Chapter VI

GREENE, MURDOCH AND COMPTON-BURNETT: AGREEMENT AND DIVERGENCES

Graham Greene, Iris Murdoch, and Ivy Compton-Burnett have in common their interest in the uplift of the society and they adopt a moralistic approach, as clearly visible in their works. They share a common concern for the decline of morality in the modern society. All the three authors believe that the chaos and confusion prevailing in the present materialistic and existential world can be remedied only by supplying a moral outlook and vision. In this scientific age in which the comforting institutions of religion, community and even family are openly renounced, this is not an easy proposition. The conventional and acceptable codes of behaviour in any system have been overthrown and outrageous, unconventional and revolutionary principles have taken the place enjoyed by these ousted codes. In the present situation of the modern man, ostracized from the society, estranged from his dear and near ones and alienated and abandoned without spiritual solace, one despairs of ever finding a ray of hope. He is left staring into the void he finds in himself. They believe that man's quest for the mirages of the world leads him to a selfish, materialistic and superfluous life which pulls him into the chasm of
despair, futility and fills him with a feeling of emptiness. All the three authors are preoccupied with this situation and realise the necessity of bringing back discipline and a moral order into the modern world. They have their own philosophy regarding this chaotic situation and the solution for the same.

All the three authors studied here have the basic understanding that the most meaningful identity that can be supplied to the modern man is the moral identity. The degradation that has occurred in the moral values has caused disaster to mankind in all spheres of life. If superfluous and superficial success has the power to satisfy man, modern man undoubtedly must get a lot of satisfaction. Surely he has achieved the greatest success in all fields when compared with his predecessors. But at the same time the real meaning of life has escaped his grip. The genuine values of life are incomprehensible for him. The unrest and the dissatisfaction prevailing in the modern generation point to the evident fact that the only oasis in this desert of turmoil and turbulence is the re-establishment of the lost moral sense. Morton D. Zabel has commented on this situation:

"Humanity having contrived a world of mindless and psychotic brutality, reverts to the atom of
the lonely man. Marked, hunted, Ishmaelite, or
condemned, he may work for evil or for good, but
it is his passion for moral identity that
provides the nexus of values in a world which
has reverted to anarchy.¹

The psychological and physical malady of man is
approaching a grave and incurable stage. Greene, Murdoch
and Compton-Burnett show an awareness of this situation
and make an endeavour to revitalise the modern man,
deprived of his essential vitality. All the three alike
assume a diagnostic attitude to the ills of humanity and
state a common concern about sinking moral standards. But
their prescription of remedies is not the same, as they
have each their own individual outlook despite a shared
perception.

The outstanding feature of the works of Greene, is
that his novels clearly establish his firm belief in the
presence of a merciful God. It is this belief which
complements the principles of sin and saintliness in his
works. His belief in God is so ardent that this solace is
transmitted into the mind of the readers through the
messages in his novels. The primary difference we find in
the works of Murdoch and Compton-Burnett is that they
have denied openly the concept of a personal God. This
perception held by Murdoch and Compton-Burnett accounts for the fundamental dissimilarities in the themes and in their presentation as opposed to those by Greene. But Murdoch cannot be considered completely separated from a vision of God. Though she doesn't admit faith in a personal God, she believes that the religious background would help an individual adhere to a moralistic path. She believes in the essential goodness of a person which can be achieved only through a disciplined life. Only through discipline and self-restraint can one attain true freedom. Freedom is no more synonymous with unbridled conduct and indiscipline for her. Moreover, through her interviews and her novels we come to realise that she had cherished the Christ figure in her heart and that she had tried to come closer and closer to Christian perfection. So Murdoch also has a strong moralistic approach in her works like Greene in spite of the basic difference. But Compton-Burnett has never made an attempt to establish a strong sense of morality through her works. She has, it is true, tried to show the plight of the families and intimate circles where morality is absent. She merely makes insinuations without coming to conclusions or solutions. So the first major aspect one must mention here is that the maximum edifying and ennobling effect is supplied by the works of Greene.
The idea that modern man is in dire need of a reassurance is present in most of the novels of Greene. The feeling of abandonment and displacement is troubling the individual in this technological world and he is trying to grasp at a straw before drowning in disillusionment. The comfort and the solution for this desperate plight is amply offered by the novels of Greene. The readers are pacified by the feeling that any form of evil or sin committed in the course of life would no longer be a hindrance against the attainment of eternal life. This sort of confidence can be supplied only by a moral and spiritual outlook. Greene's novels try to re-establish the lost sense of spirituality in the mind of the people. Greene has made it possible for even the worst sinner to reach the grace of God. Pinkie in Brighton Rock, the Whiskey priest in The Power and The Glory and Scobie in The Heart of the Matter are relevant examples. The term 'worst sinner' pertains only to the attitude of the society. The sinner in all the works of Greene ultimately turns to be a saint and stands justified in the eyes of God. This elevation of the mean sinner to the pedestal of a saint is sufficient to provide confidence and comfort to the common man. This type of solution for the present day ailments can't be obtained with this much intensity in the works of Murdoch.
She has presented the chaotic situation of the present society, discarded the power of the existential man without the guiding light of spirituality and has classified the modern people into two groups—the first group leading a life based on conventions and the second given to neurosis. She has also decided that happiness and the true meaning of life are got only by winning absolute freedom. But her high philosophy is not finding a proper outlet through her novels. In other words, she doesn't believe that this type of discipline and freedom which would lead to happiness and love among human beings is possible in this world. She doesn't supply a comforting answer to the complexities presented through her novels. Only in a few novels, do some of the characters attain the spirituality she has envisaged. Whereas in the other works there is pessimism, in these novels the characters gain true freedom and we hear an optimistic note. Compton-Burnette has not tried hard to bring about a didactic effect through her works. When she was questioned about the lack of poetic justice meted out through her novels, she had stated her conviction that, the reward and punishment expected by mankind would remain only poetic or imaginative or a literary convention. So here again it is clear that the modern spiritual necessity is more
aptly resolved and accomplished by Greene and by Murdoch than by Compton-Burnett.

As D. H. Lawrence has stated, "any novel which reveals true and vivid relationship is a moral work, no matter what the relationships may consist in." This view is acceptable when morality and sin are considered from the personal viewpoint. When considered in the light of the argument of D. H. Lawrence, the novels of Greene and Murdoch are moral works. The real and mundane aspects of human relationship are delineated in their fiction. But Compton-Burnett's works cannot be said to portray true human relationships convincingly. Besides, she seems to be averse to the idea of poetic justice in her novels. Because of these reasons her novels are described as 'amoral'. She herself has denied this and considers herself a moralistic writer to a certain extent.  

Man, as we have seen in Chapter two tends to be what he is not, to be what the society in which he was brought up thinks is desirable. This tendency ultimately leads to a pseudo-personality, that is a type of personality which is projected outwardly. The real character of the individual will be determined by the inner self which remains hidden inside. This kind of dual personality in extreme cases may lead even to psychological disorders.
The major characters of Greene, who have become unforgettable do not have this peculiarity. Even if they may have a slight inclination to make pretensions and attempt masquerades, we see that very soon they collect enough willpower to project their true selves. Thus the 'sinners' in Greene's novels are not making any attempt to conceal their true selves. This quality endears them to the author, to the readers and to God. There are certain other characters like Ida Arnold in Brighton Rock and Louise in The Heart of the Matter who succumb to this frailty. They are presented as 'pious' in nature whereas their true self is extremely vicious. Greene shows considerable bitterness in the portrayal of these characters. Murdoch also declaims against this attitude of the people and their tendency to express the qualities which they don't possess genuinely. True humility acquired by the shedding of the 'ego' would enable oneself to express oneself sincerely. Murdoch's successful characters are those who come to an understanding of their true selves, as for example Jake Donaghue in Under the Net. When considered under this criterion, Greene and Murdoch have a Christian approach regarding sin and sinners. Murdoch is against all kinds of hypocrisies and whole-heartedly agrees with the Biblical insistence on frankness and purity of the heart. Napier in More Women
than Men is such a character. The author's disapproval of the bogus nature of the characters is discerned in spite of her placid and calm mode of narration. But she doesn't pass any verdict and there is no question of open indictment. This approach is entirely different from the one found in the novels of Greene and Murdoch. Greene plainly adheres to Christian principles, Murdoch accepts an indirect adaptation of the Christian approach and Compton-Burnett adopts an indifferent, non-Christian method.

As regards the theme of temptations and sin, all the three authors have the same attitude. Compton-Burnett believes that people usually do not come out well in a temptation. The same view is established in the novels of Greene and Murdoch. To Greene temptation leads to sin but the sinner does not stop the sin, but begin his progress towards moral regeneration. Murdoch presents the yielding to the temptation as something inevitable in the fallible human nature and she considers moral perfection an ideal situation, not easily attainable.

Basically the attitudes to sin is the same in all these authors. For example, disloyalty in family life is a very important topic discussed by all the three of them. Compton-Burnett has developed this theme in most of her
novels. Miles, the character in her novel *A Father and His Fate* is a good illustration of deceit in marital life. Murdoch has presented marital incongruity and extra-marital relationships within a framework of highly complicated psychological, existential and such other modern theories. Martin, the character in *A Severed Head* is a wonderful example of marital deceit. He was disloyal in married life, had affairs with three ladies and was capable of being cool and rational about adultery. He did not think that the marriage bond, though solemn, was uniquely sacred. The same theme is dealt with in the novels *The Heart of the Matter, The End of the Affair* etc. by Greene. The lack of oneness and understanding necessary in the matrimonial bond is mentioned here. Ultimately this situation leads them to commit graver sins. Scobie in *The Heart of the Matter* and Sarah in *End of the Affair* are raised to the level of saints owing to the skilful manipulation of this theme by Greene. Thus, the same theme presented by the three authors differently, brings about different results, according to their dexterity in presentation.

As for the psychological aspect of sin, it is the prime concern in the works of Murdoch. In the interviews of Murdoch, she states her awareness about neurosis and conventions and about the types of modern men classified
into the ordinary language man and the totalitarian man. She mentions also the relevance of the supernatural elements in the life of the psychologically deranged people. But she does not prescribe any remedy for this psychological disorder. There are detailed discussions and theoretical studies of them in many of her works but practically only very few of the characters of Murdoch manage to escape from the mental agony and ailment. She seems to feel that the present day man is fated to live with these maladies. She is aware that a Christian life would have helped the individual a great deal. Edmund, a character in her novel, The Italian Girl laments:

I wished, not for the first time that I had been brought up as a Christian. Christianity was not inside me, for all that I sometimes aped it and I knew the loss to be terrible. This was yet another thing for which I could not forgive my parents.4

In spite of this longing, we see that even after the novel has advanced, Edmund is not able to attain any spiritual growth or rather he denies the spiritual progress he is 'attaining. He analyses his own position:

What was the value, what had been the value, of my long meditation? I had no power here to
heal the ills of others, I had merely discovered my own. I had thought to have passed beyond life, but now it seemed to me that I had simply evaded it. I had not passed beyond anything; I was a false religious, a frightened man.5

These two quotations reveal the stagnant state of spirituality in the case of Edmund. This is the case of most of her characters and it is clear that she doesn't furnish a solution for the psychological and spiritual problems faced by the sinners in her novels.

But this is not the case with Greene's novels. In Greene, as in Murdoch, sin sparks off psychological and spiritual problems. But the description of the mental agony and psychological crisis is much more simple when compared with the complex style used by Murdoch. Greene's characters find absolute healing in the grace and mercy of God. Even the notorious criminal Pinkie, in Brighton Rock is sure that he will get shelter in the kindness of God. When he is planning the murder of Rose, he is conscious of the forces of tenderness and pity stirring within him. "Somewhere, like a beggar outside a shuttered house, tenderness stirred, but he was bound in a habit of hate."6 The mercy of God waiting to flush the individual soul is hinted at here in this passage. Towards the end
of the novel, we are convinced that Pinkie would surely be enveloped in the grace of God Almighty. Pinkie who was a victim to this environment, his unhealthy childhood experiences etc. had turned out to be a psychologically affected, misfit in his society. Greene shows that God's mercy is available for him also.

In the novels of Compton-Burnett, this sort of approach is not seen. Her sinners are brought up in such feeble circumstances without any strong moral background that they don't develop any psychological or spiritual problems, even after indulging in sinful deeds. About the burning of a will of Aunt Sukey by herself, her sister Jessica says: "If she burned the old will, it was not her own act, not the act of the person she was. She must have done it in delusion or error or in some weakness that had no meaning." This is the attitude of the author towards her sinners. They never make an attempt to escape from the clutches of sin because spiritual knowledge and progress in the real sense of the term are alien to them. Christianity does not keep sinners out as beyond the hope of redemption. It teaches that God's mercy is available even to the worst sinner, commiseration and mercy being the cardinal principle of Christianity. This attitude is fully assimilated by Greene in the novels. He has treated the individual and his spirit with maximum reverence. The
sinners in his novels get the vision to realise the true spirit of Christianity. They are conscious of the value of the human soul and consider this to be of more significance than their own redemption and the eternal association with God. For this reason his character, Scobie, accepts eternal damnation. In his communication with God this idea is obvious:

O God, I am the only guilty one because I've known the answers all the time, I've preferred to give you pain rather than give pain to Helen or my wife because I can't observe your suffering. I can only imagine it. But there are limits to what I can do to you or them. I can't desert either of them while I'm alive, but I can die and remove myself from their bloodstream. They are ill with me and I can cure them. And you too God—you are ill with me. I can't go on, month after month, insulting you. . . .

The same treatment is seen in the case of characters like the Whiskey priest in The Power and the Glory and Bendrix in The End of the Affair—also. Because of the reverence these characters show to their fellow beings due respect is given to their soul by God also. Greene tries to
propagate the real message and motive of true religion through this attitude towards the individual.

Murdoch and Compton-Burnett do not employ this type of sacred and respectful environment to treat the individuals. In their works we come across a lot of individuals who are wallowing in the filth of sin and evil. Murdoch very convincingly portrays the plight of the modern individual unable to find a proper placement and identity in the society. But the required concern of the individual is not noticeable in her novels. Either she fails to find a method to put the modern man in his proper place or else she finds it an impossible task to replenish the lost value and grandeur for the man of this present age. The predicament of the modern individual totally displaced and without a spiritual or a worldly redemption is expressed through the feelings of Matthew in An Accidental Man:

. . . London seemed a city, not even wicked, devoid of spirit, dusty, broken. God had died there since Matthew was young and Jesus Christ, who might have been waiting for him in England, was gone, too, faded utterly, his old Friend and Master, gone. How abhorrent to him now was the
image of the crucified one, the personal local
Godhead of Christianity.⁹

In the works of Compton-Burnett one does not find
any strong concern to prove the value of the individual
and to redeem him or her from the depraved condition.
Self-justification rescues them from the embarrassment
temporarily and leaves them permanently in the hell of
eternal damnation. When Miles, a character in A Father
and His Fate is caught in the mean act he says:

. . . I would rather be what I am, a weak, erring
man, weaker than a woman I dare say, than a hard,
hardly-judging person, who speaks with a second
purpose all the time, and a malicious one at
that. . . . Oh, I have not so much fault to find
with myself.¹⁰

This proves that the treatment of the individual is
entirely different in the case of the three authors.

‘Ego’ is always a supplementary factor in accentuating
the sin of an individual and it is interesting to note
the manner in which the three authors have dealt with
this aspect. Murdoch is of the opinion that ‘ego’ stands
as an obstacle in the way to attain proper and complete
freedom which helps a person to perceive reality. But she
doesn’t make an attempt to redeem many of her characters
from the shackles of 'egoism'. For example, Blaise a character in *The Sacred and Profane Love Machine* has an extra marital relationship with a lady, Emily, his concubine and conceals this truth from his legal wife Harriet. He is reluctant to admit the truth and says: "I can't feel the value of truth here. Perhaps that's what corruption is..." Finally when the truth is blurted out to Harriet, her own 'ego' is inflated. She gets a dominance over her husband and his illegal wife. "All these people now depend upon her. She and only she, could if it were possible at all, help, heal and avert disaster." Her ego gets satisfied by her awareness of the self-importance until Blaise leaves her for Emily. In Greene's novels the protagonists generally succeed in shedding the egoistic feeling. The Whiskey priest in *The Power and the Glory* is the best example. His prayer is significant in this context: "O God, forgive me--I am a proud lustful, greedy man--These people are martyrs. They deserve a martyr to care for them--not a fool like me, who loves all the wrong things." Here we find unconditional surrender to God in total humility, having shed 'ego' and pride absolutely. In the characters of Compton-Burnett, though the structure of the novels is weak, the characters never give up their self-confidence and individuality. Self-justification is ample proof for the overpowering
egoism even when one of them is caught red-handed in an evil deed.

The use of the supernatural elements is another concern of this study. The supernatural is freely used in the works of Murdoch. She has ample reason for using them. She believes that in this modern world, when religion has become problematic, psychological forces would be free as if they were spirits. In her novels like *The Bell*, *The Sea* etc. we see supernatural agents at work. They are manifestations of the sins and evils inherent in the mind of the characters of the novels. But she doesn't make use of these elements to extricate the individuals from the burden of sin. In spite of all the preachings and philosophic speeches the characters do not get redemption. Greene has rarely used supernatural elements and one novel where it gains prominence is *The End of the Affair*. Greene has succeeded in bestowing a supernatural power on Sarah after her death. She, an ordinary sinner, turns out to be a saint by this process. A boy suffering from awful pain in the stomach got cured by the proximity of a book belonging to Sarah and also her presence with the child in his dream. Thus the supernatural factors are again put to use by Greene to ascertain the idea that the state of sin is temporary and that it is a stepping stone
to saintliness. Compton-Burnett hardly ever makes use of the supernatural elements in her works.

Christianity has always concentrated on the ennobling effect of suffering. The Holy Bible assures: "And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, establish and strengthen you." Similarly many other references to the merit of suffering can be seen in the Bible. In Christianity, suffering is an inevitable part. Christ himself established the value and importance of suffering on the Cross. The theme of suffering is dealt with differently by Greene and Murdoch. In the case of Compton-Burnett, there is practically no suffering. Even after committing a grave sin and even when branded responsible for a crime, her characters remain complacent and take shelter under some flimsy excuses and justifications. Greene's characters who are really sinners get purified through their suffering. The Whiskey priest and Scobie are examples. Scobie in The Heart of the Matter stands as the epitome of suffering. He can't bear the sufferings of the others dependent on him and so condemns himself to eternal suffering by getting out of their system and even that of God. So here we see the supreme example of noble suffering. Similarly in the case of the Whiskey priest in
The Power and the Glory he is compassionate and his suffering is for the poor, needy fellow beings. He experiences a communion in the presence of sufferers like him. He prays: "Oh, God, Send them someone more worthwhile to suffer for." In A Burnt-Out Case, we read: "With suffering we become part of the Christian myth." Greene shows consistently his awareness of the ennobling effect of suffering. This is different from the viewpoint of Murdoch, who concentrates on the negative aspect of suffering. Cato, a character in her novel Henry and Cato says about suffering: "Christianity hands it out even to peasants. Christ suffered, that is the whole point. But what a pointless point. It's such a selfish activity, suffering..." It has already been mentioned in the chapter on the fiction of Murdoch that she doesn't approve of deliberate suffering which would lead the individual to the inflation of the 'ego' and which would not help the perception of reality. This difference in the analysis of suffering is a marked disparity in the approach of the two authors.

Buddhism has a fascination for both Greene and Murdoch. Greene is reverential towards the Buddhists. In fact he did not hesitate to stay in the Buddhist temples in the Far East because he considered Buddha is saint. He reflects, approvingly that Buddha, after all, failed.
Murdoch concentrates on the philosophical aspects of Buddhism. She is fascinated by the concept of the liberation of the self by the attainment of Nirvana and the resultant perception of reality. Greene’s novels do not exhibit any direct influence of Buddhism except his concern for failed individuals. But in Murdoch’s works there are clear signs of the attraction of this religion. Her attitude towards suffering is based on the influence of Buddhism. Consider Cato’s feeling about suffering: “. . . It’s such a selfish activity, suffering. Buddhism treats it with contempt.” Compton-Burnett does not acknowledge any such guiding philosophy in her novels.

Murdoch has mentioned two types of men, ‘conventional’ and ‘neurotic’ and has presented them as failures in her novels. Both these groups are not likely to get a vision of their true self. Francis Z. Kunkel considers Greene’s character Scobie a sick man whose attitude to suffering is ‘neurotic’. Even though some critics represent this type of an understanding, the author has succeeded in converting this neurotic, sick man into an absolute success by the spiritual manifestation given to the novel. Compton-Burnett has admitted her ignorance of the complex psychological phenomena and this is evident from her novels.
The three authors differ in their social outlook, particularly in their attitude to the individual. The social consciousness of the characters differs in intensity from novelist to novelist. The sinners in Greene's novels have an exceptional love and consideration for their fellow-beings. For example the Whiskey priest feels a sort of oneness with the criminals and the sinners in the prison which he had never experienced in the presence of the Holy Congregation in the church. The salvation attained by even the branded sinners itself is another technique used by the author to promote the social perspective. So also the 'pious' people, approved by the society are brought down to a very low spiritual standard, also for the same purpose. Thus the discrimination between the individuals based on the superficial spirituality is alleviated and the equality is brought about in the society. This endeavour is not made by Murdoch or Compton-Burnett. Dame Ivy's technique of leaving the criminals and sinners without proper judgement or punishment is itself a social evil. She has not made an effort to give the moralising effect through her fiction which is needed by the society. The one social benefit achieved through her works is the fact that she has left the innocent children uncorrupted and unpolluted by the evils of the elders. In their innocence
and purity they pray for the redemption of the elders, as when for example the small children Julius and Dora pray for their father:

... And if he has erred in thus taking his thoughts from his lawful wife, pardon him, O God, and do not visit thy wrath upon him, for he is but a weak and sinful man, and lacks the wisdom that is in the heart of childhood. ... For though he may be sinful in thy sight, there is no one who can take a parent's place.22

When we examine the effect of sin in the fiction of Miss Murdoch, we encounter a lot of confusing ideas with contradictory views. Philosophical ideas are introduced by some of her own characters but nullified by certain other characters. We have to assume that Murdoch is very sceptic about the ultimate benefit that can be brought into the modern society through the presentation of this theme. She uses apt dialogues and thoughts in most of her novels. For example in her novel The Good Apprentice this idea is conveyed through the words of Thomas:

So it is that we must live with death and see it as an illumination and a right, a final precious possession, ours as nothing else is upon this scene where all is vanity. The
so-called "death-wish" is not something negative, but one of our purest instincts. Every religion requires us to die to the world. Death has always been, in the wisdom of the East, the image of the destruction of the ego. What we see there makes the world nothing, and what the world sees there is nothing. Nirvana, the cessation of all selfish desires, the release from the tormenting turning wheel of illusory passions, is pictured as nothingness, the dust and ashes which all material and carnal goods are seen to be in the light of eternity and which shines not in a temporal forever but now, now with its justice upon every moment of our staggering rambling lives. Death is the death of the ego, and is in this sense a natural right, claimed too by those who decide to die to the world by the destruction of the body, the prison of the soul; thus the destruction of the body is the image of the liberation of the soul. And the liberation of the soul is the aim of true psychology. 

After learning lofty ideas of this spiritual level, towards the end of the novel we see the opinion of Harry, a character in the same novel:
No one can avoid muddle, no one can avoid corruption, the pure dedicated life is an illusion, the mere idea of it is a damaging lie, look at all the wickedness priests cause, they're as messy as we are only there's a conspiracy to keep in dark. The idea of goodness is romantic opium, it's a killer in the end. . . .

Thus the noble ideas embedded in the former quotation are contradicted by the ideas contained in the latter. So here we have to argue that though Murdoch has many exalted ideas of considerable social relevance, functionally her status is subordinate to that of Greene.

Greene and Murdoch have dwelt upon sin and its manifestations in an expository manner. Both of them are overtly didactic in that they have a vision of an ideal society and have a moral design for the present society's reconstruction. But this is not so with Dame Ivy. She used her characteristic method of insinuations and hence doesn't find a strong basis to develop any concept, convincingly and impressively for the society.

Another drawback of Compton-Burnett is her limited social set-up. A convincing social philosophy is possible only if the author encompasses a large society. But
Compton-Burnett has presented very limited family circles and this is a major reason for the ineffective narration. Murdoch in comparison introduces a larger group and there is greater scope for her theories and philosophy which envelop the whole of humanity. But the most extensive social background is the one in Greene's novels. He has included a wide-range of characters such as intellectuals, prisoners, criminals, priests, professionals and even social outcasts like lepers. This broad social canvass has enabled him to present his ideas as operating in a variety of human relationships.

Generally the Christian principles pertaining to morality are upheld by the characters of Greene. Though they are sinners in the eyes of the society, in their own internal scrutiny or self-analysis, they are justified. It was suggested in the second chapter of this thesis that a morally sound person will hold on to the right moral principles and that his actions are not usually based on free will. They are usually love under moral compulsion. The other two authors portray characters who are acting according to their free-will mostly. In some cases guilt-feeling is seen as in the case of Edward in *The God Apprentice* by Murdoch but the feeling is temporary and doesn't produce the desired results. So it can be inferred that the maximum moral maturity is
acquired by the characters of Greene. This factor has enhanced his skill in substantiating the ideas connected with sin and saintliness.

The last and the most important aspect to be considered in this chapter is the method adopted by the three authors to show how the sinners are extricated from their bondage. All the three of them are conscious of the fact that only a spiritual dimension can survive successfully in bringing about a suitable solution for the plight of the sinners. Greene has achieved the greatest success in this attempt. Even the most unscrupulous sinner gets redemption by his understanding of the mercy of God. Any evil gets purified in the presence of God. He marginalises the importance of religion, caste, creed and all denominations and thus renders the mercy of God accessible. Father Rank in The Heart of the Matter remarks to the comment made by Louise, about Scobie as a ‘Bad Catholic’ in the following manner: “That’s the silliest phrase in common use.”26 Even Pinkie, a notorious criminal, is on the threshold of salvation, by the assurance of the priest himself. Thus Greene has fully managed to fulfil the purpose of introducing themes connected with sin and salvation in his fiction. This theme is there prominently in the works of Murdoch also. She performs a lot of philosophizing also regarding this
concept but because of the absence of a firm belief in the Almighty, the sinners are not purged of their sins. Even towards the end of the novels only very few of her characters manage to escape from the clutches of the worldly evils and get a vision of truth through the attainment of freedom. Compton-Burnett, in her works, mentions many sinful acts of the individuals found in her limited circles, but no effort is made to suggest a worldly or spiritual compensation or atonement. They remain sinners throughout their life without any strong guiding force, worldly or heavenly. The only indirect consolation for them is the innocent, uncorrupted protection of the younger generation.

Compton-Burnett, Murdoch and Greene have their own approach towards the sin and sinners as elucidated by this chapter. There are some aspects of similarity and some areas of dissimilarity. Their individual philosophy regarding the possibilities and limitations of human beings has evolved out of their basic attitude and concept of sin and sinners.
Notes


7. Compton-Burnett, Elders and Betters 149.


10. Compton-Burnett, A Father and His Fate 183.


14 The Bible, The First Letter of Peter 5: 10.

15 Greene, *The Power and the Glory* 175.


