CONFLICT

Mankind of today finds itself imprisoned within various phases of conflict both spiritually and physically owing to the stunning developments in many spheres exercising strong impact. This impact results in a tragic experience of disintegration of human relationship, meaninglessness, absurdity and a sense of nothingness of life. Science may have saved man from poverty and relieved him of the pangs of physical pain but he suffers internally. Man’s conflict is between his conscious movement and his unconscious sensual self-drive. He is a complex creation comprising both the constructive and the destructive qualities nurtured by the advancement of science and technology. The world has become the abode of struggling and suffering man.

Human life is beset with various kinds of conflicts such as religious conflict, marital conflict, filial conflict, institutional conflict, generation conflict, social conflict and political conflict, which are placed at the centre of Graham Greene’s plays. Jane Spence Southern observes, “Unlike many contemporary English writers, his (Greene’s) work evidences a fixed determination to grapple with the difficulties of our time” (1). The playwright, while dealing with these conflicts, covers the themes of sin, repentance and redemption, spiritual love and physical love, doubt and faith, corruption of childhood, betrayal, good and evil, love and marriage, boredom, despair, suicide and death in his serious plays The Living.
Room, The potting shed, The Complaisant Lover, Carving a statue and The Great Jowett, Yes and No and the themes of pursuit, flight, the hunter and the hunted and fugitive in his less serious plays The Return of A.J. Raffles, and For whom The Bell Chimes. As a modern writer, Greene concentrates on the human condition developed within a certain human experience undergone by his characters in different religious, domestic, social and political situations of the modern age. He exposes his characters to uncongenial situations and deals with their emotional, religious and moral reactions.

Religious conflict arises when an individual revolts against his or her religion. In The Living Room Greene sets Rose, a twenty-year-old young Catholic girl, against her religion by making her commit the sin of adultery with Michael, a forty-five-year-old married lecturer in psychology. According to John Atkins, “Although a Catholic, he (Greene) had been brought up in the English protestant tradition, and the sexual impulse had always borne the hallmark of impurity” (20). It is essential to study the factors which led Rose to fall in love with Michael, a pupil of Rose’s father John Pemberton, who got him the job in London University and also appointed him trustee and executor of Rose’s will. Even after Pemberton’s death, Michael continued to visit Rose’s house in the capacity of her trustee. When Elizabeth, Rose’s mother, died Rose became the responsibility of Michael, whom she started loving in a frenzied manner on account of her dependence upon him and his intimacy with her parents. Rose, a Catholic, is in search of a father personality after the
death of her parents and falls in love with him. When she found herself in
a situation between deceased father and a dying mother, she needed a
psychological support, which was provided by Michael. On the death of
her mother and with none to rely on at that situation except Michael, Rose
cemented her love for him by indulging in adultery with him on the night
of her mother’s funeral itself. Rose says, “I loved you the night of my
mother’s funeral” (CP 10).

By her love affair she revolts not only against her Catholic religion
but also her Catholic relatives, her two old aunts, Teresa Browne and
Helen Browne and her maimed, wheel-chaired uncle James, who is a
priest. Rose is a sinner from the religious point of view because she has
committed the sin of adultery. Initially, she could not realize that her love
affair would face such a questioning from her religion and her relatives.
Bringing in Rose between her religion and love affair, the playwright
works out the conflict between spiritual love and physical love. As
A.A.De Vitis remarks, “The major conflict becomes that of the individual
against the orthodox conception of a just and merciful God” (156). The
conflict between the spiritual love and the physical love represents the
conflict between the forces of good and evil in the mind of man. Deeply
influenced by Henry James and Joseph Conrad, Greene has acquired a
sound knowledge of the religious sense and evil force as they are
prevalent in human life and deals with them seriously in his novels
*Brighton Rock*, *The Power and the Glory*, *The Heart of the Matter* and
*The End of the Affair* and in his plays.
In his works, Greene has portrayed his chief characters as fallen human beings who are either sinners or criminals. The playwright shows a vast difference between Rose, who represents the world of innocence and her aunts, who represent the world of experience. Accompanied by Michael, Rose enters the Holland Park house of her aunts with the hope of finding a fertile ground for a promising future but she finds everything shocking. She is not pleased with the shocking and unnerving conditions prevalent in the house. Terrified at the abnormal atmosphere of the house, Michael expresses his displeasure, thus: “What’s an odd room! It’s the wrong shape…. Nothing quite fits” (CP 8). It is ironical that the ordinary Holland Park house to which Rose comes, seeking safety and comfort, becomes a place of dejection and rejection. Through the oddness of the room, Greene symbolizes the strange behaviour and the lifestyle of the old Brownes. It is said that there is a slight rift between Rose’s mother and her aunts over the former choosing a non-catholic as her husband. The gulf between Rose and her aunts is further widened by her love affair. She falls in love with Michael without comprehending the terrific implications.

On the basis of Rose’s love, Greene works out the theme of initiation and the corruption of childhood. Learning the theme of corruption of childhood from Henry James, Greene has moved further deep in exploring the havoc played upon the personality of the children when they come into contact with the destructive corrupt adult world under various circumstances. As a young girl, she is fearless and impulsive in her love affair. Later Greene shows her in conflict with her
religion, relatives and society. Never will her old aunts allow her to marry a non-catholic. Society will not tolerate her affair with a married man. The playwright places Rose in the midst of a three dimensional conflict religious, domestic and social. Only after entering the adult world of her aunts she gradually comes to know of her real stand. The oddness of the atmosphere and the indifferent attitude of her aunts reveal to her the frightening complexity of the adult world. They are very particular in knowing Michael’s religion.

As a psychologist Michael reads their mind and expresses his fear to Rose, telling “I’m afraid you are going to disappear in a wood of old people” (CP 8). Greene symbolically hints at the darkness of their world. The external oddness prevalent in their house, symbolizes the inner darkness. In their fear of death they have closed the rooms in which somebody had lived and died. On the superficial plane, they are religious. On a particular occasion Helen feels sorry for not attending the church. But internally they lack the true religious spirit. Their fear of death, their hatred for Michael, their reluctance in understanding Rose’s problem and their lack of concern for her welfare are certainly some aspects which are not pertaining to the true religious minded persons. They are in conflict with their own religion by not practising it. It is Helen, the younger one who plays a pivotal role in objecting the love affair of Rose and Michael. Rose’s attitude of conflict is fuelled more intensely by Helen’s attitude rather than by Teresa’s. As Peter Glenville remarks,
The two foolish old women who do not understand the essentials of their own religion, must be sympathetically understandable. Helen, who precipitates the tragedy because of her lack of charity, is herself the unhappy victim of fear; and she sincerely believes that she is right in all her actions. (xi)

Portraying Helen as a tough-minded character, the playwright places her to be a stumbling block to Rose’s love affair. She does not like Michael’s very appointment as trustee, his accompanying Rose to her house, and his very presence in the house. Despite the care taken by Michael and Rose in hiding their love, their intimacy could not escape the suspecting mind of Helen. Their love affair experiences one of the major hurdles from Helen, who intelligently avoids Michael’s stay in her house, pointing out the possibility of the “silly talk” of the villagers. Very much frustrated with lack of charity on the part of old women, the psychologist prefers to stay in Red Lion, a small hotel in the village.

The religious conflict being experienced by Rose enters a crucial phase with the presentation of her problem to James, her sixty-five-year-old uncle and priest. Through James, Greene brings in the church to solve the human problem. When Rose seeks her uncle’s help, she has already reached a point of no-return in her love affair by indulging in adultery with Michael many times. Unlike Helen, James is an affectionate person, who loves, cares and pities Rose, revealing to her all the details regarding the mystery behind the closure of many rooms in the house. The habit of
closing the rooms had started with the death of their father. Being unable to bear the agony of separation and fear of death they destroyed even the photos of the dead persons in order to escape from their obsession of fear. Greene works out the theme of death through James’ analysis of the old women’s attitude towards death. Rose’s conflict with her aunts especially with Helen deepens when she comes to know of their nature. In their fear of death they have even taken the stand of remaining spinster believing that they would not grow old. James, unlike his sisters, stopped fearing death twenty years ago when he met with an accident, as a result of which he became maimed and also a useless priest, neglecting his duties, such as saying mass, attending the sick and hearing confession.

As a Catholic priest James also takes a stand against Rose’s love affair. Being her uncle, he is very kind to her but being a priest he could not go against the church rule. As Paul O’Prey puts it,

Then there was only one hard answer a priest could give in any situation, despite his own compassion and understanding, and that was an answer in accordance with the law as laid down by the church which knows all the rules as Father Rank, Scobie’s priest says in The Heart of the Matter (82).

Through the confrontation between Rose and James, Greene dramatizes the conflict between the Church and the individual. Rose, who has already acquired some knowledge with regard to the serious implications of her love affair as a result of her conflict with Helen, is driven further deep into
her recognition by her conflict with James. Rose’s problem is like Scobie’s in Greene’s novel *The Heart of the Matter*. Rose is a young, innocent and ignorant girl while Scobie is a married middle-aged man. After committing the sin of adultery in ignorance, Rose approaches James to get his consent for her marriage with Michael without knowing the sinful nature of her love affair, which cannot result in marriage according to the church as well as the social rules. To James, Rose has become a sinner in spite of her innocence and ignorance, which has been betrayed by Michael. As J.P. Kulshrestha observes, “… the relation between man and God is one of Greene’s major preoccupations …” (110). The priest makes her understand that she could not marry Michael for he is a married man and also a non-catholic. In her infatuation she prefers to live with him even without getting married and strongly believes that she can be happy only with him. Rose’s behaviour with Michael is marked by the intensity and possessiveness of physical passion. While James is dragging Rose into the Catholic religious treatment of her problem, she suffers mental conflict finding herself torn between the forces of physical love and spiritual love. The young girl is subjected to unbearable mental agony as a result of her divided-self.

Greene also dramatizes the conflict between religion and psychology by involving James and Michael, the psychologist, in analysing the problem of Rose’s love affair. The priest believes that “God is exact… an absolute knowledge of every factor” (CP 26) whereas the psychologist holds a contradictory view. James is placed on two different
planes while persuading Rose and while arguing with Michael. On the first plane he enters the world of innocence and dedicates himself to the noble task of saving an innocent girl from sin by drawing her into the fold of God by means of repentance. On the second plane he enters the world of the middle-aged non-catholic psychologist and makes a valiant attempt to save him from the same sin by convincing him of the supremacy of the mysterious and omnipotent God. The confrontation between the priest and the psychologist is highly absorbing and arresting. Michael justifies his love affair, explaining the circumstances under which Rose fell in love with him and the factors relating to the absence of love between himself and his neurotic wife, Marion. Michael in The Living Room has been modelled on Scobie in The Heart of the Matter. Except for the fact that the former is a non-catholic and a psychologist both of them face the same problem. Michael’s condition is seriously pathetic because he has been suffering from the pangs of loveless life with his wife. Michael says to James, “And I’ll go on as I have for the last ten years… living with a woman I don’t desire—a hysterical” (29). In loving Rose and in longing to marry her the psychologist cannot be justified on the basis of his unpleasant married life. As he is within the sacred bond of marriage, his affair with Rose is a sin from the religious points of view and a crime from the legal point of view. James advises him to come out of his affair with Rose by giving the following solution:

James: There’s only one answer I can give. You’re doing wrong to your wife, to Rose, to yourself – and to the God you don’t believe in. Go away. Don’t see her, don’t write to her, don’t answer her letters if she writes to you.
Michael: And in the end…?

James: We have to trust God, Everything will be all right. (CP 28-29).

Like Rose, Michael also experiences mental conflict finding himself in between his piteous young lover and his equally pitiable neurotic wife. At the hands of Greene, the love triangle becomes a moral battle ground for the conflict between the forces of good and evil. As John Spurling remarks, “Greene saw his own task … as the retrieval of that last dimension which in the other world of the morality plays and Christian teaching, the grand backdrop of the struggle between good and evil…” (27). In The Living Room Greene has coupled religious conflict with marital conflict so that he can analyse the relationship between God and a sinner and the moral issues involved in it. As Ian Hamilton puts it, Greene mixes “sexuality and religiosity with a tincture of morality and creates a human condition” (512).

In The Potting Shed, Greene provides religious conflict as the basis for his discussion of belief and doubt, making use of the detective story framework employed by him in many of his novels and entertainments. As John Vinocur remarks, “After all these years, after all this time in which some final wisdom might have washed ashore, the theme of his novel “Monsignor Quixote” … is just plain doubt” (2). In the play James, the younger son of Henry Callifer, is not informed that his father is dying because of their contrary views on God. Henry who has written the book
‘The Cosmic Fallacy’ is renowned for his extreme rationalistic beliefs whereas James has been a theist since his boyhood period. Without his presence being liked by his mother and John, his elder brother, he is portrayed as an alienated man in conflict and mental suffering. As David Lodge observes, “Religious faith has often been associated with suffering in Greene’s works …” (41). He is treated in a strange manner by all his family members who opine that there is something abnormal in his behaviour. Informed by Mrs. Callifer, even his estranged wife Sara, is present in the house. Very much shocked and frustrated at their indifference, James reacts angrily and asks her, “What’s wrong with me? why do they keep me away? (CP 86). The conflict between the father and the son has led to this hostile situation. Anne, the thirteen-year-old daughter of John, brings him home by informing him of his father’s impending demise through a telegram. As an undesirable and an unexpected attendant, James experiences mental torment and indulges in a search for identity. In his inability to find out the causes for the estrangement between himself and his family members he attempts to travel back into his mysterious past.

Greene presents James as a forty-five-year old man who appears as a nervous stranger in ‘Wild Grove’, his parents’ house. As Frederick R.Karl remarks, “These heroes operate within a decay-saturated world, a world as much corrupted as that of Conrad’s novels…. In short, they seek God in what appears to be a devil controlled universe. This is in a way their heroism” (132). James suffers in Wild Grove as Rose in Holland
Park house in The Living Room. While he is treated with apathy, his divorced wife Sara is treated affectionately. Mrs. Callifer insists on her to stay a few more days so that they can visit the spring flower show. Even Frederick Boston, the disciple of Henry Callifer, who has arrived at ‘Wild Grove’, on receiving the information, plays a dominant role in strengthening the forces against James as a mysterious character. Greene channelises the dramatization of conflict on the basis of James’ deviation from the rationalistic view held by his father.

James’s arrival is a shocking news to his mother and his brother, but not to Anne, who, finding him almost compatible, is very much affectionate towards him. While the adult members of the family are in discord with him, the young girl appears to be pleased with him and always stands in support of him. Their indifference to James is strikingly evident immediately after his arrival. The conflict between James and his family is not a sudden development but has a deep-rooted past. Since the age of fifteen he had stayed at home only for a short duration in the past thirty years and after becoming a newspaper man in Nottingham he has spent fifteen years without seeing his father. It is his mother who has been deliberately avoiding his presence in the house from his boyhood period. According to Albert E. Kalson, “The estrangement from his parents seems to have been their doing. In fact, as his father’s death becomes imminent, his mother forbids him to enter Callifer’s sick room” (830). The conflict between the atheist father and the theist son reflects the universal problem of the clash between the doubters and the believers. That Henry Callifer is
an extreme rationalist is evident in his wife’s comment on him. “But how he hates those sentimental myths, Virgin births, Crucified Gods” (CP 82). Owing to her fear that James’ entry into his father’s room would spoil the peace of the dying man, she blocks her son. As a true wife she wants to see her husband dying in peace. James undergoes a mental struggle without knowing what is wrong with him and why he is distanced by others. Frightened at Sara’s statement that his mother is afraid of what he is, he falls deep into a mental torment. As A.A. De Vitis puts it, “His inability to participate in the human community gives James the only pain he understands” (156).

Greene gives importance to a mysterious experience undergone by James at the age of fourteen in the potting shed of his house. This mysterious experience questioned and shook the very foundation of his father’s extreme rationalistic belief and as a result, the conflict between them shot up. In consequence of James’ estrangement from his parents since his boyhood period, his total personality has undergone a change towards nothingness and loss of memory. His burnt-out-case like condition is cited as reason for his wife’s indifference towards him. Finding nothing untoward in his attitude, James considers himself a middle-aged newspaper man who goes to the office at four and usually gets away by one in the morning and sleeps till nine. Contrary to his self evaluation, his family members treat him as a psychologically affected person who has lost his memory. His loss of memory is evident in his inability to recall the childhood experience in spite of the hints dropped by
Boston while his brother is able to remember the incident. Like Shakespearean tragic heroes, James suffers from the onslaught of his mental conflict but without any tragic flaw in his character like Othello’s jealousy, Macbeth’s vaulting ambition and Hamlet’s procrastination. Greene presents a human condition and the experience of life developed within it. James’ condition created by his parents and his experience of life within it, is dramatized. As Stanley J. Kunitz puts it, “Greene’s interest is not in events but persons and not in the outward actions of persons but in their minds and feelings” (71).

In The Potting Shed Greene traces the course of James’ suffering mind resulting from the battlefield in which two principles are in eternal confrontation. Owing to his mental conflict James becomes an alienated man who in order to escape from others and from his own self hides himself in a small lodge in Nottingham. According to Roger Sharrock “Greene’s alienated man is essentially a traveller wandering or escaping even it is only an escape from himself like Querry in A Burnt out Case” (SSC 18). James’ moving on the plane of convergence between the Catholic and the non-Catholic worlds leads him to suffer mentally. The Catholic world is represented by him and the non-Catholic world by his father and his mother. In dramatizing James’s condition Greene is really dealing with a psychological situation, in which the significant actions of the hero are the effect of his reaction to the disciplined religious training and the stress of his tormenting circumstances carved out by his parents.
The theme of religious conflict is infused with the betrayal of childhood, which is revealed in the treatment received by James at the hands of his father in his boyhood period. The mysterious childhood experience when opposed by his father drives him, according to Maris Beatrice Mesnet, “to feel torn between a natural need for a minimum human happiness and the exacting demands of faith” (113). Greene employs the childhood experience as a powerful driving force shaping James personality which writhes under the betrayal of his parents. He unfolds more spaciously the consciousness of a man running or hiding from his parents’ corruption of his childhood mind.

Greene also deals with the religious conflict on another plane, forming it a basis for the cleavage between James and his father. William Callifer, had turned against his rationalistic brother Henry Callifer by becoming a convert to Catholicism and also a priest. The conflict between the brothers might have led to that between James and his father for as a small boy he had been deeply intimate to his lovable priest-uncle. According to Roger Sharrock, “Henry Callifer has been a famous agnostic thinker and writer, publisher of many books against religious belief” (UF 77). It is not surprising that a person with such a record against religion has stooped down to throw his son into conflict by attempting to nullify the impact of his mysterious childhood experience.

Marital conflict is seen in the plays The Living Room, The Potting Shed and The Complaisant Lover. In the first two plays, this conflict plays
a second fiddle to religious conflict but in the third, it has gained much significance. According to A.A. De Vitis, “The Living Room uses for its situation the triangle relationship that has characterized his [Greene’s] novels since The Heart of the Matter” (150). Greene provides a room for marital conflict by making Michael fall in love with Rose without giving serious consideration to his neurotic wife, Marion. Michael dislikes living with a neurotic patient. He denies that she can be cured, pointing out, “I’m part of her insecurity. I’m inside her neurosis as I’m inside her house” (CP 29). In a desperate mood, he naturally falls in love with Rose without thinking over the justification behind his act. By falling in love he lays the foundation for his conflict with Marion, who, by her refusal to divorce him, strengthens the rift. On one hand his indulgence in illicit sexual affair with Rose cements his bondage with the girl and on the other hand Marion’s determination to continue living with him complicates the problem. Michael is indebted to Marion as her husband and to Rose as her lover. Marion’s condition is more pitiable than Michael’s for she has been a victim of neurosis since the death of her only child ten years ago. For a woman, child and husband are the most important companions in life. After the loss of her child, Marion does not want to lose her husband also. As Michael is her only support in life she wants to retain him at any cost. She can’t think of a life without him. She often makes phone-calls to Rose’s aunts and enquires about her husband. The problem of love and marriage seems to have no earthly solution for all the three characters are stubborn in their stand. Michael is willing to marry Rose while Marion is unwilling to divorce him. To Michael, Rose is an essential requirement to
satisfy him sexually whereas to Marion, Michael is essential as a reliable life partner. When Marion becomes neurotic, physical love is denied not only to her husband but also to herself. In the absence of physical love, Michael runs in search of it while Marion runs for real love beyond sex.

Marital conflict in *The Potting Shed* revolves around the strained relationship between James and his wife Sara, both of whom have been living separately since their divorce five years ago. After five years of married life Sara divorced James with the consent of his mother. To Boston, Sara says, “When I divorced him, I won his mother’s approval” (80). Greene develops the love triangle, involving James, Sara and God. Influenced by Father William Callifer, James has inclined towards the love of God from his boyhood period. Suddenly he has become a completely transformed personality without feelings like Querry in Greene’s novel *A Burnt out Case* in consequence of his young mind’s inability to withstand the tension resulting from a mysterious experience when he was fourteen. Being a personification of nothingness, he is unable to love Sara in bed. His mind is obsessed with God, revealing the impact left by the childhood experience. James finds himself torn between spiritual love and physical love. Sara complains of James as follows: “In the night you’d wake loving nothing, you went looking for nothing everywhere, when you come in at night I could see you had been with nothing all day” (87). The need for physical love results in marital conflict in both *The Living Room* and *The Potting Shed*. On the failure of James’s married life Albert E. Kalson comments, “His marriage to Sara... failed
when both husband and wife became aware that he had lost interest in the relationship, or perhaps he had never had any” (830). In her frustration with the failed married life she cries at James “Why did you marry me?” (CP 87). Finding it impossible to lead life without being loved, Sara divorces James who continues suffering without a solution to his problem. Marion’s nervous problem initiates marital conflict in *The Living Room* while James’s psychic problem becomes the root cause in *The Potting Shed*. Both the plays are serious plays in which strained marital relationship is linked to the mainstream of Greene’s religious vision.

In *The Complaisant Lover*, Greene deals with marital conflict by employing his usual love triangle but without interposing the relationship between God and man. The playwright confines himself to the pattern of husband-wife-lover. As Frank Kermode puts it, “… the husband-wife-lover situation occurs in a considerable variety of manifestations with the later Greene and with special ingenuity in *The End of the Affair* and *The Complaisant Lover*” (126). Mary, a thirty-five-year old married woman and a mother of two children, Sally and Robin initiates conflict with her middle-aged dentist husband Victor, falling in love with a thirty-eight-year-old antiquarian book seller, Clive. Victor is a good-natured man gifted with an inexhaustible source of anecdotes to enliven the atmosphere with a sense of humour. He reveals his love of humour saying, “A sense of humour is more important than a balance at bank” (CP 146).
Even in the beginning of the play both Mary and Clive seem to be attracted to each other. They exchange their sights while Victor is exploring his humorous talk. As the play progresses Mary’s love for her husband weakens and her proclivity towards her lover strengthens. Evincing little interest in Victor’s talk, Mary often turns away and expresses her displeasure. She finds his anecdotes irritating rather than pleasing. It is ironical that what the husband enjoys as humorous is dispensed with by wife as something irksome. Portraying Victor and Mary as incompatible, Greene prepares the ground for marital conflict. In the cocktail party in the beginning of the play, while Mary proves to be a pleasant hostess by means of her hospitality, Victor brands himself as an unpleasant companion with his boring anecdotes which he considers humorous. This becomes one of the vital factors drawing Mary towards Clive, who establishes his supremacy as a loveable companion by means of his sensible small talk. Victor reveals Mary’s lack of interest in his anecdotes saying, “my wife doesn’t approve of my jokes” (CP 150). It is a pity that he fails to behave as desired by his wife. Victor is quick to hurt others though not intentionally.

As in the earlier plays, absence of physical love is the driving force behind Mary’s love affair. She reveals that she and her husband have not slept together for five years. At the same time she is quick to admit that in married life sex between husband and wife wanes gradually because of other domestic concerns related to children and economy. In her love affair with Clive, Mary finds an outlet for her sexual desire and also her
spirit being suppressed by her heavy domestic responsibility. She finds her domestic conditions a fertile ground for the growth of kindness and affection but not sexual desire. Portrayed by Greene as a shrewd character, Clive exercises an irresistible influence over Mary. He has a profound taste for secondhand books and a strange taste for married women. Discouraging Ann, the nineteen-year-old daughter of Howard, from tempting him to fall in love with her, he insists that he belongs to a different school in which there is room only for married women. He himself cannot cite any solid reason for his proclivity towards married women, which may be, according to him, due to his love of the experienced or his desire to prove his superiority over their husbands in the art of love or his inexplicable jealousy over their life partners. His psychic disposition is such that he is deeply in love with the married women and is capable of winning them over to his side without much difficulty. To Ann he reveals that he had already had affairs with four married women, whom he did not want to marry. He is gifted with all the charming manners required for enticing the feminine. No sooner does Ann meet him than she falls in love with him and expresses her desire to go with him. In his opinion Ann’s attitude towards him is not the result of love but infatuation. He desires to enjoy real love, which according to him, shall be provided only by married women. He says, “Ann dear, you aren’t in love with me” (CP 154) and frustrates her with a blunt reply, “There are no girls of nineteen in my school” (CP 154).
Robin is as much interested in Ann as the latter in Clive. Ann simply ignores Robin’s advances towards her, considering him an immature boy. As A.A. De Vitis puts it, “There is a dramatic counterpoint developed through Ann’s infatuation for Clive, for Mary’s adolescent son is smitten with Ann, giving her such tokens of esteem as a badly stuffed mouse and an electric eye that doesn’t work” (CP 160). There are three love triangles interwoven in the play. The first love triangle involves Victor, Mary and Clive, second comprises Mary, Clive and Ann and the third deals with Clive, Ann and Robin. Greene provides a deep insight into the nature of the love affair between Mary and Clive by presenting Ann and Robin. Undoubtedly the affair between Mary and Clive is deeper, stronger and superior to the yearnings of Ann and Robin, both of whom contribute to the theme of corruption of innocence by their attitudes. Both Robin and Ann might have been corrupted by Mary’s attitude towards Clive and as a result they are tempted without their own knowledge to practise the activities of the adult world. Robin is a keen observer of Mary’s activities, gets corrupted and develops an interest in Ann, who, ignoring his impulses, runs behind the experienced Clive, who does not evince any interest in her. Greene employs the theme of marital conflict to reveal its corrupt impact on the world of innocence. Getting angry with Ann, Mary warns her not to run after Clive and advises her to find a suitable companion of her own age.

Mary’s conflict with her husband enters a crucial stage when Clive expresses his desire to spend a week with her. He strongly believes that
Victor will divorce Mary when he comes to know of her illicit affair. Mary’s secret discussion with Clive in the midst of her busy domestic responsibilities in her own house reveals her keen interest in the outing with her lover. Clive is shrewd enough to pressurize Mary, pretending to prefer Ann’s company, if she is hesitant because of her busy domestic schedule. After leading sixteen years of married life and becoming the mother of Sally and Robin, Mary goes to the extent of deceiving her husband. It is really a moral failure on the part of Mary, to decide in favour of adultery, ignoring her indebtedness to her husband and her responsibility to her grown-up children. Under the guise of marital conflict, Greene discusses the conflict between good and evil, enacting a moral drama as in human life. In the course of her married life Mary might have become more bound to her husband by means of inner love, overcoming the temptations of physical love.

In his wife’s opting for the company of Clive, Victor is also highly accountable. He admits that he does not love his wife as much as he loves his profession. He remembers how he enjoyed loving Mary in the past. He feels that he has allowed himself to concentrate more on his role as the head of the family rather than as the husband of Mary. On account of his negligence, Mary falls apart from him. In addition, his undesirable characteristic makes Mary draw away from him. As Philip Stratford remarks, “Victor Rhodes…is a practical joker and a bore. Dribbling glass, musical cushion, the plastic rat, the tiresome anecdote and the hired joke are the paraphernalia which serve to make him a suitably foppish victim
of abuse” (CP 145). Greene seems to justify Mary’s decision by providing convincing reasons. He projects her as a highly duty conscious housewife, fixed in the midst of cramping domestic responsibilities such as efficient conduct of cocktail parties, skilful management of everyday household activities and attending on her children. This tight domestic schedule takes a heavy toll on her both physically and mentally. Under such circumstances Victor breaks her down intrinsically by stopping loving her because of his dedication to his profession. Often both the husband and the wife discuss the health and the education of their children. Their early blissful life has become a paradise lost. Both of them feel the necessity of a break. Victor says to Mary, “We are both working too hard. We ought to go off somewhere by ourselves. You and I haven’t had a holiday for a long time” (CP 165). When the break comes from Clive, Mary could not say ‘no’. She prefers going with her lover. Under the pretext of going with an imaginary friend Jane Crane, Mary enjoys the company of Clive in a hotel in Amsterdam. Mary’s moral failure cannot be justified. By involving in the crime of adultery she betrays her husband and her children. In Greene’s entertainments, sin is replaced with crime. In all his works whether they are serious or entertainments, moral issue is always there. The moral issue is related to Mary’s illicit affair which amounts to the sin of adultery though significance is not given to it explicitly. Mary succumbs to her craving for flesh and commits the crime of adultery, violating the sacred bond of marriage. Greene does not enact a moral drama in the mind of Mary before her departure to Amsterdam. Mary
shows a little hesitation not owing to her dilemma over the moral issue but to her responsibility more as the mother of two children.

In her blind love for Clive, whom she knows only for two months, Mary descends to the mean level of deceiving her husband. In the play, marital conflict reaches a moral point at which the wife cuckolds her husband by indulging in adultery in order to relieve herself of domestic tension. As desired by Clive and as planned by her, she stays with him for three days in a hotel in Amsterdam. As Philip Stratford remarks, “Mary like Sarah, in The End of the Affair, is recklessly prodigal in love once committed, and like a child simply accepts that loyalty to love is absolute and overrides any other law or social convention” (149). Mary again deceives Victor with a lie when the latter finds her with Clive in the hotel.

After the love episode the marital conflict takes a serious turn with Mary’s decision to divorce her husband. Clive exercises a strong hold on Mary when she goes to the extent of saying, “I won’t think about Robin or Victor or Sally’s music lessons. I’ll only think about me” (CP 160). He impresses Mary further by pleasantly surprising her with the presentation of a pair of diamond ear-rings. Every act of Clive captivates Mary much and draws her closer to him and every act of Victor bores and distances her away from him. Mary is persuaded by her lover to leave her husband and marry him. Her conflict with her husband gains momentum when she agrees to his proposal initially. When Victor comes to know of Mary’s affair, she boldly accepts and requests him to divorce her. She asks him,
“You have to divorce me. Please do something” (CP 193). With Mary’s bold and strong appeal for divorce, the conflict between them reaches the climax.

In Carving a Statue, Greene deals with the conflict between a sixty-year-old Father, whom the playwright has modelled upon Benjamin Robert Haydon, a romantic painter obsessed with biblical objects, and his sixteen-year-old son. Without giving personal names, Greene simply calls his characters as the Father, the Boy, the first Girl and the second Girl on the basis of sex and relationship. Parker is the only character with personal name. The Father is an obsessive character who is highly preoccupied with carving the statue of God. He confines himself to the world of obsession without evincing any interest in the welfare of his son. As John Atkins remarks, “Every creative writer worth our considerations is the victim of obsession …. Without failure and waste his emotions cannot be roused” (182) Working for nine hours a day, he dedicates himself to the He-statue and forgets his son, who seriously feels the need for a woman in the absence of his mother whom he has lost to cancer soon after his birth. Without realizing his responsibility, the sculptor fails in his duty to his son as a father. As a sixty-year-old person, he should be loving and caring to his young motherless boy and should spend time in grooming him to face his future as a successful personality. Instead, he appears to be a selfish father, who orders his hungry son not to touch his portion of loaf. He is an arrogant and irresponsible father obsessed with carving the He-Statue, which occupies every bit of his thought. With
parental love and care denied, the boy is really a piteous character. Instead of carving the character of his son, the sculptor dives deep into his obsession with regard to carving the statue of God. Without responding properly to the queries made by his son, he either resorts to obsessive thoughts or evades with half-hearted answers.

The Father is a failed artist who is incapable of completing the task in spite of his doing the work for the past fifteen years. As Albert E.Kalson puts it, “Greene … turned mystical in Carving a Statue, a play about a failed artist and his indifference towards his unhappy child…” (833). Emphasizing the incomprehensibility of God, Greene makes the task of carving His statue an impossible one to the sculptor, who, not having any perfect idea of God, simply indulges in obsession. The sculptor’s failure as a father is evident in his son’s poor education and his reluctance to answer questions raised by the boy about love, unhappiness and suffering being experienced by him. The Boy presents a bad picture of his progress at school. He says, “I was failed in Latin. Failed in mathematics. A bad report on conduct” (CP 221). In drawing the image of the unhappy child Greene might have been powered by his own unhappy childhood experiences at the school in Berkhamsted, where his father was the Headmaster. According to Neil McEwan, in Greene’s works, “many characters … are haunted by thoughts of school …” (7). The sculptor has betrayed his son by not giving him love and affection and by not training him with proper education. The Boy wants to acquire the knowledge of the world of reality, the access of which is denied by his father, who
escapes into the realm of obsession under the pretext of carving the statue of God. Very much grieved at the absence of mother’s love, the boy wants to know much about her through his father, the only source available to him.

The Father represents the adult world whereas the boy, the world of innocence. Through the conflict between the sculptor and his son Greene dramatizes the conflict between the adult world and the world of innocence. The Boy experiences the pain of real life due to the absence of motherly love and fatherly care while the Father is an escapist from the pain of real life and a man on the run being haunted by the image of God, hardship of reality, his son and finally his own self. The sculptor is both a failed artist and a failed parent. Like most of Greene’s major characters the sculptor is a split personality who is torn between filial love and his love of profession. On account of his inability to perfectly execute both, he becomes a man on the run not only from the pain of external world but also from his own self. The sculptor sails in the world of obsession while his son is interested in acquiring knowledge about the world of reality. He does not answer his questions and belies his expectations. The Boy pursues him with a series of questions and God haunts him with His incomprehensibility. He shouts at his father, “You might answer me. You’re too damned preoccupied” (CP 224). Greene has designed the boy as a foil to his old father. He inclines towards his father, wants to know much about the world from him and tries to strengthen human relationship between them. He is like a bud waiting to blossom in the adult world. His
Father-sculptor displays a sign of deviation from him. While the boy is asking about his mother and a girl met by him, the sculptor is talking to himself about the proper subjects for a sculptor. The Boy is interested in his father whereas the latter remains indifferent to his aspirations. He attentively listens to his father’s narration of his ordeals in choosing the model for the He-statue but the sculptor is reluctant to listen to his son’s interests such as his mother, education, conduct, love, suffering and sailing. He nullifies the boy’s ambition to become a sailor, mocking that he could become a hangman with his expertise in the art of making knots. His indifference is on the anvil both when he remains obsessive and when he occasionally answers. The sculptor proves to be a cruel father by unwillingly indicating the place where the picture of his wife is kept. His unwillingness to answer the boy’s questions about his mother and even to show her picture reveals the loveless relationship between him and his wife. According to Neil McEwan, in Greene’s works “there are vicious characters…. and few characters who are successful” (13).

The Boy is a pathetic character experiencing frustration and depression at the hands of the adult world. His sentimental reaction to the picture of a little dead girl by means of comparison with his dead mother reveals his craving for mother’s love. He pities the dead girl, talks to her affectionately and enquires her whether she has a father like him. He treats even a dead girl as alive but his father fails to treat even the alive with love and affection. The Boy’s hatred for school reflects Greene’s unhappy boyhood experience. As Greene himself puts it, “Unhappiness in a child
accumulates because he sees no end to the dark tunnel. The thirteen weeks of a term might just as well be thirteen years” (SL 78). With his poor knowledge in studies the sculptor serves as a major factor behind his son’s failure in education. It is natural for the boy with poor educational background to hate his school. At the base of the relationship between the sculptor and his son lies the relationship between the torturer and the tortured.

In dramatizing the conflict between the sculptor and his son Greene brings in the element of betrayal of innocence by the adult. In order to quench his thirst for mother’s love the boy brings a girl to the studio-house and shows her the picture of his mother. His attitude towards the girl is more spiritual than physical. He yearns for genuine motherly love from her and not merely physical pleasure. There is an act of betrayal on the part of the girl, who, being a tart, induces the boy sexually and reveals her interest in sex and riches. The Boy says to her, “I want someone to love” (CP 237). In the episode of the Boy and the first Girl, Greene gives a peep into the boy’s innocence. Despite the tart’s temptation, the boy simply stops with embracing her, becomes dreamy and discloses his interest in becoming a sailor and in visiting many foreign ports. The Boy’s world abounds in travels and adventures, which he tries to experience by means of his dream as he is deprived of them in the real world by his cruel father, who, confining him to his studio, curtails his freedom and makes him his assistant. Owing to his deep interest in adventures and travels, Greene himself had undertaken journeys to many troubled and risky
regions of the world like West Africa, Congo, Mexico, Vietnam, Haiti, Indo-China to feel the experience of life on the dangerous edge of things and to report on them. The Boy is subjected to corruption and betrayal both by his father and the first Girl. Considering her as an image of mother’s love, the boy brings her but she, being a tart, tempts the Father and indulges in sexual act with him in the same studio where the statue of God is being carved. Both the Father and the Girl expose the horrible corrupt nature of the adult world. Both the Father and the Boy are motivated by physical love and spiritual love respectively in their attitude towards the Girl. Very much depressed by his father’s betrayal, the Boy shouts at him “you needn’t feel so proud. She’s only a little tart” (CP 245). By his sexual act the sculptor thwarts his son’s attempt to experience love in human relationship and corrupts his mind. He does not allow his son to experience his love and also the love of others.

The first Girl may be a tart but in her company the boy tries to enjoy the love of his dead mother. Her presence provides the boy with an opportunity to enter the world of his mother, which is denied to him by his father. Greene has drawn the adult world in its most despicable form. The sculptor is shown as a person with a strong physique and a weak mind whereas his son is depicted as a boy with a normal physique and a strong mind. Though the Boy is suffering in the absence of parental love and care, he is capable of withstanding the pressures of pain. Like his father, he is not on the run both on the physical plane and on the mental plane. He possesses the strength of mind, which enables him to face problems
boldly. But his physically strong father lacks mental strength as a result of which he is a man on the run both physically and mentally and proves to be ineffective in facing the real life problems. On the physical plane he escapes into the task of carving the statue of God and on the mental plane he often dives deep into his obsession. Being unable to bear the agony and the pain of his wife’s death, the sculptor has taken shelter in the tough task of carving the statue of God. Like Browne sisters in The Living Room the sculptor suffers from the fear of death. He is too weak to bear the hard realities of human life, which entails suffering and pain. His mental weakness makes him a failure in human relationship, which is evident in his indifference to his son. Though he seems to be dedicated to his work by attending nine hours a day for the past sixteen years, he is still far away from finishing, for without loving his son he cannot love the He-statue. He fails to explain to his son what is love. From human love originates the divine love. As a husband he failed because he did not properly attend to his sick and dying wife and as a father he fails because he does not bring up his boy properly and as a sculptor he fails because he is unable to finish carving the statue of God even after sixteen years.

The Boy personifies the constructive spirit of life with his inquisitiveness to know everything about life and with his interest in establishing human relationship. His father personifies the destructive spirit of life with his escapist tendency. His notion of God that He neither loved nor hated his Son, reflects his own attitude to his son. The Boy wants to be educated properly, to go to work, to marry and thus to
participate in the regular activities of life but his father shuts himself off from human relationship being obsessed with the He-Statue. The Father’s indulgence in sex with the first girl is a destructive act. Greene has portrayed him as no better than a mean human being without any domestic concern. Ignoring his son’s request to marry again and to participate in life, the sculptor simply leads a careless, irresponsible and sedate life on the annuity left by his dead wife.

By not loving his son and by indulging in sex with the girl brought by him, the sculptor proves himself unworthy of the noble task of carving the statue of God. In the boy’s opinion, his father could not carve the statue’s left eye expressing love because he himself is a person without love and concern. The Boy remarks about his father’s failure as follows: “he’s looking at fathers for nearly sixteen years now. He can’t find exactly what he wants” (CP 234). He is brimming with emotions and feelings, which his father lacks. Without participating in life the sculptor becomes a living statue and unveils his personality through the gigantic block of stone being carved into the statue of God.

Greene further strengthens the boy’s conflict with the adult world through the episode of the second Girl, who is deaf and dumb. The Boy chooses a deaf and dumb girl as his companion in order to protect her from his lecherous father. But his father is not the only person in the corrupt adult world and there are persons like Parker. The sixty-five-year old Parker proves that he is more lecherous and more corrupt than the
sculptor by driving the deaf and dumb girl to death through a road accident. Entangled in the corrupt adult world the Boy finds himself frustrated and alienated when his attempts to initiate a fresh life are nullified by his father and Parker. As David Pryce-Jones puts it. “Greene repeats the combination of unhappy children and cruel adults with little or nothing between innocence and depravity” (10).

In The Return of A.J. Raffles Greene completely turns to the comic phase of his career as a playwright, centering the plot around the conflict between a criminal and an Inspector, a father and a son and two political personalities. He has built the pivotal character, Raffles after the model of William Hornung’s A.J. Raffles, a clear-cut example of the criminal as a hero. Raffles, a memorable paradoxical character of Greene, is a burglar wanted by Scotland Yard and also a talented English cricketer loved and respected by all. To Inspector Mackenzie, who has been on his pursuit for many years, he is an arch-criminal. In The Return of A.J. Raffles Greene has replaced the sinner with a criminal, the act of sin with an act of crime and the hunter, God with an Inspector. With a view to dramatizing his comic vision of his usual themes, the playwright has completely deviated from his serious religious treatment. Raffles may be called a parody of Greene’s sinner for he has been portrayed as a split personality with a comic bent of mind. According to Albert E. Kalson, “In the delightful The Return of A.J. Raffles Greene for once gave himself over wholeheartedly to the pursuit of fun” (833).
Though a comic criminal, Raffles is endowed with all the characteristics of Greene’s hero. As a criminal, he is in conflict with his hunter, Mackenzie. His associate Bunny says, "That old monster Mackenzie of Scotland Yard had been on his trial for years" (CP 273). Through the conflict between them, Greene weaves his usual pattern of the hunter and the hunted. Bunny shows to Alfred an old chest labelled “Relics of an Amateur cracksman” stolen by Raffles from the Black Museum of Scotland Yard in the presence of Mackenzie. Raffles, though not a serious criminal, is a man on the run under the hot pursuit of Mackenzie. An analysis of his relics reveals the lack of intensity in his criminality. He has a revolver which he has never used to fire but to frighten. His evening waistcoat, opera hat and walking stick add to the clownish phase of his burglar personality. His excellence in disguise is evident from his disguised appearance as Mackenzie in the beginning and as an amateur waiter in the middle of the play. Even Bunny is not able to identify him until Raffles reveals himself. Greene brings in the theme of rising from death by making Raffles appear against the sound wide-spread belief that he was dead in the Boer war. Raffle’s appearance is a miracle to Bunny, who also strongly believes his master to be dead. Rising from his supposed death Raffles proves to be a mysterious personality eluding the grasp of his hunters. In dramatizing this theme the playwright does not resort to probable intervention of God as in The Potting Shed. Not knowing that Raffles was not really dead in the Boer war both his associates and his enemies hold a false view. Greene projects both the pursued and the pursuer equally shrewd. Contrary to the popular opinion,
Mackenzie, the pursuer of Raffles, has an eye of suspicion on the possibility of his death and expects him to be alive.

Raffles is not a hardcore criminal and so he reveals his reluctance to participate in an act of crime when persuaded by Alfred. Being a good cricketer he loves to play the game rather than to commit crimes. Bunny glorifies Raffles’ achievements as a good cricketer, displaying to Alfred his cricket articles. Displaying the arsenals required for the criminal act of burglary and for the game of cricket, Bunny presents Raffles as an expert in both. Being a split personality he loves to be a good cricketer and also a skillful criminal. He subjects himself to mental conflict when persuaded by Alfred to help him by burgling the house of his father. His mind oscillates between love of cricket and love of crime. As Graham Smith puts it, “Greene’s grand theme of the self divided, whether as jealous lover, drunken priest, double agent to name only a few variations is clearly present” in the epigraph of The Man Within, his first novel: “There’s another man within me that’s angry with me” (2). The combination of both positive and negative qualities makes Raffles an enchanting personality. Like Rose who is torn between love of God and love of marriage, James who is torn between belief and doubt, Mary who is torn between her husband and her lover and the Boy who is torn between the world of innocence and the world of experience, Raffles finds himself torn between the love of cricket and the love of crime.
As Greene is chiefly concerned with sinners and criminals, he dramatizes the criminal aspect of Raffles’ personality. As George Woodcock puts it, “The criminal rather than crime, the sinner rather than sin are Greene’s ultimate concern” (701). Despite his initial reluctance he agrees to burgle the house of Marquess, Alfred’s father. The playwright focuses his attention on Raffles’ reaction to his physical predicament. After Bunny’s escape with the burgled bounty of five hundred pounds and a gold box, Raffles finds himself unable to escape from the bedroom of Marquess because of the unexpected entry of Portland, Prince of Wales. The playwright studies the struggle of Raffles caught in the web of inimical situation, which is further aggravated and turned against him with the arrival of Mackenzie, who identifies Raffles under the disguise of a waiter and arrests him. The conflict between them takes a serious turn with the arrest of Raffles, whose behaviour while burgling and after burglary is highly comical. In the view of Graham Smith “Seriousness is entwined with the … excitement and comedy in a satisfyingly unified way” (24). Reluctantly Raffles undertakes the criminal act, gets himself entangled and experiences physical predicament.

Driving his predominant characters to dangerous situations is one of the characteristics of Greene and in accordance with this he places Raffles in the midst of a stormy situation, which is interspersed with a comic vision. When the characters are placed on the dangerous edge they get a clear vision of their conflict and acquire knowledge through suffering. While on the perimeters of dangers they meet with failures of
which Greene sings profusely, for he strongly believes that the sense of
failure always adds a dignity however slight and precarious. Raffles
becomes a failure when he commits the criminal act and gets arrested by
Mackenzie.

Greene has also incorporated the conflict between Alfred and
Marquess into the main stream of conflict between Raffles and
Mackenzie. The generation conflict has been dramatized in the plays The
Living Room, The Potting Shed and Carving a Statue for the purpose of
exposing the cruelty of the adult world. In The Return of A.J. Raffles
Greene’s vision of the corrupt adult world is given a comical twist in
order to expose its absurdity. Laying the conflict between the father and
the son as the basis, the playwright develops the plot around the conflict
between Raffles and Mackenzie and the conflict between Portland and his
German nephew, Willy. Alfred’s poor opinion of his father is evident in
the way he addresses him. As his son opines, Marquess also behaves in a
deserving manner. He stops giving allowances to his son in order to
prevent him from helping his poor friend Oscar Wilde. Hence, Alfred
arranges for burgling his father’s house with the help of Raffles and
Bunny. Greene has portrayed Marquess as a highly comical character,
from whose stupidity evolves an extremely humorous situation. No sooner
does he come to know that he is burgled of five hundred pounds than he
behaves in a stupid manner, complaining loudly to Portland. His tragic
situation is transformed into a source of comedy by means of his stupid
attitude. The conflict between the father and the son is so serious that the
latter goes to the extent of transforming the former into a tragic comedian.
Greene mocks at the indifferent world of experience through his comic portrayal of Marquess. It is said that while following Raffles and Bunny with the hope of retrieving his burgled sovereigns along the Boxmoor High street, Marquess has fallen down and become unconscious. Towards the end of the play his body is brought on a stretcher to St. James’s Hospital for Skin Disease. Greene designs his tragic condition to be a source of laughter by making him rise from a death-like condition. The serious theme of rising from death is parodied and given a comical treatment.

Greene magnifies the comic phase of Marquess’ character not merely to laugh at the world of Fathers but also to look into the seriousness veiled behind it. Just as the sculptor in Carving a Statue, who is an utterly selfish character, giving scant attention to his son’s aspirations, Marquess fails his son’s desires by stopping his allowance. He intervenes in his son’s freedom and expects him to behave as desired by him. He is portrayed as an authoritative father under whose tyranny suffers his son. The conflict between Marquess and Alfred throws light on the conflict between the authority-exercising elders and the freedom loving youth. Marquess, who is unable to maintain a cordial relationship with his son, aspires for a laudable public image by putting up “many a boxing match for the aid of police charities” (CP 278) and conducting parties at home for royal people like Portland. The intensity of Alfred’s anger and frustration is revealed in his words; “I will go and see if my infernal father is still alive. I might seize an opportunity of strangling him
if the Inspector turns back” (CP 316). Greene’s vision of the adult world exposes its hollowness.

Interweaving the political conflict between Portland and Willy, Greene parodies the nations’ spying activities through the involvement of captain Von Blixen, a German secret agent sent for stealing the love letters written by the Prince to his lover, Alice. Revealing his hatred for his nephew, the Prince says, “I have a German nephew, an intolerable ass. He fancies himself as a soldier and laughs at me as a useless non-combatant” (CP 298). The arrest of Von Blixen exposes the German Emperor’s mean intention of dishonouring Portland by publishing the letters in the German press. As the playwright has intended to parody the conflict, he depicts Von Blixen to be comical in his attitude. On the basis of the practical knowledge acquired by Greene while serving as British secret agent during the Second World War, he presents a comical exploration of the spying activity and makes it a mockery.

In The Great Jowett, a radio play, Greene reveals his innate interest in human struggle, dramatizing the institutional conflict between Benjamin Jowett, known as Jowler, the late nineteenth century educator and the Head of Balliol College, Oxford and his adversary-scholars, Peel, Ross and Smith, who disdain him on flimsy grounds. Jowett is hated for his orphan-descent, his reading of Plato and Hegel and his controversial work on St. Paul. Like Greene’s many major religious characters, Jowett combines both religious and secular aspects in his attitude. Behaving more
as a scholar than as a religious personality, he evinces keen interest in the welfare of Balliol college from a humanistic point of view. His resoluteness in not allowing the religion to influence his service in the institution, earns him a strongly worded displeasure. Expressing his unwillingness to elect Jowett as the Master of Balliol college, Ross remarks, “….it wouldn’t be good for the college to elect a Master who may be condemned for his religious opinions…” (CP 335). Keeping them on the dangerous edge of things with defeat and failure, Greene rips open the mind of his central characters and studies their reaction as suffering personalities. In spite of his unmerited failure at the hands of his enemies in the election, Jowett continues to serve sincerely. He suffers mentally because Scott, who is not an equal to him on merit, is elected as the Master. Even in the radio play Greene has employed the pattern of the hunter and the hunted. Jowett is hunted by his enemies and is driven to the edge of humiliation and suffering. The conflict between Jowett and his enemies may be treated as that between good and evil forces rampant in human life. Gloating over Jowett’s defeat in the election, Peel remarks, “We have Jowett on the run now” (CP 337). Surrounded by oppressive forces, the great scholar remains active and continues enjoying the support of young scholars like Green, who consoles him saying, “It will be forgotten in no time at all” (CP 340). The playwright studies Jowett’s character along the path of defeat and humiliation and displays his admirable personality in the midst of his sufferings. According to Denis Donoghue, “Greene’s procedure…is to begin with a hunch, an intuition of
Jowett’s character is portrayed with inherent elements of conflict. Like most of Greene’s major characters, Jowett is a split personality. The playwright has imbibed the elements of conflict both within and without. On the external plane, the conflict is between Jowett and his adversaries and on the inner plane the conflict is within Jowett’s character itself. A faint love of aristocracy is traceable in his attitude but at the same time he is strongly determined to open the gates of Balliol College for the education of the poor. After experiencing the hardships of poor background as an orphan boy Jowett has emerged as a great scholar and so it is quite natural for him to stand in between the love of poor and the love of aristocracy. In his attitude to the Establishment also he reveals his self-contradictory nature by signing the Thirty-Nine Articles when summoned by the Vice-Chancellor and by expressing his willingness to defend the poor poet Swinburne before the College authorities. He is a Catholic priest noted for his liberal religious opinions which make his enemies request the Vice-Chancellor to denounce him. As Neil McEwan puts it, “He [Graham Greene] has been a Catholic for more than fifty years, but a dissident for most of them. He likes to be troublesome in politics and religion” (2). That Jowett is summoned by the Vice-Chancellor is a disgrace to him for the latter has not summoned so far a person of his position. Greene’s humanistic stand is strongly evident from his belief that from human love originates divine love. The whisky priest in The Power
and the Glory, though a sinner of adultery, serves the cause of man by conducting the church services secretly at the risk of his life in the midst of hostile circumstances. William Callifer, the whisky priest in The Potting Shed unwillingly attends to the church-work, having lost his faith in God as a result of his bargain with Him owing to his love for James. As a priest Jowett is also moved by his human love instead of by his blind adherence to the church. By dramatizing Jowett’s conflict both on the inner and the outer planes Greene provides the listeners and the readers with an insight into his character.

In Yes and No, a one-act play published in 1983 Greene dramatizes the theme of corruption of child and the betrayal of innocence, dealing with the conflict between two old men bound by homosexual relationship. On the superficial plane a middle-aged Director is training a young and nervous Actor where, when and how to say ‘Yes’ or ‘No’ and where, when and how to make ‘pauses’ in a play written by Frederick Privett. The Director corrupts the mind of the young Actor by exposing him to the plot dealing with the immoral adult world. In Privett’s play Ralph and John are practitioners of homosexual relationship. On three occasions Ralph gets into conflict with John by attempting to have an affair with young men. At first he attempts to move with Henry Hobbs, a young actor, secondly with Rene, a French acrobat and thirdly with a window-cleaner. On all the three occasions Ralph indulges in betraying innocence by attempting to draw the young men into homosexual relationship. Even in a one-act play Greene cannot escape from exposing the corrupt nature
of the adult world as he is obsessed with the impact of lost innocence experienced by himself during his childhood period at Berkhamstead.

In For whom the Bell Chimes a three-act farce with a parodying treatment, Greene dramatizes the social conflict through the conflict between two men the first of whom is called X and the other Masterman, bringing in the themes of betrayal, pursuit, murder. But X and Masterman are the guilty characters whose seediness reflects the condition of modern man. In his very first appearance X seems to be restless and desperate when approached by Masterman with the intention of getting some contribution from him towards the cause of Anti-Child-Polio Campaign. Carrying an ancient attaché case and wearing a pair of spectacles, Masterman in his shabby grey suit is reminiscent of Greene’s usual fugitive character on the run like the whisky priest in The Power and the Glory. Both X and Masterman are seen as fallen characters, the former internally because of his bemused look and the latter externally because of his fugitive-like appearance. In their confrontation Greene works out the theme of betrayal. Masterman who pretends to be a representative of Anti-Child-Polio Campaign tries to cheat X, who is clever enough to turn the table against the former. Without his own knowledge, he finds himself betrayed by X. As John Atkins puts it, “…the betrayal seems the more inevitable : if you do not betray willingly, circumstances will compel you” (75). Masterman approaches X to meet his selfish end but the latter escapes from his obsessive situation by implicating the former in his condition. Greene creates a comical situation by means of these two
absurd characters, who are placed in a hopeless situation simultaneously. Initially X finds himself in a helpless and tension-packed situation and soon gets relieved by placing Masterman in that situation. Pretending to pity Masterman, X manages to exchange his identity with that of the former and escapes. The conflict between them is inherent in their attitude when they try to deceive one another. Both of them are comical impostors.

The way in which Masterman becomes a victim of X’s deceit evokes hilarious laughter rather than pity. Under the pretext of pitying Masterman, X exchanges the latter’s belongings in worn out conditions one after the other. In order not to let Masterman suspect him X starts exchanging his pair of shoes and proceeds to exchange his jackets, trousers and spectacles. No sooner does X become like Masterman in outward appearance than he snatches his attaché case and runs away from the flat, slapping his wig on the latter’s bald head. Even after the exchange of their identity, they remain more or less in the same absurd condition. Contrary to his belief modern man remains an absurd character throughout the journey of his life. In spite of his intelligence and rationality he exposes himself as irrational. X cons Masterman, becomes a deceit and prepares himself to lead a life of fugitive being pursued by an unknown force. His initial tragic situation haunts him in another form after his exchange of identity. He may have escaped from his physical identity but cannot from his guilty consciousness. X has moved from one absurd condition to another. So is the case of Masterman also. As a false representative of Anti-Child-Polio Campaign, he thrives on the betrayal of
children victimized by polio, leading a life of fugitive. From his present despicable condition he is driven to another absurd condition by X. Under their exchanged conditions they do not experience any fresh lease of life but a condition which is more or less similar to the previous one. In their tragic mode, they appear as comedians rather than as serious criminals. Man in his absurdity looks more like a ludicrous creature to be laughed at than a human being to be pitied.

Neil McEwan has said in the preface of his book, “…Greene’s mature work is more effective in its relation between comic and tragic perception of the world” (ix). Both X and Masterman are comic characters with tragic background. X’s tragic background lies in his initial situation as a man in despair and in his becoming a fugitive while Masterman’s in his initial appearance as a fugitive and then in his unexpected depressed condition. Greene’s emphasis on their tragic background reveals his tragic perception of human life and his treatment of their farcical attitude towards one another throws light on his comic perception. It is highly comical that Masterman accepts everything including silver spoons given as contribution and that he is such a foolish character to be conned easily by X, whose comicality lies in his absurd initial appearance and in his exposure of his real nature. As W.W. Robson puts it, ‘Greene’s humour co-exists happily with his seriousness because both are founded on the same perception; the element of absurdity of life” (140).
The reason for X’s initial tragic condition is known when Masterman finds the dead body of Felicity Harwich hidden in the Omni-Studio. X says, “Masterman, before you came I passed through a period of deep despair” (383). The conflict between them becomes serious when X escapes, leaving Masterman in deep despair. In modern human life the condition of despair can happen to any one. Greene parodies man’s absurd condition in dramatizing the attitude of X and Masterman and cast them in a comical mode. He works out the conflict in projecting both of them as unemployable for any value. Remaining in the flat of his mistress Harwich, X leads a life of idleness on her income. He convinces Masterman saying, “The trouble is it’s not my money. It’s my fiancée’s. I have none. I’m unemployable” (CR 377). In spite of his lack of ability, Masterman employs himself in the crime of collecting contribution, pretending as a representative of the children who are polio-victims. In making X pity Masterman, Greene parodies his concept that pity destroys. Pretending to pity Masterman, X helps himself. The former indulges in self pity and spoils his chance of continuing his crime with phony credentials by getting entangled in the snare of X.

Greene dramatizes the pattern of the pursuer and the pursued through the conflict between Fenwick who works for the Anti-Child-Polio Campaign and Masterman who betrays the campaign as its fake representative. He resorts to parodying the serious pattern of the hunter and the hunted by portraying Fenwick as a farcical character. Fenwick’s farcicality is quite evident in his damaging the wall of the Omni-Studio
while searching for Masterman. He is unable to identify Masterman because the latter has disguised himself as X. The reason behind Greene’s dramatizing the conflict between them in the form of parody is to expose the absurdity of human life.

Man has inclination to commit mistakes and also the capacity to resist the advance of evil. With the discovery of nuclear energy both man’s unbelievable progress and his instant annihilation have become possibilities. What modern man requires is a moral and spiritual refinement, which Greene emphasizes in all his plays by moving his characters towards faith in God, reconciliation, understanding and peace. In “Graham Greene, 86, Dies: Novelist of the Soul”, an anonymous article in New York Times, it is stated, “Many of his (Greene’s) deepest concerns were spiritual: a soul working out its salvation … amid the paradoxes and anomalies of 20th century existence” (1). In spite of his focus on man’s sufferings, he glorifies man with his innate quality to sail towards the better by means of reconciliation. Greene does not end his plays with a tragic vision of man without any hope for recovery but with an optimistic note, highlighting the mystery of God’s mercy and emphasizing the need for the sense of forgiveness and reconciliation on the part of man. His insistence on reconciliation as the need of the present time is discussed in the following chapter.