African government are tolerated.

Even mass democracy, however, as Greene amply demonstrates in The Quiet American, despite its emphasis on the promotion of the individual, must share part of the blame for man's diminishing significance in the universe. In that novel, Pyle, a young American who is in Vietnam under the auspices of the American foreign service, is out to save the Vietnamese for "God and democracy". He, too, acts in a vacuum for he has absolutely no grasp of the intricate political and economic structure. Pyle is filled with ideals; but in his desire to save humanity, he is unable to see one human face in the crowd. The Vietnamese simply represent an abstract concept to him, they are not individuals, and consequently when he surveys the death and mutilization in the square--caused by one of his "bicycle bombs"--his only response when he sees blood upon his shoes is "I must get them cleaned before I see the Minister" (161).

It is obvious that Greene sees unprecedented danger in our increasingly technological world. Now, more than ever,

man has the means by which he may erase the entire face of the globe. Even if total annihilation should not occur, the trend towards mass conformity does nothing but deny individuality and promote alienation. Some, like Fowler, Brown and Plarr, turn aside from the chaos around them and become apathetic; yet in their determination not to become involved, not to believe they can do anything to make a difference, they merely become observers of life, belonging to nothing and no one. Others, like Aquino, attempt to compensate for the seeming insignificance of their lives by exerting their will and power over those perhaps weaker than themselves. Many live in fear, totally subservient to the state, and refuse to take control over their own lives. Still others, like Kate, who ironically says in England Made Me, "There are no foreigners in a business like Krogh's; we're internationalists there, we haven't a country" (11), become so immersed in the mainstream of society they are impervious to the need to assert their individuality before they are swallowed up by an uncaring world. And in such a world, where man is increasingly reduced to an "It" in an "I-It" society, to use Buber's terminology, where he is vulnerable to objectification by his fellow man (Breisach 163-64), Greene, like the existentialists, calls upon him to rise above the crowd and be counted.

Chapter Four

Freedom and Determination

One of the fundamental principles of existentialist thought is the inherent freedom of man. According to Nicholas Berdyaev, a Christian existentialist:

The basic reality of the self is freedom. What makes a self truly a self is its power to choose, to become, to determine itself, as in any given situation it commits itself to do one thing or another. (Borowitz 97)

Given that God is dead or absent from the world, man must stand on his own and make the decisions that ultimately define him. He and he alone must choose; he and he alone must decide. Thus, as Sartre argues, "We are a freedom which chooses, but we do not choose to be free. We are condemned to freedom . . . thrown into freedom or, as Heidegger says, 'abandoned'" (Being and Nothingness 623).

The question of whether man is free or determined has intrigued thinkers for ages, and Greene is no exception. While his fascination with the individual's apparent lack of control over his own destiny has caused at least one critic to surmise that "if freedom is merely the power to choose, then Greene's novels would appear to be dominated entirely by fate" (Mesnet 80), his propensity for balance in his work leads him also to suggest that perhaps man is indeed master of his own destiny and does have the power to choose, although the choices he makes may inadvertently have tragic

consequences. Not surprisingly, this tension in Greene's work is mainly manifested in those earlier novels in which Catholic theology, as opposed to existential philosophy, predominates. Perhaps this tension indicates the author's inability to reconcile the conflict between what appears to be a belief in the intrinsic freedom of man with the contention that if God has made us as we are, then we cannot be completely responsible for what we have become. However, even in these earlier novels--Brighton Rock, A Gun for Sale, The Power and the Glory, and The Heart of the Matter, being chief among them--Greene tips the balance in favour of free will, and therefore reveals once again an existentialist bent which becomes more apparent in his later novels.

In Brighton Rock, Greene tackles the issue of freedom versus determination through the character of Pinkie Brown. He continues his examination of the forces that determine the individual in A Gun for Sale, in which the main protagonist is Raven, the hired killer who can only be described as a mature extension of Pinkie, the child mobster. In both of these novels Greene takes note of psychological factors and social deprivations that would undoubtedly have an influence on the shaping of a character, and questions whether the Pinkies and the Ravens of this world have ever had the chance to determine themselves.

To a large extent, as sociologists would argue, both

Pinkie and Raven are victims of their environment. Certainly neither seems to have had much opportunity to better his condition or even to break away from a life of crime. Pinkie, born into the sordid squalor of Nelson Place, where "the houses looked as if they had passed through an intensive bombardment" (BR 109), later uses his horror of extreme poverty to justify the violent lifestyle he has adopted in the underworld: "Nobody," he thinks, "could say he hadn't done right to get away from this [Nelson Place], to commit any crime" (BR 117). Raven, too, whose unsightly hare-lip "revealed the poverty of parents who couldn't afford a clever surgeon" (GFS 14), develops contempt for a world which has cast him aside and escapes into the underworld to better exact his revenge against those who have shunned him.

By far, however, Greene's emphasis in these two novels is upon the psychological factors that helped to shape these two characters. He seems to suggest that whatever social deprivations weighed against Pinkie and Raven, they were nothing compared to the immense psychological bombardments each had undergone as a child. In this regard, they appear to be the most destiny driven of all of Greene's protagonists, on the face of it having little or no control over the events that seem to have shaped their lives.

The full extent of Pinkie's alienation, for example-- and hence, the extent to which he has been psychologically

determined--can only be measured by taking into consideration the disturbing episodes that surface in his dreams. In one such nightmare, the child Pinkie is an unwitting witness to the Saturday night ritual being carried out in his parents' bed. No doubt having been subjected to such rituals during his formative years, the nightmare evokes feelings of "hatred, disgust, loneliness", as well as a feeling of complete abandonment:

. . . he had no share in their thoughts--for the space of a few minutes he was dead, he was like a soul in purgatory watching the shameless act of a beloved person. (BR 232)

While witnessing such an act would be traumatic to any sensitive young child, it served to breed in Pinkie what amounts to a pathological repulsion for the sexual act. Unable to envision a world where love and sex are complements of each other, he becomes emotionally sterile; thus alienated from a world he cannot understand, he turns his back upon it.

In a second nightmare, which seems to have derived from some obscure incident in his childhood, Pinkie stands alone in an asphalt playground. When the school bell clangs, the children in the yard advance towards the terrified child, "with a purpose" in mind (BR 231). Whatever the purpose is, one can only surmise, but this incident seems to have taught him early that vulnerability was not conducive to survival. Henceforth, in a world in which there are no rules, he would

stop at nothing (BR 232).

The psychological factors that shaped the character of Raven are perhaps even more compelling than those that shaped Pinkie. At the outset, the sins of Raven's parents set him off from the crowd: his father had been hanged and his mother had committed suicide, and the luckless young child had happened upon her, her head nearly sawn off with a bread-knife. Orphaned at an early age, he was placed in a boys' home, where he was subjected continuously to beatings, solitary confinement, bread and water, and "all the rest of the homey stuff" (GFS 127). No doubt as a conduit to survival, he had hardened himself against these events in his life, which would explain why he believed that "soft kids" stood no chance in the outside world.

Perhaps the most devastating psychological torment that Raven has had to deal with was occasioned by his physical defect. Convinced that "if a man's born ugly, he doesn't stand a chance" (GFS 44), he attempts to convert his inferiority complex into one of perverted superiority. Trying to compensate for what he perceives to be a total lack of control over his own life, he apports unto himself control over the lives of others. By becoming a hitman, he in effect becomes a quasi-god, a being who holds in his hands the power of life and death.

By the time they hit the race-course, the characters of Pinkie and Raven seem to have been fully formed. Not only

that, but life on the race-course appears to mark a rendezvous with destiny, for the underworld is a place to which they truly belong. There, each finds a sort of companionship denied him in the outside world. Pinkie finds in Kite the only true "father" he has ever known; Raven discovers an honour among thieves, a certain kinship of mutual respect for the outcasts of society. And when Kite is killed by a rival gang (ironically by Raven, as A Gun for Sale reveals), and Raven is betrayed by one of his kind, the fate of both Pinkie and Raven is sealed: bent on revenge, neither will stop at anything until his mission is complete.

If Pinkie and Raven have the power to choose, Greene certainly does not seem to be suggesting it in the following passages. Pinkie, who cannot reckon one false step throughout his quest for revenge, feels that "every step [was] conditioned by a pressure he couldn't even place" (BR 182). Further, as death closes in upon him, he clearly feels impotent in the face of his destiny:

. . . he wasn't made for peace, he couldn't believe in it. Heaven was a word: hell was something he could trust. A brain was only capable of what it could conceive, and it couldn't conceive what he had never experienced; his cells were formed of the cement school-playground, the dead fire and the dying man in the St Pancras waiting-room, his bed at Frank's and his parents' bed.
(BR 284)

Raven also feels he has been denied his chance in life. As he too lies dying, he regrets what he perceives to be the

inevitable course his life has taken:

. . . he had been marked from his birth
for this end, to be betrayed in turn by
everyone until every avenue into life
was safely closed: by his mother
bleeding in the basement, by the
chaplain at the home, by the shady
doctor off Charlotte Street. (GFS 169)

In The Power and the Glory and The Heart of the Matter, Greene questions the individual's power to choose when other, sometimes malign, forces appear to be exerting a counter-will over him. In these two novels the protagonists seem to be caught up in events beyond their control, the unwitting victims of tragic circumstances.

In the state of Mexico, where civil war has been declared against members of the Roman Catholic clergy, the last surviving priest is on the run. Knowing that it means certain death if he is caught by the authorities, when The Power and the Glory opens, the whiskey priest has only one thought in mind: to escape to safety to a neighbouring state. But escape he cannot, for each time safety appears within reach, he is drawn back into the stifling atmosphere of the god-forsaken land.

The beginning of the novel finds the priest waiting patiently in the operating room of Mr. Tench, the dentist, for the boat that will sail to Vera Cruz in a few hours. Before the boat is ready to depart, however, a small child appears at Mr. Tench's door. Explaining that he has heard there is a "doctor" in the village and that he wishes to

bring this "doctor" to his dying mother, he waits patiently for the priest to join him. Reluctantly the priest does so, feeling as if he has no choice in the matter: "unwillingly he had been summoned to an occasion he couldn't pass by" (PG 14). Thus, as he begins his long trek away from the coast and his most direct route to safety, he is "shaken by a tiny rage" (PG 14)--rage at the thought he is meant to miss the boat and is not meant to be saved.

Ironically, however, it would appear that the priest is meant to be saved and it would also appear that it is God who is blocking his attempts at escape. First there are the villagers, pleading for a mass here or a baptism there, who delay the priest in his journey; then a dying child, shot three times by the American gringo and beyond any earthly help, but who holds the priest in a grasp of compassion; and finally a yellow-toothed mestizo, clinging to him like a blood-sucking leach, waiting only for an opportunity to betray him. The mestizo, in particular, seems heaven sent--a Judas-like figure whose sole purpose is to see that the priest is crucified and that Christianity remains in the land. When the half-caste therefore implores him, after he is safely ensconced on the other side of the border, to return to Mexico to administer the last rites to the dying American gringo, the priest goes with him; even though he knows that it is a trap and that he too will surely die, he feels powerless to refuse confession to a dying man. Thus

it would appear at the end of the novel that God's will has been carried out: the priest is sacrificed and made a martyr in the eyes of the people; another priest is sent to replace him; and it appears, for a time at least, that the Church will indeed survive in the ravaged land.

In The Heart of the Matter, Scobie's power to choose is called into question when his inexorable pity for others leads him into circumstances apparently beyond his control. Passed over for promotion to Commissioner of Police, and unable to bear the unhappiness of his wife, Louise, who sees the lack of promotion as a direct insult, Scobie rashly agrees in a moment of pity to send her away on a holiday. When he is unable to raise the funds through conventional sources, he is forced to borrow the money he needs from Yusef, a Syrian trader believed by the authorities to be involved in a diamond-smuggling operation. Although the transaction is a straightforward one, with Scobie agreeing to pay to Yusef four-percent interest on the loan he has obtained, the deal has certain ramifications not altogether favourable to the police officer. For example, while Scobie is above suspicion in the matter, in that he has made it clear to Yusef that he will in no way be compromised in his duties, rumours quickly spread that he is in the pay of the Syrian. And indeed, Yusef has every intention of compromising the integrity of the officer for his own benefit. When he feeds Scobie false information about the

supposed smuggling operation of a rival, in order to get the rival out of the way, it is clear that Yusef's professed friendship for Scobie (under which the loan is said to have been made) has taken on more sinister overtones. However, it is not until Yusef intercepts a letter written by Scobie to Helen, the child-widow who has become Scobie's mistress during Louise's absence, in which he clearly confesses his love for Helen, that the Syrian plays his full hand.

Threatening to reveal all to Louise, who has telegraphed that she is on the way home, Yusef successfully blackmails Scobie into delivering a package to a Portuguese captain--a package that Scobie suspects contains contraband diamonds. Finally, when Yusef sends Scobie a diamond in gratitude for the success of the operation, and Scobie's boy Ali happens upon it, the officer angrily complains to the Syrian that his indiscretion has awakened suspicion in the mind of the servant. As a result, Yusef orders the murder of Ali and Scobie spins into an orgy of guilt for the role he has played in the murder of his friend.

Scobie's guilt is compounded by his inability to break off the affair with Helen, confess his sins, and resume a normal relationship with Louise; or, conversely, to divorce Louise and take up his life with Helen. Moved by pity for both women, and feeling responsible for the happiness of each, he tries to maintain an equilibrium by concealing his affair from his wife. Therefore, not only does he feel

compelled to give into Yusef's blackmail demands, but to prevent Louise from thinking that anything is amiss, he risks what he believes to be eternal damnation by accepting communion in a state of mortal sin. Having thus perjured himself in the eyes of God, and desiring peace for himself and happiness for the others, Scobie takes the only route that he feels is left open to him. By taking his own life, he genuinely believes he is acting for the good of all.

On the face of it, it would appear that Scobie is indeed being manipulated by forces beyond his control. Yusef uses him for his own diabolical purposes and, especially with the murder of Ali, leads him down a path he does not want to go. In fact, as Scobie waits patiently at Yusef's home for the boy who will not arrive, he is "touched by uneasiness, as though he had accidentally set in motion a powerful machine he couldn't control" (242). Helen, too, manipulates him: with her childish tantrums and vulnerable air, she awakens in him a pity he cannot quell and an overwhelming desire to see to her happiness. As well, Louise is partly responsible for pushing him to the end. As Scobie realizes, if she had not been so unreasonable about wanting to go away, knowing the trip was beyond their means, he never would have been forced to borrow from Yusef, he never would have been compromised by Yusef, and he never would have taken up with Helen. Further, by insisting that he attend communion with her, having heard already about his

affair with Helen, she twists his hand and forces his fate. Most of all, however, Greene suggests that if blame is to be affixed, if Scobie has indeed been robbed of his power to choose, then God must surely be held responsible for the tragic end. By endowing Scobie with an overwhelming sense of pity, by making him as he is and then demanding that he renounce his pity to save himself, God is in fact setting intolerable standards which can only--and do--lead to despair.

That Pinkie and Raven, the whiskey priest and Scobie, are determined to some extent by forces beyond their control cannot be denied therefore, and Greene does not suggest otherwise. Yet Greene also illustrates that in the final analysis these characters do have the power to choose, in spite of the limitations placed upon them, in spite of the forces that seem to be working against them. In this respect, while the tension between freedom and determination that characterizes these novels seems in large part to derive from Greene's own inability to choose, it must be noted that it is still not inconsistent with the existential philosophy, which insists that man's freedom is total, albeit rooted in a determinate, historical situation. As Marjorie Grene explains in Introduction to Existentialism:

Geographical, historical and economic facts far beyond the individual's control do indeed determine the scope and limits of the choices he can make.

Yet, however narrow those limits, it is still the choice within the situation, not the mere situation itself, that makes the man. (46)

She continues:

. . . it is no contradiction for men to be determined and free, for freedom would be meaningless, were there not these particulars to face or flee, use or discard--particulars which make me what I am, yet which I, by my transcendence of them in this direction and not in that, make into the world they are [sic]. (50)

Through carefully drawn parallels between Pinkie and Raven and other characters in the novels in question, Greene clearly demonstrates that these two protagonists were not in fact destiny driven but simply failed to transcend the limitations placed upon them.

In Brighton Rock, the parallel so established is between Pinkie and Rose. They share a common geography, Rose also having been born in Nelson Place and encumbered by all the economic disadvantages that seem to have had such a destructive effect on Pinkie. They were both raised in the Roman Catholic faith, but whereas Rose seems to derive strength from her religion, Pinkie rejects it as a source of weakness. And although it might be argued that Rose did not endure the same type of psychological trauma to which Pinkie was subjected, from the limited sketch Greene provides of her home life, it is obvious that she suffered emotional deprivation as well. Yet Rose is the antithesis of Pinkie: she is good, he is evil, something that may not be explained

away on the basis of determining factors alone.

In A Gun for Sale, Greene drives his point home more forcefully. The parallels between Raven, the hired killer, and his victim, the good and kindly Minister of War, are striking: the Minister's father was a thief, his mother had committed suicide, and he had spent his life in an orphanage. He too had come from an economically deprived background but had risen above his circumstances to play a role in the political life of the nation; as Minister of War, he had refused to use his position to the detriment of his country but had instead "cut down the army expenses to help clear the slums" and opened up housing developments for the poor (GFS 122). And although it is important to remember that freedom, as defined by the existentialists, is not to be confused with the freedom to achieve certain goals, which in itself is not considered to be a great value (Sartre, Being and Nothingness 621), Raven did perhaps have it in his power to achieve goals similar to those achieved by the Minister. Like the Minister, he received an education while in the Home; unlike the Minister, he did not make use of it to achieve his fullest potential.

Accordingly, as Sartre points out in Being and Nothingness, as summarized by Robert G. Olson in An Introduction to Existentialism:

"Heredity, education, environment,
physiological constitution" are "the

Chapter Five

Anguish

The concept of anguish as a universal phenomenon lies at the heart of existential philosophy. Sometimes referred to as anxiety, dread or nameless fear, it is nevertheless to be distinguished from fear, which is always the apprehension of a definite object. Rather, anguish is related to something quite indefinite; pure anguish may be said to be that which man experiences when he stands at the edge of the abyss and encounters the loneliness, the abandonment, the meaninglessness and the nothingness that are central to human life.

Anguish, argue the existentialists, belongs to no certain place and time. It is simply the tragedy of the human condition and can be found in every corner of the globe. It exists in both democratic and totalitarian countries and is a manifestation of the godlessness of modern society. More specifically, as J. Rodman Williams says, it is the result of an "indefinite fear of future world-wide catastrophe or of people having more liberty than they know how to handle"; it is also a result of "political terror", arising from the instability of world peace today as various political regimes battle for supremacy, which evokes continuing uncertainty and dread (Williams 101).

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no place for him in ordinary society because of his circumstances--the nature of his parents' deaths, his poverty-stricken background, and his physical deformity--he is not only evidencing bad faith but is deliberately choosing to make his life in the underworld. As Sartre explains:

I do not limit myself to receiving passively the meaning of "ugliness," "infirmity," "race," etc., but, on the contrary, I can grasp these characteristics--in the simple capacity of a meaning--only in the light of my own ends. This is what is expressed--but by completely reversing the terms--when it is said that the fact of being of a certain race can determine a reaction of pride or the ugliness can appear only within the limits of my own choice of inferiority or of pride; in other words, they can appear only with a meaning which my freedom confers upon them. (Being and Nothingness 677)

Accordingly, by making no attempt to rise above his circumstances, by receiving passively the limitations placed upon him at his birth, and by creating a perception of how others must see him--a perception which, incidentally, is not always a correct one, for Anne does not even notice his deformity--Raven is making a free and deliberate choice to spend his life in the underworld.

When the chips are down, both Pinkie and Raven reaffirm the choices they have made. Raven, who is so filled with images of betrayal that he is unable to believe in trust, blocks out "some memory of peace and goodness which had been on the point of returning to him" (GFS 167)

as he proceeds with his final acts of destruction. And when Pinkie, who can picture eternity only in terms of pain (BR 118), is offered a final chance for redemption, he freely chooses to reject it in what is perhaps one of the most poignant passages Greene has ever written:

An enormous emotion beat on him; it was like something trying to get in; the pressure of gigantic wings against the glass. *Dona nobis pacem*. He withstood it, with all the bitter force of the school bench, the cement playground, the St Pancras waiting-room, Dallow's and Judy's secret lust, and the cold unhappy moment on the pier. If the glass broke, if the beast--whatever it was--got in, God knows what it would do. He had a sense of huge havoc--the confession, the penance and the sacrament--and awful distraction, and he drove blind into the rain. (BR 300)

In the end, therefore, both Pinkie and Raven have freely chosen, and what they have freely chosen is evil over good.

Although in The Power and the Glory the question of the priest's power to choose is not as clearcut as perhaps it is in other novels, Greene does nevertheless suggest that he too is exercising free will in sacrificing himself for the love of his God. At the beginning of the novel, the priest rages against the forces that seem to be working against him, but in truth he is struck by indecision. Too cowardly to stay and die a martyr for his Church, but too heroic to put his own safety before the needs of his people, he wanders in a state of limbo, unsure of where his inaction will take him. True, he is consistently hindered in his

half-hearted attempts at escape, but by refusing to shake off the bonds of his priesthood, he is in fact choosing to stay, for a time at least, with his people.

There can be no doubt that it is God's will that the whiskey priest die for the sake of his Church, but there is strong evidence in the novel to suggest that God does not force his hand. In fact, when the priest is safely ensconced across the border and the half-caste appears, urging him back to the other side, the decision of whether to stay or to go clearly rests with the whiskey priest. Realizing that the choice is between a life in the realm of nothingness, in which he will surely sink back into his old and slothful ways, and precarious joy in the realm of God, the priest freely chooses the latter. It is a calculated decision but one ultimately made with the heart; it is also a choice like that of the Prince of Denmark, a choice of "whether he should kill himself or not, whether it is better to go on suffering all the doubts about his father, or by one blow . . ." (PG 213). Strangely enough, the knowledge that he will soon die and bring an authenticity to his life that hitherto had been missing brings a feeling of peace to his weary soul, and with a lightened heart, with a complete cognizance of the situation, he turns towards Mexico.

In The Heart of the Matter, Greene amply demonstrates that Scobie has also exercised freedom of choice in making

the decisions that ultimately define him. When he rashly agrees to send Louise away on a holiday, knowing that he has already been denied funding by the bank and knowing that only Yusef will grant him a loan, he is consciously setting in motion a chain of events which will ultimately have tragic consequences. He is, in fact, in existentialist terms, making a choice within the situation. That he believes it is the right choice at the given time is unquestionable, for he "would still have made the promise even if he could have foreseen all that would come of it" (60). Neither does he excuse his affair with Helen and all the lies and deceptions that follow, for he readily admits that "with his eyes open, knowing the consequences, he entered the territory of lies without a passport for return" (199). As well, he recognizes his complicity in the death of Ali and knows that by the choices he has made he is as responsible as Yusef is for the murder of his boy-- a realization that is painfully brought home when he views the mutilated body of his once trusted servant:

He swore aloud, hysterically. 'By God, I'll get the man who did this,' but under that anonymous stare insincerity withered. He thought: I am the man. Didn't I know all the time in Yusef's room that something was planned? Couldn't I have pressed for an answer?
(247)

According to Sartre, freedom is a lonely matter for one is abandoned to oneself. Further, to Sartre's thinking, if God inhibits freedom of choice, one must cast away God.

While The Heart of the Matter and its examination of freedom cannot really be considered Sartrean in nature, in that the Catholic overtones are far too strident for consideration of such a possibility, nevertheless Scobie's ultimate, apparent rejection of God has traces of Sartrean existentialism in it. Scobie, unable to reconcile his love of God with his pity for Louise and Helen, unable to put his own soul before the happiness of others, freely chooses to reject the God who has made him as he is and demands intolerable standards of him. By taking his own life, by committing that ultimate act of defiance, he hands himself over to the absurd which has characterized his life of late and turns his back upon his God forever.

By the time of the writing of The Quiet American, the conflict in Greene's work seems largely to have disappeared. Fowler, realizing that Pyle's violent ways can no longer be tolerated in this world, clearly exercises free will in taking action against him. Similarly, Brown in The Comedians, seeing at last that he can no longer afford to stand aside as an impartial observer, exercises the freedom with which he has been endowed in taking a small, albeit futile, action against the forces that seek to destroy him. While in The Honorary Consul Plarr is, to a certain extent, caught up in circumstances beyond his control, Greene clearly illustrates that he has in fact chosen to help the abrogados and must therefore accept responsibility for his

choice. In this novel, in particular, the author suggests that no longer is manipulation by outside forces a credible excuse for the direction our lives have taken, as evidenced by the incredulity with which Plarr greets Rivas's assertion that if he is forced to murder Fortnum, God, for having made him as he is, will surely have loaded the gun and steadied his hand (221). Even in The Human Factor, in which the Soviet Union uses Castle shamelessly to further its own ends, there is no indication that Castle has not chosen to assist the communists of his own free will; if anything, the emphasis in that novel is upon choosing wisely the cause to which one will become aligned. Accordingly, the bent towards existentialism on this difficult issue of whether man is free or determined, first revealed in the earlier novels, reaches an intensity in Greene's later work that cannot be easily dismissed.

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Readers of the novels of Graham Greene cannot help but

be struck by the universal cry of anguish that resounds throughout. From the whiskey priest in Mexico to Scobie in West Africa, and even to Querry in the heart of the Congo, the cry that is heard is reminiscent of Christ's cry on the cross: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" In other novels, where there is a seemingly quiet acceptance that God has gone from this world forever, the sense of anguish is no less acute. It is evident in Papa Doc Duvalier's Haiti, General Stroessner's Argentina, the war-torn London that provides the setting for several of the novels; it can be felt in Castle's icy isolation in the Soviet Republic and witnessed in the face of the Vietnamese woman who "sat on the ground with what was left of her baby in her lap" (QA 161).

Anguish, as conceived by the existentialists, may be placed in roughly three categories: anguish in the face of nothingness, anguish in the face of freedom; and anguish in the face of death. While all existentialists would agree that all three types of confrontation contribute in no small way to the individual's anguish, there is some divergence among them as to what constitutes the primary source of that anguish. In his novels, Greene gives consideration to all three categories.

Heidegger sees anxiety, or anguish, as "that basic disposition which grips the whole person, makes him aware of his estrangement from Being, makes him feel completely

threatened, and in doing so sets free liberating forces" (Breisach 88). To Sartre, the confrontation with nothingness represents total destruction. Unlike Heidegger, he does not see it as an aid in the emergence of being but as "pure annihilation" (Breisach 98). The Christian existentialists further refine the concept of anxiety and relate it to man's feelings of abandonment and forlornness in the whole unfriendly universe. Marcel, in particular, sees it arising in those periods in which the individual is most distant from God or when he has shut himself off from the ontological mystery (Breisach 157). It is this latter approach that Greene takes in The Power and the Glory, The Heart of the Matter and A Burnt-Out Case.

In The Power and the Glory, the priest's confrontation with nothingness is the result of a number of cumulative steps, all of which bring him farther away from God. As was noted in the chapter "Absence of God", the priest's flight is a flight from God. His estrangement from God, and hence from the source of his being, began in the early days of the purgation of the priests from Mexico. Suddenly finding it no longer easy to be a priest, he fell into slothful and forgetful ways, characterized by his "surrenders"--of feast-days and fast-days and days of abstinence, of his devotion to his breviary, and so on (70). He then of course fell into despair and in that despair fathered the child Brigida. But it is not until that dark night in the prison cell, when

he realizes that he cannot repent of his sin and that he is but "one criminal among a herd of criminals" (152), that he passes into a "region of abandonment", a region where time stands still and in which he wanders in a "kind of limbo" (174). And as he comes upon the banana station, which has been abandoned since his last visit, it seems as if life itself has been suspended:

Life didn't exist any more; it wasn't merely a matter of the banana station. Now as the storm broke and he scurried for shelter he knew quite well what he would find--nothing. (174)

Henceforth, the priest's journey into the heartland of Mexico, symbolic of his own inward journey, is compared to a journey on a blank piece of paper (185)--a confrontation with nothingness, an annihilation of being.

The priest's anguish arises from his feelings of absolute abandonment, his alienation from God. Not brave enough to be a saint but too cowardly to die with the others, he longs to make peace with God while feeling too unworthy to be returned to grace.

Like the whiskey priest, Scobie's anguish intensifies the farther away he moves from God. Unable to trust in God to see to the happiness of others, he becomes consumed by a "terrible impotent feeling of responsibility and pity" (HM 124). It first surfaces when he looks at the body of young Pemberton, who, for whatever unknown reasons, fell into despair and hanged himself. It surfaces again, even more

forcefully, when he faces the survivors of the shipwreck, a tiny band of human misery who were forced to survive for forty days and nights in an open boat, the victims of a misdirected missile. He is suddenly overwhelmed by a feeling of responsibility, for the weight of their misery lay on his shoulders (HM 122). His anguish, which is further heightened by the thought that there is no one, not even God, to share his burden, is poignantly described as he stops outside the rest-house where the survivors cling to life:

The lights inside would have given an extraordinary impression of peace if one hadn't known, just as the stars on this clear night gave also an impression of remoteness, security, freedom. If one knew, he wondered, the facts, would one have to feel pity even for the planets? if one reached what they called the heart of the matter? (HM 124)

According to Jaspers, ultimate anxiety occurs in "situations of uninterpretable shipwreck", when there are no answers, no interpretations that make sense, and no way out (Williams 104). Scobie's feelings of shipwreck first occur when he realizes that he is unable to forget his marriage vows and leave Louise, but is also unable to abandon Helen to Bagster or whatever. He does make a futile attempt at a confession but is unable to put his own soul before the happiness of others. Consequently,

When he came out of the box it seemed to Scobie that for the first time his footsteps had taken him out of sight of hope. There was no hope anywhere he

turned his eyes; the dead figure of God on the cross, the plaster Virgin, the hideous stations representing a series of events that had happened a long time ago. It seemed to him that he had only left for his exploration the territory of despair. (HM 222)

When he later takes communion in a state of mortal sin, knowing full well the consequences of such an action, it is clear that he has indeed fallen into despair. His anguish at having defiled his God, as well as his guilt for the role he has played in Ali's death, know no bounds. Feeling utterly alone and trapped, he takes what appears to be the only way out, even though he knows that by taking his own life he is shutting himself off from peace forever.

Querry's anguish in the face of nothingness closely parallels the anguish described by Marcel when one has shut oneself off from the ontological mystery, the mystery of God. When Querry arrives in the leper village in the heart of the Congo, he is a burnt-out case: he is unable to love, to suffer, to believe. His whole existence is in fact characterized by a nullity of being; his life has faded into nothingness. Later in the novel it is learned that Querry's acute attack of indifference is a result of the failure of his so-called objective "proofs of God", that when he had ceased to believe in his own arguments he had lost all manner of faith. Paradoxically, although Querry claims that he no longer knows what suffering is (BOC 16), his anguish surfaces in his dreams. In one dream in particular, in

which he is a priest who must make a confession before saying mass that night, he is prevented at the last minute from unburdening his soul: "It was as though he had had an appointment with hope at this turn of the road and had arrived just too late. He let out a cry like that of an animal in pain and woke" (BOC 52). Querry's dilemma is therefore how to synthesize his conscious with his subconscious, to open himself up to the ontological mystery that his subconscious embraces but his conscious rejects, and thereby to make himself whole again.

Anguish in the face of freedom, principally as espoused by Sartre, is reflected in Greene's later works, most notably The Quiet American and The Human Factor.

In Being and Nothingness, Sartre defines "anguish" as follows:

The reflective apprehension of the Self as freedom, the realization that a nothingness slips in between my Self and my past and future so that nothing relieves me from the necessity of continually choosing myself and nothing guarantees the validity of the values which I choose. (799-800)

Anguish in the face of freedom is therefore connected to acts of choice and responsibility. In freedom we choose, but we can never be sure that the choice we have made is the correct one. Nevertheless, we must accept full and complete responsibility for the choices we have made--we cannot shift this burden to God or to anyone else. Consequently, there arises what J. Rodman Williams refers to as "ethical

anguish": the realization that we are completely free and the source of all meaning in the world (108).

Both Fowler in The Quiet American and Castle in The Human Factor are embodiments of the existential hero who, in the words of Marjorie Grene, accepts "total responsibility in total solitude" (99). Neither is a believer in God. Says Fowler at the outset of the novel: "I'm not a Roman Catholic. I don't think you could even call me a Christian" (QA 48). He later admits to Pyle that he does not believe in God, that things do not make any sense to him with Him (QA 104). To Castle, God is linked with the fairytales of his childhood--nice, comforting beliefs that have no basis in fact, that one outgrows as one matures (HF 74-75). Consequently, there is no God in whom Fowler can trust to bring order out of the chaos in Vietnam, just as there is no God on whom Castle can depend to end apartheid in South America. Therefore, when Pyle's policies erupt into bloodshed, Fowler realizes that he can no longer stand aside as an observer, that if Pyle is to be stopped he must stop him himself. Similarly, Castle is unable to accept quietly the apartheid policies of South Africa. As a result he becomes a double agent, a British intelligence officer who freely gives details of a top-secret contingency plan for the defence of South Africa, involving England, Germany, and the United States, to the Soviet Union, partly in gratitude for one of their agents having helped him and

his wife escape the oppressive regime. Like Fowler, in the absence of anyone else, he sees his job as being there "to right the balance" (HF 194).

Both Fowler and Castle make free and conscious decisions. Fowler chooses to remove Pyle by setting him up to be murdered by a small communist faction. Although he half-heartedly hands the decision back to God--"to that somebody in whom I didn't believe"--saying "you can intervene if you want to" (QA 179), he nevertheless accepts full responsibility for Pyle's death. He says: "I had betrayed my own principles; I had become as engagé as Pyle, and it seemed to me that no decision would ever be simple again" (QA 182). Castle, too, recognizes that the choice he has made, to be a double agent, has been freely made by him. As he sends to Boris what he believes to be his last message, he chooses the following passage from War and Peace: "You say: I am not free. But I have lifted my hand and let it fall" (HF 195).

Fowler's subsequent suffering, along with Castle's, is existentialist in nature. There is no Christian remorse; neither would undo what he has done. Yet Fowler does suffer. He has abrogated his principles, he has caused the death of another human being, and his motives for doing so are suspect even to himself in that Pyle has robbed him of his mistress. Further, there is no immediate hope of any form of release from his anguish. As Greene critic Robert

O. Evans points out, there is, "no possibility of confession or remorse" (245). His anguish is inescapable, as evidenced in the last line of the book when he says: "Everything had gone right with me since he had died, but how I wished there existed someone to whom I could say that I was sorry" (QA 187). Castle's suffering, too, arises out of the choices he has made. At the end of The Human Factor, he has been permanently exiled in the Soviet Union, far from his wife and adopted son who are unable to get out of England. It is not the life he had intended, but the fact that events may not always turn out as we intend is no excuse for evading responsibility in existentialist terms. As well, at the end of the novel he is also without hope that his suffering will soon cease. In a telephone call to Sarah, his wife, he attempts to downplay the anguish he is experiencing. He tells her of a friend who has invited him to his dacha in the spring, but his voice is "the voice of an old man who couldn't count with certainty on any spring to come" (HF 347).

Anguish in the face of death arises when one confronts his own death in specific terms, rather than viewing death in general terms--i.e., as something that happens to someone else. Man, argue the existentialists, must confront his own death. According to Heidegger:

Death is that fact which makes
nothingness visible in human life
itself, stands in each year of human
life, and in doing so brings it to the

threshold of authentic existence.
(Breisach 89)

Further, says Jaspers, it is essential that man accept death as final. He argues that if man is convinced there is a future after death, he becomes apathetic about the present world, this life, its problems and challenges (Williams 77).

Although anguish in the face of death is not one of Greene's major themes, he does touch on it briefly in The Honorary Consul. When Charley Fortnum, the victim of a bungled kidnapping, realizes that he may die at the hands of his kidnappers, he is forced to acknowledge for the first time the temporality of his own existence. Charley, naturally, is reluctant to face the very real possibility of his own death, and attempts to numb his anguish with alcohol. What is most significant in this novel, however, is the emergence of the existentialist premise that an acceptance of death brings one to the threshold of authentic existence. Says Aquino, the self-confessed poet of the rebel group: "When death is on the tongue, the live man speaks" (HC 123). Ironically, however, Aquino is unable to face the fact of his own death. He is able to write about death, yes, "but only death the great abstraction" (HC 124).

Perhaps it should be mentioned that to the Christian existentialist, anxiety in the face of death is a result of man's own sin, not of his finitude. As J. Podman Williams explains, death to the Christian existentialist is not a threat of his non-being, it is a threat of his continued

being. It is the "anxiety of one whose movement to death is a movement to God" (Williams 128). This is the anguish the whiskey priest feels in his final hours:

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. It seemed to him at that moment that it would have been quite easy to have been a saint. It would only have needed a little self-restraint and a little courage. He felt like someone who had missed happiness by seconds at an appointed place. He knew now that at the end there was only one thing that counted--to be a saint. (PG 250-51)

According to the existentialists, anguish need not be--and indeed should not be--viewed negatively. Anguish, they argue, is the mark of the awakened man. Echoes Bendrix in The End of the Affair:

In misery we seem aware of our own existence, even though it may be in the form of a monstrous egotism: this pain of mine is individual, this nerve that winces belongs to me and to no other. But happiness annihilates us: we lose our identity. (47)

He later adds: "As long as one suffers one lives" (139).

The existentialists are aware that anguish can lead to despair. To use a metaphor of Kierkegaard's, man is thrown into the sea of life and can only thrash about. There is always the possibility that he may drown. However, it is equally possible that he may discover that he can support himself or, even yet, that there is some substantial hope

outside himself from whose strength he can draw upon to rise above his annihilating circumstances (Michalson 13).

Chapter Six

Authenticity and the Search for God

Confronted by nothingness, and amid ever deepening anxiety in an increasingly complex world, the individual has two choices: he can choose to do nothing, to immerse himself passively in the meaninglessness of everyday life, and thus risk continuing uncertainty and despair; or he can answer the existential call to authenticity, to rise above his circumstances and to discover himself.

Furthermore, as William V. Spanos points out in A Casebook on Existentialism, it is precisely at this point in the human predicament--when, stripped of all illusions and false securities, the individual stands face to face with nothingness--"that the most significant difference between humanistic and theistic existentialism emerges" (8). He writes:

For the atheist . . . the alternative to physical or spiritual suicide . . . is a fully conscious, if agonized, acknowledgement of the irreconcilable nature of man's alienation from the universe and a rebellious, if precarious, assertion of the existential self against the discontinuities of the human predicament. . . . For the theist . . . the alternative . . . is a leap of faith--not a rejection of the concrete world--a wager, to use Pascal's metaphor, concerning the truth of the existence of the absent God, or more specifically, the truth of the Incarnation, which reconciles time and eternity and thus infuses meaning into the apparently chaotic and fragmented

temporal world. (8)

The influence, either consciously or subconsciously, of the religious existentialists can be easily traced in those novels of Graham Greene in which theistic concerns predominate. In The Power and the Glory, for example, Kierkegaard's insistence that the search for the truth involve a subjective, passionate and ongoing process exemplifies the whiskey priest's agonized struggle as he attempts to come to terms with himself and ultimately with his God. The Kierkegaardian leap of faith, an unconditional acceptance of the existence of God in the face of the paradoxical and the absurd, is evident in The End of the Affair, in which Bendrix--against all his philosophical arguments to the contrary--grudgingly admits there must be a God. And in A Burnt-Out Case, the philosophical positions of Spanish philosopher Miguel de Unamuno and Catholic existentialist Gabriel Marcel are skillfully woven together as Querry wrestles with his lack of faith, while at the same time yearning for a chance to go back and begin again, to penetrate the "heart of darkness" and thus embrace what Marcel refers to as "the ontological mystery".

Unlike Sartre, the religious existentialists do not insist on the priority of existence over essence. Rather, they see the goal of authenticity as the recovery of a sense of essence, of finding one's way back to God. As Spanos says:

For the Christian existentialist . . .
 existence precedes essence only in the
 sense that man cannot know his divine
 essence and achieve an I-Thou
 relationship with God without immersion
 into the destructive element of
 existence. (9)

As noted in the previous chapter, anguish--or anxiety, as it is commonly called--is vital in that it is the mark of the awakened man. For the Christian existentialist, however, it is essential if man is ever to achieve true communion with God. "To endure anxiety," writes John Macquarrie, "is to have one's eyes opened to the reality of the human condition, and so to see the need for grace" (168). This sentiment is echoed in A Burnt-Out Case, when Dr. Colin distinguishes for Querry the difference between discomfort and suffering. He says:

Wouldn't you rather suffer than feel discomfort? Discomfort irritates our ego like a mosquito bite. We become aware of ourselves, the more uncomfortable we are, but suffering is quite a different matter. Sometimes I think that the search for suffering and the remembrance of suffering are the only means we have to put ourselves in touch with the whole human condition. With suffering we become part of the Christian myth. (122)

in reaction against the so-called Christians of his time, Kierkegaard denounced those who paid only lip-service to Christianity without knowing anything of the suffering and doubt that true belief entails. To Kierkegaard, as to other Christian existentialists who followed in his wake, the "central danger posed by the church is that man never

has a chance to truly search, since what looks like satisfaction is offered to him even before any real religious quest can arise" (Breisach 29). True Christian existence, on the other hand, is "filled with suffering, with repenting one's failures, with being offended by the radical demands of Christ, with 'fear and trembling'" (Breisach 31).

To the religious existentialists, the search after the self is essentially a search after God, for only through the inward search, and by enduring the struggle and agony inherent in such a search, is the being of God revealed. As Eugene O. Borowitz explains:

The only way to come to God . . . is found in recognizing the hollowness of the self on its own, emptying the self of all its pretensions and self-sufficiency, and in that humility turning in full commitment to God, as the ground, the standard, the completion of its reality. (37)

In The Power and the Glory, as noted before, the priest's flight is a flight from God. Not brave enough to be a saint and to die in the martyrdom of the Church, yet not cowardly enough to abandon his people and to escape to safety across the border, he begins a long, torturous journey across the face of Mexico. Although ostensibly he is going nowhere, his journey is symbolic of his own inward journey, his search for truth and self-recognition. Along the way he confronts his pride of the early days, when he had been serene in his faith and filled with ambition, when

being a priest meant to him authority and no little amount of prestige as opposed to a humble commitment to God. He faces too the fact of his sin, of how he had fallen into despair and fathered a child, of how he has now cut himself off from grace in that he cannot repent of his sin because he loves the fruit of it. One by one he confronts his failures--his failure to observe the rites of the Church; his failure to serve his people in an increasingly violent political environment; his failure to find comfort and strength in the belief he had embraced; his failure to save his child from the violence and corruption she would certainly face; and, above all, his failure to be a saint. Thus, stripped of all pretensions and the crutches of his Church, the whiskey priest comes face to face with the annihilating void: that all is nothingness, that God has abandoned the land, that he now stands alone in a hostile world.

The priest's confrontation with nothingness, and the existential anguish it has involved, has prepared the way for true communion with God. Through his "immersion into the destructive element of existence", he is forced to acknowledge the debilitating emptiness of a life removed from grace. When he is therefore finally settled in safety across the border, once again receptive to the pitfalls of an easy-going life, he is faced with what can only be called an existential choice: he can remain in his haven across

the border, where already he can feel "the old life hardening round him like a habit" (199), or he can return to Mexico and die for his Church, and thus attain in death a concrete fullness he could not attain in life.

Accordingly, the priest's final journey, back into the ravaged land, is symbolic of his journey to God, before whom he must now stand in "fear and trembling", with empty hands, realizing at last that "there was only one thing that counted--to be a saint" (251).

"For the Christian," says Spanos, "God is not dead; He is rationally incomprehensible; that is, He is absent." He continues:

Thus man's freedom becomes the dreadful awareness of the necessity to choose between a life in the realm of Nothingness and a life of precarious joy in the realm which to the empirical eye appears meaningless, but to the eye of faith constitutes on the microcosmic level a reconciliation between existence and essence and on the macrocosmic level . . . an "intersection of the timeless with time," when "the past and future/Are conquered and reconciled".
(8-9)

According to Kierkegaard, given that God is "rationally incomprehensible" and ultimately unknowable, true communion with Him can only be achieved by a leap of faith. Such a leap necessitates an embracing of the paradoxical and the absurd, acceptance of not a doctrine but a whole new way of life, and a lifelong commitment to suffering and to a continual becoming.

Kierkegaard defines three stages through which man may pass in order to achieve authenticity, each of which requires a leap to get from one to the other. The first is the aesthetic stage, in which the individual leads a contemplative life, is involved in the world of immediacy, and immersed in the pleasurable activities of everyday life. As Borowitz points out, this style of life is essentially self-destructive and is a flight from authenticity; the end is always boredom (32). At the second stage, the ethical stage, the individual "founds his existence upon recognizing a distinction between good and evil and accepts certain obligations as universally binding" (Noxon 95-96). But at the third stage, the religious stage, he "lives for eternity, acknowledging the distinction between sin and faith as being the ultimately decisive one" (Noxon 96). More importantly, it is at this stage that the individual turns in full obedience to God and acknowledges His supremacy over all, and thereby embraces a faith that to the rational mind defies all comprehension.

The End of the Affair is the story of Maurice Bendrix, a middle-aged writer who sets out to discover why his mistress had left him some eighteen months before. Suspecting that another man had been involved, he pursues with a vengeance the identity of his rival but is ill prepared for the shattering reality he eventually encounters. As the story unfolds it is learned that the

mystery man he seeks is none other than God himself; and thus begins Bendrix's strange relationship with God, a torturous affair in which he vows to hate Him forever but paradoxically refuses to acknowledge His existence.

The End of the Affair is also the story of Sarah Miles and of her agonized struggle in coming to terms with the faith she has embraced. It tells of her anguish in leaving her lover, her attempts to dispel the "myth" in which she irrationally believes, and her longing for a sort of peace that would take away the pain forever. She too takes a leap of faith, and discovers in the process the absolute surrender and complete self-sacrifice it demands.

By the time the novel opens, both Bendrix and Sarah have passed through the aesthetic mode of existence. Immersed in the world of immediacy, their lives have been characterized by fleeting love affairs engaged in to alleviate the boredom of their existence. Sarah is married and displays a certain loyalty to her husband, but their marriage is missing a higher commitment. Maurice, a writer, does display a certain commitment to his work, but he views life with detachment; at the beginning of the novel, he even states that he is writing his and Sarah's story "against the bias" he inevitably feels in describing a personal encounter, because as a professional he must maintain his distance (7).

During the course of their affair, Bendrix and Sarah

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make a leap from the aesthetic to the ethical level when they make an emotional commitment to each other. At this stage both are dissatisfied with the status of their affair and long for something more permanent. Bendrix, in particular, realizes the emptiness of his life before Sarah. He writes: "My passion for Sarah had killed simple lust for ever. Never again would I be able to enjoy a woman without love" (58). It should be emphasized, however, that at this stage neither is looking for any sort of a religious experience. Both are avowed atheists and God does not enter into the picture at all. Says Bendrix: "We had agreed so happily to eliminate God from the world" (69).

Sarah's leap of faith occurs in June 1944, the month that marked the end of the affair. During a particularly nasty air-raid, Bendrix leaves the room in which he and Sarah have just finished making love and goes downstairs to see if anyone is in the basement. Less than two minutes later an explosion rocks the house. Sarah, going downstairs to find him, is greeted by the sight of her lover lying motionless on the floor, his arm jutting lifelessly from under the door. Believing Maurice to be dead, she flees to their room, falls to her knees upon the floor, and prays to "anything that might exist" (72). Through a diary excerpt she tells what happened:

I hadn't any idea what to say. Maurice was dead. Extinct. There wasn't such a thing as a soul. . . . I knelt and put my head on the bed and wished I could

believe. Dear God, I said . . . make me believe. I can't believe. Make me. . . . Make me believe. I shut my eyes tight, and I pressed my nails into the palms of my hands until I could feel nothing but the pain, and I said, I will believe. Let him be alive, and I will believe. . . . But that wasn't enough. It doesn't hurt to believe. So I said, I love him and I'll do anything if you'll make him alive. I said very slowly, I'll give him up forever, only let him be alive with a chance . . . and I said, People can love without seeing each other, can't they, they love You all their lives without seeing You, and then he came in at the door, and he was alive, and I thought now the agony of being without him starts, and I wished he was safely back dead again under the door. (95)

When Sarah realizes the enormity of her vow, she does whatever she can to convince herself that she is just being superstitious, that God does not really exist. To this end she begins weekly meetings with a rationalist she had met on the Common, a Mr. Smythe who bears the distinguishing mark of gross livid spots on his left cheek. Far from convincing her, however, of the fallacy of her belief, all his arguments against the existence of God only serve to reinforce her faith. Falling deeper into despair, she tries to defy God, telling Him that she is going to leave her husband to be with Bendrix, daring Him to stop her if He can. Later, when her husband Henry pleads with her not to leave him and in a moment of weakness she agrees to stay, it seems as though God has indeed stopped her. Feeling completely trapped, she makes a final plea to God, begging

Him to end her pain by not allowing her to live any longer.

Bendrix's reaction upon learning that Sarah had left him because of her vow with God is initially one of relief. "Now I knew the whole absurd story of the vow," he says, "now I was certain of her love, I was assured of her" (128). He arranges a meeting with her and badgers her into agreeing to go away with him. When she gets home, however, she writes him a farewell letter, explaining why she cannot go away with him, why she cannot walk away from her bargain with God. She says:

I believe there's a God--I believe the whole bag of tricks, there's nothing I don't believe, they could subdivide the Trinity into a dozen parts and I'd believe. They could dig up records that proved Christ had been invented by Pilate to get himself promoted and I'd believe just the same. I've caught belief like a disease. I've fallen into belief like I fell in love. I've never loved before as I love you, and I've never believed in anything before as I believe now. I'm sure. I've never been sure before about anything. When you came in at the door with the blood on your face, I became sure. Once and for all. Even though I didn't know it at the time. I fought belief for longer than I fought love, but I haven't any fight left. (146-47)

When Sarah unexpectedly dies from pneumonia a little over a week after her meeting with Bendrix, Bendrix is consumed by grief and rage. He directs his anger at God, that non-existent entity whom he irrationally blames for robbing him of his mistress. At the same time he is all too aware of the danger in hating, saying, "I musn't hate, for

if I were really to hate I would believe, and if I were to believe, what a triumph for You and her" (138).

Nevertheless, Bendrix is preparing to take the final leap. By his very denial of Him, God is invading his every thought. He at first tries to reason away the possibility of God's existence by saying:

When we get to the end of human beings
we have to delude ourselves into a
belief in God, like a gourmet who
demands more complex sauces with his
food. (145)

At the same time, he is unwittingly entertaining the idea that Sarah might be right. Noting that he has come to an end of his interest in his work, he says:

If we are extinguished by death, as I
still try to believe, what point is
there in leaving some books behind any
more than bottles, clothes or cheap
jewellery? and if Sarah is right, how
unimportant all the importance of art
is. (148)

Bendrix's agonizing struggle is further complicated by a series of events, which he makes every attempt to pass off as coincidences or as having a rational explanation. One interpretation, of course, is that these events are manifestations of miracles, an explanation that Bendrix resists with every fibre of his being.

First is the matter of his so-called resurrection, of which the rational explanation is that Bendrix was not dead at all but merely unconscious. Next is Sarah's defiance of God to stop her from being with Bendrix if He can, and

Henry's subsequent interference, which can be explained as a coincidence, as can Sarah's plea with God to end her suffering and her death a few weeks later. Bendrix also tries to brush away an event that had happened at the funeral, when, pleading with the dead Sarah to rescue him from a girl he had picked up, her mother barrels between them and whisks him away.

When the coincidences start adding up, however, Bendrix becomes visibly disturbed. His armour cracked, he finds that he is unable to dismiss easily his discovery that Sarah had been baptized a Catholic at age two and her mother's revelation that she had wished at the time that it would "take" (164). He becomes even more unsettled when Parkis (the man he had originally hired to watch Sarah) reveals that the dead Sarah had visited his sick son during the night and had made him well again--or so his son, Lance, had claimed. Feeling that he is being hunted down by some unseen force, he lashes out at Sarah and begs to be left alone:

I want to be alone. If I can't have you, I'll be alone always. Oh, I'm as capable of belief as the next man. I would only have to shut the eyes of my mind for a long enough time, and I could believe that you came to Parkis's boy in the night with your touch that brings peace. Last month in the crematorium I asked you to save that girl from me and you pushed your mother between us--or so they might say. But if I start believing that, then I have to start to believe in your God. I'd have to love your God. I'd rather love the men you

slept with. (181)

Yet it is not until Bendrix meets Mr. Smythe, the rationalist, who "coincidentally" had taken a lock of hair from the dead Sarah to remember her by, and learns that his birthmark had mysteriously disappeared overnight, that his final defence breaks down. Even then, stubbornly refusing to be part of the myth, he rages at Sarah:

. . . if this God exists . . . and if even you--with your lusts and your adulteries and the timid lies you used to tell--can change like this, we could all be saints by leaping as you leapt, by shutting the eyes and leaping once and for all: if you are a saint, it's not so difficult to be a saint. It's something He can demand of any of us, leap. But I won't leap. I sat on my bed and said to God: You've taken her, but You haven't got me yet. I know Your cunning. It's You who take us up to a high place and offer us the whole universe. You're a devil, God, tempting us to leap. But I don't want Your peace and I don't want Your love. I wanted something very simple and very easy: I wanted Sarah for a lifetime and You took her away. With your great schemes You ruin our happiness like a harvester ruins a mouse's nest: I hate You, God, I hate You as though You existed. (190-91)

Paradoxically, however, and in the face of the absurdity of it all, Bendrix does leap. In a final display of anguish, he says to Sarah:

. . . all right, have it your way. I believe you live and that He exists, but it will take more than your prayers to turn this hatred of Him into love. (191)

By no means is Bendrix's suffering at an end. The

quest for authenticity, according to the existentialists, involves a lifelong struggle. At no point can one claim that he has reached his goal. Bendrix too realizes that his struggle has just begun and, weary of the road ahead, asks for peace:

O God, You've done enough. You've
robbed me of enough, I'm too tired and
old to learn to leave, leave me alone
for ever. (192)

In the final analysis, then, it would appear that both Bendrix and Sarah have been saved from aesthetic despair by what Marjorie Grene aptly terms "a love of God equalily despairing" (40).

The End of the Affair not only illustrates the concept of the leap of faith but also exemplifies the extremity of Kierkegaard's "either/or" position. Arguing that one cannot be lukewarm on faith, Kierkegaard insisted that God must be loved to the exclusion of all others. Whether or not he meant that one could only love God by turning away from all else that one holds dear is debatable--and the critics are rather divided on this. Nevertheless, Sarah does put her love of God before her love for Bendrix; unable to synthesize her love for both, she ends her affair with Bendrix, only to start another with the Ultimate Other.

Although A Burnt-Out Case contains unmistakable traces of Kierkegaardian philosophy, it reflects a breaking away from the harsh Kierkegaardian tradition that man is open to God only and indicates a move towards the softer philosophy

of Marcel, to whom transcendence involves both a true communion with God and participation in the "corporate human existence" (Casserley 87). It reflects too the thinking of Unamuno, who insisted that all theological proofs of the existence of God proved nothing, that the only possible philosophical position was that of doubt and wonder.

In his essay, "Kierkegaard's Stages and 'A Burnt-Out Case'", James Noxon explores the Kierkegaardian themes running throughout Greene's novel and pays particular attention to the three stages of existence as exemplified by various characters. Without going into the thrust of his argument, which is that A Burnt-Out Case is an expression of the "spiritual malaise" the author was suffering at the time, it is sufficient to note the three stages as they apply to the novel and from there to explore how the novel represents a move to Marcel's and Unamuno's philosophies.

As Noxon notes, by the time the novel opens Querry has already suffered the boredom that awaits the aesthete. He has had his fill of the women of Europe, his work has long since ceased to interest him, and he has lost his belief. In short, he has retired from life. As Noxon says, "Psychologically, he is a burnt-out case, escaping an existence whose meaninglessness has shown itself to a mind turned ironic" (13). Querry's progression to the second stage, however, occurs when he follows Deo Gratias, the negro leper, into the forest and protects him during a

night-long vigil. This illustrates, says Noxon, "a response of sympathy and affection at an ethical level which his European women never reached" (98).

For the most part, though, Kierkegaard's concept of the ethical stage is exemplified in the persona of Dr. Colin, the village doctor who has devoted most of his life to caring for the lepers. As a man who "is committed to the use of his science for the betterment of the human condition" (Noxon 98-99), Colin shows quite well that "it's possible for an intelligent man to make his life without a god" (BOC 82).

Of all the clerics in the novel, Father Thomas best illustrates the religious sphere, where duty to God must take precedence over claims of morality. Father Thomas is a moral theologian, harsh of judgment and quick to condemn, who is far more interested in the pursuit of souls than in easing the lives of the people he serves. As Noxon rightfully points out, "On several occasions [Father Thomas] points to a conflict between moral and religious duty and is offended when his Superior chooses what is commendable from the standpoint of a humane ethic" (99).

The first rumblings of protest against Kierkegaard's either/or position were heard perhaps as far back as The Power and the Glory and The Heart of the Matter, both of which were published before The End of the Affair. In the former, the whiskey priest protests at having to put his

love for God before his love for his daughter, but by the end of the novel realizes that the only thing that mattered was to be a saint. Scobie protests too at having to put his own soul before the love of others, and his inability to reconcile his covert desire to be one with God while remaining firmly planted in the world leads to his deepening anguish and subsequent suicide. Querry, however, unable to choose between his love of art and his love of God, simply chooses to opt out of any search for a meaningful existence, excusing himself on the grounds that "belief is a kind of vocation and most men haven't room in their brains or hearts for two vocations" (BOC 192-93).

Obviously every man cannot aspire to be a saint and most cannot even hope to attain the level of existence suggested by Kierkegaard. Indeed, through the characterizations of Dr. Colin, the Superior and Father Thomas, Greene would now appear to be suggesting that Kierkegaard's either/or position is not only untenable but undesirable. Both Colin and the Superior are drawn with sympathy and are shown to be the backbone of the community. The former is an atheist, the latter a man of God, but both are firmly rooted on the ground. In contrast to Father Thomas, the least sympathetic of all the characters in the novel, who concerns himself only with theological matters, Colin and the Superior are dedicated to improving the lives of the people in the colony. The Superior, for example,

sees little point in building a church when the people still live in mud huts and insists that any new money the community receives must go towards equipping the hospital. Father Thomas, on the other hand, is totally out of touch with the needs of the community. More concerned about life in the hereafter, he feels it is far more important, for instance, to teach the natives the Catechism than to train them to be literate and eventually self-sufficient (BOC 84).

Although Marcel takes his lead from Kierkegaard and agrees that an authentic existence involves finding one's way back to God, he insists that man cannot live "an isolated solitary existence" (Casserley: Michalson 87).

Rather, as J.V. Langmead Casserley says:

For Marcel the supreme value of human existence is to be found in this possibility of existing for and in the others, of being loved by the others, and, above all, by God the Ultimate Other, who himself transcends that otherness in the loving act by which he makes himself our kin. (Michalson 94)

To Marcel, then, an authentic existence cannot be achieved by turning inward to the exclusion of all others but by immersion in the "corporate human existence", by involvement in the community as a whole, where by serving others one necessarily serves God and thereby opens oneself up to Him.

Ironically, Querry comes to the Congo expressly to escape involvement with others, yet as his "cure" is being effected he becomes increasingly caught up in the affairs of the colony. Where once he had designed some of the most

beautiful buildings in Europe "not for the glory of God or the pleasure of a purchaser" (BOC 51) but solely for self-gratification, he now sets about designing and building a rudimentary hospital for the lepers. When the hospital is finished, he realizes that his work is not: "There's always more building to be done for the next twenty years, if only lavatories" (BOC 126), he tells Father Joseph. With plans of building mobile units to reach those who cannot get to the village, perhaps to be followed by a place where the mutilated can receive occupational therapy, Querry has no desire to leave the village. Needed among the lepers, he intends to make his home there.

Querry's involvement in the life of the community is precipitated by the night he spends in the forest with the negro leper, Deo Gratias. Upon learning that the boy had wandered off alone into the jungle, Querry, thinking something may have happened, sets off in search of him. As each step brings him deeper into the heart of the jungle, along a path that may, for all he knows, "mark the farthest limit of human penetration" (BOC 56), he is plagued by seemingly unanswerable questions. Why, he wonders, did Deo Gratias leave the safety and familiarity of the leproserie in the first place? He had expressed a desire to stay and it seemed unlikely that the path he had taken would lead to a village. Of what had the man who had brought news of the servant's disappearance been so terrified? What had driven

Deo Gratias to walk so far on mutilated feet? Without his realizing it, Querry's cure has begun. When "Interest began to move painfully in him like a nerve that has been frozen" (BOC 56), it signalled the first crude awakening of a deadened man.

Querry eventually comes upon the boy, hurt and terrified in the darkness. He spends the night by the leper's side, clinging fast to the fingerless hand. Although it is questionable that he prays with Deo Gratias in the forest, as is later reported, his experience evokes in him a strange yearning for Pendélé--that mystical place for which Deo Gratias was searching, a place that to the natives represents "singing and dancing and games and prayers" (BOC 58).

The religious significance of Pendélé cannot be undermined. It may in fact be compared to what Marcel calls "the ontological mystery"--the mystery that lies at the very heart of personal existence. Certainly, Pendélé is shrouded in mystery. Whether or not it is simply a sacred trysting ground for the natives is unclear. In all likelihood, though, it could never be found on any map, only in the farthest regions of the mind. Deo Gratias himself is extremely vague about where Pendélé can be found; he has only the faintest memories of it and cannot describe it in any way. When pressed by Querry about what happened there, his simple response is "Nous étions heureux" (BOC 78). It

is, however, connected to the beginning of time--Deo Gratias, at least, associates it with very early, unformed memories (BOC 78-79)--and to the end of time, a place where the dead go to be buried (BOC 131). Perceived as a place of peace, it is also perhaps where one can go back and begin again.

To Marcel, any attempt to bring God into a rationally understandable form is ultimately futile since the mystery of God is totally inexplicable. This is not to say, however, that man cannot aim at a true and living relationship with God, only that in aiming for transcendence he must open himself up to the mystery and ready himself to have it revealed to him. While to Marcel the mystery of God is ultimately revealed through participation in the liturgy, he nevertheless insists that the revelation itself "is perfectly well able to affect souls who are strangers to all positive religion of whatever kind". He continues:

. . . this recognition [of the ontological mystery], which takes place through certain higher modes of human experience, in no way involves the adherence to any given religion; but it enables those who have attained to it to perceive the possibility of a revelation in a way which is not open to those who have never ventured beyond the frontiers of the realm of the problematical and who have therefore never reached the point from which the mystery of being can be seen and recognised. Thus, a philosophy of this sort is carried by an irresistible movement towards the light which it perceives from afar and of which it suffers the secret attraction.
(46)

Although Querry goes into the forest an atheist and comes out one, he is nevertheless a changed man. He has opened himself up to the possibility that "if, like these Africans, one believed in some kind of divine being, wasn't it just as possible for a god to exist in this empty region as in the empty spaces of the sky where men had once located him?" (BOC 54-55) He is thereafter too troubled by his lack of faith, which Colin tells him he keeps on fingering like a sore he wants to get rid of (BOC 192). His longing for Pendélé cannot be quelled and he tells himself that "If there were a place called Pendélé . . . I would never bother to find my way back" (BOC 172). It would indeed seem that Pendélé is the light of which Marcel speaks, and of which Querry suffers "the secret attraction".

Querry's inability to reconcile his lack of faith, however, brings to mind the teachings of Unamuno, who also held that the path to faith constituted an endless struggle. Like Marcel, he argued that all attempts to bring God into rationally understandable forms were futile but also insisted that reason leads to skepticism and away from God. In Ways of Escape, Greene acknowledges the influence of the Spanish philosopher on the character of Querry, saying

Although Greene says he had not read Unamuno's A Tragic Sense of Life by the time he wrote A Burnt-Out Case, he had read the philosopher's Life and Death of Don Quixote, "with no particular interest". Perhaps, he says, "the book . . . I so quickly forgot had continued to work its way through the cellars of the unconscious" (WE 197-98).

Querry belongs to those described by Unamuno "in whom reason is stronger than will, they feel themselves caught in the grip of reason and haled along in their own despite, and they fall into despair, and because of their despair they deny, and God reveals Himself in them, affirming Himself by their very denial of Him" (197).

Authenticity, according to Unamuno, is to be achieved by action, not by thought. Since man can never be sure of the existence of God, and his faith in God is ever beset by the torturing, everlasting questioning of its validity, he must apply himself to achieving a quality of life on earth instead of involving himself in what may be useless speculations about a hereafter. Thus, for Unamuno, "a man began to 'exist' only when he moved out of himself into something larger than his little world of self-interest" (Mackay:Michalson 53).

Querry's involvement in the community and the interest he takes in those around him lead Dr. Colin to pronounce that he is cured. By moving out of himself he has therefore achieved a level of authenticity; through others he has recovered a sense of essence. As Colin says after Querry's death: "He'd learned to serve other people . . . and to laugh" (BOC 198). And while he is not sure that Querry had begun to find his faith again, he had, he says, discovered again "a reason for living" (BOC 198).

Greene remains silent on whether or not Querry had

recovered his faith by the time of his death. There is some indication that he perhaps takes the final leap as he is dying, but the ending is ambiguous to say the least. What is clear, though, is that Querry has begun his search for God; he has opened himself up to the mystery, he has begun the never-ending questioning. Perhaps, in the final analysis, the thoughts of religious existentialist Reinhold Niebuhr should be kept in mind, who asserts that:

Transcendence is less finding god than
finding the need for and the way to him.
Through it man opens himself up to the
possibility of faith, though he may
believe he now has none. (Borowitz 125)

Greene, like the religious existentialists, offers no comforting solutions to the problem of authenticity. The road to God is littered with anxieties; it represents a tenuous, uphill climb with no guarantee of a reward at the end. Yet man, they believe, must attempt the climb; to do otherwise is to wallow in the nullifying emptiness of a meaningless life. In freedom he must choose, even though he knows that ultimately "he is headed for an experience of suffering and a firsthand knowledge of the tragic" (Mackay:Michalson 53).

Chapter Seven

Authenticity and the Call to Action

To the religious existentialist the goal of authenticity is the establishment of a communion with God; to the atheist existentialist transcendence often lies in a complete rejection of Him. As Marjorie Grene explains in Introduction to Existentialism:

. . . in the view of Sartre and, by Sartre's account of Heidegger, it is the very denial of God's existence, not the search for him, that makes the inner odyssey of the self seeking the self philosophy's primary concern. The self that existentialism seeks is each person's individual self, which he must forge for himself out of such senseless circumstances, such meaningless limitations, as are given him. This self-creation--the making of one's essence from mere existence--is demanded of each of us because, according to existentialism, there is no single essence of humanity to which we may logically turn as standard or model for making ourselves thus or so. And there is no single concept of humanity, because there is no God. (41)

To the atheist existentialist, man is the source of all meaning in the world. Through a life authentically lived he creates his own values, forges his own destiny and gives such significance to his existence as he chooses to give it. He acts, in freedom and in anguish, believing, as Robert G. Olson says, that "although life is inescapably tragic and man necessarily doomed to frustration, values sufficient to make life worth the effort are available to him within the

very heart of despair" (62).

With the publication of The Quiet American in 1955, it was evident that Green's work was making a marked movement towards atheist existentialism as best expressed by Sartre. Significantly, in this first of several novels to deal with the committed and the uncommitted in a world torn by political strife, he introduces a new kind of protagonist, one who rises to a different challenge in a different world. The tortured hero of the earlier novels, desperately seeking God often in his very denial of Him, now gives way to a hero for whom God does not exist and for whom the ultimate reality is to be found in action. In the face of the meaninglessness around him, he attempts to give significance to his life by actively committing himself to a form of resistance against the whole absurdity of current human affairs. He thus becomes, in true existentialist tradition, a man who, in the words of Marjorie Grene, "is born to set right a time out of joint" and whose tragedy therefore "lies in the disproportion of the circumstances to be righted and the action that he takes to right them" (58).

According to Sartre, existence precedes essence in the sense that "man first of all exists, encounters himself, surges up in the world--and defines himself afterwards" (Existentialism & Humanism 28). "Man," he says, "is nothing else but that which he makes of himself" (Existentialism & Humanism 28). Since God does not exist, it is up to the

individual himself to create his own values and to give meaning to the world. Says Sartre in Existentialism & Humanism:

The existentialist . . . finds it extremely embarrassing that God does not exist, for there disappears with Him all possibility of finding values in an intelligible heaven. There can no longer be any good à priori, since there is no infinite and perfect consciousness to think it. It is nowhere written that "the good" exists, that one must be honest or must not lie, since we are now upon the plane where there are only men. Dostoievsky once wrote "If God did not exist, everything would be permitted"; and that, for existentialism, is the starting point.
(33)

Insisting that man alone decides his being, Sartre calls upon the individual to take control of his own destiny, to refuse to be a passive observer in the cosmic process. To this end, he says, "man must commit himself to something beyond himself", to "an aim which is one of liberation or of some particular realisation" (Existentialism & Humanism 56), and he must act upon that commitment. His doctrine, which he describes as an "ethic of action and self-commitment", therefore declares:

. . . there is no reality except in action. It goes further, indeed, and adds, "Man is nothing else but what he purposes, he exists only in so far as he realises himself, he is therefore nothing but the sum of his actions, nothing else but what his life is."
(Existentialism & Humanism 41).

The Quiet American, The Comedians and The Honorary

Consul are the three novels that most clearly adhere to Sartre's philosophy and his call to action. Included among these must be The Human Factor, for Maurice Castle, the protagonist of that novel, is at the outset the man of action (in contrast to the protagonists of the other three novels, for whom action comes as a last resort), and the primary thrust of the novel is an examination of the ethic of action and the ultimate futility that often underlines all our deeds.

In contrast to the earlier theological novels in which the search for God is the primary concern of the individual, the novels just mentioned are noteworthy in that the protagonists neither look for God nor find Him. None of these protagonists, with the possible exception of Plarr, who finds his disbelief in God wavering just a bit, come to any sort of a theological conversion; they are atheists at the beginning of the novel and they are atheists at the end. Indeed, for the most part God does not exist. As in The Human Factor, he belongs to the fairy-tale realm of childhood where belief in mystical things was once possible; as such, there now can be no dependence on Him to create a meaningful world. In fact, in The Quiet American, when Pyle asks Fowler if he believes in a God, adding that to him things would not make any sense without Him, Fowler, against the backdrop of the horrors of Vietnam, answers: "They don't make sense to me with him" (104). And even in The

Honorary Consul, which is far more theological in tone than the other novels now under discussion, Charley Fortnum is made to say to León Rivas, the ex-priest: "Oh, you can have your God. Sorry, father, but I don't see any signs of him around, do you?" (205)

The political milieux of these novels are violent ones and may be said to represent the distemper of our times. The background of The Quiet American is the war in Vietnam, where the old colonial forces of the French are battling the insurgent forces of the communists, while isolated guerilla groups such as that of Greene's General Thé are creating havoc for all. In The Comedians Papa Doc Duvalier and his Tontons Macoute are terrorizing the residents of Haiti by carrying out torture and executions on a daily basis; and in The Honorary Consul the insidious violence of General Stroessner's Argentina is more than evident by police visits in the middle of the night, unexplained disappearances, and widespread rumours of political opponents rotting and dying in jails across the country. Even in The Human Factor, the setting of which is actually in England, the political climate against which Castle's actions take place is South America, which has all the attendant violence of an apartheid regime.

With the exception of Castle, the protagonists of the other novels, like Fowler, have chosen not to become involved in the political situations that surround them.

Fowler, a foreign correspondent stationed in Saigon, prides himself on being a reporter, not a lead writer; he sees his primary function in Vietnam as that of the disinterested observer, there to record the facts and not take sides. He says:

It had been an article of my creed. The human condition being what it was, let them fight, let them love, let them murder, I would not be involved. (QA 27)

On several occasions throughout the novel he says, "I'm not engagé" (e.g., QA 95), and he tells Pyle that he considers himself to be an isolationist (QA 176). Similarly, Brown of The Comedians, the owner of a tourist resort in Port-au-Prince, purposely steers clear of any involvement in the political situation in Haiti, partly out of fear that involvement would lead to a seizure of his hotel. All he wants out of life, he tells Doctor Magiot, is to run his hotel, to see things as they once were, and to have a body to love (234). Further, he says, "somewhere years ago I had forgotten how to be involved in anything. Somehow somewhere I had lost completely the capacity to be concerned" (C 182). Plarr too is uncommitted in the sense that he is unable to transmit any belief in a god or a cause (HC 212). As a South American doctor with a prosperous practice, his main concerns seem to be seeing to his patients, lunching at The Italian Club, and finding someone to warm his bed at night. When he does agree to help his old friend León Rivas and his

bungling band of revolutionaries by providing them with the precise details of the American ambassador's movements, he does so mainly out of loyalty to Rivas (although he does admit to acting somewhat in the improbable hope that he may be helping his father, from whom he has not heard in years), never believing for a moment that they would act anyway (HC 26). Although Fowler, Brown and Plarr neither are blind to the situations in which they find themselves, nor approve of them in any way, these characters have, as Sartre says, abandoned themselves to "quietism"--the attitude of "let others do what I cannot do" (Existentialism & Humanism 41).

In contrast to Fowler, Brown and Plarr, other main characters in the novels in question are men of action. In The Quiet American, Pyle, the young American employed by the Economic Aid Mission, "believed in being involved" (28). As an idealist committed to the idea of a Third Force which he believes will win democracy for the East, he acts on his commitment by furnishing plastic, used in the making of "bicycle bombs", to General Thé and his band of revolutionaries. Like Pyle, Mr. Smith of The Comedians, the "presidential candidate of 1948", is also an idealist and an American. Although he is somewhat the object of derision for his commitment to the establishment of a vegetarian centre in Haiti, believing as he does that if acidity is removed from one's diet then passion and hence violence are removed from one's life, Greene makes it clear that Smith

also acts: when he hears that Jones is being held in an Haitian jail, he immediately tries to secure his release; he acts on his compassion for the poor by tossing coins to the mutilated in the streets; and he actively lobbies Haitian ministers in an effort to set up his vegetarian centre. On a far more dangerous level, Jones too acts; although he is a braggart whose exploits are not to be believed, he has a knack of engaging in foolhardy action, as he does when he attempts to swindle the Haitian government by some non-existent arms deal. As well, León Rivas and Aquino of The Honorary Consul are not men who stand idly by. In an attempt to free a number of political prisoners in Argentinian jails, they devise a kidnapping plan whereby they hope to hold hostage the American ambassador until such time as the men on their list are released. When, in error, they kidnap Charley Fortnum, the luckless Honorary Consul of the British Embassy, they are still determined to go ahead with their plan for freeing the prisoners by using Fortnum as a hostage instead.

In Sartre's world where everything is permissible and man creates his own values by acting, it would appear prima facie that the actions of Pyle and company are acceptable. That they are not acceptable Greene makes clear, particularly when Pyle's misguided involvement results in a number of deaths when the bicycle bombs explode in the square. However, at no time does Sartre espouse

unrestrained individualism. The individual, he says, must always act in good faith; he must have a true and lucid consciousness of the situation, he must accept full and total responsibility for the choices he has made; and he must realize that in choosing for one, he chooses for all. Furthermore, the action so taken must be intensely personal and involve both thought and passion; in this respect, says John Macquarrie, "action is not to be identified with the outer act, nor is it to be measured in terms of the 'success' of such an act" (176). Thus, while for Sartre the real man is the man of action, it is not, says Olson, "one who acts foolishly or irrationally, but who, within a given situation, exploits its possibilities to the fullest" (143).

Although Pyle's intentions are good--says Fowler, "I never knew a man who had better motives for all the trouble he caused" (QA 59)--his actions fail the test of authenticity on several points. First, he does not act with a true and lucid consciousness of the situation. Infused with idealism, mostly garnered from York Harding's books on the East, Pyle has absolutely no notion of what the affairs in Vietnam are about. "He never saw anything he hadn't heard in a lecture-hall," Fowler points out, "and his writers and his lecturers made a fool of him" (QA 31. Second, Pyle does not accept responsibility for what he has done. He initially refuses to believe that General Thé's insurgents would have anything to do with the bombing; and

even when he realizes their culpability (and hence his own), he brushes off the deaths he has caused as being a matter of no consequence. He tells Fowler:

They were only war casualties. . . .
It was a pity, but you can't always hit
your target. Anyway they died in the
right cause. (QA 177)

On the third point, in choosing for one we choose for all, it would appear at first glance that Pyle is in fact choosing for all as he would choose for himself. His goal is the liberation of the Vietnamese people; by furnishing supplies to General Thé's army, he genuinely believes he is helping to pave the way for democracy. Thus it may be said that in realizing himself he is, in Sartre's words, "realising a type of humanity" (Existentialism & Humanism 47). Again, however, he is acting without regard to the particularities before him. He never for a moment considers that perhaps the Vietnamese people do not want to be saved for democracy, that abstract concepts such as liberty mean nothing at all to them. Fowler tries to point out to him that the Vietnamese people are not interested in whether they are governed by the communists or the French, that all they want is enough rice, not to be shot at, and for one day to be much like another, but Pyle refuses to listen (QA 93). Thus, by trying to impose his views on another people, without regard to their needs or wants, he is in a way attempting to coerce their freedom to choose for themselves; this, in Sartre's view, is but another form of bad faith.

In The Comedians, Jones's action in attempting to swindle the Haitian government cannot, of course, seriously be considered to be what Sartre refers to as action. His action is purely in the sake of self-interest and certainly involves no real thought on his part. Smith, it may be said, genuinely acts when he attempts to get Jones out of jail; but his attempts to set up his vegetarian centre and to do his bit for the poor by tossing coins to the mutilated in the streets are misguided. Again, like Pyle, he is acting on a set of idealistic principles and has absolutely no idea of the reality of the situation in Haiti. In fact, he is so caught up in his conviction that acidity is the cause of all evil in this world that he is blind to human nature being what it is. By refusing to see that evil is the result of the free choice of men like Papa Doc Duvalier, he is powerless to do anything about it. Nevertheless, Greene accords him a sort of dignity. Despite his ridiculous scheme, Smith is a man who shows fidelity to a cause, and his courage and integrity are to be applauded.

In The Honorary Consul, Aquino's action fails the test of authenticity in that he does not act as if every action is to be his last. To Aquino, death is the "great abstraction" (124), it is something to be written about but not faced, and hence his action is robbed of the intensity that existentialism demands that it have. Of all these men of action, though, León Rivas is the most sympathetically

drawn and seems most to embody Sartre's idea of action authentically taken. The ex-priest turned revolutionary, who is described as "struggling back from a succession of failures towards the primal promise to the poor he had never intended to break" (27), has significantly rejected the life of passivity he led as a priest in favour of a life of action. Although he insists he still believes in a god, he has lost faith in the Church, which he believes is out of touch with the human reality. As well, León is perceived as a man who is creating his own values, as Sartre says one must. In attempting to explain his disillusion with the Catholic Church, he says: "You learn the rules and find they don't apply to any human case . . ." (219). But if Rivas's action as an abogado fails, it is because he does not exercise his own free will in the continued bungled kidnapping of Charley Fortnum. According to Sartre, man is not completely defined until his death; consequently, the quest for authenticity requires that he continue to interpret the multiplicity of facts that surround him and to act according to those facts. Rivas knows the kidnapping was a mistake, he certainly does not want to kill Fortnum, yet he is reluctant to let him go for fear of angering El Tigre, the absent leader of the band. He is therefore allowing his action to be dictated by another (which, in itself, is a form of choice), thus exercising bad faith. Further, as the time for the ultimatum draws nigh and Plarr

finds León reading detective novels, Plarr questions his friend's suitability for a life of action:

Had he, as the situation grew darker,
lost the sense of responsibility, like a
roulette player who abandons his chart
and no longer bothers even to watch the
ball? He should never have tried to be
a man of action: as a priest at a
bedside he would have been most at his
ease waiting passively for the end.
(209)

Ironically, however, it is as a priest that León finally achieves authentic action. When Plarr is shot by the paras in attempting to stall the ultimatum, León, in defiance of Aquino who demands Fortnum's death, throws down his arms and rushes to his friend's side. "Aquino," he is heard to say, "for a priest there are always priorities" (262).

As Robert O. Evans points out in his essay, "Existentialism in Greene's 'The Quiet American'", complacency with things as they are is yet another form of bad faith (248). This is the sort that Fowler, Brown and Plarr suffer at the beginning of the novels in question. If life is to count at all, however, we cannot stand by and allow others to shape our destiny. Authenticity requires that we choose, and in choosing we become involved. "Sooner or later," says Mr. Heng in The Quiet American, "one has to take sides. If one is to remain human" (172).

When Pyle's bicycle bombs exploding in the square kill a number of people, Fowler realizes that he can no longer tolerate the young American's actions. Knowing that Pyle

will continue on his violent way unless he is checked, Fowler agrees to set him up for a secret meeting with a communist faction, who are also anxious to put an end to the bombing episodes. Although Fowler tries to tell himself that the communists just wish to talk to Pyle, he knows very well that they intend to assassinate him. His action is therefore the result of free choice; he has made a choice within a situation, with a true and lucid consciousness of that situation.

Like Fowler, Brown steadfastly refuses to become involved in the situation in Haiti until a series of events finally convinces him that he can no longer stand aside as a disinterested observer. Before the novel opens, his employee Joseph was crippled by the Tontons Macoute during a "questioning" session with them. Knowing that torture is the order of the day, Brown is therefore not too surprised to discover, upon his return from a visit to the States, the body of Doctor Philipot, the Secretary for Social Welfare, lying in his pool. Philipot, it seems, had slit his own throat in desperation when he had learned that Duvalier's men were seeking him. Subsequent to this, Brown is a witness to the interrupted funeral of Doctor Philipot, at which time the Tontons Macoute strike Mrs. Smith (who was insisting that they let the procession pass) and make off with the body. Still Brown refuses to become involved. He even tries to maintain his neutrality when he is paid an

unexpected visit by the Tontons, who demand to know the whereabouts of Joseph, young Philipot (the late doctor's nephew), and Jones (whom they suspect of having joined the rebel forces). When Brown insists that he knows nothing of the trio's whereabouts, he is savagely beaten by the Tontons until Mrs. Smith intervenes. Jones later surfaces, running in fear of his life because he has been caught out in his attempted swindle, and Brown does take action when he seeks political asylum for his friend at the German embassy, the home of his mistress, Martha. Nevertheless, even at this stage he insists that he is not involved and is unable to understand why he is taking a risk by spiriting Jones away to safety. It is not until Hamit disappears--a good friend who had helped him and Martha by providing a place of rendezvous--that Brown feels something must be done to curb the power of Duvalier and his bogey-men. At the urging of Doctor Magiot, who points out that Brown's mother was a heroine of the Resistance and certainly would have done whatever she could to stop Papa Doc, he agrees to help young Philipot and his group by delivering Jones to them. This he intends to do by calling Jones's bluff with respect to his military exploits, thus effectively trapping him into compliance. Yet Brown's action is authentic. In reality he is running as much of a risk as Jones is, because if caught it is certain death for both. Neither is Jones an unwilling partner; here, at last, is a chance for him to prove

himself. Therefore, Jones is making a free and conscious decision of his own; he is fully aware of the risks involved and still agrees to do what he can. Finally, while Brown doubts that Jones is really the leader he claims to be, he nevertheless believes that any action taken is better than no action at all.

The central thrust of The Honorary Consul is the evasion of responsibility, which Sartre insists is a bar to authentic existence. Charley Fortnum has been kidnapped, but no one will accept responsibility for the mistake. As the English ambassador says, "something which is everybody's responsibility is always nobody's responsibility" (134-35). The General refuses to intervene while he is on holidays, the Foreign Minister says it is a Paraguayan affair, the President is reluctant to bring pressure on the General while he is a guest of the nation, the Americans believe kidnappings have to be discouraged, and the English feel they can do nothing anyway because they are not very popular with the General. Even Father Rivas refuses to accept responsibility for what has happened or may happen to Fortnum. "If I kill him," he tells Plarr, "it will be God's fault as much as mine" (220). He continues: "He will have loaded the gun and steadied my hand" (221).

Obviously, though, it is Plarr's denial of responsibility in which Greene is most interested. "I'm not responsible for their mistakes," Plarr insists (184), but

Greene makes it clear that he is. Although Plarr somewhat thoughtlessly provided Rivas and his band with the information on the American ambassador's whereabouts, which resulted--albeit mistakenly--in Charley's kidnapping, he is as responsible as the others for the unfortunate state in which Charley finds himself. That nothing ever turns out the way we intended is no excuse in existential philosophy for the action we have taken. Further, before Plarr can attain authenticity, he must also accept responsibility for the child that Clara, Charley's wife and Plarr's mistress, is carrying. The child is his, "the result of an error, a carelessness on his part" (211), but he feels no responsibility for it; when Clara refuses to have an abortion, Plarr is only too pleased to pass off the baby as Charley's.

Through their forced confinement at the hands of Rivas and his men, Plarr comes to know and understand Charley Fortnum better. By confronting him as an individual (as opposed to merely the cuckold husband of his mistress), Plarr is eventually forced to acknowledge his part in the insane affair. He also develops a certain respect for Charley, realizing that here is a man who loves his wife, an emotion Plarr does not feel himself to be capable of. Consequently, he tries to pressure the revolutionaries into letting Fortnum go, arguing that their action has been futile and will only result in the deaths of them all.

As A.A. DeVitis has noted:

. . . the living man may evade responsibility, paradoxically "creating" himself as he exercises [his] freedom. But the moment of choice, of engagement, must at last come if the individual is to achieve existence; and the moment of choice, of engagement, may, and in Sartre's novels frequently does, bring death. (117)

Plarr's moment of engagement comes when, bored by inaction, he volunteers to talk to Perez, the leader of the paras, in an attempt to stall the time for the ultimatum. What makes this action so significant is that Plarr is almost certainly committing suicide, for Perez has made it clear that any man who leaves the hut before Fortnum does will be shot down. Whether Plarr believes he will be the exception is not known; what is known is that he feels he has come to the end of himself:

It seemed to him he was already his father's age, that he had spent as long in prison as his father had, and that it was his father who had escaped. (249)

Realizing that he can never love Clara the way Charley does and that he can never be the father to his child that Fortnum can be, he seems determined to make his life count for something. By telling León, "I've got to do something for the poor devil in there" (250), he is acknowledging his responsibility in the whole sad affair, and by going out in the glare of the early morning sun he is taking authentic action at last.

As John Macquarrie points out in Existentialism: An

introduction, guide and assessment, "the rejection (or at least the suspension) of conventional morality is typical of existentialists" (207). This is to say, as man answers the call for authenticity, he is often required to respond to some deeper voice of conscience. Certainly this would seem to be the case in The Quiet American where Fowler, no longer able to tolerate Pyle's violent ways, becomes a willing accomplice in his assassination. On one level it may be said that Fowler is a murderer; yet in responding to a deeper voice of conscience, his action is an ethical one, for by Pyle's death he hopes to save a countless number of lives. Similarly, Castle in The Human Factor may be regarded as a traitor, and no doubt would be by most of the free world. But in taking a stand against apartheid, a cause he believes the Soviets will assist, he too rises above conventional morality for the greater good of all.

Nevertheless, as Macquarrie goes on to say, "no individual conscience ever speaks with complete purity", and as he points out, the peril of course is that egoism can always be disguised as a call to conscience (213), of which Greene seems to be aware. Although it is doubtful that Fowler gets rid of Pyle because of a personal vendetta--even though Pyle has robbed him of his mistress, there is no evidence in the novel to suggest that Fowler is seeking revenge--Brown's motives for delivering Jones to Philipot's band are a little more suspect. Overcome with jealousy, he

believes (or half-believes) that Jones is sleeping with Martha, and he even tells Doctor Magiot that he has his own reasons for wanting Jones out of the embassy (C 236). Martha, too, suspects he is acting out of jealousy; "I don't like your motive," she tells him (C 256). Yet if this is the case, Brown is taking an extraordinary risk for an affair that has reached its end anyway. Further, when Martha does ask him why he is agreeing to help, his response has an air of sincerity and truth about it. He says:

I don't like Concasseur and his
Tontons Macoute. I don't like Papa Doc.
I don't like them feeling my balls in
the street to see if I have a gun. That
body in the bathing-pool--I used to have
different memories. They tortured
Joseph. They ruined my hotel. (C 245)

There is no hope except in action, says Sartre, and yet man must always act without hope (Existentialism & Humanism 40). As Marjorie Grene points out, absurdity and irrationality underlie our freedom. She says:

Our highest purposes fall miserably and
ineptly short of their fulfilment; and,
where they do issue into positive
action, they are ensnared in a maze of
chance, purposelessness, or, at best,
cross-purposes. (58)

Whether Fowler's action is ultimately futile is not known, but he has, for a while at least, stemmed American interference in Vietnam. Brown, on the other hand, can claim no such success. The actions of Philipot and his commandos are a miserable failure, although it must be remembered that action is not to be judged by the success of

the act. Jones and Joseph are dead, but Jones ironically dies a hero's death in the eyes of his men. The surviving members of his commandos find refuge in a lunatic asylum near Santo Domingo, hardly a fitting end for a band of fearless revolutionaries. Brown too has lost: he has lost Martha, for the affair has quietly died; he has lost his hotel, for he cannot return to Haiti; and he must, for a time at least, live out his life as a partner in Mr. Fernandez's undertaking firm. In The Human Factor, Castle's actions are also futile. His duplicity is discovered by the British secret service, he is forced to flee to Russia, and there is nothing to suggest that he has in any way harmed the South African government. Whatever action he has taken has been undermined by the Soviet government, who have been using him as a pawn in their game of international intrigue. Castle's usefulness to the Soviets, it turns out, was only in being a front for the real double agent, a Soviet spy in the employ of British intelligence, who was passing back to the British the information Castle was feeding to the Soviets; in this way, the other spy was authenticated in the eyes of the British and could thereby provide to them false information which the Soviets wanted them to have. Castle's tragedy, of course, is that in all likelihood he will end his days without Sarah and Sam, his reasons for becoming a double agent in the first place.

With its emphasis upon the inherent tragedy of the

human condition and the underlying hopelessness that affects us all, existentialism has often been referred to as a doctrine of despair. This Sartre denies, saying:

. . . what man needs is to find himself again and to understand that nothing can save himself from himself, not even a valid proof of the existence of God. In this sense existentialism is optimistic, it is a doctrine of action, and it is only by self-deception, by confusing their own despair with ours that Christians can describe us as without hope. (Existentialism & Humanism 56)

Through A Quiet American, The Comedians, The Honorary Consul and The Human Factor, Greene demonstrates that the human reality is ultimately a tragic one. However, if there is any answer at all to the precarious situation in which modern-day man finds himself, it is not to be found in what he calls "isms" and "ocracies" (QA 94)--abstract sets of philosophical, political or religious ideals--but in each man projecting himself beyond himself, in committing himself to something outside himself, and in acting. Through these novels he illustrates the Sartrean position that action taken authentically is intensely personal and involves the whole man; it is a form of resistance against the whole absurdity of human affairs. Through his main protagonists he shows that man cannot afford to stand aside and be indifferent, that if one's life is to have meaning at all, one must stand up and be counted. In the final analysis, one must become involved, must become engagé, for only through involvement can one attain concreteness and

fullness.

Conclusion

Existential motifs are recurrent throughout the novels of Graham Greene. The absence of God, the lack of meaning in the outer world, man's alienation from the world around him, freedom and decision, and anguish in the face of nothing are of primary concern to the existentialists, as they are to Greene. His emphasis upon the increasingly difficult dilemmas that modern man faces, his consternation about man's inhumanity to man, his fear that we are on the brink of destruction and are not doing enough to avert the calamity, place him among the existential writers of our time.

Certainly to Greene, as to the existentialists, no solution to the precarious position in which modern man finds himself is to be found in religious dogma or political institutions. The Roman Catholic Church he sees as being out of touch with modern reality. As he points out over and over again in his novels, the Church tries to impose a set of beliefs which often make no sense; further, in doing so, it robs man of the intensely personal search for God that is essential if one is to come to know Him. Not only that, but the Church is seen as being ineffectual at best in alleviating the suffering of those it serves and, in fact, often perpetrates it by its imposition of obligations on the poor. There is also a feeling in Greene's novels that man

needs to learn to live in this life, and not pin all his hopes on an hereafter which may or may not exist. Similarly, political institutions, be they capitalist or communist, provide no answers to the dilemma we face. Perhaps Greene's harshest criticisms are directed against the American concept of capitalism, and hence democracy (the model for the Western world), which he considers to be too idealistic in scope and therefore not workable in many countries. In particular, in their desire to save humanity as a whole, Greene accuses mass democracies of being unable to see the human suffering and human indignity they are causing. Undoubtedly, Greene is far more sympathetic to his communist characters, but his main characters always stop short of embracing the doctrine. Even Castle, the Soviet spy in The Human Factor, agrees to assist the Soviets only out of gratitude for their rescue of Sarah and Sam and he tells his mentor that he will never pretend that he shares their faith, that he will never be a communist (244). Of Greene's secondary characters, Doctor Magiot in The Comedians gives the fullest expression to the communist sentiment, but even he makes it clear that he believes in the "future of Communism", which he is careful to distinguish from communism as it is practised today (176). While it is true that the existentialists share common goals and aims with the communists, they reject communism because dialectical materialism denies individual freedom.

What man needs, suggests Greene, is to undertake a journey, an intensely personal search, whereby perhaps one might be able to go back and begin again. He says in Journey Without Maps:

. . . when one sees to what unhappiness,
to what peril of distinction centuries
of cerebration have brought us, one
sometimes has a curiosity to discover if
one can from what we have come, to
recall at what point we went astray.
(21)

At this point there is a split in Greene's works as he vacillates between the positions of the religious and the atheist existentialists. On one hand, self-authentication can only be achieved by a search after God, by a leap of faith and an affirmation of His existence. On the other hand, in keeping with the philosophy of Sartre, he suggests that life can only be given dignity and worth if one freely and consciously commits himself to a type of humanity and takes positive action to realize his commitment.

Taken as a whole, the novels of Graham Greene do much to explain the philosophy of existentialism. What they do not do is allow one to point with certainty and say that the progression of Greene's life work reveals a bent towards a particular type of existentialism, as that espoused by Sartre, for example.

True, an evolution of a sort is evident in his works,

but it is by no means constant.³ However, even in the early "Catholic" novels, Brighton Rock and The Power and the Glory, whose primary themes are good versus evil and sin and salvation, demons of existentialism surface. They are even more obvious in The Heart of the Matter when Scobie's anguish and despair can find no comfort or solace in the arms of his faith. From there Greene jumps to The End of the Affair where belief in, much less love for, an intolerable God is no longer a given but requires a giant leap of faith. Four years later, with the publication of The Quiet American, God is dead and gone and man must forge his own destiny. Yet in A Burnt-Out Case, published five years after The Quiet American, the hero is once again wrestling with his unbelief, trying to find his way back to God. Then comes The Comedians, another depiction of a godless state in the tradition of The Quiet American, followed in its wake by The Honorary Consul, which in some ways is an expression of Sartrean existentialism but in another way is an angry diatribe at a god who has made us as we are and who has forsaken us in our moment of need. The

Perhaps the move towards existentialism in Greene's work reflects the author's own uneasiness with the tenets of the faith he embraced in 1926. In Journey Without Maps he takes care to point out that he is "a Catholic with an intellectual if not an emotional belief in Catholic dogma" (17), and it is therefore not inconceivable that the existential doctrine suggests to Greene certain truths he emotionally cannot deny, even though they may be in conflict with certain precepts he intellectually apprehends. If this is so, it would go a long way towards explaining the conflict so often apparent in Greene's works as a whole.

Human Factor, published in 1978, once again embodies the theme of action and commitment in a world in which God does not exist, followed by Doctor Fischer of Geneva or The Bomb Party and the vision of a monster created in man's image and whose death has no more significance than that of a dog's. Yet only two years later Monsignor Quixote is published and Greene presents us with the vision of a kindly priest whose unshakable faith in a loving God cannot fail to affect us all.

Even as Greene equivocates, however, and attempts to "give expression to various states or moods of belief and unbelief" (Ways of Escape 195), there is evidence of a dim nostalgia for the past, a longing for the God of childhood and an age when things seemed simpler. There is a regret that we do not live in a time when faith was easier and when God was someone in whom you could trust to set right the world again. And in spite of the existential themes, the modern horror he describes with unflinching reality, there remain remnants of a faith which stubbornly refuse to unravel even in the face of the adversity of our modern age.

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