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The Mystery of Evil
in Five Works by Graham Greene

A Thesis

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The Faculty of the Department of English
The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts

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ABSTRACT

Graham Greene's works in the 1930s reveal his obsession with the nature and source of evil in the world. The world for Greene is a sad and frightening place, where betrayal, injustice, and cruelty are the norm. His books of the 1930s, culminating in *Brighton Rock* (1938), are all, on some level, attempts to explain why this is so.

The four books that immediately precede *Brighton Rock*—It's a Battlefield (1934), England Made Me (1935), Journey Without Maps (1935), and A Gun For Sale (1936)—are wildly uneven in quality, yet each marks a definite step forward in Greene's development, particularly in his ability to express his sense of a world "not black and white but black and grey." Like most of his contemporaries, he began by blaming the social and political ills of the period. To this broad social criticism he added studies of failed personal relationships. Finally, the supernatural world began to intrude in his books. The world became a vast battleground where the forces of good and evil fought; men seem at times to be merely the agents through which the supernatural world works on earth.

The religious dimension is made explicit for the first time in *Brighton Rock*: justice, mercy, love, companionship are considered not only by human standards, as in his earlier works, but by divine ones. Through his repulsive protagonist, Pinkie Brown, Greene explores the breathtaking energy and fertility of evil. The essential mystery of evil's existence, entwined with yet distinct from other social, psychological, or religious considerations, is finally what *Brighton Rock* is about.
THE MYSTERY OF EVIL

IN FIVE WORKS BY GRAHAM GREENE
In an essay on Walter de la Mare, Graham Greene wrote: "Every writer worth our consideration, every writer who can be called in the wide eighteenth-century use of the term a poet, is a victim: a man given over to an obsession." To illustrate his point, he argues that Henry James was obsessed with treachery, that Thomas Hardy was filled "with a terrible pity for human beings," that de la Mare was obsessed simply with death. Here, as in much of his literary criticism, Greene seems to be writing about himself. Treachery, pity, death—all these are commonplace in the world of his novels, and together they point to Greene's own obsession with evil.

If there is a thread that connects all of Greene's works, it is this fascination with the workings of evil in the world. The world for Greene is a sad and frightening place, a place where evil has gained the upper hand. His perspective is always a little lopsided: goodness counts for very little in his books, and what goodness there is seems only to attract yet more evil. One is destined to be unhappy, to betray, to fail. Success, if it comes, is temporary and serves mostly to heighten one's misery after it has fled. One is fortunate to die before becoming too disillusioned.

Greene's writings in the 1930s are all, on some level, attempts to explain why this should be so. That it is so he never doubts. Yet his early attempts to express this overwhelming sense of a fallen world, a world "not black and white but black and grey," were at best only partially successful. It was only in Brighton Rock (1938), his eighth novel, that he was able to find the story to fit his obsession. "In all writers," wrote Greene, "there is a moment of crystallization, when the dominant theme is plainly expressed, when the private universe becomes visible to even the least sensitive reader." In Greene's canon, that moment comes in Brighton Rock; in telling the story of the boy gangster Pinkie Brown he brought his "dominant theme" to the surface for the first time.

Brighton Rock is Greene's first full-fledged treatment of the struggle between good and evil in the world, and his first
explicit discussion of the ways in which God or Satan can work through men. It points the direction his novels would take over the next dozen years. **Brighton Rock** thus stands at the beginning of a series and at the end of one. It looks ahead to Greene's Catholic novels, *The Power and the Glory* (1940), *The Heart of the Matter* (1948), and *The End of the Affair* (1951). But it also marks the end of one stage of his development. The roots of Greene's great Catholic novels lie in his works of the mid-1930s; he had found his subject early in life, but it remained for him to conceptualize it more clearly. It is this process that we can detect in the earlier books.

**Brighton Rock** also differs from Greene's earlier work in the sureness of its execution. Greene served a long apprenticeship as a novelist; his abilities took a while to catch up with his vision. The books that precede **Brighton Rock** are wildly uneven in quality, yet each marks a definite step forward in Greene's development. Like most writers of his generation, he began by blaming evil on the political and social ills of the period. To this broad social criticism Greene eventually added studies of failed personal relationships. Finally, the supernatural began to intrude on his stories; the world became a vast, awful battleground where men seemingly were no more than agents through which good and evil moved on earth. Like the layers of an onion, the explanations—social, personal, religious—surround the central mystery of the nature of evil.

The four books that immediately precede **Brighton Rock** show this development clearly. The straightforward social criticism of *It's a Battlefield* (1934) and *England Made Me* (1935) gives way to a more complex view of the relation of the individual to society in *A Gun For Sale* (1936) and **Brighton Rock**. Personal and sexual relationships, never easy in Greene, become both more painful and more ambiguous in each succeeding book. And religious considerations, which are absent entirely from the first two books, are important in *A Gun For Sale* and central to an understanding of **Brighton Rock**.

Standing midway between *It's a Battlefield* and **Brighton Rock**
is *Journey Without Maps* (1936), Greene's account of his travels in West Africa. Not so much a travel book as a form of self-analysis, *Journey Without Maps* is an important landmark in Greene's development. In the books that follow it, Greene's sense of the world—and hence his sense of evil—is richer, multi-faceted, infinitely more complex. If *Brighton Rock* is the crystallization of Greene's obsession, *Journey Without Maps* is the catalyst. Disparate elements that float unconnected in the earlier novels come together in this book, and the result is much greater than the sum of the parts. Evil is no longer simply the equivalent of social injustice, as it appears in *It's a Battlefield*, nor is it the result of perverse personal relationships, as in *England Made Me*. Instead, it is a condition of life, bound up with human nature yet at times inexplicable.

R. W. B. Lewis says that Greene's subject is "the mystery of the human condition, beyond or beneath any sociological or historical or psychological explanation thereof." Indeed, there is a sociological explanation for Pinkie's behavior, and a psychological one, and a sexual one, but none adequately accounts for the evil that seems present in the very air he breathes.

It is perhaps not surprising that as Greene's ability to evoke an atmosphere of evil increased, his power clearly to explain its causes decreased. It is possible, in a sentence or two, to explicate Greene's "message" in *It's a Battlefield*, and the novel is the lesser for it. The same cannot be said of *Brighton Rock*. Greene delights in paradoxes; or rather, he accepts as truth ideas that appear paradoxical. His intent is, in Auden's words, to "prohibit sharply the rehearsed response." Thus we find in *Brighton Rock* that the "good" (Rose) and the "right" (Ida) are bitter enemies, while good and evil are closely allied. But Greene's skewed outlook often results in confusion and contradiction. It is sometimes difficult to figure out precisely what he is trying to say. By examining the books that come before it, we can pick out the threads that eventually intertwine in *Brighton Rock* and look at them individually. Though each is only a part of the pattern that Greene weaves
in *Brighton Rock*, they can provide clues to what he is about.

I

The situation of our time
Surrounds us like a baffling crime.

—W. H. Auden

Critics usually distinguish Greene from other writers of the 1930s by pointing to his religious beliefs, but Greene, like nearly all of his contemporaries, dealt extensively with political and social themes in his art. It was not until *Brighton Rock* that his Catholicism became apparent; indeed, a critic writing in 1938, on the eve of *Brighton Rock*’s publication, would have been hard-pressed to separate Greene from the Auden group of writers. If not personally, then artistically and socially he could be considered a member of that group: he came from the same background, received the same schooling, developed the same left-wing leanings (to the point of becoming a Party member for a time at Oxford), and, when he came to write, concerned himself with the same issues. Like his contemporaries, Greene examined the social and political forces that were making the world an increasingly violent and squalid place. Greene the social critic is often lost in discussions of Greene the Catholic, but he has always concerned himself with the influence society has on the individual.

Greene’s most undisguised social commentary is in *It’s a Battlefield*. As the title suggests, the city is seen as a battleground; society is viewed in terms of class struggle. The old order is everywhere crumbling, and chaos is threatening. Greene attempts in this novel to examine the effects this situation has on individual lives. Like soldiers in a war, the citizens of London find their lives molded and distorted by social and political forces outside their control, by inexplicable violence and injustice and pain. Greene chose his epigraph for the novel from the historian Kinglake:

In so far as the battlefield presented itself to the
bare eyesight of men, it had no entirety, no length, no breadth, no depth, no size, no shape, and was made up of nothing except small numberless circlets commensurate with such ranges of vision as the mist might allow at each spot. . . . In such conditions, each separate gathering of English soldiery went on fighting its little battle in happy and advantageous ignorance of the general state of the actions; nay, even very often in ignorance of the fact that any great conflict was raging.  

The characters in *It's a Battlefield*, like Kinglake's soldiers, fight their personal battles unaware of the general conflict. But their lives are disrupted nonetheless by events they have no part in and cannot control. Evil lies in a social system that haphazardly ruins individual lives. At the center of the novel is a gross injustice--Jim Drover's conviction for a murder he committed to protect his wife--that can neither be blamed on anyone nor righted by anyone. Drover represents no threat to society, and his death serves no purpose. Yet society, through its laws, demands that he die for his act. This sort of unjust justice is incomprehensible, even to those like the Assistant Commissioner, whose job it is to uphold the system. The Assistant Commissioner can rationalize his role in this system only by disavowing any responsibility for its consequences, by morally standing aside: "The Assistant Commissioner, like Pilate, washed his hands; justice is not my business; politics is not my business. God help the men responsible for the way life is organized; I am only a paid servant, doing what I am told" (p. 166).  

It is impossible, however, to find anyone who can be held responsible for the way life is organized. Justice and mercy on a social scale are seemingly outside the power of the individual to influence, leaving the individual in the position of a victim. Greene holds out little hope that the system that produces this situation can be changed. Early in the book, the journalist
Conder, in discussing Drover's case, becomes angered by "the incomprehensibility of those who judged and pardoned, rewarded and punished." But he realizes that these actions are "not systematic enough to be called injustice" (p. 39).

The despair that the Assistant Commissioner and so many others feel when they consider human "justice" is due to their being unable to identify an enemy. The evil that condemns Drover to die rests in no one place or person. Injustice or justice is a combination of occurrences that no single person can control or predict—a politician looking for votes, a clergyman too frightened to intervene, a journalist with a cause, a labor leader acting on a whim. We are brought back again to the novel's epigraph: each individual is fighting his own personal battle—for money, for love, for survival—unaware that together with numberless others he is contributing to an overall end.

The fragmented nature of such a society is cause for great alarm, but Greene offers no plan to unite it. In this he is distinct from most of his contemporaries. Unlike, for example, Auden or Spender, who in the mid-1930s could still imagine a better society replacing the one crumbling about them, Greene can see no further than the impending chaos. His social criticism consists of depicting what is wrong, rather than suggesting how things might be changed.

Only at the close of the novel does Greene allow a ray of hope to penetrate. The scene points in a direction he will take again in later books, including Brighton Rock. The chaplain at Drover's prison visits the Assistant Commissioner. He is going to resign his position. "I can't stand human justice any longer," he says. "Its arbitrariness. Its incomprehensibility." When the Assistant Commissioner asks whether divine justice isn't much the same, the chaplain replies: "Perhaps. But one can't hand in a resignation to God," then adds: "And I have no complaint against His mercy" (p. 199).

It is one of the novel's ironies that human mercy is seen as no less awful than human justice. All of Drover's friends
feel morally bound to work for his reprieve, but a reprieve—"mercy"—means only that Drover will spend 18 years in prison, an alternative Greene finds more frightening than death. Drover, who had waited calmly for death, is unable to bear the thought of such mercy: he tries unsuccessfully to commit suicide. It is the incomprehensibility of human mercy, rather than of human justice, that provokes the chaplain to resign. If he cannot at times understand divine justice, the chaplain can at least, as he says, take comfort in his belief in God's mercy. In the world of men, there is no comparable comfort to be found.

This scene will be echoed later with much greater effect at the end of Brighton Rock, when the priest speaks to Rose of the "appalling strangeness of the mercy of God." But in the later book the two worlds—human and divine—are juxtaposed throughout, and the priest's words are integral to an interpretation of the book. In It's a Battlefield, we are given no hint of any world beyond this one; the chaplain's words lack force because they relate to nothing that has gone before. He may find comfort in God's mercy, but we have seen no justification for his belief.

The injustice of Drover's position is made to stand for the evil inherent in the social system. On a personal level, evil is often the result of isolation, of an inability to find companionship. Men who are lonely—and in Greene loneliness is the rule rather than the exception—are often led to acts of violence and betrayal, acts that in turn contribute to the decay of society.

Conrad Drover, the convicted man's brother, is the first of Greene's outcasts, men who are victims of their childhoods and of their positions in society. He embodies several traits that Greene will explore again in the characters of Raven, the killer in A Gun For Sale, and Pinkie. Conrad carries in his adult life the burden of his childhood, when he was made an outcast for his intelligence and his lack of physical prowess. He knows little of companionship. He hates everyone except his brother and his brother's wife, Milly, both of whom he loves
with a fierce, despairing love.

For Greene, love and sex always mean suffering. His characters love without hope, equating sex with sadness, despair, loneliness, treachery. Happiness in love is always to be mistrusted. Milly says she was "always afraid" of her happiness because she never believed it could last. Conrad and Milly share this knowledge that love always leads to pain; in the end, their common despair forms a bond between them. When they at last sleep together, it is a passionless, hopeless act. Whatever love had developed between them is lost in the physical act of intercourse: "He had a dull sense of irrevocable injury which one of them had done to the other. Love had been close to him, in the kitchen, before the glow and hum of the gas, between chair and chair, which had escaped him now in the bed." Conrad thinks: "This is love: the hate and the pain and the sense of guilt and the sound of crying in the greying room" (pp. 126-127).

What Conrad feels he has lost is companionship, an intimate, nonphysical communion with another person. Sexual intercourse, here as elsewhere in Greene, is tied up with the idea of betrayal: Conrad has betrayed his brother and has also betrayed the first true companionship he has known. Emotional intimacy, such as he believes he had with Milly, cannot survive physical intimacy.

Yet Conrad also has a confused sense that his betrayal is not entirely his fault, that he and Milly and Jim have in some way been victimized by circumstances. His guilt and his despair turn momentarily to rage; his renewed sense of isolation leads him to violence. He decides to murder the Assistant Commissioner as the most visible symbol of that system which has, in Conrad's view, caused such suffering. The thought of violence becomes a release. It is a way of ridding himself of his hopelessness, of striking back at a society that has victimized him since childhood.

Yet in the end Greene denies him even this release. The pistol he has purchased is filled with blanks. He is hit by a
car and dies a slow, painful death. It is difficult to escape
the conclusion that he is being punished for his adultery and
his betrayal. His jaw, having been broken, is wired shut, and
Conrad dies unable even to communicate his pain to another
person. He is left completely isolated once again, the
punishment for his betrayal of love.

It is a harsh fate for Conrad, since Greene has been to
some trouble to convince us that Conrad is not entirely
responsible for the way he is. No-one in the novel seems in
control of his destiny; everyone, to some extent, is a victim
of social and political forces too complex to sort out. Conrad,
with Greene's backing, can blame his childhood for molding him
into what he is. He can blame the injustice of his brother's
imprisonment for the loneliness that brought Milly to his bed.
He can blame the isolating influences of society for the lack
of companionship in his life. In Conrad, "there remained, even
below the hatred, the belief that if he had been able to love
naturally and without shame, if he had been loved with tenderness
and permanence, there would have been no need of the pistol in
the pocket, the aimless walking and the guilt" (p. 174).

In short, what happens is not entirely Conrad's fault, yet
he suffers nonetheless. Greene, in a series of essays on Henry
James written in the mid-1930s, gives a number of clues to his
own outlook. He argued that James's great theme was the evil
brought about by treachery. The innocent suffer, the treacherous
suffer, each in their own ways, but there is no perceivable
logic that governs the suffering. In James, says Greene, there
is no "poetic justice":

It was not as a moralist that James designed his
stories, but as a realist. . . . There was no
victory for human beings, that was his conclusion;
you were punished in your own way, whether you were
of God's or the Devil's party. James believed in the
supernatural, but he saw evil as an equal force with
good. Humanity was cannon fodder in a war too
balanced ever to be concluded.\textsuperscript{6}

Greene himself had not yet reached this point in \textit{It's a Battlefield}, but he was heading in that direction. The supernatural world plays no part in the novel. Evil remains a product solely of this world. Yet Greene would argue that, in bringing all his characters to such bleak fates, he was simply being a realist: this is the way the world works. One is ultimately merely a victim of the evil inherent in the human condition. Conrad's pistol loaded with blanks is also a symbol of how ineffectual he is. The good (Milly and Jim are without question good) suffer as indiscriminately as the bad.

But Greene is, in his peculiar way, a moralist as well. It is hard to shake the impression that he reserved a particularly agonizing death for Conrad as punishment for his adultery and for his betrayal of his brother. Certain evils we bring on ourselves, and sex is one of them. The result is a somewhat confusing outlook in this book as Greene seems to say that we both are and are not responsible for our actions, that there is nothing we can do but that there are some things we should not do. A pronounced distaste for sex, noticeable in each of his novels of the '30s, leads to seemingly contradictory positions. It is an apparent paradox in Greene that while isolation often leads to evil acts, sexual intercourse is itself often an evil act. The redeeming love his characters crave is a childlike love, pure, innocent, free from the conflicting emotions, the mingled pain and pleasure of adult sexual love. Conrad Drover briefly possessed such a love, then ruined it.

II

\textit{The longer life, I wote the greater sin,}
\textit{The greater sin, the greater punishment}
\textsuperscript{11}---Edmund Spenser

What Greene calls "the brief ecstasy and lengthy pain" of love is at the heart of \textit{England Made Me}. The tension that existed
in Conrad's love for Milly—between the emotional need for companionship and the physical desire for sex—is emphasized in the suppressed incestuous longings of Kate and Anthony Farrant. Sex is once again a villain. Love is destroyed by the body's cravings. Passion leads to violence and sin.

As individuals, Kate and Anthony are incomplete. Each needs the other to become whole. Their relationship is most often described in terms of a successful marriage: "They had as many memories in common as an old couple celebrating their thirtieth anniversary." Like a married couple, the twins have always enjoyed a peculiar sympathy, each intuitively anticipating the thoughts and feelings of the other. As children especially, they seemed bonded more closely than husband and wife. But the easy intimacy of childhood becomes confused as the two grow up. Adult love includes physical as well as emotional intimacy, and this of course is denied to Kate and Anthony. Each tries unsuccessfully to find a substitute, Kate in her passionless affair with Krogh and Anthony in a series of brief affairs.

In this novel, as in It's a Battlefield, Greene has put at the center a relationship that cannot be consummated without considerable guilt. Sex is strongly linked to sin in both cases. There is also a sense of disgust that accompanies the idea of sex; certainly Greene could not have chosen a sexual attraction more likely to ensure moral outrage than an incestuous one. It's as if the sexual act is primarily an act of degradation: "Yes, it was ugly, the human figure. Man or woman, it made no difference. . . . The body's shape, the running nose, excrement, the stupid postures of passion" (p. 86). The words are those of Minty, the shabby expatriate journalist who takes up with Anthony. Minty abhors women; he finds the idea of any physical passion loathsome. Although we cannot assume that Minty is always speaking for Greene, we seem constantly to be reminded of his standards as we watch the various relationships in the novel develop. The plot may belong to Kate and Anthony, but the tone is provided by Minty.
Greene is intent on separating, in as far as is possible, the ideas of sex and love. If this stems in part from his apparent distaste for "the stupid postures of passion," it also involves a longing for the innocence of pre-sexual love. He wants to believe in the possibility of a love unclouded by the body's desires, but the only time such a love can occur is in childhood, as it does between Kate and Anthony. Attempts to recreate this type of relationship in adult life can at best be only partially successful. Kate wants her brother near; everything she does has that one end in mind. But when she at last succeeds in bringing him to Stockholm, she cannot keep him. Her attempt to recapture the purity of their childhood innocence is futile.

Kate is more self-aware than Anthony, and she recognizes the nature of her feelings for him. Anthony, however, refuses to confront his emotions. He confuses love with desire, denying the "devotion of the blood" (p. 78) that ties him to Kate in favor of the easy conquest, the passing good time:

His love was blurred, was dispersed, was thinned out like pastry over a large area. Love was not gratitude, love was not this dependence of the brain, this thought-reading, this inconvenience of shared pain, this was the unfortunate trick of being twins; love was fun, love was a good time (p. 78).

He has moments of illumination, when he realizes "with astonishment and pain" that love is truly "this inconvenience of shared pain," but these thoughts are brushed aside almost as quickly as they arise.

Kate fears loneliness most; she prizes the companionship that she and Anthony have always shared. Without that, she will be left isolated much as Conrad Drover was. But the twins seem incapable of continuing their emotional intimacy without the corresponding physical intimacy. At one extreme, then, is isolation, which is terrifying, and at the other is sex, which is forbidden. In the middle is love, which is painful. The only
other alternative is Minty's, which, if not attractive, begins at least to be understandable.

Greene finds the companionship, the emotional closeness, of love vital; without this essential communion society breaks up into fragments, as it did in *It's a Battlefield* and as it does again in *England Made Me*. Yet he seems to hold no hope that such a love is ever possible for long. Fallen man is incapable of loving as purely as children or as angels do. Sex is an isolating act. Rather than being a confirmation of intimacy, it is a denial of it. Some of Greene's characters, like Conrad or Anthony, equate love with sex and are disappointed by the truth. Some, like Kay Rimmer or Loo Davidge, deny the worth of companionship in favor of sexual gratification. For these characters Greene has a thinly-disguised contempt.

In Minty, we see a third type of character, one who has no parallel in the earlier novel. Minty also equates sex with love, but his reaction is the opposite of what one would expect. Because he loathes the human body, the stupid postures of passion, he rejects love as well, opting instead for isolation. The question in his mind is one of either purity or debasement. There is an element of pride in Minty's attitude; he puts himself on a higher moral plane than those who grub like animals between the sheets. He doesn't drink or swear. Yet Minty is a repulsive character: one always thinks of him in connection with his stomach operation, during which, as Minty himself never hesitates to mention, enough pus was drained from him to fill a milk jug. Minty becomes a symbol of a sort of perverse morality, an exaggerated reaction against an increasingly immoral and chaotic world. He scorns all human contact, emotional and physical. He is both a product of and a contributor to the evil around him.

As in *It's a Battlefield*, Greene in this novel links the failure of personal relationships to the rottenness of the social order. The breakdown in communications between individuals is mirrored by the increasing fragmentation of
society. Everyone is moving toward isolation, a situation nicely symbolized by Krogh's uncomfortable relationship with his new office building. The modern glass structure is sleek, beautiful, efficient, but it is terribly impersonal: the building, "like an untrustworthy man, emphasized its transparency." Krogh, in his soundproof office, is caught in an "Arctic isolation" (p. 35). He is surrounded everywhere in the building by his own initials woven into the carpets, painted on the walls, in electric lights over the doors. He is, in other words, surrounded only by himself, and "it seemed to him that he had always been so surrounded" (p. 49).

Krogh is the link between the public and the private worlds in the novel. We see him both as a public figure, a man with immense power, and as a private man. The contrast between the two is great. The confidence with which he runs his international business empire is set beside the inept way he handles his personal relationships. He is unable to imagine another person's feelings (a trait he shares with Raven, Pinkie, and Ida Arnold), and is thus unable to communicate in more than the most superficial way. Throughout the book, his purely physical relationship with Kate is implicitly compared with what Greene sees as the deeper, more important relationship that Kate had with Anthony as a child.

The more successful Krogh the businessman becomes, the more isolated Krogh himself becomes. He eventually finds himself cut off not only from other people, but from his own past. He rather sentimentally remembers working as a young man on the construction of a bridge in Chicago, remembers the camaraderie of the workers, the sense of belonging. But he can no longer recreate those feelings; his past becomes a series of images without any meaning (p. 105). He can make no connection between the man he was and the man he is, which makes his isolation complete. He feels like "a man who speaks only Esperanto."

Greene makes a clear connection between Krogh's inability to communicate on a personal level and the immoral—or perhaps
amoral—acts he commits as a businessman. "Honesty was a word which never troubled him: a man was honest so long as his credit was good: and his credit, he could tell himself with pride, stood a point higher than the credit of the French government" (p. 35). Morality is an irrelevant concept for Krogh because he never thinks in terms of individuals. All of Krogh's great public acts have consequences for individuals. That Krogh cannot think in human terms makes him a better businessman, but it also contributes heavily to the depersonalization of society as a whole. Krogh's offices and the plant where young Andersson works are built to isolate people from one another.

Green hints in the novel of a parallel between the way an individual grows from childhood to adulthood and the way a society develops. Just as Kate and Anthony's love becomes more confused and unhappy (not to mention immoral) as they grow older, so society seems to move from innocence to unhappy experience. Krogh's business represents the state society has reached: cold, impersonal, amoral. Krogh is more than once referred to as symbolizing "the future." Anthony, on the other hand, is "full of the conventions of a generation older than himself" (p. 25). He and his values have no place in the modern world. Krogh's humble past is similarly sentimentalized. Society seems to have lost its innocence, just as a child does as he grows toward adulthood.

This connection between the life of the individual and the growth of a society is developed further in Journey Without Maps, as Greene begins to search more closely for the roots of evil. He seems to have reached a dead end in England Made Me. The books closes on a note almost of despair, with Anthony's murder preceded by the death of that peculiar intimate companionship that had existed between brother and sister. "You heard him shout," Kate tells Minty at the funeral. "I didn't hear a thing. I didn't feel a thing" (p. 206).

For the first time, Kate is left isolated, surrounded only by herself. Everyone in the novel is isolated; no one is
happy. But the causes of this unhappiness are a little unclear. There is a sense of sin in this novel that supplants the social injustice of It's a Battlefield. To quote Greene's essay on James again, he argues that "the evil of the capitalist system is an altogether inadequate explanation" for the "black and merciless things" that are at the heart of James's works. The same is true of Greene, beginning with England Made Me.

It is interesting that the character who most captures Greene's imagination is Minty. He dominates the novel to a degree disproportionate to his actual importance in the plot. Greene himself recognized this; in his autobiography he wrote that Minty

was entirely unexpected when he emerged from the preconscious. . . . I had no intention of introducing into the story a sly pathethic Anglo-Catholic . . . who would steal all the scenes in which he played a part and have the last word, robbing even Kate of her curtain at Anthony's funeral. Oh yes, I resented Minty, and yet I couldn't keep him down.

Minty appears at times to have wandered by accident into the novel. His religious beliefs, like the chaplain's in It's a Battlefield, are not shared by anyone else in the book. He seems to stand apart from the rest of the action, to be a symbol of those black and merciless things that Greene is unable to successfully integrate into the main plot. He is a comment on the book without really being a part of it. There is a direct line from Minty to Pinkie in Brighton Rock; with each character our sense of evil expands to include more than social injustice or personal immorality. But I do not think Greene understood all that Minty represented for him. He had not as yet dug to the bottom of his obsessions; his journey to West Africa provided him with the self-knowledge he needed.
We've overdone civilization, and personally I'm all for a little barbarism.
   --John Buchan, The Three Hostages

In 1935, Greene journeyed to West Africa. Once there, he embarked on a gruelling 300-mile trek, nearly all on foot, moving inland from Freetown, Sierra Leone to French Guinea and then back out through Liberia to the coast again. His account of the trip, Journey Without Maps, is one of his most revealing books. The journey for Greene became a kind of psychoanalysis that he conducted on himself, uprooting the sources of some of his deepest obsessions. West Africa, he knew, was an important symbol, but of what he could not say:

The psychoanalyst, who takes the images of a dream one by one, . . . finds some images have an immediate association; to others the patient can bring out nothing at all; his brain is like a cinema in which the warning 'Fire' has been cried; the exits have been jammed with too many people trying to escape, and when I say that to me Africa has always seemed an important image, I suppose this is what I mean, that it has represented more than I can say.9

Thus Greene's physical journey became a metaphor for a journey of another kind. The vast unmapped expanse of central Liberia became a symbol for the subconscious regions of the mind, where dreams, images, half-forgotten memories could be uncovered and examined. Greene was searching for something he had not been able to find in Europe. The journey inland for him was a metaphorical journey back from adulthood to childhood; he was attempting to "take up the thread of life from very far back, from as far back as innocence" (pp. 101-102). But this personal search for the well-springs of consciousness became a search also for the well-springs of culture, a trip
not only from adulthood to childhood but from civilization to the simplicity of primitive life.

On the coast at Freetown, Greene a mixture of Europe and Africa, "the worst of two worlds," native culture corrupted by transplanted British civilization: "They had planted their seedy civilization and then escaped from it as far as they could. Everything ugly in Freetown was European" (p. 38). He is warned on the coast of the dangers of travelling inland. Indeed, the prospects for survival, let alone enjoyment, were bleak, and Greene found much to hate in Liberia especially. But in the interior, away from the civilization of the coast, he also found to his surprise that rarest of his emotions, happiness:

Suddenly, inexplicably, I felt happy at the rest-house, the square squat bungalow built on cement piles to keep out the white ants. . . . There was a cockroach larger than a black beetle in the bathroom, there were no mosquito rods with the camp beds, . . . a native stood outside the rest-house all the evening complaining of something with folded hands; but I was happy; it was as if I had left something I distrusted behind.

(p. 55)

What he has left behind is the modern world, the "empty—sinless graceless chromium world" whose crumbling he had depicted in his two previous novels. Greene was happy in Africa because nothing was hidden. Both good and bad were immediately apparent. There was a simplicity about the squalor of Africa that he found oddly attractive. There was no deception; one always knew the worst. The complexity of European civilization, the unjust justice and cruel mercy, was left behind. In its place was life at its simplest level. The Assistant Commissioner in It's a Battlefield had spent most of his career in the East; there, he says, despite the poverty, the hardship, the disease, he had been happy (suggesting, perhaps, that Greene knew what
he expected to find in Africa before he got there). Human nature had been stripped to the bare minimum. Good and evil, right and wrong, justice and mercy, were all more immediate and particular. Thus the Assistant Commissioner had been able to do his job with an easier conscience. In Europe, as we have seen, everything is murkier.

Africa reminded Greene of childhood, where all impressions are direct and unclouded by reason or prejudice. He came to think of the African villages as representing culture in its infancy. In coming to Africa, he felt he had left behind the confusion of both personal and cultural adulthood for the innocence of childhood. He discovers in the villages a sense of close-knit community, of companionship on a social level. It is the same kind of companionship that Kate and Anthony had known as children, simple, open, free still from the incestuous desires that came only after adolescence. The natives in the interior, in Greene's view, have still retained this childlike innocence:

I never wearied of the villages in which I spent the night: the sense of a small courageous community barely existing above a desert of trees, hemmed in by a sun too fierce to work under and darkness filled with evil spirits—love was an arm around the neck, a cramped embrace in the smoke, wealth a little pile of palm nuts, old age sores and leprosy, religion a few stones in the center of the village where the dead chiefs lay, a grove of trees where the rice-birds, like yellow and green canaries, built their nests, a man in a mask with raffia skirts dancing at burials.

(pp. 79-80)

Again, the key here for Greene is purity, and with it innocence, two qualities to which he attaches great importance. Poverty, cruelty, disease exist in the bush; evil is there as well, but it is in Greene's mind an evil to be sharply distinguished from the evil found in Europe. It is important to realize that
Greene was not searching for a lost Eden. He is attracted to West Africa because, amid the squalor and the insects, he finds a "purity" absent elsewhere in the world. Typically, he expresses this sense in sexual terms:

In retrospect even the cockroaches seem only a badge of an unconquered virginity, 'never sacked, turned, nor wrought' . . . Africa had the last say, and it said it in the form of rats and ants, of the forest swallowing up the little pits the Dutch prospectors had made and abandoned. There is not so much virginity in the world that one can afford not to love it when one finds it.

(p. 144)

That last sentence goes a long way toward explaining the bizarre attraction/repulsion that Greene seems to feel for a character like Minty or, later, Pinkie. Minty's is a perverse virginity, a rejection of adult sexuality. Minty hates having grown up; he is still much attached to Harrow, for which he feels a mingled hate and love--perhaps because it represents for him the awkward period of puberty. Minty seems to long for the innocence of childhood, when sexual problems did not exist. Greene understands that impulse. In the passage above, sex, as it has before, is made to stand for the evils of the modern world, and for the complexities that accompany adulthood. Repressing sexuality entirely has warped Minty's personality, but I suspect Greene's reaction is more one of pity than disgust.

Another attraction of African culture lay in its elemental view of the supernatural world, which Greene again found analogous to that of childhood. He is fascinated by the cult of the bush devils, the representatives of supernatural power in the villages. The devils were leaders of local bush societies, one of whose functions was to provide ritual initiation, sometimes lasting as long as seven years, into adulthood for a tribe's children. The supernatural world worked through these devils, and it was a real and immediate part of a village's
The power the devils transmitted was neither good nor evil. It was simply Power, such as Greene was aware of in his own childhood. He has related in several places his recurring childhood dream of the witch who lived in a linen closet near the door of his nursery. The witch frightened him, but the fear was also oddly seductive. Even earlier, his dreams had consisted of a shapeless force pressing against the windows, a formless power, "something outside that has got to come in" (p. 119). The dreams seem to represent his awareness of the supernatural world, a world he is as yet unable to interpret. At first, he responds simply to the Power itself. Later, as reason develops, that same Power is reincarnated as evil (never good) in his dreams: "the man with the gold teeth and rubber surgical gloves; the old woman with ringworm; the man with his throat cut dragging himself across the carpet to the bed" (pp. 180-181).

The supernatural power that moved through the bush devils, though itself neither good nor evil, was capable of working either good or evil in the world. Greene is a bit confusing on this point. He insists that this power has "nothing to do" with Christian ideas of good and evil (p. 176), yet the bush devils terrify the villagers—they cause destruction and suffering, and even looking upon the more powerful of them can bring death. Similarly, in Greene's childhood dreams the "formless power" often took shapes, such as the witch, that do not appear neutral, but actively evil: "Any dream that opened with terror, with flight, with falling, with unseen presences and opening doors," usually ended with the "cruel and reassuring presence" of this supernatural power (p. 180).

Carolyn D. Scott points out the distinction Greene seems to make between "primitive evil" and "jaded evil." Greene himself speaks of the "finer taste, the finer pleasure, the finer terror" of childhood; he finds all these once again in Africa. The attraction of the bush devil's power lay in its immediacy, its vividness. It is uncomplicated, direct; it
reinforces the close connection between the natural and supernatural worlds, a connection he was keenly aware of in childhood. Again, Greene seems to long for a kind of virginity. He responds to the Power because it is unspoiled. He makes no distinction between unspoiled good and unspoiled evil; either is preferable to the "jaded" evil of the modern world, which is synonymous with treachery, deceit, betrayal, and injustice.

Greene distrusts adulthood intensely. The older an individual and a society becomes, the farther he or it moves away from both purity and that keen, intimate knowledge of the supernatural. When he finally returns to the coast at Monrovia, it is like re-entering the adult world of pettiness and cruelty. Not surprisingly, the first sign that the travellers are nearing "civilization" again is a native girl posturing with her breasts and hips, aware of her sexuality. Greene writes: "The journey, if it had done nothing else, had reinforced a sense of disappointment with what man had made out of the primitive, what he had made out of childhood" (p. 224).

The journey to West Africa was vital for Greene. He writes in several of his essays of artists who, as he puts it, "reach the bedrock," who dig to the core of their existence, and by so doing gain the self-knowledge needed to create important art. Greene reached bedrock in Liberia. Journey Without Maps is filled with epiphanic moments—the unexpected happiness at the rest-house, the comforting familiarity of the bush-devil's dance, the surprising discovery that life was preferable to death—in which he seems for the first time to consciously recognize the nature of his obsessions. He recognized the deep attraction that purity and innocence had for him, if those words can be stripped (as Greene tries to do) of their virtuous connotations.

The novels that follow Journey Without Maps show the influence of Greene's African experience. Brighton Rock in particular is, in part, about purity and innocence. In both Brighton Rock and A Gun For Sale the supernatural world is an
integral part of everyday life, not tacked on as in the previous novels. Both works have adolescents for protagonists (Greene has called Raven "a Pinkie who has aged but not grown up"\textsuperscript{12}) and stress the importance of childhood in determining the course of one's life. Both have settings most easily described by a word Greene has made his trademark: "seedy." His interest in the seedy has the same source as his interest in childhood; the "deep appeal" of the seedy, he says, comes from its being "nearer the beginning . . . its building has begun wrong, but at least it has only begun" (p. 249). The worlds of Nottwich and Brighton are the nearest equivalent to the Liberian interior that Europe can provide. They have affinities with Monrovia and the coast, which, though corrupt, are yet only a short distance from the "central darkness," the elemental beginnings.

The supernatural world intrudes much more forcefully in the novels following \textit{Journey Without Maps}. Greene is careful never to dismiss the bush devils or the witch at the cupboard door as merely fantasies. The reality of supernatural evil and supernatural good is never questioned by Pinkie. The supernatural world is as real as the physical in these books, and as important. Justice, mercy, love, companionship—all these themes are at the heart of \textit{A Gun For Sale} and \textit{Brighton Rock}, just as they were in \textit{It's a Battlefield} and \textit{England Made Me}. But in the later novels they take on an added significance, as they are considered not only but human standards but by divine ones. The world of \textit{It's a Battlefield} is horizontal, symbolized by Kinglake's vast flat battleground sharply defined by the earth below and the fog above. The boundaries of Pinkie's Brighton are just the opposite—with the sea on one side and Nelson Place on the other, the world of this novel is rigidly vertical, extending from Heaven to Hell.
IV

Our interest's on the dangerous edge of things.
The honest thief, the tender murderer,
The superstitious athiest, demi-rep
That loves and saves her soul in new French books—
We watch while these in equilibrium keep
The giddy line midway.
   --Robert Browning, "Bishop Blougram's Apology"

A Gun For Sale in many ways has the feel of being a warm-up for Brighton Rock. Particularly in its protagonist, Raven, whom Greene later called "a first sketch for Pinkie," the earlier book anticipates the later, blocking out in rough form many of its major themes. A Gun For Sale is one of the books Greene labelled "entertainments" to distinguish them from what he considered his more serious work. The difference between novel and entertainment is primarily one of emphasis: the ingredients are the same in each, but they are combined in different proportions. Character development is not as important in A Gun For Sale; one is carried along instead by the twistings and turnings of the thriller plot. One can see the makings of Pinkie in Raven, but the portrait is incomplete. Similarly, religious themes are present in A Gun For Sale, but they are buried beneath the fast-paced action of the story. Brighton Rock began too as an entertainment, but all that remains of the detective story Greene says he intended to write is the opening sequence, in which Hale is murdered under Brighton Pier by Pinkie's gang. The detective story quickly diminishes in importance after that, providing only the scaffolding upon which Greene hangs his speculations on mercy and damnation. The proportions are changed, with metaphysics dominating plot, though the underlying form of the thriller is the source of much of the novel's atmosphere.

Greene found the thriller form congenial. He had turned to it first out of necessity in 1931, after three unsuccessful historical novels had left him in debt, and the result--Stamboul Train--was his only work prior to Brighton Rock to turn a profit. The thriller provided Greene with a set of conventions
that suited his outlook well. Unlike the drawing-room or "puzzle" mysteries of the period, the thriller was anything but genteel or precise. Michiko Kakutani writes that the puzzle mystery "reinforced the belief that society is orderly. . . . Justice prevails in these stories, the way it does in a morality play; and reason, too, is triumphant. It is taken for granted that the detective can solve the mystery and translate his knowledge into socially efficacious action."¹⁴

As practiced by writers like Greene, the thriller is a much messier affair. In that, it more accurately reflects the era. Greene writes in his autobiography that he is surprised when readers ask why he sometimes writes thrillers, "as though a writer chooses his subject rather than the subject choosing him."¹⁵ The thriller was the best form for capturing the feel of the modern world, a world marked by mystery and violence, but of a kind wholly different from that in a "traditional" detective story.

A Gun For Sale and Brighton Rock each begins with a murder and ends with the murderer's death; in between, the murderer is hunted down by the representatives of justice. The outline is thus the same as a detective story. Both in both books the initial murder is not viewed as an isolated act, a departure from the norm, but as representative of the norm. Violence is the rule rather than the exception. It pervades the atmosphere of both books; in A Gun For Sale it is symbolized by the seemingly unavoidable world war that hangs over the action. Evil is not an act but a situation. It is not disposed of when the murderer is disposed of. Order is not restored when the crime is solved. Rather, the particular crime, the particular evil, seems only to represent a larger evil that cannot be confined to any one place. Evil is no longer a temporary mystery, to be eventually uncovered and banished, but a permanent mystery whose essence can only be hinted at indirectly. It is part of the human condition, so intertwined with its fabric that to pull it out would be to unravel the whole.
In thrillers there is a sense of uneasiness, of untidiness. Its elements—violence, pursuit, betrayal, treachery—bespeak fear and uncertainty. It is difficult to know who to trust, difficult to know, in fact, who the villain really is. Characters are often an unsettling combination of good and evil qualities; detectives and murderers, hunters and hunted, begin to develop a disquieting similarity to one another. In some cases the actual perpetrator of an evil act is only the agent of other, more impersonal forces. It can be a government, as in Greene's The Confidential Agent (1939), or an extremely powerful individual, as in A Gun For Sale. Justice then becomes more ambiguous: who is responsible? who is to be punished? who is capable of judging? The representatives of justice can bring about justice only on the most narrow scale; the larger evils are beyond their power to deal with.

Thrillers depict a world on the edge of chaos; small-scale guerrilla attacks can be made on pockets of evil, but the increasingly fragmented and disorderly nature of the world prevents these from having any lasting effect. The good thriller writer, far from producing merely escapist fiction, becomes more of a social realist: this is the way the world is, he says.

It is precisely the type of world that Greene tries, with partial success, to show in It's a Battlefield and England Made Me. But social criticism alone is inadequate to account for all the violence, suffering, and injustice that occurs in these novels. The thriller provided Greene with a form through which he could better express his sense of evil in the world. If, as he believed, the world had entered a "fogbelt of melodrama," then the thriller fit the times perfectly. It became an important example of what Samuel Hynes calls the "parable-art" of the 1930s.

Hynes in his study, The Auden Generation, quotes Auden's dictum that "there are two kinds of art, escape-art, for man needs escape as he needs food or deep sleep, and parable-art, that art which shall teach men to unlearn hatred and learn
love." Parable-art, says Auden, "consists of particular stories of particular people and experience, from which each according to his immediate and peculiar needs may draw his own conclusions." Parables teach without being didactic. They contain stories with a central moral meaning that is nowhere explicitly stated. Hynes likens them to myths, which "render the feeling of human issues." Many of Greene's works of the 1930s, says Hynes, are examples of parable-art, though Greene habitually clothes them in more conventional narrative forms. It's a Battlefield and Journey Without Maps are both parables, the former disguised as a social document, the latter as a travel book. But neither form suited Greene's temperament so well as the thriller.

In considering A Gun For Sale and Brighton Rock, it is well to remember Greene's distinction between them. A Gun For Sale, though it has much in it that is serious, will not bear the same critical scrutiny that Brighton Rock will. The distinction between novel and entertainment is not entirely an arbitrary one. Entertainments are intended to please a wider audience; usually, according to Greene, they were written quickly and with the primary goal of making some money.

With that said, there is much of interest in A Gun For Sale. The book's protagonist, Raven, is a watered-down version of Pinkie. He is another of Greene's outsiders, men who have been betrayed by their birth, their looks, their position, or by family and friends, and are therefore cut off from society. Raven qualifies on all counts. His memories of childhood are all violent. "He had been made by hatred," we are told, and he has spent his life trying to get even with the world for making him in that way. Like the characters in It's a Battlefield, he feels betrayed by circumstances, a victim of forces outside his control. But Raven's response is different. For all he has suffered, someone has got to pay. This is "justice" at its simplest level, the kind of justice most often found in children, according to Greene:
They [Pinkie and Raven] have something of the fallen angel about them, a morality which once belonged to another place. The outlaw of justice always keeps in his heart the sense of justice outraged—his crimes have an excuse and yet he is pursued by the Others. The Others have committed worse crimes and flourish. . . . Whatever crime he may be driven to commit, the child who doesn't grow up remains the great champion of justice: "An eye for an eye." "Give them a dose of their own medicine." As children we have all suffered punishments for faults we have not committed, but the wound has soon healed. With Raven and Pinkie the wound never heals.19

Why Raven should be, in some way, morally superior to the Others is not made explicit. But Greene's reaction to the native culture he encountered in Africa suggests an answer. Africa's attraction lay primarily in it simplicity. Emotions, responses, attitudes, relationships were all reduced to their most basic and uncomplicated level. Nothing was hidden, nothing unknown. Greene wrote later, in The Heart of the Matter, that Africa was where "human nature hadn't had time to disguise itself," where "the injustices, the cruelties, the meanness that elsewhere people so cleverly hushed up" were still unashamedly in the open.20 Greene, as he showed in Africa, is never so happy as when the very worst is known. An evil hidden is infinitely worse than the same evil undisguised. At one particularly low point in Liberia, Greene again discovered that he felt happy:

I was curiously happy and careless and relieved. One couldn't, I felt sure, get lower than Dougobmai. I had been afraid of the primitive, had wanted it broken gently, but here it came on us in a breath, as we stumbled up through the dung and the cramped and stinking huts to our lampless sleeping place among the rats. It was the worst one need fear, and it was bearable because it was inescapable.

(pp. 126-127)
This need to know the worst is quite similar to Kate and Anthony's longing for the "deep comfort of no pretence." When one reaches the bottom and all is known, there is nothing left to fear. There is no possibility of betrayal, treachery, disappointment, because no expectations are left. It is only at this point, Greene contends, that one can love men as God loves them, knowing the worst.

Logically or not, Greene attaches great importance to those characters who possess this openness or purity. They have not learned to dissemble, to evade, to cover up. Characters like Raven are Greene's version of innocents, and innocents are always to be pitied for their fate at the hands of the corrupt, the Others. It is an idiosyncracy of Greene's that his innocents are always the outlaws. They stand outside society, with its deceptions and betrayals, its jaded evil. Yet they are also products of that society, which must bear some responsibility for making them what they are. It is Greene's comment on the state of the modern world that the only purity it can generate is perverted, made into evil. Both Pinkie, the "spoiled choir-boy," and Raven had the potential to be good; for them, like the fallen angels they are compared to, there is no middle ground between good and evil. But, again, in Greene's view they are as much to be pitied for their fall as condemned, for they bear only partial responsibility.

In *A Gun For Sale*, we see the world through Raven's eyes and unavoidably develop sympathy for his situation. Raven is involved in a personal quest for justice and companionship, those two elusive ideals. He has come to expect injustice from society, but he is first astonished and then enraged when he is double-crossed by Cholmondeley and then by Dr. Yogel. Raven, the innocent, has a keen sense of honor. "I don't go back on a fellow who treats me right," he tells Dr. Yogel (p. 28). When Dr. Yogel tries to turn him in to the police for the reward money, Raven has "a sense of injustice stammering on the tongue. These people were of his own kind; they didn't
belong inside the legal borders; for the second time he had been betrayed by the lawless" (p. 29).

Raven becomes both hunter and hunted. He is pursued by the representatives of legal "justice"—who are after him for the wrong crime—while at the same time he becomes an instrument for a different kind of justice. Cholmondeley and Sir Marcus are symbols for Raven of all he has suffered in his life, but they are also symbols of something different for the reader. They come to represent the jaded evil of the modern world. They represent the poverty of spirit, the meanness of heart, which has brought civilization to the edge of destruction in the form of world war. They are the most visible symbols of that evil which pervades the novel. They are the Others, who commit worse crimes than Raven and flourish. Sir Marcus, with his malicious acquisitiveness, and Cholmondeley, with his self-indulgent cruelty, are the real villains in the story—Greene has not the sympathy for them that he has for Raven. We are given no excuses for their crimes.

As Raven nears his prey, he begins to feel that he is no longer acting only for himself: "There was a kind of light-heartedness now about his malice and hatred he had never known before; he had lost his sourness and bitterness; he was less personal in his revenge. It was almost as if he were acting for someone else" (p. 149). He believes he is acting for Anne, of course, who has also suffered at Cholmondeley's hands, but there is a sense that Raven is the unwitting instrument of social justice, too. He succeeds where the social institutions of justice failed, by punishing those who most deserve it. It is interesting, first, that Raven accomplishes this with no higher motive than personal revenge; and, second, that this kind of primitive justice—an eye for an eye—is seen as the only effective justice.

But what Greene gives with one hand, he takes back with the other. Raven's triumph is brief. He has not, even unwittingly, restored permanent order. Evil is ever fertile and never banished for long. There are always those to take Cholmondeley's
place: "they were turned out of a mold, and you couldn't break the mold" (p. 176). War has been averted, but only for the moment. In the book's final chapter, life returns to its normal state after the temporary disruption caused by Raven. Nothing essential has been changed. The lives of Major Caulkin, Ruby, Acky, and Saunders quickly resume their former patterns. Even Anne has begun to forget Raven by the book's final paragraph. His act is robbed of lasting significance.

Raven is robbed, too, of the personal satisfaction he had expected in revenging himself on Cholmondeley. He is made a victim one final time by his last-minute discovery that Anne has betrayed him. In the end, his desire for companionship has been thwarted, making his quest for justice unimportant to him. His relationship to Anne is an interesting one, more like that of mother and child than anything else. His longing for her approval and acceptance is conspicuously non-sexual, his hare-lip being a convenient excuse for making a physical attraction between them unlikely. Instead, Raven is allowed to love without the confusion and corruption that, for Greene, always attend sexual desire. Indeed, Raven seems to be trying to find someone to take the place of his mother. For Raven, her betrayal, her abandonment of him through suicide, is the unforgivable act: "he'd never been able to equal that ugliness" (p. 101). Anne is presumably the first woman, and the first person from inside the legal borders, whom he feels he can trust.

Where betrayal occurs in Greene's novels, all other considerations diminish in significance. Attention is directed exclusively at the betrayal. It is useless to argue that Anne has perfectly justifiable reasons for turning Raven in. The important fact is that she gives her word, and then breaks it. What is being betrayed is the idea of companionship. Raven has spent his life in isolation; he could "never realize other people," we are told (p. 33), could never, in other words, develop that vital, intimate relationship with another person in which all is shared. It is what Raven longs for, what he
wants from Anne: to be able to lay himself open entirely, to let someone know the worst. He likens the process to a religious confession or to psychoanalysis, a way of relieving the burden of one's past. Raven's "light-heartedness" at the door of Midland Steel is due to his feeling that he is no longer alone in the world. When he finds he has been betrayed once again, he gives up:

He couldn't work up any sourness, any bitterness, at his betrayal. . . . He had been marked from 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. How could he have expected to have escaped the commonest betrayal of all: to go soft on a skirt?

(p. 169)

Betrayal is central to Greene's vision of the world; it stands for a basic flaw in human nature. The list of betrayals in his work is a long one, and behind them all is the archetypal betrayal: that of Christ by Judas. This connection is suggested in *A Gun For Sale*. The action of the book takes place under the shadow of Christmas. For Raven, the easy and false sentiment of the season is a reminder of what lay in store for the child, "the double-crossing Judas and only one man to draw a knife on his side when the Roman soldiers came for him in the garden" (p. 89). Raven feels a "horrified tenderness" for him, because "he knew what the child was in for."

The story of Christ ends for Raven with the Crucifixion; he believes only in the betrayal and suffering. The rest is a fiction, concocted by men so "they didn't have to consider themselves responsible for the raw deal they'd given him" (p. 89). Raven clearly identifies himself with Christ. Christ's life becomes a pattern for the lives of all society's outcasts. Raven derives no comfort from this, only a bitter resentment
and a renewed sense of the world's injustice. But by reenacting, in modern terms, the suffering of Christ, Raven is emphasizing what Greene sees as an enduring fact about the nature of the world: that innocence and purity are doomed always to be betrayed. Innocence can be betrayed either by being corrupted into experience, as when a child becomes an adult; or, as in Raven's case (for Greene sees Raven as being a child), by being beaten down and destroyed by the corrupt Others.

The process also serves to enoble Raven. By identifying him with Christ in this way, Greene forces us to consider Raven in a new light, to judge him by different criteria. The world of the novel opens up to include a religious dimension not present in his earlier work. While he does not press the point as he does in Brighton Rock, Greene is suggesting that Raven's story is of more than passing importance, because he has an immortal soul to save or lose. In an essay on Francois Mauriac, Greene wrote:

> With the death of James the religious sense was lost to the English novel, and with the religious sense went the sense of the importance of the human act. . . . Even in the most materialistic of our great novelists—in Trollope—we are aware of another world against which the actions of the characters are thrown into relief.²¹

He adds that "particular acts are less important than the force, either God or Devil, that compels them." It is this force, the supernatural world working in the world of men, that is first apparent in A Gun For Sale. The supernatural is more immediate here; when Raven feels "as if he were acting for someone else," a plausible interpretation is that he is an instrument of divine justice. Earlier in the same passage, we learn that Raven has "a kind of blind faith . . . in poetic justice" (p. 149); in other words, he believes in a higher and more satisfying, a more "just" justice, than human justice. We have seen throughout Greene's work the "arbitrariness and
incomprehensibility" of human justice. In the end, it is not the representatives of that justice who set things straight (if only temporarily), but Raven.

There is a further hint that the supernatural world is working through Raven. Throughout the last part of the book, he is disguised in a gas-mask that strongly suggests the masks worn by the Liberian bush devils. Much of the devil's power lay in the mask itself; he became a conduit only while he wore the mask. The same transformation symbolically occurs when Raven steals the gas-mask during a mock air-raid. He is changed from being helpless, unable to penetrate the offices of Midland Steel, to being powerful, able to exact vengeance on Cholmondeley and Sir Marcus. (The reverse, incidentally, happens to Buddy Fergusson when he is stripped of the mask.) The mask is the key; while Raven wears it, he is in complete control of all that happens. It is then that he feels he is not acting for himself alone. When he discovers Anne's betrayal, he finds he "couldn't see clearly enough through the mask" any more (p. 169), and he wearily takes it off, shortly before he is shot.

Greene doesn't insist on the religious implications of Raven's story, but their presence is felt. By considering his characters as divine beings, with souls to save or lose, Greene knew he was moving against the current of twentieth-century literature. Writers of his generation, whose world had been defined for them by The Waste Land, struggled to find beliefs to replace those that had been lost. There was no place in the meaningless, chaotic world they saw around them for Heaven or Hell. Greene saw the same world they did--a civilization still not recovered from one world catastrophe yet lurching toward a second--but he interpreted it differently. He never used his religion as a retreat from life; instead, he saw Catholicism as possessing the only reasonable interpretation of the visible world. Instead of regarding the violence and suffering of the '30s as evidence that there was no order, no meaning, in the world, Greene saw it as proof that the earth
was a vast supernatural battleground where the opposing forces of good and evil fought.

His religion, Greene says, was a mirror of his experience: experience taught him to believe in the reality of a supernatural world. Catholicism appealed to him because it was the only system of belief that posited a Hell as real as the one he saw around him every day. Greene converted to Catholicism only as an adult. Contrary to most conversions, which are primarily emotional, Greene's was rational: "At that time, I had not been emotionally moved, but only intellectually convinced." Catholicism explained for him in rational terms what he had felt instinctively before. "Of course it's true," Pinkie says. "What else could there be? Why, it's the only thing that fits." Far from being an emotional refuge in Greene's work, religion is a confirmation, an acknowledgment, that the world is an evil place.

Because he does not share Pinkie's belief in damnation, Raven can imagine peace in the form of oblivion after death. For him, the suffering ends with this life. Pinkie has no such comfort. He understands the significance his acts possess and has no doubt that they damn him. Raven is primarily a victim; in the end, we can only feel sorry for him. Our response to Pinkie must be more complex. He has an awareness of evil as profound as his author's. Evil is not merely inflicted on him; he chooses evil in full knowledge of its consequences. His complicity in his own fate is great.

V

They say miracles are past, and we have our philosophical persons, to make modern and familiar, things supernatural and causeless. Hence it is that we make trifles of terrors, ensconsing ourselves in seeming knowledge, when we should submit ourselves to an unknown fear.

—*All's Well That Ends Well* (II.iii.1-6)

In *Brighton Rock*, the supernatural world is as evident as the natural. The two worlds are set side by side, and the novel's action begins at the point where they are brought into uneasy
contact. This dichotomy is expressed in the opening chapter through the juxtaposition of the sunny Brighton beach resort—"the early summer sun, the cool Whitsun wind off the sea, the holiday crowd" (p. 5)—and the dark underworld of the race-track gangs. Where the two worlds intersect is Hale, the shabby journalist, who is dragged into the darkness under Brighton Pier and murdered. The two Brightons of sun and darkness reflect a further relation between two distinct and opposing systems of thought, between two levels of reality, in the novel. One the one side is the ethical world of right and wrong, on the other the theological world of good and evil. In completely separating the two worlds and depicting them as largely incompatible, Greene has reached the logical conclusion of a process evident as early as It's a Battlefield. In that novel, there is the strong suggestion that the idea of right, as embodied by the Assistant Commissioner, has little to do with the idea of good. The Assistant Commissioner's "right" actions, in fact, often lead to evil results. In A Gun For Sale, Mather and Saunders are concerned only with questions of right and wrong, while Anne and Raven (and Greene) are interested in questions of good and evil. The two groups work at cross-purposes throughout the book.

This distinction between good-and-evil and right-and-wrong is at the heart of Brighton Rock. It is suggested even in the conflicting narrative forms that Greene uses in the novel: what began, in his words, as "a simple detective story," became, as R. W. B. Lewis says, "a mystery story in a more ancient and theological sense." The detective story is Ida's, the religious drama Pinkie's. There is a tension between the two narratives that reflects the tension between differing views of reality. Ida reduces events to their simplest level; by insisting that all actions can be judged strictly in terms of right and wrong, she tries to make the world conform to the rules of a puzzle mystery. Pinkie's world, the world of good and evil, is more ambiguous. While Ida struggles with the "mystery" of Hale's death (which is no mystery to the
reader, who knows from the start that Pinkie has murdered him), Pinkie and Rose are involved in mysteries of a different kind, the theological mysteries of mercy, damnation, salvation, and sin, mysteries that Ida cannot imagine. The simple and insignificant mysteries of the detective story give way to the more profound questions of the religious drama.

Pinkie's capacity for damnation sets him apart from the other characters in the novel. The supernatural world is immediate and vivid for him; he retains that intense spiritual awareness that Greene remembered from his own childhood and which he found among the Liberian natives. Pinkie attaches himself to supernatural evil—"Credo in unum Satanum," he says—because it is more real to him. He has seen convincing evidence of its existence every day of his life, beginning in Nelson Place: "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 it had never experienced" (p. 228).

Greene's treatment of Pinkie differs significantly from his treatment of earlier anti-heroes. The difference lies primarily in his refusal to soften Pinkie's character. He ruthlessly blocks every avenue by which we might come to feel sorry for him. All the devices Greene used to develop sympathy for Raven are suppressed in his portrait of Pinkie. Raven is allowed to become human. He has a code of honor; he shows loyalty to those, like Anne, who have been compassionate toward him; he has a keen if somewhat simplistic notion of justice; and, above all, he is allowed to love. In Greene's fiction, those who love, suffer; but those who cannot love are damned. Raven suffers for his love, but at least he loves. In the end, Greene makes it too easy for us with Raven. He is a little sentimentalized. "The honest thief, the tender murderer"—these lines from Browning, so much admired by Greene, have a somewhat precious ring; they seem more a part of literary tradition than real life.\(^{25}\)

About Pinkie, though, there is nothing sympathetic. He
is less a victim than a perpetrator of evil. Pinkie is not a lapsed Catholic but one in active revolt. He accepts the world as being a supernatural battleground between good and evil, but he consciously casts his allegiance with the forces of evil. He is brutal, heartless, devoid of any of Raven's softening characteristics. Greene deliberately squelches any pity we might feel for his protagonist; the ending in particular, with Rose heading toward "the worst horror of all," seems designed solely to provoke revulsion toward Pinkie.

Pinkie in a sense already inhabits his own hell. The horrifying poverty of Nelson Place, and within that Paradise Piece, is the physical counterpart to Pinkie's spiritual state. If the world is a battlefield, this is the front line:

There he was, on the top of the hill, in the thick of the bombardment—a flapping gutter, cracked windows, an iron bedstead in a front garden the size of a tabletop. Half Paradise Piece had been torn up as if by bomb bursts; the children played about the steep slope of rubble; . . . a municipal notice announced new flats on a post stuck in the torn gravel and asphalt facing the little dingy damaged row.

(p. 141)

Nelson Place is the breeding ground for extreme evil such as Pinkie's, but it is also, paradoxically, the home of extreme good, as we see in Rose. Good and evil understand each other in Brighton Rock. They are on opposing sides, but they are fighting the same war. When Pinkie and Rose return to Nelson Place, Pinkie realized that "the world never moved; it lay there always, the ravaged and disputed territory between two eternities. They faced each other as it were from opposing territories, but like troops at Christmas time they fraternized" (p. 135).

The implication here is again that good and evil are closely connected, that one has meaning only in relation to
the other. Pinkie's words to Rose during their first meeting—
"You an' me have things in common" (p. 28)—take on added
meaning as it becomes clear that they do, in fact, have more
in common with each other than with the inhabitants of Ida
Arnold's world: "She was something which completed him. . . .
What was most evil in him needed her: it couldn't get along
without goodness" (p. 126). This connection between good and
evil is first suggested in A Gun For Sale by the identical
backgrounds of Raven and the minister he murders. Both had
criminal-fathers and suicide-mothers and both had grown up
in "homes." The same situation occurs in Brighton Rock; in
the same soil both good and evil can be nurtured, because their
elements are much the same.

Greene is more strongly attuned to the workings of evil
than to those of good. The act of faith for him is believing
in supernatural good, which often in his books is like an
unseen planet whose existence is known only through its
gravitational pull on other planets. He comes to a belief in
goodness, in Heaven, in God, primarily through his insistence
on their seeming opposites. To refer again to A Gun For Sale,
Raven is at one point compared to "the darkness pressing
round the little lighted crib" of a Christmas manger scene
(p. 155). The light in the crib, the light of Christ, is made
brighter by the intense darkness around it. Light and dark
are degrees along the same continuum; they are defined only
in relation to one another. In the same way good and evil are
inextricably linked. They complete one another, as Pinkie finds.
By ruthlessly suppressing every element of good in Pinkie,
Greene is in a sense making the darkness even darker, so that
the light is brighter in comparison. Good and evil are
necessary counterparts. One could not exist without the other.

Greene also suggests that Pinkie can be thoroughly evil
only because he has the capacity to be thoroughly good. The
words of the old priest to Rose, "Corruptio optimi est pessima"--
the worst is the corruption of the best--point to another
seeming paradox in the novel; that is, that only those with
the wonderful potential to be saints can be such unrepentant sinners. Characters like Pinkie do in fact live "on the dangerous edge of things," teetering between the heights and the depths. There is no middle ground. Pinkie himself was at one time tempted to virtue and nearly, he tells Dallow, became a priest. He is an ascetic; he doesn't smoke or drink, doesn't eat chocolate, doesn't, despite his profession, gamble, and he abstains from sexual intercourse. His intense spirituality makes him a kind of perverted priest; Lewis points out that there are parodies in Brighton Rock of nearly all the sacraments.26 By giving Pinkie and Rose similar backgrounds, and by suggesting that Pinkie could as easily have been a priest as not, Greene is stressing the dual nature of man, a being he sees as having the potential to be both Christ and Satan.27

This characterization of Pinkie, while it does not make him attractive, does lend him a kind of dignity. Greene is fond of quoting Eliot's essay on Baudelaire:

So far as we are human, what we do must be either evil or good . . . and it is better, in a paradoxical way, to do evil than to do nothing: at least, we exist. It is true to say that the glory of man is his capacity for salvation; it is also true to say that his glory is his capacity for damnation. The worst that can be said of most of our malefactors, from statesmen to thieves, is that they are not men enough to be damned.28

Pinkie, as Greene strenuously asserts in Brighton Rock, is worthy of our consideration because he is closer to God than anyone but the saints. As the priest tells Rose, "A Catholic is more capable of evil than anyone. I think perhaps--because we believe in Him--we are more in touch with the devil than other people" (p. 246). The underlying message is that Pinkie is in some way more important (not better) than non-Catholics such as Ida. This attitude is apparent throughout the book. Greene may be horrified by Pinkie, who is a monster, but he has only scorn for Ida, who is not in his eyes "blessed" with a capacity
for damnation. His attitude is the same as Rose's when she says with contempt: "Oh, she won't burn. She couldn't burn if she tried" (p. 113). This badge of distinction—the ability to damn oneself—is denied to "ignorant" (as Rose says) souls such as Ida's.

Ida is firmly anchored in this world. Her connection with the supernatural world extends only to seances and ouija boards: "She wasn't religious. She didn't believe in Heaven or Hell. . . . Let Papists treat death with flippancy: life wasn't so important perhaps to them as what came after: but to her death was the end of everything" (p. 36). Ida, "a sticker where right's concerned," is on the side of justice. Her set of values is firmly opposed to that of Rose and Pinkie. Her favorite saying, "It's a bit of life," has a terribly ironic ring in the context of Greene's fiction. Life for him always means suffering and guilt and betrayal. Ida, so steadfastly on the side of "life," causes her share of suffering in its name. She is determined to see justice done, but we have seen throughout Greene's work what an elusive thing human justice is. The world of right and wrong, of human justice, is controlled by men like Colleoni, who looks "as a man might look who owned the whole world, the whole visible world that is, the cash registers and policemen and prostitutes, Parliament and the laws which say 'this is Right and this is Wrong'" (p. 65).

Ida comes to stand for the "empty sinless graceless chromium world" that Greene so deplored in Journey Without Maps. If she is incapable of doing sufficient evil to make her way to Hell, she is also devoid of the grace necessary to reach Heaven. She is identified with "the great middle law-abiding class" (p. 80), whose minor sins—the harmless promiscuity, the occasional drunkenness, the petty viciousness and cruelty and thievery—are seen as contemptible by Greene. They are examples of jaded evil, and they contrast sharply with the "purer" evil of the ascetic Pinkie.

Ida's carnality is particularly emphasized. Again, adult sexuality is seen as distasteful at best and at worst repulsive.
Ida dismisses her promiscuity with the excuse that it is "only human nature"—a bit of fun now and then that has nothing to do with right and wrong. But any temptation to find this attitude attractive dies in the particulars of Ida's sex life. The men she attracts—Tom, Hale, "the old ghost" Clarence, Phil Corkery—are uniformly weak, unappealing types who lack any hint of potency. Her one night with Phil (with Phil's eyes turning "yellow with the sexual effort") leaves Ida disappointed and unfulfilled. The act never matches the excitement of anticipation. Moreover, despite her apparently healthy sexuality, Ida is childless, perhaps sterile, while Rose conceives after only one night with Pinkie.

Minty's spirit still hangs over this novel. Sex is never a loving act, never a confirmation of intimacy. Ida, despite her heartiness and her vast reservoir of popular emotions, is unable to truly love. Sex is merely physical, merely selfish. In this sense, Ida follows such characters as Kay Rimmer and Loo Davidge in Greene's work. Both Kay and Loo are set up briefly as alternatives to the heroines in their respective novels—Kay to her sister Milly and Loo to Kate Farrant—but neither is allowed to become more than an object of ridicule. Physical satisfaction and emotional companionship seldom come together; characters like Ida, who are merely sensual, do not have the capacity to feel companionship. Ida is unable to understand another person on anything but the most superficial level, as she shows in her dealings with Rose. Greene speaks of Ida's "merciless compassion," which in the end puts Rose back in Nelson Place.

If Ida's character is defined largely in terms of her sexuality, Pinkie's is defined just as much by his utter aversion to the idea of sex. Pinkie is aware of the sham of equating sex with love. His knowledge of others' experiences—his parent's weekly exercise ("bouncing and ploughing"), Annie Collins's suicide, Dallow's adultery with Judy—convinces him that the two have little in common. "The Boy laughed at the fine words people gave to a dirty act: love, beauty . . . you couldn't
deceive him with lovely words, there was nothing to be excited about, no gain to recompense you for what you lost" (p. 92). The strong attraction/repulsion he feels for Rose is due to the horror he has at the possibility of being forced into sexual relations with her. For Pinkie, it is the ultimate horror, the ultimate degradation. One can believe that Pinkie could perhaps have been saved by Rose's love had he not felt compelled to sleep with her. Love, instead of being equated with sex, is again equated with the idea of companionship. Good and evil in the form of Pinkie and Rose develop a bond much the same as that between Kate and Anthony Farrant. There is an intimacy between them that Ida cannot understand. Rose and Pinkie know and thoroughly understand one another: "Good and evil lived in the same country, spoke the same language, came together like old friends, touching hands beside the iron bedstead" (p. 127).

Ida's sexuality is also a sign of her experience. Pinkie bitterly resents being thought of as too inexperienced, too young to lead a gang. "Experience" in his mind is tied to the idea of depravity, to sexual intercourse and drunkenness: brandy lay "like the stain of the world in his stomach" (p. 230). He is particularly galled by the belief that he will not be considered a man until he learns "the game," sex. He clings to a kind of perverted innocence, an innocence that hates what it doesn't know. Spiritual awareness is coupled in Pinkie's case by a scorn for the things of this world.

Pinkie's fury at being thought inexperienced is due mostly to his great pride. Pride, Lucifer's sin, is a quality Pinkie has in abundance. Greene wrote of evil that is was "to be distinguished from good chiefly in the complete egotism of its outlook." Indeed, his pride is the thing which most distinguishes Pinkie from Rose. It contrasts sharply with her selflessness. Pinkie is locked within himself, unable to sympathize with other human beings. He is capable of thinking only of himself. He is like Raven in this way—or at least Raven as he appears at the beginning of A Gun For Sale, when
he "couldn't realize other people." Raven learns to sympathize with Anne; her compassion awakens a dormant emotion in him, and he tries to understand her, which is the first and largest step in learning to love. "It's good not to be alone," he says.

Pinkie, however, is fiercely determined to remain alone. He takes pride in his egotism and in his scorn for all other people. Pinkie does not even dream, which is extremely unusual for one of Greene's characters (Raven dreams several times); it seems to emphasize his isolation, even from his own subconscious. This isolation is shaken by Rose, however, with whom Pinkie begins to feel the first faint stirrings of companionship. He struggles against it, but for the first time "other people's feelings bored at his brain" (p. 202). "The conception of another life" leaves Pinkie shaken, disturbs the comfort of his egotism. His determination to kill Rose comes from a fear of the companionship that has grown between them, not from a fear that she might betray him. His isolation, the habit of a lifetime, becomes something Pinkie cherishes. After Rose is gone, he thinks, there would be "no more human contacts, other people's emotions washing at the brain--he would be free again; nothing to think about but himself. Myself: the word echoed hygienically" (p. 231).

Pride leads Pinkie to reject emotional intimacy by rejecting Rose's love. This parallels his equally important rejection of the possibility of repentance. As evil as Pinkie is, he is never cut off from the chance of mercy. "Between the stirrup and the ground" is a refrain that runs throughout the novel; in that instant of contrition, God's mercy can be won. Yet Pinkie obstinately refuses to repent. At each moment that it seems possible--in the shed after being slashed by Colleoni's men, in the theater after the wedding, in the car on the way to his death--Pinkie retreats within himself. He takes a painful satisfaction in damning himself, knowing the while the consequences of his actions. Hell is real to him, an infinity of pain lies ahead, but Pinkie in the end is too proud to ask forgiveness. His refusal becomes one more way by which Greene prevents our pitying him. Instead of being tempted to sin, Pinkie,
the perverted priest, is tempted throughout by virtue. Unlike Conrad Drover, who felt he had been denied a love that could have saved him, Pinkie is offered just such a love and spurns it. The love of Rose could easily lead to the love of God, but Pinkie fears such intimacy, such emotional and spiritual defenselessness. The "beast" in the following passage is a reference, perhaps, to the Hound of Heaven:

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.

(pp. 239-240)

Greene’s religious novels, beginning with Brighton Rock, are often referred to as modern equivalents of medieval mystery plays. The comparison tends to simplify Greene’s world too much, but in its basic outline Brighton Rock does resemble a mystery play. Pinkie can be made to stand for Christian man: divine, fallen, yet ultimately redeemable. The whiskey priest of Greene’s next novel, The Power and the Glory, follows the pattern of the medieval mysteries more closely, because we know he is saved in the end, but Pinkie too is meant to be a kind of Everyman. His story would lose all interest if we were unable to believe that he, like the whiskey priest or the protagonist of a morality play, is capable of being saved, of repenting between the stirrup and the ground.

It seems unlikely, though not impossible, that Pinkie repents between the cliff edge and the rocks below. Yet Rose is not left without hope. The words of the sniffing priest at the end
hint at a divine mercy infinite in capacity. Pinkie, though
determined to the last to damn himself, does not escape the
Hound of Heaven even after death. Lewis says that Brighton Rock
is "a deliberately pitiless book, and partly because it aims,
by moving beyond human pity, to evoke the far, faint light
of an incomprehensible divine mercy." Indeed, the priest's
explanation to Rose, "You can't conceive, my child, nor can I
or anyone the . . . appalling . . . strangeness of the mercy
of God" (p. 246), is meant to be the final word. Not even Pinkie
is cut off from salvation. Ida has seen that justice is done,
but it is a cold uncaring justice that sends Rose back to her
parents. The distinction between human and divine justice is
here clearly stated. Human justice is merciless, while divine
justice is tempered by, almost defined by, mercy. "The Church
does not demand that we believe any soul is cut off from
Mercy," the priest says (p. 246).

If any character in Greene's fiction is damned, it is Pinkie.
Yet Greene in the end shies away from the responsibility of
consigning his repulsive creation to the flames. For all his
insistence on the reality of Hell, he is curiously reluctant to
admit that anyone must be damned eternally. Needless to say,
his theology here, as elsewhere, is unorthodox. Perhaps his
reasoning is suspect as well. But, given the book's final chapter,
it is impossible to say for certain that Pinkie is cut off
from salvation. A similar situation occurs at the end of The
Heart of the Matter. Orthodox Catholic theology teaches that
Scobie, by his suicide, is as surely damned as Pinkie. Yet
Father Rank's words--"For goodness' sake, Mrs. Scobie, don't
imagine you--or I--know a thing about God's mercy"--again
suggest Greene's doubt about this particular dogma. "I know the
Church says," Father Rank continues. "The Church knows all the
rules. But it doesn't know what goes on in a single human
heart." Critics who are willing to give Scobie the benefit
of the doubt, to see him as another example (along with the
whiskey priest) of a "saint whose name no-one could remember,
do not apply the same standards to Pinkie's case. Yet Greene
is saying much the same thing in both instances: that none of us can, after all, truly understand the "appalling strangeness" of God's mercy.

In this sense, the final chapter of Brighton Rock provides the link with the Catholic novels that follow in Greene's canon. It is easy in Brighton Rock to forget that supernatural good can also work in the world, because we are shown so little evidence of its presence. But Brighton Rock, though it is Greene's first full-fledged treatment of the struggle between good and evil in the world, is not his last word on the subject. From the unremittingly bleak world of this novel, Greene moved toward a more balanced view in his later works. For the protagonists of these novels—the whiskey priest, Scobie, both Sarah and Bendix in The End of the Affair—God's love holds a powerful attraction, however hard it is resisted. The force of good is equal to that of evil. In Brighton Rock, good is passive (like Rose) or dormant, while evil possesses a breathtaking energy.

The evil in Pinkie's character seems finally to have its source in everything and nothing. There is a mystery at the core of Brighton Rock that has to do with the nature of evil. At times it seems that Pinkie and Rose are only pawns in a horrifying battle, lacking the free will to choose their destinies. Pinkie feels at one point that his every step is "conditioned by a pressure he couldn't even place" (p. 147). He comes to wonder whether everything that happens is inevitable, whether it is all beyond his control. Evil is in the very air he breathes, in the poverty of Nelson Place, in the nauseating opulence of the Cosmopolitan, in the shabby atmosphere of the race-track. It has a separate existence, not caused by temperament or environment yet evident in both. Pinkie firmly believes in the power of supernatural evil to influence men; so does Greene. Human beings appear at times to be merely conduits through which the supernatural world works in the world of men.

Yet the situation is more complex than that. Greene insists that Pinkie bear some responsibility for what he is. He does have the power to choose good over evil; opportunities to do
just that are strewn throughout the novel. Greene differentiates between the evil in the world, over which Pinkie has no control, and the evil of his acts, for which he is responsible. The world was an evil place before Pinkie arrived; if there is tragedy in his story, it is in his being given so little chance to start with: "An awful resentment stirred in him—why shouldn't he have had his chance like all the rest, seen his glimpse of Heaven if it was only a crack between the Brighton walls?" (p. 228).

But there is a difference between having no chance and having a small chance, and Pinkie does have his chance in the form of Rose's love. He looks at her on the car seat beside him as they drive on the cliffs and wonders if she represents that crack between the walls, but he cannot bring himself to believe it. For Pinkie's situation—Paradise Piece, the cement playground, the suffering, and the rest—Greene has enormous pity, but his situation does not absolve Pinkie of responsibility for his actions. Rose is compelling evidence that he could have chosen differently. The essential mystery of evil's existence, entwined in yet distinct from all social, psychological, or religious considerations, is finally what Brighton Rock is about, and for that mystery Greene has only tentative solutions.
Notes


10 Carolyn D. Scott, "The Urban Romance: A Study of Graham Greene's Thrillers," in Graham Greene, pp. 19ff. The argument that follows is mine; I have only borrowed her terms.

11 For two examples, see "From Feathers to Iron," in Collected Essays, pp. 63-65, and "'Sore Bones, Much Headache'," also in Collected Essays, pp. 241-246.

12 Ways of Escape, p. 75
13 Ibid., p. 75
15 Ways of Escape, p. 229.
17 Ibid.
19 Ways of Escape, p. 75.
22 Ways of Escape, p. 78.
24 Lewis, p. 51.
25 Greene says: "If I were to choose an epigraph for all the novels I have written, it would be from 'Bishop Blougram's Apology'." He then quotes the six lines beginning "Our interest's on the dangerous edge of things." See A Sort of Life (London: Bodley Head, 1971), p. 115.
26 Lewis, pp. 53-54
27 In The Power and the Glory, he carries the process a step further by depicting one character, the whiskey priest, as both sinner and saint.
28 Frank Kermode, ed., Selected Prose of T. S. Eliot


30 Greene refers to Pinkie most often as simply "the Boy," which suggests we are to see him as representing more than just an individual. It is no coincidence that in *The Confidential Agent*, which Greene began while still working on *Brighton Rock*, the hero is called only D., while in *The Power and the Glory*, written two years later, the lead characters are never named at all but referred to only as "the priest" and "the lieutenant." By denying these characters the most personal and identifying of possessions, a name, Greene is emphasizing their universality.

31 Lewis, p. 50.

32 *The Heart of the Matter*, p. 306.
Works Consulted


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