Chapter III

Theorem (1)
Graham Greene has written some thirty books, twenty one of them novels or 'entertainments', and the rest short stories, travel-records, plays, collections of essays, and autobiography. He calls his less serious novels 'entertainments', though the distinction is very often thin. *Brighton Rock*, for instance, was first published as a novel and then relegated to the rank of 'entertainments' in the American and Penguin editions and again listed as 'novel' in the Uniform Edition series. Similarly, *The Quiet American*, which lacks the unity of the preceding novels, has been included in that category. Atkins rightly observes that "the essential product of an author's mind should be indivisible, regardless of its superficial lightness or gravity". Moreover, some of the circumstances, characters and settings in his 'entertainments' are morally and artistically as significant as anything in the more serious ones.

1 John Atkins: *Graham Greene* (London, 1970)
which Greene prefers to call 'novels'. In any case, for purposes of a consideration of the themes of Graham Greene's fiction, this distinction is unimportant.

The object of the preceding two chapters was to focus attention on the fact that Graham Greene's individual vision and his interpretation of life were largely influenced by his Roman Catholic faith and by his obsession with evil and its natural concomitants, despair, failure, lust, hatred, violence and squalor. This influence, therefore, is naturally reflected in his themes, motifs, settings, and symbols. It would, however, be wrong to suggest that Greene wrote according to a thesis and that his themes are exercises in the working out of that thesis. A writer's predilections are bound to manifest themselves in a certain pattern which, in fact, quite often gives his work a structural unity and constitutes his vision of life. At its best, the novel in the hands of Greene is, in Friling's phrase, an agent of his moral imagination.

A typical Graham Greene novel is a well-told crime story of some sort in which faith, or its absence, is the chief issue. It is generally set
against a sordid background, and its characters are quite often repulsive. The context is invariably the twentieth century — except in his very first novel *The Man Within*. Through suffering and pain, the character of the central figure is sought to be elevated to a more heroic stature. This process of elevation of the character of the protagonist in Graham Greene's novels is the most significant element in his themes; and this makes for the central action or the recurring motif in the novels. It is here, again, that Greene's very characteristic and individual approach is noticed. It is very different from the old, traditional approach of the creators of the romantic heroes.

In the words of Karl:

Having assumed that the romantic hero is surely dead, Greene still believes that man can be heroic, although in his terms heroic takes on a different line from that in previous times. Greene has reached back beyond the superficial romantic hero of the nineteenth century, to the Greek concept of tragedy, at the same time remembering that Greek tragedy in itself must be modified to suit a basically irreligious, democratic age. Greene feels he must allow for the "fall" that is central to Aristotle's view of the tragic hero; but here that "fall" is man's


descent from grace, and his attempt
to embrace faith in a seemingly
Godless universe is the measure of
his heroism.

Unlike the traditional Christian belief
that man has been essentially evil since the Fall,
Graham Greene is inclined to believe, it appears,
that man is essentially good, but flawed by evil.
The evil is inevitable in human life and it has
to be endured. As worked out in his themes, evil
produces personal limitations which are responsible
for the gap between aspirations and achievement
which is the stuff of irony. Perceptive critics
like Karl have brought out this point very clearly.
He says:

For Greene, the essential human
tragedy, implicit in the gap between
what man wants and what, because of
his personal limitations, he is able
to attain, is ironic. The latter, his
capacity, sucks the former, his desire.
Caught between the two, man must
evidently fail unless he has a vision
of something beyond himself. 2

1 F.K. Karl: A Reader's Guide to the
Contemporary English Novel
(London, 1963), p. 87

2 Ibid.
The life and career of the anxious-priest (The Power and The Glory), scold (The Heart of The Matter) and ringle (Brighton Rock) aptly illustrate this condition.

Another implication of Greene's thesis is that the more imperfect a man is, the nearer is he to God. There is something humble about his imperfection and failure which attracts God's grace. Thus Major Scoble (The Heart of the Matter), the anxious-priest (The Power and The Glory), Bendix (The God of the Gilk), Dull (Lion and the Mouse), Francis Andrews (The Man with the Gun), Werry (A Burnt-Out Case), and W (The Confidential Agent), who is agnostic, and even Rinkle (Brighton Rock) are closer to God than such complacent characters as Les Arnold (Brighton Rock). Thus we have, in one novel after another, not only the clear recognition of the painful consequences of the Fall but also of the possibilities of divine grace.
The man within is Graham Greene's first published novel. He started writing it when he was not quite twenty-two and its success on its publication in 1929 surprised him. When he was asked to revise it for the second edition, he found the story "embarrassingly romantic" and the style "derivative". The re-issue was for him a "sentimental gesture towards his own past, the period of ambition and hope".

It is Greene's only novel which does not deal with contemporary life. It has a historical setting and deals with early nineteenth century smuggling. Whatever its limitations, it is interesting as the earliest exposition of a theme which was to figure considerably in his subsequent work. Greene's later novels, by and large, are variations of the theme —

---

1 Quoted from Author's note prefacing the 2nd edn. (1960) of the novel.
though some of them are more subtle and show a marked degree of improvement in artistic presentation, concentration, and depth.

Francis Andrews is the son of a 'measuring' and 'brutal' father, a smuggler, who is 'not chary of his blows to either child or wife'. He hates his school, runs away from it and soon takes to his father's occupation. Despite his great liking for and friendship with Carlyon, the leader of the smugglers, he betrays them to the excisemen. In an encounter on a dark night, an exciseman is killed and some of the smugglers are captured. Carlyon is one of those who escape. In a relentless pursuit they are now after Andrews's blood. Flying from Carlyon and his gang, Andrews meets Elizabeth and falls in love with her. Elizabeth persuades him to give evidence against the smugglers in a court of law. Andrews does so partly on her persuasion and partly for the sake of the reward promised to him. The prosecution fails to get the smugglers convicted, and they are soon free to continue their old hunt.

---

1 The Man Within, p. 37
after Andrews. This time, however, Elizabeth
is their first quarry. Unable to stand the tension
of being hunted, she soon kills herself. A strong
feeling of having betrayed his better self besides
that of betraying the smugglers seizes Andrews,
and he commits suicide.

Here we have all the key themes that are
to recur persistently in Greene's later novels:
betrayal, pursuit, attempts at gaining self-respect,
a search for peace. The two-fold conflict,
internal and external, an integral part of Greene-
Greene's themes, is also prominently projected. On
the one hand, we have a young smuggler in conflict
with his own self; and on the other, the law-enforcing
agencies which clash with the smugglers.

The epigraph, borrowed from Sir Thomas Browne
('There's another man within me that's angry with me')
is a fine indication of the situation in which we
find Andrews later. He is a man divided within
himself --- with 'evil' possessing him powerfully
but not quite succeeding in driving out the good.
This is what we learn about him from the novel:

Andrews's character was built of
superficial dreams, sentimentality,
cowardice, and yet he was constantly made aware beneath all these of an uncomfortable questioning critic. 1

... but all I want is a little sympathy. I could be made into a man if anyone chose to be interested — if someone believed in me ... but here his other self took a hand. He was, he knew, embarrassingly made up of two persons, the sentimental, bullying, desiring child and another more stern critic. If someone believed in me — but he did not believe in himself. always while one part of his spoke, another part stood on one side and wondered 'Is this I who am speaking? Can I really exist like this?' 2

The moral conflict inherent in Andrews's situation produces an inner discord which reduces his spiritual life to a frightening chaos.

Psychologically, this is the most significant aspect of the theme — one which recurs repeatedly in his major novels.

Despair, loneliness, 'lost childhood', the sense of failure and inadequacy that are associated with such themes in his later fiction, are all here, in his very first published novel.

1 The Man within, p. 43
2 Ibid., p. 24
Andrews is lonely, in a world that is indifferent to him:

A wave of self-pity passed across his mind and he saw himself friendless and alone, chased by harsh enemies through an uninterested world. 1

A haunting awareness of being pursued and trapped disturbs him:

A sense of overwhelming desolation passed over him, a wonder whether he would ever know peace from pursuit, and he gave an unconscious whisper like a rabbit snared. 2

And he thinks of spies too:

He saw her suddenly as a hostile spy from reality, ... 3

Time and again, he thinks of his unhappy childhood:

... for a few weeks later, when holidays fetched Andrews home, his

1 The man within, p. 24
2 Ibid., p. 27
3 Ibid., p. 31
father was there, dominant, easily aroused, as ready as ever with the whip, which he seemed to keep more for his family than for his hounds.1

The mere rituals of the Church failed

to move him:

The shuffling priest was reading the lesson in a meaningless crawl muffled by the mist and his increasing cold. The words meant no more to him than did the dead men. It was a mechanic ritual less conscious than the act of brushing teeth. 2

The feeling of isolation came over him

again:

Loneliness and fear were like the emptiness of hunger to his body.3

and again,

she doesn’t know what it is to be alone and frightfulness, he thought.4

Despair, too, afflicts him:

Despair and a kind of terror were

1 *The great Within*, p. 38
2 Ibid.
3 Ibid., p. 40
4 Ibid., p. 41
advancing towards him down a long tunnel...

Andrews finds most values hollow, void of sustenance, but there is one which he could not ignore — the value of a woman's tender love. His otherwise dark world is illumined, albeit temporarily, by Elizabeth's love for him. It was with her, and only with her, that he could ever imagine moments of happiness in a dreary existence:

He thought of the seasons they would see together; of summer, blue sea, white cliffs, red poppies in the golden corn; winter, to wake in the morning to see Elizabeth's hair across the pillow, her body close to his, and outside the deep, white silence of snow; spring again with restless hedgerows and the call of birds. They would hear music together — organs in dim Cathedrals speaking of sad peace, the heartache of violins, the piano's cold drooping notes, like water split slowly down a long echoing silence, and always the music of her voice, which seemed to him in this new foolish, drunken happiness more lovely than any instrument.

1 *The Man Within*, p. 214

2 Ibid., p. 191
... a pity and tenderness quite alien to desire filled him. He wanted to touch her, but only as one would touch a child who was sad at some pleasure taken away.

but his love for Elizabeth ends tragically, and peace comes to him only in death. Through suffering and pain, he has discovered himself, and the conflict has ended:

... and he need no longer be torn in two between that spirit and the stern unrelenting critic which was wont to speak. I am that critic, he said with a sense of discovery and exhilaration.

He has now identified himself with "the man within". Francis Andrews, unlike the heroes of Greek tragedy, is not himself a great man. In this, he is more akin to the unheroic heroes of modern drama and fiction. and yet the intensity of his conflict and the attendant suffering lift him

1 The Man Within, p. 399
2 Ibid., p. 290
up to tragic heights. And, in classical fashion, he experiences an "anagnorisis", a flash of all-revealing illumination, which gives dignity and elevation to this tale of suffering set in a rather sordid environment.

It is important to note here that Graham Greene's major preoccupation in later novels with the sense of sin does not find a significant place here. It enters the novel at a very late stage with Andrews's seduction by Merriman's mistress.

It was necessary to discuss this novel at some length since it has assumed importance in the context of Graham Greene's later achievement. It would be easier now to discuss the themes of his later novels with reference to this first.
Graham Greene's next five novels, *Stamboul Train, It's A Battlefield, Journey into the Night, A Gun for Sale* and *The Confidential Agent* — his novels of the thirties — are more realistic and topical. They deal with events and characters more easily recognisable, with the world of the creator and their readers. Greene's social observation is more obvious in these novels than in his first published novel or in his later ones. The pace of these novels is not so frequently checked and interrupted by moments of reflection. Reflection is absorbed in the narrative, and does not affect the pace.

The themes, however, have many points of similarity with the one noticed in *The End Of The Affair*. Conscience of guilt, born out of a sense of failure, betrayal, unhappy childhood shadowing the grown-up man, the unsatisfactory nature of the love-relationship, and the inevitability of evil in
human life. The setting is invariably seedy, unpleasant and inhuman. The associated notes are also there — despair, isolation and fear.

*Stamboul Train*, though labelled as an 'entertainment' by its author, is as good as any of his later novels in psychological penetration and presentation of the essential human situation. It is Graham Greene's first serious attempt to capture a wider public. All the ingredients of a crime-thriller and the pace of a sensational film story go into the making of this novel: a speeding-train, journey through alien lands, chase, betrayal, murder, theft, and firing-squads. But all these elements are external to the story, provided with a view to forcing the reader into compulsive attention. The main story, as always in Greene, is as serious as ever, and is told with deep insight into human problems. It may, therefore, be aptly described as an 'intellectual thriller'.

The story concerns one Mr. Czinner, an idealist and a revolutionary socialist, who has been living in England as an exile for six years under an
assumed name. When he feels that preparations and plans for a successful revolution in his country are ripe, he undertakes a surreptitious journey on a trans-continental train, the Stamboul train, to join his comrades. Some "muddled fools" started the revolution three days too early, before Mr. Szinner could join and lead them. The plan misfires, the communist uprising fails, and Szinner's comrades are ruthlessly eliminated. Mr. Szinner is left with only one aspiration now --- to reach Belgrade somehow, surrender to the authorities, and put up a stout and passionate defence of his cause and speak of the glorious role of those who fell. This would give his spiritual satisfaction, and bring him to the notice of the world. As it is, he is haunted by a consciousness of having let down his comrades, of having deserted them in their hour of need. He is prepared to meet, what he knows with utmost certainty, his death, thereafter. Execution, after a passionate defence in a court, would give him the status of a martyr. Unfortunately, however, he is robbed of this chance. Mabel Warren, a female journalist and a passenger on the train, betrays him to the frontier-guards, and he dies before he could reach his destination.
In his last moments he is in desperate need of a confession, of forgiveness, to relieve his sense of guilt. There was no one around. The religion he was brought up in, he had rejected long ago. The only comfort he could hope for was from God, and longed for that comfort.

It would be seen that the basic theme of this 'entertainment' is the same as that of *The End* and of most of his later novels: betrayal, pursuit, failure, man's isolation, attempts at gaining self-respect, search for peace. Only the locales and emphasis have shifted. The idea of sin, which figures so prominently in his two most significant novels, *The Power and the Glory* and *The Heart of the Matter*, has not taken roots yet. A powerful sense of guilt, however, troubles the central character.

The epigraph, as always in Greene's novels, provides valuable clues to the nature of the theme and to much of the novelist's outlook:

*Everything in nature is lyrical in its ideal essence; tragic in its fate, and comic in its existence.*
It sums up very briefly, yet beautifully, the entire story: Dr. Czinner’s revolutionary ideals, the miserable failure of those ideals, and the incongruity of the situation which compels a non-believer to think of comfort that comes from faith in God.

Dr. Czinner, having failed, suffers from a sense of guilt that haunts him whenever he thinks of the workers and peasants who were killed in the abortive uprising:

... that the man who, after firing his last shot, was bayoneted outside the sorting-room had been left-handed and a lover of Volina’s music, the melancholy idealistic music of a man without a faith in anything but death, and that another, who leapt from the third-floor window of the telephone exchange, had a wife scarred and blinded in a factory accident, whom he loved and to whom he was deeply and unwillingly faithless.

Death offered him no release from guilt:

... because when the burden of failure was almost too heavy to bear,
a man inevitably turned to the most business promise, 'I will give you rest'. But he did not give rest, for rest could not exist without the consciousness of rest. 1

The sense of guilt was born out of a painful realisation:

...he himself was not without dishonesty, and the truth of his belief was not altered because he was guilty of vanity, of several meanesses; once he had got a girl with child. Even his motives in travelling first class were not unmixed; it was easier to evade the frontier police, but it was also more comfortable, more fitted to his vanity as a leader. He found himself praying, 'God forgive me', but he was shut off from any assurance of forgiveness, if there existed any power which forgave. 2

Mr. Goring thinks of 'forgiveness' time and again. Perhaps, that is the only way he can be at peace with himself as he seems to realise vaguely. But his pride stands in his way. It would be shameful for a Marxist to confess, a negation of

1 *Stamboul Train*, p. 265

2 Ibid.
all he stood for. He tells himself: "I have no conviction of forgiveness; I have no conviction that there is anyone to forgive." And yet he almost finds himself yielding to the temptation, because it is so easy to reach 'forgiveness': "There had been a time when a clear conscience could be bought at the price of a moment's shame." Soon he finds himself at the door of a second-class compartment where Mr. Wise, the clergyman was writing in a notebook. His pride again stood in his way:

...he watched him with a kind of ashamed greed, for he was about to surrender to a belief which it had been his pride to subdue. But if it gives me peace, he protested, and at the still darkling associations of the word he pulled the door back and entered the compartment.

The tragic situation of Mr. Gzinner, his spiritual loneliness, is thus underlined. In many ways this is an anticipation of the Whisky-Priest

1 Stamboul Train, p. 266
2 Ibid.
3 Ibid., p. 267
(The Power and The Glory) and Major Scobie (The Heart of the Matter), the two celebrated creations of Graham Greene. The novel depicts Dr. Chung's internal conflict much too sensitively for it to become merely a version of the 'God that failed'—of a Marxist recanting his new ideology to return to an old faith. His sufferings spring from his divided self, his being, as it were, a Marxist who is also a human being in need of peace.

The theme of betrayal, noted in The man within, occurs in this novel too, and affects several relationships—though it is not made very prominent. Mabel Warren, once she recognises Dr. Chung on the train, is inspired by the idea of a 'scoop' and the prospects of better pay for her journalistic work. From then on she relentlessly pursues him and ultimately betrays him to his enemies. A worse betrayal is by the people he loves, the "enamoured fools" who staged an abortive uprising and dashed his hopes. Then, Janet Paracou betrays Mabel Warren's acting affections in her desire for a more glamorous and exciting life. Ayatt's journey starts with the suspicion that his agent,
Sekman, has betrayed his interests to his rival businessmen. Throughout the book, he is shown to be worried about this betrayal. Coral Musker first betrays herself for the promise of a comfortable life and then broods over the possibility of Ayatt betraying her.

The inclusion of social comment in this novel distinguishes it from the author's first published novel. Poverty and economic disparity invite Greene's comments. Mr. Clinner is his spokesman:

'And beautiful faces, thin from bad food, old before their time, resigned to despair, passed through his mind; they were people he had known, whom he had attended and failed to save. The world was in chaos to leave so much nobility, unused, while the great financiers and the soldiers prospered.'

And again,

'You put the small thief in prison, but the big thief lives in a palace.'

---

1 *Istanbul Bran*, p. 236

The world was chaotic; when the poor were starved and the rich were not happier for it; when the thief might be punished or rewarded with titles; when wheat was burned in Canada and coffee in Brazil, and the poor in his own country had no money for bread and froze to death in unheated rooms; the world was out of joint....

appearing for the first time so explicitly

in *Stamboul Train*, Greene's social comments continue through all his novels of the thirties. Perhaps, this was dictated by the age to which the novels belong. Later, his social observation is subordinated to the theological element; it is implied without being projected prominently.

In the context of Graham Greene's considerable later achievement through what are called his "Catholic novels", *Stamboul Train* assumes importance. Through a dialogue, now famous, between Dr. Csinner and the priest, Greene has tried to give a modern, scientific explanation for the religious act of confession.

---

1 *Stamboul Train*, p. 299

* See Chapt. I, p. 7
preparing the reader's mind for a more understanding approach to his Catholic novels. Mr. Czinner's hesitant return to God is also significant. It is the first occasion in his fiction where Graham Greene's own motives for conversion are suggested.
In *It's a Battlefield*, Graham Greene deals with man's isolation from a sociological angle, though his focus is still on the individual rather than on society. In the industrialised society of the thirties, everyone appeared to be fighting his own battle, hardly aware of what he was fighting for or what he was fighting for. As the assistant commissioner of police says,

> The truth is, nobody cares about anything but his own troubles. Everybody's too busy fighting his own little battle to think of the next man.  

To this is added what Caroline thought; the fight is "in ignorance of the general war".

The story concerns one Conrad Grover and his efforts to get his brother Jim's sentence of death reprieved. Jim, in the midst of a communist-inspired rioting, kills a policeman under the mistaken impression that he was about to attack his wife Ally, to whom he was greatly devoted. Conrad,

---

1. *It's a Battlefield*, p. 217
2. Ibid., p. 218
strongly attached to his brother, and started looking after Milly. In a moment of pity for Milly's condition, he makes love to her. Next morning he finds himself troubled by a sense of guilt. He feels that he has betrayed his brother. This soon becomes an obsession. The consequences of reprieve are even more frightening. It would mean eighteen years of cheerless existence for them. However, he fails in his efforts to get his brother's sentence reprieved. Haunting guilt, loneliness and failure drive him to death. While trying to shoot at the assistant commissioner of police, whom he regarded as being responsible for the failure of his efforts for a reprieve, he is run over by a car and killed.

The epigraph, taken from Kinglake, not only suggests the title but also explains the nature of the theme. It very closely corresponds with what Matthew Arnold had said well over a century ago——

and we are here as on a darkling plain
swept with confused alarms of struggle
and flight
where ignorant armies clash by night.1

1 Dover Beach
The battle-field is an image of life and the awareness of the fight being directionless and purposeless only adds to the misery of the individual's isolation. He is, even otherwise, a very lonely being.

Loneliness was only too easily attained; it was in the air one breathed; open any door, it opened on to loneliness in the passage; close the door at night, one shut loneliness in. The tooth-brush, the chair, the ever and the bed were seats in loneliness. One had only to stop, to stare, to listen, and one was lost.1

and a little later the same feeling overtakes Jules again:

He opened the door, loneliness was in the dark passage, he stumbled on the Unit stairs, loneliness round his feet. Even the room below with the table spread for their supper was empty.2

It covers not only individuals but also localities and scenes like a fog:

... the peace of Sunday in Call Mall

1 It's a battlefield, pp. 171-72
2 Ibid., p. 177
was like the peace which follows a massacre, a war of elimination.

The motif of 'evil' in this novel takes the form of 'injustice', and assumes a dominant role. What began in *Jailbirds' Train* as an exposure, an artist's awareness of his surroundings, and a legitimate vindication of a character's (Mr. Czinner's) stand, is developed here as a large-scale attack on human injustice. In fact, the intense social sympathy expressed in this and other novels of the thirties led some people to suspect that Greene was at least a fellow-traveller. The attack on social injustice is spread over the whole book, and it has never been repeated so forcefully in any other of Greene's novels. It begins with statements like the following:

> He became aware with sudden clarity how injustice did not belong only to an old tired judge, to a policeman joking in Piccadilly; it was as such a part of

---

1. *It's a Battlefield*, p. 106

* This, of course, is based on a very superficial view of his isolated statements. A close study of this novel and of *Jailbirds' Train* alone will convince anyone that Graham Greene had no sympathy for the communists. Numerous instances can be cited in support of the view. All writers, worth their salt, are aware of the reality of wide-spread social injustice and naturally react to it.
the body as age and inevitable disease. 1

and continues:

Molly's face was lost among the harsh confident cultured faces. It did not belong to the same world; they were insulated against pain, poverty and disaster. One could not appeal to them for justice; justice to them was another word for prison. 2

Injustice has made the world so gloomy, so stifling that people are afraid to be happy. Molly describes the fact of her husband being in jail and her present unhappiness to the years of her previous happiness:

So one likes people to be happy. If we hadn't been so happy, he wouldn't be there. He wouldn't have stabbed that man. We'd be together. I never wanted to be happy. I was always afraid. 3

and again:

It doesn't pay to be happy. I always told him it couldn't go on, but somehow we couldn't help it. 4

1 It's a battlefield, p. 60
2 Ibid., p. 69
3 Ibid., p. 74
4 Ibid., p. 117
It seems that Greene is going beyond social criticism here to comment on the nature of life in the world. Greene sounds almost like Hardy at this point. Unhappiness is more than amateur. There seems to be something in the very nature of things that militates against human happiness. Miley’s words recall Hardy’s Elizabeth-Jane (The Mayor of Casterbridge) who is afraid to be happy when things are apparently going well with her.

The final assault on injustice, both human and divine, is made in the dialogue between the Chaplain and the Assistant Commissioner of Police:

The Chaplain said: "I can’t stand human justice any longer. It’s arbitrariness. It’s incomprehensibility."

I don’t mean, of course, to be blasphemous, but isn’t that very like, that is to say, isn’t divine justice much the same?"

"Perhaps, but one can’t hang in a resignation to God".

---

1 It's a Battlefield, pp. 230-31
The guilt and betrayal motif is as strong as it is in his earlier and several of his later novels. In fact, it is the central motif in the theme, and the chief element in the organization of the plot. Haunted by a sense of guilt, born out of the betrayal of his brother, Conrad Grover, the chief character in the novel, drives himself to death. In a moment of pity for her condition, he makes love to Milly, his brother's wife; and ever afterwards he is haunted by a sense of guilt. He cannot get over the feeling that he has betrayed the brother who loved him so greatly. The progress of the story from the onset of guilt to his death has, of course, been worked out with Greene's usual subtlety and psychological penetration. It begins with, "his love of his brother wavered at the sight of her despair", and moves on to a consideration of their plight even if they succeed in getting a reprieve for Jim, Conrad's brother. Saved from

---

1 *It's a Battlefield*, p. 67
execution, Jia will have to spend eighteen years in jail. A long period, indeed, at the end of which they will all be old and good for nothing.

For the first time in his life he was touched by hatred of his brother. How long before one could smile or laugh? How long these cramped muscles of the mouth? How long the awareness that a moment's errant was treacherous?

He cannot help thinking:

... if Jia lived, they would be condemned to a kind of death themselves. The end of the eighteen years would be always in their sight, chilling any chance errant, the flat end to every story.

Then the act of love; followed by a sense of guilt:

... he had more reason to hate himself; he loved his brother and he had done his brother what people seemed to consider the bitterest of wrongs. ... awake and silent in bed, he had pasted the proper labels on his memory of it, "a mortal sin". "the bitterest wrong". "a broken commandment". ... it was unfair that they should leave him so alone.

---

1 *It's a Battlefield*, p. 128
2 Ibid., p. 129
3 Ibid., p. 133
In several passages of great intensity, Conrad Grover's guilty feelings are described. He finds it very difficult, almost impossible, to shake off the sense of guilt. What is more, this deep sense of guilt isolates him from all, the only person who could have ever given him happiness and comfort, and whom he had loved before she was married to his brother. This isolation produces intense loneliness.*

To this are added other notes which frequently occur in Greene's novels, a sense of failure in not being able to do anything for the reprieve of his brother and the feeling of inadequacy produced by an unhappy childhood.** All these factors combine to drive him to death.

It may be mentioned here that the 'pursuit' motif, frequently occurring in Greene's novels and noticed in the case of the two earlier novels is not

---

* Passages referring to his loneliness have been quoted earlier in this chapter.

** The latter is true also of another character in the novel, Jules Brinton.
altogether absent. Condor, the journalist has a strong feeling that he is being followed, until he finds that his pursuer has run away because he thinks Condor is following him.

*It's a Hell of a Life* is different from Greene's earlier novels in one important respect. There is complete absence of any kind of spiritual satisfaction, however slight, to the central character before he meets his death. There is no amnesia. In this respect, it is the gloomiest of his novels.
The story concerns a Swedish industrialist and financier, Erik Krogh, and some English men and women who are now in Sweden. Of the latter, Anthony and Kate Farrant are twins, Mitty is a newspaperman, Hall is an old friend of Krogh and now his subordinate, and Loo is a girl from Coventry on a short holiday in Stockholm with her parents. Kate, the efficient secretary and mistress of Krogh, dotes on her brother Anthony whom she brings to Stockholm and, with her influence on Krogh, Anthony gets employed as his bodyguard. Anthony, though not scrupulously honest or self-respecting, retains a measure of sincerity, which prompts him to give up his job after a nasty exchange with Krogh. He now thinks of returning to England and continuing his affair with the Coventry girl. Krogh, however, considers
his potentially dangerous and gets him eliminated through hail, his old friend and now a loyal dog.

In the character of Krohn, the ruthless impersonality of international finance is symbolised. He is not interested in human beings, except in a routine way. In fact, he avoids human company as much as he can. When he goes to the theatre or a musical concert, one seat on either side is kept unoccupied. In his room he sits alone. But he loves figures, and is happy only in their company.

...there was nothing he didn't know about figures, there was nothing he couldn't do with them, there was nothing human about them.1

To him, human values have no meaning. Everything has to be subordinated and examined in the context of his relentless, rapacious greed.

He has his own interpretation of honesty:

Honesty was a word which had never troubled him; a man was honest so long

1 *England Made Me*, p. 171
as his credit was good; and his credit, he could tell himself with pride, stood a point higher than the credit of the French Government. For years he had been able to borrow money at four per cent to lend to the French Government at five. That was honesty — something which could be measured in terms of figures.1

In any human encounter, he does not get personally involved. For instance, he meets Andersen, an old worker, laughs with him, offers him a cigar, makes kind enquiries about his son, and then packs him off. He does not hesitate to get Anthony eliminated when he finds him posing a threat. In the pursuit of financial success:

... he has no scruples; loyalty and honesty go over board automatically, and lies and frame-ups are a natural technique, devoid of any personal feeling for or against his victims.2

Krog's material success, however, exacts its inevitable penalty. He is completely dehumanised.

1 England Made No, p. 40

2 A. J. Collins; English Literature of the Twentieth Century (London, 1954), p. 248
He is successful but lonely, and a slave to his huge financial empire. Nothing pleases him more than the symbols of his success which he hardly realises, separate him from other men;

he rose and his coat caught an ash-tray and spun it to the floor, his own initials were exposed, S.K. the monogram had been designed by Sweden's leading artist, S.K. --- the same initials endlessly repeated formed the design of the deep carpet he crossed to the door. S.K. in the waiting-rooms; S.K. in the board-room; S.K. in the restaurants; the building was studded with his initials. S.K. in electric lights over the doorway, over the fountain, over the gate of the court. The letters flashed at his like the lights of a semaphore conveying a message over the vast distances which separated him from other men. It was a message of admiration; watching the lights he quite forgot that they had been installed by his own orders.1

The motif of 'evil' is thus introduced into the novel through this rapacious greed for wealth — the evil that alienates, demoralises, and destroys. All those who are caught into its tentacles suffer; some of them perish. Anthony says,

1 England-made me, p. 42
and Krogh himself is not happy. His carefully acquired respectability would not even allow him to relate a crude joke, the joke that "came with the warmth of an ancient friendship renewed" and which "surprised him into a smile of rare humanity".

The denial of this harmless minor indulgence:

... left him with a sense of loneliness, of dryness, as if his life now were narrower instead of infinitely enlarged.

The world of finance that he has created around him not only fails to give him happiness, but also fails to give him security, since it is built over frauds, lies and frame-ups. Kate knows this:

He's one of us, fighting for his own security like one of us, he's not the future, he's not self-sufficient, just one of us, out of his proper place.

---

1. England Regent, p. 56
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid., p. 203
England Jade is one of the two novels* in which Graham Greene's pet theme of lost childhood influencing a man's personality and character gets the fullest expression. The weakness and failure of the two characters in the novel, Anthony and Minty, are related to their unhappy early life with their parents and at school. Several passages quoted in Chapter II are from this novel.**

Minty is a weak and ineffective character, resigned to his fate, without hope or ambition:

He had been slowly broken in by parents, by schoolmasters, by strangers in the street, crooked and yellow and pigeon-chested, he had his deep refuge, the inexhaustible ingenuity of his mind. 1

By common standards Minty is not a normal healthy individual. Human figure, whether of a man or a woman, and the normal human functions

* The other novel is Brighton Rock.
** Please see Chapt. II, pp. 30-31
1 England Jade, p. 91
strike him as 'ugly';

Yes, it was ugly, the human figure. Man or woman, it made no difference to Ninty. The body's shape, the running nose, excreant, the stupid postures of passion, these beat like a bird's heart in Ninty's brain.1

The memories of childhood are invariably unpleasant for him:

A gang of schoolboys raced through Ninty's mind, breaking up his pictures of Madonna and Child, jeering, belching, breaking wind.2 He keeps a spider closed under his toothglass:

And like the spider he withered, blown out no longer to meet contempt; his body stretched o'er in the attitude of death, he lay there motionless, tempting God to lift the glass.3

He has no friends to call on him and lives alone in his room. Once, when Anthony came to him...

1 _Angland_, p. 109
2 _Bild._
3 _Bild._, p. 147
with his girl-friend, he was elated and offered them his best hospitality. Soon, however, he discovered that they came to him looking for privacy and his heart broke; he left the room to them:

He was so lonely, so isolated that he drove the others back into the companionship they had lost; even a shared unease, a shared bickering, had a friendly air compared with his extreme friendlessness.1

Anthony carries failure with him wherever he goes. He accepted all sorts of odd jobs round the world and soon gave them up. He could not keep his job with Krogh, though for a right reason.

His failure too, like Ninty's, is related to his school days.2 He is a liar with a distorted sense of respectability. He uses a narrow tie to prove that he was there. Yet, "he wasn't unscrupulous enough to be successful." That is why he paid

1 England Made Me, p. 167
2 Ibid., p. 190
with his life.

Kate desperately tries to adapt herself to the new values of the world of international finance. She is an efficient secretary and mistress to Krogh. Yet, somewhere deep down, her national past, pulls at her;

Her dusty righteous antecedents pulled at her heart, but with all her intellect she claims alliance with the present, this crooked day, this inhumanity.1

She cannot help reflecting that

... there had been a straightness about the poor national past which the international present did without. It had't been very grand, but in their class at any rate there had been gentleness and kindness once.2

This nostalgia for the England of the past generation that made them affects Kate, Anthony and Ainty, and isolates them from their surroundings both physically and spiritually.

1 England today, p. 162
2 Ibid., p. 173
Thus in this novel too we have the ingredients that recur persistently in Greene's novels: evil, violence, corruption, betrayal, lost childhood, failure and alienation.

*England Made Me*, however, is the most secular of Greene's novels. There is no suggestion of spiritual consolation, no 'annihilations of immortality' to those who suffer. The final impression is one of bleak anguish, of experience inherent in "the crooked day, this inhumanity".