THE CONCEPT OF HUMAN NATURE IN G. GREENE’S WRITING

This MA paper is submitted in partial fulfillment of requirements for the degree of the MA in English Philology

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I declare that this study is my own and does not contain any unacknowledged work from any source.

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# CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. POST-WAR BRITISH FICTION</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 The Literary Scene</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Post-War British Novel</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. GRAHAM GREENE’S PHILOSOPHY AND AESTHETICS</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. THE COMPLEXITIES OF HUMAN EXISTENCE: <em>THE HEART OF THE MATTER</em></td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. THE MEANING OF LIFE LOST AND REGAINED: <em>A BURNT-OUT CASE</em></td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONCLUSIONS</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUMMARY</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REFERENCES</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore the concept of human nature in the writing of the British author Graham Greene and the ways it is revealed in his works. Two novels by G. Greene were subjected to analysis – *The Heart of the Matter* (1948) and *A Burnt-Out Case* (1960). The research method chosen for the study was textual analysis. The research demonstrated that according to Greene, it is impossible to draw a clear line between good and evil. The characters that seem to be failures – in comparison with what they wished and hoped to do – are seen as being nearer to God than those more successful in worldly ways and in the end the greatest sinners turn out to be the truest believers. The research also demonstrated that to reveal his vision of the human nature, Greene applied paradox mixed with severe irony and social satire. Further studies must be conducted in order to go deeper into certain aspects of the human nature in other G. Greene’s fictional works.
INTRODUCTION

For Britain, the years after the Second World War became a strange mixture of great decline and equally great changes. The war had brought destruction, chaos, the feeling of insecurity and nostalgia of a bygone age. Earlier ideologies and beliefs fell away before the Holocaust and the atom bomb. Evil became one of the problems that concerned the novelists of the post-war epoch. To dwell on this topic, some writers continued carrying on the modernist tradition of formal innovation. Others, in order to help the British to restore the lost sense of national identity, advocated a return to realism. However, there was a group of post-war novelists who already established themselves on the literary scene between the wars. Graham Greene was one of these writers. Although the majority of the survivors of the thirties found it difficult to adapt themselves to the post-war world, not only Greene avoided this fate, but continued producing works that gained great success with both critics and the readership. As a writer, he proved himself to be prolific and many-sided. Indeed, of the English novelists born since 1900 Graham Greene is perhaps the most considerable.

Greene did not claim to stand in the first rank of authors. He repeatedly claimed that a novelist should strive for objectivity and was his own best critic and an astute critic of Greeneland. Although mainly known as a novelist, Greene’s range was immense. He also produced tales, plays, poems, film-scripts, critical and political essays, autobiographical works, travel books, and biographical studies that gained critical acclaim and vast international readership. Much of his fictional work is characterized by intelligence, descriptive nerve, and deftly perceptive analyses of characters and situations. In his works he investigated the mental, emotional and spiritual depths of the human nature in a variety of situations and relationships: Greene imprints them unforgettable on the imagination; and in each case, he depicts vividly the downtrodden who suffer in a world of injustice and inequality. (Blamires, 1993, 409; Watts, 1996, 195-6)

Greene was highly praised by both his contemporaries and literary critics. The British writer and critic V. S. Pritchett stated that Greene was the first English novelist since Henry James to present, and grapple with, the reality of evil. (Kirvaitis, Šurnaitė, 1999, 247) As indicated by Cedric Watts in his book A Preface to Greene (1996, 195-6), Greene is one of the writers who offer a distinctive vision of world-view. According to Watts, combining the grippingly readable, distinctive linguistic intelligence and humane sensitivity which characterize so much of Greene’s

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1 The term was originally coined in 1940 by the critic Arthur Calder Marshall, according to whom Greeneland was characterized by seediness. Eventually, A Supplement to the Oxford English Dictionary I (1972) included the word, defining it thus: ‘A term used to describe the world of depressed seediness reputedly typical of the setting and characters of the novels of Graham Greene’. Greene himself, however, resisted the term and, according to his biographer, Norman Sherry, the term has often been overused by critics. (Chenco, 2006, 7; Watts, 1996, 142)
work should ensure that his wide and appreciative readership will endure for many years to come.

Another brilliant Catholic writer of the time Evelyn Waugh considered Greene to be “a storyteller of genius” with “the modern way of telling a story”. He compared Greene’s technical mastery to “the camera’s eye which moves (...) recording significant detail”. (accessed 9 September 2006, available from: http://members.tripod.com/~greeneland/critics.htm)

According to American writer John Updike, Greene’s novels are “as intense and penetrating and disturbing as inquisitor’s gaze” and “his masterly facility at concocting thriller plots and his (...) sensibility had come together, at a high level of intelligence and passion, with the strict terms of an inner religious debate”. (accessed 9 September 2006, available from: http://members.tripod.com/~greeneland/critics.htm)

A British author David Lodge believed that Greene’s Catholicism is rather “a system of concepts, a source of situations, and a reservoir of symbols with which he can order and dramatize certain intuitions about the nature of human experience”. Thus, it may be seen “not as a crippling burden on his artistic freedom”, but as “a positive artistic asset”. (accessed 9 September 2006, available from: http://members.tripod.com/~greeneland/critics.htm)

British essayist and author Pico Iyer regards “hazards of compassion” revealed by Greene to be the ultimate strength of his books. The most sobering lesson of Greene’s fiction is, according to Iyer, “that even God, faced with a wounded murderer, might sometimes feel himself agnostic”. (accessed 9 September 2006, available from: http://members.tripod.com/~greeneland/critics.htm)

According to the British writer and critic and Greene’s contemporary V. S. Pritchett, Greene “presents a whole and memorable human being” and “this wholeness is exceptional”. (accessed 9 September 2006, available from: http://members.tripod.com/~greeneland/critics.htm)

Some critics refer to Greene solely as a “Catholic” writer, viewing him as a representative of the Modernist trend (D. Bailey, D. Green, R. Smith). There are those according to whom Greene’s writing was influenced by the existential philosophy (D. Lodge, J. Atkins, N. A. Scott, M. B. Mesney). Also, some literary critics search for similarities in Greene’s works and the works of F. Dostoevsky (F. Kunkel, J. Madole, F. R. Karl). (Королева, 2006, 3-4)

In search of a moral centre Greene raised multiple social, philosophical and religious issues, such as sin, salvation and damnation, evil and its origins, betrayal, physical and spiritual suffering, the lost innocence of childhood, etc. But above all Greene seemed to be attracted by the mystery of human nature and its multiple and diverse manifestations in a variety of situations, settings and relationships. His probably central issue – How can a man living in a
corrupt world full of evil retain his honesty and moral integrity? – determines the problem of this research: what is human nature according to Greene? How does it reveal itself in his works?

The formulation of the problem allows to define the purpose of the research – to explore the issue of human nature in G. Greene’s works. Two novels by G. Greene were subjected to analysis – The Heart of the Matter (1948) and A Burnt-Out Case (1960). These novels have been selected due to their wide critical acclaim and deep insight into the human nature revealed in them.

To achieve the foreseen aim the following objectives were raised in the research paper:
✓ to examine G. Greene’s philosophical and aesthetic preferences, as well as provide the analysis of the general historical and literary background of the period after the Second World War, and define the ways mentioned elements influence the manifestation of the human nature in the selected novels;
✓ to provide the analysis of the selected novels;
✓ to reveal G. Greene’s concept of the human nature;
✓ to define what stylistic and contextual means were applied by G. Greene to reveal his vision of human nature in the selected novels.

The methodological and theoretical part of the research is based on the works of the authors on the history and theory of the British novel of the twentieth century (H. Blamires, R. Carter, A. Maley, J. McRae, S. Connor, J. Holloway, P. Thody, K. Kumar, M. Dodsworth, A. Gąsiorek, and others) and the authors providing the information on G. Greene’s personality, background and literary and philosophical preferences (J. Chenco, A. Purssell, H. Gordon, C. Watts, and others). The research methods chosen for the study involve textual analysis of G. Green’s novels as well as the analysis of the historical and literary background.

The research has been carried out deriving from both quantitative and qualitative perspectives, focusing on understanding of the material and searching for the relationships between the theoretical field study and the material for the practical analysis. The research procedures include collecting data that include broad historical information on the history and development of the British prose (the novel in particular) during the period after the Second World War, biographical and critical information on G. Greene and his works. The data have been drawn from both printed sources and electronic media. To make sure the data is as current, all-sided and relevant as possible, books, journals, and search in the computerized databases of the Internet were applied as well as participation in scholarly conferences, lectures and seminars connected with the subject of the research.

The basis of the research is the printed editions found in the information centers of the British Council Lithuania and Longman Pearson Education Limited Office Lithuania. These institutions
provided the major part of the literary sources on the history of British literature (e.g. *The English Novel in History: 1950-1995* by S. Connor and *A Preface to Greene* by C. Watts). The research also includes the books and literary sources found in the libraries of the Vilnius University and Vilnius Pedagogical University (e.g. *The New Pelican Guide to English Literature*). Some books were lent from the private collections (e.g. *A Sort of Life* and *Ways of Escape* by G. Greene). The minor part of the material came from the Internet (e.g. literary criticism and quotations on G. Greene were found on his official Web-site [http://members.tripod.com/~greeneland](http://members.tripod.com/~greeneland)). While carrying out the research all efforts were made to ground the paper on the printed sources rather than the electronic media. However, sometimes it was rather difficult, e.g. some books (*The Catholic Revival in English Literature, 1845-1961* by I. Ker) were available only in the Internet libraries, and only within the restricted access.

After formulating the thesis and making a draft plan, the collected research data was reduced according to the sources and examined. Then the data was analyzed, i.e. it was examined and underwent a check of its relevance to the subject of the research. After that, the relevant data was marked and re-grouped again (this time, in accordance with the draft of the plan) indicating all the necessary reference information. The final step included the final reading and reducing the final scope of material into smaller groups according to the final plan of the research.

The significance of the current research consists in its providing an opportunity to examine the problems of the human nature in G. Greene’s works. On the one hand, the research extends both the existing general knowledge on the subject; on the other, it helps to go deeper into the subject and investigate it in detail. It also allows to compare a variety of different views on the subject and draw certain conclusions. The paper contributes towards the development of the knowledge on Graham Greene and, moreover, due to its deeper insight into the central subject of Greene’s writing, the results of the research may change certain prevailing attitudes towards the writer and his works. In addition, the research may stimulate further research on the subject, which may disclose new and unexpected aspects and views.

1. POST-WAR BRITISH FICTION

1.1 THE LITERARY SCENE

According to *Kumar (1983, 15)*, although it may sound strange, one ought to be very grateful to the Second World War for it provides a convenient dividing line in the history of both Britain and the world during the twentieth century. It has been the great engine of change at the social and cultural levels. Before the Second World War, the British class system seemed more than ever firmly set in its grim contours of privilege and privation, upper-class glitter and working-
class endurance. The line was sharply drawn between the culture of the masses, based largely on the dance hall and the cinema, and that of the elite, rooted in the traditional ‘high culture’ of painting, music, drama and literature. The post-war period became a complex interrelationship of decline and transformation.

These were the years of the definitive stripping away of Empire and the loss of British power and influence in the world in political, military and economic terms. The idealism and the radicalization of the war years spilled over, with declining force, into the post-war period and British government became largely a matter of an array of consultative and supervisory bodies, moving from ‘the government of men’ to ‘the administration of things’. There were huge changes in the form of nationalization of key industries such as transport, coal and steel. The National Health Service, “national compulsory insurance for all classes for all purposes from the cradle to the grave” (Churchill, broadcast on March 2, 1943, cit. in http://mr_sedivy.tripod.com/quotes12.html, accessed 3 December 2006), and national housing programme were created as part of the new welfare state. To crown these remarkable changes, came R. A. Butler’s Education Act, which guaranteed (and made compulsory) free secondary education to everyone up to the age of fifteen. Butler’s Act has been called ‘the most impressive ever passed in the field of British education’. Indeed, it was potentially the most important gesture towards democracy made in the twentieth century. (Calder, 1971, 628-9 cit. in Kumar, 1983, 22-3)

The war had brought about one of the few significant shifts of the century in the distribution of income, by narrowing the difference between working-class and middle-class incomes. It was inevitable that the working classes should attempt to go further, just as the middle classes would fight to maintain their ‘differentials’. Similar things occurred with the relation between the sexes. Women had participated on a massive scale in the war economy and the war effort generally. After the war, following a brief (involuntary) withdrawal, women re-entered the economy in increasing numbers. ‘Equality’ became a central term in the political vocabulary of the post-war decades: although whether equality of condition, or merely of opportunity.

By contrast, although much of the old pre-war order remained remarkably stable, e.g. the monarchy helped to reinforce the message of order, hierarchy and proper attitudes, the same could not be said for the culture and values of the post-war decades. What have changed were social and cultural attitudes and behaviour: the way people regard themselves and each other. The British for the first time threw off the mantle of Victorian morality that had shrouded them up to the Second World War and beyond. Young people in particular sought a new cultural and moral independence of their elders and in search of it moved furthest towards a common culture. So too, in a more general and less complete way, have the older generations in matters of
personal consumption, family life, and moral attitudes. Dispositions of power have fundamentally shifted. Richard Hoggart\(^2\) and others in these years were proclaiming the end of the traditional working class. The continuing decline in church membership and attendance and in church baptisms and weddings indicated that the family, sex, and marriage in Britain would never be the same again. \((Kumar, 1983, 24-5; 38-45)\)

The Second World War has had as its direct effect the arrival of considerable numbers of immigrants from different regions of the Empire and, as a result, the challenge to an undisturbed sense of Britishness produced by the plurality of impinging and co-operating cultures. In cultural terms, during the years since the war Britain has seen a prodigious explosion of cultural forms and technologies, which have fundamentally readjusted the relations between art, culture and society. \((Connor, 1998, 2)\)

According to Kumar \((1983, 25)\), the war also did more than anything else in the century to stimulate ‘the nationalization of culture’. While the Royal Charter granted to the Arts Council of Great Britain\(^3\) \((1946)\) meant that government was to have a determining influence on the shape of culture, it brought the state into an active involvement with culture. In the narrower sense, it involved a dramatic increase in a state patronage (both official and semi-official) of literature and arts, which was significant throughout the period. Its motives were mixed, as were its effects, even from the war years themselves. In the broader context, however, this posed enormous questions about control and creativity, about censorship and ‘permissiveness’ and about the relationship of the centre – which in practice meant London – to the parts, the provinces and regions.

One may notice a significant shift from the modern poetry towards more public genres (e.g. the novel, the drama) and the writer’s incorporation into a wider culture. Study of prize-winning poems over the years at Cheltenham, one of the major annual festivals of the arts, shows a complex interrelation of the slight and serious. ‘Increasingly the writer is becoming a part of show business,’ wrote R. Findlater in 1953. The modernist conception of the avant-garde poet battling against society and the common language to preserve his or her individual vision gave way to an image of the storyteller using the common language to record or transcribe fictions on

\(^2\) **Richard Hoggart** (born September 24, 1918) – a British sociologist, widely known for his book *The Uses of Literacy* \((1957)\), which was differently interpreted as lamenting the loss of an authentic popular culture and as denouncing the imposition of mass culture by the culture industries. He was founder of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at the University of Birmingham in 1964. He was also Assistant Director-General of UNESCO \((1971-1975)\) and Warden of Goldsmiths College, University of London \((1976-1984)\). \((accessed 4 January 2007, available from: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard_Hoggart](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard_Hoggart))\)

\(^3\) **The Arts Council of Great Britain** – a non-departmental public body dedicated to the promotion of the fine arts in Great Britain. The Arts Council of Great Britain was divided in 1994 to form the **Arts Council of England** (now **Arts Council England**), the **Scottish Arts Council**, and the **Arts Council of Wales**. At the same time the National Lottery was established and these three arts councils, plus the **Arts Council of Northern Ireland**, became distribution bodies. \((accessed 4 January 2007, available from: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arts_Council](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arts_Council))\)
behalf of society. Likewise, the influence of the media on new writing has been noteworthy, and mixed in its effect – some of the techniques of film expression gradually absorbed into contemporary writing-style, detailed descriptive writing has reduced, a staccato style occurred, the narrative became heavily dependent on dialogue, etc. According to George Steiner⁴, “to compete with TV the serious novel had to choose topics formerly exploited by trash fiction” (1967, cit. in Holloway, 1983, 73-9).

Part of the novelist’s task has always been in affecting various kinds of mutual conformity between single individuals and the larger groups and communities in which they participate. In order to do this the novelist has to assume that he or she shares the interests and ideals with his or her audience. One common point of reference was national identity but the post-war traditional society and its bases of power have ceased to supply men with the sense of community and their personal integrity or ‘identity’. This seemed to be symptomatic of what Cyril Connolly called “a failure of intellect or imagination”. (Connoly, July 1947 cit. in Day, 1997, 65) Many authors shared the disillusion and saw the principle of equality enshrined in the welfare state as a threat to culture because it was inimical to the idea of excellence to which art should aspire. One of the functions of the postwar novelist was, then, to try to recreate a sense of national identity more suited to Britain’s new position in the world. (Day, 1997, 65; Gąsiorek, 1995, 2)

1.2 POST-WAR BRITISH NOVEL

The novel promises a view of events and experiences which otherwise could have slipped unnoticed and provides the eye-witness account. It represents a meeting point between the individual and the general, bridging the isolated subjectivity and the peopled world. In addition, the novel is one of the ways in which history is made, and re-made. Much of post-war British literature is in the form of novels, and up till now the novel remains the most popular literary genre in Britain. (Connor, 1998, 1)

When we recall the scope and variety of British fiction in the earlier years of the twentieth century in the hands of such writers of genius as Henry James, Joseph Conrad, E. M. Forster, D. H. Lawrence, Virginia Woolf and James Joyce, it is difficult not to feel that there has been a decline. Whereas the modernists perceived themselves as an avant-garde, post-war writers saw

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⁴ (Francis) George Steiner (born April 23, 1929) – a prominent literary critic; his field is comparative literature. His work as a critic has tended toward exploring cultural and philosophical issues, particularly having to do with translation and the nature of language and of literature. Steiner’s work has influenced intellectual discourse on popular culture and scholarly popular culture studies. His best-known book, After Babel (1975), was an early contribution to the field of translation studies. He is a regular contributor of reviews and articles to journals and newspapers including the New Yorker, the Times Literary Supplement and The Guardian. (accessed 17 May 2007, available from: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Steiner)
themselves as fighting a rearguard action to preserve a form threatened with extinction. The modernists cast giant shadows over their successors’ work, since they seemed to have taken the novel as far as it could go, leaving the latter to scuttle about among the leftovers. Post-war writers lacked zest and a sense of excitement. At the same time, despite a number of gloomy prognostications, the post-war years saw the appearance of novels by writers as diverse as Nigel Balchin, Elizabeth Bowen, Ivy Compton-Burnett, Lawrence Durrell, Henry Green, Graham Greene, Rosamond Lehmann, Wyndham Lewis, Malcolm Lowry, Nancy Mitford, William Sansom, Angela Thirkell, Philip Toynbee and Evelyn Waugh, which allows to state that the British novel was far from dead. (*Connor, 1998, 1; Gasiorek, 1995, 2; Phelps, 1983, 417-8*).

However, the early post-war period in the British literature was marked by a gamut of emotions ranging from uncertainty to despair. Even a cursory glance at the numerous discussions of the novel’s future in the aftermath of the Second World War reveals that many writers shared certain concerns. They thought the novel was under pressure from the events of recent history, which seemed not only to be unrepresentable but also to have shattered pre-war illusions; from mass culture in the form of radio, cinema, and later television; and from the after-shocks of modernism. The war, in turn, had had a devastating impact on the imagination, stifling writers’ creativity and destroying their confidence in the form. The works of numerous novelists of the period are marked by the tension between a wish to represent various aspects of post-war reality and a recognition of the artistic difficulties entailed. Some remained more or less within the orbit of a fairly traditional realism (J. Fowles, G. Lamming, D. Lessing, E. Maitland, V. S. Naipaul, A. Wilson); others departed from it in different ways (T. Berger, A. Carter, I. Compton-Burnett). The post-war decades could be characterized in terms of a straight conflict between experimental writers and realists. Both groups saw themselves as battling for the future of the novel. Whereas one saw innovation as indispensable to the novel’s health, the other considered it to be the cause of its malaise.

Therefore, it could be convenient to divide post-war novelists roughly into six main categories: the survivors of the thirties (that is, writers who were already in the forefront of the literary scene between the wars); novelists who were already writing during the same period, but who either did not achieve maturity or failed to gain full recognition until after the Second World War (the so-called ‘Angry Young Men’), or those related to them in theme or approach; a group of women writers of more or less ‘feminist’ persuasion; a group of anti- or at least post-imperialist writers; and a few writers who have also achieved considerable reputations in the period under consideration but have little in common with any of the other categories. (*Gasiorek, 1995, 2-3; Phelps, 1983, 417-8*)
The majority of already writing novelists found it as difficult to make the transition successfully to the post-war world as they had done to meet the challenge of their formidable predecessors or near-contemporaries. D. H. Lawrence’s revolt against ‘the old skin and grief form’ of the English novel, Virginia Woolf’s reaction against the ‘materialism’ of writers like Arnold Bennett and H. G. Wells, and James Joyce’s linguistic and narrative innovations, had all seemed to be pointing in the direction of greater experimentation and a break-up of the familiar fictional moulds.

The impact of the war itself, of course, affected those already writing in very different ways. There were, inevitably, some whose intellectual and emotional commitments belonged so unequivocally to the 1920s and 1930s that they never really adapted themselves to the post-war world. This was especially the case, perhaps, with the politically confused or disillusioned, e.g. Rex Warner, Christopher Sherwood, and to some extent Aldous Huxley. It was, however, the ‘writers of sensibility’ like Charles Morgan, Rosamond Lehmann and Elizabeth Bowen, who were exploring personal relationships, usually among the upper-middle class or the intelligentsia, within an already dead or dying social ambience, who found it most difficult to make the transition.

The post-war years exploded by the eruption onto the scene of the so-called ‘Angry Young Men’. They did not belong to a clearly defined movement, rather they express mood, which was combative, irreverent, defiant, edgy and ironic. Novelists, poets, and dramatists, they sought a new moral and social centre for British society. Through their characters these writers were eager to express their anger with society but, in the words of an English critic, one often had the feeling that ‘they beat against the doors not in order to destroy them, but in the confident hope that if they made enough noise they would be let in.’ Among them were Kingsley Amis, John Wain, John Braine, John Osborne, and Colin Wilson. Of these novelists, Ivy Compton-Burnett was the most idiosyncratic and also the one who most obviously and deliberately reached back to the past for her subject-matter. (Kumar, 1983, 40; Phelps, 1983, 418-420)

Though after the war some writers continued experimenting with form, most of the writers of the post-war period returned to conventional writing techniques and were, on the whole, still writing comfortably within the basic conventions of the traditional British novel. None of these novelists was particularly innovative in form, and they all relied on a fairly conventional view of the novel as more or less realistic.

The question of literature and religion was for various reasons a prominent and controversial one in this period. It was to some extent artificially emphasized by the ideological conditions of the Cold War, in which a number of intellectuals who had formerly been optimistic Communists lurchted contritely into pessimistic Christianity of a kind that concentrated all its attention on
Original Sin rather than on redemption. In this climate ‘evil’ was regarded as the great problem of the day, and much literary discussion was accordingly devoted to the wisdom of Dostoevsky and to the inescapably ‘tragic condition’ of Man. Indeed, quite a few post-war British writers were interested not so much in political or social issues as in moral and philosophical problems and especially in the problem of man’s identity in the present world. The problem of identity was seen to be closely linked with one of the most influential trends of twentieth-century thought, existentialism. The existentialists are sceptical about understanding the essential nature of any person or thing. According to them, the writer’s task is to deal with concrete facts of experience rather than theorize about the real nature of things. The influence of existentialist ideas left a deep impression on the work of Iris Murdoch. She created a series of novels whose characters search for an understanding of the meaning of life and try to reduce their experience to something comprehensible. With Murdoch the trend in British writing moved to philosophical fiction. Among others, a philosophical explanation of the nature of things is also to be found in the works of John Fowles, whose point of departure is always man’s lack of knowledge about human nature, and William Golding, whose novels remind one of moral fables exploring the inborn evil in man beneath the thin cover of civilization. Golding’s exploration owes something to the novels of Albert Camus; however, the debt is overlaid by the specifically Christian nature of his vision. The British novel since the Second World War has frequently tackled questions of faith in a religious sense, e.g. novels by Kingsley Amis and Graham Greene. In his works Greene investigates the moral problems that beset modern man, discusses the questions of the meaning of life, the meaning of human actions, and man’s inevitable corruption. (Dodsworth, 1994, 235; Gąsiorek, 1995, 2; Kirvaitis, Šurnaitė, 1999, 241-8)

2. GRAHAM GREENE’S PHILOSOPHY AND AESTHETICS

Graham Greene was one of the most widely read novelist of the twentieth century and combined serious literary acclaim with wide popularity. Indeed, no other contemporary British writer enjoyed so high a reputation on the continent of Europe. However, although his reputation

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5 Albert Camus (November 7, 1913 - January 4, 1960) – an Algerian-French author and philosopher. Although he is often associated with existentialism, Camus preferred to be known as a man and a thinker, rather than as a member of a school or ideology. He preferred persons over ideas. In his essays Camus presented the reader with dualisms: happiness and sadness, dark and light, life and death, etc. His aim was to emphasize the fact that happiness is fleeting and that the human condition is one of mortality. He did this not to be morbid, but to reflect a greater appreciation for life and happiness. In Le Mythe de Sisyphe (1942), Camus was interested in how we experience the Absurd and how we live with it. Our life must have meaning for us to value it. If we accept that life has no meaning and therefore no value, should we kill ourselves. Camus’ understanding of the Absurd promotes public debate; his various offerings entice us to think about the Absurd and offer our own contribution. Concepts such as cooperation, joint effort and solidarity are of key importance to Camus. He made a significant contribution to our understanding of the Absurd, but was not himself an Absurdist. (accessed 2 February 2007, available from: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albert_Camus)
must rest on his serious religious novels, Greene was versatile and his travel books, short stories and those lighter novels he called ‘entertainments’ were of high quality. Greene was a superb storyteller. He also did a great deal of work outside the field of fiction. He wrote plays and film-scripts as well as being an excellent film critic, and contributed to children’s literature. His works explore the ambivalent moral and political issues of the modern world. Throughout his life, Greene was obsessed with travelling far from his native England, to what he called the ‘wild and remote’ places of the world. His ability to create debate and his practical jokes often brought him into headlines. He associated with many famous figures of his time: T.S. Elliot, Herbert Read, Evelyn Waugh, Alexander Korda, Ian Fleming, Noel Coward and others.

Critics speak of Greene’s specific manner of writing. His novels are written in a lean, realistic style with clear, exciting plots. Unlike many writers of the twentieth century, he did not experiment with language, subvert traditional narrative, or choose exotic subjects. The narrative technique he uses is eminently journalistic; the line between fiction and facts is very thin. Greene’s fiction was originally divided into the categories of ‘Serious novels’ (e.g., *The Power and the Glory*, 1940) and ‘Entertainments’ (e.g., *Brighton Rock*, 1938). As Greene himself explained, the ‘entertainments’ contain the element of melodrama and do not carry a philosophical message. However, the distinction was rather arbitrary for Greene’s ‘entertainments’ were found to be as high a value as the literary efforts, and both ‘entertainments’ and ‘serious novels’ combine ingredients of the popular thriller mixed with topical serious content.

Greene’s were probably the first literary novels written in English in the twentieth century which had at their centre religious themes. In his literary criticism Greene attacked most modern literature for having lost any religious sense or themes, which resulted, he argued, in dull, superficial characters who “wandered about like cardboard symbols through a world that is paper-thin.” (Greene, cit. in accessed 2 February 2007, available from: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Graham_Greene) Greene is perhaps the most perplexing of all the literary converts whose works animated the Catholic literary revival in the twentieth century. Ironically, although his faith always contained a considerable element of doubt, it was this very doubt that so often provided the creative force for his fiction.

Greene had a conventional Anglican upbringing. In 1926 upon urging of his future wife Vivien Dayrell-Browning, he took instructions in the faith and was received to the Roman Catholic Church, later explaining that “I hand to find a religion (...) to measure my evil against” (Greene, cit. in accessed 11 December 2006, available from: http://www.kirjasto.sci.fi/greene.htm). Although after his conversion to Catholicism, his concern with religious matters became appropriately intense, Greene repeatedly stressed that he was not a
Catholic novelist but rather a novelist who happened to be a Catholic. At any time in his life, Greene’s ideas were layered, complex, variable and paradoxical and his Catholicism was increasingly eroded by doubt. As he himself noted: “When I was baptized, I made it clear that I had chosen the name Thomas to identify myself … with St Thomas Didymus, the doubter.” (*The Other Man*, 1983, 154)

In practice Greene assailed numerous aspects of Catholicism. For example, Christ’s seventh commandment is: ‘Thou shalt not commit adultery’; not only Greene repeatedly broke the commandment, but also tried to square the circle by suggesting sometimes a close acquaintance with evil was no obstacle to the salvation of the soul. Thus, although he was following some of the procedures of a Catholic believer, he was denying and doubting the most central tenets of the faith. He denied Hell, doubted Heaven, doubted even God, and saw purgatory as merely part of ‘this life’. One of Greene’s many paradoxes was the claim that faith might be compatible with disbelief.

However, he was not so interested in the religion itself, but more in the inner human conflicts. He portrayed his characters as sinners, as ordinary human beings who face all sorts of inner conflicts. These conflicts are so acute that they lead to the character’s death which is usually a violent death or suicide. In one of his early articles Greene argued that “life is violent and art has to reflect that violence” (*Greene, cit. in Kirvaitis, Šurnaitė, 1999, 248*). The brutal scenes of soldiers setting on fire villages in Africa, the religious persecution in Mexico, and the atmosphere of rising tension in pre-war Europe he faced while travelling around the world, all this gave the writer an opportunity to point to evil, violence and brutality as a universal condition of modern man. From the 1950s onwards, though, Greene’s literary works became more diversified, anguish and dark brooding diminished and comedy started playing an increasing role. The ageing Greene called himself a ‘Catholic agnostic’ and acknowledged his disbelief in Hell. This may be the reason for the happy endings, lighter and less intense descriptive style, and prevailing more secular atmosphere of his later works. Some of his later works are largely light-hearted: notably *Travels with My Aunt* (1969) and *Monsignor Quixote* (1982), with their atmosphere of picaresque adventure. It seems that in his old age Greene decided to take his readers and himself on numerous holidays of the imagination. (*Kirvaitis, Šurnaitė, 1999, 248; Watts, 1996, 86-94, 149-50*)

Greene is said to be like ‘a careful housewife, who is unwilling to throw away anything that might perhaps serve its turn’ (*Watts, 1996, 152*). For instance, he re-used, in work after work, certain locations and plot-situations connecting his real-life experience and his fictional world. Examples abound: Harston House in Cambridgeshire, the home of Greene’s rich uncle Sir William Graham Greene, had gardens which contained a potting shed and a big pond with a
small island. These featured in the play *The Potting Shed (1957)* and in various tales, including *Under the Garden (1950)*. Oxford University and, particularly, Greene’s Balliol (or ‘Belial’) College, appear in *When Greek Meets Greek (1941)* and *The Great Jowett (1980)*. The Liberia of *Journey without Maps (1936)* provides the oppressive jungle of *A Chance for Mr. Lever (1976)*. The Freetown of *The Other Side of the Border (1954)* reappears in *The Heart of the Matter (1940)* and *Ways of Escape (1980)*, as well as *Journey without Maps*. Mexico, and particularly its port of Frontera, with its vultures (or ‘buzzards’), sharks and bust of Obregón, feature in *The Lawless Roads (1939)*, *The Power and the Glory* and *The Lottery Ticket (1954)*.

Greene repeated using the same locations in both the fiction and the non-fiction thus leading to the coining of the expression ‘Greeneland’ to describe these settings. This country of the imagination extended its boundaries to mid-century Africa, Latin America, the Far East, the Caribbean, Vienna and Brighton Pier. Though, whether the fictional location is Brighton or Mexico, London or Liberia, Vietnam or Sierra Leone, Greeneland is a distinctively blighted, tainted, oppressive landscape, full of decay, corruption and sleaziness. (Watts, 1996, 152-3)

Greene liked using recurrent character-types. One of them, which is most easily identifiable, is the type based on Greene’s brother Herbert: that of the con-man who repeatedly gets into financial scrapes through dubious schemes (e.g. Farrell in *The Bear Fell Free (1935)*, Anthony Farrant in *England Made Me (1935)*, Jones in *The Comedians (1966)* and the Captain in *The Captain and the Enemy (1988)*. Another, partly autobiographical, character is the writer who, after seeking to achieve detachment, moves towards commitment to a cause. The examples are Fowler (*The Quiet American (1955)*) and Querry (*A Burnt-Out Case (1961)*). In sexual triangles, Greene (guided, no doubt, by personal experience) sometimes depicts the woman as one who seeks to reconcile conflicting claims: usually the claim of loyalty to her husband with the claim of sexual adventure. Certainly Mary Rhodes in *The Complaisant Lover (1959)*, Sarah in *The End of the Affair (1951)*, Martha in *The Comedians* and Clara in *The Honorary Consul (1973)* belong to this category. The betrayal of a man by his supposed friend is a plot-device which extends from *The Man Within (1929)* to numerous Greene’s novels and tales: *The Third Man (1948)* is a famous example.

Greene also seems to like playing games with names; in his texts, significant patterns or pairings of names emerge. Most obviously, there are names associated with birds, usually unpleasant ones (an exception is Phuong (Phoenix) in *The Quiet American*): Kite, Crowe (*Brighton Rock*), Krogh, Crane, Henne-Falcon, Raven, Conder. There are aquatic names: Crab, Crabbe, Tench, Piker; and colour names: Pinkie Brown, Rose (French for ‘pink’, in *Brighton Rock, It’s a Battlefield (1934)*, *The Living Room (1953)* and *Travels with My Aunt*) and Molly Pink (*Brighton Rock*), and Browne (*The Living Room*). A name which seemed to favourable
associations for Greene him was ‘Coral’ (which he associated with jewellery): hence the Coral Musker in Stamboul Train (1932) and Coral Fellows in The Power and the Glory. Some surnames, on the contrary, seem very ordinary – Jones Brown, Smith – and may (as in the case of Jones and Brown in The Comedians) be taken for rogues’ pseudonyms. Sometimes even the very absence of a name may have religious significance. In The Power and the Glory, the whisky-priest has no name other than the common name (that of a killed hostage) he borrows for a while. His anonymity is appropriate to his representative role as sustainer of the continuity of religion. (Watts, 1996, 155-7)

One of Greene’s most important preoccupations concerns the innocence and vulnerability of the child and the repercussion of childhood experiences in later life. Greene considered childhood to be a very important stage in human development which leaves an imprint on the human psyche. In large part this approach may have been due to a wretched childhood and to the traumatic time spent at Berkhamsted School where he was tormented and bullied for being the headmaster’s son. (Rudaitytė, October 25 2005; Watts, 1996, 153)

In The Lost Childhood Greene wrote: “Goodness has only once found a perfect incarnation in a human body and never will again, but evil can always find a home there. Human nature is not black and white but black and grey” (1951, 18, cit. in Watts, 1996, 97). Greene considered evil to be an essential element of life. He depicted cruelty and injustice but such injustice has been always seen by Greene as part of the abstract injustice of life as a whole. (Kirvaitis, Šurnaitė, 1999, 248; Watts, 1996, 97)

Greene’s writing was much influenced by the existentialist philosophy. Existentialism itself can be viewed as a revolt against traditional philosophy; it has been labeled a philosophy but a definition is difficult as its proponents have a marked difference in outlook. According to Sartre, existentialism is a doctrine that does render human life possible; also, a doctrine which affirms that every truth and every action imply both fundamentals of the human condition and its relation to the world around us. Human beings can be understood neither as substances with fixed properties, nor as atomic subjects primarily interacting with a world of objects. Existentialism claims instead that as conscious beings, humans would always find themselves already in a world, a prior context and a history that is given to consciousness, and that humans cannot think away that world. The existential doctrine confronts man with a possibility of choice. Existentialists also believe existence precedes essence, rather than essence preceding existence, i.e man defines his own reality. The basic questions include: “What is it like to be a human in the world?” and “What is the nature of human freedom?”. (Sartre, 1946, cit. in Kaufman 1989, accessed 2 February 2007, available from: http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/sartre/works/exist/sartre.htm)
The essential charge laid against existentialism is that of over-emphasis of certain features of living in a modern, oppressive society, such as anxiety and meaninglessness. It is equally true that all the themes popularly associated with existentialism – dread, boredom, alienation, the absurd, freedom, commitment, nothingness, and so on – find their philosophical significance in the context of the search for a new categorial framework, together with its governing norm. Greene does pay much attention to the fact of existence. Isolation, pain, suffering and guilt are very much the back-bone of his art.

Among the major philosophers identified as existentialists (many of whom – for instance Camus and Heidegger – repudiated the label) were Karl Jaspers, Martin Heidegger, and Martin Buber in Germany and Jean Wahl and Gabriel Marcel in France. Existentialism was as much a literary phenomenon as a philosophical one and the postwar years found a very diverse coterie of writers linked under the term: retrospectively, Dostoevsky, Ibsen, and Kafka were conscripted; in Paris there were Jean Genet, André Gide, André Malraux, and the expatriate Samuel Beckett; the Norwegian Knut Hamsen and the Romanian Eugene Ionesco also belong to the club. Greene was mainly influenced by Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus. (Barnes, 1968, 143-4; accessed 2 February 2007, available from: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Existentialism; accessed 2 February 2007, available from: http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/existentialism/)

According to Sartre, there are two kinds of existentialists. There is, on the one hand, theological existentialism advocated by philosophers and theologians like Paul Tillich, Gabriel Marcel, Martin Buberthe, Karl Jaspers and Gabriel Marcel; and on the other there are existential atheists, amongst whom must be placed Heidegger as well as the French existentialists. What they have in common is the fact that they believe that existence comes before essence.

Christian existentialism posits God’s existence, as well as accepting many tenets of atheistic existentialism. The Catholic existentialist believes that when essence is wiped out, then existence is necessarily negated. The intellect, willing or not, necessarily comes up with the essence, the absolute idea, the standard, the criterion. Only through essence can one have the affirmation that something exists. Belief in God is a personal choice made on the basis of a passion, of faith, an observation, or experience. (1946, cit. in Kaufman 1989, accessed 2 February 2007, available from: http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/sartre/works/exist/sartre.htm; accessed 2 February 2007, available from: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Existentialism)

As an existentialist Greene starts with himself and, as an individual, he gives his consciousness careful consideration with respect to those absolutes outside. Greene’s primary characters, Pinkie (Brighton Rock), the Whisky Priest (The Power and the Glory) and Scobie (The Heart of the Matter), are hubristic figures in an existential humanist world, where there is no God and man simply is. He is what he wills and nothing else but that which he makes of
himself. However, if existence is prior to essence, man is responsible for what he is. And that means that he is responsible not only for his own individuality, but that he is responsible for all men. To choose between this or that is at the same time to affirm the value of that which is chosen; for we are unable ever to choose the worse. What we choose is always the better; and nothing can be better for us unless it is better for all. Our responsibility is thus much greater than we had supposed and we cannot escape it.

In the world where God does not exist, all possibility of finding values in an intelligible heaven disappears. Everything is permitted and man is in consequence forlorn, for he cannot find anything to depend upon either within or outside himself. Man is free, man is freedom. Nor, on the other hand, is man provided with any values or commands that could legitimize our behaviour. We are left alone, without excuse. Man is condemned to be free. Condemned, because he did not create himself, yet is nevertheless at liberty, and from the moment that he is thrown into this world he is responsible for everything he does. (Barnes, 1968, 143-4; Day, 1997, 53-4; Sartre, 1946, cit. in Kaufman 1989, accessed 2 February 2007, available from: http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/sartre/works/exist/sartre.htm; accessed 2 February 2007, available from: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Existentialism)

Greene is an excellent novelist in the respect of providing obstacles for his characters to hurdle or on which to destroy themselves. Political clashes, sensuality, perversion, robbery, and crimes of violence are the material of experience. The experiences he presents are so formidable, indeed, that his characters need to agonize, despair, challenge, and defy in order to surmount them. His existentialism, as Catholic, is quite dramatically evident in his ability to create plausible individuals under conditions that seem farfetched. Greene has the quality of the modern existentialist in full degree: he can move through much immediacy of experience in rapid rime. And yet, existentialism in his novels is given the shape of the fable. Although providing realistic circumstances and vividly depicted characters, Greene remains a philosopher, not a writer on the matters of everyday life. (Barnes, 1968, 145-6)

In his complex understanding of the human consciousness and principles of portrayal of the human psyche (fragmentary, associative, non-linear), G. Greene is closer to the writers of the ‘stream of consciousness’ rather than to the classical realist writers of the twentieth century. Similarly to them, Greene chooses to describe a usual moment in the life of the character to reveal his or her destiny. However, unlike the modernist writers, Greene does not stress the peculiarities of the process of human thinking. Therefore, rather than choosing arbitrary moments from characters’ life he carefully selects the moments that reveal the character’s attitude to life. (Королева, 2006, 5-6)
Being a shy and sensitive youth given to melancholy, Greene disliked sports and school, rather preferring to read historical novels and adventure stories by authors such as Rider Haggard and R.M. Ballantyne. These novels had a deep influence on him and, together with his traumatic childhood experience, helped to shape his writing style (e.g. strongly influenced in boyhood by Rider Haggard’s *King Solomon’s Mines*, he developed a lasting interest in Africa). (*Rudaitytė, October 25 2005; accessed 9 September 2006, available from: http://members.tripod.com/~greeneland/bio.htm*).

Greene remained a rapid, voracious and retentive reader throughout his life. He could appreciate and employ the most heterogeneous texts, ranging from the children’s books of Beatrix Potter (which contributed phrases to *Brighton Rock* and *The Power and the Glory*) to the magisterial novels of Henry James, from Metaphysical poetry and Shakespeare’s plays to the experimentalism of Joyce’s *Finnegans Wake*. The epigraphs to his novels provide some indication of his range of reading: they are taken from (among others) Sir Thomas Browne, Shakespeare, John Donne, T. S. Eliot, Thomas Traherne, George Santayana, Alexander Kinglake, W. H. Auden, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Thomas Hardy, A. H. Clough, Lord Byron, John Dryden, Dante, George Herbert, Edwin Muir, Cardinal Newman, Thomas Péguy, Auguste Flaubert and Sören Kierkegaard.

Greene knew well the ‘conceits’ of Metaphysical poetry and grotesque, bizarre similes of Jacobean drama and acknowledged their influence; but he was also strongly influenced by American traditions. American crime fiction also may have contributed to the effective staccato style of his action scenes (which may be illustrated by *Brighton Rock*). Hemingway’s style can sometimes be detected in Greene’s laconic passages of dialogue and description (e.g. *The Lawless Roads, The Quiet American*). (*Watts, 1996, 122-123, 160*)

Another contributor is the satiric tradition, emphasizing lust, squalor and the decay of the flesh, which extends from Ben Jonson’s *Volpone* to Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels*. This blends with

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6 The *metaphysical poets* were a loose group of British lyric poets of the 17th century, who shared an interest in metaphysical concerns and a common way of investigating them. The label ‘metaphysical’ was given much later by Samuel Johnson. These poets themselves did not form a school or start a movement. Most of them didn’t even know or read each other. Their rigorous verse appeals to the reader’s intellect rather than emotions. Influenced by continental Baroque, and taking as its subject matter both Christian mysticism and eroticism, metaphysical poetry used unconventional style which was characterised by wit, subtle argumentations and the ‘metaphysical conceits’, an unusual simile or metaphor such as in Andrew Marvell’s comparison of the soul with a drop of dew, to reach surprise effects. (*accessed 19 December 2006, available from: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Metaphysical_poets*)

7 After Shakespeare’s death, the poet and dramatist Ben Jonson was the leading literary figure of the *Jacobean era* (*The reign of James I*). However, Jonson’s aesthetics harks back to the Middle Ages rather than to the Tudor Era: his characters embody the theory of humors. According to this contemporary medical theory, behavioral differences result from a prevalence of one of the body’s four ‘humors’ (blood, phlegm, black bile, and yellow bile) over the other three; these humors correspond with the four elements of the universe, air, water, fire, and earth. This leads Jonson to exemplify such differences to the point of creating types, or clichés. Another popular style of theatre during Jacobean times was the revenge play, popularized by John Webster and Thomas Kyd. (*accessed 19 December 2006, available from: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Literature_in_English#Jacobean_literature*)
the tradition of social satire in the English novel: Greene’s works are remarkable of depressing urban landscapes and decaying environments of sordid crime, similar to the ones in the works by Dickens and Conrad. Greene admired Baudelaire’s poems as well as Eliot’s, and his works can also be related to the poetic tradition of urban realism and decadence, the representatives of which had often enough depicted the city as a location of both squalor and corruption and sought to reconcile the lyrical and the sordid. In addition, the ‘decadents’ gave prostitution and sexual ‘deviance’ new prominence in literature; and Greene’s fiction is characteristic of the repetitive appearance of prostitutes, brothels, promiscuous women, deviant adults and even depraved children. Thus, scores of authors and literary trends have left a verifiable imprint on Greene’s writing. According to his own opinion, three of the most important of them are Joseph Conrad, T.S. Eliot and Herbert Read. (ibid., pp. 144-6)

Evelyn Waugh once urged a friend who was a novelist to “Go to the cinema”: “Try and bring home thoughts by actions and incidents. Don’t make everything said. This is the inestimable value of the Cinema to novelists. (...) Make things happen.” (accessed 2 August 2006, available from: http://www.doubtinghall.com/intro.html) Writing about his early novels, Greene too wrote of how he used to think ‘in terms of a key scene’, which ‘halts the progress of the novel with dramatic emphasis, just as in a film a close-up makes the moving picture momentarily pause’. (Ker, 2004, 112) He continued to follow this method in his later novels. Greene participated in writing film-scripts and, certainly, the Hollywood movie influenced his works, the structure, narrative, some dialogues of his characters, and ‘tough guy’ diction and cynical jesting of gangsters in his thrillers. (Watts, 1996, 164-5)

3. THE COMPLEXITIES OF HUMAN EXISTENCE: THE HEART OF THE MATTER

Greene wrote The Heart of the Matter (1948) drawing on the experience he got operating as a British intelligence officer in Freetown, Sierra Leone, during the Second World War.

The explanation of the novel’s title appears about halfway through the novel in the following passage: “If one knew, he wondered, the facts, would one have to feel pity even for the planets? If one reached what they called the heart of the matter?” (Greene, 1991, 124)

The novel is more complicated than it may seem at the first sight. It occupies and comments on the ambitious subjects of war, espionage, love, adultery, treachery, and betrayal. But at its core – at the heart of The Heart of the Matter – it is a novel of moral dilemmas. Its plot, its psychological and spiritual depth, even its political intrigues turn around the questions of the meaning of life and human actions: Has one the right to ever interfere with the lives of others
and take the responsibility for their actions upon himself? Is it possible to make others happy? Is suicide ever the right choice? Although the novel resembles a thriller in its growing atmosphere of spying and suspicion, trust and distrust, Greene replaces a thriller with a ‘serious’ novel thus stripping away the surface trappings of an ordinary suspense or detective story, such as the focus on crime and a subsequent investigation and pursuit.

According to the author himself, he had meant the novel to enlarge a theme of the disastrous effect on human beings of pity as distinct from compassion. Compassion as the ability to understand and share someone else’s pain is opposed to pity as leniency towards the ones below you. “Point me out the happy man,” says Greene, “and I will point you out either egotism, selfishness, evil – or else an absolute ignorance.” (Greene, 1991, 99-102, cit. in accessed 9 September 2006, available from: http://members.tripod.com/~greeneland/heart.htm)

Many critics have indicated that the exotic setting of the novel matters little: that the author could have taken a journey through his psyche anywhere, that Scobie could just as well have lived in London. This is far from true. Greene certainly does focus his novel on the Europeans in Africa; they are the subjects, not Africa. However, this does not mean he reduced Africa to a mere exotic prop on which to stage his European escapades. Greene set his book in Africa for a purpose. In The Heat of the Matter, he examines one man’s complicated relationships with himself, with other people and with Africa.

Pierloot (1994, 29-31) suggests that the motif of life on the frontier is of particular importance in Greene’s writing. A border always implies a separation of different realities. It breeds the sense of conflicting allegiances. The image of the frontier also serves the writer to convey the idea of life as a border between heaven and hell, salvation or damnation. Later, by Greene’s travelling throughout the whole world, the crossing of frontiers perhaps lost its fascination. But in his fiction geographical borders, physical and fictive barriers function as important knots and clues in the structure of the story. West Africa during the Second World War was probably more remote from the rest of the world than at any time in the twentieth century; the war in the Atlantic made travel by ship extremely dangerous. European colonial staff in the area always felt isolated, and this feeling was increased by the war. The setting imposes a further petrifying constraint on characters. The country is their undoing, as they are no longer on firm ground. The white community of the colony finds itself in different social, political and moral circumstances and is trapped in a halfway culture. Their physical alienation reflects the spiritual alienation they suffer. Greene vividly depicts the pettiness of the isolated British community indicating that even their voices soon alter because after several months in the colony one’s intonation becomes “high-pitched and insincere or flat and guarded” (Greene, 1991, 42). When the reader joins Scobie he is passing the Secretariat which reminds him of a hospital. The metaphor of the
hospital shows how Scobie views the European colonial relationship with the African natives. This metaphor implies that the British become patients while staying in Freetown. Their symptoms are “unreasonable temper, the drink too many, the sudden stand for principle after a year of acquiescence” (ibid., 14). The cure is, of course, to be sent home, but while they must remain in Africa they are looked after by the ‘doctors’ who are native clerks working for the colonial government. He describes the clerks by saying, “Cheerful and respectful they put up with any insult. The patient was always right” (ibid., 15).

If the lower depths of Dante’s hell were frozen, Greene’s are damp and subtropical. Ugliness and evil are the very first things that the reader confronts with in the novel. Realistic and dramatic details in the opening pages of The Heart of the Matter with immediately set the depressing mood that foreshadows the coming tragic events: “the corrugated iron (…) clanged and clattered, a vulture flapped and shifted on the iron roof” (Greene, 1991, 13). The West Coast of Africa becomes the landscape of loneliness, hopelessness, despair, and lies. Graham Greene’s Freetown is filled with human debris: the afflicted, the pettily pretentious, and the failed, with schemers and thieves and liars and murderers, and with those whose daily task is to convince themselves they matter for anything. Greene surrounds them with the stifling air, torturous heat, endless rains and all kinds of symbolic death – fevers, diseases, suicides, vultures, cockroaches, lizards, ants, and mongrels. Even the streets of the town are “stretched out on either side like the arms of a skeleton” (ibid., 94). In addition, the absolute poverty makes it hard to differentiate between wrong and right: “the guilt and innocence were as relative as the wealth” (ibid., 15). It seems that even God has forgotten about the place and its inhabitants: “Nobody here could ever talk about a heaven on earth. Heaven remained rigidly in its proper place on the other side of death, on this side flourished the injustices, the cruelties, the meanness that elsewhere people so cleverly hushed up” (ibid., 36). Into this oppressive climate of humidity and decay he places his protagonist. The hell-like description of Africa heightens Scobie’s moral conflict and the physical danger characteristic of such a place provides a convincing setting for the spiritual dangers.

The protagonist of the novel is Major Henry Scobie, a man of nearly fifty, a long serving police inspector in a British colonial town on the West Coast of Africa during World War II, responsible for providing both local and wartime security as well as controlling smuggling. He represents the typical Greene hero, a sinner disguised as a hero-villain, and the problems of the ordinary man. Scobie tries to preserve his moral integrity in a world without any values apart from considerations of self interest. His moral conflict exemplifies the tragedy of a human being whose personal morality is not compatible with the morality of the society he lives in and the group he belongs to. Since the conflict resides to a large extent in Scobie, the narrative is focused
mainly on and within him. Scobie is singled out as by a movie camera’s swooping eye from the rest of the world. The effect achieved is to intensify and perhaps sentimentalize our experience with Scobie by restricting the dramatic possibilities of the narrative, a result Greene was well aware of, but one, given the narrative strategy he chose, that concentrates almost all our attention on Scobie. Greene’s writing is masterful, creating a strong sense of place filled with memorable characters, a style memorably distinctive, harmonizing in imagery with the themes of a suspenseful plot-sequence. He creates indelible images with extraordinary economy: “His hilarity was like a scream from a crevasse”; “her face went out like a candle in a sudden draught of wind” (Greene, 1991, 195, 208). His choice of an external narrative technique through which the reader is both omniscient and omnipresent, raises a feeling of intimacy with the characters, from which gradually grows a judgmental perception of these individuals.

For fifteen years, Scobie has managed to walk a delicate balance between doing his job and doing it too well. For him, the war is a distant affair, one that encroaches on his turf mostly when he has to ferret out Nazi spies, saboteurs, and illegal smugglers. For being rigorously fair Scobie’s associates call him ‘Scobie the Just’, a mocking allusion to the classical Aristides the Just. Scobie has a reputation for an unusually strong resistance to corruption and that does not serve to make him popular amongst the other administrators in the British colony – he has ‘gone native’, as the saying goes. There is even a rumor going around the town that he is in the pay of the Syrians long before his relationship with Yusef begins. This rumor is so widespread, that Wilson, the British intelligence secret agent, reports on it to his supervisors. However, Scobie has only grown wise in the ways of the local tribespeople, and no longer attempts to impose a British version of ‘justice’ on their squabbles and petty corruption.

While suggesting Scobie’s commitment to his job, The Heart of the Matter also immediately challenges his efficacy and policing power. Scobie is quite self-conscious about what his work entails, and he believes that it is a vocation requiring perceptiveness and a strong sense of justice. Asked by Helen Rolt how he knows about her stamp album, he replies, “That’s my job. I’m a policeman” (Greene, 1991, 140), and in his dialogue with God he states, “I’m not a policeman for nothing – responsible for order, for seeing justice is done” (ibid., 259). Scobie’s idea of a policeman involves assuming full responsibility for all the deprived of the world and his loneliness and despair reflect the tragedy of a man who persistently holds human dimension above all other considerations in his interactions which constitutes the main source of conflict in

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8 Aristides (530 BC – 468 BC) – an Athenian soldier and statesman. He was one of the 10 commanders against the Persians at the Battle of Marathon under Miltiades. Aristides was nicknamed ‘the Just’ because he was popularly recognized as never seeking personal glory or financial gain in his public service to the people of Athens. As a result, during his adult life, Aristides was asked to arbitrate difficult private and public issues. Herodotus, writing just 40 years after the death of Aristides, said that “there was not in all Athens a man so worthy or so just as he”. (accessed 15 May, 2007, available from: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aristides_the_Just)
his life. In the society he lives, avoidance of punishment and unquestioning deference to power are valued in their own right, without any respect for an underlying moral order supported by punishment and authority. However, Scobie knows that authority and punishment alone are not sufficient to create a sense of justice. As a policeman, he goes beyond conventional rule obligation and beyond rigid identification with the role model of a policeman which prevents the individual from moving upward to principled autonomy. The moral judgement which allows one to reflect on his or her values and think them over is what Scobie is trying to do all the time thus acquiring his own conception of justice according which one should always take into account the situation the individual is in. Scobie goes beyond conventional rule obligation and believes that he has a moral responsibility to disobey unjust laws that degrade human personality which leaves him in a conflict with the conventional morality represented by his profession. Greene’s technique of presenting Scobie’s work is traditional of the detective story: “Humble, prosaic, oafish, well-meaning, slow – these are some of the adjectives called to mind by the policemen that populate detective stories.” (Lehnman, 1989, 57 cit. in Malamet, accessed 26 March, 2007, available from: http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0403/is_n3_v39/ai_14867735)

Scobie is married to Louise, one of the most unsympathetically presented female characters in world literature. Louise is a solitary woman who loves literature and poetry but struggles to form social relationships. She is also a devout Catholic, and for her sake Henry converted to Catholicism. While describing her Greene implies severe irony: the righteous Louise, who follows the rules and tenets of the Church so thoroughly in the course of the novel turns out to be a heartless egoist. Louise seems to be a Catholic who is very attached to what the ‘Church says’, but possesses neither genuine faith nor compassion.

Scobie’s marriage to her is shrouded in mystery, but we know it was more an act of duty than of love. As Scobie describes it: “No man could guarantee love forever, but he had sworn fourteen years ago, at Ealing, silently, during the horrible little elegant ceremony among the lace and candles, that he would at least always see to it that she was happy” (Greene, 1991, 59). And Scobie struggles to make his poetry-loving and deeply unhappy wife happy. The reader perceives Louise through Scobie’s eyes and his void of feeling towards her is notably made explicit by his heartless description of her: “His wife was sitting up under the mosquito-net, and for a moment he had the impression of a joint under a meat-cover” (ibid., 23). If Scobie is able to make such a cruel assertion in a very lucid manner, it is clear that his love for her has since long vanished.

Married and feeling responsible for the wife’s happiness, Scobie is, however, unable to love anyone, including himself. Most of Scobie’s capacity for love died several years earlier at a boarding school in England when their only child, a nine-year-old daughter Catherine, was taken
by a sudden illness. The difficulty of communication and the fact of World War II prevented Scobie from even attending the funeral. Since his daughter died, there was little else left to him and he retreated into his job. Catherine’s death could also explain Scobie’s strong sense of duty towards others that became the central factor in his life: “It had always been his responsibility to maintain happiness in those he loved. One was safe now, for ever, and the other [Louise] was going to eat her lunch” (Greene, 1991, 25). Its effect is that Scobie eventually begins to confuse the feeling of pity and responsibility with love.

Early on in The Heart of the Matter it becomes apparent that Scobie does not have a good relationship with his wife. He thinks often about his responsibility towards her and feels guilty that Louise is trapped in a place she dislikes with a husband she has nothing in common with. He wonders, “Poor Louise, if I had left it to her, where should we be now?” (ibid., 17).

Scobie and Louise have differing opinions of what makes a place home. In describing his office, Scobie admits he has made it comfortable through reduction; the unnecessary things have disappeared over time until he is left with the things that really matter – “a pair of rusty handcuffs” (ibid., 123). Here Greene implies a seemingly insignificant detail to reveal his understanding of the events and puts the reader’s mind at work by evoking certain associations. The constant mentioning of the handcuffs on the wall of Scobie’s office foreshadows his gloomy end.

Louise, on the other hand, is different from Scobie. “If home for [Scobie] meant the reduction of things to a friendly unchanging minimum, home to her was accumulation” (ibid., 22). Instead of discussing this difference, Scobie allows Louise to do what she wants with their house because he feels guilty about trapping her in Africa, even though by doing so their house become less of a home for him: “He stood very still like a spy in foreign territory, and indeed he was in foreign territory now” (ibid., 21).

While part of the problem in this marriage is the things Scobie and Louise leave unsaid, another part is the things they say. Louise has a habit of calling Scobie by the nickname ‘Ticki’. He hates this but allows her to do so because he thinks she is ignorant of how this nickname makes him feel. He even calls himself ‘Ticki’ to her because he thinks it will make her feel better. But Louise does realize how much he hates the name. When Wilson, the British intelligence secret agent, asks about the nickname Louise expresses guilt over using it in front of other people. She says she tries not to because she knows how much he hates it but often forgets. Scobie thinks he should be the one pitying Louise, but in fact Louise pities him just as much as he pities her.

Another tension between them is in Louise’s love of literature. Some of the other British inhabitants of Freetown refer to her as ‘literary Louise’. Once Scobie overhears someone call her
this way he becomes furious, because his perpetual sense of responsibility for Louise also extends to how the gossip will affect her: “He could feel the malice and snobbery of the world padding up like wolves around her. They wouldn’t even let her enjoy her books, he thought” (ibid., 32). He seeks to find her friends she can talk about literature with in an attempt to keep her happy. When Wilson visits Louise to discuss literature, Scobie says he is glad Louise can talk to someone about books. The irony, however, is that he is the one who really sees this as a bad quality: “At the word books Wilson saw her mouth tighten just as a moment ago he had seen Scobie flinch at the name of Ticki, and for the first time he realized the pain inevitable in any human relationship – pain suffered and pain inflicted” (ibid., 81). Scobie has no interest in literature whatever. He rarely reads books, owns almost none, and dislikes poetry or any literature that reveals human emotion. Louise knows her husband looks down on her books and so it is significant that, in the end, he asks her to read to him. He tries to ease some of this pain before killing himself.

Scobie’s extraordinary obsession with making sure his wife does not fall into despair or become an object of ridicule often spurs Scobie to detect each shift in her mood:

“...He never listened while his wife talked. He worked steadily to the even current of sound, but if a note of distress were struck he was aware of it at once (...) So long as his ear-drum registered those tranquil sounds – the gossip of the club, comments on the sermons preached by Father Rank, the plot of a new novel, even complaints about the weather – he knew that all was well. It was silence that stopped him working – silence in which he might look up and see tears waiting in the eyes for his attention.” (ibid., 26)

Every nuance of Louise’s behavior is subject to his examination; he can even assess other people’s perceptions of his role as her husband: “He knew every one of her faults. How often he had winced at her patronage of strangers. He knew each phrase, each intonation that alienated others (...) The worst was when he detected in his colleagues an extra warmth of friendliness towards himself, as though they pitied him” (ibid., 32).

But all this is not done out of love. Scobie’s motivation in everything he does for Louise is pity, never love. He thinks pity is the end of love and says that “he knew from experience how passion died away and how love went, but pity always stayed” (ibid., 192). He talks about longing to keep her from embarrassing herself and about how much he hates it when he can tell other people pity him for being married to her. This pity becomes “the expression of an almost monstrous pride” (Greene, cit. in Hoskins, 1999, 170). It leads him to think he understands everything so much better than everyone else. But the reality is that it is he who does not understand the community he lives in. Scobie’s relationship with the colonial society of Freetown is very bad by the time The Heart of the Matter begins. He fails to feel at home with the English colonial community who adhere strictly to their own set of norms and rules in a
defense against the physical and moral weakness of the society they live in. Meanwhile, Scobie’s relationship with Africa and with the native people is thriving. Scobie came to Freetown an imperialist, like all the others in the colonial government. However, he was able to come to understand the people and the culture, and by the time the novel begins, he has more love and affection for Africa than for his own country: “Why he wondered, swerving the car to avoid a dead pye-dog, do I love this place so much? It is because here human nature hasn’t had time to disguise itself (…) Here you could love human beings as nearly God loved them, knowing the worst” (Greene, 1991, 35). Apart from expressing Scobie’s affection towards the country, this remark tells much of his twisted vision of the Catholic faith, which influences his human relationship with others. It seems that Scobie has difficulty in reconciling his own Catholic belief that ‘God is love’ with the doctrines of the Church and with the injustices he witnesses in his environment. As a result, finds himself in struggle with God who does not seem to have the same compassion as he has. It is obvious that Scobie shares almost patronizing love of the degraded. However, it seems that instead of seeing life as better than it really is, this sentimentality is rather involved in seeing the world as worse than it happens to be. Scobie likes peace and quiet and routine in Freetown. In other words, he ‘likes the stink’ (Kettle, 1972 cit. in Watts, 1996, 147) and is not committed to fighting it.

Scobie’s relationship with Ali, his trusted servant (know as a ‘boy’ in Africa) of fifteen years, is very much a master-servant relationship, but at the same time it is tender and humane. Ali never betrays Scobie. Every time Scobie returns from leave Ali is there waiting for him. Greene gives the reader a good look at Ali when he accompanies Scobie to the interior town of Pemberton. Along the way Ali cooks for Scobie and sees to it that his camp bed is set up and that they make the ferries, all very typical of a servant. But he also gives Scobie the kind of companionship he desires. Alone on the road with Ali and a native driver Scobie is happy. “It seemed to him that this was all he needed of love or friendship” (ibid., 84). In comparison to the other ‘boys’ portrayed in the novel, little, outside of his daily tasks, is expected of Ali. Unlike Scobie, Yusef sends his boys on illegal errands and Wilson threatens and yells at his boys, and expects them to become his spies. Scobie never asks too much of Ali, until near the end. The first time Scobie is suspicious about Ali is after he sees his boy talking to an unfamiliar native and Ali denies he has betrayed his master with a simple phrase: “I’m your boy” (ibid., 230).

Thus, Scobie loves the Africans’ innocence and naïve ignorance of European ways. He believes human nature is always corrupt and Westerners have learned to disguise the corruption, but Africans do not try to be so false. The African naïvety of Western manners draws Scobie’s affection because he wishes he could get away with being so naïve. However, Scobie does not
realise that he actually is naïve. In spite of numerous warnings he remains the last person who fails to understand that he is being spied upon:

“They have sent a special man from London to investigate the diamonds – they are crazy about diamonds – only the Commissioner must know about him – none of the other officers, not even you.”

“What rubbish you talk, Yusef. There’s no such man.” “Everybody guesses but you.” “Too absurd. You shouldn’t listen to rumour, Yusef.” (Greene, 1991, 92)

Finally, he asks the Commissioner, “Am I the only one who doesn’t know about Wilson?” (ibid., 185). Greene suggests that Scobie’s inability to acknowledge Wilson’s identity is a product of his own self-deception, As Louise puts it: “Oh, I think sometimes he’s got a kind of selective eye-sight. He sees what he likes to see” (ibid., 80).

Being a policeman Scobie cannot even detect as well as Father Rank, who hints that he perceives the special agent’s identity and also displays his own powers of observation in trivial matters in a dialogue with Wilson:

“You ought to have been a policeman, Father.” “Ah,” Father Rank said, “who knows? There are more policemen in this town than meet the eye – or so they say.”

“Who say?” “Careful of those sweets,” Father Rank said, “they are harmless in moderation, but you’ve taken four already.” (ibid., 68)

Ironic, but in the novel the policeman and the priest reverse their expected roles. It is Father Rank who is supposed to be the official carrier of the doctrine of the Catholic Church. However, his opinions and views displayed in the course of the novel leave the reader in doubts that this wise and tired old man, who saw the darkest corners of the human souls, would remain faithful to the principles he is supposed to preach. Father Rank, for example, unabashedly affirms that he is a gossip: “If a man tells me anything I assume he wants me to pass it on” (ibid., 69). On the other hand, Scobie, as the priest admits, is a person to whom people make ‘confession’: “If people are in trouble they’d go to you, Scobie, not to me. They ask me to dinner to hear the gossip” (ibid., 183). When he is summoned to investigate a recent suicide of Pemberton, a young inspector of a small inland town, Scobie is more forgiving than the priest. During the investigation of the suicide Scobie “wonder[s] how he would feel if he were his father” (ibid., 83) and faces a moral conflict, because this incident forces him, as a Catholic convert, to question religion as a system. He is shocked when father Clay points out that Pemberton’s suicide implies damnation. “Even the Church can’t teach me that God doesn’t pity the young (ibid., 89), he reflects. “We’d forgive most things if we knew the facts,” (ibid., 81) he tells his wife when she is discontented for interrupting her life by requiring that her husband travel for several days to investigate and report on the matter. In this simple sentence, Graham Greene captures the essence of human relationships, as well as foreshadows a host of events to follow. Scobie later dreams that he is in Pemberton’s situation, even writing a similar note, but when he
awakens, he tells himself that he could never commit suicide, as no cause is worth the eternal damnation that suicide would bring.

Greene remarked that “dreams can dictate the mood of a whole day and bring a dying emotion back to life”. (Watts, 1996, 135) Repeatedly, his novels and tales incorporate significant dreams; indeed, it is probable that no other writer of predominantly realistic fiction has employed them so frequently. There are sixty three descriptions of dreams in his fiction. Greene was an assiduous recorder of his dreams. It is possible that the seeds of this almost obsessive self-analysis were sown at the time during the psychoanalytic treatment at Kenneth Richmond, where Greene was well versed in Freudian⁹ and Jungian¹⁰ ideas and trained to report his dreams for analysis. Gradually, he became remarkably adept at recalling and exploiting his night-self. In this, there was a mixture of psychological self-analysis, some superstition, and a pragmatic recognition of fertile material for literary works.

It is through dreams the reader is given a glimpse into Scobie’s vision of idyllic happiness:

“It is through dreams the reader is given a glimpse into Scobie’s vision of idyllic happiness: “Birds went by far overhead, and once when he sat down the grass was parted by a small green snake which passed on to his hand and up his arm without fear, and before it slid down into the grass again touched his cheek with a cold, friendly, remote tongue.” (Greene, 1991, 83)

Within the hot, sweaty, smelly Africa of The Heart of the Matter, such dream offers a contrasting lyricism while yet maintaining some of the thematic concerns. In the novel dreams perform another general function: Greene was aware that describing their dreams is an obvious way of giving psychological depth to characters that might otherwise seem too schematic. In The Heart of the Matter dreams are mostly Dunnian¹¹: precognitive, prophetic, like the above mentioned Scobie’s dream of suicide or Helen Rolt’s dreams that she is gripped by Bagster, as she will be in reality after Scobie’s death.

Scobie seems utterly incorruptible; however, little by little it becomes clear that out of his sense of pity for the others, he is ready, if necessary, to break the most cherished laws of both

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⁹ **Freud, Sigmund** (1856-1939) – Austrian neuropsychologist, founder of psychoanalysis, and one of the major intellectual figures of the 20th century, analyzed the complex symbolic processes underlying dream formation: proposed that dreams are the disguised expression of unconscious wishes, clarified the understanding of the relations between the unconscious and conscious portions of the mind and the workings of the id, ego, and superego. (accessed 7 February 2005, available from: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Freud](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Freud))

¹⁰ **Jung, Carl Gustav** (1875-1961) – Swiss psychiatrist, influential thinker, and founder of analytical psychology. Jung’s unique and broadly influential approach to psychology has emphasized understanding the psyche through exploring the worlds of dreams, art, mythology, world religion and philosophy. He emphasized the importance of balance and harmony. He cautioned that modern humans rely too heavily on science and logic and would benefit from integrating spirituality and appreciation of the unconscious realm. (accessed 5 May, 2007, available from: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carl_Jung](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carl_Jung))

¹¹ **Dunne, John William** (1875 - 1949) – an early aircraft designer, Dunne became seriously interested in the nature of Time. Through years of experimentation with precognitive dreams and hypnagogic states he posited that our experience of Time as linear was an illusion brought about by human consciousness. Dunne argued that past, present and future were in fact simultaneous and only experienced sequentially because of our mental perception of them. It was his belief that in the dream state the mind was not shackled in this way and was able to perceive events in the past and future with equal facility. (accessed 19 December 2006, available from: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_William_Dunne](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_William_Dunne))
Church & State. It becomes obvious when Scobie experiences a feeling of responsibility experienced as pity towards the Portuguese Captain who had hidden a letter to his daughter in Germany in his cabin. During wartime it is an offence, which Scobie should, as a policeman, report to the authorities and this would greatly endanger the captain’s career. However, when Scobie reads the captain’s letter he comes across the following passage:

“My dear, I’m growing old (...) I am not a good man. You do not know how easy it is for me to commit the unforgivable despair. Then I think of my daughter. There was just enough good in me once for you to be fashioned. A wife shares too much of a man’s sin for perfect love. But a daughter many save him at the last. Pray for me, little spider. Your father who loves you more than life,” (Greene, 1991, 54)

the empathy of fatherhood deepens in him, because Scobie did have a daughter and he can understand a father’s love for his child, which is the only unconditional love of one human being toward another, the only human emotion which is divinely pure. Thus, Scobie refuses to apply the rule of law ignoring the human dimension and tries to find a solution to a problem. But though his decision to help the Portuguese captain appears charitable, he still feels corrupted:

“Fraser said cheerfully, “Burning the evidence?” and looked down into the tin. The name had blackened: there was nothing there surely that Fraser could see – except a brown triangle of envelope that seemed to Scobie obviously foreign. He ground it out of existence with a stick and looked up at Fraser to see whether he could detect any surprise or suspicion (...) Only his own heart-beats told him he was guilty – that he had joined the ranks of the corrupt police officers.” (ibid., 55)

But it is Louise who gnaws the hole that is destined to grow into “an enormous breach [in] (...) his integrity” (ibid., 115). Scobie has no ambitions in his career – to his wife’s disappointment. As Greene puts it, “[British w]omen [in the colony] depended so much on pride, pride in themselves, their husbands, their surroundings. They were seldom proud, it seemed to him, of the invisible,” (ibid., 21) which reveals the conflict between Scobie’s and Louise’s moral reasoning: while Scobie tries to preserve abstract principles of justice and love of humanity, Louise depends on concrete indications of success like promotion. The fact that he has been passed over yet again for a promotion to Commissioner of Police in favour of a younger man causes Louise great distress, both for her personal ambition and her hopes that the local British community will begin to accept her: “I’ll never be able to show my face at the club again” (ibid., 23). Louise starts to find her life in the colony unbearable and decides to move to South Africa to get away from the shame of her husband’s failure. Though Scobie wonders if any human being can arrange another’s happiness and even considers the desire to be happy in a world so filled with pain and suffering to be impossible, he still tries to make Louise happy and promises to find a way to pay for her passage to South Africa. Scobie’s attempts to secure a loan from the bank fail, thus leaving him the only way to find the money – to borrow it from a Syrian man named Yusef, a local black marketeer who is depicted as the embodiment of evil. The paradox is that even being
'the Just’ Scobie is ready to waive his principles to secure the happiness of the ones who are dear to him no matter what price he has to pay. Transaction with Yusef becomes the first step to Scobie’s incremental downfall. Although Scobie views it as a business deal Yusef will try to exploit this relationship and drive Scobie down to his own level which involves avoidance of punishment and acquisition of power without any respect for a moral order underlying rules. At this point, Greene’s tale is a fairly believable melodrama in which he places both man and land in an arena where the latter is filled with evil and the former is waiting to be infected by it.

What Greene does next is he complicates the plot with additions that do not seem organic to his design: to test man’s ability to retain faith. When Louise is gone to South Africa, having done his duty, Scobie feels a temporary contentment: “The sadness was peeling off his mind, leaving contentment. He had done his duty. Louise was happy” (Greene, 1991, 103). However his peace is disturbed when he has to receive the survivors of a torpedoed ship. When a small six year-old girl almost dying arrives on a stretcher, Scobie is shocked that “the child should have been allowed to survive the forty days and nights in the open boat – that was the mystery to reconcile with the love of God. And yet he could believe in no God who was not human enough to love what he had created” (ibid., 121). When Scobie tries to comfort a dying young girl by pretending to be her father, who was killed in the wreck, and prays over her “Take away my peace forever, but give her peace” (ibid., 125), his peace is indeed taken away, and what follows could be interpreted as his period of atonement or purgation. Indeed, sometimes God seems to figure as an essential character in the novel, invoking supernatural agency, as though an additional dimension has been restored and nothing is outside His reach.

Scobie’s fall comes about through what is presented as his dominant characteristic – his overdeveloped sense of pity. It is this, rather than any feelings of lechery, which leads him to have an affair. Another woman enters his life in a very inevitable circumstance. Not long after his wife leaves, a nineteen-year-old woman named Helen Rolt sets sail for West Africa with the husband to whom she has just been married but there is a shipwreck, the man dies and she is left alone clutching an album of postage stamps. Helen easily befriends herself with Scobie who feels drawn to her, as much to the cherished album of stamps as to her physical presence. Pity drives him to increase his interest in the stranded young widow and he soon starts an affair with her and it is with Helen that Scobie experiences true happiness. The only notion of happiness in the novel is the memory of the ‘sirens wailing’ during the first night Scobie spent with Helen. Sadly, Greene allows for only this single night of happiness, and maybe love, for the following day Scobie reflects:

“Was it the butterfly that died in the act of love? But human beings were condemned to consequences. The responsibility as well as the guilt was his (…) he knew what he was about. He had sworn to preserve Louise’s happiness and now he had accepted another and contradictory
responsibility. He felt tired by all the lies he would sometime have to tell; he felt the wounds of those victims who had not yet bled.” (ibid., 161)

Helen represents the beginning of Scobie's downfall, since being with her he is aware of committing a grave sin – adultery, and thus tangles himself in a web of lies and deceit, and that proceeds inexorably to destroy him.

Scobie’s relationship with Helen eventually turns into the game of covering tracks; as he leaves her hut for the first time after they make love, he has already begun “to fashion in his own mind the undetectable crime: he planned the moves ahead: he embarked for the first time in his life on the long legalistic arguments of deceit (…) He looked carefully everywhere for signs of his presence: he straightened a mat and hesitated over an ash-tray. Then at the end of it all he had left his umbrella standing against the wall. It seemed to him the typical action of a criminal.” (ibid., 161)

This proves Scobie is much concerned with how things look to others, and yet he is often blind to the fact that he is a bad deceiver; at the club he muses that he and Helen have evaded the detection of others: “Scobie thought with a tremor of self-disgust, how clever we’ve been: how successfully we’ve deceived the gossipers of a small colony. It oughtn’t to be possible for lovers to deceive so well” (ibid., 191). He does not realize that a colony such as that is like a small provincial village where people live in very close quarters, everyone knows everyone else, everyone watches everyone else and nothing remains hidden. Scobie’s affair is being observed from the very beginning; returning one night from Helen he meets a knowing Wilson:

“I’m sharing with Harris,” Wilson said. (. . .) “I’ve been taking a walk,” Scobie said unconvincingly. “I couldn’t sleep.” It seemed to Wilson that Scobie was still a novice in the world of deceit. (ibid., 168)

When Louise returns, Scobie soon finds himself responsible for the happiness of two people, rather than just of one. This sets up the story’s central conflict: both women trust him, and yet he has to abandon or lie to one. Which one? This moral dilemma, which bond of trust to break, is irresolvable. Scobie is incapable of wounding his wife by admitting his relations with the girl – and equally incapable of wounding the girl by breaking off their relations. His error is that, confusing pity with love, he has, as a result, put himself in the position of God in the women’s lives. He believes that Louise must be protected from the truth of his affair at all costs and foolishly assumes that he and he alone can make Louise’s and Helen’s lives endurable. However, he has an almost astonishing capacity to misjudge women. Louise already knows about the affair while she is in South Africa. Everyone knows about his relationship with Helen, and Louise is connected to enough people that someone finds a way of letting her know:

“Did you know all the time – about her?” Wilson asked.
“It’s why I came home. Mrs. Carter wrote to me. She said everybody was talking. Of course he [Scobie] never realized that. He thought he’d been so clever.” (Greene, 1991, 301)

Aware of his affair with Helen, Louise insists that Scobie fulfils his religious obligations by accompanying her to mass and receive communion with her, knowing that his reception of the Host will be an act of sacrilege since it is a mortal sin for a Catholic to take communion without repenting of sin first. Unlike his wife Louise, Scobie is not a cradle Catholic, but a convert. His faith, however, appears deeper than hers. While many Catholics may easily confess, take the sacrament, and then go back to sin, Scobie is not able to do this, because he is convinced that Helen needs him and he cannot resist responding to a human need of him. This allows him to say: “God can wait, he thought: how can one love God at the expense of one of his creatures?” (ibid., 187). In this quote, Scobie’s unique relationship with God is revealed: to him God is a human being, not a transcendent hegemony. His guilt at betraying the two women is compounded by the sorrow he feels at betraying the God who loves him and whom he also loves. Thus, in Louise’s desire to go with him to communion Scobie feels “as though he were being urged by a kindly and remorseless gaoler to dress for execution” (ibid., 212) and later dwells over the choice of suicide in terms of its theological damnation and conception of the truth: “The truth, he thought, has never been of any real value to any human being – it is a symbol for mathematicians and philosophers to pursue. In human relations kindness and lies are worth a thousand truths. He involved himself in what he always knew was a vain struggle to retain the lies” (ibid., 58)

As Scobie himself notes, “no human being can really understand another, and no one can arrange another’s happiness” (Greene, 1991, 85). Characteristically of many post-war intellectuals in this respect, Greene evinces in the novel a sense of generalized betrayal, apparent in the almost routine assumptions, that people will always let each other down and that nothing much can be expected from human relationships. One of the primary themes that the novel uses to convey the inherent difficulty in communicating and understanding is that of the fundamental unreliability of writing. Throughout The Heart of the Matter there are examples of written communications that are distorted: letters are misspelled or lost or stolen; cables informing Scobie about the illness and subsequent death of his daughter are sent in reverse order, the first telling of his daughter’s death, the second that she was seriously ill with the doctor still hoping; official government telegrams are contradicted by other telegrams; Scobie’s diaries are terse and cryptic. The idea of writing concealing or distorting its own meaning pervades the novel.

The cables Scobie receives from Louise about the death of their daughter also exemplify the distortion of writing: “Catherine seriously ill. Doctor has hope my diving (…) ‘Diving’ was a mutilation – I suppose for ‘darling’” (ibid., 155-6). Instead of breaking the news the cables are
darkly comic; ‘diving’, intended as a term of endearment for Scobie, ironically suggests the condition of the dying girl. Scobie’s letters to his wife while she is away are similar to his diaries: “He had to be accurate: he could comfort only by omission” (ibid., 141). The exactness of the writing is almost absurdly tangential to the essence of his thoughts, and Scobie encounters the same kind of obtuseness when he reads Pemberton’s suicide note; the two men are linked by the impenetrable records they leave behind: “Don’t go and pay the money I owe – the fellow doesn’t deserve it. They may try and get it out of you. Otherwise I wouldn’t mention it. It’s a rotten business for you, but it can’t be helped. Your loving son. The signature was ‘Dicky’ [a hint at Scobie’s nickname ‘Ticki’]. It was like a letter from school excusing a bad report” (ibid., 88).

This breakdown of all forms of communication helps to create the picture of human beings who are totally isolated from one another, constantly misunderstanding and misjudging each other. The Commissioner’s somewhat affectionate appellation ‘Scobie the Just’ may seem ironic in light of Scobie’s later deceptions. It is also ironic that at the very moment that he is lying to his superior, Colonel Wright, about his relationship with Yusef, Scobie makes so favourable an impression that he is promoted to the rank of Commissioner.

But if no living person can understand another then who do we trust? Yusef’s conception of trust is that “You must always know more about them than they do about you” (Greene, 1991, 242). If Louise sometimes rises to the role of an observer and a jailer, it is Yusef who ironically recalls the Great Detective in certain comic respects; because he cannot read or write he stores all his information in his head – a parodic reminder of the intelligence of Sherlock Holmes – and his network of information is so formidable that it much surpasses Scobie’s own woeful inadequacy as a detective. Yusef’s definition of trust ruthlessly connects all human feelings and interactions to the dynamics of power; as he demonstrates in the case of Ali, the most ‘trustworthy’ person is one who can never again speak.

Yusef’s boy has just delivered proof of Scobie’s illegal transactions with Yusef; and Scobie fears Ali has witnessed too much of the interaction. He is suspicious not because of something Ali has done; it is because Scobie is ashamed in front of him. Scobie never sees Ali alive again – he is murdered by the ‘wharf rats’ who do Yusef’s dirty work for him. When he finds Ali’s murdered body he is overcome with grief and says to him, “You served me and I did this to you. You were faithful to me, and I wouldn’t trust you” (Greene, 1991, 248). The destruction of an innocent victim is like the destruction of God for Scobie; however, Ali’s death means so little to Louise that in an attempt to console him she says; “I know it is a terrible thing dear, but you’ve got to put it behind you. You cannot help Ali now” (ibid., 252), which reveals the difference of
attitude between Scobie and his wife to the value of human life as well as Louise’s egotistic nature.

Ironically, the way Yusef views trust is Scobie’s self-perception as well; once dead, he feels he will no longer plague God: “I can’t go on, month after month, insulting you (…) You’ll be better off if you lose me once and for all” (ibid., 258).

God plays a crucial role in *The Heart of the Matter*, because in the end, despite all the secret messages and smuggled diamonds and human betrayals, the novel is about a man’s struggle with his Catholic faith. Scobie’s conflict is particularly interesting because it is not a conflict of faith, but rather a dispute set in legalistic terms; whether a violation of the laws of the Church is justified by the personal sense of duty one feels, which duty, personal or religious, are in the end primary, and what happens when those laws are broken.

Throughout the novel, Scobie constantly puts his fears in the voice and context of religion. References to religion and religious belief permeate the book. A still, small voice of God calls in many different ways, and Scobie senses it at the beginning of his affair with Helen, as he looks out at the sea:

“Somewhere on the face of those obscure waters moved the sense of yet another wrong and another victim, not Louise, not Helen. Away in the town the cocks began to crow for the false dawn.” (Greene, 1991, 170)

These Biblical allusions to the Creation story, and to the betrayal of Christ by Peter, carry the implication that God is present in all things and that nothing is beyond his power.

Like Greene himself, at a certain point Scobie denies Hell as a place full of flames, but sees it as a sense of loss, emphasizing what he means by explaining that you “have to have lost something really important” (ibid., 120). And this shows how Scobie goes through hell in life, when starting to lose everything. Yet, he is constantly struggling to reconcile the demands of his faith with his pity for others and desire to protect them. As one whose life lacks meaningful code, Scobie is tormented by doubts. He has become a Catholic and he tries valiantly to understand his moral quandary through its tenets. Scobie is a man without a country, without a culture, without a philosophical and intellectual framework. He feels no commitment to the traditions that the English community cling to so desperately in the African colony. His allegiance to the professional code erodes in the course of the novel. It is the Catholic faith he has adopted as a convert that anchors him and presents him with a seemingly inflexible moral code. However, it turns out that for Scobie Catholicism offers nothing but impossible paradoxes. Catholics know the truth, in Scobie’s estimation, and are therefore damned by their knowledge: “How often, he thought, lack of faith [in the form of Helen Rolt] helps one to see more clearly than faith.” (ibid., 210)
Interestingly, the more things go badly for Scobie and the further he puts himself from the Church, the stronger his faith as a Catholic becomes, thus revealing Greene’s attitude that awareness of sin strengthens one’s faith in God. Despite believing himself damned as an adulterer, he is unable to break off the affair. Painfully aware of his sinfulness and “what human love had done to him. It had robbed him of love of eternity” (*ibid.*, 258), he still begs God not to abandon him after he commits himself to maintaining the tie with Helen: “Oh God, I have deserted you. Do not you desert me” (*ibid.*, 210). But if he is exasperated by what he experiences as God’s accessibility, Scobie still cannot see Him, as he admits: “I’ve preferred to give you pain rather than give pain to Helen or my wife because I can't observe your suffering. I can only imagine it” (*ibid.*, 258). Scobie is Greene’s perhaps fullest sketch of a Catholic sinner. Even paradoxically displaying Christ-like qualities, he remains a very fallible creature. His ‘sin’ arises from his propensity for pity and his wish to make others happy.

Unable to continue living in deception, Scobie considers suicide as an escape from the cruel grip of a moral double-bind and agonizes over the choice of suicide in terms of its theological damnation – suicide has been preached as the unforgivable sin, the sin of despair. According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, “[b]y despair, man ceases to hope for his personal salvation from God, for help in attaining it or for the forgiveness of his sins” (*Part III, Section II, Chapter I, Article I: Hope 2091, accessed May 5, 2007, available from: http://www.vatican.net/archive/catechism/p3s2c1a1.htm*). Therefore, suicide is against God’s wishes; but then, isn’t God forgiving? Isn’t his unfathomable love reaches out as both a reassurance, and as a call to repent, to come home? Which can we truly trust? The Church’s rule that suicide is unforgivable, or God’s limitless forgiveness of all sins, once one repents? Exactly how deep can be man’s trust in God’s forgiveness? It is only when the burden of sin is great that you really ponder what faith and trust in God really mean. Here Greene exploits one of the great paradoxes of Catholicism. On the one hand, it specifies the concept of mortal sin, which follows from the doctrine of hell and which underpins one of the seven defined Catholic sacraments, that of penance, which originated from and which depends on the fundamental Christian belief that human beings have been endowed with unconditional free will which must consequently have the unrestrained capacity to commit such serious sin that it is punishable by an eternity in Hell. On the other, it offers to such mortal sinners various means of eluding entry to Hell through confession, repentance, and altruism and solidarity with the sufferers. If they were sincere, perhaps they would deserve lenient treatment by the Almighty.

Greene’s attitude to sinners is always one of compassion, even when this seems to fly in the face of the Church’s teaching. He almost dismisses the Catholic concept of mortal sin: “As for mortal sin, I find the idea difficult to accept because it must by definition be committed in
defiance of God. I doubt whether a man making love to a woman ever does so with the intention of defying God” (Greene, 1983, 158 cit. in Watts, 1996, 86)

Reflecting upon the love of God, Scobie thinks, “How desperately he must love” (Greene, 1991, 213), and convinces himself that by sacrificing his own life, he will no longer impose suffering on Louise, Helen and God:

“I can die and remove myself from their blood stream. They are ill with me and I can cure them. And you too God – you are ill with me. I can’t go on, month after month, insulting you (...) You’ll be better off if you lose me once and for all”

“He stood with the gin bottle poised and thought: then Hell will begin, and they’ll be safe from me, Helen, Louise, and You.” (ibid., 258, 294)

Scobie believes that there is a form of charity in his own eventual suicide. The last sentence Scobie utters after taking an overdose of sleeping pills is “Dear God, I love…” (ibid., 265) and he dies with the word of love on his lips extending his love to whoever needs it.

And it is here that the crucial question of the novel is asked most poignantly: was it a sacrifice? If yes, then how far should one sacrifice oneself for the happiness of others? Henry Scobie provides one answer but the novel itself leaves the question open for its readers to ponder.

The ambiguity of death is strong in The Heart of the Matter. From his earliest childhood Greene exhibited a world-weariness that at times reached the brink of despair. Already as a schoolboy he toyed with the idea of suicide. Death attracted him like a magnet. Greene’s characteristic methods of describing death emphasize it. He intensifies the focus of the narrative on the person for whom death is imminent. He heightens the suspense just before a death by shifting the point of view, recording the most minute sensations and impressions. But the character is never taken all the way to the end. The death is followed with the suggestion of a great gap; then the focus shifts abruptly to the thoughts and reactions of those still living. This technique of describing death emphasizes both its finality and its mystery. The individual’s life is seen as a completed progression, with death as its last act. By focusing on the survivors’ often mistaken or incomplete understanding of the deceased, Greene shows our inability to understand life or death. Greene suggests that lives and deaths are all ambiguous, and it is difficult to tell saint from sinner. The reader is left with the impression that something has been launched which the eye cannot follow. That a death may be a ‘happy’ one, however, is sometimes suggested by the circumstances surrounding it and by the sense of possibility inherent in its ambiguity.

The logic of the novel’s ending, though tendentious, has certain predictability. Scobie chooses escape and eternal damnation over confronting the mess he himself has made, ironically (for a policeman) failing miserably at what he conceived would be the perfect, face-saving crime. In order to make his death of some use to at least one of the women to whom he is bound, he
embarks upon an elaborate subterfuge in order to make it appear that he has died of an attack of angina, and manages to fool no one. Predictably enough, in a novel in which all the characters spy upon one another, the entries in his diary where Scobie inserts earlier references to the chest-pains caused by his supposed angina are discovered to be fakes. Ironically, neither Scobie’s childish mistress nor his pious Catholic wife was worth his sacrifice. Both have other men waiting to console them. It is also ironical that had the spy, Wilson, not detected the truth about his faked suicide, Scobie might have become the very embodiment of the man who succeeds by his use of immoral means in attaining an unambiguous good.

The theme of failure is threaded strongly throughout the novel. Each character fails in their ultimate goals by the end of the book. Scobie’s ultimate sacrifice, suicide, fails to bring the expected happiness he imagines it will to his wife. Similarly, Wilson, the man who is pursuing an adulterous affair with Scobie’s wife, an affair she refuses to participate in, is foiled at the end of the novel when Scobie’s wife refuses to give in to his advances even after Scobie’s death. Other instances of failure, both subtler and more obvious, can be seen throughout the work, lending it a muted, dark feeling.

When Scobie’s suicide is discovered, Louise’s narrow-minded Catholic judgement on him is characteristically harsh and her assumption of her husband’s fate is predictable: “He must have known he was damning himself (…) It’s no good even praying” (Greene, 1991, 271). She seeks to understand his death within the confines of narrow dogma she sees it, perhaps correctly, as a sign of Scobie’s weakness but she sees it also in terms of traditional dogma, and it is left to Father Rank to tell her, with some exasperation “For goodness sake, Mrs. Scobie, don’t imagine you – or I – know anything about God’s mercy” (ibid., 271). The paradox is that it is Louise who defends the tenets of Catholicism while Father Rank not only stands up for Scobie’s right for the divine atonement but also doubts the Catholic conception of sin and redemption.

The novel discusses the fundamental issues of faith and salvation, and the paradoxes of good and evil omnipresent in fallen humanity. It also reminds the reader of the fact that nothing and no one is beyond the reach of God whose love passes understanding. In The Heart of the Matter Graham Greene offers an acid and assiduous portrayal of the drama of the human soul. It could be called a study of despair leading to Scobie’s disintegration and suicide. As Graham Greene himself saw it The Heart of the Matter deals with the issues of pity and pride. Scobie was intended to show that pity can be the expression of almost monstrous pride. Greene takes us into the heart of the matter, into Scobie, and it is an almost embarrassing sight, to see such an anguished man turned inside out, as it were.
4. THE MEANING OF LIFE LOST AND REGAINED: A BURNT-OUT CASE

As Graham Greene himself noted about A Burnt-Out Case (1960), he “…went to Belgian Congo in January 1959 with a new novel already beginning to form in [his] head by way of a situation – a stranger who turns up in a remote leper settlement for no apparent reason...” (Greene, 1999, 215-18 cit. in accessed 9 September 2006, available from: http://members.tripod.com/~greeneland/burnt.htm). Greene sets his novel in the Belgian Congo in the late 1950s. However, instead of focusing on the political tension brewing in the Congo of the period, he focuses on the peaceful leproserie where good was being done and healing was accomplished. Doing this, he wants to show the everyday side of Africa, not the dark and troubled side. He wants to reveal the beauty, peace, and healing potential he found in Africa. However, though the geography of the novel is indubitably that of Empire, the focus is on the inner state of the protagonist, Querry. Thus, landscape – a term normally signifying a natural or man-made background – may be interpreted as a spectrum not only of geographical, but also of bodily, emotional, textual, and ideological terrains. Specific descriptions of the wider Africa are spare, sketching an indeterminate region, negatively defined by its perceived “emptiness” (Greene, 1992, 77), and by the capital, Luc – an invented locality.

A Burnt-Out Case is a study of the effects of fame on an artist (presumably reflecting Greene’s own struggles after his own success), and there are a lot of parallels between physical and spiritual disease. The nuns and priests running a remote African leproserie have as their unexpected guest a world famous architect named Querry who arrives anonymously, trying to escape as far as possible from his past and apparently has no intention of leaving.

The somewhat forbidding title of the novel is a term used for those victims of leprosy who can be cured because the disease has eaten about all that it wants – toes, ears, fingers. They are no longer infectious and no longer suffer the excruciating pains of those who undergo cure with their bodies intact. Pain is the alternative to mutilation. Querry is diagnosed as the mental equivalent of a ‘burnt-out case’.

Querry is partly autobiographical character that very much resembles Graham Greene at the time of A Burnt-Out Case. Greene first experienced excessive fame with the success of The Heart of the Matter (1948). With this book’s publication, he was never again in debt, nor did he ever again feel he had to write to survive. More significantly, he gained the name of a “Catholic writer.” The situation got so out of hand the writer came to hate the term and insisted that he was only a writer who happened to be a Catholic. The same thing happened to Querry. After a lifetime spent designing cathedrals and other religious structures, Querry has earned a reputation
for being a good Catholic. However, nothing could be further from the truth than that. Early on in the novel, Query explains why he has stopped building churches:

“The acoustics had to be good of course. The high altar had to be visible to all. But people hated them. They said they weren’t designed for prayer. They meant that they were not Roman or Gothic or Byzantine. And in a year they had cluttered them up with their cheap plaster saints; they took out my plain windows and put in stained glass dedicated to dead pork-packers who had contributed to diocesan funds, and when they had destroyed my space and my light, they were able to pray again, and they even became proud of what they had spoiled. I became what they called a great Catholic architect.” (Greene, 1992, 45)

In the same scene he compares the art of architecture with that of writing. It seems that it is Greene who is actually comparing the writer with the architect. He was disappointed that many of his novels had become spoilt by critics reading too far into them. So he wrote a story about another artist whose work has been overanalyzed, and thus ruined.

Query had long renounced his Catholic faith, and has lost interest in his vocation as well. Gradually whatever fed Query’s vocation ceases to exist. Fallen not through sin, but through boredom and a loss of faith, the fact that Query’s spiritual emptiness is symbolized by the churches he designs, the religious function of which no longer matters for him: “I wasn’t concerned with the people who occupied my space – only with the space” (ibid., 44). He realizes his love of women was really self-love, and his artistic self-expression was the kind that consumes the self.

Query is the victim of a terrible attack of indifference: the sickness of despair has run its course but left him permanently maimed. He has lost touch with love, sentiment, and suffering and no longer finds meaning in art or pleasure in life. Humanity has no grapple on him. Query leaves behind a failed marriage, several mistresses, and a career that has kept him in the public eye for twenty years or more and embarks into the African jungle looking for escape.

We first see him on a boat churning its way up a muddy river in the middle of Africa. The native song describes him as: “a white man who (…) comes from a long way away - we do not know from where - and he tells no one to what place he is going or why” (ibid., 11-2). Query is trying to flee to a place where he can be alone with his own disease, “an empty place” (ibid., 46), as he later tells Colin. Thus, the “emptiness” (ibid., 77) of Africa complements Query’s sexually, emotionally, and spiritually-denuded inner state; an empty space upon which to restore Query’s inner self. However, African landscape not only operates to reflect the mind or the situation of the protagonist, but plays a great part in determining his destiny. Query had the chance to go to the Orient, but Africa – despite its comparative proximity to Europe – “somehow seemed a lot farther off” (ibid., 147). The Orient seems less of “a long way off” (ibid., 146), because it is already familiar to the Western imagination, as a stereotype. Hence the prospect of a plane “to Tokyo” sends Query on an imaginative trip to a land of “geishas [and] cherry
blossom” (*ibid.*, 146-7). Compared to the discursive-richness of the Orient, Africa is a denuded space, less familiar within Western discourse and, therefore, more exotic.

We never learn all the details of his life before he shows up unannounced at a leper colony in Africa. Querry simply shows up at that leper colony, asking to stay, and is willing to perform any menial task that he is given. He believes that “perhaps [in the leproserie] there would be enough pain and (...) fear to distract” (*ibid.*, 111) him from the encumbrance of a public persona that no longer corresponds with his own estimate of himself. He seeks to regain the meaning of life that has once been lost to him (thus is his name ‘Querry’, which brings to mind the Latin verb ‘quaere’ – question, search for, or seek in vain). He might have lost his capacity to love but his scruple retains.

The account of the leproserie is no gratuitous horror but a careful, discriminating, accurate rendition of an African leper colony and the diligent work done there by the patients, the priests and the doctor. Greene was particularly careful to get the exactly right details of leprosy and its treatment. In the novel, there is no shoulder-shrugging acceptance of pain and disease but a sympathetic rendering of the struggle to treat, cure or at least contain an appallingly disfiguring and crippling ailment. Greene also draws out all the humor he can from the depressing reality of the leproserie and of life. Nothing is too sacred for Greene not to attack: “Sometimes I think God was not entirely serious when he gave man the sexual instinct (...) Nor when he invented moral theology” (*ibid.*, 191).

The fathers who run this community of lepers are too busy with their work to bother about theological debates; they would rather talk about the practicalities of being useful than about the state of each other’s souls and are more interested in curing the natives’ bodies that in regulating their sexual mores. They worry about building houses and hospitals; they are content with a simple roof without walls for a church. When it is suggested to the Superior that Querry is planning to build him a cathedral his first thought is about how many houses he could build with the money it would take to build a cathedral. Next to physical well-being of their patients, they care most for mental well-being. Lessons in reading and writing are more important to the fathers than lessons in dogma and theology. They are concerned with providing a place for the mutilated to learn to be of use again and for everyone to become educated.

It would be natural for the fathers to wonder why a man who seems perfectly normal and healthy would want to live in a leproserie. But they never ask any questions. They see in Querry less a mutilated man in need of help than an architect whose skills can help them rebuild their dilapidated buildings. They give him space and peace and expect nothing in return. Their worries are about making him feel comfortable, not about making him believe in their faith. These Catholic priests firmly reject any imposing of their view on the people whom they serve and
heal. Even when he argues with the Superior, he is not preached at, only reasoned with. Most importantly, the fathers try to shelter him from those who could harm him. When Marie Rycker comes on behalf of her husband, the Superior refuses to let her see Querry because he had made a promise to leave him undisturbed. And they keep their promises as long as possible.

The leproserie offers a particular type of sociality, separating socially-stigmatized lepers from the rest of the society. As a place shunned and feared by the wider world, the leproserie resembles Querry’s desire to avoid the public realm. His room also suggests that he seeks to run away and to get rid of the old identity. Greene describes it as “the only one in the [leproserie] completely bare of symbols, bare indeed of almost everything. No photographs of a community or a parent” (1992, 74). In other words, there is nothing imparting a trace of memory, such as a photograph which reminds of something familiar and thus helps to maintain the bond with the past, nothing signifying either his investment in this space, or that from which he has come. Wishing to drop off the past altogether, Querry seeks pure, “empty space” (ibid., 46).

At the leproserie Querry befriends Doctor Colin who is religiously uncommitted and has his own special sense of what Christian love means. He is the most grounded character, who whilst losing his faith has maintained his faith in serving humanity. Not only does he do the most work to ameliorate the suffering of the lepers and works hard to heal the easy cases of leprosy, but he also works hard to find a use for the burnt-out cases. By putting them to use, he is able to give them a desire to keep living. In addition, Colin is much more able to deal with people on a human level than the fathers of the leproserie. Collin is originally skeptical of Querry, seeing him as a Father Damien12 emulator, or a ‘leprophil’ as he calls it, but eventually he warms to Querry. When Colin first meets Querry he realizes he will be one of these burnt-out cases, once he is healed. The treatment of Querry is not an easy case for Colin. However, Colin is not used to give up. When Querry asks if he can be cured, Colin replies, “Perhaps your mutilations haven’t gone far enough yet. When a man comes here too late the disease has to burn itself out” (Greene, 1992, 46).

It is Colin how realizes the similarities between Querry and Deo Gratias. Deo Gratias (whose name means ‘Thanks to God’ and has double significance: partly ironic, since the man is a leper; and partly non-ironic, since caring for Deo Gratias helps to restore Querry) has just been declared cured when Querry arrives, but because of his mutilations, he will never be able to

12 Father Damien (January 3, 1840 – April 15, 1889) – a Roman Catholic priest from Belgium and member of the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, a missionary religious order. Damien is most noted for his devotion to caring and ministering to people with what was then widely known as leprosy, forced by government-sanctioned medical segregation, living on the island of Molokai in the Kingdom of Hawaii. In the Roman Catholic and Anglican traditions, as well as other denominations of Christianity, Damien is considered the spiritual patron for Hansen’s Disease, HIV and AIDS patients as well as outcasts. (accessed 18 May 2007, available from: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Father_Damien)
leave the leproserie. The material decay specific to Deo Gratias’ form of leprosy, that is, Hansen’s disease, which atrophies the nerves, is pertinent to Query’s emotional lack, in that he now no longer feels anything. Colin gives him the job of looking after Query in an attempt to give Deo Gratias a reason to live. When Deo Gratias disappears into the forest one day Query goes in search of him. Query does not really care for Deo Gratias yet. He tries to ignore the man, especially because his name, which is awkward for a convert to atheism to say. But he goes into the forest, nonetheless, more in search of an adventure to alleviate his boredom than in search of his servant.

The forest is harmonized with Query’s purpose of distancing himself from the world, rejecting familiar Western World mythologies, such as those located in “the woods of Europe, with witches and charcoal burners [sic] and cottages of marzipan” (ibid., 63). By gradually erasing and resisting all signs of modern man’s presence (“[it] would soon convert [the road] to a surface scrawl, like the first scratches on a wall of early man” (ibid., 31-32)), the forest is both the setting for, and symbol of Query’s rejection of civilization; its immanent primitivism enables Query to disassociate himself from Modern myths – upon which his fame, as a Catholic architect, is based.

When Query arrives in Africa, he is not suicidal, just tired of the life he had been living. He does not care enough to kill himself, but he also does not really care if he dies. When he goes into the forest in search of Deo Gratias he wonders if he is perhaps looking for an accident (ibid., 56). But he is not suicidal enough to travel beyond the forest path in search of death, so when Query finds Deo Gratias, with a broken ankle, he remains with his servant through the night. Query notices that Deo Gratias is nearly paralyzed with fear, but Query does not fear the forest, or anything else for that matter. So he stays out of human decency and boredom, not out of any saintly motives. Here we are introduced to another space where Query might maintain some sort of functional social existence. Greene recasts the idea of a secular personal peace, with regard to Query’s inward, psychic retreat: Pendélé. Pendélé is situated in imaginative space, somewhere between dreams and reality. It is also described by Deo Gratias as somewhere to be shared with others. Query enters the narrative emotionally marooned. But, as his development of a good simple relationship with Deo Gratias testifies, Query gradually evolves into one who adopts the sharable, social quality of Pendélé as somewhere – both geographical and spiritual – that he himself is trying to locate: “[i]f there was a place called Pendélé, he thought, I would never bother to find my way back” (ibid. 172).

Query’s past is revealed in the shape of a fairy-tale about the King’s jeweler. The King is God and “he no longer believed all those arguments historical, philosophical, logical and etymological that he had worked out for the existence of the King. There was left only a memory
of the King who had lived in his parents’ heart and not in any particular place” (Greene, 1992, 158). The atheist Dr. Colin who believes only in science and the progress of human evolution, points out to Query: “You’re too troubled by your lack of faith, Query. You keep on fingering it like a sore you want to get rid of. I am content with the myth; you are not you have to believe or disbelieve” (ibid., 192). Query’s rejection of faith hints that he is still preoccupied with faith. He reflects that the state of unbelief might be proof of God’s existence. He supposes that for his sins or his neglect of Him, God has punished him by letting his belief die; but if he infers that this has happened, then, logically enough, his faith is maintained. Thus, ‘faith’ is tantamount to the hope that what is now not believed may yet have a basis; it is a strange trust that is nourished by skepticism.

Thus, voicing one of the most ingenious religious paradoxes in Greene’s work, A Burnt-Out Case affords an audacious (but valid) claim that is possible for a man of intelligence, modesty, honesty, and remorse to make his life without a god. The claim resembles existentialist tenet, which believes in an individualism that is free from any social and external influence in order to achieve autonomous decision-making in life and ultimately giving control over one’s fate.

The novel tells the story of Query’s gradual recovery. Colin convinces him to help in the building of the new hospital, and between that, intellectual conversation with Colin, and the space the fathers give him, Query is healed. A paradox, but Query who was suffocating in the poisonous atmosphere of the civilization finds peace of mind and is gradually cured of his ‘disease’ in the place where healthy men fear to enter. Colin plays the diligent doctor and fights against all that begins to disturb Query’s peace. The first time Colin notices healing in Query is when he laughs at a joke. Colin is shocked because the laugh sounds so little like a real laugh, it had been out of use for so long (Greene, 1992, 115). But the laugh does indicate healing. Another indication of healing is one Query comes to realize on his own. When the journalist Parkinson asks Query if he really knows himself, Query responds, “We have to if we are to be cured. When we reach the farthest point, there’s no mistaking it” (ibid., 111). This is part of the reason he talks to Parkinson; he has come to understand himself; he is at the farthest point. Also, curiosity indicates healing. Query inquires about the doctor’s personal life. Colin responds, “Perhaps if I tested your skin now I would get a second negative reaction” (ibid., 121). The first negative reaction, he tells Query, was when he showed curiosity about Deo Gratias. He is beginning to care about other human being. Just before his peace is disturbed, Query admits to Colin that he has finally become happy (ibid., 94). Happiness does not prove he is cured, but it proves he wants to be cured.
In spite of the fathers’ attempts to protect Query, and Colin’s attempts to provide the right environment for healing, negative influences still find their way to Query, to steal the little peace he has found. The peace begins to erode when Query is recognized by Rycker.

Andre Rycker, who prides himself on his informed Catholicism, is most repellent character in the novel. He believes that he loves God and attempts to perform His wishes daily. Rycker is a former seminarian, who left because he was never taken seriously, a spoiled priest, morbidly preoccupied with the rights, duties and symbolism of a Christian marriage. He is married to young Marie, who loves to dream about shoe shopping, misses her dog back home, and reads romance fiction. In Rycker’s mind Marie will never be fit to talk with about matters of the soul, and to him, there is nothing else worth talking about. That is why he often visits the fathers in the hope that they will provide spiritual guidance for him. But the fathers have more important things to do than counsel Rycker about his religious scruples.

Greene portrays Rycker as being completely blind. Not only is he blind about the Europeans around him, but also about the real Africa as well. Rycker is one of those who have come to Africa to suffer. He wants the Congo to be a dark and troubling place where his outward suffers will mirror his inner sufferings. Spending as much time on the road as he does to get to the leproserie or to Luc, he must often see scenes like those he passes on the way to the Governor’s house. To him these naked, clay-covered women, giant statues, and other “inexplicable objects” are the “fingerprints of Africa” (Greene, 1992, 61). He completely fails to understand them. He is angry at Colin’s refusal to accept clothing donations. Rycker cannot realize that Colin refuses the donation because there are not enough clothes for all, and he knows that the jealously this would create would be worse than their lack of clothing. Rycker thinks this is ridiculous and says lepers should not be jealous (ibid., 64-5). It is beyond his understanding that a disease does not take human nature away from these people. They are sick but they are not beggars. They can still be jealous and they can still demand dignity.

When Rycker hears of Query all he knows is that this man was once called ‘the great Catholic architect’. Rycker and his wife try to stay up on current events by reading magazines and spending time in the nearby city of Luc. So they dig out an old magazine with a picture of the famous Query to see if it could be the same person. Rycker is incapable of keeping a secret, so, contrary to Query’s request of him, he tells everyone he encounters that ‘the Query’ has moved to the neighborhood. Because he wants Query to become his best friend and confidant, and because he is too wrapped up in his own worldview, he never notices that Query is like all the others and he may not care about it. Later, Query notices that Rycker is “like a wall so plastered over with church announcements that you couldn’t even see the brickwork behind” (ibid., 144).
Rycker complains to Query about the fathers saying that they never listen to him. He says they always want to talk about new wells, never about the human soul (ibid., 40). Query also would rather prefer to talk about wells, but Rycker only hears what he wants to hear. He persistently flees from genuine dialogue with anyone he encounters. He never listens to other people; he never attempts to comprehend what they are trying to convey when they speak to him; he is totally insensitive to their responses, their feelings, their thoughts, and their search for a worthy life. Rycker never speaks to other persons; instead he speaks to the idea of these persons that he has framed in his mind. This is especially evident in his interactions with his wife and Query. The possibility to respond with sensitivity, to relate dialogically, comes up. Rycker evades it.

At their first meeting, Query indicates that he would not call himself a Catholic. Rycker ignores the statement and spreads lies about the architect’s ardent devotion and profound dedication to Catholicism. This is only the beginning of Rycker’s lies. He goes on to tell everyone in Luc that Query is going to build a cathedral in Africa. Query never once gives Rycker a reason to believe this. At the meeting, Query also intimates that perhaps Rycker should be more sensitive to Marie’s difficult situation – even if, according to Rycker, she seems deaf to his love of God. Rycker, however, rejects the possibility that he might correct his actions. In his opinion, his belief in God justifies his actions, which include callously destroying the freedom of other people.

Rycker becomes dangerous to Query when he perverts a simple story he hears about Deo Gratias. After hearing about this incident he is so eager to make Query into a saint that he is able to completely change the story without realizing it. He tells a room full of people:

“[Query] went out into the bush two weeks ago, they say, to find a leper who had run away. He spent the whole night with him in the forest, arguing and praying, and he persuaded the man to return and complete his treatment. It rained in the night and the man was sick with fever, so he covered him with his body” (ibid., 63).

He has no need to know the facts. He believes he understands Query’s heart, therefore, he knows what must have happened in the forest. Finally, Rycker’s lies become so overwhelming for Query that, half joking, he says he is tempted to seduce Marie so that her husband will stop thinking of Query as of such a saint. By the time Rycker comes to believe Query has an affair with his wife, Query has come to think Rycker is so absurd that he does not realize the danger Rycker poses, until it is too late.

The responses of Query, Dr. Collin, and all the priests at the leper colony to Rycker are a partially veiled contempt. Except for Father Thomas. Father Thomas is the next person to cause trouble in Query’s life. He is a similar kettle of fish to Rycker and responds to the Church teachings with a belief that at its centre is nothing more than ritualistic clichés. He values
teaching the catechism more than the alphabet and he is angry at the nuns for allowing a woman who keeps having children by different fathers to be a teacher (Greene, 1992, 84-5). The Superior even tries to convince Father Thomas to return to Europe. But, like Rycker, Father Thomas wants to be in a place where he will suffer physically (he originally asked the church to send him to China). He seems to persuade himself into a kind of false piety as a way to cope with choosing a vocation which does not seem to have chosen him. Similarly to Rycker, Father Thomas claims to be suffering from spiritual afflictions and is quick to consider the possibility of Query providing the panacea to cure their jaded existence. However, early in the novel the Superior is quite perspicacious when he says of Rycker: “When a man has nothing else to be proud of he is proud of his spiritual problems” (ibid., 50). The Superior also identifies a similar problem in Father Thomas, who assumes that Query is a saint-like character. Father Thomas is sure that he knows the truth and never listens to others. A sense of doubt or some form of evaluative process is necessary when one considers embarking on judging human actions and motivations. Yet, both Rycker and Father Thomas seem so certain of their beliefs that a slight of honour or a simple misunderstanding can result in a minor dilemma unraveling into a catastrophic conclusion.

Father Thomas becomes dangerous to Query when he hears and believes the lies Rycker is spreading. Father Thomas believes Rycker’s story after asking Deo Gratias if it is true. Deo Gratias tells him it is, but the Superior points out to Father Thomas that he does not understand the African people: “When you have been in Africa a little longer, you will learn not to ask an African a question which many be answered by yes. It is their form of courtesy to agree. It means nothing at all” (ibid., 87). However, Father Thomas refuses to believe the Superior. Instead, he begins to elevate Query in the same way Rycker has done. When Query denies having faith, Father Thomas insists he has been given the gift of aridity. Query becomes frustrated and insists that Father Thomas does not understand what he has tried to say. But Father Thomas is too blinded by what he wants to be true to see what really is true.

In the course of the novel Query is beginning to settle down and even learning to ignore Rycker and Father Thomas; however, the outside world will not be so easily put away, and even in the leproserie Query finds his peace threatened. A celebrated journalist seeks him out, a fat man who “carries his corruption on the surface of his skin like phosphorous” (ibid., 109). Montagu Parkinson is seemingly sophisticated, desensitized, evil manipulator who always seems to remain innocent, whatever falsehood he spreads. At the moment described in the novel, Parkinson is a journalist without a story. He has come to Africa to cover a political event but finds he has arrived too late. Not wanting to return home without something, he tracks down Query.
By the time he meets Parkinson, Querry is exhausted by the lies Rycker has been spreading. He tells Parkinson the truth about himself and hopes that some of that truth will appear in the story. When Parkinson’s first article comes out Querry is infuriated. It tells Rycker’s version of the story. Nothing Querry had actually said appears in the article, because Parkinson is not concerned with truth. He only wants to gain more importance and accomplishes it by writing history. He says, to Querry’s back, “I don’t mind you being a religious fake, Querry, but I’ll show you that you can’t use me to ease your bleeding conscience. I wouldn’t be surprised if there weren’t pilgrims at your shrine in twenty years, and that’s how history’s written, believe you me” (ibid., 117). Parkinson is more than just a bad journalist. He gets all facts wrong and he does so intentionally. He really wants to write fiction, to have the power to move an audience in the direction he chooses. So he twists fact into the fiction he wants people to believe. Parkinson is already beyond any kind of emotional suffering. He sold his soul to the devil of success.

Surprisingly, Querry’s anger is directed at Rycker, not Parkinson. He realizes that Parkinson had to invent a story to make it news worthy, and that Rycker simply offered the most sensational story. He does not really forgive Parkinson, but he pities him enough to not blame him. These were Rycker’s lies; Parkinson was merely the means of spreading them.

Querry’s final tormentor is the nearly innocent Marie, Ricker’s young wife. Though she plays such an important part in the plot, Rycker’s young wife is rather lightly sketched in, as are some of the other characters. She is so young that she could be his daughter. She was born into a colonial life and is now expected to act the part of a good little colonial wife, but she has no interest in this life. Greene insists we feel sympathy for her:

“She refused to believe that this was the end, growing old in solitude with her husband and the smell of margarine and the black faces and the scrap-metal, in the heat and the humidity. She awaited day by day some radio signal which would announce the hour of liberation. Sometimes she thought that there were no lengths to which she would not go for the sake of liberation” (1992, 139).

This is not a life she has chosen for herself.

Andre Rycker uses bizarre psychological and religious methods of oppression to maneuver his young wife into a situation in which her freedom is destroyed. He is violent and she fears him when he is drunk; he eventually hits her in their last confrontation. He is also sexually abusive. Rycker takes Catholic teachings about sex to an extreme. He believes sex should never be enjoyed and says he only married to follow Paul’s advice to keep from burning. By the time Querry meets her, Marie has come to dread sleeping with her husband.

Another of Marie’s genuine complaints is that she is terribly lonely. She lives hours from the closest Europeans and sees them rarely. When someone offers to teach her to play cards she must decline because her husband has forbidden her this activity. She is kept quiet and meek by her
husband, and he is quick to scold her for any behavior he believes to be inappropriate. He does not even like her reading romance novels; she must do so in secret. Even the people living around her are inaccessible to her. Rycker’s factory employs natives but they speak a language Marie has never been taught. If she had attempted to communicate with the natives, Rycker would probably have been angry, but she never tries. To her Africa is a prison no different than where a heroine from one of her novels might be imprisoned.

As a consequence, Marie rebels against the egocentric, stupid, and evil manipulations of her husband in a subtly childish manner, which seems to be the only way that she can salvage a bit of freedom from the clutches of his uncouth religious fanaticism. She never confronts her asinine, callous husband straightforwardly, as if sensing correctly that confronting Rycker would only bring an insensitive and violent response.

Trapped in a horrible marriage, Marie, however, is the only character who seems to take control of her destiny. When Querry first meets her he feels sorry that she is trapped far from home with a man like her husband. When he is able to give her assistance he does so gladly because she seems so innocent. But she quickly turns on him when she discovers a way out of Africa. This way is to say that Querry is the father of her baby. If he accepts the lie she would be happy to make him her knight in shining armor; if he denies the lie she will be sent home, which will make her happy as well. What she cannot see is that for Querry it is an impossible situation. He tells her, “You’ve burned the only home I have” (ibid., 184). All he wants is a place of peace and quiet to call home; she has chased him away from it. Mary is the only one brave enough to dare escape her circumstances, although her choice of feigning a Querry-induced pregnancy had its own tragic consequences.

Querry is accused by Marie of getting her pregnant. This charge is complicated by Querry’s ongoing need to debate whether he needs God to be happy. He decides that happiness or its opposite need have nothing to do with the intervention of either God or the Church. The irony is that both Rycker and Father Thomas are the first ones to believe Marie. They believed Querry was a saint when Querry insisted he was not, and then instantaneously believe Querry is an adulterer when Querry claims the opposite.

The novel’s ending is far from optimistic. Having lost his faith in God but finally regained happiness and desire to live for others, Querry absurdly dies at the hand of the man who is blinded by groundless jealousy. It is rather ironic as the author allows Querry to be cured and kills him. On Querry’s last night alive the fathers have a party. They all sit around drinking and laughing, and Querry realizes he is now able to enjoy the fun around him (Greene, 1992, 175). On the same night Colin says about him, “It’s much more difficult to cure the mind than the body, and yet I think the cure is nearly complete” (ibid., 177). It is also ironic that Querry is
killed by the former seminarian Rycker who claimed to love God, perhaps, only because he never loved people.

However, Greene implies that this is actually the best ending that could be expected. As the Superior tells Colin, “Everybody will have got what they wanted (. . .) Rycker feels he has become important both to God and man (. . .) Mme Rycker will soon be free to go home and she will keep the child. M. Parkinson has a much better story than he had ever hoped to find” *(ibid., 197)*. And what he leaves unsaid about Querry is that he had hoped to never leave Africa; he wanted to be buried next to Colin and Colin’s already buried wife, in what he calls the “atheist corner” of the cemetery *(ibid., 192)*.

In Greene’s own words, the situation in the novel is an attempt to give dramatic expression to various types of belief, half belief and non-belief (Greene. *cit.* in *accessed 26 March 2007*, available from: http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/customer-reviews/0140185399/ref=cm_cr_dp_2_1/002-2216945-0951236?ie=UTF8&customer-reviews.sort%5Fby=-SubmissionDate&n=283155), in the kind of setting removed from world politics and household-preoccupations, where such differences are felt acutely and find expression. *A Burnt-Out Case* is not a novel of great intensity of feeling or one much concerned with the violently changing Africa which is its locale. The events, however, are less important than the conversations, quietness, retrospective air, and the parabolic quality of the plot. The protagonist’s tiredness and detachment affect the novel as a whole. Combining his rich travel experience with a style of the utmost calm, lucidity and simplicity, Greene invests in *A Burnt-Out Case* a moral dilemma that gives it an edge of seriousness and a whiff of suspense. The novel exposes what most religious people do not wish to confront: the re-examination, and possibly the renewal of love at the painfully unbearable realization of the cruel truth that they do not love despite all the scrupulous church-going and the lip worship.

**CONCLUSIONS**

The research reveals Greene to be is one of the most interesting and complex English novelists, who was attracted by the mystery of the human nature. Greene examined the powers that affect human behaviour and determine one’s destiny. He strove to understand the rules of human existence. In his works he discussed the questions of the meaning of life, man’s double nature, betrayal and treachery, pity and responsibility, and dealt with the theme of pursuit, of the relationship between the hunter and the hunted. Yet he also concentrated on portraying the internal life of the characters, their mental, emotional and spiritual depths. His characters are deeply troubled by internal struggles, world-weariness and cynicism and living in seedy, sordid
or rootless circumstances. They make attempts to understand the nature of their existence and their relationship with God. Greene is good at providing characters with a variety of situations, settings and relationships which allow to reveal their essence. He is interested in the ways certain moral principles are interpreted and displayed in the human relationships. According to Greene, it is impossible to draw a clear line between good and evil. Zealous Catholics (Louise in The Heart of the Matter, Rycker in A Burnt-Out Case) in his novels turn out to be selfish and callous. The characters that seem to be failures, on the other hand, are seen as being nearer to God than those more successful in worldly ways, and in the end the greatest sinners turn out to be the truest believers. In complicated circumstances, respectable people suddenly violate moral norms and the ones who are expected to act mean appear to be the real heroes.

To reveal his vision of the human nature, Greene applied paradox mixed with severe irony and social satire. He exploited the most ingenious religious paradoxes of Catholicism – the paradox of the holy sinner and the paradox of faith without belief. Paradox as a means of character disclosing in the novels directly results from the writer’s life perception, his understanding of the depth of the human fall and the great contradictions that may find their way into the human consciousness. Greene doubted the values which are normally accepted as indisputable and was convinced that the greatest vices are hidden under the mask of virtue. According to him, human nature is inherently corrupt. Evil is an essential element of life and it may easily find home in the human body. Even seemingly innocent and saint-like characters turn out to be utterly corrupted and fallible creatures, suffering from purblind selfishness and appalling spiritual pride that hides under the mask of pity.

Man’s destiny is total loneliness: no man can arrange other’s happiness nor share his or her fate or vocation. In his novels Greene evokes a sense of generalized betrayal, assuming that people will always let each other down and that nothing much can be done about it.

Greene had one of the most recognizable writing styles of twentieth century English authors – realistic, with clear, exciting plots, harmonizing imagery with the themes. There is no waste of words. To avoid artificial pompousness, even touching upon serious matters Greene avoided using serious tone. For that purpose he applied bitter irony combined with skepticism, satire and humor which help to reveal the writer’s point. Another feature typical of Greene’s writing is lean writing style combined with deep expressive implications. The implication (both in dialogues and descriptions) often helps to understand what is left unsaid thus revealing the author’s intentions. A single word, detail, or hint may point out a set of causes and consequences, or disclose character’s inner state. Greene never imposes his point of view upon the reader. Instead, he uses original and unexpected verbal images and carefully selected vocabulary to reveal it. Sometimes they are poetic, sometimes intentionally rude; however, they always serve their
purpose by helping the reader to get to the essence. Greene’s manner of writing, beyond doubt, proves him as a master story-teller.

Further studies must be conducted in order to go deeper into certain aspects of the human nature in other G. Greene’s fictional works.
SUMMARY


Norint pasiekti užsibrėžtą tikslą buvo numatyta:

✓ ištirti G. Greene’o filosofinius ir estetinius požiūrius, taip pat pateikti periodo po Antrojo Pasaulinio karo bendro istorinio ir literatūrinio fono analizę ir nustatyti, kokios įtakos turėjo minėtų elementų žmogaus prigimties sąvokos pasireiškimui parinktuose kūriniuose;
✓ pateikti pasirinktų romanų analizę;
✓ atskleisti G. Greene’o žmogaus prigimties sąvoką;
✓ nustatyti, kokios stilistinės bei kontekstinės priemonės buvo naudojamos žmogaus prigimties sąvokai išreikšti pasirinktuose romanuose.

Darbo tikslui pasiekti buvo naudojamas literatūrinio teksto analizės metodas.

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