Greene’s novels portray the picture of a hostile world where two antithetical forces – forces of good and evil are locked in a conflict. The concept is nothing new since almost all the religions of the world provide us with a deep insight in the eternal spiritual war between good and evil. But what appears to be the most distinguishing feature of Greene’s outlook is his projection of evil as a predominating force in a big bad world, which seems to be abandoned by God. In fact, evil is not only central but also all embracing in Greene’s novels.

In exploring the mysteries of this cosmic duality, Greene lays primary emphasis on evil which encompasses the physical as well as the psychological world of human beings. Delving deep into the dark and tormented corridors of the mind, he has tried to explore different shades of aboriginal darkness of human psyche. His choice of this theme is determined by his experiences in his childhood, his subsequent
conversion to Roman Catholic faith as well as his many journeys into the less salubrious parts of the world, which reinforced his childhood awareness of evil and corruption as Michael Sheldon puts it in his book *Graham Greene: The Man Within* [Chapter: Lord Rochester's Man]:

Young Graham Greene acquired a diverse experience of sin. He drank to excess, chased prostitutes, flirted with suicide, investigated whipping establishments, volunteered to spy against his own country, and even indulged in the awful crime of writing a racy literary biography. But sin rarely left Greene's mind at ease and like his subject, he often found himself experiencing the ‘Confusion of love and lust and death and hate.’ (I)

The fallen spiritual condition of man has time and again been highlighted by Greene as he explores the nature of manmade evil in a world featuring social and economic inequities and political strife. Infact “it is Greene's ability to penetrate our hearts of darkness that makes him a writer of enduring importance” (Sheldon 14). His visits to the different parts of the world were never as meaningful as his odyssey towards the genesis of psychic darkness – the largest journey without maps.

Greene's portrayal of a dark world offers a good resemblance to hell which may be identified as an essential psychic reality. He seems to be much concerned about hell and its appearance. In *The Power and
The Glory hell seems to engulf a large part of Mexico but "Greene knew that he could find the flames ring up to greet him wherever he cared to look" (Sheldon 14). Indeed hell where the devil resigns supreme is not an extraordinary location under the earth. It is the darker side of the human mind where the devil dwells in.

Set in a milieu of urban seediness or political corruption in many parts of the world Greene’s novels project the picture of a world, "too frightened to be honest" and "peculiarly terrifying." "Green Land", a collective name given by the critics, is a world, essentially seedy, sordid, violent and cruel, a world bereft of the mercy of God and characterized by the squalor, the poverty, the existence of dehumanizing labour and want, the pitilessness and remorselessness of a harsh land and the lack of any and every amenity that makes for civilized living. While presenting a panorama of the futility and anarchy of the contemporary civilization, Yeats spoke eloquently of a world in which "things fall apart; the centre cannot hold" (3) (‘The Second Coming’) but few writers can rival Greene’s ability to convey a sense and concept of sterility of modern life and urban civilization. Michael Sheldon justly observes in this context:

His eyes miss nothing. He sees the cracks waiting to open up, the towers beginning to lean. The monstrously evil Pinkie Brown slouches towards the bright lights of Brighton with nothing but destruction in mind. At his approach the...
innocent laughter and music of the resort town are transformed into the hollow background noise of a nightmare and all images become distorted, as though reflected in a broken mirror. (14)

But Greene's intention is to describe an image of a spiritual condition rather than an actual environment. The following passage from Newman, which stands as an epigraph to The Lawless Roads, depicts the fearful, suffering condition of men and concludes:

> What shall be said to heart-piercing, reason bewildering fact? I can only answer that either there is no Creator or this living society of men is in a true sense discarded from His presence. If there be God, since there is a God, the human race is implicated in some terrible aboriginal calamity.

In Greene's novels calamity goes on. Here evil predominates and Lucifer reigns. Infact the seedy texture of his novels, with their excessive violence, a tone of horror and disgust, a tone which sometimes seems to be in excess of circumstances simply points out the fact that man has been discarded from God's sight. With reference to some of the major novels of Graham Greene let us discuss how he endeavoured to make the presence of evil the most striking against the psychological and physical backdrop of his novels.
Greene himself described the following lines from one of Browning's poems [Bishop Blougram's Apology] as an epigraph for all his novels:

Our interest's on the dangerous edge of things,

The honest thief, the tender murderer,

The superstitious atheist, demi-rep

That loves and saves her soul in new French books –

We watch while these in equilibrium keep

The giddy line midway.

Brighton Rock justly captures this spirit of Greene's novels as it amply testifies to the correlation between the banality and ugliness of this world and the spiritual emptiness of it.

As a leading exponent in English of the existentialist-psychological fiction which dominated European literature during forties and afterwards, here Greene presented a vivid picture of the cancerous growth of modern civilization, characterized by the destructive force of materialistic tyranny. Maria Couto defines Greene's concept of evil as "a summation of social wrong and institutional injustice which deprives people like Pinkie of human sensibilities" (61). And Brighton Rock offers a commentary on the world, the flesh and the devil – the urban life as affected by hedonism, consumerism, multinational systems and business empires and over-shadowed by a climate of meanness malice.
and snobbery. Here "man is bounded by a merciless sky, by soulless masses of concrete construction, and is a component of the push button civilization" (Couto 57).

The novel begins with a startling note that seems to generate an awareness of this inescapable menace:

Hale knew, before he had been in Brighton three hours, that they meant to murder him. With his inky fingers and bitten nails, his manner cynical and nervous, any body could tell he did not belong — belong to the early summer sun, the cool Whitsun wind off the sea, the holiday crowd (5).

The lines contribute to a sense of inevitable doom, suspense and terror.

The novel centres round Pinkie Brown, a ruthless depraved boy of 17, who murders Hale, a newspaper reporter to avenge the loss of kite, the former leader of the gang, now led by Pinkie. Ida Arnold, a big breasted and big hearted woman, upholding the law of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth with terrible lightheartedness attempts to hunt down this young gangster. To escape punishment Pinkie marries Rose, a waitress and thereby prevents her from witnessing against him. Inspite of Rose's sincere and deep love for him Pinkie makes a cunning attempt to murder Rose herself by a fake suicide pact and ultimately kills himself in the process. This theme of hunter and hunted has been employed as a significant vehicle for the exposition of the problem of evil in a world.
pre-dominantly Godless. In the end we come across Rose, carrying the child of the dead Pinkie, a murderer. The priest assures Rose: “You cannot conceive my child, nor can I or anyone, the appalling strangeness of the mercy of God (Greene, Brighton Rock 297) but Greene sends Rose to experience a last cruel disillusionment at the very end when pregnant Rose goes to play the message which Pinkie recorded on their wedding day. Rose, though hopeful, goes to face “the worst horror of all” (247). What Pinkie had recorded was, “God damn you, you little bitch, why can’t you go back home forever and let me be?” (214). This horrifying end seems to be a grave exposition of the problem of social injustice and the kind of evil it breeds and which leads even good-people like Rose to utter misery. The plight of the adolescent hero, trapped by poverty and sucked into a criminal world highlights the social sin of injustice and exploitation, responsible for the evil actions of Pinkie. Infact the evil of social discrimination forms a prominent shade of Paradise Piece. Both Pinkie and Rose share the experience of growing up in Paradise Piece with its “flapping gutter” “cracked glassless windows” “iron bedstead” “steep slope of rubble” “torn gravel and asphalt facing the little dingy damaged row” (141). Greene depicts Mr. Prewitt’s house as “shaken by shunting engines; the soot settled continuously on the glass and brass plate….., there was nothing anywhere to keep out sound” (207). In this city of dreadful nights Colleoni, the untouchable mafia boss enjoys police...
protection, and the small crook with his wounded pride makes desperate attempts to save himself. The establishments consent and overlook bigger crimes while the adolescent criminal is hounded and ultimately faces a tragic and horrible destiny.

In *Brighton Rock* Greene tries to create an impression of a sorbid underworld darkened by the allpervasive presence of evil. The skilful use of cacophonous words in descriptions aptly reinforces the sense of cruelty and heartlessness that characterize the situation: “nausea” “poison” “venom” “disgust” “horror” “humiliation” “repulsion” “hideous” “stale” “grim” “sour” “awful” “dingy” (twice). A sense of repulsion is created by derogatory adjectives. Nelson place where Rose dwelt is depicted as “damaged” “dreary” “awful” “battered” “hopeless” “horrifying” “dusty” “shabby” “deformed” “dreadful” “evil” and full of “lavatory” smells. A cry for a pristine world, a world of innocence can easily be traced. Greene remarks:

... but there was not innocence, you had to go back a long way further before you got innocence; innocence was a slobbering moth, a toothless gum pulling at the teats: perhaps not even that. (141)

Though Pinkie, the protagonist is an adolescent of seventeen, being born and brought up in the slums, in the midst of excruciating and dehumanizing poverty he has seen enough of the corruption, vice and
violence. He laughs but "the, horror of the world lay like infection in his throat" (232). It is a cold insensitive hollow and selfish world from which he tries to escape. The brief phrases, visualizing the landscape of Brighton encapsulates the erosion of values and the "brittle hard and unfeeling nature and the ephemeral gloss of materialism" (Couto 59) : women with "bright brassy hair" "painted polished nails", who cackle "metallic confidences"; ( Greene, Brighton Rock 11 ) young men in huge motoring coats" accompanying "small tinted creatures who rang like expensive glass when they were touched but who conveyed the impression of being as sharp and tough as tin" (61). The merry face of Brighton with its "early morning sun", "the cool whitsun wind off the sea" "the rattle of miniature cars, the ghost train diving between the grinning skeletons under the aquarium promenade, the sticks of Brighton rock the paper sailor cap" (6) and innumerable pleasure seekers trying to escape from their routine life seems to give a grave indication of the dark world inside. Poverty and wretchedness of the protagonist are set against the triumphant assertion of the gloomy world of Brighton where he has no entry : a parade of posh hotels, acres of deep carpet, the American Bar, the Louis Seize waiting room, the Pompadour Boudoir, Mr. Colleoni in double-breasted waist coat, gold cigarette lighter in hand, talking to Pinkie in threadbare coat :  

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Heat, dust, the smell of bottled beer, cheap one-night stands, grubby hand with slashing razor confronts expansive good humour, grapes, flowers and the total impregnability of the man who appears to 'own the whole world, Parliament and the Law. (65)

This juxta-position of extremes brings home our realization of the "private hell of Pinkie's life" (Greene, Brighton Rock 6).

Greene's awareness of the all-pervasive presence of evil is rooted in the experiences of his own childhood. He had the firm conviction that the impressions we receive in our childhood leave their indelible mark on our mind. So the corruption of childhood, a sort of 'evil that engulfs some of Greene's characters emerges as one of the major themes of Greene's novels. In the words of John AtKins:

He affects a deep horror for the condition of the child who is psychologically raped by our merciless society. He shows no signs of being what we term a 'child lover' but he seems to implore us to give the young a chance. (104)

We find the corruption surrounding children in the Prologue to The Lawless Roads where the situation of his hometown is recalled:

The Irish servant girls could not be kept in at night, they would return with the milk in a stranger's ear. The youths with scented hair and bitten cigarettes greeted them by the
traffic lights with careless roughness. There were so many fish in the sea ... Sexual experience had come to them so early and too easily (12).

In *Brighton Rock* also we find childish simplicity and innocence draining out of the young protagonist as he is fully exposed to the evils of the adult world. Pinkie, born & brought up in degrading circumstances, slums and poverty falls prey to intense frustration and bitterness at never having had a chance of being good in his childhood. As a result he chooses the path of crime and violence as an escape route from such intolerable circumstances. As a boy he had the frightful experience of viewing the parental activity in "the room at the bend of the stairs where Saturday night exercises had taken place" (90).

Infact his childhood hell partly consisted of this experience:

It was a Saturday night his father panted like a man at the end of a race and his mother made a horrifying sound of pleasurable pain. He was filled with hatred, disgust, loneliness : he was completely abandoned : he had no share in their thoughts – for the space of a few minutes, he was dead, he was like a soul in purgatory watching the shameless act of a beloved person. (189)

As a result he finds love as an instrument of exploitation and betrayal and develops a powerful sense of disgust for the sexual act:
... And the boy laughed again at the fine words people gave to a dirty act: love, beauty... He knew everything, he had watched every detail of the act of sex, you could not deceive him with lovely words, there was nothing to be excited about. no gain to recompense you for what you lost. (93)

Assuming that he might be trapped and being followed by Ida Arnold Pinkie allows himself to marry Rose, in order to prevent her from giving evidence against him.

But to him marriage implies nothing but sexual experience which leads to his strong dislike towards this custom as it is evident in the lines quoted below:

The registrar gave him a glance of intense dislike, he said. ‘Repeat after me’, and then ran too quickly on ‘I do solemnly declare that I know not of any lawful impediment’, so that the boy could not follow him. The registrar said sharply ‘It’s quite simple. You have only to repeat after me ....’

‘Go slower’ the Boy said. He wanted to lay his hand on the speed and brake it down, but it ran on: it was no time at all. a matter of seconds before he was repeating the formula ‘my lawful wedded wife’. He tried to make it careless, he kept his eyes off Rose but the words were weighted with shame.
'No ring?' the registrar asked sharply. 'we don’t need any ring', the boy said ‘This isn’t a church’ .... He heard Rose repeating by his side ‘I call upon these persons here present to witness...’ and then the word husband and he looked sharply up at her. If there had been any complacency in her face then he would have struck it. (170-171)

But as a result of this loveless marriage he finds himself confronted with “the last human shame” and indulges in the corruption of innocence(181) :

She took off her hat, her mackintosh – this was the ritual of mortal sin : this, he thought was what people damned each other for .... he pushed her against the bed. ‘It’s a mortal sin’, he said, getting what savour there was out of innocence trying to taste God in the mouth .... he blotted everything out in a sad brutal now-or-never embrace .... Now it was as if he was damned already and there was nothing more to fear ever again .... (226)

The same disgust towards sex is amply manifested when they watch a sentimental movie :

It was a romantic film : magnificent features, thighs shot with studied care, esoteric beds shaped like winged coracles. A man was killed but that didn’t matter. What mattered was the
game. The two main characters made their stately progress towards the bed sheets: ‘I loved you that first time in, Santa Monica ....’ A song under window, a girl in a night dress and the clock beside the screen moving on, He whispered suddenly and furiously to Rose, ‘Like Cats’. It was the commonest game under the sun - why be scared at what dogs did in the streets? (181)

Greene justly sums up this end of innocence and death of human feelings: "... his grey eyes had an effect of heartlessness like an old man’s in which human feelings have died" (8).

Greene’s agonizing consciousness of evil left its indelible mark on some of his characters. Pinkie Brown, the adolescent protagonist of *Brighton Rock* who never falters to commit mortal sin and accepts damnation with soured egotism seems to be the very incarnation of evil. He is the race course gangster whom Orwell describes as “a species of Satanist”. Like a true Satanist he is a victim of wounded pride which comes out when the police inspector warns him about Colleoni and advises him to clear out of Brighton:

> There was poison in his veins, though he grinned and bore it. He had been insulted. He was going to show the world. They thought because he was only seventeen .... He trailed the
clouds of his own glory after him: hell lay about him in his
infancy. He was ready for more deaths. (69).

To him "Heaven was a word; hell was something he can trust"
(230). Being a firm believer in the existence of hell, the concept of
heaven seems to elude him:

'These atheists, they don't know nothing. Of course there is
hell. Flames and damnation... torments.' 'And heaven too.'
Rose said with anxiety... 'Oh, may be' the boy said. 'may
be'. (53-54)

Mr. Prewitt, the corrupt lawyer to whom Pinkie seeks advice about his
marriage, quotes dramatist Marlowe:

"You know what Mephis-to-pheles said to Faustus when he
asked what Hell was?"

He said, 'Why this (world) is Hell, nor are we out of it.' (212)
And this remark can be justly applied to the career of Pinkie, predestined
to be damned.

"The Infliction of pain" is to him "the finest of all sensations". Thus
he derives sadistic pleasure in tormenting Rose, his sweet heart:

He was working himself into a little sensual rage, as he had
done with the soft kids at the council school. 'you don't know
anything' — he said, with contempt in his nails, 'oh no' she
protested 'I know a lot'.
The boy grinned at her, 'Not a thing', pinching the skin of her wrist until his nails nearly met.... what would be the fun if people didn't squeal' (52)

He is the "evil in propria persona" that seems to have haunted Greene's mind since childhood. Infact the novel centres round the Boy's (Pinkie) passionate desire to commit evil. Thus Greene shows the significance of the word murder to him:

The boy said slowly, leaning out across the rail in to the doubtful rain 'when people do one murder, I've read they sometimes have to do another - to tidy up' The word murder conveyed no more to him than the word 'box' 'collar' 'giraffe' (46).

His views on sex seems very much akin to Baudlaire, a Satanist. 'La volupté unique et suprême de L'amour git dans la certitude de faire le mal' (The sole and supreme pleasure in love lies in the absolute knowledge of doing evil.)

He marries Rose but it is another act of evil, the corruption of innocence:

He had a sense now that the murders of Hale and Spicer were trivial acts, a boy's game, and he had put away childish things. Murder had only led upto this – this corruption. He was filled with awe at his own powers. (169)
He is well aware of the fact that the devil's dance, he started has no end.

It was not only spicer. He had started something on Whit Monday which has no end. Death wasn't an end; the censer swung and the priest raised the Host. (105)

Ultimately he gets prepared to murder Rose, who loves him so dearly. But before that we come across a vivid delineation of a conflict in Pinkie's psyche – a battle for his soul between the forces of good and evil, which reminds us of Marlowe's Dr. Faustus where we come across the depiction of a similar struggle in protagonist's psyche. But the more evil gains ground in Pinkie's psyche the more he recalls religious phrases: "He began softly to intone - 'Dona nobis Pacem'. 'He won't,' says Rose: 'What do you mean?' 'Give us peace' (230). He weeps as he watches a sentimental romantic film and contemplates a vision of "limitless freedom: no fear, no hatred, no envy. It was as if he were dead and were remembering the effect of a good confession, the words of absolution" (182).

But alas! He is deprived of repentance: "he could not experience contrition" (182). He is a typical product of the spiritually sterile, drab and mechanically sensual modern civilization. Like Marlowe's Dr. Faustus who bartered his soul to evil, he is unable to repent and predestined to
eternal damnation as Greene explains: “the ribs of his body were like steel bands which held him down to eternal unrepentance” (182).

The battle for his soul is once again discernable in Peacehaven Hotel. To prepare a fake suicide pact, he asks Rose to write a suicide note: “Say you could n’t live without me, something like that” (233). What is most striking in Pinkie’s character in his unfaltering determination to commit evil. This is clearly detectable when the supernatural battle for his soul intensifies:

He found that he remembered it all without repulsion; he had a sense that somewhere like a beggar outside a shuttered house, tenderness stirred, but he was bound in a habit of hate ... He told himself that soon he would be free again – they’d see the note: He had not known she was all that unhappy, he would say, because they’d got to part she must have found the gun in Dallow’s room & brought it with her. (233 - 34).

He feels the “prowling pressure of pity” as “the huge darkness pressed a wet mouth against the panes” (234). Once again we can detect God’s angels in the form of wings vainly seeking possession of his soul as they [Pinkie and Rose] drive away from the hotel:
An enormous emotion beat on him; it was like something trying to get in; the pressure of gigantic wings against the glass. Dona nobis pacem. He withstood it .... If the glass broke, if the beast – whatever it was got in, God knows, what it would do. He had a sense of huge havoc – the confession, the penance and the sacrament – and awful distraction, and he drove blind into the rain. (242)

We find a peculiar juxta position of the words of the Mass, ringing in his psyche and the murderous instruction, he gives to Rose. And this indicates coexistence of good and evil in human soul:

He was in the world and the world was made by Him and the world knew Him not .... ‘All you need do is pull on this. It isn't hard. Put it in your ear – that’ll hold it steady .... when it’s over, I'll come back an' do it too'. (243)

Thus ultimately it is evil, that seems to be a natural choice for him, that emerges triumphant and takes possession of his soul and he says “It'll be too dark for me to see much” (244). This inner odyssey through Pinkie's psyche simply demonstrates protagonist's innate inclination towards evil which guides his soul towards the arena of evil and this recalls lines from The Witch of Edmonton:

Answer how well or ill he steered his soul,

By Heaven's or by Hell's compass.
Indeed he had crossed a gulf from commonsense, his daylight sanity and had entered a nightmare world of mayhem and revenge from which he could no longer turn back.

Ida Arnold, a type of middle class materialist, common in the modern world, who pursues Pinkie with a ruthless vitality seems to represent another form of evil as he upholds the law of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth with "terrible lightheartedness". She pursues Pinkie to avenge the murder of Hale, killed by having a stick of Brighton Rock thrust down his throat and enjoys the hunting of Pinkie as a fun, another excitement of living. She does not care even though her pursuit has led to another murder and ultimately ended in the gruesome self-immolation of Pinkie. Infact she never ventures to realize Pinkie's compulsions and the environment that surrounds him and has made him what he is. Ida's attitude leads Greene to remark: "There was something dangerous and remorseless in her optimism" (36). The image of the gull which ends the chapter simply emphasises the predatory nature of Ida:

A gull swooped screaming down to a dead crab beaten and broken against the iron foundation of the pier. It was the time of near-darkness and of the evening mist from the channel and of love. (148)

The Heart Of The Matter, a powerful expression of Greene's preoccupation with man's sinfulness, his awareness of this sinfulness
and his consequent search for salvation is primarily the story of evil fixing itself upon the protagonist of the novel, Scobie, the superintendent of police in the capital city of the West African colony. The very setting of the novel invites comparison too with another story of corruption and death, Conrad's *The Heart of Darkness*, that blatant exposure of the horror of imperialism in the Belgian Congo. The character of the man and the setting in which he operates help to define each other and at the same time, arouse the reader to the intense awareness of the evil surrounding each one of us. It is therefore only natural that Greene employs an individualistic style enabling him to communicate his vision of the world to his readers – a place full of evil, corruption, squalor, want, and exploitation. He has developed a verbal pattern revealing not only a landscape of heat, stink, loneliness and death but the situation of man in a world abandoned by God.

Figuratively the word seedy means “shabby looking”. And it is no wonder that seediness is “a constant aspect of Greene’s style and that it is a strength, for it gives to his writing that accuracy that he identifies with truth, the quality of highly charged drabness” (Hynes 6). The very first section is a prelude to an atmosphere of violence, horror and disgust in this novel. Greene creates an atmosphere of sordidness, seediness and squalor and a prevailing sense of failure among human beings out of
sharply visualized particulars. The very opening lines depict Wilson, a victim of intolerable loneliness in the midst of squalid surroundings:

Wilson sat on the balcony of the Bedford Hotel with his bald pink knees thrust against the iron work .... Sitting there facing Bond Street, he had face turned to the sea. His pallor showed how recently he had emerged from it into the port: so did his lack of interest in the school girls opposite. He was like the lagging finger of the parameter, still pointing to Fair long after its companion has moved to stormy .... He felt almost intolerably lonely. On either side of the school the tin roofs slopped towards the sea, and the corrugated iron above his head changed and clattered as a vulture alighted (11)

The description of the school building as well as the small boys pleading the sailors and soldiers to visit the women in the brothel also contributes to the sense of seediness:

Three merchant officers from the convoy in the harbour came into view, walking up from the quay. They were surrounded immediately by small boys wearing school caps. The boys' refrain came faintly up to Wilson like a nursery rhyme: 'Captain want jig jig, my sister pretty school teacher, captain want jig jig' .... and the school boys had swarmed
again round a single able-sea man: they led him triumphantly away towards the brothel near the police station, as though to the nursery. (11-12)

While sipping his wine very slowly Wilson finds nothing to do except to go to his “hot and squalid room” and read a novel. When Harris, a cable censor, meets Wilson he gives vent to his feeling of utter dislike towards the place in the most blatant manner:

[Wilson]: “Been here long?”

[Harris]: ‘Eighteen bloody months.’

[Wilson]: ‘Going home soon?’

Harris stared over the roofs towards the harbour. ‘He said ‘The ships all go the wrong way. But when I do get home you’ll never see me here again’ He lowered his voice and said with venom over his lemon squash, ‘I hate the place. I hate the people. I hate the bloody niggers’.... (13)

Through an appropriate choice of words Greene gives a powerful expression of a sense of predominating evil and wretchedness of man:

Round the corner infront of the old cotton tree, where the earliest settlers had gathered their first day on the unfriendly shore, stood the law courts and police station, a great stone building like the grandiloquent boast of weak men. Inside that massive frame human beings rattled in the corridors like a
dry kennel .... In the dark narrow passage behind, in charge
rooms and cells, Scobie could always detect the odour of
human meanness and injustice – it was the smell of a zoo, of
saw dust, excrement, ammonia, and lack of liberty. The
place was scrubbed daily but you could never eliminate the
smell. Prisoners and police men carried it in their clothing like
cigarette smoke.(15)

Abundance of sordid imagery in the novel augments the sense of
spiritual desolation and emptiness. The images of such abominable
creatures as vultures, cockroaches, lizards etc endow the novel with a
sinister touch and add to the sense of seediness. In the very first
chapter there is such an image : “A vulture flapped and shifted on the
iron roof” (13). Vultures stand for evil and death: and evil and death
hover all over the story. Such images also crop up in the latter part of the
novel:

On the other side of the road vultures strolled like domestic
Turkeys in the regimental refuge. (21)
The lizard flicked across the wall and came to rest again. the
wings of a moth in his small crocodile jaws. (59)
His eyes followed the lizard as it pounced ; then he picked an
ant-wing out of his gin and drank again. (58)
The cockroach was half way up the wall, and Harris began to wave the light of the torch backwards and forwards over the cockroach. (70)

The mosquitoes whirred steadily around them like sewing machines. (112)

A mosquito immediately droned towards her ear. (122)

There's nothing to look at except the green black out curtains, the government furniture, the flying ants scattering their wings over the table: a hundred yards away the Creoles' pye-dogs yapped and wailed. (57)

As he [Scobie] opened his door a rat that had been nosing at the food-safe retreated with out haste up the stairs. (181)

He stood inside the door and clapped his hands softly, but no rat moved. (82)

A dead pye dog lay in the gutter with the rain running over its white swollen body. (172)

In the novel we come across various other images, suggestive of squalor and ugliness in the form of human experiences. When Scobie meets Louise in her bedroom she reminds him of a dog or a cat with hair matted and eye closed:

When he found her in the bedroom under the mosquito-net she reminded him of a dog or a cat, she was so completely
'out'. Her hair was matted, her eyes closed. He stood very still like a spy in foreign territory, and indeed he was in foreign territory now. (21)

The depiction of Scobie picking up a voodoo bottle while standing on a heap of crates on the wharf adds to the sense of gloominess:

Scobie picked the bottle up. It was a dimpled Haig, and when he drew out the palm leaves the stench of dog's pizzle and nameless decay blew out like a gas escape. A nerve in his head beat with sudden irritation. For no reason at all he remembered Fraser's flushed face and Thimblerigg's giggle. The stench from the bottle moved him with nausea, and he felt his fingers polluted by palm leaves. He threw the bottle over the wharf, and the hungry mouth of the water received it with a single belch, but the contents were scattered on the air, and the whole windless place smelt sour and ammoniac.... Its contents had been released, it was as if the evil thought were left to wonder blindly through the air, to settle may be on the innocents. (38)

Equally powerful is the description of Wilson's excruciating experience in a brothel. A feeling of horror and disgust is stirred up in the reader as he reads the seedy details of the brothel from where Wilson finds no way to escape. We find Wilson trapped in a passage which "had
been white-washed and plastered but rats had torn holes in the plaster and human beings had mutilated the white wash with scrawls and pencilled names" (173). He finds his way blocked by "an old mummy" and inspite of his sense of "an awful disappointment" Wilson is forced to sleep with a girl and experience a feeling of degeneration and decay (174):

Wilson said weakly, 'Let me by', but he knew that she wouldn't move; she stood watching him, as though he were a tethered animal on whom she was keeping an eye for its owner, .... When he tried to push by, she thrust him backwards with a casual pink palm, saying 'By-an-by. Jig jig'. It had all happened so many hundreds of times before. Down the passage the girl came carrying a vinegar bottle filled with palm wine, and with a sigh of reluctance Wilson surrendered. The heat between the walls of rain, the musty smell of his companion, the dim and wayward light of the Kerosene lamp reminded him of a vault newly opened for another body to be let down upon its floor. A grievance stirred in him, a hatred of those who had brought him here. In their presence he felt as though his dead veins would bleed again. (175)
Another important aspect of Greene's style is the juxtaposition of the humans and non-humans and this brings human beings to the level of animals. Scobie hears the scuffling of a few rats which natives feel, are of the size of the pigs and love to eat them roasted. There is also a reference to “human rats” – the young cowardly men equipped with razors or bits of broken bottle. These rogues roam about to steal goods from the ware houses. This deliberate degradation of human beings simply makes the readers aware of the all-pervasive presence of evil.

Several visual images add to the deariness of the atmosphere. For example the following image may be noted:

They had come beyond the range of the tin-roofed shocks and the decayed wooden settlers’ huts: the village they passed through were bush villages of mud and thatch: no light showed anywhere: doors were closed and shutters were up, and only a few goats’ eyes watched the head-lamps of the convoy. (84)

Moreover there are sordid images of dusty slopes; desolate rooms, and barren paths.

Scobie was compelled to stay at Bamba because of his illness. The anxiety for money necessary for sending his wife to South Africa haunted his psyche. As a result he dreamed of himself sitting down on the grass and a small grass snake climbing up his arm and then sliding
down into the grass again. Such disturbing dreams emphasise the prevalence of evil in the novel. We may also quote some more seedy details from the novel heightening the sense of evil and highlighting the wretchedness of man in the big bad world, abandoned by God:

I'm carrying my corruption around with me. It's the coating of my stomach. (232)

He lay on his back in a nausea of self-disgust. (167)

As they kissed he was aware of pain under his mouth like the beating of a bird's heart. (251)

A prevailing sense of failure which makes us acutely conscious of the futility of human action adds to the sordidness of the novel. Scobie, the central character of the novel is a victim of persistent failures and consequent frustration. And the tale of his life, an odyssey through a dark tunnel where there is no ray of hope, contributes to the gloomy atmosphere of depression in the novel.

Scobie, the honest and upright Deputy Commissioner of Police in West African colony experiences failure and a sense of futility. His official life is one of disappointment. Unlike other officials in the colony he refuses to accept bribe and comes in the way of smugglers like Yusef and Tallit. Thus his devotion to his profession remains beyond doubt at least in the first half of the novel. Greene sums up Scobie's steadfast devotion to his profession:
He had nearly everything, and all he needed was peace. Everything meant work, the daily regular routine in the little bare office, the change of seasons in a place he loved. How often he had been pitied for the austerity of the work, the bareness of the rewards. But Louise knew him better than that. If he had become young again, this was the life he would have chosen to live. (59)

Scobie badly needs money for the sake of his wife but when the captain of the ship “Esperanca” offers him a bribe of one hundred pounds to get back his daughter’s letter Scobie declines and ultimately destroys the letter. But in spite of his integrity he is denied promotion to the post of commissioner and we can feel the sense of immense frustration he has to experience.

Although Scobie has been married to Louise, for the last fourteen years his conjugal life with Louise proves to be a failed one. He is terribly conscious of their loveless relationship. Louise also very often accuses him of not loving her. She says: “I’ve known it for years. You don’t love me” (58). According to her Scobie has failed to love anyone ever since their daughter’s death and in her desperation she even says to Scobie: “Ticki, you won’t even say you love me. Go on. Say it once” (59). Greene’s depiction of Scobie’s reaction gives us an insight into the deep sense of failure as well as the sense of duty which is involved in this
loveless relationship and which only torments his psyche as he finds no pleasure in fulfilling his obligations:

He eyed her bitterly over the pink gin, the visible sign of his failure: the skin a little yellow with atabrine, the eyes blood shot with tears. No man could guarantee love for ever, but he had sworn fourteen years ago, at Ealing, silently, during the horrible little elegant ceremony among the lace and candles that he would always see to it that she was happy. (59)

In the early days of their conjugal life Scobie used to consider his wife beautiful. But now he looks at a black girl and discovers her beauty, which he would not have done fifteen years ago. Greene describes:

It was strange to think that fifteen years ago he would not have noticed her beauty – the small high breasts, the tiny wrists, the thrust of the young buttocks, she would have been indistinguishable from her fellows – a black. In those days he had thought his wife beautiful. A white skin had not then reminded him of an albino .... He watched her go out of the dark office like fifteen wasted years. (20)

This shows that Scobie finds no beauty or Charm in his wife. But as a Roman Catholic he never forgets his duty to keep her happy. So he simply performs his duty of loving her. And this burdensome sense of duty always torments his psyche like the albatross hanging from the
ancient Mariner's neck. Greene portrays Scobie's terrible awareness of the sense of failure in his married life:

The less he needed Louise the more conscious he became of his responsibility for her happiness. When he called her name he was crying like canute against a tide – a tide of her melancholy and disappointment. (21)

When Scobie fails to get promoted Louise becomes afraid of losing her face in the club and therefore decides to go to South Africa. Greene's vivid portrayal of the tense moments before their separation also testifies to the futility of their relation:

Neither of them had any appetite for lunch, but the cook, who wanted to rise to the occasion, produced an enormous curry which filled a washing basin in the middle of the table: round it were ranged the many small dishes that went with it – the fried bananas, red peppers, ground nuts, pawpaw, orange slices, chutney. They seemed to be sitting miles apart separated by a waste of dishes. The food chilled on their plates and there seemed nothing to talk about except, 'I'm not hungry,' - Try and eat a little, 'I can't touch a thing', 'you ought to start off with a good meal', an endless friendly bicker about food .... It seemed horrible to both of them that now they would be glad when the separation was complete;
they could settle down when once this ragged leave-taking was over, to a different life .... (99-100)

In fact it is a relationship which only pains Scobie and burdens his heart.

The problem of money needed for the passage to South Africa begins to haunt his mind. His terrible mental anguish tells upon his physique and he dreams of reading a letter containing different variations of the figure 200:

It was not Pemberton that worried him now – let the dead bury their dead – it was the promise he had made to Louise.

Two hundred pounds was so small a sum: the figures rang their changes in his aching head like a peal of bells: 200 002 020: it worried him that he could not find a fourth combination: 002 200 020 .... Louise was right – it was like the old days. If he had felt younger, if there had been no problem of 200 020 002, he would have been happy. (84)

In this context Greene justly points out the inability of human beings to arrange happiness for others:

If I could just arrange for her happiness first, he thought, and in the confusing night he forgot for the while what experience had taught him – that no human being can really understand another, and none can arrange happiness. (85)
Thus this condition of Scobie entrapped in an inescapable situation which only torments his psyche simultaneously accentuates the unmistakable presence of evil.

But Louise seems to be totally indifferent to the suffering of his mind and body. Her ‘arrangement’ is all that Louise seems to be concerned of. He assures her again and again but all his efforts fall through and a sense of failure engulfs his psyche. Greene makes a vivid presentation of his mental condition in these lines:

The sense of failure deepened round him. All the way back from Bamba he had faced one fact – that there was only one man in the city capable of lending him, and willing to lend him, the two hundred pounds, and that was a man he must not borrow from. (96)

It is to make Louise happy that Scobie ultimately sacrifices his integrity – the greatest treasure of his character. He borrows money from Yusef, engaged in the illegal trade of smuggled diamonds, on an interest of four percent per annum though his conscience does not approve this. Thus Scobie comes into the grip of Yusef and Yusef, in the guise of friendship betrays the trust of Scobie, cheats him and even blackmails him. Yusef collects the letter that Scobie has written to Helen with whom Scobie has an extra-marital relationship and threatens Scobie that he would hand over the letter to Louise if he fails to comply with his wishes.
Thus Scobie falls prey to Yusef's blackmailing and becomes an accomplice in the smuggling of diamonds. Inspite of being a police officer he becomes a tool in Yusef's hand. His soul stinks and he reflects as he visits Yusef at his office on All Saints Day to seek mental solace:

This was the day of All Saints and he remembered how mechanically, almost without fear or shame, he had knelt at the rail this second time and watched the priest come. Even that act of damnation could become as unimportant as a habit. He thought: my heart has hardened, and he pictured the fossilized shells one picks up on a beach: the stony convolutions like arteries. One can strike God once too often. After that does one care what happens? It seemed to him that he had rotten so far that it was useless to make any effort. God was lodged in his body and his body was corrupting outwards from that seed. (244)

The evil strengthens its grip on Scobie and he becomes partially responsible for the gruesome murder of Ali, his trusted boy servant who has served him for long fifteen years. It is Scobie who confides to Yusef that he has doubts about Ali's integrity and this leads to the brutal murder of Ali. He reflects:
I am the man. Didn’t I know all the time in Yusef’s room that something was planned? Couldn’t I have pressed for an answer? (247)

Indeed Scobie’s falling into the clutches of Yusef and involving himself in his criminal activities mark his failure from a moral as well as professional point of view. But we can mark the beginning of Scobie’s end i.e. his “descent down a long slide” long before his falling in the clutches of Yusef. While searching a Portuguese ship Esperanca Scobie comes by a letter from the Captain of the ship to his married daughter in Germany. He decides to open the letter to check the genuineness of the communication. But he breaks the law in doing this as Greene informs us:

Scobie took the letter and opened it. The act was irrevocable for no one in this city had the right to open a clandestine mail. A microphotograph might be concealed in the gum of an envelope. Even a simple word code would be beyond him. Every letter found however obviously innocent – must be sent to the London censors unopened. (53)

As he finds nothing suspicious in the contents he tears up the letter as well as his report about it. But he feels that he has been corrupted by his sympathy for the fat sentimental captain who might be dismissed from the post.
The scrap went up in flame .... only his own heart-beats told him he was guilty – that he had joined the ranks of the corrupt police officers ... They had been corrupted by money, and he had been corrupted by sentiment. (55)

Louise’s absence leads Scobie to fall in love with Helen Rolt, a survivor of the torpedoed British ship. But it simply doubles his responsibility and his mental anguish is also intensified. A sense of moral guilt begins to haunt him because as a Roman Catholic he is not permitted to indulge in extra-marital relationship. Thus the entire novel is replete with instances of failure which make Scobie aware of the futility of his search for happiness in a world full of woes : “What an absurd thing it was to expect happiness in a world so full of misery” (123). And he concludes:

Point me out the happy man and I will point you out either extreme egotism, evil – or else an absolute ignorance. (123)

Thus Scobie’s sense of failure reinforces the sense of evil that prevails in the novel.

The entire novel is characterized by a sense of spiritual vacuity. Unlike Louise, Scobie is not an ardent believer in Roman Catholic faith. This leads to Louise’s accusation that he has accepted the faith merely to marry her. He fails to attend Mass and thereby neglects his religious duty. He himself unfolds his heart before the priest:
'I don't know how to put it father, but I feel — tired of my religion; it seems to mean nothing to me. I have tried to love God, but —' he made a gesture which the priest could not see, turned side ways through the grille — 'I am not sure that I even believe'. (153)

In the church even the words of the priest seem to him as a mere "formula", "a hocus pocus".

Scobie undergoes an intense spiritual crisis as he and Helen passionately fall in love with each other inspite of the fact that he is thirty years older than Helen. It is because of this love affair that he becomes a victim of terrible unhappiness. A sense of guilt engulfs his psyche and he remains fully aware of the consequences of his adulterous affair as Greene describes it in Book II Part I Chapter 3:

In the future that was where the sadness lay. Was it the butterfly that died in the act of love? But human beings are condemned to consequences. The responsibility as well as the guilt was his — he was not a Bagster: he knew what he was about. He had sworn to preserve Louise's happiness, and now he had accepted another and contradictory responsibility. He felt tired by all the lies he would sometime have to tell; he felt that wounds of those victims who had not yet bled. (161-62)
Louise’s return from South Africa simply deepens his spiritual crisis. He introspects:

Do I in my heart of hearts, love either of them, or is it only that this automatic pity goes out to any human need? (206)

In the meantime Louise is informed by Mrs. Castle about Scobie’s love affair with Helen. On account of this extra-marital relationship Scobie has not attended services at Church during Louise’s absence. But now Louise insists on his participation in Mass and Communion. And Scobie is unable to attend Communion in a state of mortal sin as he is afraid of eternal damnation which a doer of such offence faces. So it is necessary for him to confess before attending church services. But he can not confess as he is unable to repent and forsake his extra-marital relationship to show that he is sincerely repentant. At this crucial juncture of his life, Scobie stands on the brink of spiritual devastation. He meets Helen who reminds him that he still has time to go for confession. But Scobie, fully aware of the futility of the exercise only asserts that there is no question of leaving her: "My dear' Scobie said, 'I’m not leaving you ever. I’ve got to think, that’s all" (211).

On the pretext of going to the police station for some papers Scobie visits the church and goes to confess. But Father Rank who advises him not to meet Helen alone fails to convince him:
'And you must have a real purpose of amendment. We are
told to forgive our brother seventy times seven and we
needn't fear God will be any less forgiving than we are, but
nobody can begin to forgive the uncontrite. It's better to sin
seventy times and repent each time than sin once and never
repent.' He could see Father Rank's hand go up to wipe the
sweat out of his eyes: it was like a gesture of weariness. He
thought: what is good of keeping him in this discomfort?
He's right, of course, he's right. I was a fool to imagine that
somehow in this airless box I would find a conviction.... He
said, - 'I think I was wrong to come, Father'. (221)

A depressed and dejected Scobie falls prey to despair — a state of mind
which according to Roman Catholicism is a sin to attain:

When he came out of the box it seemed to Scobie that for
the first time his footsteps had taken him out of sight of
hope. There was no hope anywhere he turned his eyes: the
dead figure of the God upon the cross, the plaster virgin, the
hideous stations representing a series of events that had
happened a long time ago. It seemed to him that he had only
left for his exploration of the territory of despair (222).
The evil strengthens its grip on Scobie as he abandons his Roman Catholic faith and his acute consciousness of his spiritual sterility is epitomized in the dream sequence where he finds his body stinking:

That night he dreamed that he was in a boat drifting down just such an underground river as his boyhood hero Allan Quatermain had taken towards the lost city of Milosis. But Quatermain had companions while he was alone, for you could not count the dead body on the stretcher as a companion. He felt a sense of urgency, for he told himself that bodies in this climate kept for a very short time and the smell of decay was already in his nostrils. Then sitting there guiding the boat down the midstream, he realized that it was not the dead body that smelt but his own living one. He felt as though his blood has ceased to run: when he tried to lift his arm it dangled uselessly from his shoulder. (222)

In a state of sin he goes to Curch with Louise but "the fear and the shame of the act he was going to commit chilled his brain" (223). He finds himself in the territory of eternal despair as he receives the bread and wine representing the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ. He regards this act as a direct insult of God at His own attar. Greene makes a vivid presentation of the inner workings of Scobie's psyche:
He thought watching the priest pour the wine and water into the Chalice, his own damnation being prepared like a meal at the altar, I must come last .... sanctus. Sanctus. Sanctus. The Canon of the Mass had started: Father Rank's whisper at the altar hurried remorselessly towards the consecration:

'To order our days in thy peace ... that we be preserved from eternal damnation ....' Pax, Pacis, Pacem: all the declinations of the word 'peace' drummed on his ears through the Mass. He thought: I have left even the hope of peace for ever. I am the responsible man. I shall soon have gone too far in my design of deception ever to go back .... Father Rank raised God in his fingers – this God as light now as a wafer whose coming lay on Scobie's heart as heavily as lead. (224)

Scobie's spiritual crisis has been depicted in all its poignancy by Greene:

The saliva had dried in Scobie's mouth: it was as though his veins had dried. He could not look up; he saw only the priest's skirt like the skirt of the medieval war-horse bearing down upon him: the flapping of feet: the charge of God .... But with open mouth (the time had come) he made one last attempt at prayer, 'O God, I offer up my damnation to you.

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Take it. Use it for them; and was aware of the pale papery taste of an eternal sentence on the tongue. (225)

But he feels that he can not deceive God forever. And the only recourse left for him to resolve this deadlock is to end his life by committing suicide which again is another sin on the part of a Roman Catholic and invites eternal damnation. Thus the novel gives an impression of spiritual waste there by making the all-pervasive presence of evil quite conspicuous. Moreover Scobie's odyssey from honesty to dishonesty only confirms that inevitable inclination of human beings to fall on the side of evil.

Fate of some other characters like Louise, Father Rank and Pemberton mark failure as an inevitable human destiny and thereby contributes to the general atmosphere of gloomy depression pervading the novel. Pemberton, the Deputy Superintendent of Police at Bamba, resorts to suicide as he cultivates the habits of gambling and drinking and is over head and ear indebts which he is unable to pay off.

Louise Scobie, the wife of Major Scobie also falls prey to a sense of failure and its consequent depression and dejection in her personal life, which never ceases haunting her mind. Her interests and inclinations are never the same to that of Scobie. Being a woman of superficial and worldly outlook she is always concerned with her social
status. Thus, when Scobie fails to get promotion to the post of Commissioner, she feels very upset as she fears losing her face at the Cape Station Club, the white people's club, meant only for the higher officers and their wives in the town. But to Scobie such social vanities hardly matter. Unlike Louise he never believes in making a show of his position, status and acquaintances. Thus Greene's account of their attitude to their place of residence proves the veracity of this fact:

If home for him meant the reduction of things to a friendly unchanging minimum, home to her was accumulation. The dressing-table was crammed with pots and photographs — himself as a young man in the curiously dated officer's uniform of the last war; the Chief Justice's wife whom for the moment she counted as her friend; their only child who had died at school in England three years ago — a little pious nine-year-old girl's face in the white muslin of first communion; innumerable photographs of Louise herself, in groups with nursing sisters, with the Admiral's party at Medley Beach, on a Yorkshire moor with Teddy Bromley and his wife. It was as if she was accumulating evidence that she had friends like other people. (21-22)
But all such differences would have been reduced to mere trivialities if their marriage were a successful one. But it is an instance of failed marriage as there exists no love between them and both are acutely conscious of this loveless relationship. It has been already discussed in details how Louise reacts sharply when Scobie fails to arrange the money needed for her passage to South Africa. In fact like Scobie, Louise also experiences a pervasive sense of failure as her married life has been reduced to mere loveless rituals.

In her social life also Louise faces failure as people do not generally like her. They dislike her company, call her “Literary Louise” and sneer at her for being a lover of art(31). Thus Harris turns his nose up at her intellectuality and love of art as he regards them as a matter of superficial interest or pose without any trace of genuineness or authenticity. He informs Wilson:

Perhaps if I had a wife like that I’d sleep with niggers too.
You’ll meet her soon. She’s the city intellectual. She likes art. poetry. Got up an exhibition of arts for the shipwrecked seamen. Poor old Scobie. (14)

Louise is also acutely conscious of her loneliness and therefore implores Scobie not to desert her:
'Oh, Ticki, Ticki' she said, 'you won't leave me ever, will you? I haven't got any friend – not since the Tom Barlows went away'. (28)

She complains to Scobie regarding people's attitude to her:

She said, 'Oh Ticki, Ticki. I can't go on.'

[Scobie] 'I thought you were happy tonight.'

[Louise] 'I was – but think of being happy because a UAC, Clerk was nice to me. Ticki, why won't they like me?' (42)

But such revelations cannot relieve her of the immense sense of failure that she experiences. So in Book I Part I Chapter II she makes a blatant disclosure of an intolerable psychic reality which seeks to unhinge her mind:

'Ticki, I can't bear this place any longer. I know I've said it before, but I mean it this time. I shall go mad Ticki, I'm so lonely. I haven't a friend, Ticki'. (58)

Thus Louise's urge to make herself sociable receives a drubbing in the West African colony. And Louise's sense of failure in her social life like that of her conjugal life adds to the general atmosphere of frustration, sadness and desolation in the novel which seems to portray failure as a
common and inescapable human destiny. We also never fail to observe in the later part of the novel that though Louise does not fall on the side of the evil, it is her snobbery and pressing desire to make herself a socialite that ultimately drives Scobie to take the desperate and dangerous step of borrowing money from that scoundrel Yusef. Thus Louise, though unintentionally, contributes to the cause of evil.

Even Father Rank, a Roman Catholic priest, suffers from a sense of failure and its consequent depression. He is despaired of his vocation and unveils his sense of futility in the following line: “I feel as though I weren’t a working man at all” (183). His feeling of despondency originates from his awareness of his inability to help the living. The following remark testifies this fact:

‘I was not of any use to a single living soul, Scobie. I thought, in Africa things will be different .... If people are in trouble they’d go to you, Scobie, not to me. They ask me to dinner to hear the gossip. And if you were in trouble where would you go?’(183)

He also feels that he is not a “reading man” and he is lacking in “talent for loving God as some people do” (183). A Roman Catholic is never supposed to harbour frustration but the presence of this sense of failure
and disappointment in the mind of the very man who being a Roman Catholic Priest is supposed to console and comfort others only shows the cancerous growth of evil in human psyche.

Activities of Edward Wilson, the spy employed by the British Government to keep a watch on some government officials including Scobie sometimes fill us with disgust. As his profession demands disguise Wilson never hesitates in telling lies. He tells Louise that he does not know a soul, but Louise finds him going to the commissioner's house at dinner time. But in his personal life he again betrays his deceptive nature. He gets a poem expressing his love for Louise published in his school magazine The Downhamian and intends to send the poem to Louise to impress upon her that a poem upon her has appeared in print. Of course he has “to cut the paper out with no indication of its source” and “he would have to paste the cutting on a paque paper to disguise what was printed on the other side.” And if Louise enquires “where it had appeared, it would be easy to invent some convincing coterie name” (167). Thus he plans to take a lot of pains only to deceive Louise and to make her fall in love with him. This shows that Wilson is a swindler – a man of unscrupulous character. Greene justly sums up the deceptive nature of Wilson in the following lines:
It was as if his profession were slowly absorbing his whole life, just as school had done. His profession was to lie, to have the quick story ready, never to give himself away, and his private life was taking the same pattern. (167)

Though Scobie bears no grudge against Wilson, Wilson hates Scobie bitterly. After meeting Louise, Wilson begins to look upon Scobie as his rival and misses no opportunity to lower his dignity directly or indirectly. He accuses Scobie of offering protection to Yusef, the smuggler of diamonds: “Then with a venom that took Scobie completely by surprise, he said, ‘There are rumours going about that Yusef is protected’ (132). He also adds: “They [people] say that you [Scobie] and Yusef are on visiting terms. It’s a lie, of course, but ...” (132). According to Wilson, Yusef and Scobie are hand in hand to frame Tallit, Yusef’s bitter rival in the trade of illegal diamonds, because “Yusef wants him run out of town” (132). But such allegations fail to irritate Scobie. He rather admits:

‘It’s perfectly true. I’m also on visiting terms with the sanitary inspector, but it wouldn’t prevent my prosecuting him ...’ He stopped abruptly. He said, ‘I have no intention of defending myself to you, Wilson’. (132)
He further adds that Wilson is too young for his job, whatever it is.

However Wilson, a victim of desperate feelings of life breaks down as he fails to hurt Scobie, a man who has done no harm to him: "Oh, you are unbearable. You are too damned honest to live." And a feeling of "rage shame self-depreciation" engulfs his mind (132).

But Wilson, always willing to give vent to his hatred for Scobie, does not give in. Having failed to humiliate Scobie in the professional front he brings personal allegations against him and this only lays bare his despicable evil intentions. He accuses Scobie of sending Louise to South Africa only to keep her away from him: "you sent Louise away". Wilson said, "because you were afraid of me" (133). It is noteworthy that Scobie, acutely conscious of his duties as a husband always wanted to make Louise happy and that is why he himself introduced Wilson to Louise hoping that his company will relieve Louise of her feeling of loneliness and its consequent frustration. And Wilson is not unaware of Scobie's utmost co-operation in building up a relationship between his wife and Wilson. But Wilson further accuses Scobie of being indifferent to Louise's feelings: "She couldn't stand your stupid, unintelligent ..., you don't know what a woman like Louise thinks" (133). He goes so far as to disclose that he has kissed Louise obviously intending to create a rift in the relation between husband and wife: "Wilson said, 'I kissed her..."
that evening ..." He insinuates that Scobie has taken bribe otherwise he cannot procure the money needed for sending Louise to South Africa:

‘How did you get that money to send her away? That’s what I’d like to know. You don’t earn all that. I know it’s printed in the Colonial Office List’. (133)

He even accuses Scobie of feeling sexually interested in Helen Rolt, a survivor of the ship-wreck, caused by a German submarine and detects it as the cause of Scobie’s absence in the funeral of the little girl, another victim of the ship-wreck.

But when Scobie refuses to yield to his provocations and simply dismisses his allegations saying that it is excessive heat which is destabilising Wilson’s mental equilibrium, Wilson prostrated by his feeling of disappointment in insulting Scobie breaks into tears and with immense detestation eyes Scobie going away. The fact that it is Wilson’s selfish and personal interests and not professional bindings that impels him to incriminate Scobie only marks his failure as a professional and at the same time projects him as a man very prone to succumb to evil intentions.

Wilson is a man bereft of moral scruples. He leaves no stone unturned to make Louise the wife of a brother-officer his mistress. As
advised by Scobie, Wilson takes Louise for a stroll and kisses her not once but twice, until she frustrates his repeated approaches of love saying:

'I like you, Wilson', she said, 'but I'm not a nursing sister who expects to be taken whenever she finds herself in the dark with a man. You have no responsibilities towards me, Wilson. I don't want you'. (78)

However this does not stop Wilson from proclaiming his love for Louise:

"I love you, Louise" (78). Greene justly observes that Wilson can only think of a physical relationship with a woman and nothing else:

She had been kind to him, she bore his company, and automatically at any first kindness from a woman love stirred. He had no capacity for friendship or for equality. In his romantic, humble, ambitious mind he could conceive only a relationship with a waitress, a cinema usherette a landlady's daughter in Battersea or with a queen – this was a queen. (75)

Wilson does not stop here. He does not give up his attempt of alienating Louise from Scobie. Thus when he goes to meet Louise again
after her return from South Africa he makes an all out attempt to poison Louise's mind against Scobie.

At first he makes a mistake. He sarcastically refers to Scobie as "Your Ticki" and this only infuriates Louise as she feels that she has the exclusive right to call her husband by that name. She gives him a blow making his nose bleed profusely. But Wilson a potential mischief maker does not give up his evil intentions, he informs Louise: "I've seen him come away from her [Helen's] hut at two in the morning. He was up there yesterday afternoon." He also tells Louise that Yusef is using Scobie to serve his own purpose: "It's my belief Yusef is using him" (217). And we can not but condemn Wilson for his disdainful act of poisoning Louise's mind against Scobie, a man who has always trusted him and even encouraged his friendship with his wife Louise. This is surely not what we expect from Wilson in return of Scobie's genuinely benevolent, sympathetic and broadminded attitude towards him. Infact Wilson's unscrupulous attempt to make love to Louise and alienate her from her husband is an act of betrayal towards Scobie, which only makes the unmistakable presence of evil traceable in his character.

The sense of absolute spiritual sterility is clearly discernable in the character of Yusef. Yusef, one of the Syrian traders, involved in the trade of contraband diamonds seems to be the very incarnation of evil.
Yusef, described as having “huge thighs” “tendrils of black breast-hair” (33) “large fat hands” (34) and a “fat arse” (36) is the very embodiment of cunningness and deceit. No wonder he is a great hypocrite whose “fat and candid dishonesty” according to R.W.B. Lewis “would have pleased Dickens, and even more Wilkie Collins” (259). He intends to seduce Scobie from his duty to serve his selfish interests but his words never betray his treacherous intentions. He leaves no opportunity of offering friendship to Scobie. Thus during their first encounter in the novel after Scobie discovers Yusef sleeping in his car which “stuck by the roadside” half-way down the hill”, (33) Yusef earnestly prays for Scobie’s friendship:

‘May be, Major Scobie, or may be we’ll be friends together. That is what I should like more than anything in the world.’ (36)

When Scobie gives Yusef a lift to the latter’s house, he offers to pay four hundred pounds to buy Scobie’s car which Scobie himself bought at a cost of one hundred and fifty pounds. Scobie however does not fail to detect his real intention behind such offer and refuses to accept it. Yusef speaks eloquently of friendship:
‘Major Scobie’, Yusef said, leaning his great white head forward, reeking of hair oil, ‘friendship is something in the soul. It is a thing one feels. It is not a return for something.’ (91)

He showers praises upon Scobie for his integrity reminiscing how Scobie unlike other police men has treated him impartially:

‘You nearly caught me Major Scobie, that time. It was a matter of import duties, you remember. You could have caught me if you had told your police men to say something a little different. I was quite overcome with astonishment. Major Scobie, to sit in a police court and hear true facts from the mouth of police men. You must have taken a lot of trouble to find out what was true, and to make them say it. I said to myself, Yusef, a Daniel has come to the Colonial Police’. (91)

To make himself trustworthy he informs Scobie about Wilson, a special man from London, employed to “investigate the diamonds” and also adds that “only the Commissioner must know about him – none of the other officers, not even you” (92). He once again renews his offer of friendship:
I just want you to understand, Major Scobie, that you can depend on me. I have friendship for you in my soul. That is true, Major-Scobie, it is true'. (93)

He never fails to assure Scobie of his good intentions and his unselfish help as it is evident in the following lines:

'I would do a lot for you Major Scobie'. (91)

'I can be of real help to you'. (93)

He even wants to lend Scobie some money:

'I know how things are, Major Scobie and if I can help ..., I am a well-off man'. (93)

And when Scobie rejects the offer as a bribe, he makes it clear that it is a self-less act on his part as he does not want any favour in return:

'I am not offering you a bribe, Major Scobie. A loan at any time on a reasonable rate of interest – four percent annum. No conditions. You can arrest me next day if you have facts. I want to be your friend, Major Scobie. You need not be my friend. There is a Syrian poet who wrote, 'of two hearts one is always warm and one is always cold': the cold heart is
more precious than diamonds the warm heart has no value
and is thrown away". (93)

Scobie declines the offer for the time being, but ultimately Yusef gets
Scobie entangled in his net as Scobie has to borrow money from Yusef
for Louise's passage to South Africa. Though Scobie takes money from
Yusef in good faith, it is a wrong step on Scobie's part as it brings him
close to Yusef, a dishonest and cunning trader who ultimately resorts to
blackmailing Scobie.

Yusef wishes to make Scobie instrumental in undoing his business
rival Tallit, another Syrian trader. So he informs Scobie that Tallit's
cousin, sailing to London, was carrying diamonds in the crop of a parrot.
He asks Scobie to allow the cousin to go but to detain the parrot on the
pretext that it is a sick parrot. Scobie acts accordingly. But this action
simply brings disgrace and discredit to Scobie in the eyes of his higher
officials because it is ultimately found that the parrot, having diamonds
worth about a hundred pounds in the crop, does not belong to Tallit's
cousin. It is Yusef who cleverly substitutes another bird to incriminate
Tallit in a criminal case. When Scobie comes to know about this
mischievous intention of Yusef, he denounces his relationship with
Yusef saying: "Well Yusef. I'm taking no more information from you.
This ends our relationship. Every month, of course I shall send you the
interest". But Yusef the cunning hypocrite does not give up and professes his longing for Scobie's friendship:

'My friendship for you is the only good thing in this black heart. I can not give it up. We must stay friends always'. (151)

When his eloquent words about friendship fail to have their impact on Scobie, Yusef changes his track and threatens Scobie that he would reveal the transaction of money between them to the Commissioner:

'I will tell him you took my money and together we planned the arrest of Tallit. But you did not fulfill your bargain. so I have come to him in revenge. In revenge'. (152)

But when Scobie gives him a go ahead, Yusef, a scheming hypocrite, assures him that he is not going to execute the threat:

'Of course I shall not go. One day you will come back and want my friendship. And I shall welcome you'. (152)

Yusef obtains Scobie's love letter to Helen Rolt from her boy servant and asks Scobie to handover a small packet to the Captain of the Portuguese ship “Esperanca” which is due to arrive in two days. He repeatedly implores Scobie to do him this little favour for the sake of “just
friendship” as he describes it. He also pledges: “On my word as a friend the package contains nothing, nothing for the Germans. No industrial diamonds Major Scobie” (198). But when Scobie refuses to help him, Yusef, a villain and rogue betrays his treacherous nature which shows him in his true colour: “I hear from a clerk in the cable company that your wife is on her way back. I will have the letter handed to her as soon as she lands” (200). And Scobie can not but allow Yusef to exploit his official position. Thus Yusef corrupts Scobie, an honest and plain hearted officer to such an extent that he becomes a stranger to himself. It shakes the very basis of Scobie’s character and he finds himself an object of self-pity:

Once pausing by a mirror, he saw poised over his own shoulder a stranger’s face, a fat, sweating, unreliable face. Momentarily he wondered: who can that be? before he realized that it was only this new unfamiliar look of pity which made it strange to him. He thought: am I really one of those whom people pity? (202)

Yusef is a man of unscrupulous character. Being depressed by his relationship with Louise and Helen when Scobie meets Yusef, Yusef a man of lax morality consoles him in his own way, which only speaks of his immoral disposition:
"You do not need to be ashamed with me, Major Scobie. I have had much woman trouble in my life. Now it is better because, I have learned the way. The way is not to care a damn, Major Scobie. You say to each of them, 'I do not care a damn. I sleep with whom I please. You take me or leave me. I do not care a damn'. They always take you, Major Scobie". (241)

We come across a staggering revelation of Yusef's ruthlessness and brutality in Book III Part I Chapter IV. The poise and calmness with which he gets Ali murdered really startles us. When Scobie informs him that his boy servant Ali knows too much about him as well as Yusef and these secrets might easily be communicated to Wilson as "Ali's half-brother is Wilson's boy" and "They see each other", Yusef answers him that he will not have to trouble himself with all such anxieties any more (242): "Do not worry. I will not have you worry. Leave everything to me, Major Scobie. I will find out for you whether you can trust him." He made the startling claim: "I will look after you" (242). But not for a moment he discloses what he is going to do with Ali – the horrible murder of Ali that he has planned. He repeatedly assures Scobie that he intends to help him:
‘You mustn’t ask me questions, Major Scobie. You must leave everything to me just this once. I understand the way’. (242)

‘I am going to help you, Major Scobie. That is all’ . (243)

‘I just wanted to say, Major Scobie, that you need not worry about me. I want your good, nothing so much as that. I will slip out of your life Major Scobie. I will not be a milestone. It is enough for me to have had tonight – this long talk in the dark on all sorts of subjects. I will remember tonight always. You will not have to worry. I will see to that’. (246)

With great care and cunningness Yuisef weaves a plot to murder Ali. He asks Scobie to give his ring to his boy servant so that he can convince Ali that he is really wanted by his master at Yusef’s house. To divert Scobie’s attention Yusef, the great hypocrite, presents himself as a man with an artistic and philosophical bent of mind:

‘I have always dreamed of an evening just like this with two glasses by our side and darkness and time to talk about important things, Major Scobie. God. The family. Poetry. I have great appreciation of Shakespeare. The Royal ordnance Corps have very fine actors and they have made
me appreciate the gems of English literature. I am crazy about Shakespeare. Sometimes because of Shakespeare I would like to be able to read, but I am too old to learn. And I think perhaps I would lose my memory. That would be bad for business, and though I do not live for business I must do business to live. There are so many subjects I would like to talk to you about. I should like to hear the philosophy of your life'. (244)

The height of Yusef's hypocrisy astonishes us as he describes philosophy as "The piece of cotton you can hold in your hand in the forest" (245). And then comes the staggering disclosure of a terrible truth – the brutal killing of Ali, declaring the triumph of evil over good:

Through the window behind Yusef's heads, from somewhere among the jumble of huts and ware houses, a cry came: pain and fear: it swam up like a drowning animal for air, and fell again in to the darkness of the room, in to the whisky under the desk, in to the basket of wastepaper, a discarded finished cry. (246)

And Scobie duped by Yusef so long, discovers to his great horror the dead body of his trusted servant who has served him for fifteen years.
Thus we fail to gauge the unfathomable depth of Yusef's wickedness and spitefulness, which leaves us shocked and dumbfounded and at the same time convinces us of the domination of evil over good.

The Power and the Glory is based on personal experience of Greene who undertook a journey to Mexico in 1938 in order to investigate the religious persecution in the state. It is a religious - political novel set against the backdrop of a totalitarian state whose secular ideology denounces and seeks to abolish religion as it looks upon it as a means of exploiting the poor. The novel intends to declare the indestructibility of religion in the face of political oppression, however tyrannical or ruthless that may be, but we never fail to detect the miasma of evil that seems to give an impression of spiritual wastage and ugliness accompanied by a sense of failure.

Some characters and situations that we come across in the novel are based on truth. Thus in The Lawless Roads, a travelogue, Greene speaks of T.G. Canabal, the elected Governor of Tabasco, a small province in South Mexico. Canabal, a destroyer of churches and prosecutor of the clergy "had organized a militia of Red Shirts, even leading them across the border in to Chiapas in his hunt for a church or a priest. Private houses were searched for religious emblems and prison
was the penalty for possessing them" (129). Norman Sherry also describes in his The Life of Graham Greene: Volume 1, 1904-39:

He [Canabal] organised a great burning of the statues of saints from the churches .... A bull would be named God, a donkey Christ, a pig the Pope, and the virgin of Guadalupe represented by a cow. (706)

Samuel Hynes remarks in his introduction to Graham Greene: A Collection of Critical Essays: "He furnished the world with the texture of violence, terror and cruelty that he finds in life" (3). Perhaps it is this realistic setting of the novel that makes us feel the presence of evil so acutely and proves the veracity of what John Spurling says in Graham Greene:

If Brighton Rock was set partly in a city of the mind, a suburb of hell which bore superficial resemblance to real Brighton. The Power and the Glory is sharply authentic shot as it were on location in hell itself, with most of the parts played by genuine locals. (34)

The very opening chapter of the novel has all the details that amply suggest a general atmosphere of waste, corruption, desolation and dejection. Here we come across Mr. Tench, — a man despaired of
and disgusted with his life in a prohibitionist, totalitarian Mexican state. Mr. Tench, a dentist, has been leading a painfully monotonous life of seclusion for more than fifteen years and is suffering from chronic indigestion because of the contaminated water of "this bloody land" as he describes the place (10). He has snapped his contact with his wife and children and does not rule out the possibility of his wife's getting remarried:

'Oh, I gave up writing before I came here. What was the use? I couldn't send any money. It wouldn't surprise me if the wife had married again. Her mother would like it – the old sour bitch: she never cared for me'. (15)

The physical as well as the imaginative atmosphere created in the very opening lines has its share of dreariness and banality:

Mr. Tench went out to look for his ether cylinder, in to the blazing Mexican sun and the bleaching dust. A few vultures looked down from the roof with shabby indifference: he wasn't carrion yet. A faint feeling of rebellion stirred in Mr. Tench's heart, and he wrenched up a piece of the road with splintering finger-nails and tossed it feebly towards them. One rose and flapped across the town: over the tiny plaza.
over the bust of an ex-president, ex-general, ex-human being, over the two stalls which sold mineral water, towards the river and the sea. It wouldn’t find anything there: the sharks looked after the carrion on that side.

Mr. Tench is the victim of a sense of alienation resulting from a feeling of despise and dislike which local people cherish for the foreigners like him. He wishes good day to a man sitting in the shade with a gun. But he looks at Mr. Tench spitefully as if “he had never had any dealings with the foreigner” (I).

That Mr. Tench forgets everything and anything is probably a sequel of his frustration with his barren and isolated existence. We come across many such instances of his forgetfulness in the first chapter:

Half-way across he suddenly forgot what he had come out for—a glass of mineral water? (7)

Mr. Tench stood in the shade of the customs house and thought: what am I here for? (8)

Mr. Tench cleared his mouth of phlegm, ‘what did I say?’ He couldn’t remember a thing. (9)
The boat general Obregon is depicted in such a way as to project a sense of desolation and dejection:

The general Obregon was about thirty yards long. A few feet of damaged rail, one life boat, a bell hanging on a rotten cord, an oil-lamp in the bow, she looked as if she might weather two or three more Atlantic years, if she didn't strike a Norther in the gulf. That, of course, would be the end of her. (8)

The depiction of a narrow street of the town which "petered out two hundred yards away in a swamp" also suggests a sense of seediness and squalor (12). A sense of gloomy desolation prevails in the delineation of Mr. Tench's residence-cum-clinic:

He led the way inside, locking the door behind him, through a dining-room where two rocking-chairs stood on either side of a bare table: an oil lamp, some copies of old American papers, a cup board..... The dentist's operating room looked out on a yard where a few turkeys moved with shabby nervous pomp: a drill which worked with a pedal, a dentist's chair gaudy in bright red plush, a glass cupboard in which instruments were dustily jumbled. A forceps stood in a cup, a
broken spirit-lamp was pushed into a corner, and gags of cotton-wool lay on all the shelves. (12)

There is also a reference to the “horrors and degradation lying around our childhood in cupboard and bookshelves, everywhere” seeking to corrupt the childish innocence (12).

Moreover there are the instances of moral corruption in the first chapter. Mr. Tench makes a false promise when he assures the customs officer that he will deliver the set of artificial teeth by evening but inwardly he knows that it is “quite impossible” (8). The Chief of Police is found to keep mistress, the sweetheart of one Lopez who has been shot for assisting “undesirables ..., to get out” of the state (11).

Corruption among the rulers is not infrequent in the novel. The sale and consumption of liquor are prohibited in this totalitarian state. But we find the Governor’s cousin supplying liquor against the hard cash which the priest is prepared to pay. Thus he violates the prohibition and thereby commits an offence against the law. He secretly carries out his illegal trade by taking full advantage of his relationship with the supreme ruler of the state. The Governor, “a hardman” as the beggar describes him, is unaware of this illicit activity (107). But the Chief of Police is not only fully aware of this illegal trade but he also joins the drink parties at
the hotel-room of the Governor's cousin. Governor's cousin also doesn't hesitate to partake of the drinks, paid by the priest – a stranger. Thus the activities of the Governor's cousin and the chief of the police only illustrate the darker side of the administration. They only highlight the unmistakable presence of social evils even under the veil of an all powerful dictatorial rule in a totalitarian state. Infact it establishes the veracity of what the priest afterwards says to the lieutenant:

'It's no good your working for your end unless you're a good man yourself. And there won't always be good men in your party. Then you'll have all the old starvation, beating, get-rich-anyhow'. (195)

The atmosphere of the novel is marked by a prevailing sense of spiritual barrenness and decay. Thus we come across a squalid description of the policemen who are seen walking “raggedly with rifles slung anyhow : ends of cotton where buttons should have been slipping down over the ankle : small men with black secret Indian eyes” (19). (195)

The description of the police station and the police men is all the more squalid which only leaves an impression of something decaying or rotten:
A sour smell came up to the plaza from the river and the vultures were bedded on the roofs, under the tent of their rough black wings. Sometimes, a little moron head peered out and down and a claw shifted. At nine thirty exactly all the lights in the plaza went out.

A policeman clumsily presented arms and the squad marched in to barracks; they waited for no order, hanging up their rifles by the officer's room, lurching on into the courtyard, to their hammocks or the excusados. Some of them kicked off their boots and lay down. Plaster was peeling off the mud walls; a generation of police men had scrawled messages on the white wash. A few peasants waited on a bench, hands between their knees. Nobody paid them any attention. Two men were fighting in the lavatory. (20)

Lieutenant's home once again leaves us with the same impression. In the candle light lieutenant's own lodging looked "as comfortless as a prison or a monastic cell" (24). It is infested with beetles which "exploded against the wall like crackers" (24). Here he experiences a sense of emptiness - "a complete certainty in the existence of a dying, cooling world, of human beings who had evolved from animals for no purpose at all" (24).
The picture of the prison where the priest is put for a night leaves us shocked making us profoundly conscious of the sheer horror of an abominable existence. Here darkness is both physical and spiritual. And in the midst of utter darkness human beings, akin to beasts, are found to indulge in sexual activity: “their cramped pleasure” (123):

Among the furtive movements came again the muffled painless cries. He [the priest] realized that pleasure was going on even in this crowded darkness. (122)

Infact carnal pleasure has been repeatedly referred to, so as to make us feel a keen sense of degeneration:

A new voice spoke, in the corner from which the sounds of pleasure had come. (126)

Somewhere against the far wall pleasure began again; it was unmistakable: the movements, the breathlessness, and then the cry. (130)

Again the cry came, an expression of intolerable pleasure. (131)

Nothing can interrupt this Carnal pleasure which goes on most gruesomely. Here the mosquitoes never stop making noise: 

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Behind the human voices another noise went permanently on: it was like a small machine, an electric belt set at a certain tempo. It filled any silences that there were louder than human breath. It was the mosquitoes. (122)

The priest suffers from an acute pain in his feet and he has a cramp in the soles but he can not but withstand it because of his inability to press the muscles in a short space to relieve his feet. The “hours of darkness” seems to be “stretched ahead interminably” (126) and “the only punctuation of the night was the sound of urination” (133). Greene grasps the essence of the whole atmosphere in abhorrence:

This place was very like the world: Overcrowded with lust and crime and unhappy love, it stank to heaven. (125)

Roger Sharrock repeats the same when he remarks:

Pushed in to the dark, overcrowded stinking cell, where there is only one bucket for the ordure of all the prisoners the priest finds himself in a microcosm of the sinful world. (119)

The novel abounds in sharply visualised details suggesting a sense of weariness with life and underlying the presence of evil in a seedy sordid world, abandoned by God. Repeated references to vultures, symbolic of
death and decay, signify the atmosphere of evil and death prevailing in the novel:

The hot wet river-port and the vultures lay in the waste paper basket, and he picked them out. (12)

The vultures on the roofs looked contented, like domestic fowls. (12)

He stared up at the merciless sky. A vulture hung there an observer. (9)

The vultures rose languidly at her approach. (53)

The vulture came picking its way across the yard, a dusty and desolate figure. (147)

There are also frequent references to mosquitoes which seem to symbolize greedy appetite and destructiveness:

Through the open door the mosquitoes came whirring in. (21)

... the mosquitoes jabbed at his wrists, they were like little surgical syringes filled with poison and aimed at the blood stream. (89)
... the mosquitoes hummed all round like sewing machines. (87).

... the mosquitoes came droning towards the candle-flame. (91)

Beetle, snake, ant, pig and rat have been reiterated several times to augment a sense of ugliness and squalor:

The beetles were flocking out and covering the pavements .... (106)

... and the beetles denoted against a bare globe. (106)

A tiny green snake raised itself on the path and then hissed away into the grass like a match flame (89).

Some pigs came grunting out of a hut, and a turkey-cock paced with evil dignity .... (74)

The narrow column of ants moved across the room to the little patch on the floor where the stranger had split some brandy. (18)

The place was half filled by a stack of maize, and rats rustled among the dried leaves. (43)
A sense of obnoxiousness and repulsion is stirred in us as we come across words such as "phlegm" and "nausea", of which Mr. Tench is a victim:

An awful feeling of nausea gripped Mr. Tench in the stomach. (7)

He [Mr. Tench] was shaken with nausea – something was wrong – worms, dysentery .... (8)

The heavy phlegm gathered in his [Mr. Tench's] mouth. (9)

He [Mr. Tench] got rid of his phlegm .... (14)

Juxtaposition of human beings and animals – a common technique employed by Greene, is suggestive of degeneration and degradation of human beings:

The priest began to cough, and the rat moved quickly like the shadow of a hand in to the stack. (44)

Besides these there are heterogeneous images which produce in us miscellaneous feelings like abandonment, unpleasantness and decay:

... the cement playground up the hill near the cemetery where iron swings stood like gallows in the moony darkness was the cite of the cathedral. (24)

Heat stood in the room like an enemy. (25)
The gold bangle on the bony wrist was like a padlock on a canvas door which a fist could break. (33)
The lieutenant stood there like a little dark menacing question mark in the sun .... (35)
Dark fell like a curtain: one moment the sun was there, the next it had gone. (38)
Then the rain reached them. It came down like a wall between him and escape .... (152)

Certain descriptions suggestive of affliction and wretchedness of human beings make us aware of a profound sense of unhappiness — the prevailing mood of the novel:

He [Capt. Fellows] walked slowly; happiness drained out of him more quickly and completely than out of an unhappy man: an unhappy man is always prepared. (37)
The usually happy and the always unhappy one watched the night thicken from the bed with distrust. (39)
The routine of his life like a dam was cracked and forgetfulness came dribbling through, wiping out this and that. (60)

And finally in Part II chapter I Greene makes the most poignant revelation of man's futile quest for transient happiness:
Happiness was dead again before it had had time to breathe; he [priest] was like a woman with a stillborn child—bury it quickly and forget and begin again. Perhaps the next would live. (64)

The vivid depiction of the priest’s encounter with a mongrel in the deserted and desolate bungalow of the Fellows (Part II Chapter IV) reduces the dignity of human beings. We stand aghast at the terrible sight of the famished and abandoned beach:

And it came: a mongrel bitch dragging herself across the yard, an ugly creature with bent ears, trailing a wounded or a broken leg, whimpering. There was something wrong with her back. She came very slowly. He could see her ribs like an exhibit in a natural history museum. (141)

While making a hectic search for something to eat the priest finds a bone with a lot of meat on it. But it is a few inches away from the bitch’s mouth and the mongrel is not ready to give up its claim on the bone. Greene’s delineation of the way the priest competes with the bitch and ultimately grabs the bone shocks us by pinpointing the utter deterioration and debasement of human dignity:

They were all in competition. The priest advanced a step or two and stamped twice ... but the mongrel wouldn’t move, flattened above the bone, with all resistance left in the
broken body concentrated in the yellow eyes ... it was like hate on a death bed ... For a moment he became furious – that a mongrel bitch with a broken back should steal the only food. He swore at it – popular expressions picked up beside bandstands: he would have been surprised in other circumstances that they came so readily to his tongue. (144)

The description is undoubtedly very bleak and depressing, which wipes out the line of demarcation between human & subhuman beings. It is not that the priest himself is unaware of this degradation: “Then suddenly he laughed: this was human dignity disputing with a bitch over a bone” (144).

At last the priest wins and he feels a sense of pity for the animal. The dog also “seemed to bear no malice; her tail began to beat the floor hopefully questioningly” (145). Twice the priest makes up his mind to leave some meat for the dog. But his pity gives way to hunger:

He thought: I will eat just so much and she can have the rest. He marked mentally a point upon the bone and tore off another piece .... The priest reached the point he had marked, but now it seemed to him that his previous hunger had been imaginary: this was hunger what he felt now .... He would leave that knuckle of meat at the joint. But when the moment came he ate that too .... (145)
This seems to show the priest in a poor light.

After leaving the house of Fellows the priest reaches a deserted village where following an Indian woman he discovers to his horror a child lying unconscious in a hut. The child “Wet with blood, not sweat” is “perhaps three years old” (150). We are appalled to imagine that even an innocent child has been hit in three places. Greene depicts the psychic reality of the priest, blatantly exposed to this gruesome facet of human existence: “Horror and disgust touched him – violence everywhere: was there no end to violence?” (150). A little later when the child dies the priest justifies the ways of God by saying: “Why, after all, should we expect God to punish the innocent with more life?” (155). He means to say that the child is saved from suffering all the ignominies of human existence any longer.

As the woman, probably mother of the child implores him, the priest starts praying for the child. But he is fully aware of the futility of his prayer:

He could feel no meaning any longer in prayers like these. The Host was different: to lay that between a dying man’s lips was to lay God. That was a fact – something you could touch, but this was no more than a pious aspiration. Why should anyone listen to his prayer? Sin was a constriction
which prevented their escape; he could feel his prayer weigh him down like undigested food. (151)

The description leaves us all the more depressed.

The priest accompanied by the woman starts a desperate search for a Church to bury the child. Eating only large brown lumps of sugar they cover a long distance through the dense woods. The path is absolutely desolate & deserted. Greene asserts the dreariness of their existence in the following lines:

They might have been the only survivors of a world which was dying out, they carried the visible marks of the dying with them. (154)

At sunset on the second day the priest leaves the woman in a wide plateau where “a grove of crosses stand up blackly against the sky, leaning at different angles” and begins to journey alone (154). But feeling a sense of duty towards the woman he comes back and finds the dead child left by the woman. “With an obscure sense of shame”(156). as Greene describes it he takes the small lump of sugar which lay by the child’s mouth and we come across a most shocking portrayal of pain and suffering, highlighting the misery of a single soul and asserting a sense of being physically as well as psychologically abandoned:

Immediately he began to eat, the fever returned; the sugar stuck in his throat; he felt an appalling thirst. Crouching
down he tried to lick some water from the uneven ground; he even sucked at his soaked trousers .... The priest moved away again, back to the edge of the plateau and down the barranca side; it was loneliness he felt now – even the face had gone, he was moving alone across that blank white sheet, going deeper every moment in to the abandoned land.(157)

Roger Sharrock's comment regarding the atmosphere of the novel seems very appropriate in this context:

In this environment man seems wholly absorbed in the natural cycle of birth, copulation and death; he stares the bitter land with mules bizzards and insects. Man feels absorption but he resists it and regards his plight as abandonment. "The huge universal abandonment": the theme and the word recur. (107)

In fact the whole chapter is marked by a sense of wretchedness and desolation, reinforced by the description of the priest's encounter with the bitch, his gruelling suffering and his long journey in the company of a woman carrying her cead child on her back. And this once again convinces us of the all-powerful presence of evil from which human beings find no way to escape.
Greene's use of appropriate words also leaves an impression of emptiness and desolation. In the novel we come across words such as "loneliness" "desolation" "desertion" "alone" "aloneness" "abandonment" "abandoned" "lonely" "desolate" "vacancy" "dying" "weariness and "hollowness". They are perhaps indicative of a spiritual wasteland.

Another striking aspect of Greene's prose style is his use of similes and metaphors, evoking a sense of death and decay. In the first chapter we come across, for example Mr. Tench's comparison of the priest's dark suits and sloping shoulders to a coffin: "The man's dark suit and sloping shoulders reminded him uncomfortably of a coffin ..." (14). He also detects the presence of death in his "Carious mouth." In Part III Chap I evil is compared to malaria, a dreaded disease of that time: "Evil ran like malaria in his veins" (176).

Sometimes dialogue is contrived in such a way, that it seems to produce, as a critic supposes, "a despondent, dribbling effect". The following dialogue occurs in the scene where the governor's cousin, and his stooges drink the priest's illicit wine and brandy:

He [Jefe] said, 'It's good beer. Very good beer. Is this the only bottle?'
The man in drill watched him with frigid anxiety.
'I'm afraid the only bottle'.
'Salud!'
'And what', the Governor's cousin said,
'Were we talking about?'

'About the first thing you could remember', the beggar said

'The first thing I can remember', the Jefe began, with deliberation, '— but this gentleman is not drinking'.

'I will have a little brandy'.

'Salud!'

'Salud!'

'The first thing I can remember ....'

'Salud!'

'Salud!'

'No, but as I was saying ....'

'Salud!' (112)

The repeated use of the word "salud" in this dialogue reinforces a sense of weariness. Similar technique has been adopted in the following narratives by Arundhati Roy in her *The God of Small Things*. Here a feeling of hopelessness seems to ooze out:

He watched the trains come and go. He counted his keys

He watched governments rise and fall. He counted his keys

He watched cloudy children at car windows with yearning marshmallow noses.

The homeless, the helpless, the sick, the small and lost, filed past his window. Still he counted his keys. (63)
There were so many stains on the road. Squashed Miss Mitten-shaped stains in the Universe.

Squashed frog-shaped stains in the Universe.

Squashed crows that had tried to eat the squashed frog-shaped stains in the Universe.

Squashed dogs that ate the squashed crow-shaped stains in the Universe. (82)

As we have already discussed in the introductory chapter that Greene himself being a victim of unhappy childhood, a subject of psychoanalysis at a young age and a reader of psychology, earnestly believed in the role of impressions and experiences of childhood in shaping one's future life. That is why corruption of childhood comes again and again as a significant theme in Greene's novels. In *The Power and the Glory* also this demeaning aspect of human existence reinforces the atmosphere of evil that hangs conspicuously in the novel. In the very opening chapter Greene reflects on the immensity of evil lurking in every nook and corner of childhood:

We should be thankful we cannot see the horrors and degradations lying around our childhood, in cupboards and book shelves, everywhere. (12)
Coral Fellows, the daughter of Captain Fellows provides an interesting study in this regard as "she is on the verge of maturity, on the dangerous line between one life and another" (Sharrock 116). Coral, a precocious child who experiences her first menstrual pains while superintending counting and packing of bananas, never knows what childhood really is. Being burdened with the duties of the adulthood, which she is too young and immature to bear, she never gets the taste of the pleasures of childhood. Her childhood has dried up and she is already a denizen of the adult world though she is not prepared for it. The following lines aptly put forward a poignant description of her psychic reality:

After half an hour she began to feel tired – she wasn’t used to weariness so early in the day. She leant against the wall and it scorched her shoulder - blades. She felt no resentment at all at being there, looking after things: the word play had no meaning to her at all – the whole of life was adult. In one of Henry Beckley’s early reading books there had been a picture of a doll’s tea-party: it was incomprehensible like a ceremony she hadn’t learned: she couldn’t see the point of pretending…. it was a new pain (not worms this time). but it didn’t scare her; it was as if her body had expected it. had grown up to it, as the mind grows up to the loss of
tenderness. You couldn't call it childhood draining out of her: of childhood she had never really been conscious .... The child stood in her woman's pain and looked at them: a horrible novelty enclosed her whole morning: it was as if today everything were memorable. (53-54)

Brigitta the priest's daughter, an interesting study in the corruption of childhood, is a case in point. Brigitta is the result of an act of desperation – an act bereft of love as Greene puts it:

They had spent no love in her conception: just fear and despair and half a bottle of brandy and the sense of loneliness had driven him to an act which horrified him.... (66)

Nowonder that this child, the result of sheer carnal desires is thoroughly neglected. As a result she becomes an easy victim of moral and spiritual corruption. She is first introduced to the reader as "the small malicious child who had laughed at him"[The priest]. The priest watches her "coming out of the outside landscape of terror and lust" (65), when Maria, her mother, calls her. The priest is appalled at the immensity of her maturity. The manifestations of its ugliness and horror strike the priest:

He caught the look in the child's eyes which frightened him – it was again as if a grown woman was there before her time
making her plans, aware of far too much. It was like seeing his own, mortal sin look back at him, without contrition. (67)

The priest is eager to establish a close contact with her. But Brigitta whose “seven-year-old” dwarf like body “disguised an ugly maturity” is insolent enough to make a “last impudent malicious gesture” at the priest, the man whom her mother describes as her father, before she goes away (8). The priest is shaken to the very core of his existence as he thinks of the horror of watching her going to astray:

- He thought of his own death and her life going on; It might be his hell to watch her rejoining him gradually through the debasing years, sharing his weakness - like tuberculosis…. (68)

At the time of his departure the priest implores Maria to bring up the child properly. But Maria bluntly lets him know that the child is good for nothing: “She’ll never be good for anything, you can see that.” Priest, who still believes in the innocence of the childhood, observes: “She can’t be very bad — at her age” (79). But his hopes are dashed away as he gets the taste of her ugly maturity - the dawning of sexual knowledge in her mind at a very tender age:

- He [the priest] said, ‘My dear, what is the matter with you …?’
- They came open quickly then — red-rimmed and angry, with an expression of absurd pride.
She said, 'you ... you ...'

'Me?'

'You are the matter'.

.... He said 'My dear why me ... ?'

She said furiously 'They laugh at me'.

'Because of me?'

.... 'Pedro says you aren't a man. You aren't any good for women'. (81)

Her words leave the priest groping in the darkness as he finds no way out for the child from the impregnable and imminent darkness of knowledge – a result of the first awakening of sexual knowledge in a child not yet ten years old:

He was appalled again by her maturity, as she whipped up a smile from a large and varied stock .... The world was in her heart already, like the small spot of decay in a fruit. She was without protection – she had no grace, no charm to plead for her; his heart was shaken by the conviction of loss. (81)

He finds the pallor, he finds the rot, he finds the evil ready to engulf the child but he finds no means to save her from everything that tends to vitiate her mind at an early age – the consciousness of sex, wretchedness, deprivation and debasement:
The child's snigger and the first mortal sin lay together more closely than two blinks of the eye. He put out his hand as if he could drag her back by force from something; but he was powerless. The man or the woman waiting to complete her corruption might not yet have been born. How could he guard her against the non existent? (67)

This helplessness and inability on the part of the priest have been iterated once again:

He saw her fixed in her life like a fly in amber – Maria's hand raised to strike; Pedro talking prematurely in the dusk; and the police beating the forest – violence everywhere .... He was a man who was supposed to save souls. It had seemed quite simple once, preaching at Benediction, organizing the guilds .... It was as easy as saving money: now it was a mystery. He was aware of his own desperate inadequacy ...., the whole vile world coming round the child to ruin her. (82)

The childhood of lieutenant also appears to be miserable. So he seeks to leave no trace of the past that might remind him of his unhappy childhood:

It seemed to him like a weakness: this was his own land, and he would have walled it in if he could steel until he had
eradicated from it everything which reminded him of how it had once appeared to a miserable child. He wanted to destroy everything: to be alone without any memories at all. (25)

When he meets a group of children, he vows to eradicate everything that is responsible for the depravity of the children: "He would eliminate from their childhood everything which had made him miserable, all that was poor, superstitious, and corrupt" (58).

Thus we find that children, however delicate they may be, are not spared. The degradation and vitiation of childhood make us cognisant of the inescapable grip of evil—malignity and wickedness reigning in the world.

The theme of evil is also conspicuous by the presence of a profound sense of failure distinguishing some of the characters of the novel. Infact failure and its consequent sense of frustration seem to be the common human destiny. This contributes to the sordid atmosphere of the novel and strengthens the impression of evil prevailing all over the world.

The chief protagonist of the novel is a priest who has been branded as the whisky priest because of his addiction to liquor. When we first come across the priest in the first chapter we find him carrying brandy which he shares with Mr. Tench, the dentist. Again being chased
by the police when the priest takes a shelter in the place of Fellows he
does not hesitate to ask for some brandy. The shameless manner in
which he makes the request justly surprises Captain Fellows who
exclaims: “What a religion, ... Begging for brandy, shameless”. Mr.
Fellows also refers to the “difference between drinking a little brandy
after dinner – well, needing it” (38). Infact liquor seems to provide him
with essential sustenance. Thus he admits to Coral, the daughter of
Captain Fellows that whatever courage he has, is a result of his
consumption of liquor: “A little drink’, he said ‘will work wonders in a
cowardly man. With a little brandy, why, I’d defy – the devil” (42). Infact
the priest’s obsession with brandy is a recurrent feature in the course of
the narrative. He asks for brandy when he reaches a village some time
later: “Can you give me – a little spirit?” (43). In Maria’s village we again
find him desiring to have some brandy. And later Maria offers him some
brandy. Infact it is his drunkenness which is one of the factors that
previously led him to break his celibacy – to indulge in a sexual act with
Maria. His act of fornication is indeed a shameless violation of his
priestly duties. He also breaks the law of the country which prohibits the
consumption of liquor.

In the capital city he procures some liquor through a beggar, in the
confidence of the Governor’s cousin, illegally running a business of
liquor. He is also detected buying brandy in the town. He again drinks
brandy collected by the lieutenant in the prison where he spends his last night. His shameless addiction to liquor is indeed shocking to us.

A man of introspective nature, the priest is a victim of a sense of guilt. From the beginning to the end of the novel we find him suffering from a sense of failure. The priest's admission of his unworthiness undoubtedly redeems his character but it is his sense of desperate inadequacy and his introspections in this regard that leave us all the more depressed. He never fails to realize that he is a bad priest, negligent of the duties and responsibilities, assigned to him. Thus when he has been imprisoned for illegally possessing brandy he confesses to his fellow prisoners: "... You see I am a bad priest and a bad man. To die in a state of mortal sin" (126). When a woman, another prisoner, observes that the priest is a martyr, one who sacrifices his life for a noble cause, the priest thoroughly convinced of his unworthiness says:

'I don't think martyrs are like this .... Martyrs are holy men. It is wrong to think that just because one dies ... no. I tell you I am in a state of mortal sin. I have done things I couldn't talk to you about, I could only whisper them in the confessional'. (126)

In fact he never shrinks from admitting his guilt:

My children, you must never think the holy martyrs are like me. You have a name for me. Oh, I've heard you use it
before now. I am a whisky priest. I am in here now because they found a bottle of brandy in my pocket. (127)

But the woman does not give much importance to it. She says: "A little drink father ... it's not so important". So the priest asserts: "I have a child", adding that he has not repented for it(127). In fact he is unable to repent as Greene puts it:

That was true: he had lost the faculty. He couldn't say to himself that he wished his sin had never existed, because the sin seemed to him so unimportant that he loved the fruit of it. He needed a confessor to draw his mind slowly down the drab passages which led to grief and repentance. (128)

In Part II Chap I where Greene describes the priest in company of the Mestizo, the half-caste observes that the priest is an old man. The priest denies being very old and "his conscience began automatically to work: it was like a slot machine into which any coin could be fitted, even a cheater's blank disk. The words proud, lustful, envious, cowardly, ungrateful – they all worked the right springs – he was all these things" (89). This picture of his terrible inadequacy simply shocks us.

The priest makes an analysis of his past when he used to be proud and naughty. The realization of his errors, follies and sins only leaves him despondent and dejected. He is also fully aware of the fact that the past seven years of his life have been replete with surrenders – his
abstinence from performing priestly duties in the face of opposition.

Thus Greene depicts:

The years behind him were littered with similar surrenders – feast days and fast days and days of abstinence had been the first to go; then he had ceased to trouble more occasionally about his breviary – and finally he had left it behind altogether at the port in one of his periodic attempts at escape. Then the altar stone went – too dangerous to carry with him. He had no business to say Mass without it; he was probably liable to suspension, but penalties of the ecclesiastical kind began to seem unreal in a state where the only penalty was the civil one of death .... Five years ago he had given way to despair – the unforgivable sin – and he was going back now to the scene of his despair with a curious lightening of the heart. For he had got over despair too. He was a bad priest, he knew it. They had a word for his kind – a whisky priest, but every failure dropped out of sight and mind: somewhere they accumulated in secret – the rubble of his failures. One day they would choke up, he supposed, altogether the source of grace. (60)
The sense of failure again haunts his mind as he finds himself unable to save his child from the corruption, sinfulness and vice. Perhaps it is this pathetic incapability that is reflected in his dream in Part II Chap III:

His eyes closed and immediately he began to dream. He was being pursued; he stood outside door banging on it, begging for admission, but no body answered there was a word, a password, which would save him, but he had forgotten it. He tried desperately at random – cheese and child, California, excellency, milk, veracruz. His feet had gone to sleep and he knelt outside the door. Then he knew why he wanted to get in: he wasn’t being pursued after all: that was a mistake. His child lay beside him bleeding to death and this was a doctor’s house. He banged on the door and shouted, ‘Even if I can’t think of the right word, haven’t you a heart?’ The child was dying and looked up at him with middle-aged complacent wisdom. She said, ‘You animal’, and he woke up crying. (132)

His sense of unworthiness does not leave him even when the hour of his death approaches. The realization of his uselessness dawns upon him and his sense of being spiritually abandoned torments his psyche:

If I hadn’t been so useless, useless ... The eight hard hopeless years seemed to him to be only a caricature of
service: a few communions, a few confessions, and an endless bad example. He thought: If I had only one soul to offer, so that I could say, Look what I've done ..., People had died for him, they had deserved a saint, and a tinge of bitterness spread across his mind for their sake that God hadn't thought fit to send them one ..., He thought of the cold faces of the saints rejecting him. (208)

The feeling of wastage and absence of purpose in human life also gain prominence in the character of Padre Jose. His life is a depressing tale of failures. Padre Jose who had been a priest for forty years had to renounce the Roman Catholic faith to save his life when the new totalitarian government came to power. He gave up his priesthood and all priestly duties and got married thereby breaking his vow of celibacy. Padre Jose, a renegade priest, "very fat and short of breath", is thus portrayed as a living emblem of the weakness of the Roman Catholic faith (28).

Against his will Padre Jose had to marry his house keeper who "fed him and fattened and preserved him like a prize boar". Even the children of his neighbourhood are aware of Jose's subservience to his wife and whenever his wife calls him to come to bed, the children make him an object of their mockery by echoing the same words: "José, José, come to bed, José " (30).
Padre Jose however gets some chances to amend his guilt in giving up his faith. While visiting a cemetery Padre Jose comes across the grand father and the parents of a dead child. They appeal him to say a prayer on behalf of the child but Jose refuses citing the law of the land. Inspite of the “enormous temptation” to respond to the call of duty – “to take the risk and say a prayer over the grave” (49), he miserably gives in to fear:

He felt the wild attraction of doing one’s duty and stretched a sign of the cross in the air; then fear came back, like a drug. Contempt and safety waited for him down by the quay: he wanted to get away. (49)

Padre Jose, in the grip of despair, breaks down pathetically: “He sank hopelessly down on his knees and entreated them: ‘Leave me alone’. He said, ‘I am unworthy can’t you see? – I am a coward.’ He finds himself as he is, “fat and ugly and old and humiliated” and knows that he is “in the grip of the unforgivable sin, despair” (49).

Again when the priest is chased by a Red shirt and a few others, on the assumption that he is carrying liquor, prohibited in the state, he seeks shelter from Padre Jose: “They are looking for me. I thought perhaps just for tonight. You could perhaps ...” But Padre Jose refuses stoutly: “Go away”, Padre Jose said, – “go away” (117). Thus he
ignores his duties as a priest as well as a human being and drives away the priest most despicably in the face of imminent danger:

In the lamplight Padre Jose's face wore an expression of hatred. He said, — 'why come to me? Why should you think...? I'll call the police if you don't go. You know what sort of man I am.' (118)

He uses the strongest possible words of condemnation against the priest: "Go and die quickly. That's your job" (118). Padre Jose misses the final opportunity as he fails to rise to the occasion when the lieutenant asks him to hear the priest's confession. Inspite of the lieutenant's assurance that "nobody shall know", Padre Jose overborne by his masterful wife ultimately decides to give up his last opportunity. Infact at the end he gets so much accustomed to failure that he is hardly concerned about its consequences. Thus Greene presents his psychic reality:

Padre Jose made a despairing gesture – as much as to say, what does one more failure matter in a life like this? (205)

Padre Jose who is in "a continuous state of mortal sin with no one to hear his confession", is acutely conscious of his terrible inadequacy. He sans all his priestly duties – performing daily rituals, conducting Masses, hearing confessions and feels that it is no good praying any longer at all as a prayer demands an act and he lacks the intention of
acting. Infact he has “nothing to do at all but to sit and eat – eat far too much” (30).

He fully realises that his marriage with his housekeeper, that again at an old age has utterly decimated his dignity by reducing him to a clown. His sense of being dishonoured and condemned is unwrapped in the following lines:

... he knew that he was a buffon. An old man who married was grotesque enough, but an old priest .... He stood outside himself and wondered whether he was even fit for hell. He was just a fat old impotent man mocked and taunted between the sheets .... He was a sacrilege wherever he went, whatever he did, he defiled God. (29)

The intensity of his sense of humiliation leaves us depressed when he reflects that, “there was no respect anywhere left for him in his home, in the town, in the whole abandoned star” (30).

Mr. Tench, the dentist whose family life has been reduced to nothing and whose wife wants to divorce him, is another victim of the sense of failure. He is in such a depressed state of mind that he can not complete a letter to his wife. He feels being deserted in an alien hostile world. And we have already discussed while describing the physical as well as the imaginative atmosphere, created in the very opening lines, how he often falls prey to forgetfulness, a probable consequence of his
futile existence. Mr. Tench finds the execution of the priest and it hurts him badly:

The crash of the rifles shook Mr. Tench: they seemed to vibrate inside his own guts: he felt sick and shut his eyes. (216)

And this is followed by a feeling of desolation and dejection:

... An appalling sense of loneliness came over Mr. Tench, doubling him with indigestion. The little fellow had spoken English and knew about his children. He felt deserted. (217)

Sense of failure and a feeling of being shattered may also be detected in the character of Mrs. Trixie Fellows, the sickly and panic-stricken wife of Caption Fellows. It seems that it is her utter dissatisfaction with and repulsion to her life in an alien country that generates in her a feeling of morbidity. Thus when Mr. Fellows observes that they are not leading a bad life “... he could feel her stiffen” (38). Greene expresses her sense of frustration with life — the possible origin of her morbidity, psychological rather than physical, in the following words:

“... The word ‘life’ was taboo: it reminded you of death. She returned her face away from him towards the wall and then hopelessly back again — the phrase ‘turn to the wall’ was taboo too. She lay panic-stricken, while the boundaries of her
fear widened, to include every relationship and the whole world of inanimate things; it was like an infection. You could look at nothing for long without becoming aware that it, too, carried the germ ... the word 'sheet' even. She threw the sheet off her and said, 'It's so hot, it's so hot'. (38-9)

A strange fear of death looms large in her morbid psyche:

Terror was always just behind her shoulder: she was wasted by her effort of not turning round. She dressed up her fear, so that she could look at it — in the form of fever, rats, unemployment. The real thing was taboo — death coming nearer every year in the strange place: everybody picking up and leaving, while she stayed in a cemetery no one visited, in a big above-ground tomb. (33)

Thus Mrs. Fellows, sick of life, is in a state of living death.

Even the lieutenant, an atheist and a champion of the secular world proves no exception. He also fails to find out a purpose of his existence after capturing the priest, symbolizing the church which the secular authority is out to destroy:

.... Now the last priest was under lock and key, there was nothing left to think about. The spring of action seemed to be broken. He looked back on the weeks of hunting as a happy
time which was over now for ever. He felt without a purpose, as if life had drained out of the world. (207)

After meeting the priest in the prison and informing him that Padre Jose would not visit him to hear his confession lieutenant comes to his office where he dreams a curious dream which clearly indicates his state of being trapped:

Then he sat at his desk and put his head upon his hands and fell asleep with utter weariness. He couldn't remember afterwards anything of his dreams except laughter, laughter all the time, and a long passage in which he could find no door. (207)

Evidently the lieutenant finds no escape route from this sense of futility of life emerging from his subconscious or unconscious mind. He seems to feel that the capture and the consequent execution of the priest – "the small hollow man", will serve no purpose (206).

Even the boy Luis who initially seems to be a product of the secular values, advocated by the lieutenant, at the end, joins the world of religious values, preached and propagated by the priest. After the death of the priest Luis's entire outlook on life seems to have undergone a sea change. When Luis finds lieutenant, he seems to experience an intense feeling of hatred. He possibly feels cheated by the secular ideology as his subsequent action shows:
He got down from the window-seat and picked up his candle—Zapata, Villa, Madero, and the rest, they were all dead, and it was people like the man out there who killed them. He felt deceived .... The boy was looking at his revolver holster and he [Lieutenant] remembered an incident in the plaza when he had allowed a child to touch his gun—perhaps this boy. He smiled again and touched it too—to show he remembered, and the boy crinkled up his face and spat through the window bars, accurately, so that a little blob of spittle lay on the revolver-butt. (220)

And finally when the new priest appears mysteriously to carry the mantle of religious values, Luis spontaneously kisses his hand: “But the boy [Luis] ... put his lips to his hand before the other could give himself a name” (222). All these clearly show that inspite of the death of the priest it is the religious faith which ultimately triumphed over the secular values. And it ofcourse signifies a defeat for the lieutenant, a representative and an emblem of a world without religion and without God.

Thus this failure to have a desired life and the sense of futility of human existence as experienced by the characters like the priest, the lieutenant, Padre Jose and Mrs. Fellows only confirm the impression of evil pervading the world.
The mestizo, or the half-caste whom the priest comes across incourse of his journey from village seems to be the very incarnation of evil. The mestizo who “had only two teeth left, canines which struck yellowly out at either end of his mouth like the teeth you find enclosed in clay which have belonged to long extinct animals” plays the role of Judas, the traitor in the novel.

The mestizo is aware that there is a reward on the priest’s head so he forces himself upon the priest as his companion on his journey to Carmen. And the priest though he is aware of his real motive can not shake him off. The mestizo who spits every now and then is a very repulsive and cunning character. He tries step by step to confirm his assumption of the priest’s real identity. He first addresses the priest as “senor”. When the priest asks him the reason, he asserts that the priest is a man of education. The priest tries his best to falsify his suspicion about him but mestizo is too shrewd to be deceived. Again when the priest prevents mestizo from beating the mule, the mestizo remarks: “you talk like a priest”. The priest protests: “What nonsense you talk” but he ignores it and tries to gain his confidence by introducing himself as a good Christian (88).

The mestizo is not ready to let his coveted catch go and to lose seven hundred pesos, the reward for helping to capture the priest. So
mestizo, the very emblem of deceit and hypocrisy, again and again assures the priest of his good intentions:

You don't trust me. Just because I am a man who likes to do a good turn to strangers, because I try to be a Christian, you don't trust me. (89)

Here I have spent many hours guiding you to Carmen — I do not want any reward because I am a good Christian. I have probably lost money by it at home — never mind that .... (89)

I give up a whole day to helping you, and you pay no attention when your guide is tired. (89)

I would not betray you. I'm a Christian. I just thought a prayer .... would be good .... (91)

The mestizo wants the priest to acknowledge his real identity, so repeatedly and very cunningly he addresses him as father:

Won't you say a prayer, father, before we sleep. (89)

I'd just have to say — father, hear my confession. You could not refuse a man in mortal sin. (89)

'What's that paper .... Father ?' (92)

'What's preventing you, father ? You are a father, aren't you?(96)

Finally with much effort the priest is able to separate himself from the mestizo. He gives the half-caste his own mule to ride upon and
makes the mule follow the path leading to Carmen, while he himself takes a different path. The mestizo can not resist due to his feverish condition but he threatens and abuses the priest:

He began to shout abuse – a meaningless series of indecent words which petered out in the forest like the weak blows of a hammer. He whispered, 'If I see you again, you can't blame me ...' (102)

This shows that the mestizo, the cunning rogue, who is only concerned with his selfish interests completely lacks fellow feeling. He is a vile betrayer of his fellow men.

The priest has his second encounter with the mestizo when he has to pass a night in prison for the illegal possession of liquor. He directs the priest to advise him regarding his future course of action because he knows that it is the police and not he who will be rewarded if he discloses the priest's identity at that time. When the priest opines that revealing his identity would be an act of murder, a mortal sin, the mestizo whose "malaria eyes had never known what mercy was" makes it amply clear that neither moral scruple nor Roman Catholic faith concerns him (137):

I don't mean that. I mean about the reward ... You can't escape far, can you? It would be better, wouldn't it, to catch
you out of here. In the town somewhere I mean nobody else could claim .... (137)

Thus it is only money that concerns him.

The mestizo follows the priest and reaches the village on the other side of the border. Being well aware of the fact that the priest is unable to ignore his priestly duties the crooked mestizo informs him that he is sought for hearing the confession of a dying gangster, wounded by the police. To convince the priest, he shows him a piece of paper with the handwritten words “For Christ’s sake, Father …” and assures him that he need not cross the border so there is no possibility of his being arrested (179). Thus it is the mestizo’s treachery that leads to the capture of the priest but he does not repent. He instead asks the priest to pray for him. When the priest points out that it will not befool God and he should better pray and give away the money he received from the government as a reward, mestizo stoutly denies that he is paid for helping the police.

Thus “the extraordinary apparition of the mestizo, with his yellow fangs and wriggling exposed toe and fawning, clinging, inexorable treachery” and readiness to do anything, to go to any length for lucre bears the indelible mark of evil (The Power and the Glory VI).

The theme of evil has also been dealt with in The End of the Affair, portraying an odyssey towards salvation through love and suffering. The
novel is not bereft of seedy details, enhancing the sense of abandonment and the feeling of frustration:

The black leafless trees gave no protection: they stood around like broken water pipes .... (2)

Through the blasted doorway I could see the grey morning light and I had a sense of great emptiness stretching out from the ruined hall: I realized that a tree which had blocked the light had simply ceased to exist – there was no sign of even a fallen trunk. A long way off warden's were blowing whistles. (82)

The extracted lines augment the same feeling of joylessness and disappointment that characterize Greene's novels. This again reminds us what Robert Gorham Davis says about the background and characters of The End of the Affair in Highlights of Modern Literature, edited by Francis Brown:

In Greene's novels everything is as drab and dreary as possible. London bomb damaged; it rains all the time; the heroine has a bad cough; the meals are indigestible and made to sound so; the people are boring or nerve-racking; love is described largely in physical terms, and those repellent ones. The characters turn to the church because they find life intolerable. (60)
In the novel we come across Maurice Bendrix, an obsessed lover, extremely jealous in his love as he is overwhelmed with a selfish desire of possession. Bendrix meets Sarah Miller, the wife of a civil servant named Henry by chance and falls in love with her. Sarah’s husband Henry is a typical modern alienated individual whose sense of alienation results from the evil effects of a mechanical civilization. Henry, worried and frustrated, is the victim of a sense of insecurity and he is unable to feel any physical attraction towards Sarah. In fact Henry exemplifies the dehumanizing effects of the present abstract and calculated systems which deprive man of his natural and spiritual self.

Sarah, a woman devoid of scruples, therefore develops adulterous relationship with many. And Bendrix is one such person. Sarah makes love with Bendrix even in her husband’s house and remains remorseless and unrepentant. Sarah, concerned only with the pleasure of the moment, thus unveils the disastrous impact of modern civilization on the man-woman relationship. Here adultery falsifies the holy tie of the nuptial thereby highlighting the predicament of the man-woman relationship in an evil world.

But their affair abruptly comes to an end. After a flying bomb raid Sarah stops communicating with him and says:
You needn't be so scared. Love doesn't end. Just because we don't see each other .... people go on loving God .... all their lives, without seeing him. (79)

A frustrated and angry Bendrix finds hatred as a suitable expression of jealousy. He can not even tolerate the thought of Sarah united with her new lover abandoning him to desolation. He thinks of committing suicide but abstains as it may relieve Sarah. He rather seeks to take revenge on Sarah by increasing the agony of her existence as he recalls later in the novel:

I didn't kill myself ... It wasn't cowardice : it was a memory that stopped me – the memory of the look of disappointment on Sarah's face when I came into the room after the V1 had fallen. Hadn't she, at heart, hoped for my death, so that her new affair with X would hurt her conscience less, for she had a kind of elementary conscience ? if I killed myself now, she wouldn't have to worry about me at all, and surely after our four years together there would be moments of worry even with X. I wasn't going to give her that satisfaction. If I had known a way, I would have increased her worries to breaking point, and my impotence angered me. How I hated her. (87)

After two years Bendrix meets Henry and his jealousy and hatred gets rekindled. Thus he recalls their meeting:
'How's Sarah?' I asked because it might have seemed odd if I hadn't, though nothing would have delighted me more than to have heard that she was sick, unhappy, dying. I imagined in those days that any suffering she underwent would lighten mine, and if she were dead I could be free: I would no longer imagine all the things one does imagine under my ignoble circumstances. I could even like poor silly Henry, I thought, if Sarah were dead. (3)

Bendrix comes to know from Henry that he suspects Sarah's fidelity and Bendrix is out to find out and destroy Sarah's love. He employs a private detective Parkis to find out Sarah's lover. As Bendrix recollects his first meeting with Sarah he finds "all my [his] hatred returning" and observes (26-27) : "Hatred seems to operate the same glands as love; it even produces the same actions" (26-27). He is unable to get rid of his bitterness and self-disgust:

What a dull lifeless quality this bitterness is. If I could I would write with love but if I could write with love I would be another man; I would never have lost love. (7)

And this bitterness and hatred which seems to be an outcome of his perverted jealousy only serve to strengthen his bondage to evil.

Bendrix is not unaware of his role as a devil's disciple:
"I can imagine that if there existed a God who loved, the devil would be driven to destroy even the weakest, the most faulty imitation of that love .... If there is a God who uses us and makes his saints out of such material as we are, the devil too may have his ambition; he may dream of training even such a person as myself, even poor Parkis, into being his saints, ready with borrowed fanatism to destroy love wherever we find it. (68)

Parkis steals Sarah's diary and Bendrix discovers that his rival is no human being but God himself. When Bendrix is knocked down by a door during the air raid Sarah prays for his recovery. She promises to abandon her earthly passions and offer herself to God. Bendrix survives but Sarah awakens to a new reality. She has to live without Bendrix to experience "the agony of being without him".

Inspite of this revelation Bendrix does not give up his role as a devil's disciple. He thinks that he will emerge triumphant in the conflict "between an image and a man". He pursues Sarah and wants her to break up with Henry so that they may start living together. But the Divine Lover proves to be more jealous of his possession and before Bendrix can win her back Sarah dies of Pneumonia. And a series of miracles suggest her sanctification.
Bendrix, now compelled to lead an "empty life, odourless, antiseptic, the life of a prison" (176), starts breathing hatred again. And this time the object of his hatred is God who frustrates his love and corrupts his happiness:

You're a devil God, tempting us to leap ... with your great schemes you ruin our happiness like a harvester ruins a mouse's nest. I hate you God, I hate you as though you existed. (191)

This once again reaffirms his role as a devil's advocate. But we can not overlook the point raised by D.P. Jones regarding the role of God:

If god has made Bendrix and the world as they are, but yet demands quite impossible behaviour from them, he is to be regarded as the origin of pain, confusion and misery, the deliberate and rather sadistic mocker of our existence. (183)

Through his passions have been eroded, Bendrix likes to show the dead Sarah that he is still capable of making love and living without her. So on the day of Sarah's funeral he attempts to seduce a girl, younger and more beautiful than Sarah just to show that he can do without her:

That evening I was still full of my hatred and disgust ... More than anything in the world I wanted to hurt Sarah. I wanted to take a woman back with me and lie with her upon the same
bed in which I made love to Sarah; as it was as though I knew that the only way to hurt her was to hurt myself. (65)

Sarah's mother informs Bendrix about Sarah's surreptitious baptism at the age of two by a Catholic priest and the priest Father Rank also speaks in favour of Sarah's Catholic sepulture. But Bendrix, still jealous of her Divine Lover, is dead against burial and insists on her cremation. He says:

I wanted her burnt up, I wanted to be able to say, Resurrect that body if you can; my jealousy had not finished, like Henry's with her death. It was as if she were alive still, in the company of a lover she had preferred to me. How I wished I could send Parkis to interrupt their eternity. (166)

Bendrix now sets out to oppose Sarah's sanctification. He dismisses miracles because his belief in them will only confirm his belief in God's benevolence. He regards them as coincidences like "two cars with the same figures side by side in a traffic block" (189). But at the end he gives up and prays god to leave him alone.

John Atkins regards the novel as a product of Greene's personal crisis as "the hatred had to be spilled out before Greene could recover his balance" (194). And it is hatred where Greene's obsession is switched to in The End of the Affair. Besides hatred, contempt and jealousy, seedy details and a sense of failure in the condition of man,
alienated in an industrial civilization reinforces the theme of evil in the novel.