

CHAPTER I

CONTAINS OF IDEOLOGY

"The writer's personal history, like the pressure of the age in which he lived, is a context which can help us to focus on the work as it is. Biographical knowledge can sharpen the sense of the work's objective, as itself, life distinct and meaningful in itself." *

The human predicament and way of sin which Graham Greene projects through his works are not a Catholic metaphysic but the transmutation of his personal experiences and encounters in his life. His ideology as an artist is shaped through the same personal and social factors conditioning his time.

The schooling

Graham Greene was born in a middle class family on October 2, 1904. The son of J.H.Greene, Graham Greene was "given a conventional middle class and Anglican upbringing in the confines of his father's school."¹ The school atmosphere did not fascinate him; he was rather disgusted with the do's and don'ts. There at the school he was denied every form of pleasure. The school was a veritable prison for him. "We have all been tortured by sadistic

* Helen Gardner, *The Business of Criticism*, p.22.
1. Jones, D.P., *Graham Greene*, op.cit., p.2.

school masters, as Mr. Graham Green points out. We have all suffered from the frown of the boss and fear of the sack, as Swift once suffered."¹

The routine life at school with its mechanical arrivals and departures left him with a feeling of boredom. "In these surroundings", David Pryor-Jones says, "to which Greene so constantly and so avidly refers, his imagination seems to have been stranded, turning inwards for support like a convolvulus creeper".²

There was no free flow, no outlet for emotions. He was increasingly becoming conscious of the ruthless disregard of the human needs, the iron-rule and the terrible indifference that marked life at school. He himself had been looking for something human. Pound has expressed similar sentiments in his epigraph to one of his novels :

'Something human is dearer to me than the wealth of all the world'³

Life at school repelled him. He was not slow to realise the ill-effects of the conditioning, the checks and measures, the spare-the-rod-spoil-the-child attitude that was typical of his school days. He was up against a tightly regimented world. The school came to be linked in the insouciant mind with a concentration camp where all kinds of tortures were practised on the innocents. The child's natural instincts, Greene felt, were thwarted. The situation was by no means enviable. Greene looked for emotional release. The child agitated, though inwardly, to break loose with an over-

1. Isaacs, J., An Assessment of the Twentieth Century Literature, Secker and Warburg, London, 1964, P. 48.

2. Jones, D.P., Graham Greene, op. cit., P.8.

3. 'The Domestic Background', The Lost Childhood and Other Essays, op. cit., P.114.

powering, big world, that hold him, tenuously, on the leash. A tiny fire smoldered beneath the surface.

It was at school that Green was initiated into a strange, horrifying world. He had unconsciously realized the terror of life. He marvelled at the unworldly innocence of the pedagogic mind and its tortuous obstinacy. He was conscious of the 'intimacy of the academic brain, and its unreliability'.¹ The euphoria had gone. The surface was cracking up, as the granite was coming painfully through. The romantic longing for an idealized past had given way to the cruelty and brutality of a crude and brutal world. He was exposed to an abysmally dark world where he failed to secure a vantage point, a foothold. He missed intimacy and human relationship. He felt like a stranger in this world. Greene recalls :

I cannot believe that my own school, so progressive in many ways, was peculiar in its mistrust, the attitude that privacy could only be misused, the attitude of the divorce court.²

"Lavatories", Greene adds, "in my house had no locks, so that even that opportunity for a little quiet reading or writing was denied".³ There were too many deterrents. "One may," Greene writes, "find the dark source of his (James's) deepest fantasy concealed in a family life which for sensitive boys must have been almost ideally free from compulsions".⁴ He was sick of the inhibitive society, sick of everything around him. "Childhood was beginning", John Atkins says, "to take on for him the character of a primitive land from which the tribe had emerged only partly freed of its totems and taboos".⁵

1. 'Man in Mexico', *The Lost Childhood and Other Essays*, op. cit., p. 122.

2. Greene quoted by John Atkins in *Graham Greene*, op. cit., p. 47.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 47.

4. 'Henry James: The Private Universe', *The Lost Childhood*, op. cit.,

5. Atkins, J., op. cit., p. 42.

Greene was susceptible to the adult world. He had by now 'plunged into adult society'. John Atkins comments :

As a result, even the best headmasters still believed in their hearts that sex was dirty and acted on that assumption. They were guilty in the main of two misconceptions : that sex could never be pleasant or amusing, and that marriage is always sacred.¹

Greene's precocity is seen in his reactions to his environment, particularly the prevailing attitude to sex. He had "developed emotionally at a very early stage, and chafed under school restrictions and the normally accepted myths of boyhood".² Lack of freedom had considerably contributed to his incipient hostility. He has increasingly felt himself to be at the receiving end. His attitude to the world - a world that takes all but gives little - owes largely to his embittered past.

Greene's acute sensibility, thus, made him aware of the cruelty and brutality which were part of the outer world. Greene had felt them on his pulse. The school fell short of the child's expectations. It failed to strike a responsive chord in his heart. When he is talking about the "defencelessness of Dickens's and Kipling's early years", he is giving vent to his own feeling of insecurity :

Life which turns its cruel side to most of us at an age when we have begun to learn the arts of self-protection took these two writers (Dickens and Kipling) by surprise during the defencelessness of early childhood.³

This is a self-confessed truth, for Greene found himself in a similar situation.

1. Atkins, J., *op. cit.*, p. 46.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 48.

3. 'The burden of childhood', *The Lost Childhood and other Essays*, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

The school, then, failed to satisfy the child. But so did the Anglican Church. Neither seemed to resolve the emotional crisis. Nor did they respond to his deepest self. The Anglican Church made no impression on Greene's mind. In The Lawless Roads, he says :

The Anglican Church could not supply the same intimate symbols for heaven; only a big brass eagle, an organ voluntary, 'Lord, Bless Us with Thy Blessing', the quiet croquet lawn where one had no business, the rabbit, and the distant music.¹

This was written after Greene's conversion to Romanism. But the attitude seems to ante-date his conversion.

Out of this contrast of home and school, happiness and misery, came a knowledge of heaven and hell : "And so faith came to one One began to believe in heaven because one believed in hell".² Thirty years later, the same ground was to be covered in the first volume of his autobiography, A Sort of Life (1971), where Greene writes that "the school began just beyond my father's study, through a green pane door".³ But in The Lawless Roads the memories of childhood stand alone, without explicit connection with what follows, and the reader is left to apply the metaphor of crossing a frontier to the writer's experience of Mexico, and to see in a particularly violent stage of that country's history the opposition of heaven and hell.

In the same book there are references to the persecution of

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1. Greene, G., The Lawless Roads, Longman, 1939, Penguin, London, 1962, p. 11.
 2. Quoted in Literature Alive : 'Graham Greene', Prof. Norman Page, vol. 2, No. 2, April '60, p. 1.
 3. Ibid.

Catholic Priests and to the fate of hunted individuals (a recurring character-type in Greene's stories) : "Every priest was hunted down or shot, except one who existed for ten years in the forests and the swamps, venturing out only at night ...".¹ One informant has told Greene of a 'whisky priest' : "He had taken one of his to be baptised, but the priest was drunk and would insist on naming him Brigitta. He was little less poor man ...; but who can judge what terror and hardship and isolation may have excused him in the eyes of God ?"² As Neil Mc Nuan has observed in his recent study of the novels, "Greene turned this joke into a legend",³ and the outcome was one of his best novels, The Power and the Glory (1940).

The Moment of Rebellion

Things come to a pretty pass when Greene ran away from school. This was the inevitable result of his inability to face up to his inhuman surroundings. The little rebel, the sensitive individual could not long stand the cruelties of life. He revolted against the manner in which children were required to conform, obey and follow. The escape is suggestive as much of a despairing romanticism as of romantic rebellion. The school symbolised the horror of existence, the pain of life. Peter Quennell reminisces in The Sign of the Fish :

The school that we both attended proves to have been a place of almost unfathomable iniquity, haunted by adults and adolescents. There was Callinan who practised torment with dividers, Mr. Grandon with pale bleached hair, a dusty gown, a kind of demonic sensuality; and from such heights evil declined towards Parlow whose desk was filled with minute photographs - advertisements of art photos. Hell lay about them in their infancy'.⁴

1. Quoted in Literature Alive : 'Graham Greene', Prof. Norman page, vol. 3, No. 2, April '90, p. 2.

2. *Ibid.*

3. *Ibid.*

4. Quennell, P., The Sign of the Fish, Collins, London, 1960, p. 61.

Greene wanted to get out of the hell that memoir describes. He was overcome by disgust, ennui and boredom. He felt a terrible monotony at school, and even during holidays. In his own words :

I think the boredom was far deeper than the love. It had always been a feature of childhood ; it would set in on the second day of the school holidays. The first day was all happiness, and, after the horrible confinement and publicity of school, seemed to consist of light, space and silence. But a prison conditions its inhabitants. I never wanted to return to it (and finally expressed my rebellion by the simple act of running away), but yet I was so conditioned that freedom bored me unutterably. 1

Oliver Twist was also faced with a situation where escape gives but a false sense of security and well-being. Greene says in his essay on Charles Dickens :

We have witnessed Oliver's temporary escapes too often and his inevitable recapture : there is the truth and the creative experience. We know that when Oliver leaves Mr. Brownlow's house to walk a few hundred yards to the bookseller, his friends will wait in vain for his return. All London outside the quiet, shady street in Pentonville belongs to his partners; and when he escapes again into the house of Mrs. Maylie in the fields beyond Shapperton, we know his security is false. 2

The experience of both Oliver and Greene represents the emotional ordeal that not only children but also grown-up people have to undergo in life.

Greene was kept under the observation of a psychoanalyst. His unsuccessful rebellion was an escape-mechanism, which the psychoanalyst described as inverted morbidity. Greene recounts his personal experience :

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1. 'The Revolver in the Corner Cupboard', The Lost Childhood and other Essays, op. cit., P.202.
2. 'The Young Dickens', The Lost Childhood and other Essays, op. cit., P.63.

The psychoanalysis that followed my act of rebellion had fixed the boredom as hypo fixes the image on the negative. ¹

Greene writes about how he felt afterwards :

I emerged from those delightful months in London spent at my analyst's house - perhaps the happiest months of my life - correctly orientated, able to take a proper extrovert interest in my fellows (the jargon rises to the lips), but wrung dry. ²

It seemed for a moment that he had been cured, and the rough edges had been smoothed over. As a matter of fact, the psycho-therapy was intended to correct his aggressiveness and to curb his rebellious spirit and get him adjusted to the world. He noticed in him a softening up, a cooling down. He had been made aware of the virtues of surrender. The rage of personality and the demonic passion had been, temporarily, extinguished. Greene recalls :

For years, it seems to me, I could take no aesthetic interest in any visual thing at all ; staring at a sight that others assured me was beautiful, I would feel nothing. I was fixed in my boredom. ³

It seemed as though he had been cured of the hypersensitivity. But rebellion dies hard. The tortures of the school dormitory have left a permanent mark on his mind. His revolt is a hangover from the early days.

Greene next turned to what he has described as the 'more dangerous venture'.⁴ He must find an outlet for his pent-up emotions. He switched over to games, dangerous games at that.

1. 'The Revolver in the Corner Cupboard', *The Lost Childhood and Other Essays*, op. cit., p.204.

2. *Ibid.*, p.202.

3. *Ibid.*, p.202.

4. *Ibid.*, p.203.

He was now inventing 'hazards with which to escape boredom'.¹

He says :

Now with the revolver in my pocket I was beginning to emerge. I had stumbled on the perfect cure.²

He was scared of life, scared of its queer ways and cunning corridors. He decided to stay put. He would not relent. To relieve monotony and escape boredom, Greene simulated suicide by putting the revolver to his head and pulling the trigger. It is not that he loved life less. There is more than a suggestion of neurosis in the act. Nor does it represent a simple death-wish. Rather it signifies the strong pull that life had on the child. His simulated suicide, ironically, shows his zest for life. He must overcome aridity if he wanted to live. The urge of life induced in him a sense of adventure. The 'war against boredom had got to go on'.³ The thrill he got out of it is beautifully described by him :

I put the muzzle of the revolver in my right ear and pulled the trigger. There was a minute click, and looking down at the chamber I could see that the charge had moved into place. I was out by one. I remember an extraordinary sense of jubilation. It was as if a light had been turned on.⁴

The buoyant optimism is a far cry from the romantic fatalism.

The revolver episode is a thin end of the wedge. Greene is moving inch by inch to the hitherto unexplored experience of life. The emotional vagueness has gone. Greene was returning to life. By this time he had reached the stage of adolescence.

1. 'The Revolver in the Corner Cupboard', *The Lost Childhood and Other Essays*, op. cit., p.201.

2. *Ibid.*, p.202-3.

3. *Ibid.*, p.205.

4. *Ibid.*, p.205.

He recalls :

It was like a young man's first successful experience of sex - as if in that Cambridge glade one had passed a test of manhood. I went home and put the revolver back in the corner cupboard.¹

Of his early love experience he writes :

Had I romantic thoughts about the governess? Boredom, aridity, these were the main emotions. Unhappy love has, I suppose, sometimes driven boys to suicide, but this was not suicide, whatever a coroner's jury might have said of it. The romantic flavour - the autumn scene, the small heavy compact shape lying in the fingers - that perhaps was a tribute to adolescent love, but the discovery that it was possible to enjoy again the visible world by risking its total loss was one I was bound to make sooner or later.²

It seems Greene has come a long way from the embittered past.

Although his view of the reality is personal, it "was the 'unreality' of the system as a whole that aroused Greene's antagonism".³

The school failed. Psychoanalysis did little more than provide a temporary relief. Greene's emotional extremism could not be subdued. Rather it became more acute as he grew in years. A problem child, Greene did not give up his instinctive rebelliousness. The free spirit is still there, and has acquired over the years a peculiar toughness. In the early 1950's also he did try to commit suicide while reading a Dorothy Sayers detective novel in which an old school friend murders another by challenging him to drink a half-pint of whisky at one go (the result was a fatal heart attack). Greene took a glassful of aspirin in a tumbler of whisky. All that happened was that he slept very well that night.

1. 'The Revolver in the Corner Cupboard', *The Lost Childhood and Other Essays*, op. cit., P.204.

2. *Ibid.*, P.204.

3. *Atkins, J.*, op. cit., P.47.

Conversion and after

From Berkhamsted Greene went to Balliol College, Oxford. He carried with him the burden of childhood.

Balliol and Oxford made little impression on him. He was not a scholar, though he did aspire for success. Greene dreamt of going to China or staying there for a few years. He wanted a change. He also joined a tobacco company for this purpose. But the plan did not materialize.

Greene met a Roman Catholic lady, named Vivian, and proposed to her. He took a job with Nottingham Journal as an apprentice. He got associated with Father Trollope, who later became his confidant.

Greene was received into the Roman Church in February 1936. The same priest married him to Vivian. A son and daughter were born to them. But the marriage broke off, although they continued to be on friendly terms.

He had since his conversion worked in different capacities: sub-editor of The Times, 1936-39; Film Critic, The Spectator, 1936-39; Literary Editor, The Spectator, 1940-41; Foreign Office, 1941-45.

Greene was converted to Roman Catholicism, an institution that symbolized power and prestige on emotional grounds. The conversion was aimed at toning down his ambivalence. It suggests the recovery of self through faith. Religion was called upon to do what psychoanalysis had failed to do. But where the public school discipline and psychoanalysis had failed, Roman Catholicism was not likely to deliver the goods. Greene remained resolutely himself. Instead of making him tame, conversion has, in fact,

created a highly problematical situation. It has unleashed a war between experience and dogma, reality and myth. The burden of Greene's criticism is how to strike a balance between opposing forces. The fact remains that Greene has not compromised his spirit of revolt. Of course Catholicism has given him a sense of belonging. But it has not made things easier for him.

The conflict, we might say, is not finally resolved. Greene's conversion does not mean the 'resolution of a combat'.¹ He would, in fact, cherish the continuance of tensions rather than desire their resolution. He says: 'Christian faith might have borne poorer fruits than this sense of unattainable glory lodged in the child's brain on a Yorkshire farm forty years ago.'² The horror of the world that he felt as a child at home and school has deepened with the passage of time. It has set up an unrelieved tension in Greene. He is torn between attraction and repulsion. The imposed structure of belief seems to crack under the weight of experience.

In Greene it is the experience that writes itself. He tends to see the world moving in the crystal of his personal experience. The externals of the Catholic mystique, Greene would unhesitatingly admit, are not commensurate with his experience. Cyril Connolly writes that Greene does take his 'theology into some dark corners, and sometimes appears politically, even doctrinally intransigent'³ For him, experience, to quote his own expressions,

1. 'Herbert Read', *The Lost Childhood and Other Essays*, op.cit., p.160.

2. *Ibid.*, p.163.

3. *Colony, C.*, *The Modern Movement*, Oxford, 1960, p.82.

seems to "lie among the great possessions, 'the black and merciless things'",¹ "the evil of capitalist society".² Greene has not sacrificed experience to the tailor-made dogma of the Church. This is reinforced by Greene's observation:

In the land of the skyscrapers, of stone stairs and cracked bells ringing early, one was aware of fear and hate, a kind of lawlessness—appalling cruelties could be practised without a second thought; one met for the first time characters, adult and adolescent who here about them the genuine quality of evil.³

Greene eschews the clichés and claptraps of Catholicism. He speaks from the centre of personal experience. For others Catholicism may have been a panacea but for Greene it has only come to mean 'a refuge, a retreat' from the violent, anarchical world which he cannot abandon. David Pryce-Jones writes: 'His Catholicism offers little hope or joy but only fear and danger'.⁴

Greene's preoccupation with sin has outraged the Catholics because they think that instead of confessing sin, Greene condones it. The apparatus of Catholicism, according to the hard-liners, becomes an emotional escapism. David Pryce-Jones believes that Greene has "taken the urge to sin in a misyphoric sense, so that even for the Catholic the sacraments which are at the centre of his religion become part of the dreary uphill struggle".⁵ Greene, in fact, has divested sin of the trappings of Catholicism and given it an earthly basis. He has "postulated an intolerable God who does not expect it (love) and does not allow us to pervert

1. 'Henry James: The Private Universe', *The Lost Childhood and Other Essays*, op. cit., P.23.

2. *Ibid.*, P.28.

3. *The Lawless Roads*, op. cit., P.10.

4. *Graham Greene*, op. cit., P.100.

5. *Jones, D.P.*, op. cit., P.100.

ourselves without admission".¹ The Catholic symbols of sin and evil appeal to him because they evoke the real world of man. "They have been super-imposed", David Pryce-Jones says, "on a personal vision which existed before conversion and which Greene has described in The Lost Childhood".²

Behind the facade of Catholicism is a sensitive uncompromising human being. Greene's conversion does not mean the surrender of experience to fantasy, by which probably Greene means, the Catholic fantasy. There is more than a religious element in his human earth-based outlook. Naturally, Greene's utterances about religion lack coherence.

His conversion, possibly, has not altered his outlook on life and the world of reality that Greene had discovered as a child. He is still struggling for the vicarious fulfillment of some deep-seated desire, possibly, also, a way out of the impasse. Nor has the man within, the rebel, yielded to religious orthodoxy. On the positive side, his new religion has given Greene a vantage point. He adapts it for his personal use, his vision of reality. It has been a convenient way of articulating his rebellion. One cannot explain away the problems posed by life. "To such impressions, traumatic in their intensity", David Pryce-Jones says, "Catholic doctrine could add no more than an outward form, and a suitable grammatical clothing".³

Speaking strictly in theological terms, the nature of Greene's Catholicism has been open to question. Pryce-Jones refers

1. Jones, D.P., op. cit., P.103.

2. Ibid., P.100.

3. Jones, D.P., Graham Greene, op. cit., P.6.

to V. de Vane who agrees with judgment of an earlier critic, Jacques Maritain, that Greene is 'anglais terriblement', and goes on to build up the theory that "Greene's conversion is not so much to Catholicism as to the Jansenist doctrine of predestination, the heretical equivalent of Protestant Calvinism".¹ Once the peg of Catholicism is shaken loose, the field is free for speculation along other lines, and one wonders why could not one fall in line with Angus Wilson and approach Greene from a humanist point of view.

The Humanist

Our impression of Greene is one of a good human being. He is liberal, frank and full. Writing of his human obligations, he says :

There are certain human duties I owe in common with the greengrocer or the clerk - that of supporting my family, if I have a family, or not robbing the poor, the blind, the widows, or the orphan.²

Greene loves the saints and the sinners alike. He says : "The greatest pressure on the mind comes from his (writer's) political or religious group, even it may be his university."³ John Atkins refers to Greene's ideology which rejects both orthodoxy and individual anarchism :

Greene is surely claiming the right to say what he likes to be the keeper of his own artistic conscience. But this is Protestantism, a detestable heresy. He is claiming a privileged position for himself - after declaring that writers must not accept privileges from authority. Nector Hawton, an ex-Catholic who is now editor of *The Humanist*, made some shrewd comments on this attitude in an article contributed to *The Plain View* (Winter, 1963): 'Graham Greene', he wrote, 'seems to think that as a Catholic writer he is more free than he would be as a Communist writer'.⁴

1. Jones, D.P., *Graham Greene*, op. cit., P.100

2. 'Why Do I Write?' Greene, G., *The Faith of An Artist*, Ed. G.S.Lewis, Allen and Unwin, London, 1962, P.93.

3. *Graham Greene, The Faith of An Artist*, op. cit., P.93.

4. Atkins, J., op. cit., PP.165-70.

His attitude to Catholicism is very clear. Writing on Henry James, He says that 'Catholicism spoke only to his aesthetic sense'.¹ His remark of Conrad reflects his attitude to the Roman Church.

Conrad was born a Catholic, but all he retained of Catholicism was the ironic sense of an omniscience and of the final unimportance of human life under the watching eyes. Conrad's similarity is to the French, once a Catholic nation; to the author for example of *La Condition Humaine*; the rhetoric of an abandoned faith.²

This is true of Greene, too. Writing about James and Conrad, Greene has explained the fundamentals of his belief. Like them, he refuses to work within the schematised teachings of the Church. He is not guided by the tenets of the Church so much as by his reason. Greene's religion is a metamorphosis of his personal experience. Of his intellectual radicalism David Pryce-Jones speaks thus :

Although Greene's response to experience did not lead him to more than an undergraduate Communism, it led him to a greater intricacy of self-examination and a deeper pessimism than Auden's.³

Greene's outlook is determined by the time spirit, and connects the living experience of suffering man. There is no escape from tragedy, no island of serene fancy. There is no cessation of the struggle. But the struggle is human. The eternal conflict between good and evil is re-created in a contemporary setting. It requires a human being to realize the predicament of man undergoing the trials of life. And Greene shows that he has it. He admits : "I do not consider myself a Catholic writer. Of course, I am a Catholic."⁴

1. 'Frederick Holfe', *The Lost Childhood and Other Essays*, op. cit., p. 33.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 113.

3. Jones, D.P., *Graham Greene*, op. cit., p. 10.

4. *Graham Greene*, 'An Interview' *The Illustrated Weekly of India*, January 19, 1964, p. 22.

The Proficiency

In his essay on Walter de la Mare, Greene makes a remark which is self-revealing :

Every creative writer worth our consideration, every writer who can be called in the wide eighteenth century use of the term a poet, is a victim : a man given over to an obsession.¹

Greene, too, is a victim : he is given over to an obsession. Greene's obsession, in all probability, is not a theological doctrine. It is a humanist's vision of reality. If Greene is not a consecutive thinker, he is also not a metaphysician or a Catholic apologist. Greene's dilemma is not a dogmatic truth. It reflects the world of man, a world where something is happening and, therefore, man is changing. Greene's obsession is a pointer to the baffling realities of life. His criticism of Henry James's fantasy sums up his own creative dilemma :

He (James) presents us with a theorem, but it is we who have to work out the meaning of X and discover that X equals no-way-out.²

Greene's obsession is human. His basic obsession is the proficiency of man in an evil world. The obsession is the product of Greene's moral development, his ceaseless battle with the reality that infects man. It is his personal discovery, the crystallization of an evolving human soul. It is a recognition of the central truth : man's struggle against the evil of the world, against the world that creates conditions in which evil inflates and proliferates. Greene's dilemma is conditioned by the inescapable fate of humanity pitted against an evil world. It reflects Greene's inborn humanism. What W.W. Robson has said of humanism as a literary criterion applies squarely to Graham Greene :

1. *The Lost Childhood and Other Essays*, op. cit., P.57.

2. 'The Portrait of a Lady', *The Lost Childhood*, op. cit., P.44.

Our feeling about this profound and absolute sincerity of the author is an essential part of our recognition of his full humanity.¹

Greene's concern with evil is the culmination of his battle with evil. His concept approximates to an ideology that lends the whole body of his work the importance of a system. It determines his art and makes for the particular predicament which is woven into the fabric of his fiction. The predicament - the 'cruelty and unhappiness' which confront man - grows out of his preoccupation with sin.

A question may be asked : How has Greene come to apprehend evil as the decisive force in life ? The answer will be : through intuition, personal realization. Evil is his personal discovery, an artist's unshaken grasp of the truth. His precocious sense of misery and brutality was matured over the years and became his dominant concern - the human predicament and sin. Greene emphatically says :

Anyway she (Marjorie Bowen) had given me my pattern - religion might later explain it to me in other terms, but the pattern was already there - perfect evil walking the world where perfect goodness can never walk again, and only the pendulum ensures that after all in the end justice is done.²

Bowen's The Viper of Milan was for the child Greene the mirror of the world. He was face to face with evil ; Innocence up against a terrible world. The invisible had become visible ; 'evil odious, blatant, vulgar', reflection of the world. To the child was presented all the evil of the world. The bizarre truth recurs in his flash-back :

1. 'Are Purely Literary Values Taught', W.W. Robson, *The Critical Moment*, Faber and Fator, 1964, p. 67.
2. 'The Lost Childhood : Personal prologue', *The Lost Childhood*, op. cit., p. 10.

Perhaps a savage school master or the kind of female guardian the young Kipling suffered from or some beast in himself has prepared each man for this life.¹

The experience has entrenched itself over the years. Peter Jennell, his school mate, reminisces :

And even at the present period, when I re-read his books—those sombre chronicles of sin and suffering, where every form of pleasure is naturally suspect, every love-affair inescapably doomed, and a breath of Evil mixes with the fog that swirls around the lonely street lamps — sometimes I feel that I am confronting the spirited schoolboy in a more accomplished and more portentous guise.²

This realisation determines Greene's future development.

In fact, his outlook is shaped by his past experience. It has come to symbolise the universality and ubiquitousness of the truth that man is inexorably confronted with an evil world. Greene's evolutionary humanism sees in Good and Evil a universal content; humanity fighting against the dark forces unleashed by the reckless 'new industrial bourgeoisie'.³

The evil which is the dark source of Greene's deepest fantasy is the evil of the capitalist society. It belongs to a 'dog-toothed civilisation'.⁴ For Henry James, 'evil was overwhelmingly part of his visible universe'.⁵ So is it for Greene. We are made aware of a seedy and squalid world which is the never-missing backdrop to his sense of evil. The predicament of man accrues from the tragic forces generated by evil. Fight it or surrender. Greene's dilemma is a critique of society and an

1. 'At Home', The Lost Childhood and Other Essays, op. cit., P.223.

2. 'The Sign of the Fish', op. cit., p.62.

3. 'The Young Dickens', The Lost Childhood, op. cit., P.55.

4. 'At Home', The Lost Childhood, op. cit., P.223.

5. 'Henry James: The Private Universe', The Lost Childhood, op. cit., P.86.

involvement of the present mode of life.

Greene loves man. He loves even the evil in man, because man is the victim of the evil world. Greene does not condemn man. Of course, he condemns the world. He is conscious of the fact that treachery, cruelty, guilt and sin are socially conditioned. Greene's sense of evil is human as it conveys the whole truth : Man is made by his world. He has no animus, no spleen to vent on man. He loves a criminal and a saint alike. It radiates the centre of his humanist vision. He says :

I have yet to find socialist or conservative who can feel any pity for the evil he denounces, and the final beauty of James's stories lies in their pity: 'The poetry is in the pity'.¹

Like Shakespeare, Fielding and Tolstoy, like Malraux, Sholokhov and Sartre, the great humanists in the world literature, Greene is committed to humanity in its fight against evil. Man is the world. The humanists never fail to emphasize this truth. You cannot separate man from his surroundings. What Blackburn says illustrates Greene's angle of vision :

The primary concern of all arts I have talked about is man himself. Of course, you cannot separate a human being from his environment, they are as interrelated as body and soul.²

Greene has the 'power to see the outside of a character and to work from the outside to the inside'.³ He has discovered something generic, something socially decisive. He sees 'evil as a fatality that comes from the nature of the times'.⁴

1. 'Henry James: The Private Universe', *The Lost Childhood*, op. cit., P.22.

2. *The Price of An Eye*, op. cit., P.51.

3. Pritchett, V.S., *The Living Novel*, Chatto & Windus, London, 1945, P.45.

4. *Ibid.*, P.49.

But Greene is not the prophet of doom. His vision, which is essentially a tragic vision, reflects the inescapability of struggle. He is frank enough to admit: "I was not on the classical side or I would have discovered, I suppose, in Greek literature instead of in Miss Bowen's novel the sense of doom that lies over success - the feeling that the pendulum is about to swing."¹ There is the truth. There is no question of surrender. Despite death and disaster, defeat and despair, man forges ahead. There is a moral intensity 'in the struggle'. The struggle symbolizes man's indomitable will, his relentless fight against omnipotent evil, the "horror of 'the brutality and rushing confusion of the world'".² "Violence comes to us", Greene writes, "more easily because it was so long expected - not only by the political sense but by the moral sense".³ Greene says :

It is, therefore, with a shock of a startled incredulity that we become aware on occasion even today of eternal issues, of the struggle between good and evil.⁴

The Thirties : the Sense of Reality

Every writer is a product of his times. Greene is no exception. He shares with his contemporaries the common aspirations of the thirties. His outlook on life is conditioned by the mood of his age. As Jones says :

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1. 'The Lost Childhood', *The Lost Childhood*, op. cit., P.16.
 2. 'Henry James : Religious Aspect', *The Lost Childhood*, op. cit., P. 33.
 3. 'At Home', *The Lost Childhood* op. cit., P. 221.
 4. 'Frederick Rolfe. Edwardian Inferno', *The Lost Childhood*, op. cit., P. 102.

It is in this 'climate of opinion' conveyed by Greene's novels that the influence of the nineteen-thirties can best be observed. The subject matter of his novels up till the outbreak of the Second World War includes smuggling, the destruction of a dictator, the death-sentence passed on a Communist, international capitalism a juvenile delinquent, and civil war. ¹

The thirties mark an intense social awakening. We notice an acceleration of anti-humanistic trends but there is also a determined effort to fight them. Marxism came to be regarded as a healthy alternative to Fascism. Communism caught on with the younger writers as the creed of the toiling mankind. Marxism appealed to those who believed in peace and social justice. Communism now turned the public eye to the spectre of Hitlerism. The conception of evil underwent a radical change as more and more people tended to think of it in objective terms. To quote George Orwell :

FROM THE GAIN OF COMMUNISM UPON THE INTELLECTUALS there followed the tendency to see the world situation in the simplified terms of absolute German evil and absolute Russian purity. ²

Marxism offered a perspective in which things could be seen in their proper dimension. It attracted writers of different shades of opinions. Attention was focussed on evil working in and through man. The situation called for a sane, unbiased and human approach to the social and political problems facing man. The spirit of realism led to the debunking of the myth. Many people now began to think of Christ as an evolutionary socialist. It was often said that St. Paul and Marx were labourers in the same vineyard. The age was making new demands on human mind.

1. Jones, D.P., Graham Greene, op. cit., P. 9.

2. Muggerridge, M., op. cit., P. 87.

In Russia the socio-economic structure was being transformed. Socialistic economy had replaced monopoly, leading to an era of social and economic justice. Evil was no more a will-o'-the-wisp. It was linked with the world and it became a social syndrome. Evil was identified with a system that had nearly exhausted itself. Poverty, misery, the exploitation of man by man were regarded as the breeding ground of evil. It was necessary to change the entire system.

Britain felt compelled to adopt a policy of non-intervention. Workers, peasants, and writers in England hailed the Russian policy as a means for social transformation. We notice a social awakening, a desire to fight against the existing conditions and for the liberation of man. "Thus", G.S. Fraser says, "the important literature of the 1930s is a literature of topical urgency, reflecting a feeling of tension and an awareness of crisis."¹ Marxism embodied the hopes and aspirations of mankind. "Between the Wars", G.S. Fraser goes on to say, "one might have said as a fairly accurate generalization that a materialistic view of life had gained upper hand".² The novel has "become the focus of the insecure, frightening, dangerous state of the contemporary world".³

The novelists who distinguished themselves in the decade addressed themselves to the problems facing the world. They are all anxious to transmit the experience of man confronted with a menacing world. The struggle against evil, against the forces of alienation is the hall-mark of the novels of the thirties.

1. Fraser, G.S., *The Modern Writer and His World*, Iupa, 1961, P. 84.

2. *Ibid.*, P. 86.

3. *Ibid.*, P. 86.

Greene also belongs to this milieu. He shares with the writers of the thirties a passionate sense of reality. His attitude, like that of his contemporaries, is shaped by the ethos of the age. The world around him corresponded with the world he had perceived early in life. Rather he has, progressively, come to see his private world in terms of the public world outside. Greene has accepted the modern challenge.

He addressed himself to the whirlwind of history as others, Hemingway, Faulkner, Malraux, to name only a few, at the time did. Although not 'committed', Greene was fully aware of his moral responsibility. The passage quoted below provides the perspective in which we can see Greene :

If the life of an individual is a conflict, then that conflict implies a choice, and the choice, complexity, and complexity, the existence of more in human life than can be compressed into a formula. ¹

He has since not only expressed the reality of evil, but has also come to represent the conscience of humanity.

Greene : the last years

Recently also, Greene, who had been for the last couple of decades a quiet and elusive presence in the French Antibes, was convicted by a French civil court for defamation. The case history is again of Greene's outrage. In 1991, Greene decided to make a public issue of a private English in order to campaign against what he called 'organised crime' and 'police corruption' in the city of Nice in Southern France. The Mayor of Nice, Jacques Medecin, who had once been linked with underworld had then retorted that Mr. Greene was 'spitting in the soup'. The case involved the

1. Lehman, J., *Op. cit.*, p. 177.

daughter of a couple Mr. Greene had befriended when he was visiting the Congo in 1960. The daughter, Martine Cloetta married Daniel Gay who like Mr. Greene lives on the Mediterranean Coast.

After a divorce Martine was given the custody of their two daughters although their father had the visiting rights. One day, however, he went to the house of Martine's parents where she was staying, assaulted her father and took away the older daughter. The police took no action against Daniel Gay. It was at this stage that Mr. Greene, outraged at the man's audacity, plunged himself into the affair. The novelist's investigation revealed that Daniel Gay had a criminal record and was on friendly terms with a number of police officers and at least one judge.

Nice has been renowned for its corruption and crime for decades. Mr. Greene's initial efforts to attract attention to the city's rampant corruption went unnoticed. He even returned his Legion of Honour to arouse public interest. Finally, he decided to use his best weapon - his writing.

In his small non-fictional book "I accuse", he wrote: "I give a warning. Avoid Nice for it is the privileged haunt of the most powerful criminal milieu on the south of France ... Justice is powerless in unravelling this web when it allows itself to breathe in the whiff of temptation".¹ In an interview Greene had once spoken about this chilling world: "once one has seen a dead child in a ditch in Vietnam or Mexico in the time of the religious purges or Haiti under Papa Doc Duvalier or Cuba under Batista, one is no longer inventing fiction called The Quiet American, The Power and the Glory or The Comedians or

1. Quoted in The Telegraph: 'A Novelist Confronts Reality', April 13, 1983, P. 6.

Our Man in Havana",¹ He added : "This is the world as it is".² Now he was once again confronting reality : criminal activity in the French Riviera.

Graham Greene, we have said before, is a Catholic but not a Catholic novelist.³ In fact, he has, as George Orwell writes in one of his letters, affinity with the Communists :

You keep referring to him (Greene) as an extreme conservative, the usual Catholic reactionary type. This is not so at all, either in his books or privately. Of course he is a Catholic and in some issues has to take sides politically with the Church but in outlook he is just left with G.P. Lewings. I have even thought that he might become our first Catholic fellow-traveller, a thing that does not exist in England but does in France.⁴

To enforce George Orwell's observations there is John Atkins who legitimately says : "Greene hates his religion as a prisoner hates his cell".⁵ Although Greene was a member of the Roman Church, he was not carried away by the propaganda against Communism. He supported the Communist action in Poland and felt that it could not be used as a criticism of Communism. The crimes committed by the Nazis, Greene felt, could not be compared with what the Russians had done in Poland. John Atkins says that Greene "was particularly interested in the Pax movement which was an attempt to reconcile the Church with Communism and was supported by Moscow".⁶ Greene's ingrained humanism makes itself felt in his

1. Quoted in *The Telegraph* : 'A Novelist Confronts Reality', April 13, 1953, P. 6.

2. *Ibid.*, P. 6.

3. Rayner Sipey, *Greene*, London & Harburg, 1947, P. 14.

4. Orwell, G., 'Some Letters of George Orwell', *Encounter*, Jan., 1952, P. 64.

5. Atkins, J., *Graham Greene*, op. cit., P. 208.

6. *Ibid.*, P. 207.

extreme liberality of opinion, his passionate love for truth, his acute awareness of a brutal world impinging on man. The Church has, naturally, found it extremely difficult to fit him into its streamlined rigorous discipline. Atkins observes :

One attraction of the Church for Greene must have been its refusal to victimise heretics. He is faithful to the Church because of its whiskey priests and Scotchies not because they are pardoned, but because they are damned.¹

Greene praises Péguy for challenging God in the cause of the damned. His love for humanity has led him to write from the devil's side. His love transcends the run-off-the-mill morality. "We are", Greene says, "saved or damned by our thoughts, not by our actions".² He goes to the spring of action, thereby laying bare the secret of the human heart. He loves the Church because it accepts the convicts, the sinners, the misfits, the neurotics and the wash-outs. His sensibility is outraged whenever the Church adopts an attitude that is not in accordance with the observed truth. As Paul West says :

Greene, in fact, the man who rebuked the Cardinal-Archbishop of Paris for refusing Christian burial to Colette, whose life has become (as Malraux's used to be) a series of well-timed sorties to the secular trouble-spots, who is as much a journalist as a Jansenist, is closer to an enraged compassion than to sectarian hebetude.³

That Greene's vision is deeply rooted in reality is amply contained in his two volumes of autobiography, A Sort of Life (1971) and Days of Essence (1980). In Days of Essence, Greene quotes a poem by Edward Thomas : "He goes : I follow : no release/Until

1. Atkins, J., *Graham Greene*, op. cit., pp.206-9.

2. 'Francis Mauriac', *The Lost Childhood & Other Essays*, op. cit., p.79.

3. West, P., *The Modern Novel*, Hutchinson London, 1966, p.94.

he ceases".¹ It is not uncommon, perhaps, for celebrities to be honoured by persons who borrow their identities, or simply capitalise on a chance coincidence of proper names; but only Greene could have converted this into an occasion for metaphysical doubt : "And I been the impostor all the time ?"²

The autobiography also refers to a correspondence between Greene and Evelyn Waugh that begins with specific issue in relation to the novel (Waugh had been asked to review it for a London newspaper) but broadens out into a consideration of Greene as a Catholic novelist and of the relationship between an author and his characters. Greene himself was later to remark that the novel 'represented the depressive side of a manic depressive character'.³

Greene calls his journeys "ways of escape". His fascination with Africa, originating in childhood reading of Rider Haggard, is like that of Conrad's Marlow, who tells us : "As a child I had always been fascinated by maps".⁴ Greene's Journey Without Maps records the beginning of a long affair with West Africa. Greene has been everywhere : in Latin America, in Eastern Europe, in Indochina, in Malaya, in Africa. What was he looking for ? In a lecture delivered in 1960 at the University of Hamburg, he said that the writer's virtue is a "virtue of disloyalty"⁵ the ability to change sides with the victims.

Perhaps, as he said, he was in fact looking for 'communism

1. Quoted in *The Statesman*, 'End of the Journey', S.Choudhury, April 14, 1961, P.6.

2. *Ibid.*

3. Quoted in *Literature Alive*, 'Graham Greene', Prof. Norman Page, vol. 3, No. 3, April 1960, P.3.

4. Quoted in *The Statesman*, 'End of the Journey', S.Choudhury, April 14, 1961, P.6.

5. *Ibid.*

with a human face'. But he was not so naive as to believe that it was easily believable. His secrets - those which he chose to keep were well-kept. We never know the subjects on which he conversed with Ho Chi Minh in 1965, and we have only slightly more information about the meetings with Castro and Allende. He made no secret of his enormous admiration for 'Fidel' as he called him.

A very recent book The Life of Graham Greene, vol.1 (1908-1939), by Norman Sherry also seeks to find out all the aforesaid facts. We shall, in the subsequent chapters of this thesis, see how Greene's characters enact his moral dilemma. The problem of sin appears to be the chief pre-occupation of Greene in his works (Chapter 2). Sin is a dissonant factor in the lives of all his characters and it is out of their suffering and predicament that their need to commit sin is born. (Chapter 3). After sin it is the pursuit of freedom that makes Greene's characters think of their independent situation and the love of God (Chapter 4). Eventually the characters emerge into a new spiritual development. This experience make them aware of new dimensions of hope in a life of absolute disbelief and nothingness (Chapter 5). God's sovereignty over human relations seems to be a perpetual problem for the characters of Greene. They are confused over distinctly different ways of God from the ordinary human ways (Chapter 6). Greene's characters are not absolutely incapable of attaining salvation (Chapter 7). The authors like Mauriac, Dostoevsky, Huxley etc. have also a parallel theme in their works (Chapter 8).

Greene's development with the problem of predicament and sin, as the analysis will show, represents the moral struggle of his own life.