Most writers dealing with real people find their invention confined, but that was not so with Ford. 'When it has seemed expedient to me I have altered episodes that I have witnessed, but I have been careful never to distort the character of the episode. The accuracies I deal in are the accuracies of my impressions. If you want factual accuracies you must go to... but no, no, don't go to anyone, stay with me.' (The italics are mine: it is a phrase worth bearing in mind in reading all his works.)

Graham Greene on Ford Madox Ford
CHAPTER III

THE VISIBLE WORLD

Graham Greene called some of his novels entertainments. Brighton Rock was first issued as an entertainment. When he published Travels With My Aunt in 1969, the distinction was dropped and all the entertainments were included under novels. In 1972 Peter Wolfe published a full-length study of the so-called entertainments with the title Graham Greene: the Entertainer. Many of these entertainments were turned into films and made Greene popular. In America this kind of fiction goes by the name thriller. In most thrillers we meet a super-human hero who ultimately succeeds in destroying his opponents. Peter Wolfe approves of G.S. Fraser's suggestion and argues that these entertainments have something in common with John Buchan's The Thirty-Nine Steps. According to him, "What shortens thematic distances and cuts dramatic corners for Greene is melodrama". He proceeds to analyse how melodrama serves Greene's purposes. With all his painstaking, sometimes supersubtle analysis of these novels, Peter Wolfe is not helpful when one likes to determine the genre quality of these entertainments and the kind of human image they sustain.

Before we discuss these entertainments in detail, it is imperative to provide a genre scaffolding that could afford a

2. Ibid., p.23.
vantage point to view them as they are. In Greene's latest novel, *The Honorary Consul*, when Leon is reading an English detective story, Doctor Plarr asks him whether it is a good story. Leon replies:

'I am no judge of that. The translation is not very good, and with this sort of book I can always guess the end.'

'Then where is the interest?' (asks Doctor Plarr)

'Oh, there is a sort of comfort in reading a story where one knows what the end will be. The story of a dream-world where justice is always done. There were no detective stories in the age of faith - an interesting point when you think of it. God used to be the only detective when people believed in Him. He was law. He was order. He was good. Like your Sherlock Holmes. It was He who pursued the wicked man for punishment and discovered all. But now people like the General make law and order. Electric shocks on the genitals. Aquino's fingers. Keep the poor ill-fed, and they do not have the energy to revolt. I prefer the detective. I prefer God.'

The above passage makes a distinction between a detective story and the present day reality. Dictators and torture chambers, mass executions, and weak-willed rebels are a part of the contemporary scene. One can complacently characterize this situation by employing the usual literary cliches like 'modern waste land' or 'a sort of 1984'. If we try to create a context from which this seems inevitable, we can respond to the thrillers in a more rational way. Between the Wars there was definitely a change in the very notion of reality. What/used to be thought unfamiliar, nightmarish, and inhuman assumed a garish quality, which could

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no longer be winked at. This constitutes the visible world and if an artist is true to himself this ought to go into his vision and the contraption he devises to convey it. It is here that tradition and modernity in Greene's art have relevance. Michael Holquist in an interesting article, "Whodunit and Other Questions: Metaphysical Detective Stories in Post-War Fiction", thinks that during the 30's a new kind of detective fiction emerged both in England and America which broke away from the rigid conventions of detective fiction. They are not detective novels but are like novels. And he calls them impure because they are not classic specimens of the genre. Leon in the passage quoted earlier thinks of the kind of detective story in which the detective is the source of reason and logic. But modernism is something invincible to logic and reason. When we use the word 'modernism' we are not thinking of the aesthetic revolution achieved by Joyce, Pound, Eliot and others during the 20's. It only means the altered situation that is alluded to in Leon's statement: "People like the general make law and order. Electric shocks on the genitals. Aquino's fingers. Keep the poor ill-fed, and they do not have the energy to revolt". How this situation is artistically rendered is discussed in the following pages with due attention given to each novel.

Stamboul Train

It is convenient to start the discussion of Stamboul Train with a close study of the 'key scene' which is laid in a dark shed near the railway station of Subotica in Section 4 of Part Four of the novel. It is a shed into which Dr Csinner and Coral Musker escape from the pursuit of the guards after they manage to free themselves from imprisonment with the help of Grunlich. Coral could have got into the waiting taxi as Grunlich did if she had not been a little delayed in her running and if she had not felt the weight of responsibility to remain by the side of Dr Csinner who is wounded and needs help badly. In fact, the decision to stay is forced upon her, though she has been hesitating for a few seconds.

For a few seconds she wondered whether to leave him. She told with conviction that he would never have waited for her. But then she was in no great danger and he was. She stood hesitating, bent down to watch his pale old face; she noticed that there was blood on his moustache. Voices sounded round the corner, and she found she had no time to decide... Then the ear roared into activity... and it was too late now for her to leave him.

There is something common between Coral and Csinner, the youngest and the oldest of the characters in the novel. A certain inevitability drives them to a common fate and companionship. Both are victims of forgetfulness. Both come from England in the Channel

steamer. Though they have different destinations, they share a common destiny of being forgotten by the people whom they love. At Ostend they attract the attention of the purser who finds them uncommon in being uncomplaining. The purser, who is accustomed to be pestered by the complaints of the passengers, is struck by the plain simplicity and uncomplaining nature of Coral. Significantly, he calls after her to remember him. Similarly, he finds something disturbing about Czinner who too has not complained. The purser wonders momentarily "whether something dramatic has passed close by him, something weary and hunted and the stuff of stories". But ironically these two characters who arouse interest in the purser in no time become part of the 'darkness in the purser's mind'. This brief incident both sets the tone and states the central theme of the novel.

By carefully directing each movement, Greene brings these two characters into contact with each other twice before Coral gets implicated in Czinner's case and both are taken by the soldiers to a waiting shed near Subotica station. Coral boards the Orient Express to take up an assignment as a chorus girl in one of the theatres in Constantinople. A virgin still in her teens, she is exposed to the "sudden terror of strangeness on the quay at Ostend with the purser calling after her to remember him". She has "schooled herself to accept responsibility wherever and in whatever form it came".

2. Ibid., p.6.
3. Ibid., p.229.
4. Ibid., p.10.
and initiation into life come through Hyatt and Csinmer. The moment Hyatt sees her, he likes her. When she faints in the corridor of the train, she evokes a painful pity in Hyatt who, in a flash of insight ... became aware of the innumerable necessary evils of which life for her was made up. He brings Csinmer, the doctor, to help her.

Coral's fainting is of great significance as it not only brings Csinmer and Coral together again but helps to awake in her a new awareness with which she is enabled to get a clarity of vision to perceive reality behind the facade of appearance, the sudden terror of strangeness. As Csinmer approaches Coral to examine, he feels that he is facing an ordeal. He is nervous. The fear leaves him as he kneels by her. He even feels tenderness. When she comes back to a state of confused consciousness,

... she thought it was she who was bending over a stranger with a long mustache. She felt pity for the experience which had caused his great anxiety, and her solicitude went out to the friendliness she imagined in his eyes. She put her hands down to his face. He's ill, she thought, and for a moment shut out the puzzling shadows which fell the wrong way, the globe of light shining from the ground. 'Who are you?' she asked, trying to remember how it was that she had come to his help. Never, she thought, had she seen a man who needed more help.

It is a picture of curious inversion. It is the sight of the

2. Ibid., p.24.
world reversed which makes the old images of the familiar world
sharp with unfamiliarity. Herself being ill, she feels pity for
the stranger. A sense of responsibility is inherent in her
thinking that he is ill and in need of help. It is for the first
time that she realises the depths of human relationship charac-
terised by something more than the superficial desire of the
flesh. It is this deeper awareness, her pity for his age and
anxiety, which braces her to face any contingency with calm
resolution. For all the tenderness she feels for him, she gets
only a cold little formal foreign bow from him before he leaves.
"She saw in his eyes other thoughts falling like rain. Never
before had she the sensation of being so instantly forgotten."1
What appears to be an ordeal to Czinner is not an ordeal but
an end of an ordeal. So far as Coral is concerned, it is the be-
ginning of an ordeal. This is borne out by the repetition of
certain words like 'ordeal', 'responsibility', and 'strangeness'.
In terms of the final irony, it is the beginning of the journey
for Coral and the end for Czinner. What is relevant to observe
here is the fact that Coral after the strange experience caused
by fainting develops a capacity for impersonal tenderness; she
gets an intuitive perception of another man's anxiety. It is a
new insight into the unfamiliarity - the same terror of strange-
ness - behind the familiar images of the visible world.

For the second time she experiences an impersonal tenderness when Wyatt offers his sleeper to her to rest - to have a bed and a pillow and a covering and sleep. Wyatt's gesture makes her feel how "grace came back to him with confidence ... and became only a ministering shades". She realises that he being a Jew and a businessman expects dividends for his investment. How right she is in reading his thoughts is corroborated by Wyatt's dream.

... when he saw Coral Musker walking by he jumped from the car and offered her a cigarette and after that a drink and after that a ride. That was one advantage with these girls, Wyatt thought; they all knew what a ride meant... But Coral Musker wanted a ride; she would take him for his companion in the dark of the car... and then the bushes with the scent of wet leaves holding the morning's rain and short barbarous enjoyment in the stubble.

She feels tender towards him as though he has given her new hope for a life which is not a continuous struggle. She begins to feel that perhaps she has a life in people's minds when she is not there to be seen or talked to. She remembers the purser who had spoken to her kindly. She is now endowed with a clarity of perception to understand motives which are generally hidden. This penetrating vision has come with the fainting. The Jew is very familiar to her. Yet there is some strange life moving behind the familiar. She has known people of his type and their intentions. Behind the strangeness again there is a familiarity.

2. Ibid., p.80.
They know each other, knew what each wants from the other: "their thoughts remained the same, and there was nothing to speak about, because there was nothing to discover." She surrenders her virginity in requital for the kindness shown to her, hoping to see better and more comfortable days in his company when they reach Constantinople. The decision to surrender her virginity is forced upon her by Hyatt's pressing the ticket into her bag, by the "admonishment of the old dry women of experience," and above all by her realisation that "a girl's got to learn some time" that she has to pay a price for everything she gets - "one never gets anything for nothing." Hyatt too entertains the idea of their living together in Constantinople. But Coral is troubled by a disbelief. It is too good to be true - the transformation the night has caused. Next morning at the breakfast table she has no apprehension and she is happy because pain is behind her. But this happiness is momentary. There is more pain in store for her. Events conspire to separate her from Hyatt and drive her to get implicated more with Czinner with whom she has most in common. It is for the emancipation of young people like Coral that Czinner's revolutionary zeal and philosophy are dedicated. In terms of personal relationship, it is

2. Ibid., p.50.
3. Ibid., p.146.
4. Ibid., p.50.
Oslaaer's predicament that initiates Coral, not her love affair with Nyatt. Before leaving Nyatt she experiences a momentary giddiness. This giddiness marks the end of the brief affair and a prelude to the frightening experience at the shed where she has to act out her first star part in life.

To Dr Oslaaer alias Richard John the train journey is the end and the beginning. He is a victim of forgetfulness. From one point of view, the journey marks the end of his forced exile from Belgrade and the beginning of a hope for the realisation of his socialist dreams. He was the head of the Social Democrats. When Gen. Kamnets was charged with rape, Oslaaer was the chief evidence for the prosecution. When there was a warrant against him he escaped. He has been in exile in England under the name Richard John, school teacher and physician. As a Socialist it is his great passion to establish an egalitarian society. He has been receiving information from his followers in Belgrade in coded letters. They have planned an insurrection and Oslaaer is expected to lead the revolutionaries.

It isissy Warren, a lesbian journalist, who spots and recognises Dr Oslaaer when the train has stopped at Cologne. She is exhilarated by the sight of him and deploys all her powers to get her best story out of him. She even employs unprofessional methods to steal his secrets. Her intimidatory tactics fail when Oslaaer shows her the newspaper in which the failure of the inten-
ded insurrection is reported. This failure is ironically the end of Dr Gsinner, the revolutionary, and the beginning of his journey towards self-knowledge. The revolutionaries act earlier than planned. If only they had waited, thinks Gsinner, perhaps he could have led them properly and the insurrection would not have been crushed as it is now. All the patient hopeful waiting for five years like a ghost is rendered futile. Even then he wants to go to them, at least for the sake of the living, who, he hopes, would come to his rescue.

Dr Gsinner and Coral Musker are brought together again before the 'key scene' in the shed. He goes to the rescue of Coral when she is humiliated by Mrs Peters. Gsinner gives vent to his hatred against the bourgeois temperament. Coral is bewildered by the flood of his explanation and the strength of his conviction, though she is unable to understand a word he has said. The sense of failure evokes in him a reminiscent mood.

In introspection, he sheds all his disguises. His brain is now lit with incontestable truths. He is on the brink of confession. But then he has lost the conviction of forgiveness. His faith is "as hopelessly lost as youth and first love in the corner of the viaduct wall". He is about to surrender to a belief which has been his pride to subdue. He goes to Mr Opie, the priest, but he fails to articulate his confession.

Coral finally gets involved when his thrusting an envelope secretly into her hands is watched by the soldiers. Grunlich is arrested for possessing a firearm illegally. All the three are brought to a shed near the railway station of Subotica for trial. After the perfunctory trial, Dr Csinner, who is sentenced to death, is strangely comforted by the sentence which promises him one thing he has never known, security. The world is chaotic; he has done all that he could to the poor. With a calm mind he prepares to move towards the "noisy dark". But when the ingenuity of Grunlich offers the possibility of escape from their imprisonment, Csinner hopefully entertains the possibility. The success of the attempt helps only Grunlich to get away in the waiting taxi brought by Hyatt. Coral and Csinner are left behind. She realises her responsibility towards the dying man. Alone in the dark shed, amidst the sacks of grain, she spends a terrifying night with Csinner, who is in a state of coma.

Though Coral and Csinner belong to different life styles, their thoughts are very similar, reaching the same conclusion that faithfulness does not pay in the world in which they live. Feeling feverish, Csinner becomes aware of the secret bleeding within him. He realises that he has no more duties to anyone but to himself. His Christian training takes an ironical revenge when he begins to reconcile the events of the last few days and to
wonder in what he has erred and how it is that others have succeeded. He has been damned by his faithfulness. It did not pay. Coral too is frightened of the world outside, the world of the agents, the long stairs, the landladies, the old life to which she is driven again. She begins to despair of Hyatt again. But she is left with only a memory. "Her sense of desolation, the knowledge that for some reason, God alone knew why, she loved him, made her for a moment protestant."¹ She is tired of being decent, of doing the right things. And she exclaims to herself that it didn't pay. All the same she is aware that her fidelity to Hyatt is stupid; there is no quality in him to justify her fidelity. "It was just that she was like that and he had been kind. She wondered for a moment whether Dr Oninner's case was not the same; he had been too faithful to people who could have been saved better by cunning."²

The relevant observation to be made here is that while Oninner dies with the painful realisation of the reasons for his failure, Coral's adult life starts with the dawning of a similar realisation with the help of which she is able to recognise the comic-pathetic aspect of the failure of the revolutionary. With this new awareness she can break the seem-be dualism to realise the reality behind the facade of appearance - the same sudden

¹. Graham Greene, Stamboul Train, op. cit., p.224.
². Ibid., p.225.
terror of strangeness. It has been a journey from innocence to experience and the characteristic gesture symbolising her condition is contained in the phrase, "staring with brave bewilderment into the noisy dark". Coral and Csinner are the two aspects of the same experience. The whole novel comes into life when their failure is related to the prevailing disorder of the visible world. Mabel Warren, with her perversity and lesbian interests, symbolises this disorder. She exploits Csinner to get her best story out of him. She patronises Coral to satisfy her perverse sexual interest. If at the end Csinner becomes a victim to the disorder in life, Coral is led away by the disorder manifested in Mabel Warren. Coral Musker is the organic centre of the novel. All the other characters some alive only in their relationship with her.

Stamboul Train was published in 1932 when Greene was in his twenties. By then he had written three novels, the last two of which, Rumour at Nightfall and The Name of Action, were withdrawn from circulation for being excessively romantic and derivative in style. But the first novel, The Man Within, has been retained in the Greene canon. Significantly Greene remarks in the Introduction to Stamboul Train that "Hitler had not yet come to power when Stamboul Train was written". The picture of the visible world which is "conscientiously created" by Greene

2. Ibid., Introduction, p.xiii.
is relatively free from his obsessive preoccupation with evil. Artistically, Greene discovered his métier. Stamboul Train employs omniscient point of view to hold together various strands of the story. The convenience offered by the device of the train journey to bring together various characters, each having his or her story, is fully exploited to realise a unified impression of the human condition. However tenuous the connections between the various characters may be, their interaction suggests the presence of something anomalous because all the characters are compelled to alter the course of their destination, even though they started with a definite terminus in view.

Greene employs a sort of dialectic to pattern the personal relations of the characters going on a journey. The dialectic consists in the unfamiliarity of the familiar things and vice versa. This dialectic is subtly realised in terms of the journey. Every journey has to terminate somewhere. Naturally, relations contracted on a journey terminate at the end of the journey. But most of the characters in the novel forget the purpose of the journey. They remain unchanged because of the inherent impulses that drive humanity towards the trivial and the familiar in so many unfamiliar ways. Curiously, the intended purpose of the journey is not realised by any one of the principal characters. This dialectic dramatises the strangeness behind the facade of the ordinary, plain, commonplace and familiar; the tension between
appearance and reality; the seem-be dualism; and the innocence-experience dualism. The central theme of the novel is contained in the epigrammatic statement of Mabel Warren:

Faithfulness was not the same as remembrance; one could forget and be faithful and one could remember and be faithless,1

and the narrative concern is to realise the truth that faithfulness is remembrance. The way in which this theme is explored shows the meticulous craftsmanship of Greene in structuring the novel. The novel rings with the reverberating use of the word 'remembrance' and its analogues. The last gesture of Coral Musker, after all the shattering experience she has had, is one of faithfulness and remembrance:

She had a pain in her breast... To speak, to describe her pain, to ask for help would be to empty her mind for a moment of his (Nyatt's) face; her ears would lose the sound of his voice whispering to her of what they would do together in Constantinople. I won't be the first to forget, she thought with obstinacy, fighting with all the other images which strove for supremacy, the scarlet blink of the ear down the dusky road, Dr Csinner's stare in the light of the spill; fighting desperately at last against pain, against breathlessness, against a desire to cry out, against a darkness of the brain which was robbing her even of the images she fought. I remember, I haven't forgotten.2

Even earlier when Coral left him, the narrator comments:

She looked back; he sat with head a little bent, caressing with his fingers a gold cigarette case.

2. Ibid., pp.233-234.
She was glad later that she had taken that last glance, it was to serve as an emblem of fidelity, an image to carry with her, so that she might explain: I've never left you.1

The novel opens with the purser's strangely calling after Coral to remember him. Dr Cusinner is forgotten by his followers. The bitter truth is contained in the ironic remark of Mabel Warren:

He was always popular in the slums. But he's a fool if he thinks they'll remember him. Five years. No one's remembered for so long. 2

Mabel herself, who sentimentalizes her affection for her lesbian partner Janet Pardoe, forgets her as soon as she sees Coral Musker.

Mabel, when she leaves Mr Quinn Savory, the popular novelist, wishes,

... she would far rather have sown in the over-worked mind, grappling already with the problem of another half million popular words, the suggestion of how people forget, how they laugh one day what they laugh at the next. 3

Even Joseph Crumlish, the man of destiny, whose mind works with the precision of a machine, is reminded of his crime when he sees Mr Opie, the priest travelling in the train. In the last part of the novel, "Constantinople", Hyatt is repeatedly reminded of the brief affair he had with Coral. But the whole unexplained incident at Subotica appears to him to be unreal. "Very soon he would have forgotten it because it was isolated from ordinary life and because it had no explanation." 4 At the sound of music, a memory

1. Graham Greene, Stamboul Train, op. cit., p.168
2. Ibid., p.55.
3. Ibid., pp.70-71.
4. Ibid., p.242.
swims into his mind and breaks in scarlet light. He says slowly to himself, "She was in love with me". But he is embarrassed and a little shocked. The words sound boastful and he has not meant to boast. "There was nothing to boast about being loved by a chorus girl." Again at the theatre, Petit Champs, the memory of Coral is associated with the picture of her characteristic stance, her "staring with brave bewilderment into the noisy dark". Finally he remembers the sudden strangeness of their meeting; but he cannot remember her features. He ends by the faithless gesture, "I have done all I can for her,... we should have said good-bye in any case in a few weeks". He represents one aspect of the paradox: "One could remember and be faithless".

Mabel Warren represents the other aspect of the paradox: "One could forget and be faithful". Much of the novel’s irony operates through Mabel’s character. She stands as a contrast to Coral. She comes to the station Cologne to see Janet off and incidentally to interview Mr Savory, a popular novelist travelling by the Orient Express. The temporary separation gives occasion to Mabel to sentimentalize her deep affection, though she is known in journalistic circles for her critical objectivity in reporting 'sob-stuff'. "There wasn’t a suicide, a murdered woman, a raped child who had stirred her to the smallest

2. Ibid., p.255.
3. Ibid., p.255.
4. Ibid., p.286.
emotion; she was an artist to examine critically, to watch, to listen; the tears were for paper." But now she is weeping because Janet is leaving for a week. She is an ageing, plain, infatuated woman. Janet has been a revelation to her of what love could mean, ever since they both came together in their mutual disgust of the other sex. The moment she sees Coral, she is taken in by her pretty figure and easily forgets Janet while entertaining yearning for the new found one. She thinks, "Why not give up the hope of keeping Janet Pardoe, and invite the girl to break her contract and take Janet's place as her paid companion?" For her, faithfulness is not the same as remembrance. She can forget Janet and still faithfully perpetuate the gratification of her infatuation with a substitute. Ironically, she gives up Janet and succeeds in taking Coral back to Vienna.

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2. Ibid., p.61.
John Atkins observes that "Else, as a prospective victim, does not fit into the framework of The Confidential Agent ... Else belongs to a different kind of novel. She cannot coexist with Captain Curry". This observation is unconvincing as it fails to locate the very central incident in the novel and its impact on the mind of D. Atkins's approach to this novel suffers from an inadequacy caused by his failure to get the correct perspective to the created work. The action in the novel is rendered through the point of view of D. Though Atkins says that a spiritual thriller is no new thing, he fails to see how Greene's narrative technique fuses different aspects of the visible world to 'spiritualise' the thriller element. Atkins has said earlier, "The novel is carefully planned, and the planned structure is adequate for its needs, but it fails in other respects." The most important of the 'needs' of the novel, as avowed by Greene himself, is to make something legendary out of the contemporary thriller. Atkins's objections would be relevant only when the novel is divested of the spiritual element and is treated as any other ordinary thriller. Then perhaps Else cannot coexist with Captain Curry. "The other aspects" in which Atkins feels the novel fails are related to the

2. Ibid., p.104.
inclusion of a character like Else. He asks, "What is she, who is she? Another example of Greene's corrupted childhoods? A symbol of suffering, absurd, innocent-somewhat guilty humanity?" True, Else is a symbol of innocence corrupted by treachery. The force of the novel is mainly derived from D.'s horror at the corruption to which innocence is exposed and the way this horror stirs him to punish those responsible for this corruption.

The very name Else though uncommon is fascinating. One is tempted to surmise a possible symbolic reference to the 'otherness' of civilisation. Else is associated with innocence, "innocence of a life passed since birth with the guilty". At a very early age, she possesses the theoretical knowledge of vice. In her devotion D. sees a chance of discovering honesty. She is driven to lead a very boring life and get bothered by the 'short-times' who come at odd hours to the disreputable hotel in which she is employed. D. feels, "if she had been older she would have been a slattern, but at her age she was only sad". When she gets the sack for being honest and devoted to the gentlemanly D., he is filled with horror and feels in a way responsible for the sack. He thinks that the infection in him is spreading

3. Ibid., p.48.
to affect the innocent. If the depravity to which he is exposed is to be called civilisation, D. prefers "barbarity, the bombed streets, and the food queues in his own country. A child there has nothing worse to look forward to than death". It is for her kind that D. is fighting to prevent the return of such a civilisation to his own country.

D. trusts her more than he trusts anyone to keep his credentials. Else proves her devotion even risking the anger of the manageress and her own job. D. is moved with pity for her devotion and wonders "what a world to let such qualities go to waste". He senses that she may be involved in some danger. For the first time after his arrival in London, D. takes the initiative to act, to defend the girl. He has a nightmarish experience when the manageress and Mr K. intimidate him to part with his credentials in their treacherous bid to defeat him. In this process Else gets exposed to the treacherous designs of the manageress and Mr K. D. has been indiscreet in making a rash promise to take Else away with him and, more important, in informing the manageress of his intention, which precipitates the murder of Else. After D. leaves the hotel to meet Lord Bentish, Else is thrown out of a window from the third floor of the hotel. The news of Else's death reaches D. when he is himself driven to a tight

2. Ibid., p.70.
corner. The credentials which D. has so carefully preserved from being stolen are lost without his knowledge. Without them he cannot finalise the deal, even though he has reached an agreement upon the terms with Lord Bentieh and his partners.

To understand the full impact of Else's death on D., it is necessary to see how Greene has traced every movement carefully from the beginning. D. is the Confidential Agent of a war-torn country. He comes to England to negotiate a deal for the supply of coal. The survival of his party in the war depends to a large extent on the success of his mission in effecting the coal deal. There is another agent, L., representing the rebels, travelling in the same boat with the same mission of getting the supply of coal. D. is deeply committed to the side on which he fights. Danger is a part of him. He has the awareness that danger is like the skin. "Only corruption stripped it from you."¹ This sense of danger generates distrust, distrust of everyone, including himself. And he is distrusted by his party and government. Every move he makes in London is watched. "He was haunted for a moment by the vision of an endless distrust."² Danger and distrust have incapacitated him so much that he wonders whether "he would again share anybody's emotion".³ Coupled with danger, distrust and incapacity for feeling is the sense of fear that saps all powers of

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¹. Graham Greene, The Confidential Agent, op. cit., p.4.
². Ibid., p.6.
³. Ibid., p.6.
initiative in D. He says, "I don't think I shall ever feel anything again except fear".¹ As soon as he sees the other agent, L., in the wayside restaurant, D.'s hand begins to shake 'just as it always shook before an air raid'.² He has become a coward. This cowardice is the inevitable result of his having spent six months in prison expecting every day to be shot. He feels "as exposed as if he were in a yard with a blank wall and a firing squad".³ When he is threatened by the chauffeur in the lavatory of the restaurant, D. shamelessly apologises. Even the sense of shame has been blotted out by war. He hates personal violence more than anything. He gets sick with apprehension when he is called to a direct fight with the chauffeur. Again, when he is attacked on the road in the presence of Captain Curry and L., he behaves like a coward holding his hands up in helplessness. He does not attempt to hit back. When he is badly battered and fears that they will kill him, he strikes out at the chauffeur's belly desperately.

It was three years back that he had the traumatic experience which ravaged his sensibility. Before the war, he was a university lecturer happily married for fifteen years. He has specialized in Romance Languages. His 'period' was the Dark Ages. He had the credit of discovering the Berne M.S. of an old Romance poem called The Song of Roland and he had brought out a scholarly

¹. Graham Greene, The Confidential Agent, op. cit., p.15.
². Ibid., p.19.
³. Ibid., p.19.
edition of it. But when the civil war broke out, "he had to spend six months in a military prison. His wife was taken hostage and shot dead by mistake. During an air raid he was buried beside a dead cat in a cellar for fifty-six hours.

How refined his sensibility was and how strongly it was directed towards a realistic appraisal of human situation are to be seen from the way in which he had called Oliver the real hero of the Romance poem. His scholarly edition of the poem bears witness to the insight he had into human nature. According to the Berne version of the Song, Poland refused to listen to the advice given by Oliver. Oliver had advised Roland to blow the horn and invite Charlemagne to support Roland in his fight against the Saracens. Oliver found that Roland was a "big boasting courageous fool who was more concerned with his own glory than the victory of his faith." When Roland was defeated and was dying, he wanted to blow the horn. Hurt by the damage Roland's heroism had done, Oliver struck his friend down with full knowledge. Oliver's basic humanity was revealed in his realising the damage Roland's vainglorious heroism had done. Oliver felt a deeper responsibility for the suffering humanity at large and did not mind killing his own friend. Like Oliver whom D. calls the hero of the Song, D. has the basic sense of responsibility. Curiously this sense of responsibility lies dormant, confined mostly to the subconscious.

level of his mind. War has ravaged his refined sensibility 
and filled his mind with images of death, danger, fear and 
distrust. Strangely but significantly enough, we are told, 
D.'s dreams are free from those pictures of death and des-
truction. "Only in sleep did he evade violence; his dreams 
were almost invariably made up of peaceful images from the 
past... He dreamed of lecture rooms, his wife, sometimes of 
food and wine, very often of flowers".1 His subconscious, 
treasuring all the valuable things of the past, is dependable, 
like a reliable servant, to wake him up exactly at the time 
required by him. For the first time in the novel his subcon-
scious is affected by the nightmarish experience he has with 
the manageress and Mr K., with which comes a shocking reve-
lation of human depravity and treachery. "The cat's fur and 
the dusty skirt stayed with all the night. The peace of his 
usual dreams was hopelessly broken".2 The nightmare comes 
back to him again when he is required to answer a few ques-
tions 'about the death of a girl'.

In spite of his ravaged sensibility, he has unmista-
kable springs of natural feelings which need the proper atmos-
phere to flourish. His meeting with Rose Cullen is a signifi-
cant event. The moment he hears the 'harsh' voice of Rose Cullen 
he takes interest in her and wonders why she has been drinking 
too much. In her dress and bearing, she seems to D. to belong

2. Ibid., p.85.
to the upper class. But in course of time, he comes to know that a strange relationship exists between them: firstly, she is the daughter of Lord Bentich with whom he is going to negotiate a deal for the supply of coal; secondly, he is touched by the English hospitality shown by her when she offers a bun and then a lift to London in a car which she is going to hire as both of them are stranded at Dover without the prospect of any immediate train to take them to London; thirdly, he finds that Rose with all her innocence is disillusioned with her people and belongs to a no-man's-land, where he is: "we have just to choose our side - and neither side will trust us, of course". He pitied her for having the knowledge of her lover's betrayal. After their dinner and visit to a cinema in London, D. discovers in himself a willingness to love her, "which was like treachery". In Gwyn's cottage, D. feels immense pity for her, when he finds her standing harshly in her father's house with a background of homelessness, private detectives and distrust. He feels sad to think that she might have been a child when he married and "it takes such a short time to make appalling changes: in the same period they had both travelled too far for happiness". When D. is robbed of his credentials, Rose makes every effort to establish his identity as D. She takes him to the embassy of his country. Like a

2. Ibid., p.77.
3. Ibid., p.110.
fighter, she picks the right points every time in her talk with the secretary. And finally when all her efforts fail she affirms just before the police ask D. to answer questions about the death of a girl: "You are D. If you aren't honest, then the whole putrid world..." 1

The news of Else's death carries to D. the impact of an explosion. Structurally this incident is as central as the explosion in Conrad's The Secret Agent caused through the half-witted Stevie. With its stunning impact, the different strands of the plot get into a new narrative focus. It takes some time for D. to recover from the shock. He feels it like the return of the nightmare which he had already. The reference to recurrence of the nightmare, in the light of what has already been said about the dissociation between the conscious and subconscious parts of his brain, is a pointer to the deep impact of this incident. His first expressed reaction is one of self-recrimination: "O God, it's my fault." 2 He remembers how the news of his wife's death had come to him. He had thought that no worse news would come to hurt him. "A man who had been burnt by fire doesn't heed a scald". 3 But this news affects him more "like the death of an only child". 4 He utters a helpless pitiful cry: 'Why, Why, Why?' The arguments of the police

2. Ibid., p.118.
3. Ibid., p.118.
4. Ibid., p.119.
detective implying D.'s involvement in the murder confounded him. He feels like giving up the whole thing with the painful feeling that "everything he had done since he landed seemed to add a knot to the cord".\textsuperscript{1} When the detective reads a few extracts from Else's diary, D. gets an insight into the treachery of the manageress and Mr K., who in order to further their selfish ends should have caused the death of the innocent child. "Treachery darkened the whole world. He thought, this is the end".\textsuperscript{2} At one level of the plot, this is the end of all his hopes to get the coal-deal finalised; this failure in turn would weaken his party in the civil war. At another and more important level, this is the end of the passivity, characterised by his sense of danger, fear, distrust and death, caused by the dichotomy in the functioning of his brain. This is also the end because he need go no further to find the reality of existence. This is the moment of rebirth for D. and not that moment, as argued by Peter Wolfe, when D. was "dug out from under the wreckage of a bombed building..."\textsuperscript{3} This is the moment of rebirth for D. "into pain and loss, the core realities of a world darkened by treachery and original sin".\textsuperscript{4} While the incident referred to by Peter Wolfe as being the 'moment of birth' gave him only a new awareness of one aspect of human life, that incident by ravaging his sensibility made

\begin{enumerate}
\item Graham Greene, \textit{The Confidential Agent}, op. cit., p.181.
\item Ibid., p.182.
\item Peter Wolfe, \textit{Graham Or one: the Entertainer}, op. cit., p.64.
\item Ibid., p.64.
\end{enumerate}
him a passive, fearing, cowardly adherent. But now D. turns out to be an integrated, active, aggressive, daring avenger. The earlier explosion had the effect of stunting his capacity for feeling. While it helped him to choose his side in the war, his commitment was only sustained by his working with the support of certain abstractions. He had only felt that there was no trust anywhere: "All over the world there were people like himself who didn't believe in being corrupted - simply because it made life impossible - as when a man or woman cannot tell the truth about anything. It wasn't so much a question of morality as a question of simply existing". \(^1\) He did not know what treachery was in terms of the civil war. Now he gets to know the reality in a wider context. He realises that truth is not an abstraction but is a part of existence. Significantly, there is a reference to birth in the divertive tactics employed by him before he takes to aggressive action: "He said to the detective, 'That's my birthplace over there: that village under the mountains'". \(^2\) When the detective turns his head, D. strikes right on the secretary's Adam's apple and snatches the gun.

"Rage slowly ate its way... he had been pushed around." \(^3\)

This is the moment when D. gets a flash of insight into the operation of polarities - the point-counterpoint - of the visible

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2. Ibid., p.123.
3. Ibid., p.133.
world. He who had been unheroic, pathetic, comic and hunted turns hunter in a legendary-heroic strain like Samson. There has already been reference to Samson when D. parted with his credentials: "he felt powerless, like Samson with his hair shorn". The appalling sense of human waste generates in him a righteous indignation which spurs him to act, very much like Oliver, his hero of The Song of Roland. The point to be noted here is that earlier D. has not been heroic. He did not have the heroic proportions. There was something comically inadequate about his being a Confidential Agent: a former lecturer in Romance Languages entrusted with a political mission to effect a coal-deal. He was not only unheroic but eminently unsuited to the task. We have seen how pathetically he was battered, bullied and cornered by those who are adept in political maneuvering and diplomatic double-dealing. But with all his limitations, D. is not a base agent. It is his basic humanism, the 'radical innocence', that elevates his stature to heroic proportions. He becomes a sort of a hero. It is here that we find Greene's modernity in bringing into a significant focus the contemporary thriller and elevating it to a higher legendary level.

The full impact of Else's death comes to be felt by D. in a succession of flashes, each flash piercing deep into the

core of his being and drawing a surge of indignation. "A dull rage stirred him," when he remembers the long drop from the window to the cold pavement and imagines how horrible it should have been for Else when she was helplessly falling. This dull rage stirs him to activity: "He had been pushed about like a lay figure long enough; it was time he began to act. If they wanted violence let them have violence". As he hears through the excerpts from the diary of Else, he remembers phrases he had heard from her. He concludes that she must have been pushed down. Then "rage grew in him slowly like cancer". Next, he realises that Else's death signifies not only his own defeat but a crushing blow to his party because there would be no coal now. This is "apparently an absolute end - not only the end of Else but the end of thousands at home". Now "rage slowly ate its way..." He acts. In the chase that follows his escape from the embassy, he takes shelter in the basement flat of one Glover. There "rage dictated his movements". He shaves off his heavy moustache, which makes all the difference, he looks ten years younger. With this rejuvenation, "rage was like vitality in his veins". He swears that from now on he would be "the hunter, the watcher, the marksman in the mea".

2. Ibid., p.122.
3. Ibid., p.183.
4. Ibid., p.184.
5. Ibid., p.125.
6. Ibid., p.189.
7. Ibid., p.130.
8. Ibid., p.130.
Part Two of the novel presents D. as a man of action, divested of the earlier fear, cowardice and sense of danger. Without his moustache he cannot be easily detected. He goes to the hotel to nab the guilty K., for K. seems to be the simplest to deal with. He feels that K. would break quicker than the manageress when the screw is turned. He sees the body of Else in his room laid ready for burial. "Lying there the body seemed to erase the fear of pain; he could have faced the chauffeur now on any lonely road. He felt fear like an irrelevancy." With moral courage taking hold of him and driven by righteous indignation to punish the guilty, D. pursues K. through the streets of London and the Entornations Language Centre to the basement apartment of Clover. He goes about now in his vendetta with a reckless and malicious mirth. His imagination becomes unbridled; he fears nobody. He feels exhilaration like laughter in his brain. He has no pity for his victims.

Else's death is both the thematic and structural centre of the novel from which D. as the hunted-man-turned-hunter proceeds to the fulfilment of his new mission, to take revenge on K. and to prevent the enemy agent L. from getting the supply of coal. But he feels forlorn and bitter to find no good coming out of all the events that started with Rose. In the glib reversal with which the story ends, D. is pleasantly surprised when he is off the shore of England to be joined by Rose with

In his Introduction to The Confidential Agent Greene recalls how he began this work with "a certain vague ambition to create something legendary out of a contemporary thriller". He goes on to define the basic themes of his thrillers as being "the hunted man who becomes in turn the hunter, the peaceful man who turns at bay, the man who has learned to love justice by suffering injustice". The first one of these three themes forms the material of this legend and determines the pattern of this thriller. While The Confidential Agent has all the qualities of a contemporary thriller like exciting action, violence, crime and suspense, they are all subordinated to the realisation of an expressive meaning and the creation of a decisive tone which invest the thriller with a legendary character. Physical conflicts lead to the tensions of spiritual struggle; violent episodes acquire a symbolic significance when they afford spiritual insight into the human predicament, and exciting action lends an urgency to the felt concerns of the characters. The legend is shaped by the narrative technique to reflect the human condition in modern terms.

Greene also mentions certain historical compulsions that were behind the writing of this novel. In his Introduction

2. Ibid., Introduction, p.viii.
to Brighton Rock we are told of his restless desire to become spectator of history, history in which he had himself been concerned, which brought religion close to his professional life. "It was 'clumsy life again at her stupid work' which did that." Infusing his novelistic concerns with a religious sense, he began to examine more closely "the effect of faith on action". The Spanish Civil War provided the background to The Confidential Agent. But the conflict is generalised to reflect the predicament of a person with scruples who, with all his faith in the party to which he belongs, "is not trusted by his own party and who realises that his party is right not to trust him". The novel is not merely the dramatisation of D.'s faith in his party and its effects on his action. The scruples of D. are not restricted to a faithful adherence to the dictates of his party. They operate at a deeper level which can only be termed moral. Behind his faith in the party, D. has faith in certain vital human concerns which when they are affected force him to turn at bay and take to decisive action to affirm their superior relevance to the very existence of man. What drives the hunted man to become the hunter is not the mere distrust of his compatriots, not even the helpless position in which he find him-

2. Ibid., p.ix.
self when his credentials are lost, but the horror he experiences when he sees innocence becoming a victim to the corruption of treachery. This is the expressive meaning of the legend that gets realised from the pattern of the thriller.
The Ministry of Fear

His mother smiled at him in a scared way but let him talk; he was the master of the dream now. He said, 'I'm wanted for a murder I didn't do. People want to kill me because I know too much. I'm hiding underground, and up above the Germans are methodically smashing London to bits all round me... It sounds like a thriller, doesn't it, but the thrillers are life like - more life like than you are... You used to laugh at the books Miss Savage read - about spies and murders, and violence, and wild motor-car chases, but, dear, that's real life; it's what we have all made of the world since you died. I'm your little Arthur who wouldn't hurt a beetle and I'm a murderer too.'

A close study of the above passage affords a convenient perspective to view the predicament of Arthur Rowe, the hero of The Ministry of Fear. The passage forms part of the second of the three dreams described by the narrator in Chapter 5, "Between Sleeping and Waking", of Book One, "The Unhappy Man". Greene uses a narrative device which is almost Jamesian in dramatising the consciousness of the central character by making the character reveal his predicament. There are three kinds of dreams described in this chapter. In the first one, Rowe dreams that he is back in his childhood trying to convince his mother that he has murdered his wife. But his mother wouldn't believe him. Rowe feels it terribly important to convince her. If she is convinced she can do something about it. He is desperately wanting

a reassuring word from her. But all his efforts fail to make her take his words seriously. She dismisses it as a nasty dream. Rowe wakes up and finds himself in the dim, lurid, underground place. He is driven again to convince his mother of his sense of criminality. Then starts the second dream which Rowe half-manipulates to express his sense of urgency to communicate his predicament to his mother. This 'dream' combines qualities of both dream and waking state. While the manipulation of detail brings it closer to a waking state, it retains a dream-like quality because Rowe's mother who died long ago is made to seem alive before him. Rowe's intense agony to confide his fate in a person from whom he can expect understanding and some assurance is brought into focus. The dream also reveals his desire to escape the horror of his present adult life to a period of innocence. It spotlights not only his personal predicament but the predicament of the time in which he lives and the striking contrast it bears to the time of his innocent childhood. Life now sounds like a thriller and thrillers are life like. Spies, murders, violence which are the familiar components of a thriller have become conditions of existence. The world of his mother's time was free from these thriller-like qualities. They were only found described in books and laughed at. Arthur Rowe who couldn't hurt a beetle is now a murderer. The Germans are
methodically smashing London to pieces. Rowe is filled with
horror to realise the helplessness of a child when he is
inevitably drawn from innocence to guilt. The mother in the
dream remarks that it is like a madhouse. But Rowe knows
that the madhouse is much better; everybody was kind and
reasonable to him there. Where as this cannot be said of
the life in the present. The dream then goes on to project
Rowe's memory of an incident which occurred in his childhood.
While he was playing in a haystack, he saw a dog catching a
rat. The dog made playful rushes at the rat which tried to
crawl away with a broken back. Rowe could not bear the sight
of the rat's pain. He struck the rat over and over again with
a cricket bat. This incident was watched by his nurse, who wondered how Rowe who wouldn't hurt a fly had done such
a thing. All the time Hilfe watched him with exhilaration.
None of them guessed that Rowe was possessed by a horrible
and horrifying emotion of pity. This part of the dream brings
into focus Rowe's pity which has been the cause of his guilt.
It has also a surrealist quality in that it brings in Hilfe
who is described as watching the cruel act with exhilaration.
The third dream is a pure one reflecting the unfulfilled aspi-
rations of the innocent Rowe, ending in a nightmarish reference
to the mercy-killing of his wife.
The scene is laid in an underground tunnel in London during the Blitz. Besides Arthur Rowe, there are many people who have come there to seek shelter from the enemy air raids. They are accustomed to sleep underground. They accept the situation caused by the war and are used to the nightly raids, the destruction the enemy planes have wrought and the sense of danger generated by the war. They have taken to the dug-out as the only refuge from the insecurity created by the senseless war. When Rowe wakes from the third dream, he hears the sirens sounding the All Clear. But nobody in the dug-out moves to go home. The underground life has become a part of their life. The narrator remarks, "This was the world they knew".1

But Arthur Rowe is different from the others in that he is caught in an inner battle. He tries to escape not only from the Fifth Columnists headed by Hilfe who have implicated Rowe in a contrived, make-believe murder but also from his sense of guilt that has come to possess him after killing his own wife out of pity. He is angry for being involved in a murder which he has not committed. It is ironical that he who has been set free after a brief period of confinement to a madhouse for killing his wife should now be pursued for a crime which he is not guilty of. His condition is characterized by an oppressive loneliness. The loneliness operates on two levels. After the so-called

mercy-killing of his wife he has been rendered companionless and forced to lead a solitary life. There is no one to trust; the few friends he had have turned their backs on him. On another level, he is haunted by the realisation that the pity, which was his inability to bear the pain of his suffering wife, drove him to murder her. Haunted by a guilt-stricken conscience, he tries to escape from the terror of this adult experience into childhood innocence. His predicament is such that he has to fight on two fronts simultaneously: to escape detection by the police he comes underground; to escape from the horror of life, he takes refuge in the world of dreams. In this ironic situation, he is mystified by the two dimensions of his dilemma. If he breaks one mystery, he can solve the other.

There is an ironic similarity between Howe's loneliness and the ravaged landscape of London which bears a look of desolation. Howe is a ruin moving with familiarity among the ruins of London. On his way to the Free Mothers from Renmit to investigate the mystery surrounding the cake, Howe walks through the bombed streets and becomes conscious of the affinity. He has become a part of the destructive present; the sense of alienation from the peaceful past is complete. He had always associated the past with "the long week-ends in the country, the laughter up lanes in the evenings, the swallows gathering on telegraph wires, peace".1

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If peace has been displaced by destruction in the outer world, the peace of his inner life was destroyed when the sense of guilt gnawed his entrails. He feels it an impertinence on the part of his pursuers to have attempted to kill him who at one blow had succeeded in destroying beauty, goodness and peace.

This perspective he has of the relation the outer world bears on his situation enlarges the dimensions of his predicament. He is like a bit of stone among the other stones. He is protectively coloured like a leopard. He gloated with pride over the feeling that the whole world’s criminality was his. But the mere sight of a woman’s bag or a face on an elevator going up sapped all his pride and brought home to him the stupidity of his act. Then he was filled with remorse and bitter self-criticism. He would hear a voice admonishing, “You say you killed for pity; why don’t you have pity on yourself?” This awareness of the stupidity of his pity and the folly of his act intensified his remorse.

In the chapter “Out of Touch”, Rowe begins to analyse his situation. He resents Willi, who treated murder as a joke. He sees a certain companionship in Anna who had not only warned him of his danger but hadn’t treated murder as a joke and had talked of death as something that mattered. He wants to record all the happenings and report to the police. "Something had got

to be done; he wasn't going to remain permanently in hiding for a crime which he hadn't committed, while the real criminals got away with - whatever it was they were trying to get away with." He is filled with despair. In his youth he had dreamed of many things. He imagined himself capable of extraordinary heroism and endurance. In those days everything seemed possible. But now that part of his brain which daydreamed has dried up. He is no longer capable of sacrifice, courage and virtue. "He is aware of the loss; the world had dropped a dimension and become paper-thin. He wanted to dream, but all he could practise now was despair." There is a recognition of loss of values in the outer world corresponding to his own moral degeneration. Like him the world has lost a dimension. This recognition is further fortified by the insight he gets into the state of the world when he reads a part of a passage in the Roman missal kept for display in an auction room. "Let not man prevail." The truth of the appeal chimes like music. In spite of the appeal, man has prevailed in the world. The world is ravaged not only by evil but even by virtues like courage, endurance and pity. "... we are trapped and betrayed by our virtues." Courage smashes a cathedral, endurance lets a city starve, pity kills. He finds companions in the world who like him are trapped and betrayed by virtues. Betrayal and crime are universally present in the world.

2. Ibid., p.81.
3. Ibid., p.83.
4. Ibid., p.83.
All these aspects of Rose's predicament in apposition to the conditions of the outer world are brought into focus in Section 1 of Chapter 7 called "A Load of Books". We are given an inside view of the working of Rose's mind. He contemplates suicide and analyses the motives which remorselessly lead to the inevitability of taking out his life as an expiation for the unjust trial he had and in fulfilment of a justice that would atone for his act of guilt. There seems to be no other solution. He is homeless, without money. And he is wanted by the police for a murder which he has not committed. His sense of pity roams round and finds too many objects. There are too many rats to be killed. Ironically he is one of them. There are two courses open to him: either to commit suicide or to surrender to the police. The latter course, he thinks, is unwise because if he surrenders he would probably hanged and "... the idea of hanging for a crime he hadn't committed still had power to anger him".¹ His primitive idea of justice and his conformism would prefer suicide because he would be killing himself for a crime of which he is guilty. The following comment by the narrator is ironically suggestive: "It is only if the murderer is a good man that he can be regarded as monstrous".² Rose's childhood was spent before the First World War and his impressions of the innocent childhood were ineffaceable. He

². Ibid., p.101.
believed that it was wrong to inflict pain but suffered agonies from an inefficient dentist. He knew what pain was like. He would not willingly allow even a rat to suffer pain. He had imbibed the simplicities behind the complicated details of the world: God is good, there is such a thing as truth, a grown up man knows answers to every question, and justice is equitable and faultless. In a state of innocence, he lived under the brightness of immortality. With experience came disappointment and the values cherished in his childhood became suspect. With experience also comes the disenchantment and one is led to realise the incongruity between what is real in childhood and what experience makes one understand. The world looks a small place compared to the picture of it dreamed about and man finds himself a stranger in this small world. In the context of these changed values, contradictions and complications, Howe is monstrous. But essentially he is a good man; though a murderer, he is prepared to do anything to save the innocent or to punish the guilty. He believes in justice and he knows that he is condemned by that justice. Closely analysing his motives, he comes to realise that "it was he who had not been able to bear his wife's pain - and not she... He was trying to escape his own pain, not hers". But he has not been able to know whether his fear of pain is worse than the pain. He can never tell whether his wife might not have preferred any kind

of life to death. The core of his predicament lies in his inability to reconcile the irreconcilable: love and fear. Unless he learns to reconcile, he has to suffer despair; to escape from which he decides to put an end to his life.

But the end does not come. The enemy spies successfully decoy him to a hotel where they expect to kill him. They exploit his sense of pity to their advantage. Howe on his part is moved by the seedy, shabby dealer in old books. He wishes to do one good deed before he leaves this world by helping the sick and tired-looking stranger. He does not like it but then he "felt directed, controlled, moulded, by some agency with a surrealistic imagination". In his conversation with Anna in the hotel, he comes to know a little more about 'them'. "But they can bear pain - other people's pain - endlessly. They are the people who don't care." He changes his mind about suicide because he is exhilarated by the prospect of being useful to someone again. And then the bomb explodes. There is a trace of selflessness in the care he feels for Anna to protect her.

Book Two of the novel is called "The Happy Man". With the loss of memory pertaining to his adult life, Howe is happily enabled to relive in a state of adolescence - an ironic fulfilment of a desire he felt strongly at the beginning of the

2. Ibid., p.118.
novel when he was attracted by the fete. While this section of the novel narrates Rowe's plunge into adolescence, it also marks the beginning of a new life which would enable him to face reality when his lost memory returns. More important is the insight he gets into the working of the Ministry of Fear and finally the clues he gets to break the mystery surrounding the activities of the spies, which in turn helps him to attain self-knowledge and inner balance.

The first chapter of this book is called "Conversations in Arcady". There is an ironic implication in the use of the word Arcady, which comes out with all its force when the true nature of the activities going on in this apparently simple and quiet place of happiness is revealed. Rowe has forgotten his name. He is told that his name is Digby. He spends nearly four months in this Arcady. With the loss of adult memories, he is free from his adult guilt. A search begins in Digby to know who he is. He is given access to newspapers and periodicals. He takes interest in the reported activities of a new kind of Fifth Column who blackmail people. Johns, a staunch hero-worshipper and assistant of Dr Forester, tells Rowe that the Germans are wonderfully thorough in the organisation of the Fifth Column:

They did that in their own country. Card-indexed all the so-called leaders, Socialites, diplomats, politicians, labour leaders, priests - and then presented the ultimatum. Everything forgiven and
forgotten, or the Public Prosecutor. It wouldn't surprise me if they'd done the same thing over here. They formed, you know, a kind of Ministry of Fear - with the most efficient under-secretaries. It isn't only that they get a hold on certain people. It's the general atmosphere they spread, so that you feel you don't depend on a soul."

This gives Rowe an insight into the nature of fear that the Germans spread and the absence of trust as a consequence of this fear. Rowe takes interest in the case of Major Stone who is confined to the Sick Bay. It is the sight of Poole, the cripple-back, that stirs in Digby a disturbing chord. He has forgotten him; but then the "whole obscurity of his past had seemed to shake - something at any moment might emerge from behind the curtain. He had been frightened and so he had been vehement,... Why should he fear to remember anything? He whispered to himself, 'After all, I'm not a criminal'". This realisation infuses in Digby the necessary courage to explore the mystery surrounding the Sick Bay to which Major Stone is confined. Added to this, Anna's visit inspires a sense of trust that there is someone who is positively interested in him - "I would do anything to keep you happy". He has a new experience when he kisses Anna and confesses his love to her.

The experience was as new to him as adolescent love; he had the blind passionate innocence of a boy; like a boy he was driven relentlessly towards inevitable suffering, loss and despair, and called it happiness.  

2. Ibid., p.149.
3. Ibid., p.158.
4. Ibid., p.163.
This comment by the narrator brings out once again the innocence-experience dichotomy that has been running like an undercurrent in the narrative flow of this novel. Experience is the loss of innocence. This loss of innocence is an inevitable, relentless drive towards suffering and despair. But now Digby who is in a state of innocence calls the new experience of love happiness. A mature understanding of the innocence-experience dichotomy comes to him when he pores over those passages in Tolstoy's *What I Believe* which carried faint marginal indentations. Out of curiosity he studies these passages and stumbles all of a sudden on the realisation of selfless love, and the justification for risking damnation for the sake of the people one loves:

"... there was the point ... not to kill for one's own sake. But for the sake of people you loved, and in the company of the people you loved, it was right to risk damnation."

This is the moment of new birth. Once again it works on two levels: with the recovery of his own self-hood he musters enough moral courage to face any ordeal; purged of his fear and self-pity, assured of Anna's confidence, he makes bold to break the mystery of the Spyring. First he asserts himself before Dr Forester and wants to know why he is not supplied with newspapers. Not satisfied with the explanation given, he protests against their treating him like a child or invalid

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and decides to quit. Then he explores the secret of the Sisk Bay. He learns that the severity of treatment given to Stone is simply because he found out the treachery in what Dr Forrester and Poole were doing in the dark. He feels a terrible sense of pity for Stone and is prepared even to murder to save him. He affronts Dr Forrester with his newly discovered secrets and when he is told, as a retort, who he is - a murderer - he bears this shocking revelation with remarkable courage and self-confidence.

Book Three is called "Bits and Pieces", which again has an ironic meaning in that Rowe with the recovery of lost memory and gaining of selfhood not only blows the network of the enemy spies to bits and pieces but pieces together bits and pieces of information to arrive at an integrated picture of his own self. He feels exhilarated to participate in the mopping up operations. Now his understanding of pity is different. When Mr Prentice says, "Pity is a terrible thing. People talk about the passion of love. Pity is the worst passion of all: we don't outlive it like sex", Rowe remarks, "After all it's war". He has a true insight into the old fake truism. He has learned to outlive pity. Now he can watch the rats of the spying mercilessly killed. He grows into a full man, a mature man, the "whole man" of

Book Four. He is unmoved when Willi, the head rat of the spying, commits suicide with the gun Rowe has knowingly given. Finally he realises that fear is something which can never be removed. "If one loved one feared." This is something which the mature Rowe learns and which Digby had forgotten. He belongs to a Ministry as large as life to which all who loved belonged. This Ministry of Fear is different from the Ministry of Fear operated by the Fifth Column. They spread fear and distrust. There as, the other Ministry promotes fear and love together. It is constructive and ensures maturity of understanding. The irrefutables of the innocence-experience paradox cohere. The irony ultimately works out in bringing the different tensions into a state of inner balance. It comes as an 'unsought revelation'. He also accepts the ironic situation forced on him to pretend ignorance of what Willi had told him only to prevent Anna from knowing his knowledge:

They had to tread carefully for a lifetime, never speak without thinking twice; they must watch each other like enemies because they loved each other so much. They would never know what it was not to be afraid of being found out. It occurred to him that perhaps after all one could atone even to the dead if one suffered for the living enough.

2. Ibid., p.268.
In Auden's view Greene has analysed the vice of pity, "that corrupt parody of love which is so insidious and deadly for sensitive natures", in *The Ministry of Fear*. In the case of Rowe this pity leads him to cruelty but ultimately proves constructive in helping him to get an insight into the urgent human concerns. But in the case of the Fascist agents, this pity is destructive. To quote Auden again:

To feel compassion for some one is to make oneself their equal; to pity them is to regard oneself as their superior and from that eminence the step to the torture chamber and the corrective labour camp is shorter than one thinks. ¹

What is unmistakably modern about this novel is the originality with which Greene revitalises the genre of thriller and elevates it to the level of serious fiction. If the distinction between these two modes is one between melodrama and drama - the former depending for its effect on violence, coincidence, surprises, etc., of the plot and the latter on the play of dramatic element in the exploration of character, Greene has achieved a happy synthesis of these two elements in his entertainments. T.S. Eliot in his essay, "Wilkie Collins and Dickens", makes some useful observations on the aesthetic of melodrama. He says that a comparative study of Dickens and

Collins can do much to illustrate the question of the difference between the dramatic and the melodramatic in fiction. According to Eliot, there was no clearest distinction in the past between 'highbrow fiction' and 'thrillers'. The best novels were thrilling. But in modern novel, the different elements have come to be dissociated. If in the serious novel greater emphasis is laid on character and the dramatic element, the plot and the melodramatic element gain precedence in the 'thriller'. "But the frontier of drama and melodrama is vague; the difference is largely a matter of emphasis; perhaps no drama has ever been greatly and permanently successful without a large melodramatic element... It is not necessary, for high drama, that accident should be eliminated... But in great drama character is always felt to be - not more important than plot - but somehow integral with plot".1 Towards the end of the essay Eliot remarks:

So long as novels are written, the possibilities of melodrama must from time to time be reexplored. The contemporary 'thriller' is in danger of becoming stereotyped...  

As though taking clue from the observation made by Eliot in 1927, Greene has successfully re-explored the possibilities of melodrama and created something legendary out of the contemporary thriller. While conforming to the thriller pattern with all its emphasis on coincidences, resemblances and surprises, Greene's

2. Ibid., p 469.
stress is on the human element. A fusion of character and incident takes place. The events that constitute the plot are melodramatic but the evolution of character is dramatic. The narrator almost always in these entertainments employs the limited point of view. This device helps to fuse the dramatic and the melodramatic. Writing on The Ministry of Fear, W.H. Auden says that Greene has succeeded in relating the thriller to another literary form, allegory: "His thrillers are projected into outer melodramatic action of the struggles which go on unendingly in every mind and heart".1

So, the same desire 'to create something legendary out of contemporary thriller' which Greene had in writing The Confidential Agent has gone into the making of The Ministry of Fear. There is an explicit reference to the conditions of modern post-war life bearing thriller-like qualities in the passage quoted in the beginning of this section. The insight of Rowe which may be taken to be that of Greene that the modern life fits into the thriller pattern without evoking any sense of incongruity or unreality ensures a realistic framework to the novel. There are two levels at which the plot operates; at one level the action is confined to the progression of events and incidents relating to Rowe's involvement in the mystery of the Fifth Column activities; at another level, the plot is streng-

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thened by an inner structure that gets identified with Rowe's search for self-knowledge and inner balance. These two levels are held in balance by the operation of irony. In the end a metaphysical insight emerges when both levels fuse into one. A.F. Dyson in his book *The Inimitable Dickens* says that *Bleak House* is "a mystery story, however, with metaphysical overtones; the formula of *Bleak House* has its truest progeny neither in *The Castle* and *The Trial*, nor in the modern detective story, influential though it was in both these directions, but in such intriguing if comparatively minor masterpieces as Rex Warner's *The Aerodrome* and Graham Greene's *The Ministry of Fear*.\(^1\) We can extend the point made by Dyson a little further and say that not only the formula of *The Ministry of Fear* can be traced back to Dickens's *Bleak House* but even thematically it alludes to Dickens. Dickens's *David Copperfield* is one of the formative influences on the adolescent Rowe and his sense of pity.

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The Third Man has not received as much critical attention as the other entertainments have for the obvious reason that it was "never intended to be more than the raw material for a picture".¹ The fact that Greene has chosen to publish it and include it among the novels is itself a justification for examining the work both in the general context of the entertainments and for the new mode of exploration given to the theme. Though lacking in the sense of finish and completion the other entertainments have, it has all the makings of a novel. In terms of story, it conforms to the thriller pattern adopted by Greene in the other entertainments. The story resonates with the recurrent themes of friendship, innocence-experience dualism and self-realisation all of which are rendered through the thriller idiom of suspense, chase and melodrama.

The narration begins on a note of suspense and shock. "One never knows when the blow may fall."² There is also a hint of its inevitability. The blow comes as a shock to Rollo Martins when he hears of the death of his friend Harry Lime the moment he arrives in Vienna. Their friendship is of twenty

². Ibid., p.13.
years knowing each other intimately. Harry Lime, with his wit and planning, put Martin wise to a lot of things. Martin developed a peculiar association with Harry: "It's funny I can't remember meeting any woman quite as well". There is something adolescent and immature about Martin's love and hero-worship. He gets deeply offended by the reprimandatory tone of Calloway and even attempts to hit him for speaking ill of Harry.

Calloway's first impression of Martin sums up his initial situation and prepares us for the later change: "In normal circumstances a cheerful fool. Drinks too much... Has never really grown up and perhaps that accounts for the way he hero-worshipped Lime". Calloway's first meeting with Martin is certainly not a normal circumstance. It is at the supposed funeral of Harry Lime. Martin is touched by the loss of his only friend, with the tears of a boy running down his thirty-five-year-old checks. Calloway comes to his rescue when Martin is practically stranded in Vienna without his friend Lime, who did not turn up to receive him. He is a 'cheerful fool', given to 'mixing drinks' and getting involved in 'incidents' with women. The funny aspect of Martin, or rather Hollo, because Hollo is the absurd Christian name he has, is that he is a writer of cheap novelettes under the name Buck Dexter. He gets mixed up in an absurd incident of mistaken identity. The British

2. Ibid., p.13.
Cultural Relations Society in Vienna is expecting Benjamin Dexter and Rollo as B. Dexter is mistakenly entertained by the Society.

But when what he cherishes deeply is affected, Martin can be serious. Vowing to prove that Calloway is wrong in calling Harry the worst racketeer who ever made a dirty living in Vienna, Martin gets in touch with the other friends of Harry. Their versions of Harry's death appear to vary from one another. Koch had told him that Harry had died instantaneously. But Kurtz in a telephone talk says that he was asked by Harry to see that Martins was well looked after. Martins suspects that there is something unusual about Harry's death. He decides to pursue his twin-objective of establishing Harry's innocence and exploring the mystery surrounding his death.

The talk Martin has with Anna confirms the suspicion of his firm instinctive sense that there is something queer about the circumstances of Harry's death. Anna contradicts the report of Koch who as an eye witness to the death of Harry had told Martins that Harry had died instantaneously. Cooler, another friend of Harry's, had told Anna that Harry had been anxious about her at the last moment. Martins is puzzled by the incongruity between these different versions. He wonders how Harry could have asked his friends to look after him after his arrival in Vienna and arranged to send money to
Anna if he had died instantaneously. When Martins proceeds to detect the mystery, the story takes on the thriller pattern.

The narrator comments that Martins has the advantage of a private detective to carry out his investigations. Working from inside as the friend of Harry, he covers a good deal of ground in one day. First he goes to Dr Winkler, Harry's friend and medical adviser. Dr Winkler is too cautious and calculated in his talk to reveal anything. The doctor's waiting room is filled with numerous crucifixes and religious objects d'art, made out of the bones of chickens and rabbits. There is something phoney and suspicious about the doctor.

Martins then visits Koch for the second time to get more details. A further knot is added to the tangle when Koch says that there were three people who helped to carry Harry to the house. Intrigued by the idea of the third man, Martins goes to Cooler the next day to verify the details. Cooler impresses Martins with his warmth and cordiality. When Martins asks him whether he believed in Harry's involvement in the racket as alleged by the police, Cooler dismisses it as impossible because Harry had a great sense of duty.

Not able to make much headway in his investigations, Martins goes to Anna again. He is now in love with her and wants to persuade her to forget Harry. In course of the talk
he tells her of the presence of the third man at the time of Harry's death. Anna is now convinced that Cooler had lied to her. She wants to help Martins in finding out more about the third man. As both of them approach Koch's apartment, they see a group of people assembled on the road. Anna has an instinctive fear not to go further. They come to know that Koch is dead with his throat cut and the police have come to know that a foreigner had met Koch the previous evening before he died. The news of Koch's death comes as a blow to Martins, who now wishes to escape arrest. When he goes back to the hotel, he is told that Calloway is waiting for him there. Unwilling to meet him, he comes away and is hustled into an embassy car which brings him to his appointment with the British Cultural Relations Society and the absurd episode of mistaken identity.

Calloway's revelation of Harry Lime's penicillin racket has the effect of a stunning blow on Martins. This is the central event in the novel, which has the effect of reversing the whole situation. Martins's innate sense of justice revolts. Shaken by the evil of Harry's racket, he loses all his interest in the investigations which were aimed at establishing the innocence of his friend. He even feels glad that Harry is dead. The blow carries its reverberations deep into his being. All the love and adoration he had for Harry are lost.
in a moment. "... a world for Martins had certainly come to
an end, a world of easy friendship, confidence that had be-
gun twenty years before - in a school corridor."¹ This is
the moment of a new birth for Martins. Shaken to the quick
by the injustice, he goes to inform Anna of the reality.

The story takes a curious turn when Martins, return-
ing from Anna's house, sees a ghost-like figure with Harry's
features. A new mystery starts. If Harry is alive, Martins
must hunt him down. Calloway begins to realise the folly of
his blind assertion that Harry had been dead and buried.
The continued absence of Harbin, the police informer, stren-
thens the suspicion of Calloway that perhaps they might have
buried Harbin and stage-managed the death of Harry.

The search for the identity of the ghost-like figure
leads to the end of the story. Inspired by righteous indigna-
tion, Martins goes to Kurts and asks him to send Harry to the
amusement park where he would be waiting by the Big Wheel.
His guess proves right. Harry Lime turns up. In his talk Mar-
tins does not hide his hatred for what Harry has done. He
even warns him not to trust his one-time friend, though his
warning is not heard by Lime.

Joining hands with the police, Martins traps Harry
in the Vienna sewers and ultimately kills him. The story

¹. Graham Greene, The Third Man, op. cit., p.87.
ends with the real death and burial of Harry. The nature which appeared to refuse to open up because of the unnatural death of Harbin, earlier in the beginning of the story, is now ready to take Harry in with the warmth of a spring day. And it is the end of the affair Martinas had with Harry Lime.

The Third Man shares thematic commonness with the other entertainments. It is the story of a man who loves justice by suffering injustice. As in The Confidential Agent, the turning point in the story is reached when the central character realises the corruption to which innocence is exposed. Else's death in The Confidential Agent is the central event which turns D. into a hunter. Similarly in The Third Man children are the victims of Harry Lime's penicillin racket. "A number of children simply died, and a number went off their heads". On hearing this, Rollo Martinas turns an avenger of the victims of Harry's evil, though Harry happens to be his best friend. Friendship is outweighed by the innate sense of justice and social good. Through this sense of justice comes a mature understanding. As in The Ministry of Fear, self-realisation is shown as the outgrowth of the adolescent attitude. Arthur Rowe attains selfhood through a plunge into innocence and an estrangement from adolescence. Rollo Martina's adolescent hero-worship

grows into a mature outlook on life. In common with *Our Man in Havana*, the theme of friendship is explored to assert the importance of the basic humaneness of man.

But in respect of the mode of exploration employed by Greene in *The Third Man* and the resulting structure, the novel is uniquely different from the other entertainments. They conform to a uniform pattern of the hunted-hunter, wherein the hero carries all the weight of the plot on his head. The plot logic is worked out on the basis of the purely personal concerns of the hero. It is not so in *The Third Man*. Rollo Martine's hatred for Harry Lime and the consequent hunt are motivated by an altruistic interest in justice. He is not personally affected by the penicillin racket. Moreover, he is driven to hatred by Calloway's revelation at a time when he believes that Harry is dead. What we observe in him is the stirring of a sense of duty and humane obligation, the real 'humanity's a duty'.

His point of view or the stand he takes is very similar to that of the police. Hence the mode of exploring the theme has lent itself to the shift in the point of view from the hero to the policeman, who is the society's custodian of justice and fair-play.

Audrey Nelson Slate remarks:

Calloway is never really characterised, and there is no compelling reason for his being

the narrator other than the fact that the pattern of the detective or police story usually calls for the man with greatest command of all the available information to reveal it at strategic times to the reader.

The Third Man is not a police story but the story of Rollo Martins narrated by a policeman. Rollo Martins has no inner battle to fight like Arthur Rowe, nor an outer conflict in which like D. he is involved. He is not a hunted man, nor is he driven like Wormold into an unpleasant situation to have the sense of being hunted. There are no tensions to be dramatized initially. As such, he could not be made either the narrator or the point of view. The story turns dramatic only after the shocking revelation. What is lacking by the hero's dramatic participation is made good by the high suspense that is built up from the beginning in Calloway's narration. And Calloway's choice is not merely due to 'the greater command of all the available information to reveal', but essentially due to the compelling reason that he serves better to objectify the personal legend of Rollo Martins which has wider social relevance.

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Our Man in Havana

Philip Stratford says that Our Man in Havana is "a fiction about fiction-making". This observation helps to highlight an important aspect of the structure of the novel. Many of Greene's novels have references to fictional craft which are conveyed through characters who are themselves novelists or writers. Quin Savory in Stamboul Train is a novelist; Surrogate in It's a Battlefield is a socialist writer; Kello Martins in The Third Man is a novelist; and in The End of the Affair Bendrix, the narrator, is a novelist; so also Dr Saavedra in The Honorary Consul. Greene has allowed the earlier narrative textures to be strengthened by the projections of fictional experience.

For the first time in Our Man in Havana Greene explores the possibility of applying the creative process to a life-situation. Wormold is not a novelist nor even a creative writer, but he has a novelist's creative imagination which he employs in a real life situation. When the search is for reality, the fiction-making process is as valid as any other mode of exploration. This fictional device, moreover, acts as an effective counterpoint to the unreality of a different kind of literary imagination pervading the burlesqued British Secret Service. The Chief of the Secret Service allows free play to his imagination to picture Wormold as a merchant-king without even

verifying the facts supplied by Hawthorne. Even before getting the photographs, the Chief makes wild guesses on the enormous implications of the drawings of the parts of a vacuum cleaner. What is important to note is the fantastic proportions to which the imagination of the Chief extends. He has a romantic notion of the role "Our Man in Havana" can play. But from the romantic notion develops an absurd situation. In the end when the absurdity is established, the Secret Service refuses to own its responsibility and face reality. On the other hand, it goes to build a face-saving image on this absurdity by employing Wormold on their training staff to lecture on how to run a station abroad, and by even recommending him for a decoration.

What the Secret Service fails to do is to face the startling reality of tyrannical facts. It is not so in the case of Wormold, though he treats the whole business of the Secret Service as a child's play. He thinks that Hawthorne belongs to the cruel and inexplicable world of childhood. To meet the demands of the Secret Service he indulges in a child-like game of inventing information. When his invented agents come alive he is faced by an absurd existential problem. He is essentially a human being and not a part of an impersonal organisation. His response the existential challenge brings out the creative aspect of life into play. When he finds it beyond his power to exorcise the ghosts of his creation who turn on him, he acts
boldly taking on himself the full responsibility for their creation and the destruction they have wrought. In the mode of exploration employed in Our Man in Havana, Greene goes a step further from realism to include fantasy and burlesque to explore reality. The novel begins on a realistic level and slowly assumes the characteristics of a 'fairy-story'. But at the end, human relationships are restored to realistic normality. A clear perspective emerges from the exercise of this extra-realistic technique, which is used to unfold the story.

The narration is done mainly from the single point of view of Wormold. The novel consists of five parts with three Interludes and an Epilogue. The main action is begun and dramatized in Havana. The Interludes and the Epilogue are placed in London. Within the five parts only twice the scene of action shifts from Havana: once, to the neighbouring towns which are visited by Wormold on his annual business tour, and next, to Kingston where Wormold goes being summoned by Hawthorne. It is only in the Interludes that the point of view of the narration shifts to the British Secret Service. The duration of time is less than three weeks. The short and compressed duration heightens the dramatic effect.

Our Man in Havana, published in 1958, is perhaps the most allusive of Greene's novels. He calls it a "fairy-story".
A fairy tale atmosphere is created to highlight in ironic terms the unreality pervading the cold-war world after the disaster of two world wars. In this 'fairy land' the prevailing credulousness is not based on the acceptance of the fairy stories of "a virgin who bore a child, pictures that wept or spoke words of love in the dark", but on the avidity shown in swallowing "nightmares, grotesque stories out of science fiction".¹ The world that is brought into relief is one made up of abstractions, formulas, fear and distrust. Human contacts are broken and human endeavour is exercised in mysterious and absurd activities, in the cruelties of police-stations and governments and in the testing of H-bombs on Christmas Island. They have left only ruins behind, their vanity ending up in the casualty of peace. In such a world, there is a Captain Segura who "specialises in torture and mutilation"² and whose sadism is strikingly symbolised in his cigarette-case made out of human skin. The Secret Service Organisations have ghost-like unreality about them. Even the individuals are modelled after popular magazines. In such a world existence is like a story without a purpose.

The impulse behind the story of Our Man in Havana is towards a search for the permanent behind the evanescent, for the reality behind the illusion, for an enduring centre of

² Ibid., p.36.
sanity in the agonised post-war world. We find in this novel Greene's recurrent theme of innocence-experience dualism, which is treated to a new mode of exploration. The exploration starts on the premise that when all the experience behind the enormous discoveries of the great has produced only destruction and sadness, the attitude that should take precedence is the propensity to act like an innocent clown who like God doesn't learn from experience. The British Secret Service with stress on its unreal, impersonal operations is the apparatus of the novel. It is motivated by the device of parody to highlight its unreality. Balanced with this burlesqued unreality is the breezy play of jokes indulged in at the beginning by the clown-like central figure, Wormold, who drifts jokingly into the intricacies of the British Secret Service. While the sustained play of the device of parody holds the entertainment to the fairy-story atmosphere, the undercurrent of irony brings on to the surface a vision of reality. Every joke has a victim. The victims of Wormold's jokes provide him with an insight that helps him to face the reality of existence, whose creative aspects are the assertion of personal human relations and loyalty to love. Basically the structure of the novel is that of a thriller. In common with the earlier entertainments, it is the same theme of a 'hunted man who turns hunter', out of the exploration of which emerges a legend with metaphysical undertones.
The very choice exercised by Greene of the scene of the novel in one of the Latin American countries reveals his modernistic historical awareness. After *The End of the Affair*, all his novels are located outside England. In other words, the post-war fiction of Greene has a widened historical perspective on the contemporary human situation. All his entertainments are political in the sense that they reflect the cross-currents of international political systems viewed from the perspective of an artistic realisation of human condition. Without whittling down his political interest to any narrow ideological formula, Greene dramatises the contemporary human situation against the scene created by the interplay of major international political forces. His concern is primarily with the human condition.

*Our Man in Havana* is set in Havana. In the opening chapter of Part Five, there is a reference to Columbus whose body had once lain in the Cathedral facing the Havana Club, and to the grey stone statue of Columbus "which looked as though it had been formed through the centuries under water, like a coral reef, by the action of insects". This reference to Columbus focuses attention on the discovery of the new world made by him and the way he showed it to it. Ironically, the way is followed to

explore new battlefields for cold-war. A small country like Cuba has its strategic importance by virtue of its proximity to the American coast and the British base in Jamaica. And there is political vacuum which makes Havana all the more vulnerable to the exploitations of the Secret Service. Havana is a tourist resort. The President's rule is breaking dangerously towards its end. There are indications of insurrection by the rebels in the Orient province. There are unpleasant doings which have reduced the tourist traffic. "One tourist had been killed by a stray bullet while he was taking a photograph of a picturesque beggar under a balcony near the palace." The destructive power of the bullet is being felt all round. All the Secret Service Agencies of the Big Powers are vying with one another for supremacy.

Against such a setting which Havana presents with its political vacuum and resulting vulnerability, the apparatus of the novel is set in motion. The British Secret Service wants its man in Havana to complete the Caribbean network. Jim Wormold, a seller of vacuum-cleaners, is made "Our Man in Havana". He is drawn into the network as irresistibly as Arthur Rowe was drawn towards the Fete organised by the Fifth Column agents in The Ministry of Fear. If Rowe was attracted

by the associations of childhood the Fete carried, Wormold's moral vacuum couples him to the Secret Service as smoothly as the snap-action coupling of his vacuum-cleaner couples with a snap.

The opening chapter of Part One dramatises the situation of Wormold. The theme of friendship and personal relations is stated in the very first paragraph. A note of caution is struck that friendship proceeds with the slowness and assurance of a careful diagnosis. Wormold is presented through the eyes of his friend Dr Hasselbacher. Though their friendship is of fifteen years standing, the doctor chooses to use the prefix Mr. while addressing Wormold. The narrator comments that perhaps on Wormold's death-bed he may be addressed as Jim. While this comment arouses curiosity as to how the events would develop, it prepares us to a reversal that takes place later when Dr Hasselbacher warns Wormold of his planned death, calling Wormold Jim. It is the doctor who gets murdered.

Dr Hasselbacher, standing in the Wonder Bar, says that the nigger going down the street reminds him of Wormold. What the doctor has in mind is like the nigger Wormold has two ideas in his mind - the nigger counts his steps as he goes on selling pornographic photographs to a tourist - Wormold is always conscious of time, given to the habit of calculating it while he is
engaged in his usual work. Other points of similarity are:
both are lame, British and reliable. The acute consciousness
of time is indicative of the mind's anxiety. Wormold is full
of worries and anxieties. He has also a hunted look: "He looked
quickly over his shoulder as though somebody were hunting him and
then at his watch again". 1 Another point of interest is that
the day for Wormold turns out to be one of uncomfortable truths.
The diagnosis of Wormold's situation made by Dr Hasselebacher
reveals that Wormold is weighed down by a long-term worry and
he has no secret defence against it. Unlike Wormold whose worry
is due to his excessive interest in persons, the doctor interests
himself in the abstractions of life and dreams about a better
future. He advises Wormold to dream more as a way to escape rea-
ality for "reality in our century is not something to be faced". 2

In section 2 of Chapter 1, Wormold's moral vacuum is em-
phazised. In spite of the two figures present in the shop, it
seems to him empty. "He was aware whenever he entered the shop
of a vacuum that had nothing to do with his cleaners." 3 There
is a habitual suspicion bred in him by the awareness of his
gullible nature. Though he has been selling vacuum cleaners for
the past fifteen years, he cannot demonstrate the working of a

2. Ibid., p.10.
3. Ibid., p.11.
cleaner nor can he explain the different parts accurately. He is not much of a machine: "When I touch one of these things it somehow seems to give up working".\footnote{1} When the customer, who later turns out to be Hawthorne, the Secret Service man come to enrol Wormold, puts some searching questions, Wormold answers but gets angry with himself for answering. This suspicion and uneasiness are symptoms of the great disappointment he faced ten years ago when his loving wife left him, leaving a daughter and the responsibility to bring her up as a Catholic.

Chapter 3 reveals the reasons for Wormold's long-term worry. Though he believes in nothing, he has the innate honesty to keep the promise he made to his run-away wife even before Willy was born. Reaching her seventeenth year, Willy is not only expensive in her habits but is entering the adult life, to prevent her from the dangers of which Wormold is forced to concede all her demands however taxing they are to his sagging financial condition. His credit is running down all the time. To crown his worries, Willy is ardently admired by Captain Segura. As a father he cannot take risks. He should keep her in the region of safety.

Chapter 3 continues the description of Wormold's predicament and also reveals the way out shown to him. He daydreams that one day he would wake up to find that he has amassed

\footnote{1. Graham Greene, \textit{Our Man in Havana}, op. cit., p.13.}
savings. Then he would retire to England with Willy where they would be free from Captain Seguras and the wolf-whistles. But reality is different. He is forced to get her a horse which would cost 300 pesos. He has to make an overdraft in the bank.

It is when Wormold is in such financial straits that he finds his way into the eccentric world of the Secret Service which assures him a steady income. His initiation takes place in the lavatory of Sloppy Joe's. He simply wonders at the enormous bewilderment and the nonsense of the whole business. He remembers the admonishment of his wife, "Why don't you do something, act some way, any way at all? You just stand there..." But the will to act is paralysed in him. He lacks initiative. He drifts himself into the Secret Service, which appears to him to be childish and unreal.

In Chapter 4, he goes to meet Hawthorne. On his way he is helped by Dr Hasselbacher to get an insight into the way in which one can 'monkey around' with people. The doctor teases a stranger with his talk on 'existence', 'imaginative creation', 'improved version', and thinking up a person in any way one likes. Wormold behaves almost like a spy when he frees himself from the doctor on the pretext that he has to meet a person to discuss his business. He seems already to conform to 'the drill'. He thinks, "I feel like a spy, I behave like a spy. This is absurd".

2. Ibid., p.40.
When the job is thrust upon him, he does not have the boldness to refuse. He is given all the detailed instructions as to how he should run the agency and collect secret information. He is assured of 300 dollars a month apart from the payments for his sub-agents. With improved financial condition, he can concede the demand of Willy to take a family membership in the Country Club more readily. Part One ends with the observation of Wormold that what Willy says has sense but not what Hawthorne has said. Hawthorne, he feels, belongs to the cruel and inexplicable world of childhood.

After Part One comes the Interlude in London which serves the dual purpose of parodying the Secret Service and placing Wormold's activities in a different perspective. The Chief of the Secret Service has the appearance of an undertaker and his office in the basement room has the effect of a vault or a grave. An impression emerges that after all Wormold's view of the Secret Service as something childish and unreal is not far from true when we note the wildness of imagination with which the Chief pictures Wormold as a merchant-king who must have built up the business from nothing. Another aspect of this unreality is the breakdown of human relations revealed in the way in which human beings are referred to by certain code numbers. Hawthorne gets the impression that Miss Jenkinson "would willingly have referred to Beatrice as 'it'."

Part Two of the novel continues the narration from Wormold's point of view. He receives the cable informing him of the approval given to his membership of the Country Club and asking him to recruit agents and send political and economic reports. For the first time Wormold is troubled by not giving them anything after having taken their money. He decides to play the game. First, he recruits Lopes, his only real sub-agent. It is from Dr Hasselbacher that he gets another hint that the information which he is required to send is always easy to give. With a little imagination, he can invent the agents. Dr Hasselbacher bitterly learnt the futility of serving the Secret Organisations. He advises Wormold to lie and keep his freedom. Accordingly, Wormold picks up some names from the list of Country Club members and sends them for approval. In the meantime he goes on his annual visit to his retailers outside Havana. At Santiago he goes to a hotel and feels like an imposter when he realises that it is a hotel of real spies, real police informers, and real rebel agents. He also tastes what it is to be a secret agent when he is manhandled by the police for possessing a picture postcard addressed to Dr Hasselbacher. Though he bluffs his way out by referring to the name of Captain Segura, he realises that in the intricate pattern of life, everything, even a picture postcard, can form a part. This incident has far-reaching consequences. The enemy agents catch a hint from the
picture postcard and harrass Dr Hasselbacher to intercept the cables addressed to Wormold. They even ransack his apartment, destroying the valuable experiment the doctor has been conducting. When Wormold witnesses the scene of ruins, he feels guilty for what he has done. He realises that there is always another side to a joke, the side of the victim. He is driven now to play his game wholeheartedly. The creative imagination stairs in him. He prepares careful drawings of the parts of a vacuum cleaner and fabricates reports on economic and political condition. His conversation with Milly is of particular interest:

'What are you doing, father?'
'I am taking the first step in a new career.'
She looked over his shoulder. 'Are you becoming a writer?'
'Yes, an imaginative writer.'

'Will you be famous?'
'I doubt it. Unlike most writers I shall give all credit to my ghosts.'
'Ghosts?'
'That's what they call those who do the real work while the author takes the pay. In my case I shall do the real work and it will be the ghosts who take the credit.'

The idea of a creative writer taking the credit for the work done by his ghosts is reversed here. The ghosts created by Wormold, as secret agents, will take the credit for the work done by their author. Wormold gives 'a name and local habitation' to each of his imagined characters. He gives them all the credit and thereby scores a monetary advantage. But a terrible irony develops when

the ghosts come alive. For the present he enjoys a great sense of release after the creative work.

In the Interlude in London, we are told how the practical joke played by Wormold takes the Secret Service unawares. Mystified by the phoney drawings, the Chief summons Hawthorne to get the photographs of the so-called defence-build-up. He is deeply upset by the remark made by Savage that one of the drawings resembles a vacuum cleaner. "'Fiendish, isn't it?' the Chief said. 'The ingenuity, the simplicity, the devilish imagination of the thing.'"¹ With this is to be matched his own wild imagination:

'I'm no scientist,' the Chief said, 'but look at this great tank. It must stand nearly as high as the forest-trees. A huge gaping mouth at the top, and this pipeline - the man's only indicated it. For all we know, it may extend for miles - from the mountains to the sea perhaps. You know the Russians are said to be working on some idea - something to do with the power of the sun, sea-evaporation. I don't know what it's all about, but I do know this thing is Big. Tell our man we must have photographs.'³

The parody reaches its climax when Hawthorne is complimented for recruiting such an ingenious agent: "You know, Hawthorne, we owe a great deal of this to you... Well done, Hawthorne."³

There is an ironic reversal in Part Three when the ghosts of Wormold's notional world, the poltergeists, come to assume a

¹ Graham Greene, Our Man in Havana, op. cit., p.79.
² Ibid., p.79.
³ Ibid., p.81.
reality. The arrival of Beatrice activates the creative process in him. Like a novelist, he goes on building up the character of Raul, the airforce pilot whom Wormold intends to send on a reconnaissance mission to obtain the aerial photographs of the Cuban defence installations. "The more Beatrice asked him, the more his character developed."

A deadly climax is reached when the notional Raul crashes into reality. This Pirandellian situation while filling Wormold with a sense of guilt activates the human concern in him to prevent the other ghosts from clashing with reality. He is frightened by the advantage the enemy agents have gained over him. He feels like calling out all his creations at once.

In Part Four, Wormold is told that another creation of his, Dr Cifuentes, is shot at. Unlike the Chief of the Secret Service, who would have allowed such casualties to take place in the larger interests of serving the Organisation, Wormold's innate humanism prompts him to defend the other agents. Though the situation is absurd, he owes responsibility for the reality that emerges from his joke and goes to warn the Professor and Teresa. What was so simple imaginatively looks appallingly complex and baffling. He gets an insight into the disturbing complications in the private life of Sanches. "But now it was as though he had tugged a stray piece of cotton and the whole suit had begun to unwind." He discovers treachery, adultery, spying

2. Ibid., p.131.
and insecurity marring the personal life of Sanches who is a professor of comparative education. Dr Hasselbach reenlightens Wormold on the working of the enemy agents and the way in which he was driven to intercept the cables:

At first they promised me they were planning nothing. You have been useful to them. They knew about you from the very beginning, Mr Wormold, but they didn't take seriously. They even thought you might be inventing your reports. But then you changed your codes and your staff increased. The British Secret Service would not be so easily deceived as all that, would it?

But the Secret Service views these happenings from a different perspective, in the following Interlude in London:

They've (the enemy agents) become very active in Cuba - apparently with the help of the police. Our Man in Havana has had a difficult time. His best agent, as you know, was killed, accidentally of course, on his way to take aerial photographs of the constructions - a very great loss to us. But I would give much more than a man's life for those photographs. As it was, we had given fifteen hundred dollars. They shot at another of our agents in the street and he's taken fright. A third's gone underground. There's a woman too, they interrogated her, in spite of her being the mistress of the Director of Posts and Telegraphs. They have left our man alone so far, perhaps to watch. Anyway he's a sanny bird.

In Chapter 1 of Part Five, Wormold comes to know more about the enemy agents through Captain Segura. 'They' plan to murder him by inviting him to the annual lunch of the European

2. Ibid., p.146.
Traders' Association. He is even asked to be one of the speakers. Hawthorne warns Wormold of the plan. There is a devastating passage in which the Secret Service is burlesqued:

'... All the same, in a way I was relieved when I found that the others have made up their minds to murder you.'

...

'... that really proves the drawings are genuine.'

...

'In a way, you know, it's a compliment. You are dangerous now.'

Wormold decides to attend the lunch if only to prove that he can 'come out on his feet'. At the Nacional Hotel, Dr Hasselbacher warns him that 'they' are going to kill him. In spite of the warning, Wormold attends the lunch and manages to return alive only to find that the doctor is murdered. This is a decisive moment for Wormold. He who has been hunted is now driven to turn hunter.

The 'Key Scene' of the novel is laid in Section 2 of Chapter 4 of Part Five. It is a scene in which not only does the character of Wormold come alive but the most important situation is played out dramatically. Wormold returns home after identifying the body of Dr Hasselbacher at the Wonder Bar, their once favourite resort. That Dr Hasselbacher should survive two

2. Ibid., p.168.
wars and die in so-called peace much the same death as he might have died on the battlefield disturbs Wormald and shocks his innate sense of justice and humanity. It is also cruel that when 'they' failed in their attempts to murder him, 'they' should pitch upon the doctor. All his innocent joking has proved devastatingly costly. He thinks it is time for him to pack up and leave the ruins of Havana. But before that he must do justice, must assert his individuality. He has been the cause of three deaths:

Three deaths: an unknown man called Raul, a black dachshund called Max, and an old doctor called Hasselbacher, he was the cause — and Carter. Carter had not planned the death of Raul nor the dog, but Dr Hasselbacher had been given no chance. It had been a reprisal: one death for one life, a reversal of the Mosaic Code.¹

The tone and verbal structure of this interior monologue resemble those of a Shakespearean soliloquy. In fact, references to Shakespeare have been numerous throughout the novel. As in a soliloquy, Wormald is analysing the complexity of the situation and probing for a definite course of action that would carry him to the realisation of his basic values.

What is of technical interest in the scene is the juxtaposition of two worlds: the private, personal, homely world of Willy and Beatrice and the world of violence, secret

agents and the unreality of the Secret Service Organisations. In one room Wormold is seated lost in his thoughts. In the other room, Milly and Beatrice are engaged in a human if trivial conversation. The door between the two rooms is ajar but Wormold takes in only half of what they are saying. The door separating them stands for a border:

He stood on the frontier of violence, a strange land he had never visited before; he had his passport in his hand. 'Profession: Spy.' 'Characteristic features: Friendlessness.' 'Purpose of visits: Murder.' No visa was required. His papers were in order.

Thanks to the Secret Service, he has entered the land of unreality; now the land of violence is one step ahead, for which he needs no other passport than his involvement with the Secret Service.

And on this side of the border he heard the voices talking in the language he knew.

Being essentially humane, Wormold is familiar with the language of human beings but not so with the language of murderers, spies and secret agents. He is now forced to enter the alien land if only to do justice.

He has missed an opportunity to force the poisoned drink down the throat of Carter. Now it is difficult for him to get the chance. He has no arsenic or cyanide with him. Besides, he may not get an opportunity to drink with Carter. They have

2. Ibid., p.184.
shot Dr Wasseelbacher. He has no gun. It comes as a shocking revelation, the striking difference between the imaginary and the real: "Easier said than done off the Elizabethan stage".¹
He has never handled a gun. It is perhaps relevant to note that many of Greene's heroes do not know how to handle a gun. Along with Wormold, we have Conrad Drover, Dr. Hollo Martins, and even the Assistant Commissioner in It's a Battlefield who doesn't feel the need of a gun even while accosting the criminals. Wormold's preoccupation with revenge is so deep that he wonders, when he is distracted by the loud laugh of Beatrice,

He had gone in thought so far across the border that he had forgotten that he was still here on this side with them.²

There is again a Shakespearean ring in this passage which is reminiscent of Macbeth's words:

I am in blood
Stepp'd in so far, that, should I wade no more,
Returning were as tedious as go o'er.³

It is one of the many ironies of the novel that the complexity of life is such that the clown unknowingly takes on the role of a tragic hero and the tragic hero may devolve to the level of a clown.

He is again distracted by Willy's question whether Beatrice loves her father. He thinks that one day he can come

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². Ibid., p.186.
back to settle these questions. Now he has more important
problems, the first one of which is how to kill a man. Then
comes the passage which clearly underlines the core of Greene's
theme in *this* novel:

At least if I could kill him, I would kill for
an eloquent reason. I would kill to show that you
can't kill without being killed in your turn.
I wouldn't kill for my country. I wouldn't
kill for capitalism or Communism or social
democracy or the welfare state - whose welfare?
I would kill Carter because he killed Hassel-
bocher. A family feud had been a better reason
for murder than patriotism or the preference
for one economic system over another. If I
love or if I hate, let me love or hate as an
individual. I will not be 59200/6 in anyone's
global war.¹

In a world where people are treated in terms of abstractions,
where people model themselves on popular magazines, where peo-
ple speak of ideologies and formulas, what is essentially re-
quired to be recognised is the fundamental humaneness of man
and the importance of human relations, because all the ideo-
logies and formulas have only drifted mankind to the brink of
war and destruction. The positive assertion of the basic hu-
maneness of man is the core reality of life, particularly in
the present century. Being a nonbeliever like D. in *The Confi-
dential Agent*, Wormold cannot leave vengeance to God. "Mercy
and forgiveness are scarcely virtues in a Christian; they come
too easily."²

². Ibid., p.187.
He then crosses the border into the family life and breaks the news of Hasselbacher’s death. "The joke’s over now." 1

He confesses to Beatrice the fraud he committed in inventing the agents and supplying fabricated reports to the Secret Service. He is surprised to find Beatrice taking his confession coolly. Beatrice is equally bored with sense, with the silliness and unreality of the life of formulas:

London seems pretty silly. And Henry Hawthorne. Do you think I would ever have left Peter if once – just once – he’d made a fool of UNESCO? But UNESCO was sacred. Cultural conferences were sacred. He never laughed... 2

She too recognises the cause of the contemporary malaise:

There are many countries in our blood, aren’t there, but only one person. Would world be in the mess it is if we were loyal to love and not to countries? 3

He plays the game successfully to the end. With Captain Segura he plays a game of draughts to the memory of Dr Hasselbacher whose idea it was to use miniature whisky bottles in place of ordinary pieces. He plays recklessly so that Captain Segura may empty more bottles of whisky. Then it would be easy for Wormold not only to get the list of all the enemy agents in Cuba, 'the names of the poltergeists', 4 but to possess a...
gun to hunt down Carter, the murderer of Dr Hasselbacher. With Segura's gun in his pocket, Wormold drives Carter to the nightclub area of Havana. Here again the humaneness of Wormold is effectively brought into focus. As he is not sure whether Carter has a weapon with him, he feels a strange reluctance to kill an unarmed killer. He has to work himself up into a mood of hate by remembering the terror he had felt when he saw the expressionless dead face of Dr Hasselbacher. He is also conscious of the fact that a murderer acts like a machine and to kill Carter he should become a machine. However much he hates Carter, his firmness says when Carter comes alive before him ridiculously with his inability to undo the corset of the tart and with the confession of his impotence. Wormold decides to kill him before Carter confesses anymore. "With every second the man was becoming human, a creature like oneself whom one might pity or console, not kill. Who knew what excuses were buried below any violent act?" Wormold's first shot misses to hit Carter. When Carter returns the shot, Wormold kills him. Later Wormold pities him because "he was a man".

The narrative drift throughout has been towards the humaneness of Wormold, with the stress laid on the word man in "Our Man in Havana", and the assertion of its relevance to

2. Ibid., p.204.
establish personal contacts to promote the concept of a family of human beings devoted to the loyalty of love. In the Epilogue in London, the Secret Service is pictured as continuing in the grotesque world of unreality. In spite of the absurdity it has created, it refuses to become self-conscious of the false aspect. The centre of sanity is realised only by the family of Wormold. He is now rewarded with an understanding partner who can assure him that "You won't be left twice". The situation is restored to normality and human relationships are viewed from the right perspective:

I (Beatrice) said you (Wormold) were working for something important, not for someone's notion of a global war that may never happen. That fool dressed up as a Colonel said something about "your country". I said, "What do you mean by his country? A flag someone invented two hundred years ago? The Bench of Bishops arguing about divorce and the House of Commons shouting Ya at each other across the floor? Or do you mean the T.U.C. and British Railways and the Co-Op? You probably think it's your regiment if you ever stop to think, but we haven't got a regiment - he and I." They tried to interrupt and I said, "Oh, I forgot. There's something greater than one's country, isn't there? You taught us with your League of Nations and your Atlantic Pact, NATO and U.N.O. and SEATO. But they don't mean any more to most of us than all the letters, U.S.A. and U.S.S.R. And we don't believe you any more when you say you want peace and justice and freedom. What kind of freedom? You want your careers." I said I sympathised with the French officers in 1940 who looked after their families; they didn't anyway put their careers first. A country is more a family than a parliamentary system... I can't believe in anything bigger than a home, or anything vaguer than a human being.

2. Ibid., p.217.
David Lodge says that "Our Man in Havana is an extravagant burlesque of the British Secret Service - and also, incidentally, of the apparatus of Greene's early entertainments". While the element of burlesque is very strong in the structure of the novel, it is only used as a device first to underline the comic unreality of the situation and then to explore the implications of the human problem. Spying forms part of the apparatus of many entertainments of Greene. But it is necessary to make a distinction between the apparatus of the novel and what is achieved in the end. What is created out of the apparatus, the exploration of the theme and the vision of human condition that is realised at the end are of more vital concern to evaluate the novel. Earlier in the essay, David Lodge has remarked, "During this time his work seems to be directed by a restless search for new themes or new modes of exploring familiar themes". As has already been stated, the theme of Our Man in Havana is a familiar one of the 'hunted man who turns hunter'. But the mode of exploring this theme has a novelty about it. Realism formed the groundwork of the earlier thrillers. Now an attempt is made to fabulate a composite structure made up of other literary devices like fantasy, myth, legend and fairy tale. The new elements brought into the structure replace melodrama and violent action but produce the same heightened sense of melodrama.

2. Ibid., p.113.
All the novels discussed in this chapter illustrate the proposition that there is something traditional about these novels. It is a commonplace of Greene criticism that his novels deal with godless world in which evil reigns supreme. No creative artist, especially a novelist, can do justice to his material without some scheme of values. All the main characters in these novels from Dr Qsinner to Norman show a certain awareness of what is wrong with them. This, no doubt, acts as a redeeming feature in a nightmarish world.

From Greene’s entertainments posterity may know more about the war-torn world than from a historian. In the art of Greene, setting always plays a major role; and it is the setting or the background - 'bits and pieces' of London, Vienna, Havana - that creates the authentic tone. This tone steadily moves throughout the narrative and the characters participate in the visible world without losing their individuality. Writing on Walter do la Mare’s short stories, Greene observes:

In prose we must be gently lured outside the boundaries of our experience. The symbol must in a favourable sense of the word be prosaic.

This very well describes the strategy of Greene’s entertainments.

The reader is drawn slowly towards something which he might not take seriously - secret agents, criminals, murders, firing squads and victims of violence. The novelistic devices that

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accomplish this end were developed by James, Conrad and Ford and after the First War their technique became part of a practising novelist's equipment.