CONCEPTS OF SAINTHOOD IN THE NOVELS OF ALBERT CAMUS AND GRAHAM GREENE

Thesis for the Degree of Ph. D.

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

BARBARA GUSDORF

1968

This is to certify that the

thesis entitled

Concepts of Sainthood in the Novels
of Albert Camus and Graham Greene

presented by

Barbara M. Gusdorf

has been accepted towards fulfillment
of the requirements for

Ph.D. degree in Comparative Literature

Russel B. Nye
Major professor

Date April 9, 1968

MAY 1 0 1974 R29

M MAY 11 1970 R95

ABSTRACT

CONCEPTS OF SAINTHOOD IN THE NOVELS OF ALBERT CAMUS AND GRAHAM GREENE

by Barbara Gusdorf

The purpose of this study is to compare the treatment of sainthood by Albert Camus and Graham Greene, two authors of thoroughly divergent views and backgrounds. Camus is, for all practical purposes, an atheist, Greene is a Catholic; Camus is a Franco-Algerian of proletarian background, while Greene is a middle-class Englishman. Each is, however, equally concerned with the problem of Justice on both the metaphysical and physical planes. Each knows that on the latter plane the elements which have brought our world to near disaster are cruelty, envy, greed, and what Freud called the death instinct. Additionally, because both authors feel they have a responsibility to mankind, they both serve as a thorn in the side of complacency, believing it is their duty to alert those who accept social custom, or religious and political dogma, blindly.

In the section called "Albert Camus: The Temptation Toward Sainthood," Camus seeks to provide men with "styles" for a viable way of life in the face of the absurd. This "absurd" is the tension created between man and a hostile universe. Therefore Camus' search is for positive ways of living without losing consciousness of "the absurd" and without yielding to any of its negations. In order to arrive at such a style, he presents human types in their careers. The priest, the judge, the anarchist, the Malraux-type hero, the doctor, and the municipal

clerk are considered along with Jean Tarrou, the saint laïque of his novel, La Peste. In the section "Graham Greene: The Journey Toward Sainthood," Greene is shown presenting his hierarchy of values through the human types he depicts. His failures — the maimed and warped, the complacent, the opportunists, the perverse, and the innocent, are opposed to his positive characters who include his probable saints. Major Scobie of The Heart of the Matter and the nameless Mexican priest of The Power and the Glory are considered in this study as possibilities for sainthood in an era whose interest in sanctity is directed toward social commitment rather than individual salvation.

Certain values, as well as types, emerge as positive in the views of both authors. Because guilt emerges from the knowledge of evil, it can become a positive factor; innocence, on the other hand, is nearly always suspect. Where innocence is primarily ignorance of evil, guilt, resulting from awareness of another's pain, promotes such values as compassion, responsibility, and solidarity. Because evil exists in both the worlds of Greene and of Camus, sin is present in the view of both the Catholic and the non-believer. In Greene's world, failure to live by what are considered God's wishes for men constitutes sin; in Camus' world, sin is the failure to live within the terms of the lucidity and measure demanded by the absurd.

In writing on sainthood from two different points of view, the two authors disclose similarities. Their saints are, for instance, absolutists in their demands for purity within themselves, a quality which they find impossible to maintain in the world of human affairs. In their failure to remain pure, although involved, they long for peace and

passivity. As both peace and purity are impossibilities in life, they long for death. In each case their deaths, whether from suicide, disease, or the bullets of executioners, are seen as self-willed. The greatest dissimilarity among these potential saints is the greater renunciation of ego in Greene's saints. Although both Scobie and the Mexican priest have been taught that they must think primarily of their own souls, each willingly sacrifices his eternal peace for another's salvation. Tarrou, Camus' aspiring saint, on the other hand, seeks annihilation and non-involvement after the cessation of the plague, while Greene's saints remain involved up until the last moment of their lives. Moreover, Major Scobie's suicide is not an act of egotism. He hopes, in dying, to cease hurting God and those he loves. He regards his death not as an escape from frustration but as the beginning of an eternity of further pain.

Because the problem of justice on the supernatural level will always remain a mystery to Greene, his potential saints are unorthodox, achieving their ends by sinning against the tenets of their Church. Yet because justice in Camus' view must always remain a question of limits — of lucid awareness of the human condition and of adherence to human possibilities — it is Tarrou who has failed rather than Greene's saints. Tarrou is a failure because in capitulating to death he sins against the only certainty in his world which is his life. In his aspirations for absolutes — those of purity and peace — and in his temptation toward sainthood, which is his desire to surpass the human, he has sinned against lucidity and measure.

It is not surprising, then, that Camus rejects his aspiring saint,

preferring instead his heroes of "the absurd" who are in turn closer to Greene's potential saints in their knowledge that they must live in order to prolong their involvement in the never-ending struggle between what is human and what is anti-human.

CONCEPTS OF SAINTHOOD IN THE NOVELS OF ALBERT CAMUS AND GRAHAM GREENE

by

Barbara Gusdorf

A THESIS

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of Comparative Literature

June 1968

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to acknowledge a debt of gratitude to the English Department of the College of General Studies of the University of Puerto Rico and particularly to Mrs. Esther Cressey de Márquez who very patiently typed the first two drafts of this dissertation.

I am especially indebted to Dr. Russel B. Nye, the chairman of my committee, and to the two other members of the committee, Dr. Charles D. Blend and Professor A. J. M. Smith.

I would also like to thank Mrs. Hally Wood Stephenson, who typed and gave her technical knowledge to the final draft of this dissertation.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study, "Concepts of Sainthood in the Novels of Albert Camus and Graham Greene," is to discover the differences and similarities existing in two apparently opposing views of sainthood. Such a study should consist principally of two factors: the common basis for their interest in sainthood, and how these authors differ and, oddly enough, often coincide, in the area of their chosen subject.

There are, first of all, marked contrasts in the backgrounds of Camus and Greene. Camus, for instance, who was born of illiterate parents,[1] grew up in Belcourt, an Algerian slum populated by Europeans and non-Europeans of diverse nationalities, races, and religions. Graham Greene, on the other hand, whose father was headmaster of Berkhamsted, a boys' school near London, comes from an English background which was both middle-class and homogeneous. While the poverty suffered by Camus was greatly offset by the sea, sunlight, and beaches of Algeria, Greene's greater economic security was cancelled by childhood fears, adolescent boredom, and a dull climate.

In respect to their religious backgrounds, Camus, who was born into a predominantly Catholic background, early became a non-believer, or, as Henri Peyre prefers to put it, a pagan.[2] Greene, however, was

---

[1]Although Camus' parents are often referred to as illiterate, the father taught himself to read when he was over twenty; the mother, who was deaf, remained illiterate and spoke with an impediment (see Germaine Brée, Camus (New York, 1964) 15).

[2]"Camus the Pagan," Yale French Studies, xxv (Spring 1960), 20-25.

converted from Anglo- to Roman Catholicism at the age of twenty-two, and has written from, or even against, this viewpoint ever since. Yet despite the different social and religious backgrounds of these authors, they share two attitudes in common, their metaphysical and social concerns.

Although each has been referred to as Pascalian, Jansenist, Calvinist, Augustinian, Manichean, Pelagian, and even existentialist,[3] it is more accurate to claim that both write within a wider trend — the general background of terror and anxiety — a trend which, in the present century includes Kafka, Conrad, and James,[4] along with Melville and Dostoevsky and others from the past century. Although the problem of

---

[3]Germaine Brée writes on Camus' doubtful existentialist position: "If we think of a writer whose essential effort is directed toward elucidating his own experience through an effort of his intelligence as a 'philosopher' then Camus most certainly is a philosopher, but nothing could be more erroneous than to consider him an 'existentialist' writer. Camus, himself, was more explicit on this point; his work supports his opinion; and his controversy with Sartre when L'Homme révolté was published emphasized the difference in the orientation of their thought. 'I have little liking for the too famous existential philosophy, and, to speak frankly, I think its conclusions are false,' he wrote in 1945, a point of view he never altered" (Camus, 9-10).

[4]Greene maintains, "with the death of James the religious sense was lost to the English novel, and with the religious sense went the sense of the importance of the human act" (François Mauriac," 69). He lauds James's sense of supernatural evil. In "Henry James: The Religious Aspect," he writes: "It is tempting to reinforce this point — James's belief in supernatural evil — with The Turn of the Screw. Here in the two evil spirits — Peter Quint, the dead valet, with his ginger hair and his little whiskers and his air of an actor and 'his white face of damnation,' and Miss Jessel 'dark as midnight in her black dress, her haggard beauty and her unutterable woe' — is the explicit breath of hell. They declare themselves. . . with everything but voice, to be suffering the torments of the damned. . ." (37-38). Both citations are from Greene's collection of essays, The Lost Childhood (New York, 1962).

evil is radical in each, Greene, in aligning himself with such men, is showing himself in opposition to the "liberal, optimistic view of the world nurtured by the Enlightenment which was brought to fruition in the 19th century vision of man's predicament as due to economic causes (Marx) or to psychological ones (Freud)."[5] Camus, although he has not forgotten his early training in philosophy (especially Plotinus, St. Augustine, and their relation to evil), embraces rather than censors the classical or neo-classical heritage. In fact, Camus speaks often of his "Greek" or "Mediterranean" background. Therefore Camus opts for the rational approach, Greene for the irrational: Greene that man may not prevail; Camus that in a sense he must prevail.

Sharing a sense of terror and dread, both Greene and Camus adhere to a view of life that many would consider pessimistic. But the critics Kenneth Allott and Miriam Farris assure their readers that "the pessimistic view of life is in the long run simply an adult view. Youth, physical well-being, success may temporarily blunt the sharpness of our perception of its truth, but the optimism dependent on these accidents is always precarious. Job, Aeschylus, Dante, Pascal — the creative artist or thinker — is not a Cheeryble Brother."[6]

While both Camus and Greene are in agreement as far as metaphysical anxiety is concerned (although they differ in their answers to the problem), they are even closer in regard to the temporal

---

[5]"Introduction," Graham Greene: Some Critical Considerations, ed. Robert O. Evans (Lexington, Ky., 1963), xiv.

[6]The Art of Graham Greene (New York, 1963), 17.

manifestations of evil in their times. A citation from Greene expresses both views:

> Errol Flynn, or it may have been Tyrone Power (I don't know how to distinguish them in tights), swung on ropes and leaped from balconies . . . . rescued a girl and killed his enemy and led a charmed life. It was what they call a film for boys, but the sight of Oedipus emerging with his bleeding eyeballs from the palace at Thebes would surely give better training for life today.[7]

In regard to the prevalence of evil in contemporary life, Morton Dauwen Zabel states "crime has gone beyond Addison's 'chink in the armor' of civilized society; it has become the symptom of a radical lesion in the stamina of humanity,"[8] an idea that Greene already developed in his The Ministry of Fear:

> "You remember St. Clement's — the bells of St. Clement's. They've smashed that — St. James', Picadilly, the Burlington Arcade, Garland's Hotel, where we stayed for the pantomime, Maples, and John Lewis. It sounds like a thriller, doesn't it, but the thrillers are like life . . . . 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've 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. The world has been remade by William Le Queux."[9]

In speaking specifically for Greene, Nathan A. Scott, Jr. writes:

> He has used violence and melodrama as instruments for awakening his age out of its lethargies, for destroying its specious securities and revealing the underlying nightmare and tragedy. He has wanted to "prohibit sharply the

---

[7] The Quiet American (New York, 1957), 176.

[8] "Graham Greene," Forms of Modern Fiction, ed. William Van O'Connor (Minneapolis, 1948), 289.

[9] London, 1943, 71-72.

> rehearsed response" to resurrect the heart through terror and to exhibit the world itself in all its degradation, as a country wherein man's spiritual nature is to be rediscovered.[10]

Camus has referred to this century as "le siècle de la peur," and the critic Nicola Chiaromonte gives the gist of Camus' Columbia University speech, in which Camus enumerates the specific problems of the times:

> We were born at the beginning of the First World War. As adolescents we had the crisis of 1929; at twenty, Hitler. Then came the Ethiopian War, the Civil War in Spain, and Munich. These were the foundations of our education. Next came the Second World War, the defeat, and Hitler in our homes and cities. Born and bred in such a world, what did we believe in? Nothing. Nothing except the obstinate negation in which we were forced to close ourselves from the beginning. The world in which we were called to exist was an absurd world, and there was no other in which we could take refuge. The world of culture was beautiful but it was not real. And when we found ourselves face to face with Hitler's terror, in what values could we take comfort, what values could we oppose to negation? In none. If the problem had been the bankruptcy of a political ideology or a system of government, it would have been simple enough. But what had happened came from the very root of man and society. There was no doubt about this, and it was confirmed day after day, not so much by the behavior of the criminals but by that of the average man. The facts showed that men deserved what was happening to them. Their way of life had so little value; and the violence of the Hitlerian negation was in itself logical. *But it was unbearable and we fought it*[italics added].[11]

Starting from nothing and questioning that negation, Camus has realized that "nous portons tous en nous nos bagnes, nos crimes et nos ravages.

---

[10]"Graham Greene: Christian Tragedian," *Graham Greene: Some Critical Considerations*, ed. Robert O. Evans (Lexington, Ky., 1963), 26.

[11]"Albert Camus: In Memoriam," *Albert Camus: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Germaine Brée (Englewood Cliffs, N. J., 1967), 14-15.

Mais notre tâche n'est pas de les déchaîner à travers le monde; elle est de les combattre en nous-mêmes et dans les autres."[12]

Because Greene and Camus have dedicated themselves to fighting nihilism wherever it becomes manifest, it is necessary to mention some of the concepts that are to be included under this heading. Nihilism or nothing (nihil) was represented in its most radical form, for Camus, in death. Yet generally speaking, and for the purpose of this study, nihilism includes any sort of evil — that is, any impulse, action, or attitude — capable of mutilating men or draining their lives of significance. Nihilism, it can be said, falls into two categories, philosophical and political nihilism. The former is an attitude of despair promoted to a value or a way of life. Such despair, when it leads to an "All is permitted" policy, negates such values as love, honor, truth, and the pursuit of happiness, and encourages violence and injustice. When nihilism becomes political, it embraces totalitarianism and bureaucratic systems which deny the rights of individuals by systematizing disorder, encouraging cant and falsehood, and practicing the inversion of good and evil. By making a principle of the end justifying the means, living men are sacrificed to distant goals or ideals.

While Camus is often referred to as a conscience of his time — he received the Nobel Prize in 1957 in recognition for the "clear-sighted earnestness" with which he had illuminated the problems of the human conscience of our time"— Greene, who has up to this point received less

---

[12] L'Homme révolté (Paris, 1951), 361.

credit for this aspect of his thinking, will undoubtedly accrue more recognition as time goes by.

It is the action of conscience directed towards the problems of one's time which is the source of the contemporary interest in sainthood. It is to this end that Mauriac, Bernanos, Silone, Updike, even Simenon, in addition to Camus and Greene, have treated sainthood as a literary theme. The contemporary saint, as well as the absurd hero, offers the secular society of today a reconsideration of values. Of this Henri Peyre writes:

> . . . the acclaim poured out to Camus, to Dr. Schweitzer or to Gandhi, or to Pope John (for they are comparable) testified to the deep thirst for moral heroism among our contemporaries and to our readiness to be guided by saints, even by picaresque ones, in an age of creative discontent.[13]

Peyre's reference to the contemporary creative discontent should be understood not so much in terms of the literary artist's dissatisfaction with matters of style and expression (although there is the continuous need for new myths and images) but as a discontent which is creative in the sense that it is positive or fructifying, leading us out of what John Cruickshank refers to as the "breakdown of the settled established intellectual and moral order which the literature of this century has registered."[14]

In the Twentieth Century Encyclopedia of Catholicism, Jacques

---

[13]Modern Literature / The Literature of France (Englewood Cliffs, N. J., 1966), 196.

[14]"Introduction," The Novelist as Philosopher: Studies in French Fiction 1935-1960 (London, 1962), ix.

Douillet asks the question, "What is a saint?" In attempting an answer he writes that in one sense the answer is: "A saint is a person now dead, whom the Church allows to be publicly venerated."[15] In Saints for Now, edited by Clare Boothe Luce, Mrs. Luce hazards a more extensive definition:

> What is a Saint? To speak in a dictionary manner, a Saint — with a capital "S" — is one of those persons recognized by the Church as having, by holiness of life and heroic virtue, attained a high place in heaven, and as being therefore entitled to the veneration of the faithful, fit to serve them as a spiritual model and able to intercede for them in the courts of God. The men and women thus recognized as Saints do not, of course, include all the holy, or exhaust all the possibilities of holiness. But of them we are certain.[16]

Jacques Douillet and Mrs. Luce agree that the saints' recovery of Christ's virtues is always fractional.

Both authors mention aspects of sainthood which apply at times most particularly to either Greene's somewhat unorthodox saints or to Camus' completely unorthodox saint. Jacques Douillet, for instance, mentions absolutism, a quality which belongs, however, to most saints: "Given their genius," he writes, "they were incapable of evading issues, of half-measures, of playing at two tables at once" (58); "they did not try to efface what was peculiar, but rather emphasized it" (105).

What Jacques Douillet writes concerning the unified love of the

---

[15]What is a Saint? volume XLVI of the Twentieth Century Encyclopedia of Catholicism, ed. Henry Daniel-Rops (New York, 1958), 84. All subsequent references to this volume will be given in the text immediately following the quotation.

[16]Saints for Now (New York, 1952), 1. All subsequent references will be given in the text immediately following the quotation.

saints applies particularly to Greene's saints: "The saints' love for God does not prevent them from loving all around them; but it is so intense that these other loves are not only subordinate to it, they are wrapped up and permeated by it. They do in truth love 'in God' "(56).

Each writes of the saints as sinners — an aspect which relates them to both Greene's and Camus' saints. "The very meaning of the lives of the Saints for us," Mrs. Luce explains, "lies in the fact that they were sinners like ourselves trying like ourselves to combat sin. The only difference between them and us is that they kept on trying; precisely because they believed that the revision and editing of sinner-into-saint is not done by man's pen but by God's grace"(3).

Although the aspirations of some saints appear remote today (particularly the monasticism of the desert), those monks were fleeing from the abominations of their world no more than is Camus' contemporary saint. It is the flight that Camus condemns. His saint in fleeing from guilt, enters as they did, a spiritual desert as well, for his saint knows too well, as did Saint Paul, that "guilt makes no more claim on a man who is dead."

Heroic virtue is what is usually needed to distinguish the saint from the average man. Writing of the heroism of the saints, Jacques Douillet recounts that "the hero is tenacious; he does not count the cost of attaining his goal; he will wear himself out doing it, and his strength seems more than a man's"(58). But along with heroism goes the renunciation of ego. The martyrs have usually found their strength in the consciousness of their responsibility to their brethren: the idea of

failing those for whom they struggle is more abhorrent than suffering or death.

Both of Greene's saints are heroic in their actions, but one particularly practices the heroism of those saints not called to the glory of martyrdom. However, his heroism equals that of those who give their lives all at once, proving, as did St. Thérèse of Lisieux, that the "little way of the Cross, is not the way of the little cross." Jacques Douillet elaborates this idea of "pinprick martyrdom" or the "widow's mite" as it has existed among the unknown. For there are

> millions of holy men and women, some of them perhaps greater in the eyes of God than canonized saints, who are unknown because they lived in obscurity or because their inward holiness was never recognized by their fellows. Their hiddenness serves to enhance their worth before God. . . (118)

Camus' potential saint is Jean Tarrou in his novel La Peste. Greene's potential saints are the anonymous Mexican priest in The Power and the Glory, Major Henry Scobie in The Heart of the Matter, and Sarah Miles in The End of the Affair. Only the first two of Greene's aspiring saints will be considered in this study, for the interest in sainthood today is predominantly an interest in commitment, involvement, or engagement in the community. Sarah Miles' approach to sanctity is closer to the extreme individual approach of Camus' absurd hero and stranger, Meursault.

The content of this study will reveal the possibilities of a new coherence as they are presented by Graham Greene and Albert Camus in their considerations of sainthood and will show how, in their searches

for coherence, Camus' saint fails, while Greene's saints are the heroes of the hour.

BOOK ONE

ALBERT CAMUS: THE TEMPTATION TOWARD SAINTHOOD

PART I

DÉSIR DE DURER, DESTIN DE MOURIR

> Of Albert Camus it has been written: "In a true sense, he was constantly attempting to bring into the clearing of rationality more and more territory, territory which was constantly threatening to step back into the jungles of chaos and mindlessness. In this he joined the Greeks. What is the Odyssey after all but an attempt to clear out of chaos a territory of reason where the human community could exist in mutual justice?[1]

Camus believes, as do Nietzsche and Tolstoy, that modern man lacks a sense of direction. For this reason he has dedicated his writings to a study of positive ways of living in a world which offers much that is negative. It was to this end that Camus proposed in his récit, L'Etranger, the constant confrontation or awareness of the fact of death as an antidote to the nihilism of a goalless life. By refusing to accept conventional attitudes toward death or attitudes of unknowing indifference, man avoids what Camus refers to as self-deception or inauthenticity.

Tolstoy derives a similar premise from his study of the theme of conscious death[2] in his nouvelle, The Death of Ivan Ilyich. Ivan Ilyich

---

[1]Austin Fowler, Albert Camus' The Stranger, The Plague and Other Works (New York, 1965), 60.

[2]Frequent acknowledgment is given to the influence of Kierkegaard, Melville, Dostoevsky, and Nietzsche, among others, on Camus' thought;

had always hidden his authentic self and the knowledge that he will some day die amidst the trivializing details of his social, official, and familial routine. With the imminence of death and with the questions he asks himself in the face of it, the futility of his unexamined life becomes apparent. As Tolstoy prescribed the constant reminder of death as an antidote to meaninglessness, so does Camus.

According to Louis R. Rossi in his study "Albert Camus: The Plague of Absurdity,"[3] Camus' protagonist, Meursault, is an embodiment of Heidegger's Being-toward-Death (Sein zum Tode), that is, one who, having lived his life with a minimum of hypocrisy and self-deception, had been aware, even if unconsciously, that "du fond de mon avenir, pendant toute cette vie absurde que j'avais menée, un souffle obscur remontait vers moi à travers des années que n'étaient pas encore venues et ce souffle égalisait sur son passage tout ce qu'on me proposait alors dans les années pas plus réelles que je vivais."[4]

Meursault's life is neither empty nor joyless. He knows that he

---

[2](cont.)yet it is Walter Kaufmann who, in Religion from Tolstoy to Camus (New York, 1961), brought out the close relationship between Camus and Tolstoy, declaring: "What is so remarkable about Camus is, as much as anything, that he had the courage to accept the heritage of Tolstoy, when no one else could stand before the world as Tolstoy's heir" (39). He further points out: "The persistent preoccupation with self-deception and an appeal to the reader to abandon his inauthenticity links Anna Karénina with The Death of Ivan Ilyich" (3). In by-passing Camus' L'Etranger, Kaufmann noted, "The Plague is the posthumous child of The Death of Ivan Ilyich" (40).

[3]The Kenyon Review, XX, 3 (Summer 1958), 399-422.

[4]Albert Camus, L'Etranger (Paris, 1957), 176-177. Subsequent quotations from L'Etranger are taken from this edition.

has been happy, that he will continue to be happy, and he anticipates the moment of his death with equanimity, as the rounding out of his life, that his life may become an entity, that all may be consummated.

Rossi points out that Camus, "like the existentialists and Nietzsche (and their predecessor Hegel) proceeds by negation, "for death defines liberty and gives meaning to life; the acceptance of evil leads to innocence (414-415). In Camus' use of death[5] as a means of fighting nihilism, he has learned that the confrontation of death can be a cure for "dead souls," forcing them whenever they face death as a fact, to arrive at an honest and even positive evaluation of life. In adopting the method of Bazarov — the protagonist of Turgenev's Fathers and Sons and literature's first nihilist recognized as such — which was to accept nothing (nihil) as valid without first submitting it to critical testing,

---

[5]On the predominance of death as a theme in contemporary and modern European literature, R. W. B. Lewis wrote in The Picaresque Saint: Representative Figures in Contemporary Fiction (Philadelphia and New York, 1959): "It is not easy for the majority of American readers to understand, much less to sympathize with Camus' deep preoccupation with death. . . . The public impulse in America, when faced with a work of Camus, is to inquire into the causes for the psychological abnormality allegedly there depicted: to ask how Meursault, for example, or even Camus himself got so maladjusted in a generally satisfying world. The European reader, remembering that both The Stranger and The Myth of Sisyphus were written during the Second World War and the occupation of France, for the most part, finds their involvement with death almost inevitable. For death, cruelty, humiliation, violent aberrations of justice, and a searing contempt for human dignity have been the norms of contemporary experience for many Europeans." Lewis, at the same time that he points out that recent European literature would be inexplicable without death also points out death's traditional importance, "that it is more than a natural reaction to the atrocious events of the twentieth century. It has the status of a philosophical position," relating Camus particularly to Dostoevsky and nineteenth century Russian literature (72).

Camus proceeds to reexamine all values in the harsh light of man's mortality. Testing them for viability, only such values or attitudes which do not threaten life or endanger man's happiness are reinstated; in this way many of mankind's cherished self-deceptions are discarded.

Furthermore, in employing the nineteenth-century nihilists' methods which advocated, in some instances, the destruction of a world in order to build it anew, Camus paradoxically applies their method to the restoration of order over chaos and to the instatement of sounder values and attitudes. Working through the denial of much that humanity venerates, Camus inaugurates in himself and in his protagonists the nihilistic approach of the anti-nihilist!

Camus' knowledge that new values are obviously needed derives from his early and late encounters with death and dissolution. With the poverty of his childhood, there is "the dead father, the dying grandmother, the paralyzed uncle, the deaf and silent mother,"[6] but opposed to this there is the sun of Algeria. It is in the "dark night" of Europe that Camus learns that death was not only part of his personal life but is also the rule of the day.

In fighting death and the nihilistic reaction to death, Camus seeks "la guérison au bout de la maladie." He has one clue. He knows that death often results from excesses and that nihilism is a form of excess and that excesses are, by their very nature, abnormalities or diseases. For that reason Camus uses the plague or la

---

[6]Fowler, 5.

peste[7] as one of the symbols or controlling metaphors in his writings to depict such excesses as nihilism, wars, death — whatever is life-denying or destructive to human happiness. In his novel La Peste, on one level of meaning peste signifies war in general, for Camus points out that not only has the bubonic plague been one of the most dreaded threats to human life, but that there have been as many plagues as wars in history. The term also stands more specifically for the French defeat in 1940 (in the German occupation which followed, the occupying troops were actually referred to as la peste brune). Camus expands the sense of the word peste so that it appears to include all that he has also implied in his uses of the term "nihilism."

Of this symbolism Rachel Bespaloff wrote in her study of Camus, "The World of the Man Condemned to Death":

> Perhaps the use of the term cryptic to define a style which is at times sententious and whose transparency appears without mystery, will seem debatable. The multiplicity of meanings and interpretations it suggests, the deciphering it necessitates, certainly seem to remove it from allegory, which always conceals some precise object. Nothing of the sort in The Plague, where the scourge sometimes designates the event, sometimes the human condition, sometimes misfortune.[8]

Germaine Brée also implies that the word plague or peste covers many forms of nihilism as she describes the syndrome of the twentieth-

---

[7]The image of plague or peste appears for the first time in Caligula — the first version of which was written as early as 1938, and again in 1947 and 1948 in La Peste and the play L'Etat de siège respectively, and it also appears from time to time in the Carnets I and II (1935-1942) and (1942-51). The remaining Carnets have not yet been published.

[8]Camus: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Germaine Brée (Englewood Cliffs, N. J., 1962), 98.

century mal du siècle and the implications of such a syndrome for humanity: the plague, she writes,

> in whatever context we consider it, symbolizes any force which systematically cuts humanity off from the breath of life, the physical joy of love, the freedom to plan our tomorrows. In a very general way it is death and, in human terms, all that enters into complicity with death: metaphysical or political systems, bureaucratic abstractions and even Tarrou's and Paneloux's efforts to transcend their humanity [italics added].[9]

To Germaine Brée's elucidations other concepts may be added which still remain within the categories of peste or nihilism. They are: fanaticism, tyranny, self-deception, or bad faith, les ombres inutiles (cant or residues of false reasoning), crimes, lawlessness, disorder, absolutism, and surprisingly enough, the temptation toward sainthood!

In Camus' consideration of whatever constitutes a threat to the moral health of his times, he has, first of all, in determining the nature of the ailment, to study its symptoms, to isolate the microbe before he can inaugurate its cure. To this end he refers to the illness provisionally as le mal, le malheur, la maladie, la malaise, le fléau, and la peste, or in English the plague, the pest, or the pestilence. To the list of maux which Camus sees afflicting contemporary man, he also added le malentendu,[10] as it poses, more than a mere annoyance, a real

---

[9]Camus (New York, 1964), 128. Subsequent quotations from Germaine Brée's Camus are taken from this edition.

[10]Whether in Le Malentendu, Camus' play of that name, or in his other treatments of the same theme, Camus obviously wishes, according to S. Beynon John, to create another myth of man's existence in the world, "the world without signs or sense, the absurd world in which man is never at home" (89). Rachel Bespaloff sees the world that Camus

threat to the human community. Of le malentendu or the misunderstanding as a current theme, John Cruickshank has written that Camus' writings on the absurd "belong to a wider world in which the sense of incoherence has grown rapidly more acute, and for which he bears witness to an age marked by increasing division, conflict, violence, and the failure to communicate adequately."[11] On this subject Camus himself writes in L'Homme révolté, written in 1951 as an attempt to understand the times, "chaque équivoque, chaque malentendu suscite la mort. Le sommet de toutes les tragedies est dans la surdité de heros."[12] Camus' intuition in including le malentendu as yet another mal or evil besetting mankind is productive, for it proves to be an important factor in the complex recognized as nihilism or peste.

It is apparent that in the very heart of Camus' nihilistic world view — the absurd — he finds values which, while constituting "la guérison au bout de la maladie," instigate a movement from the negative

---

[10](cont.)describes as one where "everyone is betrayed by everyone, including himself. . . . there is almost no sentence in the second act which does not have a different meaning for the one who speaks it and for the one who hears it. The entire play is built on ambiguity; one has to choose in the dark, without being recognized, without being able to make oneself known. . . . Camus saw the heart of the matter: our modern tragedy is the tragedy of ambiguity touching all mankind" (105). His short story "L'Hôte" treats another facet of ambiguity, for according to Gaëton Picon, it treats of a misunderstanding in which the "gestures of fraternity turn against us leaving only the solitude of incomprehension. . ." (156). All quotations are from Camus: A Collection of Critical Essays, already cited.

[11]Albert Camus and the Literature of Revolt (New York, 1960), 22.

[12]L'Homme révolté (Paris, 1951), 340. Subsequent quotations from L'Homme révolté are taken from this edition.

to the positive, from incoherence to coherence, from negation itself to a solution for living. In Rachel Bespaloff's recognition that Camus has tried to restore meaning and the sense of joy for all the Ivan Ilyiches — who far outnumber the Meursaults of this world — and who remain strangers to life, she writes:

> Reduced to its simplest expression, Camus's thought is contained in a single question: What value abides in the eyes of the man condemned to death who refuses the consolation of the supernatural? Camus cannot take his mind off this question. All his characters bring an answer; one has only to listen to them.[13]

---

[13]Bespaloff, 92.

PART II

STYLES DE VIE

In his Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech, Camus speaks of the necessity of fighting nihilism and the death instinct at work in our society. It is necessary, he claims, "se forger un art de vivre par temps de catastrophe, pour naître une seconde fois, et lutter ensuite, à visage découvert, contre l'instinct de mort à l'oeuvre dans notre histoire."[14] Germaine Brée writes that in countering a nihilism he refuses to accept, Camus realizes that what is needed is a "style of life" worthy of a man (209).

In seeking these "styles of life" worthy of men, Camus has proposed in all his writings, but particularly in his novel La Peste, a hierarchy of attitudes opposed to nihilism. Such attitudes are studied and considered for acceptance or rejection on the basis of viability in a world where death has become the order of the day. These attitudes are symbolized in certain "careers." Some of the "careers" which Camus has tested are those of the anarchist, the revolutionist, the bureaucrat, the tyrant, the Malraux-type hero, the police official, the priest, and the judge (les robes rouges). Against these, he juxtaposes the absurd man in whatever role he is given, whether that of the engineer, the schoolteacher, the municipal clerk, the commercial salesman, le meurtrier délicat, the poet, or the physician. It is those who, in adopting a scornful image of man, side with nihilism by bringing about the

[14] Discours de Suède (Paris, 1958), 17. Subsequent quotations from this work are taken from this edition.

destruction of others and the annihilation of self. Among these is the saint.

In his consideration of sainthood as an approach to living, Camus presents his protagonist Jean Tarrou in the novel La Peste. Tarrou's temptation toward sainthood is part of a peculiar manifestation of this century: the desire for sanctity without God.

Camus' aspiring saint is governed largely by nostalgia — by forms of nostalgia determined by what might be described as his "life cycle." This "life cycle" which propagates nostalgia consists of four stages: (1) an initial innocence; (2) an awakening to the knowledge that the world is not made to his order; (3) resulting in an exhausting struggle to try to make the world fit a preferred pattern; and (4) a weariness with life and the by now acquired consciousness that he has been aspiring to sainthood. The accompanying nostalgias are: a longing for an absolute of good or purity in a world made up of both good and evil; and the longing for, or concentration on an abstraction, goal, or ideal projected toward future realization; and finally, the nostalgia for peace or complete annihilation in death. It is then evident that his weariness with life, his concern with an ideal not realizable within his own lifetime, and his yearning for self-annihilation all add up to a complete rejection of life by the saint.

In his treatment of Jean Tarrou as an aspiring saint, Camus indicates that Tarrou's yearning for saintliness, his nostalgia for purity and peace, incorporates attitudes which, although positive, become aspects of nihilism when excessively manifested. For in Camus' view

any ideal or temptation which leads the individual on the path of absolutes makes him a stranger to life and a friend of death. This is apparent in the term itself, for "absolute" is synonymous with "complete," "perfect," "total," "unconditional," "ultimate"; to aspire to purity or peace in their most concentrated, complete, or perfect forms is to opt for excesses, such excesses that, because they can only be attained in death, are inimical to life. The aspiring saint by-passes life. He seeks escape in his annihilation rather than in continued rebellion against la condition humaine.

All of Camus' works become studies of true or false rebels and it is in regard to the would-be saint that Camus shows his reservations as early as the spring or summer of 1942 as his Carnets reveal:

> Qu'est-ce qui fait la supériorité d'exemple (la seule) du christianisme? Le Christ et ses saints — la recherche d'un style de vie. Cette oeuvre comptera [as his work progresses toward a definition of the atheistic saint] autant de formes que d'étapes sur le chemin d'une perfection sans récompense. L'Etranger est le point zéro. La Peste est un progrès, non de zéro vers l'infini, mais vers une complexité plus profonde qui reste à definir. Le dernier point sera le saint, mais il aura sa valeur arithmétique — mesurable comme l'homme.[15]

The would-be saint's cooperation with nihilism, through his nostalgia for qualities or a state unattainable in life, induces in Tarrou, and occasionally in Camus, a death instinct.[16] Such a longing for

---

[15]Carnets, II (Paris, 1964), 31. Subsequent quotations from Carnets, II, are taken from this edition.

[16]In the early 1920's Freud began to consider the possibility of a death instinct as an integral part of the human personality. In his study entitled "Beyond the Pleasure Principle," he considered the fact that

absolutes is referred to by Tarrou as his peste intérieure. Undermining both will and intellect, it constitutes a threat to both the personality and the life of the individual.

Indications of the threat of such dissolution in Camus himself can be noted in his writings. In L'Eté, which contains "Le Minotaure ou la halte d'Oran" written as early as 1939, Camus equates such a temptation with the desire to achieve in death the peace of stones: "Quelle tentation de passer à l'ennemi! Quelle tentation de s'indentifier à ces pierres, de se confondre avec cet univers brûlant et impossible qui défie l'histoire et ses agitations."[17]

Emily Zants has made a study of the symbolism involved in such elements as sea, sky, and deserts in Camus' writing. In her "Camus' Deserts and Their Allies, Kingdoms of the Stranger" she observes that rocks are the major characteristic of his deserts and as such constitute the "world" which stands in opposition to man. The "world" opposes him because it is made up of elements antagonistic to life — stone, heat, drought, silence. Yet some individuals are attracted by these hostile elements; the stranger, for instance, "is one who is enticed by the physical world of nature, drawn away from man; he is tempted by the general, by the absolute — which culminates in death — negating man's

---

16 (cont.)instincts tend toward a return to an earlier state and that since all forms of life rose originally out of the inanimate, the trend toward death may be considered inborn, a death instinct.

[17] L'Eté (Paris, 1954), 61. Subsequent quotations from L'Eté are taken from this edition.

nature which being life is the individual or particular."[18] Camus knew at least as early as April 1937 the danger of this sort of nostalgia, for he entered in his notebooks "la tentation la plus dangereuse: ne ressembler à rien,"[19] an idea he continued to develop, for in "Le Minotaure. . ." he wrote "il y a dans chaque homme un instinct profond qui n'est celui de la destruction, ni celui de la création" for "il s'agit seulement de ne ressembler à rien."[20] In "Le Vent à Djémila," in the ruins of the Roman city hidden in the Algerian desert, Camus realized that this desire to become something which is not of the world of men "ne mène nulle part et n'ouvre sur aucun pays," that Djémila and Oran were only brief sorties into the desert, each being "un lieu d'où l'on revient,"[21] which, paradoxically, one visited in order to learn from the "black sun of death" how to become reconstituted into the kingdom of men and of history.

Detecting other instances of his desire to pass over into the inhuman world of absolutes or abstractions, he later wrote "il y a toujours dans l'homme une part qui refuse l'amour. C'est la part qui veut mourir. C'est celle qui demande à être pardonner":[22] in another entry

---

[18]Symposium, XVII (Spring 1963), 30.

[19]Carnets, I (Paris, 1962), 45. Subsequent quotations from Carnets, I, are taken from this edition.

[20]L'Eté, 61.

[21]Noces (Paris, 1950), 30. Subsequent quotations from Noces are taken from this edition.

[22]Carnets, II, 318.

commenting on his identification with a friend's suicide, Camus' death instinct becomes more explicit: "Suicide d'A. Bouleversé parce que je l'aimais beaucoup, bien sûr, mais aussi parce que j'ai soudainement compris que j'avais envie de faire comme lui."[23] Later in 1957 (the last two entries were of March and April 1950 respectively) he writes in that volume in which he collaborated with Arthur Koestler: "L'homme desire vivre mais il est vain d'espérer que ce désir régnera sur toutes ses actions. Il désire aussi n'être rien, il veut l'irréparable, et la mort pour elle-même."[24] It is evident, then, from such pronouncements in respect to death, in his waverings between "oui et non," between the "désir de durer et le destin du mort," that Camus occasionally shares his protagonist's nearly permanent nostalgia for "la paix des pierres," " le bonheur stupide de cailloux," which Tarrou longs for and hopes to find, first in a style de vie consisting of an accumulation of innocuous habits or idiosyncrasies, an approximation to peace in a way of life designed to exact as little of the self as possible. Barring such an accomplishment, death beckons as a release or way out.

---

[23]Carnets, II, 322.

[24]"Réflexions sur la guillotine," Réflexions sur la peine capitale (Paris, 1957), 141.

PART III

LA GÉNÉRATION D'ENTRE-DEUX-GUERRES

If physical violence continued endemic during the long reprieve between two world wars, despair had reached epidemic proportions. Most members of the génération d'entre-deux-guerres, seated in European cafés or sunning themselves on the beaches of Algeria, felt that their disenchantment and defeatism had been imposed on them from without. Derived from the disillusionment of World War I, added to the inherited mal du siècle of the former century, their despair differed from Tarrou's peste intérieure and Camus' periods of dejection, in that theirs so obviously lacked a sense of guilt. Camus' Meursault and Sartre's Roquentin (L'Etranger was finished by May 1940, La Nausée was published in 1938) were representative of those who, so long as they languished at their café-tables, enjoyed a protracted innocence.

When brought to trial, Meursault is convicted for what is interpreted as his coeur léger (his apparent insouciance because he does not weep at his mother's funeral). Still blaming the fact that he has broken the harmony of his days on exterior factors such as history and nature, still remaining passive despite the activities for which he is, as a part of history, responsible, he attributes his killing of an Arab to the sun. "C'était à cause du soleil" (151), he asserts during the trial.

Meursault's and Roquentin's was the indifference of their generation, sitting out the eventuality of Abyssinia, of Spain, and the first days of the occupation of France. Only with 1939, when murder became wholesale, did each acknowledge: "pour la première fois, j'ai compris

que j'étais coupable" (33). In contrast to Meursault, most are not brought to trial, but put themselves on trial. In Camus' case it was not his own conviction, but that of another, Gabriel Péri, a prominent anti-Nazi, executed in 1941, that precipitated Camus into action.

Death, then, is still the catalyst. With the threat of extinction, or of the disappearance of a way of life, brought about by World War II, existence is no longer a bore or an object for scorn but a search for survival. The philosophical question had ceased to be suicide and was now murder; individual revolt against mortality became collective revolt — a revolt no longer based on the principle of "All is permitted" but on the ethical development implicit in another principle, "All are responsible for all." Revolt at this point becomes a value involving the well-being and right to happiness, not of "I," but of "we" — not of one, but of all.

Philip Thody explains the new stand of rebellion which, when it surpasses what Jean Bloch-Michel refers to as Meursault's nihilisme passif, becomes a value:

> The first discovery which the rebel makes, in his movement towards human solidarity, is that he shares a common suffering with all men. He is united with his fellows, but in a community which more resembles a prison than a free and hospitable city. He is no longer alone, but the hostile absurdity of his state has not changed. "In an absurd world," Camus writes, "the rebel still has one certainty . . . . the fact that the grocer and he are both oppressed . . . . The world cannot be transformed but it can be resisted."[25]

---

[25] Albert Camus: A Study of His Work (New York, 1957), 29. Subsequent quotations from this work are taken from the same edition.

The true rebel, then, is he who feels responsible for all life in the face of death. Such rebellion can thus be a step to a higher form of moral existence. Such a leap or trajectory is witnessed in Camus' writings from L'Etranger and Le Mythe de Sisyphe (1942) to La Peste (1947), L'Etat de siège (1948), Les Justes (1950), and L'Homme révolté (1951), as well as in his political articles written after 1945.[26] The mortal dangers to mankind were, Camus maintained, both in the structure of society and in the beliefs man lives by, or perhaps better said in too many cases, dies by. For this reason Thody relates that Camus never accepts as solutions "any but human criteria or any value which could be placed higher than the individual" (27).

Aware that the death instincts of individuals or even of societies, which in both involve the failure of the individual (or individuals) to live fulfilled lives was reducing the stamina of both, the true rebel looks for admonishment, and more astonishingly, even guidance, to that most basic negation of all, death.

It is from this, the most absolute negation, that Camus derives his notion of l'absurde, a deduction resulting from a series of ironies or discrepancies, the greatest of which is man's forfeited immortality. Rachel Bespaloff wrote that Camus, like Caligula, has "meditated on this very simple and very clear and somewhat idiotic truth, but a truth

---

[26]Camus utilized the myth of Sisyphus and that of Prometheus to designate these two stages in his own development as a writer and thinker: Sisyphus is, of course, purely individual revolt, Prometheus, collective revolt. Just before his death, Camus began another stage, that of balance, justice, or Nemesis. Each work, rather than belonging to one stage, spans two.

difficult to discover and heavy to bear 'men die and they are not happy' " (95).

Camus calls the physical-metaphysical opposition of which man is conscious, l'absurde,[27] because it withstands every effort put forth by human will and reason. He derives l'absurde from a separation or divorce between man and his world, from the discrepancies revealed, by what man as a sentient being demands of the insentient. The first and most radical term of l'absurde is (1) man's desire to live and his ineluctable fate, which is death; (2) man's desire for clarity in an ambiguous universe; and (3) man's desire for unity and order in the face of a creation which appears fragmented rather than whole, and where men themselves reveal duality or duplicity. Such terms outrage the intellect.

Take away the intellect and there is no absurdity. Remove the world and there is likewise no absurdity. The absurd then demands the mutual confrontation of world and mind. If the confrontation urged by Camus outrages human reason, what then is its purpose?

Camus believes that from absurdity or incongruity itself, from man's "unreasonable" demands and the universe's "unreasoning" with-

---

[27]The absurd is a term which has been used by many authors and critics with some variation in meaning. In Sartre the absurd is the result of the fact that both man and the universe are in his view superfluous or de trop, hence man's "nausea" or terror resulting from his accidental presence. In Malraux the absurd comes into being as a result of the fact that man is a plaything of every fatality a hostile universe throws in his way. In Camus the absurd is the result of the juxtaposition of sentient man and the insentient universe, of what the former desires and of what the latter withholds.

drawal in the face of such demands, benefits may be drawn. Camus early concludes that the only possibility of man's regaining his moral and physical well-being in the face of these negations depends entirely on his recognition of the absurd. If confronting l'absurde teaches that human existence is brief, painful, and inevitably annihilated, it also teaches that there is in absurdity a position which has meaning.

In Le Mythe de Sisyphe Camus says that there are in the face of la condition humaine only two intellectual attitudes, that of La Pallice and that of Don Quixote. Philip Thody, in a note in the English translation of the first volume of Carnets or Notebooks, writes, "the contrast seems to be between someone who accepts the things that are obviously and completely true and someone who completely neglects them."[28] Thody believes that to Camus both positions are accepted as equally absurd and that only through a balance between them can both emotion and clarity be achieved. There exists, on the contrary, the possibility that Camus' purpose in juxtaposing these two types may be to show that the Don Quixotes of this world are those who live in deception, ameliorating the truth of the human condition by refusing to confront l'absurde; whereas La Pallice, "mort devant Pavie / un quart d'heure avant sa mort / il était encore en vie," is the hero of l'absurde who realizes that without life, he has nothing.

Because the conscious man (that is, the absurd hero) feels most at home in the realm of physical sensations, he wisely lives without

---

[28]Notebooks 1935-1945 (New York, 1963), 155. Subsequent quotations from this work are taken from this edition.

nostalgia. Honestly confronting his ordained annihilation and yet refusing to honor the natural order that ordains it, he refuses "laters" (betrayals of his only certainty, his life) which hold out promises of eternal life or of social utopias — either, payable at an unknown future date.[29]

Refusing such consolations, Dr. Rieux, one of the protagonists of La Peste, shows that the notion of l'absurde, born of negation, becomes a positive factor, a challenge to struggle and survival, rather than an invitation to surrender. Developing his plan of action, based on his awareness of l'absurde (Tarrou earlier remarks that Rieux looks knowledgeable — having "l'air renseigné"), even Rieux cannot immediately realize that the plague has descended on Oran, a modern Algerian seaport. Soon abandoning subterfuge, he confronts l'absurde, differing in this way radically from the passive citizens of Oran. Standing at a window overlooking the town, his first reactions are ostrich-like:

> Le docteur regardait toujours par la fenêtre. D'un côté de la vitre, le ciel frais du printemps, et de l'autre côté le mot qui resonnait encore dans la pièce: la peste . . . . une tranquillité si pacifique et si indifférent niait presque sans effort les vieilles images du fléau . . . . non, tout cela, n'était pas encore assez fort pour tuer la paix de cette journée. De l'autre côté de la vitre, le timbre d'un tramway invisible résonnait tout d'un coup et réfutait en une

---

[29]The conscious man also refuses to betray his life by choosing among other possibilities the wrong freedom. For there are many forms of self-deception which Sartre terms mauvaise foi or bad faith. In his "An Explication of The Stranger," Sartre refers to mauvaise foi when he writes, "custom and diversion conceal man's nothingness, his forlornness, his inadequacy, his impotence and his emptiness from himself" (Camus: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Germaine Brée [Englewood Cliffs, N. J., 1962], 109).

> seconde la cruauté et la douleur. Seule la mer au bout du damier terne des maisons témoignait de ce qu'il y a d'inquiétant et de jamais reposé dans le monde . . .

In order to adjust his mind to what has happened, Rieux thinks of the historic visitations of the black death he can recall, tries to imagine the city populated with the dying and the coastline fringed with corpses. "Mais ce vertige ne tenait pas devant la raison. Il est vrai qu'à la minute même le fléau secouait et jetait à terre une ou deux victimes. Mais quoi, cela pouvait s'arrêter." Then in abandoning self-deception and in adopting a sincere confrontation of death in the form of plague, Dr. Rieux instinctively adopts one of the values born of l'absurde, which is lucidité. Another will be mesure. "Ce qu'il fallait faire c'était reconnaître clairement ce qui devait être reconnu, chasser enfin les ombres inutiles et prendre les mesures qui convenaient."

As Rieux continues to speculate regarding the plague's duration, he knows that hope is a false and dangerous line of reasoning:

> cela pouvait s'arrêter . . . . la peste s'arrêterait parce que la peste ne s'imaginait pas ou s'imaginait faussement. Si elle s'arrêterait, et c'était le plus probable, tout irait bien. Dans le cas contraire, on saurait ce quelle était et s'il n'y avait pas moyen de s'en arranger d'abord pour la vaincre ensuite.

Facing up to the absurd, as Rieux does, is to know that one is a man condemned among other condemned men.[30] This realization emphasizes the importance of mesure, or limits, for the limits of man's

---

[30]The death sentence is the central theme of Camus' work as well as one of the leading concerns in his life. It forms the thematic center of L'Etranger, La Peste, L'Etat de siège, Les Justes, "Réflexions sur la guillotine," and many of his other journalistic writings.

position are defined in relation to such absolutes. Awareness of l'absurde gives significance to life and provides the absurd man with an answer for combatting that absurdity itself, whether it asserts itself in the form of death from plague or from other sources.

If man does not use the predictability of his daily routine as a tranquilizer for deadening metaphysical anxieties, he discovers the value of limits or mesure, an ethic of faire le possible, emerging from life or from the act of living itself. Rieux is reminded of this possibility when through the window

> le bruit de la ville s'enfla d'un coup. D'un atelier voisin montait le sifflement bref et répété d'une scie mécanique, Rieux se secoua. Là était la certitude, dans le travail de tous les jours. Le reste tenait à des fils et de mouvements insignifiants, on ne pouvait s'y arrêter. L'essentiel était de bien faire son métier.[31]

Through his profession — the skills acquired which he is able to bring to bear for the betterment of the human condition — Rieux has conquered in great measure the nostalgia for unity to which men are prey. Such an ignus fatuus is one of the sources of man's present moral illnesses and it must hopefully cede to an amor fati, if coherence and order are to be achieved. Rieux has conquered this nostalgia by choosing one, the only successful one, of the two ways in which man can forge a unity for himself — either within the world or by turning away from the world. If he turns away from the world (as will the aspiring saint), an austerity will have to be defined; if he turns to seek unity or coherence within the world, a morality will be defined.

---

[31] Peste (Paris, 1947), 36. Subsequent quotations from La Peste are taken from this edition.

PART IV

THE SAINT'S PROGRESS

Camus centers his consideration of sainthood as a possibility for living, corrective to nihilism, in the figure of Jean Tarrou, a protagonist of his novel La Peste. Tarrou, of course, does not fit into any known category of sainthood. He is rather, as Camus sees it, a manifestation of one direction taken in the contemporary interest in the subject.

Unlike the traditional religiously-oriented saint, Camus' candidate for atheistic sainthood is neither holy, meek, patient, loving, nor exceptionally charitable. Instead, as one of Camus' rebels or révoltés against the human condition in which death is paramount, Tarrou has been trying to ameliorate men's lives by fighting social injustice in general, and governments which he feels convinced owe their very existences to the death sentence in particular. Later, in relating his earlier experiences as an agité, a vexé, to Dr. Rieux, he states, "j'ai cru que la société où je vivais était celle qui reposait sur la condamnation à mort et qu'en la combattant, je combattrais l'assassinat"(206). Although Tarrou does find satisfaction in his efforts to improve the human condition and in washing the sores of the afflicted during the plague year, he does, as a matter of fact, no more in the line of charity than others. Whether the others are the anonymous workers in the formations sanitaires volontaires, or those whom Camus prefers to name, instead of Tarrou, his true rebels or heroes of la peste and l'absurde — Joseph Grand, Raymond Rambert, and Dr. Bernard Rieux —

each works to combat la peste.

Camus will discard Tarrou's type of heroism which strives to go beyond the human and which invariably cooperates with death. The attitudes and action of this protagonist will provide the clearest definition of the type Camus has considered, among others, as a possibility for a viable approach to life. Tarrou, when studied, reveals in his temptation toward a peculiar form of twentieth-century sainthood, sainthood without God, several forms of nostalgia determined, in part, by his life-cycle. Such a life-cycle consists of, first, an initial stage of innocence, a stage in which life seems to be made pretty much to the order of the person, followed by an éveil or awakening. This awakening from innocence or ignorance to a knowledge of evil, recognized particularly in death, is the second stage. In this stage the person concerned realizes that things are no longer what they seemed in a world which once appeared as friendly and compatible, and now seems no longer made to fit human specifications for comfort and security.

After such an awakening, the future aspirant to sanctity (he has not yet become aware that such an ambition is developing within him) embarks on the third stage, a crusade on behalf of the victims against their executioners. For the would-be saint sees the world not only founded upon a universal death sentence but a world in which further injustice is augmented by man himself in his own inhumanity to man. In his endeavor to rescue the victimes from their bourreaux, whether the latter be governments, microbes, or God, the révolté himself can only gain to lose. In fighting the system on the physical as well as the

metaphysical plane, he strives after wind. Here Tarrou learns that in his attempt to eliminate evil, he has only increased it. He knows that:

> je n'avais pas cessé d'être un pestiféré pendant toutes ces longues années où pourtant, de toute mon âme, je croyais lutter justement contre la peste. J'ai appris que j'avais indirectement souscrit a la mort de milliers d'hommes, que j'avais même provoqué cette mort en trouvant bons les actions et les principes qui l'avaient fatalement entraînée. (207)

It is only with the fourth stage of his progress that Tarrou realizes that his has been a progression or temptation toward sainthood. This is a stage of passivity[32] which results from the humiliation and frustration realized in his admission: "je souffrais déjà de la peste bien avant de connaître cette ville et cette épidemie" (203). Later he speaks in the same vein: "j'ai continué d'avoir honte, j'ai appris cela, que nous étions tous dans la peste, et j'ai perdu la paix" (208). His combat fatigue comes from his refusal to accept as victories any relative triumph against the forces of evil or death. At this point, deliberately leading a life as lasse, ennuyée, passive as that of the preconscious Meursault, this conscious révolté endeavors never to be "amené dans une minute de distraction, à respirer dans la figure d'un autre et à lui coller l'infection" (208).

Each revolt is a nostalgia for innocence — that is, a refusal to accept the world as it is, a longing for the time when one lived without the knowledge that the world is not to be borne. Tarrou's cravings for

---

[32]Tarrou's name may possibly be derived from the phrase taré de tout, thus reflecting his weariness with life, only alleviated for a time by his preoccupation with the plague.

purity and peace are secondary nostalgias to this, and are closely related to man's denial of his universe — in man's desire for clarity, for unity, and for a state of existence in which pain or death have no part. Of the nostalgia for a lost innocence or a "paradis perdu," Jean Bloch-Michel writes in his essay, "Albert Camus et la tentation de l'innocence," that "l'important est alors de décider s'il se résigne ou s'il garde la nostalgie de son Eden perdu." If a person fails to react against a world which he sees as imperfect, he joins the passive mass of unconscious men because "se résigner à la perte de l'innocence, c'est accepter le monde tel qu'il est." On the other hand, "chaque révolte est nostalgie d'innocence et appel de l'être."[33] The révolté who has registered his protest in an act of commitment will have to be content with triumphs of good over evil which are both impermanent and relative for he can never completely obliterate these undesirable aspects from his absurd existence. If he credits temporary victories he will taste again his lost innocence because "chaque homme, à condition qu'il en ait reçu le don, peut la connaître au moment où se produit cette sorte d'adéquation merveilleuse entre son corps, ses appétits et le monde. . . . Cette innocence qui est la vraie est donc passagère" (5).

It is because Tarrou demands a return to this former stage which goes beyond the merely transitory rehabilitation accepted by other men that he cannot be content with the ephemeral return to innocence experienced by him and by Dr. Rieux in their brief respite from la peste,

---

[33]Preuves, cx (April 1960), 5.

or in such occasional returns enjoyed by Camus in the world of sports or in such group participations as he experienced in the theater. According to Bloch-Michel, one of Camus' theatrical productions given at the Chateau d'Angers was such a re-entry into a lost Eden:

> Camus se retourna vers moi et eut un geste de la main pour me montrer les spectateurs immobiles, un geste et un bref sourire. Entre lui, les comédiens et le public, venait de naître, seulement pour une second peut-être, cette communion que permet le spectacle de la beauté, ce qui récompensait et justifiait à la fois les efforts qu'il avait exigés, et le bonheur que chacun avait trouvé dans ces efforts. La communauté chaleureuse qui venait de naître, si éphémere qu'elle fût, cette beauté, la douceur de la nuit chaude, nous rendaient tous pour un instant à l'innocence (9).

Tarrou not only expresses his revolt in his refusal of "le monde tel qu'il est," but in his refusal of relative victories in his endeavors to fight la peste in the form of suffering or injustice or of "life itself," as one of Camus' lesser protagonists puts it. Tarrou reduces the occurrence of such returns from exile and increases his own estrangement from life, declaring to Dr. Rieux, "d'ici là, je sais que je ne vaux plus rien pour ce monde lui-même et qu'à partir du moment où j'ai rénoncé à tuer, je me suis condamné a un exil définitif" (209).

If Tarrou is primarily a man of nostalgia, those characters whom Camus proferts as true révoltés or true heroes of l'absurde are men who live with a minimum of nostalgia, adapting their actions to life, which is the "here and now."

Tarrou, in declaring he will leave it to such men to make history, has already in his mind turned his back on "here and now" and opted for "later." For he is now conscious of his desire to be a saint without God.

The fourth stage of his progress toward sainthood has been before the advent of plague, a pursuit of a kind of infantile peace, in which (by cultivating the most harmless of activities) he sought never to breathe the germs of peste into another's face. The "later" which he holds out as a trump card is his death, for his death from the plague at its close is a higher form of suicide, a quest for an absolute of peace and purity unattainable in life.

PART V

SAIN OU SAINT

The first stage in the temptation toward sainthood — an initial innocence — resembles the earliest experience of many human beings. It is an Eden in which the being lives, without knowledge of evil, in physical rapport with his world. This state of innocence, however, because it excludes knowledge, is also a state of ignorance.[34] In his Carnets, I, Camus included Giraudoux' definition of innocence: "L'innocence d'un être est l'adaptation absolue à l'univers dans lequel il vit. Ex: innocence du loup. L'innocence est celui que n'explique pas" (89-90). In Le Mythe. . . he wrote, "Si j'étais arbre parmi les arbres, chat parmi les animaux, cette vie aurait un sens ou plutôt ce problème n'en aurait point car je ferait partie de ce monde. Je serais ce monde auquel je m'oppose maintenant par toute ma conscience et par toute mon exigence de familiarité. Cette raison si dérisoire, c'est elle qui m'oppose a toute création."[35] In Noces, that volume of essays in which Camus celebrated man's nuptials with the world, he wrote: "mais qu'est-ce que le bonheur sinon le simple accord entre un être et l'existence

---

[34]The point that innocence is really ignorance is brought out by Roger Quilliot in his study, "Albert Camus's Algeria" (Camus: A Collection of Critical Essays, op. cit., 39). Camus, sustained by an "invincible summer" (his memory of the Algerian sun) in dark and war-torn Europe, knows, Quilliot points out, the two aspects of rapport or complicity with the natural world, for the sun is not only "life-giving, but the sun kills. It rides high in the sky, it dazzles Meursault's eyes, it triggers the murderous shot — the sun is the real murderer."

[35]Le Mythe de Sisyphe (Paris, 1942), 74. Subsequent quotations from Mythe. . . are taken from this edition.

qu'il mène?" (93). Considerably later in La Chute, Camus' récit published in 1956, Jean-Baptiste Clamence acknowledges his lost innocence: "Oui, peu d'êtres ont été plus naturels que moi. Mon accord avec la vie était total, j'adhérais à ce quelle était du haut en bas, sans rien refuser de ses ironies, de sa grandeur, ni de ses servitudes. En particulier, la chair, la matière, le physique en un mot, qui déconcerte ou décourage tant d'hommes dans l'amour ou dans la solitude, m'apportait, sans m'asservir, des joies égales. J'étais fait pour un corps . . ."[36] It is, then, not only the physical rapport with the world, but a mental and spiritual agreement as well,[37] for Clamence also reported, "je vivais impunément. Je n'étais concerné par aucun jugement" (32). "N'était-ce pas cela, en effet, l'Eden, cher monsieur: la vie en prise directe?" (34), and having lost this blessed state, Clamence later declares "oui, nous avons perdu la lumière, les matins, la sainte innocence de celui qui se pardonne à lui-même" (167).

At this point Caligula's "les hommes meurent et ils ne sont pas heureux" splits into the two terms of a dichotomy: "les hommes meurent" is that aspect of l'absurde which, as death, explains man's dissatisfaction with an order which exacts his removal from a world in which for the most part he feels physically at home; the "et ils ne sont pas heureux" relates more closely to the spiritual and intellectual

---

[36] La Chute (Paris, 1956), 35. Subsequent quotations from La Chute are taken from this edition.

[37] Jean Bloch-Michel explains that happiness and innocence are not synonymous, yet are to some degree co-existent: "s'il n'y a pas d'innocence sans bonheur, celui-ci ne se confond pourtant pas avec celle-là" (4).

alienation derived from man who exacts clarity and unity from a universe which refuses both. Clamence's first fall from innocence (his failure to respond to the cries of a drowning girl) makes him realize that even he himself lacks wholeness, that instead of being "all of a piece," is merely "in a way," that he, as well as all men, is a Judas or a double. He also knows that he and others "confrontés toujours aux mêmes questions bien que nous connaissions d'avance les résponses" would when the young woman again threw herself into the Seine, fail again to rescue her and salvage his self-image. "O jeune fille, jette-toi encore dans l'eau pour que j'aie une seconde foi la chance de nous sauver tous les deux! . . . Brr. . . ! l'eau est si froide! Mais rassurons nous! Il est trop tard, maintenant, il sera toujours trop tard. Heureusement! "[italics added] (170).

Meursault represents the other term or extreme, for rather than remaining exiled from his former felicity, he reenters his garden; for it was he who never explains himself, who never feels the need of justification precisely because in living in the least opposition to creation as it stands, he is able to be "partie de ce monde." Meursault also, before he encounters death or evil on the beach, lives in — if not conscious at least consistent — accord with his world. Content with the banal routine of a life containing "pas de complexes, pas de problèmes," himself a "modèle de normalité," in his contact with death, he commits an act which Germaine Brée maintains was "equivalent to killing that unconscious animal oneness with the universe which is destroyed when the human being accedes to the world of intellectual

consciousness" (68).[38] Meursault describes the moment of his forfeited innocence as "J'ai compris que j'avais détruit l'equilibre du jour, le silence exceptionnel d'une plage où j'avais été heureux" (90). Having lost in his subsequent imprisonment his happy delight in an "apparently indestructible routine broken only by the sea and sun of successive Mediterranean weekends,"[39] Meursault's stage of alienation, his nostalgia for some type of spiritual oneness with a cosmos he will be able to accept, does not outlast the unwelcome visit of the aumônier. Robert Champigny interprets Meursault's successful reintegration as his "refus de devenir un étranger total, c'est-à-dire un refus de devenir un étranger a soi-même, à sa propre vie."[40] Refusing the priest's promises of religious consolations Meursault's outburst has purged him of evil and he recognizes himself as a harmonious entity when "vidé d'espoir, devant cette nuit chargé se signes et d'étoiles; je m'ouvrais pour la première fois à la tendre indifference du monde. De l'éprouver si pareil à moi, si fraternel enfin, j'ai senti que j'avais été heureux, et que je l'étais encore" (179).

Yet all of Camus' protagonists are at least for a time révoltés, and depending on the quality of their rebellion, become in turn either his true or his false rebels. One of the latter, Caligula, for instance,

---

[38]Here Miss Brée is discussing those earlier versions of L'Etranger, the unpublished "La Vie heureuse," later called "La Mort heureuse" in which Mersault replaced Meursault, Zagreus, the Arab.

[39]Brée, 92.

[40]Sur un héros païen (Paris, 1959), 31.

awakes to rebellion at the death of his sister-mistress Drusilla. But his revolt took the form of tyranny — an emulation rather than an opposition to the absurd. In such a way he becomes himself an aspect of la peste.

Camus, too, has gone through these stages and, unlike Clamence, has not been able to live "à la surface de la vie."[41] From his early association with poverty and even death in an Algerian slum, he knows that life consists of the two sides of a coin — l'envers et l'endroit. He has personally faced up to l'absurde in his own near-death from tuberculosis and he experiences death on a large scale when he joins the public world of misery. His revolt is his decision to fight for the victimes against the bourreaux in occupied France.

Camus' entry in his notebooks, "j'ai vécu toute ma jeunesse avec pas d'idée du tout. Aujourd'hui . . . ,"[42] is repeated almost verbatim by Tarrou when he describes his early innocence and his abrupt awakening to the conditions of life:

> Quand j'étais jeune, je vivais avec l'idée de mon innocence, c'est-à-dire avec pas d'idée du tout. Je n'ai pas le genre tourmenté, j'ai débuté comme il convenait. Tout me réussissait, j'étais à l'aise dans l'intelligence, au mieux avec les femmes, et si j'avais quelques inquiétudes, elle passaient comme elle étaient venues. Un jour, j'ai commencé a réfléchir. (203)

Tarrou's "un jour, j'ai commencé a réfléchir. Maintenant. . ." marks the day of his awakening at seventeen when he is invited to attend

---

[41] La Chute, 60.

[42] Carnets, II, 154.

a trial in which his father, a public prosecutor, demands the death penalty for the defendant. (At the same age Camus, with his first serious attack of tuberculosis, has his closest experience of death). The trial is, among other things, the end of the cordial relationship between father and son. This relationship has been largely based on his father's avocation, the "railway guide game," but with the discovery of his father's vocation a train of thoughts, destined to carry him far, has been set going in the young Tarrou.

In later relating his éveil or awakening to Dr. Rieux, Tarrou describes it in this way: "je ne me réveillais vraiment qu'avec le réquisitoire de mon père" (205). He is referring literally to the alarm clock which his father had always set whenever he had to awaken early to attend, in his official capacity, an execution. Figuratively, of course, the alarm clock was Tarrou's call to action for Carl A. Viggiani recalls that "in social terms, for Camus, murder, or death is the door through which man enters history."[43] This is true for Tarrou, for less than a year after he attends the trial, he leaves home permanently because that particular victim of his father's has become his life-long affair. For in his dedication to other victims of injustice (or during the plague, of disease), he remains opposed to that initial "sale aventure où des bouches empestées annonçaient a un homme dans les chaînes qu'il allait mourir et réglaient toutes choses pour qu'il meure, en effet, après des nuits d'agonie pendant lesquelles il attendait d'être assassiné les yeux

---

[43]"Camus' L'Etranger," PMLA, LXXI (December, 1956), 883.

ouverts" (207-208).

Tarrou, in his struggle to remake the world to his own taste — a world without pain in which he can remain pure — follows closely the course of events of near contemporary Europe, asserting, "il n'est pas de pays en Europe dont je n'aie partagé les luttes" (206). It is because his father's victim is executed in the name of justice that he applies himself to the revision of such systems. It is only when he yields to arguments of efficacy and force majeure that Tarrou knows he has inadvertently become an executioner and that he has ceased for the time to be interested in concrete cases, sacrificing them to the ideals of abstract justice.

Once he learns that he has sacrificed the men of today for the man of tomorrow, he can no longer preclude from his own actions the terms "murder," "injustice," and "nihilism." He knows that he, too, like Marthe, the sister in Le Malentendu, has been killing his brothers "sciemment pour être heureux après."[44]

Many French intellectuals who survived the ineffectual twenties and thirties and the sturm und drang of the forties, in refusing the ivory tower, chose either Catholicism or communism. It is in the forties that Camus knows that the type of socialism he has dreamed of during the war years was becoming a new type of tyranny in the hands of the French left. Such a tyranny aims particularly at the guilt-ridden and

---

[44]Carina Gadourek, Les Innocents et les coupables (The Hague, 1963), 109. Subsequent quotations from this work are taken from this edition.

hence "straying bourgeois," becoming a new "nihilism of efficiency," practicing the principle that the end justifies the means.

Camus and his sometimes alter ego, Tarrou, refuses this type of engagement, for each is determined at the end of such clear-cut issues as the Resistance to Nazi aggression and the fight against plague (in which to Tarrou's delight he could fight microbes and not men) to maintain as closely as possible a principle of "clean hands." Such a longing on Camus' part for "le combat juste et sans violence" led to journalistic brushes with Jean-Paul Sartre and other members of the French left and to the definitive and famous querelle Sartre-Camus, as well as the composition of Sartre's play, Les Mains sales (1948), and Camus' rebuttal in the form of another dramatic piece, Les Justes (1950). In 1951 the publication of Camus' L'Homme révolté incited rejoinders from Sartre and his satellites grouped around Sartre's review, Les Temps modernes, which in turn brought forth Camus' final récit, La Chute, in 1957 and his dramatic adaptation of Dostoevsky's anti-nihilistic novel, The Possessed, in 1959.

The fall from innocence undergone by all of Camus' major protagonists, as well as by himself, can be regarded in the light of a fortunate fall — a phrase which is, R. W. B. Lewis explains,

> intended to suggest, within the Christian framework, that the fall of Adam (that is, the fall of man) proved to be fortunate for mankind since it made necessary the entrance into human history of God as man; it made necessary the Incarnation. Modern literature, however, has often exploited a humanistic equivalent of the religious idea; and has suggested that the fall from innocence or virtue can have a fortunate effect

> upon an individual, that it can educate, enrich and humanize him."[45]

Camus, of course, used the humanist concept of the fortunate fall, in his short stories and novels. This fall is fortunate in that it leads to revolt; and while it is a fall from innocence, it is at the same time a progression from ignorance to knowledge, which allows for the possibility of an enlightened revolt. Not all of his protagonists, however, profit from this awakening and fall, for these events mark only the beginning of an absurd freedom, just as for the Christian the fall marks only the beginning of his journey toward salvation.

With absurd man in mind, Rachel Bespaloff asked, "What freedom can there be in the fullest sense without assurance of eternity?" She then compared the freedom, or plight, of the being without God to that of "Adam and Eve banished from paradise, at the moment when alone an unprotected they assume the burden of their earthly existence. The mutilated freedom of Adam and Eve after the fall is not devoid of love," she continued, "since it begets the solidarity of this first we facing a hostile world. If we examine it even more closely, we recognize the frightening present-day freedom, with which we face a future that must be created out of nothing" (100-101).

Although some of Camus' protagonists had not reached what Bespaloff refers to as the "we" stage, and some profit more completely than others from the baptism of human love, each had, however,

---

[45]The Picaresque Saint: Representative Figures in Contemporary Fiction (Philadelphia and New York, 1959), 107.

followed what was, according to Herbert Weisinger, Milton's conviction that "to be truly man, one must be capable of choice, and more, must be capable of bearing the burden of that choice [italics added].[46] Leslie Fiedler sees the burden no longer as it was "so often in the past, a view of man struggling to fulfill some revealed or inherited view of himself and his destiny: but of man learning that it is the struggle itself which is his definition"[italics added].[47] Meursault, as Camus' other true rebels, does find self-definition in the acceptance of his fate or his rock, and does, as the true rebel must, in order to distinguish himself from the nihilist, demonstrate his willingness to give life for life, knowing, "J'étais coupable, je payais, on ne pouvait rien me demander de plus" (166). Additionally, as the absurd man destined to gain awareness, Meursault defines himself in his increasing and finally complete lucidity.

Camus' true rebel must pass through stages in his developing awareness which resemble those of a religious conversion; that is, a "progression from ignorance through experience to light" the attainment of an "intelligible pattern of human destiny capable of being held with the most profound conviction" wrenched from a "universe in which man enjoys, though at a bitter price, a transcendent rapport with himself, with nature, and with God."[48] Germain Brée describes a similar progression in Camus' plays (and she could well have included his novels

---

[46]Tragedy and the Paradox of the Fortunate Fall (London, 1953), 20.

[47]"No! In Thunder," Esquire, LIV (September, 1960), 79.

[48]Weisinger, 20.

and short stories as well), in which the protagonists, albeit without God, follow a basic common pattern which curiously resembles the stages of mysticism or religious conversion: "the 'natural' order of human life is dislocated: a system takes over which is the very negation of order, a systematized disorder, a perversion in which the notion of good and evil are inverted; life is drained of its substance, then comes a struggle and a final resolution in which, temporarily, the natural order reasserts itself" (165).

The false rebel is he who falls or fails, or more precisely is he who is constantly failing, rather than falling, in respect to his self-fulfillment or in respect to himself as he feels he should be. Such a discrepancy between intent and accomplishment gives rise to a sense of guilt, more or less acute according to the stringencies of the individual's self-demands. In the case of Tarrou, the would-be saint, his guilt (referred to as his _peste intérieure_) became no longer an incentive to his search for authenticity but completely eclipsed it. For aside from the clear-cut issues of plague where one fought microbes rather than men, Tarrou is rendered inactive by his fear of "lapses." In regard to these "lapses," Thomas C. Hanna writes of Tarrou's fear of inadvertently breathing the germs of _peste_ in another's face:

> We may well wonder if Tarrou is not speaking of sin when he talks of "lapses." The plague is evil and sin is giving in to this evil. It is obvious that Tarrou, in speaking for Camus is speaking of sin, but that _it is sin without God_. This is to say that, in Tarrou's thought, evil is of this world, man is of this world, and sin is against a value which is of this world. God in no way figures in the problem.[49]

---

[49] _The Thought and Art of Albert Camus_ (Chicago, 1958), 202.

Camus himself wrote in Le Mythe . . . : "L'absurde qui est l'état métaphysique de l'homme conscient, ne mène pas à Dieu. Peut-être cette notion s'éclaircira-t-elle si je hasarde cette énormité: l'absurde c'est le péché sans Dieu" (60). Admitting sin to his universe, although reluctantly, Camus speaks for himself and fellow Algérois:

> Il y a des mots que je n'ai jamais bien compris comme celui de péché. Je crois savoir pourtant que ces hommes n'ont pas péché contre la vie. Car s'il y a un péché contre la vie, ce n'est peut-être pas tant d'en déspérer, que d'éspérer une autre vie, et se dérober a l'implacable grandeur de celle-ci.[50]

Rossi sums this all up by stating,

> It seems that the sense of absurdity is the atheistical equivalent of the Christian concept of sin, and, more exactly, of original sin. It is consciousness of a fall, an "incalculable fall before the image of what we are" (Sisyphus), a sense of deficiency arising from the void which separates the irrationality of the world and our desperate longing for clarity and unity (402).

Although guilt engendered by sin, whether Christian or atheistic, can be the step toward a higher form of moral existence, it must be a reasonable or calculated culpability rather than the total culpability assumed by Tarrou. Such an assumption of total guilt leads to Camusean sin, i. e., a turning away from this life toward some type of "later" or solution outside of life. And Tarrou, of course, with his nostalgia for absolute purity, for the search of a lost innocence which would be permanent rather than transitory, and for his final nostalgia for perfect peace, the "paix des pierres," or nothingness, was banking not on life, but on death, for these nostalgias are evasions of life and constitute a

---

[50] Noces, 69.

death instinct.

If, as Rachel Bespaloff stated, "Sin without God is nothing but the choice of the wrong freedom," Tarrou, in turning away from life in his great quest for perfection, has followed the road of other absolutists in Camus' writing — of Caligula, or "le renégat, and of Stavrogin in Camus' adaptation for the theater of Dostoevsky's The Possessed, ending with nothing. His death, regarded as a higher form of suicide, reveals that his temptation toward sainthood marks for Tarrou a regression rather than a progression, that his passage is not from "ignorance through experience to light" but rather from newness to oldness, from exultation to despair, from spiritual victory to meaninglessness, from life to death.

PART VI

CREATION CORRECTED

In Camus' oeuvre revolt takes two forms — that of political or social action and that of artistic creation. In L'Homme révolté, Camus cites Van Gogh as having said, "Je crois de plus en plus. . .qu'il ne faut pas juger le bon Dieu sur ce monde-ci. C'est une étude de lui qui est mal venue" (306). It is the writer's duty then, Camus believes, because the world is basically unjust, to improve or correct this faulty sketch. The artist should then become, on the basis of his revolt, a fabricator of new worlds containing the unity and clarity which this one lacks.

However, Camus does not completely reject the world-as-it-is, but rather revolts against it "à cause de ce qui lui manque et au nom de ce que, parfois, il est."[51] For Camus still believes that the world is man's true kingdom in those ephemeral moments of rapport realized between the creature and his environment.

In this respect — in the task of correcting creation — Camus feels that poetry has failed, that the nineteenth-century Russian and American novels have come closest to the realization that should be the goal of the contemporary novel. Camus particularly feels that Romanticism limits its revolt to vain ostentation, to the flaunting of the artist's wickedness and originality as a challenge to God. Surrealism, he feels, has never gone beyond nihilism. Thus it fails to transform unsatisfactory

---

[51] L'Homme révolté, 303.

b

reality into a unified and satisfying whole. Entries in Camus' Carnets, devoted to the annotation of events and ideas, as well as to projections of future works, sometimes carry this label: "Creation Corrected."

Keeping notebooks can be thought of as a family enterprise in Camus' microcosm. Camus, who kept his own Carnets from 1935 till his death in 1960, writes his novel La Peste in the form of a chronicle kept by Dr. Rieux. Rieux' chronicle is, in turn, augmented by Tarrou's notes left at his death in Rieux' possession. There are also sporadic discussions of the literary endeavors of two other characters in La Peste. For the diligent municipal clerk, Joseph Grand, in writing a novel takes numerous philological notes to help himself over an insurmountable obstacle — the first sentence; while the journalist, Raymond Rambert, has been gathering data on the native population (a task which resembles Camus' earlier reports made to the Alger-Republicain on a Berber tribe, the Kabyle).

Meursault manifests this trait, too, but in a manner consistent with his personality. For he is keeping a scrapbook in which he pastes amusing newspaper clippings. What Robert de Luppé claims for Meursault's scrapbooks also holds true for those of Camus and Tarrou — that each is a compilation of "détails qui n'offrent aucun sens, afin de maintenir sa conscience éveillé."[52] An example of such absurd vision is included in Camus' Carnets, I:

> Le type dans une brasserie qui entend une dame téléphoner et appeler son numéro et son nom. Il répond au bout du fil.

---

[52]Albert Camus (Paris, 1963), 80.

> Ell lui parle comme s'il était là-bas (famille, détails précis, etc.) Il ne comprend pas. C'est comme ça" (208-209).

The artist with his type of vision "knows the limits of his mind, the limits of his life," writes Germaine Brée, "and the uselessness of an effort which he maintains at its highest level of intensity. Knowing the limits of his mind," she continues, "the artist does not attempt to 'reason the concrete,' but through his intelligence, he orders a sumptuous 'mime' of concrete images that testify to the carnal reality of a universe whose mystery remains intact" (246).

Meursault's very milieu was made up of created characters capable of throwing light on those absurd lives which Tarrou later records in his notebooks. One such is that strange little woman whom Meursault encounters in his café-restaurant, who sits opposite him systematically checking off every program in a twelve-page radio guide, who orders and pays for her lunch mechanically, and who is afterwards seen by Meursault winding her way through traffic in the same abstracted manner. It is this same automatic woman who sits through Meursault's trial a year later, unwavering in her attention, yet showing no recognition whatever. Various justifications have been offered for her presence in the récit and each bears a relationship to the types of entries Tarrou is to make in his own notebooks.

The most generalized of the explanations for her presence is that she underlines the mechanical nature of Meursault's life before the episode on the beach: a life devoid of conscious values or a sense of direction, set in motion only by physical stimuli or the fortuitous; in this respect her presence again emphasizes this early life pattern of

Meursault's, in her display of an intense dedication to what matters so little (her radio programs) and her absence of dedication to what matters so much (traffic and a murder trial, occurrences in which life itself is hazarded). In such a way she parodies the amorality of Meursault's earliest activities which show no difference in degrees of commitment between making love to Marie or the pleasure of drying his hands on a clean towel.

Carl A. Viggiani reminds the reader that Meursault has found this robot-woman bizarre, pointing out that the word bizarre appears two or three times in the récit used for the first time two pages before the appearance of the odd lady, by Marie to describe Meursault. "In an author as careful as Camus," he writes, "this is probably intentional, his aim being to mirror Meursault in the image of the petite automate" (880-881). To underline Meursault as bizarre is to emphasize that he is the "stranger," not so much to life as to society. It is, however, those who make up this society whose mores Meursault has jeopardized in his refusal to lie, who are, in turn, due to their own self-deceptions, the true "strangers," strangers, that is, to life.

Louis R. Rossi sees this woman's function in the récit in yet another light, for he sees in Meursault a potential for Heidegger's Being-toward-Death. As one who in his refusal to practice the conventional attitudes towards death, and as one who has never regarded death with the usual unknowing indifference, Meursault is a foil to society and this robot-woman. For she is to life what the director of the old people's home is to death: the director with "his long handclasp, his files,

and the civil service manner" was one who obviously went through ceremonies related to death "quite often in his official capacity, simply as a matter of form and almost mechanically" (404).

The robot-woman's first actions witnessed by Meursault make it clear that in the importance which she gives to entertainment, she reveals not only the passive role of the early Meursault, but she is also a murderer. Because she kills time as an audience, whether to radio or to murder trials, she is another type of criminal, for by denying life's seriousness, she plays with it to the extent that she even denies the seriousness of taking life. She cooperates, indeed, with the general levity involved in Meursault's trial revealed in such issues as his not having wept at his mother's funeral, which betray the fact that he is to be executed, not for murder, but because he does not play society's game. Of all involved in that trial he is the only one who sees life as a serious matter. The proof that others do not, is demonstrated by the journalist's overt admission that the indignation, even believed to be "righteous," has been fanned by a public hungry for melodrama: "Vous savez," he tells Meursault, "nous avons monté un peu votre affaire. L'été, c'est la saison creuse pour les journaux. Et il n'y avait que votre histoire et celle du parricide qui vaillent quelque chose" (124).

The robot-woman in her stare, devoid of recognition, points up the fact that this failure on her part is above all tantamount to the failure of society — its officials, its witnesses, and its audiences — to recognize their own common fate, for Meursault is, in reality, only one condemned man among all men equally condemned. The automate, then,

reveals above all the mechanical nature of a universe which kills implacably. Against such insentience Meursault has for a time hoped to find a way out, a "chance in a million," a hope which he, more conscious than the majority, abandons, knowing that "la mécanique écrasait tout" (164). It was from the estrangement of this mechanical aspect of the condition humaine, however, that Meursault does, at last, escape: the automatic woman then is the very mechanism he has escaped: the daily automatism of the lives and attitudes of the self-deceived who never learn, as he does, that it is not the evasion of death, but the awareness of death which "defines liberty and gives meaning to life."[53]

His final defection from the mechanical puts Meursault on the conscious level of Tarrou and Rieux, for (to use a Sartrean term) he has escaped from mauvaise foi, which is self-deception or bad faith. Serge Doubrovsky attempts to give the significance of these terms in describing them as "man's desperate effort to give consistency of being to his existence, to make himself exist through symbolic possession of the world, through other people's view of him, etc."[54] The utilization of the robot-woman in L'Etranger shows Camus' concern, as well as Sartre's, with the blinders men employ, assuming, as in the case of this strange woman, a variety of forms. There is stultifying routine; there are the ceremonies and duties of position, such as those to which Tolstoy's Ivan Ilyich adhered; there are diversions and there is social

---

[53]Rossi, 414-415.

[54]"The Ethics of Albert Camus," Camus: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Brée (Englewood Cliffs, N. J., 1962), 77.

status which leads men to believe that life is a game played according to a decreed set of rules; there is the false seriousness of authority which blinds some into a humorless and relentless pursuit of ideals or absolutes. Most prevalent of all are the conventional attitudes toward death, for

> At bottom, nobody believes in his own death. Or, and this is the same: In his unconsciousness, everyone of us is convinced of his immortality. As for the death of others, a cultured man will carefully avoid speaking of this possibility, if the person fated to die can hear him. Only children ignore this rule. . . . We regularly emphasize the accidental cause of death, the mishap, the disease, the infection, the advanced age, and thus betray our eagerness to demote death from a necessity to a mere accident.[55]

In the same vein Tarrou has noted in his notebooks the following conversation overheard in a streetcar and considered by him as typical of the attitude of all those who in order to quiet their anxieties, talk away the inexplicable:

> — Tu as bien connu Camps, disait l'un.
> — Camps! un grand, avec une moustache noire?
> — C'est ce. Il était à l'aiguillage.
> — Oui, bien sûr.
> — Eh bien, il est mort.
> — Ah! et quand donc?
> — Après l'histoire des rats.
> — Tiens? Et qu'est-ce qu'il a eu?
> — Je ne sais pas, la fièvre. Et puis, il n'était pas fort. Il a eu des abcès sous les bras. Il n'a pas résisté.
> — Il avait pourtant l'air comme tout le monde.
> — Non, il avait sa poitrine faible, et il faisait de la musique à l'Orphéon. Toujours souffler dans un piston ça use.
> — Ah! termine le deuxième, quand on est malade, il ne faut pas souffler dans un piston.(22)

---

[55]Walter Kaufmann's translation of an excerpt from Freud's "Our Relation to Death," from Timely Thoughts on War and Death. Taken from Kaufmann's "Existentialism and Death" in The Meaning of Death, ed. Herman Feifel (New York, 1959), 48.

It is very obvious that this man who his friends claim died because he blew a horn and had a weak chest, instead of from fever and buboes, must have died at the beginning of the bubonic plague for its recent arrival allowed these Oranais their deviousness in the face of death even after the dead rats had started to appear and their friends to disappear, However, these men of the working class are those who would have, like the poor of the working-class district where Camus grew up in Algiers, little besides their somewhat extravagant stories to shield them from the truth of peste.

It was another class who was able to wear their blinders longer, well-clothed against the black wind which Meursault, and any other hero of l'absurde, has felt blowing toward him all his life. The following event must have been taken from Tarrou's notebook, for it is concerned with the evening he and Cottard spent at the theater. The function was grimly appropriate for it was Gluck's opera Orphée which, despite the plague, men continued to attend with all their appropriate regalia. The tone is Tarrou's rather than Rieux':

> Ceux qui arrivaient s'appliquaient visiblement à ne pas manquer leur entrée. Sous la lumière éblouissante de l'avant-rideau, pendant les musiciens accordaient discrètement leurs instruments, les silhouettes se détachaient avec précision, passaient d'un rang a l'autre, s'inclinaient avec grace. Dans le léger brouhaha d'une conversation de bon ton, les hommes reprenaient l'assurance qui leur manquaient quelques heures auparavant, parmi les rues noires de la ville. L'habit chassait la peste.(163)

Despite the sure charm against peste of evening dress, Orpheus on that particular night fell victim to the plague during one of his pitiful arias addressed to the deceased Eurydice. In the ensuing panic the

theater was precipitately emptied, the audience leaving behind them traces of "tout un luxe devenu inutile, sous la forme d'éventails oubliés et de dentelles traînant sur le rouge des fauteuils" (164). This was one of the scenes in which the elaborate stage sets men erect to shield them from l'absurde collapses, for "au contraire d'Eurydice, l'absurde ne meurt que lorsqu'on s'en détourne."

Another form of mauvaise foi is achieved through the self-assurance gained through professional status. To illustrate this point Tarrou refers frequently to Judge Othon in his notebooks. Tarrou puts the judge on record as one who "arrive toujours le premier à la porte de restaurant. . . laisse passer sa femme, menue comme une souris noire, et entre alors avec, sur les talons, un petit garçon et une petite fille habillés comme des chiens savants" (24-25). His unfortunate son "vetu de noire. . . la petite ombre se son père" (99), dies first, preceding his father of whom some wag has remarked that he is, dressed as is his custom, ready for the undertaker. Judge Othon does, however, undergo a reversal, for at the death of his little black shadow, his personal appearance, badge of his profession and prestige, reflects his new lack of assurance. Othon, like other Camusean protagonists, has awakened from innocence or ignorance with the advent of death: "il était toujours habillé de la même façon et portait le même col dur. Tarrou remarqua seulement que ses touffes, sur les temps, étaient beaucoup plus hérissées et qu'un de ses lacets était dénoué, le juge avait l'air fatigué et, pas une seule fois, il ne regarda ses interlocuteurs en face." When Othon asks Tarrou, who has witnessed the death of his son, if the son had suffered

much, Tarrou knows that "quelque chose était changé" (198). It is Rieux who becomes indignant, not Othon, when he learns that Othon has mistakenly been kept in quarantine beyond the designated time. Othon then displays his recent descent from the absolute to the relative point of view: "M. Othon. . . leva une main molle et dit, pesant ses mots, que tout le monde pouvait se tromper" (214).

Not so with others of his profession. Tarrou in describing his father, a prosecuting attorney, to Rieux, stressed his father's mechanical approach to life which permits the older Tarrou's adherence to the heartless machinery of justice. This was the railway guide game, a game which through constant practice made his father a walking timetable:

> il était à même de vous dire exactement les heures de départ et aller de Paris-Berlin, les combinaisons d'horaires qu'il fallait faire pour aller de Lyon à Varsovie, le kilométrage exact entre les capitales de votre choix. Etes-vous capable de dire comment on va de Briançon a Chamonix? Même un chef de gare s'y perdrait. . . . Il s'exerçait à peu près tous les soirs à enricher ses connaissances sur ce point, et il en était plutôt fier. . . . je lui fournissais un auditoire dont il appréciait la bonne volonté. . . (203-204)

Absurd as the activity was, it was on the surface as harmless as many of the eccentric activities later described in Tarrou's notebooks. It was instead the discovery of his father's role as a judge that touches off a train of thoughts concerning the machinery of human justice which will later lead him to fight even divine justice. Up to this moment, however, Tarrou's concept of what went on in a law court has been quite abstract and softened by such deviations as legal nomenclature and terminology offers. Meursault's comments on the fatuous and humorless

proceedings of his own trial are:

> le fait que le sentence avait été lue à vingt heures plutôt qu'à dix-sept, le fait qu'elle aurait pu être toute autre, qu'elle avait été prise par des hommes qui changent de linge, qu'elle avait été portée au credit d'une notion aussi imprécise que le peuple français (ou allemand, ou chinois), il me semblait bien que tout cela enlevait beaucoup de sérieux a une telle décision. (160)

Tarrou's reaction is more bitter and less ironical than Meursault's, when he sees his father for the first time in the role of a judge. He appears to his son as:

> ni bonhomme ni affectueux, sa bouche grouillait des phrases immenses, qui, sans arrêt, en sortaient comme des serpents. Et je compris qu'il demandait la mort de cet homme au nom de la société et qu'il demandait même qu'on lui coupât le cou. Il disait seulement, il est vrai: "Cette tête doit tomber." Mais, à la fin, la différence n'était pas grande. Et cela revint au même, en effet, puisqu'il obtint cette tête. Simplement, ce n'est pas lui qui fit alors le travail. (205)

In Camus' world view the older Tarrou has sinned against life (which is, it should be remembered, the only sin that Camus recognizes) in two ways. Despite the apparent innocuousness of the railway guide game he is guilty as a _joueur_ of a lack of seriousness toward life in spending it on such meaningless activity.[56] In a footnote to the English translation of Camus' _Carnets_, I, Thody related, "Camus was fascinated by the words _jeu_, _jouer_, and _joueur_, with their different associations with gambling, sports, and play-acting and deliberately exploited their ambiguity."[57] Meursault in his ruminations over the newspaper clipping

---

[56]Clamence, the protagonist of _La Chute_ who is deliberately perverse admits "je jouais le jeu" (_La Chute_, 71).

[57]_Notebooks_, 126.

found in his cell telling of the son who returned after twenty-five years, hoping to be recognized without announcing himself, and who was instead murdered by his mother and sister for the money he had intended in any event, to give them, commented, "d'un côté, elle était invraisemblable. D'un autre, elle était naturelle. De toute façon, je trouvais que le voyageur l'avait un peu mérité et qu'il ne faut jamais jouer" (118). The reason why Meursault found Jan's death in such circumstances natural is deduced from the word "to play" or "to trick" and the word "natural" for to play tricks with a fate which plays with human life is to work in death's favor. And Meursault had already learned that a world which had once appeared natural — that is, in which he had felt at home — could change its aspect in a moment, for as Viggiani recounts, "Every insignificant thing, person, and act of Part I returns . . . to condemn Meursault. The 'Cela ne veut rien dire' theme of Part I is turned upside down: everything that happens to him becomes supremely meaningful . . . ." (885). It is then more prudent, admitting one's vulnerability, to withhold gambles and gambits, allowing in this way fewer openings to fate.

It is when self-deception is joined in some way with murder or death that the sin against life increases. To judge, and to feel ordained or justified in such a role, is not only a violation of modesty and of <u>mesure</u>, but it is what Dr. Rieux termed "le vice le plus désespérant, celui de l'ignorance qui croit tout savoir et qui s'autorise alors à tuer" (113). The judge is he who, in his presumption, fulfills the indictment of Rieux' to the letter for: to sentence to death what is already destined

for death is no longer to defy, but to comply, with l'absurde; in a world where only relative judgment is feasible, to condemn to death is to condemn with absolute standards — standards which no one possesses; and, last of all, to judge another absolutely is to infer that one is oneself above this universal human condition.

To offset the nihilism inherent in such forms of mauvaise foi, Tarrou devoted perhaps the greatest portion of his notes to those lives which he saw as notably harmless — an aggregate of habits or activities which, while absurd in themselves (and what human activity subject to unremitting death, Tarrou would ask himself, is not absurd!) are harmless. There are two absurd types, the old Spaniard and the military gentleman, on whom Tarrou focused his attention, who are ironical answers to Tarrou's central concern: the problem of sainthood. The old Spaniard, a retired draper, is, according to a suggestion made by Thody,

> an ironical continuation of the character of Meursault, or rather of one aspect of his character, his lack of interest in the supposedly important things of life. In his prison cell, Meursault realizes that the simple act of being alive is so important that he could, if given the chance, live indefinitely in a tree trunk if such were his fate. The old draper is doing something very close to this. He is Meursault such as Meursault would have been had not his bad luck and absolute honesty made his death inevitable. It is an ironical portrait, a corrective to the view of life expressed in The Outsider[British translation of the title L'Etranger]. Meursault was unfortunate not to have had the ability to keep himself alive, as did the draper whose monotonous action was certainly the best remedy for his asthma (39).

The monotonous action referred to above was the transference of a canful of dried peas from one can to another; the fifteenth transmission marked the time for a meal. The old man who hoped to live to a very

old age had retired at the age of fifty and according to Tarrou's notebooks "A en croire sa femme, d'ailleurs, il avait donné très jeune des signes de sa vocation. Rien, en effet, ne l'avait jamais intéressé, ni son travail, ni les amis, ni le café, ni la musique, ni les femmes, ni les promenades . . ." (100). Interested, then, in nothing but the "pure flame of life" the old Spaniard enacting ironically Camus' dictum of "vivre le plus," is according to Carina Gadourek "celui qui en approche le plus. . . il n'espère rien de la vie, mais il a le courage de la maintenir le plus possible" (124).

According to Adele King, the old Spaniard "understands the nature of life more clearly than many in active health."[58] According to Richard Lehan, Camus uses Tarrou's comment and inclusions of such types "to suggest that these unusual pastimes are no more or less idiotic than the functioning tasks of the people who make up society in general."[59]

Camus had included entries dealing with this old Spaniard in his Carnets.[60] These indicate that he, like his created character Tarrou, sought evidences of l'absurde in the life around him. The following information related by the Spaniard's wife concerning the old man is to be found both in his Carnets, II, and his novel La Peste: "il n'était jamais sorti de sa ville, sauf un jour où obligé de se rendre à Alger

---

[58]Albert Camus (New York, 1964), 67. Subsequent quotations from this work are taken from this edition.

[59]"Levels of Reality in the Novels of Albert Camus," Modern Fiction Studies, X (Autumn, 1964), 237.

[60]Compare Carnets, II, 18-19.

pour des affaires de familie, il s'était arrêté à la gare la plus proche d'Oran, incapable de pousser plus loin l'aventure. Il était revenu chez lui par le premier train"(100). This account, showing the limits the old man put to heroic action, when adjoined to Tarrou's other notes, points up ironically Tarrou's desire to be a saint which is, in its desire to surpass ordinary men, also a desire for heroism. The account also serves as a leit motif pointing up the realization that finally comes to two of Camus' absolutists: Caligula, who learns at the end, "je n'ai pas pris la voie qu'il faillait, je n'aboutis à rien," and Tarrou, who finally realizes that he was not on "la bonne voie" for, despite the train of thought released by his father, he has, like Mathieu, hero of Sartre's Les Chemins de la liberté, been on the wrong track since the word go!

Tarrou's other favorite absurdist type, the military gentleman, routinely enacted the following scene on a balcony facing Tarrou's window:

> Sa chambre donnait en effet sur une petite rue transversale où des chats dormaient à l'ombre des murs. Mais tous les jours, après déjeuner, aux heures où la ville tout entière somnolait dans la chaleur, un petit vieux apparaissant sur un balcon, de l'autre côté de la rue, les cheveux blancs et bien peignés, droit et sévère dans ses vêtements de coupe militaire, il appelait les chats d'un "Minet, minet," à la fois distant et doux. Les chats levaient leurs yeux pales de sommeil, sans encore se déranger. L'autre déchirait des petit bouts de papier au-dessus de la rue et les bêtes, attirées par cette pluie de papillons blancs avançaient au milieu de la chaussée tendant une patte hésitante vers les derniers morceaux de papier. Le petit vieux crachait alors sur les chats avec force et précision. Si l'un des crachets atteignait son but il riait." (23)

These oddities of human life brought together in Tarrou's notebooks are first of all examples of the possible ways in which men fulfill

the Sisyphean task of dominating the absurd, for occupied as they are, their gestures and activities are ultimately not more meaningless in the face of man's fate than any other. Each resembles Camus who, generally speaking, opted for life: in backing up the contention that any kind of life is preferable to no life, each shows, albeit in a very extreme way, his endorsement of Sisyphus' rock or of Raskolnikov's own type of rock, an islet in a storm-tossed sea, or Meursault's trunk of a hollow tree.

For Tarrou, however, the most important feature discoverable in these bizarre types is the fact that, disregarding the extremely low ebb of their lives, they have solved a problem which continues to baffle Tarrou: how to live without adding to evil. The old Spaniard and the man-who-spits-on-cats are hurting no one. For this reason in his consideration of the old Spaniard as well as the military gentleman he asks "Est-ce un saint?" and answers his own question in this way: "Oui, si la sainteté est un ensemble d'habitudes." In the notebooks, Rieux reports,

> On trouve. . . un petit rapport sur le vieux aux chats. . . . Les chats étaient, se réchauffant dans les flaques de soleil, fidèles au rendez-vous. Mais à l'heure habituelle les volets restèrent obstinément fermés. Au cours des jours suivants, Tarrou ne les vit plus jamais ouverts. Il en avait conclu curieusement que le petit vieux était <u>vexé</u> ou mort, que <u>s'il était vexé</u>, <u>c'est qu'il pensait avoir raison</u> et que <u>la peste lui avait fait tort</u>, mais que s'il était mort, il fallait se demander à son propos, comme pour le vieil asthmatique, s'il avait été un saint. Tarrou ne le pensait pas, mais estimait qu'il y avait dans le cas du vieillard une "indication." "Peut-être," observaient les carnets, "ne peut-on aboutir qu'à des <u>approximations</u> de sainteté. Dans ce cas, il faudrait se contenter <u>d'un satanisme modeste et charitable</u>." (225; italics added)

In considering the pointers or "indications" to be deduced from this study of the old man, Tarrou, who had a fair enough feeling for

l'absurde, is nevertheless unable to apply what he grasps intellectually to his own life. In his realization that for these men at least, approximations to sainthood were the only possibilities, he should then know that he must remain content with approximations, that is, with relative rather than absolute victories over evil and imperfection. He should also have known that sainthood and satanism are terms which connote good and evil in absolute rather than relative terms; and finally, in speaking of satanisme in reference to these types (even when he modified it with "charitable" and "modeste") he alludes to whatever contributes to the forces of negation, opposing those of life, to whatever is anti-human and, in a word, nihilistic.

Of the "vieux aux chats" his last view is — and this is after the cats disappear due to the plague — of the old man on his balcony without his former military assurance, "moins bien peigné, moins vigoureux. On le sent inquiet. Au bout d'un moment, il est rentré. Mais il avait craché, un fois dans le vide" (24). If Tarrou is right, as he explains in his diary, that the old man is vexé because he thought he was right and the plague or life has proven him wrong, Tarrou comes to a similar realization of the void. Rieux notes that Tarrou had, too, judging by his last entries and his wavering handwriting, lost his grip on himself and on life.

In reading these notebooks Rieux notes that Tarrou often refers to Rieux' mother. When personal considerations begin to appear in the material of the last pages, the reason also becomes apparent, for he wrote that Mme. Rieux reminds him of his mother; of his own mother

he adds the somewhat surprising statement, "c'est elle que j'ai toujours voulu rejoindre" (226).

Both women, no doubt, interest him as "styles of life." What he had loved in his mother, he writes, was her "dimness," her "self-effacement." Of Mme. Rieux he admires the "lightness": "la légèreté avec laquelle elle se deplaçait d'une pièce à l'autre," her goodness reflected in a face where one feels "tant de bonté" (99) shall always be stronger than plague, and the fact that she as well as her son always looks on life with courage and unwavering eyes: "Je suis heureuse de te voir," she tells her son, "les rats ne peuvent rien contre ça" (14).

Rieux wrote that

> Tarrou insistait surtout sur l'effacement de Mme. Rieux; sur la façon qu'elle avait de tout exprimer en phrases simples; sur le goût particulier qu'elle montrait pour une certaine fenêtre, donnant sur la rue calme, et derrière laquelle elle s'asseyait le soir, un peu droite, les mains tranquilles et le regard attentif, jusqu'à ce que le crépuscule eût envahi la pièce, faisant d'elle une ombre noire dans la lumière grise qui fonçait peu à peu et dissolvait alors la silhouette immobile. . . (226)

Of his mother's self-effacement and death Tarrou wrote, "Il y a huit ans, je ne peux plus dire qu'elle soit mort. Elle s'est seulement effacée un peu plus que d'habitude et quand je me suis retourné, elle n'était pas là" (226). "Dimness," "lightness," "self-effacement," and "goodness" all convey Tarrou's concern with these two women. Is this not a desire for a return to the womb, or for a regression to a former state of existence — what Freud would call a death instinct?

Tarrou's attraction toward other forms of nihilism is illustrated by another personality who keeps reappearing in his notebook. This is

Cottard, who has been referred to by Camus' critics as a collaborationist, a black marketeer, even an anarchist. It is possible for Tarrou to attract Cottard and to tolerate him in turn because of Tarrou's general suspension of judgment, that is, his refusal to judge anyone. For judgment Tarrou associates with his father's profession, the law. To a greater extent, it is probable that death is the real bond between them. For Cottard, who has committed some unknown crime, embodies associations of violence and guilt: at the beginning of the plague year he tries to hang himself; then, because he feels free for the time from police investigations, he rejoices in the plague; and at the end of the epidemic, no longer immune from their visitation, he is killed in a skirmish with these same police.

Camus points out in an entry in his Carnets, II, the nature of Cottard's attachment to Tarrou and his friends in the sanitary unit, an attachment devoid of any inclination to help others fight the peste: "Ainsi ce coeur sauvage appelait ses prochains et mendiait leur chaleur. Ainsi cette âme raviné, rabougie demandait aux deserts leur fraîcheur et faisait sa paix d'une maladie, d'un fléau et de catastrophes. . ." (18).

Of Cottard, Carl A. Viggiani wrote: "This type of nihilism which issues in indiscriminate murder is incarnated on the social level in Camus' work by Nada, Caligula, Stepan, and Cottard, whose final act is meant to be an illustration of Breton's declaration that the simplest Surrealist act consists in going down into the street, revolver in hand, and firing at random into a crowd" (883-884). Cottard's act (for Camus, it should be remembered, feels that surrealism never went beyond nihilism)

and Tarrou's attempts at correcting creation never transcend disorder and incoherence as do Camus' own creative efforts to transform chaos into order and disorder into harmony.

PART VII

ORAN — ENTRE OUI ET NON

For its geographical location and for the ugliness of the city itself, Oran both fascinates and repells Camus. He sees its buildings as ugly, its citizens somnolent and complacent, and nature, which is excluded from the city, as beautiful and wild. Germaine Brée points out that, for Camus, Oran illustrates a metaphysical situation: the absurd confrontation of man and nature, of the "monstrous beauty and indifference of the land and the equally monstrous unconsciousness of the inhabitants" (214).

Oran, besides being part of Camus' spiritual geography, is also part of his spiritual Odyssey, for the mind seeking solace demands islands or deserts. Today these are rare, and even when found are charged not only with the weight of population but with the weight of memory, tradition, and history as well. For this reason Camus writes in "Le Minotaure ou le halte d'Oran" that men must find their deserts where their equivalent is needed; in order to understand the world, "il faut parfois se détourner; pour mieux servir les hommes, les tenir un moment à distance. Mais où trouver la solitude necessaire à la force, la longue respiration où l'esprit se rassemble et le courage se mesure? Il reste les grandes villes. Simplement, il y faut des conditions."[61]

Oran offers these conditions. Its ugliness itself is an advantage, for ugliness claims no allegiance — a boon to the mind-at-war-with-

---

[61] L'Eté, 13.

itself; it offers also the virtue of a certain kind of boredom which Camus equates with the mindlessness of the Minotaur, the restful monotony of purely physical activity; it offers the anonymity of a hubbub combined with the solitude needed for contemplation; and greatest of all the advantages it offers is that of "those 'cities without a past' in which, according to Camus, man, without a history, a tradition, or even a religion to which he can refer, is face to face with the stark fact of his implacable existence."[62]

According to Camus, Oran has, like Descartes' Amsterdam, the advantage "for men with a purpose" of being commercial, anonymous, and banal. As Descartes found in the leading mercantile city (it has since become picturesque), his island or his desert, so Tarrou and Camus find in Oran, "une ville ordinaire et rien de plus qu'un préfecture française de la côte algérienne" (5), the place to put into practice Descartes' dictum "to never accept anything as true unless I know it to be obviously so."

One of the "obvious truths" revealed in this region was for Tarrou and Camus the absurd division between man and environment. Of the Oranese deserts and beaches Camus writes: "Ce sont ici les terres de l'innocence" (60).

> Sur ces plages d'Oranie, tous les matins d'été ont l'air d'être les premiers du monde. Tous les crépiscules semblent être les derniers, agonies solennelles annoncées au coucher de soleil par une dernière lumière qui fonce toutes le teintes.(58-59)

---

[62]Brée, 213.

Turning their back on innocence, the Oranais solved their problem in the following way:

> Forcés de vivre devant un admirable paysage, les Oranais ont triumphé de cette redoutable épreuve en se couvrant de constructions bien laides. On s'attend à une ville ouverte sur la mer, lavée, rafraîchie par la brise des soirs. Et, mis à parte le quartier espagnol, on trouve une cité qui présente le dos à la mer, qui s'est construite en tournant sur elle-même, à la façon d'un escargot. Oran est un gran mur circulaire et jaune, recouvert d'un ciel dur. Au début, on erre dans le labyrinthe, on cherche la mer comme le signe d'Ariane. Mais on tourne en rond dans les rues fauves et oppressantes, et, à la fin, le Minotaure dévore les Oranais: c'est l'ennui. Depuis longtemps, les Oranais n'errent plus. Ils ont accepté d'être mangés.(28-29)

It is obvious, then, that the natives of Oran were firm believers in humanizing or anthropomorphizing the world for "comprendre le monde pour un homme c'est le réduire à l'humaine, le marquer de son sceau."[63] To this purpose, they build behind their walls a town which is, in regard to nature, thoroughly negative. No trees, no gardens, no sound of wings or of leaves. Having turned their backs on the world they turn them also on inquiry: ". . .on n'agite pas sur les boulevards d'Oran le problème de l'être et l'on ne s'inquiète pas du chemin de la perfection" (26).

To make their escape from the ontological more complete, the Oranais have, in order to suppress any intimations they may have of the human condition, dedicated themselves to commerce and to the physical exertions of boxing, bowling, and bathing. In the cultivation of habits they find they can get through the days without thinking:

---

[63] Le Mythe de Sisyphe, 32.

> lever, tramway, quatre heures de bureau ou d'usine, repas, tramway, quatre heures de travail, repas, sommeil et lundi mardi mercredi jeudi vendredi et samedi le même rythme.[64]

Having gotten through the day so successfully, there are still the evenings, when a recollection arises, however dim, of the innocent world of sunsets and sunrises beyond the wall. This is disturbing to those whose lives are usually as scheduled and predictable as their streetcars, but it only occurs in the moments just before the street lights are turned on. Once the lights are lit, eclipsing at last the stars, "la rue de faubourg s'animait et une exclamation sourde et soulagé salua au de dehors l'instant où les lamps s'allumerait."[65] With the artificial illumination all of their "stupide confiance humaine" returns.

If the tendency of the Oranais to humanize the world demonstrates the type of mauvaise foi or bad faith which turns its back on innocence, Tarrou, on the other hand, takes the opposite stand, for his nostalgia for innocence turns him away from the human, toward the world of nature. His is what Emily Zants designates as the "temptation of the stranger to identify himself with the rocks" which she claims is the "temptation to join up with the world and to forget about human beings and life."[66] It is also the temptation of one who, out of contact with his fellow men, is "tempted to construct arbitrary systems as absolute as the terrain he is squatting on for "when ideologies become absolute,

---

[64]Mythe . . ., 27.

[65]Peste, 52.

[66]"Deserts . . .," 33.

they rule out the possibility of individual communication. Stone, as one of the relatively more enduring elements of the world, is consequently symbolic of the temptation of the individual towards permanence and the absolute, a temptation which postulates the cessation of dialogue and the subsequent separation of the stranger."[67]

In his leanings toward absolutes, Tarrou engages in a "tragic complicity" with nature. Of this type of complicity Ben Stoltzfus writes, "Such complicity. . . derives from the fact that man persists in attributing a oneness to a relationship which can only exist in terms of duality."[68] The fact that the much desired unity or harmony that man seeks in the universe is an impossibility is seen in the two separate entities which are Tarrou and his world: he seeks death for himself, which is complicity, yet seeks it precisely because death is a part of the world which he cannot accept for others, which is rejection.

Meursault in this respect is closer to Camus and both are, in turn, more realistic than Tarrou. Although "Meursault imprisoned" symbolizes "man caught in a hostile world," he does, however, achieve a "harmony with the universe that has condemned him. He arrives at a point from which he can look back on his life as a completed entity. He accepts his life as a value in itself; in accepting this value he accepts his death."[69]

---

[67]"Deserts . . .," 31.

[68]"Camus and the Meaning of Revolt," Modern Fiction Studies (Autumn, 1964), 298.

[69]King, 55.

Adele King elaborates this idea:

> Man could attain true happiness and individuality only by giving up his impossible compulsion to change the world and to avoid death. Meursault, on the eve of his execution, accepts death as the culmination of his own individuality. He reached that peace of which Camus sometimes speaks, a point at which the tension of the rebel is no longer felt, "a tranquil homeland where death itself is a happy silence." This homeland is beyond the grasp of a man who is in revolt against the universe. . . (56)

At this point she points out, "It may seem paradoxical to find a quest for such peace at the heart of Camus' work, but in an ultimate sense Camus' experience confirms Freud's insight. Accepting the natural world as the source of all happiness necessitates accepting death. Man rebels, but he reaches a final consent. This is not a betrayal of his desires, but an affirmation of his greatness when he no longer attempts to be a god" (55-56).

While Tarrou turns his back on the world of men, giving his final allegiance to the world of absolutes, the people of Oran have turned theirs on the world of nature and ideals. Camus continues his own attempt to reconcile them both. In this way Camus was more realistic than either Tarrou or the majority of men, his realism being manifested in his acceptance of limits or <u>mesure</u> as a rule of life. Refusing to play God, he accepts death as unavoidable, and happiness and recaptured innocence as provisional.

In his acknowledgment of limits he spurns Tarrou's absolute of innocence which was an aspiration to restore to the world "la fraîcheur de ses premiers matins," realizing too well that such a state of innocence perished once and for all for each individual "le jour où notre

bonheur se trouve en lutte avec les deux seules puissances qui ont assez de force pour le détuire: la morale et l'histoire." For that reason "la chute n'est pas autre chose; c'est la découverte soudaine de la culpabilité non pas originelle, mais historique, et par conséquence morale."[70] Oran for Camus is merely a reprieve; for Tarrou it becomes a permanent retreat. Boredom in Oran does not then resemble that of Meursault's generation so little disturbed by the death of others, but for those who feel guilt it offers forgetfulness. Camus left in 1939 to create again among those men who had a history. His problem, the problem of the artist, became more explicit in his short story, "Jonas ou l'artiste au travail" for

> Jonas ne pouvait créer d'oeuvre d'art que dans la solitude, mais il ne pouvait connaître le bonheur, sans quoi l'art ne peut naître, que dans la solidarité. La difficile balance entre ces deux états, lorsqu'on la connaît enfin, c'est le "rapatriement," c'est l'accès au Royaume. C'est-à-dire l'accès à un monde où l'on ne refuse ni soi-même, ni les autres, mais où une règle mesurée vous accorde, au sein d'une solidarité chaleureuse, la part de solitude que chaque homme est en droit d'exiger."[71]

It is after his sojourn in Oran that Camus finds one of those moments of balance needed for further creative effort, for there the Minotaur offers in the guise of a purely pbysical existence rest for the spirit: "the call of the Minotaur is 'one of the rare invitations to sleep that the earth grants us,' it is the temptation to abandon that attribute (in Camus's idiom) of Europe as opposed to Africa, the life of the mind.

---

[70]Bloch-Michel, 5.

[71]<u>Ibid.</u>, 6.

Fo

fa

no

For Camus the halt at Oran was a short one."[72]

In order to join the world of history and of morality, Camus bids farewell to Oran and the Minotaur knowing "that a bond with nature need not be tragic but that it may, on the contrary, be the source of rebirth."[73]

---

[72]Brée, 214.

[73]Stoltfuz, 302.

PART VIII

TARROU ON TRIAL

"C'est sur le chemin qui, par-delà l'innocence meurtrière, mène à la sainteté sans Dieu que la peste a trouvé Tarrou,"[74] Albert Maquet writes. For if Meursault has "la sainte innocence de celui que se pardonne a lui-même,"[75] Tarrou's is that total guilt which, craving expiation, leads him on toward self-annihilation. His guilt is revealed to him, it will be remembered, after that period of revolt in which he cuts a trajectory across Europe, fighting injustice and capital punishment, in the moment he learns his side is guilty of using the measures of its opponents.

Because Tarrou cannot forgive himself for having been a murderer — even an "innocent murderer" — he chooses Oran as a place in which to live as harmlessly as possible, where "on le rencontrait dans tous les endroits publics. Dès le début du printemps on l'avait beaucoup vu sur les plages, nageant souvent et avec un plaisir manifeste." In these activities Tarrou appears to be reliving those of his early youth and to be trying to wash away his guilt in bathing and in other innocent pastimes: "Bon homme toujours souriant, il semblait être l'ami de tous les plaisirs normaux, sans en être l'esclave" (21). In enjoying what Camus refers to as one of the boons granted by Oran, the "allure of forgetfulness," Tarrou seeks what he claims to be "la seule chose qui m'intéresse. . . C'est de trouver la paix intérieure" (24).

---

[74] Albert Camus ou l'invincible été (Paris, 1955), 67.

[75] La Chute, 167.

All of Tarrou's physical traits reveal this determination. Rieux describes him as having a square and muscular body, as being "un homme jeune, à la silhouette lourde, au visage massif et creusé, barré, d'épais sourcils" (13), his head and forehead are frequently described as heavy and stubborn ("une lourde tête," "un front dur"). The memory Rieux is always to keep of him after his death is of one who fought an all-out battle against life which he is destined to lose; of one who in the struggle against la peste has organized the formations sanitaires volontaires; of one who, after the briefest of respites from plague, agrees with Rieux that it is time to put their shoulders to the wheel again; and most lasting of all, of either one "qui prenait le volant de son auto à pleines mains pour le conduire" or of "celle de ce corps épais, étendu mantenant sans mouvement. Un chaleur de vie et une image de mort, c'était cela la connaissance" (239).

During the unequal combat between men and microbes his "égalité d'humeur," Carina Gadourek writes, was maintained "grâce à un certain détachement" (123). Of this detachment Dr. Rieux, the narrator of La Peste, comments that Tarrou's notebooks, although written in chaotic times, were an account of all that the usual historian passes over for "il s'agit d'une chronique très particulière qui sembler obéir a un parti pris d'insignifiance," presenting many secondary details. Rieux, incapable of much detachment where Tarrou is concerned, hopes that the reader of such a collection of bizarrerie, of which at first reading at lease, "on pourrait croire que Tarrou s'est ingénie à considérer les choses et les êtres par le gros bout de la lorgnette," will suspend his

judgment and not accuse Tarrou of a complete "sécheresse du coeur"(22).

Tarrou, still seeking the way back to innocence, for the moment, joins those of Oran, who in the first day of the plague continue to live on the thin surface of matter:

> Apparemment, rien n'était changé. Les tramways étaient toujours pleins aux heures de pointe, vides et sales dans la journée. Tarrou observait le petit vieux et le petit vieux crachat sur les chats. Grand rentrait tous les soirs chez lui son mystérieux travail. Cottard tournait en rond et M. Othon, le juge d'instruction, conduisait toujours sa ménagerie. Le vieil asthmatique transvasait ses pois et l'on encontrait parfois le journaliste Rambert, l'air tranquille et intéressé. Le soir, la même foule emplissait les rues et les queues s'allongeait devant les cinémas. (55-56)

As these people hide behind their routines, which are among the most successful blinds they have built up against the stark fact of death, the desultory Cottard appears and follows Tarrou, as both his parody and shadow. For Cottard, who has been interrogated by the police after his attempted suicide, echoes Tarrou's desire for peace exclaiming, "qu'il désirait seulement qu'on lui laissat la paix"(30). In addition, where so many are evading awareness, Cottard practices a different type of evasion, for he is literally on the run, yet he rejoices in the plague because the police now have their hands full with other concerns, making Cottard's capture less imminent.

Behind Cottard's desire for peace is, of course, a certain nihilism. In a prison-like world in which each person awaits certain death, Cottard's hiding behind the misfortunes and deaths of his fellow prisoners is both metaphysically and morally unsound. Describing a section of the town in which there are for the moment no visible signs of plague, Rieux couples its atmosphere with Cottard's furtive nihilism: he writes

that the plague "ne se trahissait que par des signes négatifs. Cottard qui avait des affinités avec elle, fit remarquer. . .l'absence des chiens" (120). Elsewhere in La Peste, when the nihilism of plague becomes more apparent, Rieux describes the city in which all manifestations of normal life are suspended:

> Sous les ciels de lune, elle alignait ses murs blanchâtres et ses rues rectilignes, jamais tachées par la masse noire d'un arbre, jamais troublées par le pas d'un promeneur ni le cri d'un chien. La grande cité silencieuse n'était plus alors qu'un assemblage de cubes massifs et inertes, entre lesquels les effigies taciturnes de bienfaiteurs oubliés ou d'anciens grands hommes étouffés à jamais dans le bronze s'essayaient seules, avec leurs faux visages de pierre ou de fer, à évoquer une image dégradée de ce qui avait été l'homme. Ces idoles médiocres trônaient sous un ciel épais, dans les carrefours sans vie, brutes insensibles qui figuraient assez bien le règne immobile où nous étions entrés ou du moins son ordre ultime, celui d'une nécropole où la peste et la nuit auraient fait taire enfin toute voix. (142-143)

Tarrou and Cottard both remain as emotionally depopulated as the midnight city described above. In each, evasion and detachment are forms of nihilism, for each has turned his back on any close involvement with mankind. Tarrou's friendship with Dr. Rieux is primarily based on expedience, for it furthers the former's desire to defend the victims against their oppressors, while Cottard's interest in Tarrou displays only his self-interest. Remaining emotionally unattached was part of Tarrou's determination to live without increasing the existent sum of evil, for to love and to be loved is also to hurt and be hurt. While Cottard proclaims "tout net qu'il ne s'intéressait pas au coeur et que même le coeur était le dernier de ces soucis" (228), Tarrou cautiously confines his interests to man rather than individual men.

b

Remaining emotionally celibate is, of course, a manner of avoiding "lapses" or distractions; such determinations manifested in Tarrou's physical traits were outward revelations of his inner entêtement or obstinacy. Although taking a different form from the absolutism of his father who believes that a human being could be so absolutely guilty as to merit absolute punishment, Tarrou's absolutism, although turned in another direction, still forces him to live without hope. In this he has also "inherited" a trait of his mother's, for without hope she too had lived "une vie de renoncement."

Tarrou's "aveuglement entêté" then replaces love. What Rieux wrote of love between two individuals is also true of the individual's relationship with l'absurde:

> A la fin de tout, on s'aperçoit que personne n'est capable réellement de penser à personne, fût-ce dans le pire de malheurs, car penser réellement à quelqu'un, c'est y penser minute après minute, sans être distrait par rien, ni la mouche qui vole, ni les repas, ni une démangeaison. Mais il y a toujours des mouches et des démangeaisons. C'est pourquoi la vie est difficile à vivre. (198)

To be conscious of the absurd and to try to live accordingly is the hardest thing, for to do so involves the supreme effort of trying to prevent lapses in a world where distractions are the rule. Camus also writes in his Carnets, II, of this difficulty:

> Il s'aperçoit ainsi que le vrai problème, même sans Dieu, est le problème de l'unité psychologique (le travail de l'absurde ne pose réellement que le problème de l'unité métaphysique du monde et de l'esprit) et de la paix intérieure. Il s'aperçoit aussi que celle-ci n'est pas possible sans une discipline difficile à concilier avec le monde. Le problème est là. Il faut justement la concilier avec le monde. (19-20)

For Tarrou, because he has opted to resist the world-as-it-is,

the problem of unity in a world of dispersion is insurmountable. Therefore, before he capitulates to the forces of nihilism or of plague within himself by succumbing to the actual plague bacteria he sums up his position: "Tout le monde se montre fatigué, puisque tout le monde, aujourd'hui se trouve un peu pestiféré. Mais c'est pour cela que quelques-un qui veulent cesser de l'être connaissent une extremité de fatigue dont rien ne les delivrera plus que la mort" (209).

The flaws of the absolutist — whether he be a Tarrou, an Othello, or any other tragic hero — are fatal flaws, for death becomes, as Tarrou knows, the inevitable end. Of such a tragic flaw A. C. Bradley writes:

> In almost all we observe a marked one-sidedness, a predisposition in some particular direction; a fatal tendency to identify the whole being with one interest, object, passion, or habit of mind. . . . It is a fatal gift, but it carries with it a touch of greatness; and when there is joined to it nobility of mind, or genius, or immense force, we realize the full power and reach of the soul, and the conflict in which it engages acquires that magnitude which stirs not only sympathy and pity, but admiration, terror, awe.[76]

Opting absolutely for an ideal, the absolutist accepts what Emily Zants refers to as the "fallacy of ideals taken in the absolute,"[77] and death becomes for him the inevitable but premature end.

A demonstration of the pitfalls that the absolutist, Tarrou, as the aspiring saint, might have avoided, is presented in a crucial episode of La Peste. Tarrou, overlooking the lesson which he might have gathered

---

[76]Shakespearean Tragedy (New York, 1959), 26-27.

[77]"Deserts. . .," 35.

from the absurd "wisdom" compiled in his notebooks, has again (with all the components included in Camus' notion of absurdity presented in this scene) the opportunity to put himself finally on the right track.

The episode is that of the "hour-off-for-friendship," a respite taken from the plague by Tarrou and Dr. Rieux. The time is early evening. They are on a roof-top which provides a view of the distant mountains and an uncustomary view of the sea which has been cordoned off during the epidemic. The episode culminates in a swim which puts a seal on their friendship. It is here that Tarrou abandons his habitual reticence and comes closest to communion with another. As Emily Zants claims, the sea is in part the catalyst, for "the silence of the sea is different from that of the rocks; the latter is the silence of an impossibility of communication whereas the former is that of a mutual understanding."[78] But rocks will continue to be Tarrou's natural element.

The fact that this hour is only a reprieve from the plague is emphasized by the remote sounds of the city where "quelques rues plus loin, une auto sembler glisser longuement sur le pavé mouillé. Elle s'éloigna et, après elle, des exclamations confuses, venues de loin, rompirent encore le silence" (202). The incident is more than two-dimensional in its implications. Aside from the immediate foreground, there is also a metaphysical backdrop with its reminder of the absurdity of human fate. This background holds out three kinds of promises: that of l'endroit, nature as the accomplice to a newly-founded friendship,

---

[78]"Deserts. . .," 33.

and nature as companion in the physical delight of the senses; but from time to time it also reveals that other side of the coin, l'envers, nature's hostile aspect.

Against the background which "retomba sur les deux hommes avec tout son poids de ciel et d'étoiles" (203), there is enacted the drama of these two révoltés who rebel against the human condition in general and in particular against that mass execution which the plague has decreed for Oran. The conflict involved in this scene contains the opposing aspects of revolt represented by each of the participants — in Rieux the true rebel, in Tarrou the false. Whereas Rieux remains during what was Tarrou's "profession de foi," "tassé au creux de sa chaise," Tarrou is "levé pour se percher sur le parapet de la terrasse, face à Rieux." Shown in this manner, Tarrou demonstrates his temptation to supercede the human for "on ne voyait de lui qu'une forme massive découpé dans le ciel." It is here that Tarrou confides to his new friend his ambition to be a saint without God. Rieux, of course, rejects any transcendence from the human.

Aided by the physical circumstances, for Tarrou notes, "Il fait bon. C'est comme la peste n'était montée là" (203), Tarrou is enabled in a moment of rare confidence to reveal his aspiration and its cause: he tells Rieux of that trial he had seen as a lamentable miscarriage of justice in which his father triumphed; and how that trial had set the course of his life, directing his career as an agitator or revolutionist until he realizes that in adopting the method of his adversaries, justice is once again still-born. His confession also reveals that he knows that

he carried within him the very peste germs he tried to combat, that he actually had the plague before coming to Oran, for he said, "C'est assez dire qui ne le savent pas, ou qui se trouvent bien dans cet état, et des gens qui le savent et qui voudrait en sortir. Moi, j'ai toujours voulu en sortir"(203).

Stressing his own difference from the rest of the world, which prefers to sleep easily at night rather than face such issues, he knows that "un instinct formidable" rose as a wave which "me portait à ses côtes avec une sorte d'aveuglement entêté" whereas "les autres ne semblaient pas gênés par cela. . . . Moi, j'avais la gorge nouée"(207). At this point Tarrou knows the hopelessness involved in making his ideal his motivating force in life — the difference which existed between himself and other men in their attitude toward evil. For he knows

> qu'il faut se surveiller sans arrêt pour ne pas être amené, dans une minute de distraction, à respirer dans la figure d'un autre et à lui coller l'infection. Ce qui est naturel, c'est le microbe, le reste, la santé, l'intégrité, la pureté si vous voulez, c'est un effet de la volonté et d'une volonté qui ne doit jamais s'arrêter. L'honnête homme, celui qui n'infecte presque personne, c'est celui qui a le moins de distractions possible. Et il en faut de la volonté et de la tension pour ne jamais être distrait! (208)

Tarrou has recently decided that if sainthood is at all possible, it must, in order to forestall the unforeseeable, or in order to prevent the preventable, be nothing more than an aggregate of habits. The climactic moment in this interchange between two révoltés comes when he announces:

> — En somme. . . ce qui m'intéresse, c'est de savoir comment on devient un saint.
> — Mais vous ne croyez pas en Dieu.

> — Justement. Peut-on être un saint sans Dieu, c'est le seule problème concret que je connaisse aujourd'hui. (201)

The scene points up the aspects of plague which are either outside the precautionary power of man or seem to belong to an evil which is part of the universe itself, for the serenity of that hour-off-for-friendship is interrupted from time to time by the reminders of activities which remain outside this temporary amnesty between men and men, and men and nature:

> Deux timbres d'ambulance résonnèrent dans le lointain. Les exclamations tout à l'heure confuses, se rassemblèrent aux confins de la ville, près de la colline pierreuse, on entendit en même temps quelque chose qui ressemblait à une détonation. Puis le silence revint. (209-210)

The more universal aspect of evil, that of the uncertainty of the natural world, also makes itself evident in this scene:

> Rieux compta deux clignements de phare, la brise sembla prendre plus de force, et du même coup, un souffle venu de la mer apporta une odeur de sel. On entendait maintenant de façon distincts la sourde respiration de vagues contre la falaise. (210)

The waves and the tides are an assurance that in a world of chance and change there is comfort to be derived from the sea's stability within fluctuation. But there is another lesson — that the sea also conveys the notion of permanence, but in the sense of perpetual renewal, that any friendship with the sea demands a constant rebirth of its pleasures, and there is, moreover, a third aspect, for the sea is "inquiétant" and "jamais reposé." The breeze that has been blowing in from the sea and contributing to the physical delight of the hour increases, bringing with its gathered impetus the threat of danger, while those same wind-driven waves which break against the cliff's edge

become signs of menace. That new friendship which the two men baptised with a swim in the sea was cut short by a cold current causing them to turn from the world of nature back to the world of men.

The world of men with its demands continues to impose its own sense of urgency during the hour spent on the roof, for they hear from time to time "une porte claqua dans la maison" or "un bruit de vaisselle choquée monta jusqu'à eux de profondeurs de la rue" (202). At the same time the rhythm of the waves and the intermittent flashes from the lighthouse recall the passage of time and the unrelenting demands of history and morality.

Conscious of the dissonances in the world of nature and of the conflicts in the world of men, Tarrou hurries on to explain his desire for sainthood: "Oui j'ai continué d'avoir honte, j'ai perdu la paix" (208). After making this statement, he hits upon, and immediately rejects, a solution which, because it is relative and opposes his absolutism, would constitute the cure to his peste intérieure and the answer to his quest for la paix intérieure, which is to "soulager les hommes et sinon les sauver du moins leur faire le moins de mal possible et même parfois, un peu de bien" (208). Instead, rejecting the relative, he opts for the absolute: "j'ai decidé de refuser tout ce qui, de près ou de loin, pour de bonnes ou de mauvaises raisons, fait mourir ou justifie qu'on fasse mourir. . . . je sais seulement qu'il faut faire ce qu'il faut pour ne plus être un pestiféré et que c'est là ce qui peut, seul, nous faire espérer la paix, ou une bonne mort à son defaut" (208).

> Brusquement, une grande lueur jaillit du côte d'où étaient venues les cris et, remontant le fleuve du vent, une

> clameur obscure parvint jusqu'aux deux hommes. La lueur s'assombrit aussitôt et loin, au bord des terrasses, il ne resta qu'un rougeoiement. Dans le bruit d'une décharge et la clameur d'une foule, Tarrou s'était levé et écoutait. On n'entendait plus rien.
> — On s'est encore battu aux portes.
> — C'est fini maintenant, dit Rieux. (210)

Rieux means, of course, that the skirmish is literally over. He also knows that even with the termination of la peste there will be other sources of strife and unhappiness, that the peste never dies, and the bacillus

> peut rester pendant des dizaines d'années endormi dans les meubles et le linge, qu'il attend patiemment dans les chambres, les caves, les malles, les mouchoirs et les paperasses, et que, peut-être, le jour viendrait où, pour le malheur et l'enseignement des hommes, la peste réveillerait ses rats et les enversait mourir dans une cité heureuse. (254-255)

Tarrou, on the other hand, "murmura que ce n'était jamais fini et qu'il y aurait encore des victimes, parce que c'était dans l'ordre" (210). Tarrou's obsession compels him to regard the world with hostility and leads to his desire to break off relations with it. This is not true, however, of all Camus' révoltés, for rebellion in some leads to a continuation of the struggle rather than to impasse. By such an identification Camus' true rebels are distinguished from the false.

Each, however, does undergo a period in which his metaphysical anxiety takes the form of rebellion against creation. Of the false rebels there is Cottard, of course, who shares Stepan's (an anarchist in Camus' play Les Justes) desire to destroy the world. Cottard, not content with the merely "half-way" measures of the plague epidemic on one occasion "cria d'une voix pleines de larmes et de fureur" that what was needed

was "un tremblement de terre. Un vrai!" (53) While Stepan claims that "détuire, c'est ce qu'il faut. . . . il faut ruiner ce monde de fond en comble."[79] There is also the renegade missionary in the short story "Le Renégat," who in his absolutism turns his back on a religion and a world which accepts evil as a part of creation, to adopt instead the world and religion of absolute hate in a desert region called Tagĥaza. In Camus' adaptation for the stage of Dostoevsky's The Possessed there is also Stavrogin who speaks in the vein of Stepan and Cottard: "Moi je hais affreusement tout ce qui existe en Russie, le peuple, le tsar, et vous . . . je hais tout ce qui vit sur la terre et moi-même au premier rang. Alors, que la destruction règne, oui, et qu'elle les écrase et avec tous les signes de Stavroguin et Stavroguin lui-meme."[80] Caligula's deeply-rooted quarrel with creation (and of all Camus' révoltés he and Tarrou most closely resemble each other) causes him to emulate the very absurde he opposes. He, like Tarrou, cannot live with half-measures and hence decides that "ce monde tel qu'il est fait, n'est pas supportable. J'ai donc besoin de la lune, ou de bonheur, ou de l'immortalité —, quelque chose qui soit dément peut-être, mais qui ne soit pas de ce monde."[81]

Of those who did not demand the moon, or immortality, or more than a limited happiness or limited innocence, there are others (in

---

[79] Les Justes (Paris, 1950), 127. Subsequent quotations from Les Justes are taken from this edition.

[80] Les Possedés (Paris, 1959), 261.

[81] Le Malentendu, suivi de Caligula (Paris, 1944), 111.

addition to Camus himself, who wrote "Le monde où je vis me répugne, mais je me sens solidaire des hommes qui y souffrent.")[82] Daru, the protagonist of another short story "L'Hôte," felt a considerable impatience with the imperfection of the world, an imperfection inaugurated by men themselves. "Un colère subite vint à Daru. . . contre tous les hommes et leur sale méchanceté, leurs haines inlassables, leur folie du sang."[83] There is also Dr. Rieux who told Rambert that he spoke only the "langage d'un homme lasse du monde où il vivait," and that because of his esteem for his fellow-men "il avait décidé à refuser, pour sa part, l'injustice et les concessions" (12). Such revolt against the order of things,[84] Camus wrote, is born of the "spectacle de la déraison, devant une condition injuste et incompréhensible. Mais son élan aveugle revendique l'ordre au milieu du chaos et l'unité au coeur

---

[82]Actuelles, I (Paris, 1950), 249. Subsequent quotations from Actuelles, I, are taken from this edition.

[83]L'Exil et le royaume (Paris, 1957), 109.

[84]In writing of the hermit or of any man who seeks refuge from the world, Freud said much that was pertinent to Camus' would-be saint, for "the hermit turns his back on the world," he wrote, "and will have no truck with it. But one can do more than that; one can try to recreate the world, to build up in its stead another world in which its most unbearable features are eliminated and replaced by others that are in conformity with one's own wishes. But whoever, in desperate defiance, sets out upon the path to happiness will as a rule attain nothing. Reality is too strong for him. He becomes a madman, who for the most part finds no one to help him in carrying through his delusion." ("Civilization and Its Discontents," The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, XXI[London, 1961], 81).

même de ce qui fuit et disparait."[85] And it is the injustice and the incomprehensibility of the world, and his own refusal to compromise, that causes Tarrou to put the world on trial.[86] In so doing he closely resembles Ivan Karamazov, who may be the prototype of this kind of révolté. Many of the themes which Camus utilizes in his thought and writing are recognizable in Ivan's plaint:

> I recognize in all humility that I cannot understand why the world is arranged as it is. Men are themselves to blame, I suppose; they were given paradise, they wanted freedom, and they stole fire from heaven, though they knew they would become unhappy, so there is no need to pity them. With my pitiful, earthly Euclidean understanding all I know is that there is suffering and that there are none guilty.[87]

As Promethean advocates and benefactors for mankind, both Tarrou and Ivan are interested in fighting for the victims against the

---

[85] L'Homme révolté, 21.

[86] According to Germaine Brée, the trial, rather than the death sentence, is the overall symbol in Camus' writing. The theme of the trial appears in L'Etranger, La Peste, and La Chute, for in all there are murderers, or those who consider themselves such. Each is either put on trial, puts himself on trial, or puts creation on trial or a combination of any two of the three.

[87] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, The Brothers Karamazov, trans. Constance Garnett (New York, no date), 252. All subsequent quotations from this work are taken from this edition.

A similar episode is found in Graham Greene's writing and binds Camus' and Greene's saints together. Greene's potential saints in their rejection of evil and in their rejection of much of the dogma of their religion do not go beyond God to an ultimate of justice, but beyond dogma, to what they think of as the inconceivable extent of God's mercy. Greene's defense of his protagonists comes from this question of divine mercy, for shouldn't God, in his turn, have at least as much compassion for suffering innocents and the damned as his creatures do for each other? All-or-nothingness — that harmony cannot include evil — is taken up in The Heart of the Matter, while all-or-no-oneness is included in The Power and the Glory, for the renegade priest proclaims that if anyone in his territory is to be damned, he hopes to be so too.

bourreaux. God in their eyes is one of the latter. For this reason their idea is to go beyond God or the order of things to justice. Ivan's "It's Him I don't and cannot accept" is close in spirit to Tarrou's motivating nostalgia for justice or unity, echoed also in Stepan's assertion, "Je n'aime pas la vie, mais la justice qui est au-dessus de la vie,"[88] and later adds, "il faut toute la justice où c'est le désespoir" (126).

Both Tarrou and Ivan increase the sum of evil in their desperate nostalgia for unity but at least they are propelled by an evil which lies at the roots of that disunity — the evil of human suffering. For this reason their cases, as absolutists, against creation are two-fold. For each accuses God of maintaining universal harmony on the basis of suffering (their all-or-nothing brief) and each also complains that some achieve salvation while others are damned (their all-or-no-one brief). Ivan will refuse salvation and reject the Christian idea of harmony if it depends on suffering — especially the suffering of an innocent child. "Listen! If all must suffer to pay for the eternal harmony, what have children to do with it, tell me please?. . . too high a price is asked for harmony; it's beyond our means to pay so much to enter on it. And so I hasten to give back my entrance ticket" (254).

Ivan, rejecting a creation in which children suffer, also denies it on the basis that some are to be damned while others saved. Tarrou, whose mind is considerably more "earthly" and "Euclidean" than Ivan claims his to be, reduces this conflict to the terrestrial, for Tarrou

---

[88] Les Justes, 41.

states categorically that "il n'y a que des condamnés qui attendent la plus arbitraires des grâces et parmi eux les policiers eux-mêmes" (160).

The problem for each remains basically that of unity — not only in the world but in themselves. Once Ivan decides that logically "All is permitted," his problem is to know if he can be faithful to his logic,

> si, parti d'une protestation indignée devant la souffrance innocente, il acceptera le meurtre de son père avec l'indifférence des hommes-dieux. On connait sa solution: Ivan laissera tuer son père. Trop sensible pour agir, il se contentera de laisser faire. Mais il deviendra fou. L'homme qui ne comprenait pas comment on pouvait aimer son prochain ne comprend pas non plus comment on peut le tuer. Coincé entre une vertu injustifiable et un crime inacceptable, devoré de pitié et incapable d'amour, solitaire privé du secourable cynicisme, la contradiction tuera cette intelligence souveraine.[89]

In general whatever Camus wrote above about Ivan pertains also to Tarrou: for the murder of the father performed by Ivan's surrogate, Smerdyakov, which is scientifically reasoned by Ivan but which he could not condone emotionally, can be substituted for Tarrou's reasoned and regretted murder — by proxy — of his fellow men.

Ivan's demand summed up in his "I must have justice, or I will destroy myself. And not justice in some remote infinite time and space, but here on earth, and that I could see myself" (253), not only makes him closer to Camus and his protagonists in their adherence to the "here and now" and their rejection of "laters," but also foreshadows his retreat into madness — a form of suicide. For in Ivan's and Tarrou's desire to change the world as it stands, each defeats himself. Tarrou

---

[89] L'Homme révolté, 79-80.

in his long conversation on the roof informs Dr. Rieux that he has already condemned himself either to death or inactivity, saying "ce sont les autres qui feront l'histoire" and in recognizing in himself one who is a complete stranger to life, concludes "qu'à partir du moment ou j'ai renoncer à tuer, je me sens condamné à un exil definitif" (209).

The absolutist state of mind is echoed in other Camusean protagonists — in Stepan, in le renégat, in Cottard, in Judge Othon, and most notably in Father Paneloux, the Jesuit priest of La Peste who joins the sanitary squads shortly before his death. Paneloux' second sermon delivered during the epidemic reflects the all-or-nothing quality of his mind in its message and phraseology: "c'était tout ou ce n'était rien," "il faut tout croire ou tout nier," "il fallait admettre le scandale parcequ'il vous fallait choisir de haïr Dieu ou de l'aimer," etc. Although Tarrou is an absolutist against God, rather than for Him, on the side of the condamnés and damnés, yet he follows a philosophy of intransigence and can at least understand the "logic" of Paneloux' argument recalling in Paneloux' defence the anecdote of the priest who had lost his faith when he saw the face of a young soldier destroyed by war and who claimed "Quand l'innocence a les yeux crevés, un Chrétien doit perdre la foi ou accepter d'avoir les yeux crevés. Paneloux ne veut pas perdre la foi, il ira jusqu'au bout. . . " (188)

Rieux also comments in his chronicle of the plague year on the reaction of another intransigent, the early Judge Othon: "il avait trouvé l'exposé du Père Paneloux 'absolument irréfutable,'" Rieux added, however, "mais tout le monde n'avait pas d'opinion aussi catégorique.

Simplement le prêche rendit plus sensible à certains l'idée, vague jusque-là, qu'ils étaient condamnés, pour un crime inconnu, à un emprisonment inimaginable" (85).

Faced for the first time (for Paneloux is a scholar rather than a parish priest), with the death of a child, Paneloux falters at first, letting escape a "Mon Dieu, sauvez cet enfant." He then proceeds to fortify his faith against such waverings by determining that evil is only apparent to the imperfect human understanding. In the same episode in which Othon's son dies of the plague in an agony so long even the experienced Dr. Rieux cannot endure it, muttering, "Il faut que je m'en aille. . . je ne peux plus le supporter," Rieux emerges as the partisan of Ivan and Tarrou for he later shouts wrathfully to the priest, "Ah celui-là, au moins, était innocent, vous le savez bien" (178). To Paneloux' reply that Rieux should love God and a creation which cannot be understood, Rieux reveals his state of rebellion, "Non mon Père. . . . Je me fais une autre idée de l'amour. Et je refuserais jusqu'à la mort d'aimer cette création où des enfants sont torturés" (179).

Camus and Rieux have replies to Father Paneloux, and less drastic solutions for both Tarrou and Ivan: Camus wrote, "nous nous refusons à désespérer de l'homme. Sans avoir l'ambition déraisonnable de le sauver, nous tenons au moins à le servir." In the conference given to the Dominicans of Latour-Maubourg, Camus seems to be speaking directly for Rieux when he declaims, "Je ne partage pas votre espoir et je continue a lutter contre cet univers où des enfants souffrent et meurent. . . . Nous ne pouvons pas empêcher peut-être que cette

création soit celle où des enfants sont torturés. Mais nous pouvons diminuer le nombre des enfants torturés."[90]

Paneloux and Tarrou and Othon die of the plague. Ivan and Cottard go mad. Each in his way has been on the side of death; therefore each has carried within, in his absolutism, the germs of plague, a condition which Tarrou referred to as his peste intérieure. Tarrou's death certificate might very well have been marked, as is Paneloux', "cas douteux," for both on the literal level die of atypical forms of the plague, showing symptoms of both pneumonic and bubonic varieties. "Car Rieux se trouvait devant un visage de la peste qui le déconcertait" (233), indicates that this is more than a clear-cut example of the disease and that Rieux is mystified.

---

[90]"L'Incroyant et les chrétiens," Actuelles, I, 213, 217.

PART IX

SANTÉ OU SAINTETÉ

"Rebellion! I am sorry you call it that," said Ivan earnestly. "One can hardly live in rebellion, and I want to live" (254). In his knowledge of the impossibility of living in continued rebellion, Ivan employs the term "rebellion" in a way which differs from Camus' studied usage. Camus painstakingly differentiates in his use of the terms "revolution" and "revolt" or "rebellion." The latter two words, as he defines them, have nothing to do with the all-or-nothing attitude leading to murder, massacre, or impasse. Revolt or rebellion, according to Camus, comes about as a result of a frank confrontation of l'absurde and represents a sustained and salutary tension between man and world, which includes both limits and lucidity. It is evident then, that the rebellion of the true rebel or hero of l'absurde is never a single or definitive act but a continued state of tension for "la valeur qui le tient debout ne lui est jamais donnée une fois pour toutes, il doit la maintenir sans cesse."[91]

The rebellion of Ivan and Tarrou, on the other hand, was akin to what Camus calls revolution, for it includes "l'impatience des limites, le refus de leur être double, le désespoir d'homme," all of which have for these two false rebels "les ont jetés enfin dans une démesure inhumaine."[92]

---

[91] L'Homme révolté, 342.

[92] Ibid., 366.

All of the inconsistencies found in the natures of these two révoltés are drawn from their inordinate desire for unity in a world where disparity is the rule. Camus likens their ambitious yearning to "correct creation" to a desire to play God. He writes, "si l'homme était capable d'introduire à lui seul, l'unité dans le monde, s'il pouvait y faire régner par son seul décret, la sincérité, l'innocence et la justice, il serait Dieu lui-même."[93] Unable to be God, yet unwilling to accept the existence of injustice, each continues to nurture what was for Camus an unjustifiable desire for virtue.

If Ivan's absolutism led to a series of insurmountable contradictions, Tarrou's responses to the manifold nihilism at work in the world and in his individual being lead also to a series of discrepancies. Tarrou, no more than Ivan, can escape what Germaine Brée refers to as the judgments of the "double tribunal," "the subjective inner tribunal and the outer objective tribunal," and she adds, "the two refuse to be reconciled"(238).

Both the brief Tarrou held against the world, and that against himself, lay in a single statement, the heart of his profession de foi made to Dr. Rieux in the scene-on-the-roof: "c'est bien fatigant d'être un pestiféré. Mais c'est encore plus fatigant de ne pas vouloir l'être" (208). Behind this dilemma is marshalled the whole series of contradictions which finally defeat Tarrou and lead him to his only alternative "c'est pour cela que quelques-uns, qui veulent cesser de l'être,

---

[93]L'Homme révolté, 342.

connaissent une extremité de fatigue dont rien ne les delivrera plus que la mort" (209).

The first of these contradictions to be noted is minor but may be significant if it is taken as symbolic or symptomatic of all the other discrepancies of Tarrou's position which lie behind the expression saint-laïque. For the term also embodies a certain fallacy of logic. The saint tends to turn his back on life, as one dedicated to other-worldly considerations, while the layman represents life and the considerations of this world. The ideals of the saint go beyond the human and temporal. The layman who operates in the realm of history soils his hands occasionally, if need be, and, in a world where there is no evidence of divine responsibility, accepts complete responsibility and a modicum of guilt. The saint, mortified by guilt, makes Kierkegaard's "leap to God." Tarrou, refusing to outrage his intellect by making such a leap and at the same time refusing not to be God, runs himself into a cul-de-sac:

> Quelle peut être alors l'attitude du révolté? Il ne peut se détourner du monde et de l'histoire sans renier le principe même de sa révolte, choisir la vie éternelle sans se résigner, en un sens, au mal. Non chrétien, par exemple, il doit aller jusqu'au bout. Mais jusqu'au bout signifie choisir l'histoire absolument et le meurtre est encore renier ses origines. Si le révolté ne choisit pas, il choisit le silence et l'esclavage d'autri. Si, dans un mouvement de désespoir, il déclare choisir à la fois contre Dieu et l'histoire, il est témoin de la liberté pure, c'est-à-dire de rien. Au stade historique qui est le nôtre, dans l'impossibilité d'affirmer une raison supérieure qui ne trouve sa limite dans le mal, son apparent dilemme est le silence ou le meurtre. Dans les deux cas, une démission.[94]

---

[94] L'Homme révolté, 344.

There is further contradiction in Tarrou's roles as both aspiring saint and révolté, for in aspiring to sainthood Tarrou indicates that he must have a life of peace and purity, an ideal necessarily opposed to the hand-soiling and never-ending occupations of the rebel. The irony involved in Tarrou's quest for "la paix intérieure" and the fact that the rebel (and it can be assumed that Tarrou was such up until recession of the plague) can never find peace, is apparent.

One of the sources of Tarrou's brief against life was of course the question of justice. He refused to recognize as did Camus, Rieux, and Camus' other true rebels the simple fact that in this world "il n'y a pas de justice, il n'y a que des limites."[95] Hence justice, one of the factors tried in Tarrou's outer tribunal, involves the question of possibility vs. impossibility. Tarrou, who is at odds with the world, is consequently at war with the limitations of possibility. This opposition is best illustrated in an early conversation held with Dr. Rieux in which Rieux establishes himself as one who will fight continually for all victimes of injustice, whether the injustices stem from death, or society. Tarrou replies, "oui. . . je peux comprendre. Mais vos victoires seront toujours provisoires, voilà tout" (109). Rieux' position, that of the true rebel, is well summed up in a chapter of L'Homme révolté entitled "Au-delà du nihilisme."

> Aucune sagesse aujourd'hui ne peut prétendre à donner plus. La révolté bute inlassablement contre le mal, a partir duquel il ne lui reste qu'à prendre un nouvel élan.

---

[95]Carnets, II, 236.

> L'homme peut maîtriser en lui tout qui doit l'être. Il doit réparer dans la création tout ce qui peut l'être. Après quoi, les enfants mourront toujours injustement, même dans la société parfaite. Dans son plus grand effort, l'homme ne peut que se proposer de diminuer arithmétiquement la douleur du monde. Mais l'injustice et la souffrance demeureront et, si limitées soient-elles, elles ne cesseront pas d'être le scandale. Le "pourquoi?" de Dimitri Karamazov continuera de retentir; l'art et la révolte ne mourront qu'avec le dernier homme." (363)

If the true rebel knows that his victories will always be provisional, he also accepts the fact that in achieving these victories he will sometimes have to use methods which he abhors. Tarrou as a _révolté_ during a combat he believes is utterly just, in which he fights germs rather than men, learns to his grief that in fighting death or nihilism, he has to use nihilism as a means to his end. For instance, in the campaign against _la peste_ there is no certainty that the measures taken have been effective against the disease; what is certain is that these measures engender further evil. For the quarantine which forces the separation of those who love leads to despondency, a poor antidote to contagion; the isolating of the plague-ridden city leads to the outbreak of nihilistic activities such as looting, profiteering, arson, and in some cases, to the deliberate infection of others with the disease. In other ways also, nihilism springs from the very means employed to combat it: the formerly free citizens of Oran become prisoners in the combined charnel-house and jail to which their city has been reduced, while those who try to escape are shot in skirmishes at the gates or executed for minor offenses as exemplary measures under the new _peste régime_.

Another contradiction which Tarrou puts on trial in the outer

objective tribunal concerns his relationship with others. When Rieux asks him what has motivated his interest in serving the plague victims, Tarrou responds that it was his morale de la compréhension, his ideal of sympathy. Such an ideal is, however, a mere abstraction of love directed toward man, rather than toward individual men or women. Tarrou's by-passing of love for LOVE, then, is an economy of emotion[96] for he maintained that "l'honnête homme, celui qui n'infecte presque personne, c'est celui qui a le moins de distractions possible. Et il en faut de la volonté et de la tension pour ne jamais être distrait!" (208) This economy of emotion enables him not only to concentrate on his goal of purity but eliminates what he considers to be an opportunity for further evil. He knew that human love, as opposed to a saint's love, often means hurting and being hurt — conditions which Tarrou wishes at all cost to avoid.

Both Rambert and Rieux notice Tarrou's detachment. On one

---

[96]Tarrou behaves typically here for William James wrote in his Varieties of Religious Experience that "the lives of saints are a history of successful renunciation of complication, one form of contact with the outer life being dropped after another, to save the purity of the inner tone"([New York, 1928], 349). George Orwell in his essay "Reflections on Gandhi" also appeared to be in agreement with all that Camus implied in respect to his saint and the subject of love. Orwell wrote, "The essence of being human is that one does not seek perfection. . . and that one is prepared in the end to be defeated and broken up by life. . . this is the price of fastening one's love upon other individuals." To this he added, "to ordinary human beings, love means nothing, if it does not mean loving some people more than others." Orwell also observed that "it is probable that some who achieve or aspire to sainthood have never felt much temptation to be human beings. . . . that the main motive for 'non-attachment' is a desire to escape from the pain of living and above all from love, which, sexual or non-sexual, is hard work" (The Orwell Reader [New York, 1949], 328, 335).

occasion for instance, when Rambert asks particularly to speak to Dr. Rieux, Tarrou in giving Rambert permission to enter Rieux' office replies with a knowing smile, "Je sais. Il est plus humain que moi. Allons-y" (169). Rieux also notes Tarrou's detachment which he feels has been manifested in his notebooks, and not only comments in La Peste that Tarrou's seems to be the point of view of one who looked at life through the wrong end of a telescope, but Camus, in a commentary in his own notebooks (Carnets, II), remarks, with Rieux again as his mouthpiece: "Quand on écrit ce que vous écrivez, il semble que l'on n'a rien à faire avec le service des hommes" (122).

Even more important to Tarrou than his rebellion against the world is his revolt against his own condition — the state of being a man — and it is this aspect of his revolt which leads him to submit himself to his own inner tribunal. In this subjective court of law he brings six charges against himself:

1) That he, who was unable to change the world, was unable to change himself, that he who lived in an imperfect world should also be imperfect, for he was one who knew so well "le bien et fait maigré lui le mal";[97] that he was not what Clamence would term "all of a piece," for he lacked as a human being the unity of purpose to be found only in a god, a hero of legend, or in God himself, and hence lived a series of contradictions.

2) That he, who had undoubtedly read with care works similar to

---

[97] L'Homme révolté, 342.

Le Mythe de Sisyphe, and who had been on his own absorbed in a study of l'absurde, had failed to heed the implications of said studies.

3) That he had failed in regard to lucidité, one of the "natural laws" resulting from consciousness of l'absurde, in making himself responsible for that for which he never could be responsible — the accidental or the inevitable. That he would in a world governed by death, instead of resisting it consistently, eventually capitulate. That he would (and lucidity not only includes knowledge of good and evil, but self-definition) succumb to self-deception or mauvaise foi.

4) That he had failed in regard to mesure, another "truth" derived from knowledge of l'absurde. For in preferring perfection, an impossibility, he had turned his back on the possible; that he had in by-passing the condition of men, tried to attain the condition of the saint; that he had in his obsession with guilt, avoided responsibility, concentrating not on what he could do but on what he could not do.

5) That he had in his extreme guilt finally abandoned his responsiblity as a man, refusing the burden of Sisyphus assumed by the other heroes of l'absurde.

6) That he, who had begun his career fighting death and nihilism on behalf of others, had learned that for himself, at least, annihilation was a desired goal; that he who had fought the death sentence in societies would, having first put himself on trial, eventually condemn himself to death.

For, as an aspiring saint, Tarrou is paradoxically a great sinner, guilty of what is for Camus the only sin — the sin against life: for not

only has Tarrou, as an absolutist, aspired to a goal only realizable, if at all, in another life or world, but he has sinned against his only certainty, his own life, in choosing the wrong freedom.

Whatever Rambert says about heroism applies equally to sainthood, for in showing that he knows of the complicity between heroism and death, he also implies that the same complicity exists between death and sainthood. Rambert is undoubtedly thinking of both the hero à la Malraux and of his own experiences in the Spanish Civil War when he declaims for Tarrou's benefit, "je sais que l'homme est capable de grands actions. Mais s'il n'est pas capable d'un gran sentiment, il ne m'intéresse pas." Insisting further he states, "j'en ai assez des gens qui meurent pour une idée. Je ne crois pas à l'heroïsme, je sais que c'est facile et j'ai appris que c'était meurtrier. Ce qui m'intéresse, c'est qu'on vive et qu'on meure de ce qu'on aime" (136-137).

Tarrou, who can die for an idea or an abstraction, is incapable of dying for love or of living for love. He who seeks his paix intérieure which proves his peste intérieure, lives in a sort of limbo. "Il était conscient" as is Rieux, "de ce qu'il y a de stérile dans une vie sans illusions," and that "il n'y a pas de paix sans espérance" (239). Living as are those condemned by the plague epidemic to a life of inactivity and hopelessness, he lives "sans avenir" like they who are "échoués à mi-distance de ces abîmes et de ces sommets, ils flottaient plutôt qu'ils ne vivaient, abandonnés à des jours sans direction et à des souvenirs stériles, ombres errantes qui n'auraient pu prendre force. . ." (61)

Tarrou admits in his long conversation with Dr. Rieux — his only reprieve from the plague — that it is pointless to fight if one already overlooks what one is fighting for: "à la fin, c'est trop bête de ne vivre que dans la peste. Bien entendu, un homme doit se battre pour victimes. Mais s'il cesse de rien aimer, par ailleurs, à quoi sert qu'il de batte?" (211) Rambert, in contrast to Tarrou, while separated from his mistress, still lives in hope because he loves.

Having that "obstination aveugle qui dans nos coeurs, remplaçait alors l'amour" (153), Tarrou resembles those people of Oran who during the peste year supplant their usual complacency with a habit of despair more lethal than despair itself, for they have learned to live with despair as they formerly lived with their mauvaise foi.

"It is not so curious," Emily Zants writes, that Tarrou "die at the point of the plague where everyone else's hope for personal happiness seems to be killing the plague itself." She adds, "It was still effective on Tarrou, however, who had no hope."[98] It is, of course, the combination of Tarrou's guilt and his estrangement towards others which leads him to despair. Camus, in contrast to his protagonist, knows that "ceux qui s'aiment et qui sont séparés peuvent vivre dans la douleur, mais ce n'est pas le désespoir: ils savent que l'amour existe."[99]

In refusing one of the few things that are possible to human effort — "la tendresse humaine," Tarrou fails, and as one of Camus'

---

[98]"The Relationship of Judge and Priest in La Peste," The French Review, XXXVII (February 1964), 421.

[99]L'Eté, 170.

false rebels, chooses as have the people of Oran, mauvaise foi in place of authenticity.

Seeing his own and the crux which has defeated Tarrou as identical, Camus, while reading the Odyssey, writes the following notation in his Carnets, II: "Calypso offre à Ulysse de choisir entre l'immortalité et la terre de sa patrie. Il repousse l'immortalité. C'est peut-être tout le sens de l'Odyssée" (22). It is also close to the complete meaning of all of Camus' work which includes the world of beauty and the world of suffering, as well as the acceptance of the human lot which is to die, and the rejection of any transcendence beyond the human state. Tarrou in his temptation toward sainthood chooses instead of this kingdom in the sun, exile in the "ténèbres d'Eurydice et le sommeil d'Isis."[100] For this reason Tarrou must in the matter of heroism cede to the true heroes of l'absurde, and in returning once again to the scene-on-the-roof and to Tarrou's announcement that he would like to be a saint without God, there is Rieux' reply which states very clearly the stand of Rieux, of Camus, and of all true rebels against the absurd: "mais vous savez, je me sens plus de solidarité avec les vaincus qu'avec les saints. Je n'ai pas de goût, je crois, pour l'héroïsme et la sainteté. Ce qui m'intéresse, c'est d'être un homme" (210).

In Rieux' aspiration to be no more than a man among men, interested, as he tells Father Paneloux, in their health, not their salvation, Rieux reaches what Tarrou refers to as a third category, beyond that of

---

[100] L'Eté, 60.

the rational murderer and the innocent murderer, a position which Tarrou feels would be very hard to achieve, but might possibly lead to peace: "la troisième catégorie, celle des vrais médecins" (209). This category is composed not only of professionals, but of whoever could, by means of his métier, his trade or special experience, bring to bear for the benefit of men his skill, his knowledge, and his compassion. Tarrou no longer belongs in this category now that the struggle against peste is over, for Tarrou rejects mere possibilities. In "la troisième categorie" are grouped Rieux with his medical experience; Rambert as journalist and man of the heart; and Grand, the near-ridiculous municipal clerk. For it is Grand who can never find the words to write his book, but who, nevertheless, is able to express succinctly the most valuable lesson to be learned from l'absurde: "Il y a la peste, il faut se défendre, c'est clair. Ah! si tout était aussi simple!" (115) Outside the covers of La Peste there are other notables among Camus' true rebels: Meursault who emerges, although in a purely individual process, an absurd hero, because of his complete acceptance of life and of death as a part of life; Daru of the short story "L'Hôte," who learns that "an instinctive impulse of compassion for a fellow-being will lead to his expulsion from the austere Eden of his solitude. A single involvement of feeling will implicate him in a future of human involvements";[101] and also d'Arrast, of another short story, "La Pierre qui pousse." D'Arrast arrives in the new world to apply his skill as an engineer to

---

[101] Lionel Trilling, The Experience of Literature (New York, 1967), 797.

build better lives for men.

Such a group must also include Camus himself, the author of these ideas placed in action, who has in both his journalism and his creative writing forged "un art de vivre par temps de catastrophe, pour naître une fois, et lutter ensuite. . . . contre l'instinct de mort à l'oeuvre dans notre histoire."[102]

Emily Zants has borne Camus' task in mind when she writes:

> The travels or experience of each individual must provide him with the secret, the knowledge or link of solidarity which will permit him as an individual to partake of men's communion. His descent into the night is a kind of individual death whereby he acquires this knowledge. Much of Camus' preoccupation with death is explained on this symbolic level. By his use of murders, wars, and plagues he restates in contemporary terms Odysseus' temptation on Calypso's island to remain either in perpetual confrontation with the absurd or to succumb to one of its terms, anything but the revolt which would carry the individual away from her island of debauchery back to man. It is the artistic attempt to bring the stranger back from such islands to the harmonious seashores where the balance prevails between men's ideals and their individual lives that forms the nucleus of Camus' symbolic universe.[103]

---

[102]Camus, Discours de Suède, 17.

[103]"Deserts. . .," 40.

BOOK TWO

GRAHAM GREENE: THE JOURNEY TOWARD SAINTHOOD

PART I

THE MAP: BITS AND PIECES

All of Graham Greene's writings are journeys of exploration. Those made backward into time and recounted in his books Journey Without Maps: A Travel Book, The Lawless Roads,[1] The Lost Childhood and Other Essays, and In Search of a Character: Two African Journals are probings into "the heart of darkness" or "the heart of the matter." In Journey Without Maps and in In Search of a Character, Greene explores the region earlier exploited by Conrad in his Heart of Darkness. Because Greene is aware, as was Conrad, of the dread foundation underlying human life, Greene's search is for a resuscitation of spiritual values and for a more meaningful way of life. Greene's quest is indicated in his choice of images and metaphors. Such is the case with the phrase "the heart of the matter" which serves as both the title and the key phrase in one of his major novels, The Heart of the Matter. "A hint of an explanation," another linking phrase found in The Heart of the Matter,

---

[1]The British titles of Graham Greene's works will be used in this study whenever there is a discrepancy between the British and American titles. The Lawless Roads was published on this side of the Atlantic as Another Mexico; Stamboul Train as Orient Express; England Made Me as The Shipwrecked; A Gun for Sale as This Gun for Hire. The Power and the Glory was brought out first as The Labyrinthine Ways and later as The Power and the Glory in the United States. Greene deplored this policy of changing his original titles.

also serves as the title of one of his Twenty-One Stories.

Each of Greene's journeys was made precisely because there were no available maps. For this reason Journey Without Maps, the title of Greene's earliest travel account, also becomes a recurrent metaphor in his writings. In this book he offers with the image an explication of its use:

> . . . I avoided ideas I didn't like, the idea of eternal life and damnation. But in Africa one couldn't avoid the supernatural. The method of psychoanalysis is to bring the patient back to the idea which he is repressing: a long journey backwards without maps, catching a clue here and a clue there, as I caught the names of villages from this man and that, until one has to face the general idea, the pain or the memory. This is what you have feared, Africa may be imagined as saying, you can't avoid it, there it is creeping round the wall, flying in at the door, rustling the grass, you can't forget it, so you may as well take a long look. [2]

In his The Lost Childhood Greene indicates his provisional acceptance of an early map: "One had lived for fourteen years in a wild jungle country without a map, but now the paths had been traced and naturally one had to follow them."[3] Later, however, he writes on behalf of one of his protagonists: "But he couldn't follow the plan; he'd lost the knack of map-reading,"[4] and still later another protagonist complains: "all this talk of a man called Hitler. . . your files of wretched faces, the

---

[2]Journey Without Maps: A Travel Book (London, 1950), 109-110. Subsequent quotations taken from this work will be from the same edition.

[3]The Lost Childhood and Other Essays (New York, 1962), 16. Subsequent quotations from this book will be taken from this edition.

[4]England Made Me (London, 1947), 248. Subsequent quotations from this work will be taken from this edition.

cruelty and meaninglessness. . . . It's as if one had been sent on a journey with the wrong map."[5]

The map image is extended to include the journey without passports as well as the distress of being lost in a maze or forest: "He was like a man without a passport, without a nationality; like a man who could only speak Esperanto."[6] And in Brighton Rock there is a similar situation: "It was as if she were in a strange country: the typical Englishwoman abroad. She hadn't even got the phrase book. She was as far from either of them as she was from Hell or Heaven."[7] "Did one turn left or right?" another protagonist asks himself. "It was like being forgotten in a maze when the ticket man has gone home....everyone existing alone in his little personal maze."[8] Again "the sense of unfamiliarity deepened around him. It was as if he had started out from home on a familiar walk, past the gas works, across the brick bridge, over the Wimble, across two fields, and found himself not in the lane which ran uphill to the new road and the bungalows, but on the threshold of a strange wood, faced by a shaded path he had never taken, running God knows where."[9]

---

[5]The Ministry of Fear (London, 1950), 194. Subsequent quotations from this work will be taken from the same edition.

[6]England Made Me, 136.

[7]Brighton Rock (New York, 1953), 180. Subsequent quotations from this work will be taken from the same edition.

[8]The Lawless Roads (London, 1960), 55. Subsequent quotations from The Lawless Roads will be taken from this edition.

[9]Stamboul Train (London, 1947), 144. Subsequent quotations from Stamboul Train will be taken from this edition.

Doors, together with windows are important symbols in Greene's writing. The "green baize door" occurs more than once. In The Lawless Roads he writes:

> If you pushed open a green baize door in a passage by my father's study, you entered another passage deceptively similar, but none the less you were on alien ground. There would be a slight smell from the matron's room, of damp towels from the changing rooms, of ink everywhere. Shut the door behind you again, and the world smelt differently: books and fruit and eau-de-Cologne" (3-4).

The "green baize door" image is more fully exploited in The Ministry of Fear where it becomes a more explicit division or "border" between the state of innocence and the state of knowledge. Greene continues to write in The Lawless Roads of this particular door as a border:

> One was an inhabitant of both countries: on Saturday and Sunday afternoons of one side of the baize door, the rest of the week of the other. How can life on a border be other than restless? You are pulled by different ties of hate and love (4).

"The Other Side of the Border," a sketch of an incompleted work, and "Across the Bridge," the title of a completed short story, encompass a similar concept. Each reinforces Greene's conception of life as a journey, a journey with all the discomforts and uncertainties of an actual inroad into an unknown territory.

Whether actual expeditions into Africa, Mexico, or Indo-China, or forays into the dead center of reckoning by way of the "basement room," the Viennese sewers, or the hidden world "under the garden,"[10]

---

[10]The references are to the short story "The Basement Room" in Twenty-One Stories, to the entertainment The Third Man, and to the short story "Under the Garden" in the collection A Sense of Reality.

each was a symbolic journey or descent into the remote regions of the buried psyche. For the passage beyond the border of the known world into an unknown territory, or through the green baize door which divided the secure world of childhood from that other world of childhood terrors, was a passage from ignorance to knowledge, from innocence to awareness, from chaos to order, from fatherlessness to the recovery of the lost father, and from sinfulness to sanctity. Each ingress was made in one of two ways, either via the primitive where, in the childhood of the race, vestiges of responsible parenthood are still to be uncovered, or via the "lost childhood" of the individual, where the child is, of course, father to the man.

Greene is not, however, a romantic who looked in his journeys back in time for delight in a lonely landscape or for nobility in the savage. He rather endured the difficulties of the journey in order to reap its benefits: the trip into Liberia and Sierra Leone was worth the rats and the malaria in order to discover in the bush a new vision of life, one which included a gentleness, an instinctive friendliness, and a greater candor, as well as a deeper cognizance of the supernatural. The dual aspect in these ventures, the comfort derived from discomfort, is reflected in Greene's writing, for if in "The Basement Room" the kitchen is the realm of Mrs. Baines, who is the equivalent in young Philip's mind to the witch who haunts children's dreams, it is also the territory of Baines who provides the Dundee cake, the tales of adventure, and the companionship; if in <u>The Third Man</u> the garbage-fringed channels of underground Vienna are the haunts of rats, these same sewers represent

a natural order in contrast to human anarchy, for its waters still respond to the law of its own tides; and if the under-garden world which Wilditch explores is a seemingly capricious world permeated with the odor of decaying cabbage leaves and whose silences are broken by Maria's discordant "Kwahks!" it is also the hiding place of secret jewels, the golden po and the new ways of looking at the world above.

PART II

THE GREENE WORLD

Returning from Africa in the middle 1930's, Greene felt that he had heard in the cry of the wakeful slum child an instinctive longing for a lost homeland. Such a homeland, he believed, had been found among the primitive natives of West Africa. For there the men of the bush still shared the purer terror and the purer joy of a life which continued to take the supernatural into account. It was in the dance of the bush witch that Greene saw both the acknowledgment and the exorcism of man's fears — an act performed by men too far removed from the urban populations of Europe and America to exchange their joy for boredom or their terror for nothingness. Nor had they yet exchanged their religious sense for what Greene calls the "terrifying egoism of exclusion."

In leaving Africa Greene brought back to Europe a new wasteland symbol — that of "the sinless graceless empty chromium world" — as well as his symbol of "the Coast" as the buffer state between the overly-mechanized world and the primitive world of lost innocence. He may have first realized these two worlds, or states of mind, "going out by surfboat toward the bar, that thin line of white which divided this world from the other," the chromium world which had come to meet him in the guise of "the smokestack, the siren that called us impatiently on board, the officer on the captain's bridge who watched us through glasses." The coastal town, on the other hand, which with its mud, its corrugated iron roofs, and its vultures, was receding from view, was a reminder to Greene of how much less separated the people of the coast were from

the true primitive. "The primitive," he wrote, "was at their back, it wasn't centuries away. If they had taken the wrong road, they had only to retrace their steps a very little distance in space and not in time."[11]

In choosing the Coast as a symbol, Greene accepted the "seedy" as a reminder of how far fallen man in his pursuit of "the smart, the new, the chic, the cerebral" had travelled from the Eden of his lost innocence. The "seediness" of the coast being less distant from man's beginnings is the point of confluence between the primitive world of superstition and the chromium world of complete assurance; it is closer to that point where man, in his false confidence in the thin surface of matter, turned away from his knowledge of the abyss; it is the moment when man hesitates before he joins, through progress or prosperity, the new wasteland. "The coast," then, or "the border," for they are often synonymous in Greene's thought, became the setting for much of his writing. Lying between the purer world of the primitive and the adulterated worlds of Europe or America, the Coast formed the gray and neutral territory between the extremes of good and evil, of faith and indifference. Because of its neutrality, Greene knew that life on the border or the Coast could be nothing but restless — a ravaged territory whose populace, torn by different ties of love and hate, became in themselves the battleground in Greene's drama for the two eternities.

Greene, having chosen "the Coast" as a symbol and in extending these coasts to include the "seedy" everywhere, made claims in his

---

[11] Journey Without Maps, 309.

writing to a much vaster territory, known today as "Greeneland." Because of its very "seediness" and "dinginess" Greeneland's service to humanity is to keep alive the sense of "pity of what man has done with his world" and of the discrepancy between what man was, what he is, and what he could be.

A description of the Greene world must include its physical geography, the people who populated it, and the norms which govern it. Therefore space will be given to an enumeration of those regions which Greene claims for his coasts and to the failures who, moving against a background where isolation and betrayal are the rule, populate it. In such a description the fact will become clear that where hell is so obvious, heaven may be inferred; and that where pettiness, malice and sin flourish, the failures provide the saints with their opportunities. Some of the regions Greene has claimed for Greeneland are, in addition to the Coast of West Africa, the desolate wastes and the border towns of Mexico, war-torn Vietnam, the Congo and its tributaries, the smaller English cities such as Coventry, Brighton, and Nottingham (sometimes designated as Nottwich), as well as the more dismal districts of that great metropolis, London. In Greeneland the smaller cities are recognized by their invariable Moroccan cafés, Gothic hotels, Woolworths, supercinemas, and aging prostitutes. They are wintry backgrounds painted in tones of gray. London, however, is most often seen from the vantages of its larger thoroughfares, each with its characteristic activity. There is the Clapham Road, the Finchley Road, the Brighton Road. There is the Tottenham Court Road with its "arty" furniture and its

bars, and there is the "smell of cooking greens just off the Tottenham Court Road, as well as that special cinema known as "a little place off the Edgeware Road." Great Portland Street, on the other hand, is known in Greeneland for its motor salesmen, the Euston Road for its bicycle shops; and while Carleton Myatt speeds toward Stamboul on the Orient Express he dreams of a more familiar journey down the "long straight Spaniards Road" which leads out of London with the heath following on either side, carrying with it a residue of the metropolitan squalor in the "shop girls offering themselves dangerously for a drink."[12]

Once outside of London there is, of course, a switch from urban "seediness" to a suburban variety. These are the true physical wastelands known as "Metroland." Metroland is usually described as a phenomenon of the Midlands, wherever the "land is sold for building estates and little villas go up on the wounded clay with garages like tombs,"[13] but Greene also described similar assaults made into the downlands near Brighton. Here Rose Wilson, one of the protagonists of Brighton Rock, exclaims to Pinkie Brown, the boy gang-leader: "It's lovely. . . being out here in the country with you." The "country" to the slum-bred Rose consists pathetically of a region where:

> Little tarred bungalows with tin roofs paraded backwards, gardens scratched in the chalk, dry flower beds like

---

[12]Stamboul Train, 29.

[13]A Gun for Sale (London, 1947), 54. Subsequent quotations from this work will be taken from the same edition.

> Saxon emblems carved on the downs. Notices said: "Pull in Here," "Mazawattee Tea," "Genuine Antiques"; and hundreds of feet below, the pale green sea washed into the scarred and shabby side of England. . . . there was nobody about; one of the bungalows had broken windows, in another the blinds were down for a death.[14]

Insulation, isolation, loneliness are chronic aspects of the Greene world. The insulation built up between one Greenelander and another is revealed in the following description:

> . . . in the morning, mist lay heavy. . . . Boards announcing desirable building lots dripped on short grass. . . . With visibility shut down to fifty yards you got no sense of a world, of simultaneous existences: each thing was self-contained like an image of private significance, standing for something else — Metroland loneliness.[15]

In the entertainment The Ministry of Fear Greene's readers learn that currently the "two great popular statements of faith are 'what a small place the world is' and 'I'm a stranger here myself'" (102).[16] Although geographical distances may appear to have contracted, a greater sense of intimacy is not to be inferred. Coral Musker learns this as she proceeds on her journey to Stamboul. At the very beginning a ticket agent calls after her:

> 'Remember me. . . . I'll see you again in a month or two.'

---

[14]Brighton Rock, 124.

[15]The Lawless Roads, 9-10.

[16]Greene distinguished between his novels and what are considered his lighter forms of fiction, referring to the latter as entertainments, with the exception of Loser Takes All which he has termed a "frivolity." A. A. de Vitis points out that in the novels "Greene expends more time and energy on the characterization," (53) that "what in the entertainment is a religious sense, becomes in the novel a religious theme" (Graham Greene [New York, 1964], 53, 65). In the entertainments there is, of course, also a concession to the happy ending.

> But he knew that he would not remember her; too many faces would peer during the following weeks through the window of his office. . . for him to remember an individual and there was nothing remarkable about her.[17]

Once again in Stamboul Train Carol was relegated to her role in the lonely crowd, the impersonality of a lifetime of "Ivy and Flo, of Phil and Dick, all the affectionate people one kissed and called by their front name and didn't know from Adam" (203).

In such a world of non-recognition, mere pathos can readily be converted into tragedy. This was the case of D.'s wife in The Confidential Agent. D. gives a laconic account of her execution which took place some time earlier: "They took her as a hostage for the wrong man. They had hundreds. I expect to the warders they all looked much alike."[18]

The alienation existing between individuals in the Greene world is carried to its nihilistic extreme in the adulterated penicillin racket in post-World War II Vienna. The principal victims have been children who died of spinal meningitis or who became permanently insane as a result of this criminal adulteration. As they ride the Great Wheel in the Prater, Harry Lime explains his point of view to Rollo Martins, his erstwhile admirer:

> Harry took a look at the toy landscape below. . . . "Victims?" he asked. "Don't be melodramatic, Rollo. Look down there," he went on, pointing through the window at the people moving

---

[17]Stamboul Train, 3.

[18]The Confidential Agent (New York, 1939), 212. Subsequent quotations taken from this work will be from the same edition.

> like black flies at the base of the Wheel. "Would you really feel any pity if one of those dots stopped moving — forever? If I said you can have twenty thousand pounds for every dot that stops, would you really, old man, tell me to keep my money — without hesitation? Or would you calculate how many dots you could afford to spare? Free of income tax, old man. Free of income tax." He gave a boyish conspiratorial smile. "It's the only way to save nowadays."[19]

Harry Lime's large-scale betrayal of humanity is repeated more often than not in the Greene world. There is Sir Marcus's (read Zaharoff's) scheme to bring about a world-wide war, there are Eric Krogh's (read Ivar Kreuger's) international financial manipulations and there is Kate Farrant's recital in England Made Me of the vulpine code she has learned to live by:

> "We're all thieves. . . . Stealing a livelihood here and there and everywhere and giving nothing back."
> Minty sneered: "Socialism."
> "Oh no," Kate said. "That's not for us. No brotherhood in our boat. Only one who can cut the biggest dash and who can swim."[20]

Betrayal in Greeneland is however as much a factor of the human condition as it is the consequence of human acts. Raven, the harelipped gunman of A Gun for Sale is rejected by society for his defect. Such a rejection is emblematic of the world's corruption. Raven speaks for the withdrawal of God, the Father, and for universal orphanhood when he talks of the general irresponsibility of parents. When he asserts "This isn't a world I'd bring children into" he speaks on behalf of the children who exist in the Greene world — Else, Rose Wilson, Pinkie

---

[19]The Third Man (New York, 1950), 136-137. Subsequent quotations from this work will be taken from the same edition.

[20]England Made Me, 274.

Brown, and Philip of "The Basement Room" — "It's just their selfishness," Raven continues. "They have a good time and what do they mind if someone's born ugly: Three minutes in bed or against a wall, and then a lifetime for the one that's born" (156).

In Brighton Rock Pinkie Brown stresses the fact that pre-natal betrayal is merely the prelude to further treachery. Pinkie, himself, is permanently scarred by his memories of "the stuffy rooms, the wakeful children, the Saturday night movements from the other bed" (130), for the child knew that he was alone and forgotten for as long as the parents' weekly "game" lasted.

Life itself betrays, for it is the enemy of idealism and of all who serve at its altars. In Greeneland the idealist is inevitably betrayed either by his own mistaken idealism or by his own inadequacy in achieving his ends. Dr. Czinner, the futile revolutionist of Stamboul Train is a case in point, for he is deceived by the faithlessness of others, by his own belief in the revolution, and by his own disinclination to be more opportunistic. He is sacrificed in the end for having been "too faithful to people who could have been served better by cunning," he recognizes himself as the agent of betrayal, a traitor to those "whom he had attended and failed to save," to those "sad beautiful faces, thin from bad food, old before their time, resigned to despair. . . ." "The world was in chaos," he knew, "to leave so much nobility unused while the great financiers and the soldiers prospered" (199-200).

Dr. Czinner quailed no more than Raven at the idea of dying, for " 'life,' he told himself, 'has not been so good as that' " (201). In the

moment preceding his execution he also realizes that treachery does not end with life, that it outlives the moment of death and his "clearer mind told him that the chances were few that his death would have any effect" (202). At first he had promised himself that he might in death do more for these people than in life, but now he knew he was to die as he had lived, a futility rather than a sacrifice.

Borrowing his deeply-rooted conviction that the world is a world of betrayal from the macrocosmic evidence around him, Greene surrendered himself for the time to empiricism. For in Nottingham he had seen betrayal on a grand scale where

> riding in trams in winter past the Gothic hotel, the super-cinema, the sooty newspaper office where one worked at night, passing the single professional prostitute trying to keep the circulation going under the blue and powdered skin, one began slowly, painfully, reluctantly to populate heaven.[21]

In Nottingham he had seen the path cut out for him: "one began to believe in heaven because one believed in hell" and because, as in Pinkie's case, the evidence lay all about him "for a long while it was only hell that one could picture with a certain intimacy."[22] Having gathered his evidence for a hell in the world he lived in, Greene was also forced to furnish heaven from the same stock. Anthony Burgess wrote in this respect that

> once a Catholic lays open his soul to the corruptions of the great world of commitment, he must accept a kind of

---

[21]The Lawless Roads, 5.

[22]The Lawless Roads, 5.

> empiricism if he is not to be damned, drawing from the natural order what may conceivably further the terrestrial ends of the supernatural order.[23]

Although Burgess denied that there was "little flavor of empiricism" in Greene's work because he maintained Greene based all on paradoxes and anomalies, there is still much evidence that it is by means of empirical evidence that Greene derived his conviction of supernature, that he had in his various types of journeys back into time divined in the macrocosm the "somewhat confused indication" of a struggle between good and evil, and an even more confused indication of a possible reconciliation between these forces.

It was, then, in his efforts to populate, or believe in heaven, that Greene brought into being his own microcosmic world made up of his saints, his anti-saints, and his failures.

Among his failures Greene counted the innocent, the maimed and the warped, the complacent, and the opportunistic. Among these it is only the innocent who have made any efforts to come to terms with life. But such efforts as they exert are half-hearted, for these persons lack conviction, knowing that they will never know success, happiness, or encounter much goodness in life. Whenever an innocent should make a concerted effort, it is usually misguided and, as such, constitutes a lethal danger to himself, or to others. Among such innocents are the Coral Fellows, the Coral Muskers, the Elses, the Millie Drovers, the Dr. Czinners, the Rose Wilsons, the Anthony Farrants and the Alden

---

[23]"The Politics of Graham Greene," The New York Times Book Review, September 10, 1967, 2.

Pyles of the Greene world. In many instances their loyalties will be foils to the betrayals practiced in Greeneland.

Anthony Farrant, one of the protagonists of England Made Me, may appear at first glance out of place among Greene's innocents, yet Kate, his twin sister, indicates that he is correctly situated when she exclaims "Tony, you're too innocent to live!"(247). Limping along with the outworn code of an older England,[24] Anthony is admirable in his loyalty to his code and in his bravado in meeting defeat. Refusing either to kill for a living or to accept money from his sister's lover, Anthony carries the "wrong map" in Kate's world. And despite his dodges, his lies, and his fourflushing (his unmerited Harrovian tie is one instance), which have barred him from clubs from Shanghai to Aden, he is barred, in turn, from a larger association of those who honor a deeper dishonor.

Greene's most obvious failures carry in their physical bearing the outer indications of their psychical failure. Anthony's smile and his lies are physical betrayals of his incompetence in coping with the sterile and chromium world. "Behind the bright bonhomie of his glance, behind the firm handclasp and the easy joke, lay a deep nihilism"(62). His nihilism is born of his own self-knowledge which he admits to his sister, stating "I haven't a future, Kate"(31).

Yet most of Greene's failures are more obviously maimed than

---

[24]England Made Me is translated into French as Mère Angleterre. Both titles indicate that Anthony is an inadapté in the modern world because he follows an outmoded code of honor. The American title, The Shipwrecked, is similarly apt, for whereas Kate and Hall and Minty and Eric Krogh are spiritually derelict, Anthony is completely "at sea" in the world his sister has adapted to. His death appropriately enough comes through drowning!

Anthony. Kenneth Allott and Miriam Farris are referring to these grotesques or near-grotesques when they write that such characters derive from the "same back places of the imaginations as Dickens' Quilp or Krook" and added, significantly, that Greene "is more aware of their origin and the serious use to be made of them."[25] For Wilson, Henry Wilcox, Acky, Harris, Condor, Drewitt, Jones, the detective killed in The Ministry of Fear, Jones, the soldier of fortune in The Comedians, Rennit of the Orthotex Detective Agency, Surrogate, Parkis, Parkison, and Minty provide through their failures the opportunities for the saints. This is true because while the saints and the anti-saints occupy themselves with the larger issues, these grotesques content themselves with "very small arrangements — the settling of scores." Devoid of will and of hope, "in the absence of wider human relationships," they constitute the "sad agents of disaster."[26]

Notable among these "undeveloped hearts" is Minty, one of the protagonists of England Made Me, who like Harris, a minor character of The Heart of the Matter, grasps at straws of conviviality — Harris at his name appearing in a list in a school yearbook, Minty at a letter "from the family" which is actually a request for the payment of an old debt!

Petty and apathetic in the larger issues, each resembles Minty, who in turn resembles his tortured spider. Minty has kept the spider

---

[25]The Art of Graham Greene (New York, 1963), 22. Subsequent quotations taken from this work will be from the same edition.

[26]David Pryce-Jones, Graham Greene (London, 1963), 11. Subsequent quotations taken from this work will be from the same edition.

Anthony. Kenneth Allott and Miriam Farris are referring to these grotesques or near-grotesques when they write that such characters derive from the "same back places of the imaginations as Dickens' Quilp or Krook" and added, significantly, that Greene "is more aware of their origin and the serious use to be made of them."[25] For Wilson, Henry Wilcox, Acky, Harris, Condor, Drewitt, Jones, the detective killed in The Ministry of Fear, Jones, the soldier of fortune in The Comedians, Rennit of the Orthotex Detective Agency, Surrogate, Parkis, Parkison, and Minty provide through their failures the opportunities for the saints. This is true because while the saints and the anti-saints occupy themselves with the larger issues, these grotesques content themselves with "very small arrangements — the settling of scores." Devoid of will and of hope, "in the absence of wider human relationships," they constitute the "sad agents of disaster."[26]

Notable among these "undeveloped hearts" is Minty, one of the protagonists of England Made Me, who like Harris, a minor character of The Heart of the Matter, grasps at straws of conviviality — Harris at his name appearing in a list in a school yearbook, Minty at a letter "from the family" which is actually a request for the payment of an old debt!

Petty and apathetic in the larger issues, each resembles Minty, who in turn resembles his tortured spider. Minty has kept the spider

---

[25]The Art of Graham Greene (New York, 1963), 22. Subsequent quotations taken from this work will be from the same edition.

[26]David Pryce-Jones, Graham Greene (London, 1963), 11. Subsequent quotations taken from this work will be from the same edition.

imprisoned for days under his tooth-glass and he "like the spider. . . withered, his body stretched doggo in the attitude of death, he lay there humbly tempting God to lift the glass" (147). But Minty, Greene would maintain, dimly as he perceives this, is one who has taken God into account, forming thus a feeble, but nonetheless adequate safeguard against the threat that man may himself prevail, a danger of considerable concern to Greene.

It is for this reason that both the complacent and the opportunistic appear worse in the Greene canon. For both insist that they are holding the world by the tail. It is only by Greene's will, for he is, in a sense, their Creator, that they are refused their final autonomy.

Of the compacent there are both the religiously and the secularly oriented. Among the religiously self-satisfied there is Louise Scobie in The Heart of the Matter, Helen Browne in the play entitled The Living Room, and the smug and bourgeois woman, chided by the anonymous priest in The Power and the Glory. Each of these women utilizes religious dogma to fulfill her own purposes, while Ida Arnold in Brighton Rock manipulates others from her own eye-for-an-eye, tooth-for-a-tooth view of secular Right and Wrong.

Lenient where self is concerned, Ida maintains that "God doesn't frown on a bit of human nature," but where others are involved, she plays God. For in her determination to "get justice" she insists that she knows "what is what" whenever it comes to a question of Right and Wrong.[27] With this motivation, and armored by her stupid and awful

---

[27]Ida is concerned with Puritan Good or Bad, Right or Wrong

confidence in her chromium world, she pursues Fred Hale's murderer. As she questions one who shares her world of bars and "fun" it becomes evident that Ida, at least, does not share the near universal estrangement of the Greene world.

> "It seemed odd his dying like that. Must have made a bit of gossip."
> "None I heard of," the barman said, "He wasn't a Brighton man. . . . He was a stranger."
> A stranger; the word meant nothing to her; there was no place in the world where she felt a stranger. . . . "It's a good life." There was nothing with which she didn't claim kinship. (102)

Of the opportunistic, Harry Lime and Cholmondeley, Sir Marcus's second in command, are outstanding. Cholmondeley holds the strings that control not only Raven's destiny, but possibly that of the entire world. Although Raven, the hired gunman, is far from innocent, he, as David Pryce-Jones reminded his readers, was relatively so, for

> compared to the gross self-interest of the armaments manufacturers, manipulating even man and emotion in order to maximize profits, Raven has the excuse that he is not cold-blooded. He murders because he must live: they murder because they have calculated the net financial gain.[28]

Harry Lime, emulating the philosophy of totalitarian governments, insists he is merely "in fashion" for he explains again:

> In these days. . . nobody thinks in terms of human beings. Governments don't so why should we? They talk of the people and the proletariat, and I talk of the

---

[27](cont.)rather than moral Good and Evil. Jacques Madaule pointed out that Greene's Catholic novels show his consciousness that he is living in a country oriented towards Calvinism.

[28]Pryce-Jones, 63.

> mugs. It's the same thing. They have their five year plans and so have I.[29]

In terms of pure human malice Cholmondeley and Lime can well join hands with Pinkie Brown, the boy gang-leader of Brighton Rock. Yet in this respect Barbara Seward revealed an idiosyncracy of Greene's mental processes, for she points out that Greene's tolerance is on the side of the sinners rather than the sanctimonious: "If," she writes, "Greene makes up in charity for the sinful what he loses in uncharity for the complacent, it is because the former experience what is to him the truth about our world, while the latter exist in an unreal, blind, smug, alien condition."[30] The complacent live as does Ida Arnold, "cette grosse femme qui vit à la surface des choses comme une mouche à viande."[31]

After remarking Greene's prejudice for the sinner, Barbara Seward did add, however: "But he does not go as far as to exonerate Pinkie; more is needed for salvation than a knowledge of life's horrors." Pinkie's knowledge of these horrors is rather exhaustive as is apparent in his rebuttal to Rose's Ida-like assertion: "Life's not so bad."

> "Don't you believe it," he said. "I'll tell you what it is. It's jail, it's not knowing where to get some money. Worms, cataract, cancer. You hear 'em shrieking from the upper windows — children being born. It's

---

[29]The Third Man, 139.

[30]"Graham Greene: A Hint of an Explanation," The Western Review, XXII (Winter, 1958), 89.

[31]Jacques Madaule Graham Greene (Paris, 1949), 148.

dying slowly."[32]

Ida's terrible light-heartedness "is deplored by the cognizant Pinkie and Rose, for they "know." Their Catholicism has provided for that, and whether for better or worse each was providing for his particular eternity. Pinkie opted for a certainty, for where "Heaven was a word; Hell was something he could trust. A brain was capable only of what it could conceive, and it couldn't conceive what it had never experienced" (331).

It is not only the sense of backing the surest horse, however, that causes Pinkie to choose damnation; it was also his Lucifer-like pride which forced him to defy God with his credo en unum Satanum. This is the same pride that, on the temporal plane, forced him to avenge all real and imagined slights to his person and to attempt ingress into the chromium world of Colleoni, the rival gang-leader.

Because the world of the anti-saint is the mirror image of the world seen by the saints, these worlds have features in common: they are well-mapped and known tracks for both the saint and anti-saint. The anti-saints, like the saints, have "known the story when they came in" and for that reason cannot "take the agonies seriously."[33]

With the advent of Kite, Pinkie, the boy gang-leader of Brighton Rock, has found a father image which serves his own purpose better than Anthony's public school code serves him. For Kite, the gangster,

---

[32]Brighton Rock, 329.

[33]The Confidential Agent, 89.

became Pinkie's deputy-father, rescuing him from the world of sexuality which he hated. Kite also provided another simplification — Pinkie's pattern for existence. While Kite lived "everything had been of a piece" and when Kite died[34] Pinkie saw to it that "nothing had really changed; Kite had died, but he had prolonged Kite's existence — not touching liquor, biting his nails in the Kite way" (318). When, out of expedience, Pinkie marries Rose, he dreads the modification in his pattern for living. He thinks with nostalgia of his room where "he knew exactly where to put his hand for money on the soap dish; everything was familiar; nothing strange there, it shared his bitter virginity"(249).

Pinkie, while making revenge his raison d'être, finds yet another simplification, for such a pattern of commitment hardly calls for the full emotional gamut. By excluding love — the closest he comes to passion is cruelty — or joy or sorrow, Pinkie economizes on emotions, retaining only the jungle emotions of fear and hate and envy.

His ultimate simplification is his rejection of hope; in choosing damnation he merely follows the pattern of evil that lay around him, for to Pinkie, as to another Greene protagonist, "the whole world lay in the shadow of abandonment. Perhaps it was still propped up by ten just

---

[34]Proof that the Greene world is a small world indeed is the fact that the gangster Kite spans two of Greene's books, the entertainment A Gun for Sale and the novel Brighton Rock. Raven recounts in the entertainment: "I was doing the races then. Kite had a rival gang. There wasn't anything else to do. He tried to bump my boss off the course. . . I cut his throat and the others held him till we were all through the barrier in a bunch" (176). Fred Hale's murder at the beginning of Brighton Rock is an act of revenge for Kite's death.

became Pinkie's deputy-father, rescuing him from the world of sexuality which he hated. Kite also provided another simplification — Pinkie's pattern for existence. While Kite lived "everything had been of a piece" and when Kite died[34] Pinkie saw to it that "nothing had really changed; Kite had died, but he had prolonged Kite's existence — not touching liquor, biting his nails in the Kite way" (318). When, out of expedience, Pinkie marries Rose, he dreads the modification in his pattern for living. He thinks with nostalgia of his room where "he knew exactly where to put his hand for money on the soap dish; everything was familiar; nothing strange there, it shared his bitter virginity"(249).

Pinkie, while making revenge his raison d'être, finds yet another simplification, for such a pattern of commitment hardly calls for the full emotional gamut. By excluding love — the closest he comes to passion is cruelty — or joy or sorrow, Pinkie economizes on emotions, retaining only the jungle emotions of fear and hate and envy.

His ultimate simplification is his rejection of hope; in choosing damnation he merely follows the pattern of evil that lay around him, for to Pinkie, as to another Greene protagonist, "the whole world lay in the shadow of abandonment. Perhaps it was still propped up by ten just

---

[34]Proof that the Greene world is a small world indeed is the fact that the gangster Kite spans two of Greene's books, the entertainment A Gun for Sale and the novel Brighton Rock. Raven recounts in the entertainment: "I was doing the races then. Kite had a rival gang. There wasn't anything else to do. He tried to bump my boss off the course. . . I cut his throat and the others held him till we were all through the barrier in a bunch" (176). Fred Hale's murder at the beginning of Brighton Rock is an act of revenge for Kite's death.

men — that was a pity: better scrap it and begin again with newts."[35] In watching some children play in the ruins of his native slum, Pinkie noticed "a wind blew from the sea across the site of his home. A dim desire for annihilation stretched in him, the vast superiority of vacancy."[36]

Both "nihilism" and "annihilation" derive from the Latin nihil (nothing), and yet paradoxically Greene saw both the saint and the anti-saint as the most deeply committed in his microcosm: the saint opting for an eternity of bliss, the anti-saint for one of perdition. The uncommitted, the "dull shabby human mediocrity," those "comic people, futile people, little suburban natures and the maimed and the warped"[37] who are Greene's failures, become the supernumeraries who provide the opportunities for the saints and the anti-saints in their dramas of eternal damnation or salvation.

Greene's journeys were not without promise for in Africa he found "indications" of a lost innocence and in Mexico of a lost godliness, and in Saigon of an ignorance which became the first step to a deeper knowledge.

In Africa, Greene learned that he had discovered the region that "will always be the Africa of the Victorian atlas, the black unexplored

---

[35]The Confidential Agent, 87.

[36]Brighton Rock, 208.

[37]The Ministry of Fear, 30-31.

continent the shape of the human heart";[38] in Saigon, through his protagonist Fowler, Greene learned that when man must himself prevail, he does in fact rely on a deeper commitment, to his moral sense which is his God. For Fowler declares in the end "Everything had gone right with me since he [Pyle] had died, but how I wished there existed someone to whom I could say that I was sorry."[39] And on the "lawless" roads of Mexico Greene learned that

> the luck of the road was not so bad. . . . the rats were there, of course, for the old man's hut was a storehouse for corn, but contained what you seldom find in Mexico, the feel of human goodness. . . . The old man gave up his bed to me, a dais of earth. . . . I lay on the hard earth bed almost happy. The fanged mestizo slipped away — reading out the President's message — all the blarney and the evil will of Mexican townsman, the decaying church, the vultures, the rubble in Villahermosa. . . ; all that was left was an old man on the edge of starvation living in a hut with the rats, welcoming the strangers without a word of payment, gossiping gently in the dark. I felt myself back with the population of heaven.[40]

---

[38] In Search of a Character: Two African Journals (London, 1961), 123.

[39] The Quiet American (New York, 1957), 183. Subsequent quotations from this work will be taken from the same edition.

[40] The Lawless Roads, 208-209.

PART III

SOME GREENELANDERS

It is difficult to trace a hierarchy or scheme of achievement in the Greene world. But if such a scheme were drawn up in the form of an imagined pyramid, there would be little doubt that the saints would occupy the apex and that their lofty isolation would be supported by the enormous weight of the failures. With the failed themselves, however, it is more difficult to assign gradations. For at this point the situation dissolves into paradox: for there is in Greene's writing the adulteress who will become a saint, the sinner who already is one, the benefactor who in reality is the malefactor. In the Greene world there are also the permanent innocents, those who, because they are guilty, guilty of never having entered the fray, are, for this reason, no better than the insidious and the opportunistic; while the complacent because they, too, never come to grips with the "heart of the matter" are more despised and rejected than the truly maimed and warped. Greene always prefers a knowing lack of confidence to an unknowing overconfidence. And then, there is the anti-saint, who instead of forming the very base of the pyramid, as might be expected, cuts in Greene's view a rather creditable figure against the gray and apathetic non-committed[41] who refuse to opt

---

[41]Deploring apathy in regard to metaphysical concerns, Greene recognized a type of heroism in any wholehearted commitment. In his essay "Frederick Rolfe: Edwardian Inferno," he wrote: "Satan as well as sanctity demands an apron stage" (The Lost Childhood, 93). Greene, of course, is contending that the greatest saints have been men with a more than normal capacity for evil, and that inversely, evil men have sometimes barely escaped sanctity.

for either good or evil.

However, whether the efforts of one of Greene's characters carries him as far as sainthood or not, anyone of his protagonists who enjoys any measure of autonomy passes through certain set stages. These stages correspond to the drama of the Fortunate Fall. That is, the protagonists pass from a state of innocence or ignorance, through the Fall or awakening, to the state of knowledge. Such a trajectory is certainly true of Major Scobie, the assistant police commissioner of The Heart of the Matter, of the renegade priest in The Power and the Glory, and of Sarah Miles, the adulteress who burgeons into possible sainthood in The End of the Affair, as it is also true for D. and Arthur Rowe, of the more secular works, The Confidential Agent and The Ministry of Fear.

The fall from innocence to knowledge leads to frustrations and complications. With knowledge come the qualities which are needed in order that the protagonist reaches a higher moral plane: responsibility, love, and the realization of the impossibility of the blameless act, all leading, ultimately, to a sense of guilt. Once committed to any or all of these involvements, the deeper the involvement the greater will be the anguish and the longing for peace in death on the part of the protagonist. Speaking for those who have awakened, Barbara Seward wrote: "Conscious of guilt wherever they turn and faced with inescapable choices between corruption and corruption the truly good men in Graham Greene's world are men sufficiently close to God to be appalled by their

distance from Him."[42] These are the protagonists who long for both peace and purity, and unable to find either in life, succumb to a death wish.

Not only do Greene's protagonists trace in their decisions the consequences of those decisions, the pattern of the Fortunate Fall, but Greene's plots whenever they concern his autonomous characters are movements both from life to death and from death to life. The trajectory from life to death is presented in some instances as eminently desirable because, of course, in Greene's thinking, across the threshold of life lies eternal life. While the trajectory which is directed toward eternity moves from life to death, the trajectory which is temporally oriented moves from death to life because it represents on the protagonist's part a rebirth, the awakening from ignorance to knowledge in one of the truest senses, to self-knowledge.

Of innocence itself, the first stage of existence, the most important thing that can be said is that it is in no way synonymous with goodness. It is simply that first stage of conscious or unconscious rapport between the existent and his existence where either the presence of evil is completely unknown, or if known, deliberately overlooked, or regarded as merely "incidental." For, in the latter case, if evil constitutes a threat, it is a threat not to the individual or individuals in question, but to others.

To that innocent being who still remains unaware of the possibility

---

[42]Seward, 93.

of evil, the world has remained essentially purposeful and well-designed; it is not only the "best of all possible worlds," but it appears complete and all-of-a-piece. On the other hand, to those who have lost their innocence this conviction of an ordered and purposeful world is now relegated to the realm of dreams, those induced by sleep or by drugs or by anaesthesia. Coral Musker a protagonist of Greene's entertainment Stamboul Train envisions such a synthesis:

> She dreamed first that she was a child and everything was very simple and very certain and everything had an explanation and a moral. And then she dreamed that she was very old and was looking back on her life and she knew everything and she knew what was right and what was wrong and why this and that had happened and everything was very simple and had a moral. (195)

The second, and certainly more egotistical type of innocence, wherein the child or the immature adult enjoys a sense of security despite his knowledge that others are threatened, is in keeping with that nearly universal state of mind in the half-century preceding World War I, that world which continued to enjoy the state of innocence of the child or the childlike adult immured in the righteousness of his cause. For this reason Greene criticized the values of this late Victorian world through its reading material which lauded this type of insulated ignorance through

> "the stories of Captain Scott writing his last letters home, Oates walking into the blizzard. . . Damien among the lepers." The Little Duke by Charlotte Yonge, and the African adventure yarns. His heroes were brave, pure, and truthful, and life was simple and grand. "None of the books of adventure one read as a boy had an unhappy ending and none of them was disturbed by a sense of pity for

the beaten side."[43]

In either the innocence of the egoist or of the egotist, immediate comfort is derived from a type of "nursery peace," undisturbed by the suffering of others, or by the necessity of descents into the basement room where strange revelations are made and where the first glimpse is caught of the witch who had heretofore appeared to the protagonist only in dreams.

Although innocence is not a positive factor in the Greene world, Greene nevertheless acknowledges that its loss is somehow regrettable. For one reason, whether it is seen in the child, the childlike adult, or in the recaptured innocence of a work of art, innocence does serve as a witness to "the pity of it all," of how far man has strayed from his prelapsarian state. Greene saw such a loss embodied in an infant girl in Vera Cruz whose tiny ears already bore earrings and who was, he felt, with a "gold bangle around the bony wrist," already "handcuffed to sophistication at birth."[44] From this and other indications, it seems certain that to be alive in the Greene world is to be doomed. Perhaps in order to find innocence, Greene suggested, it is necessary to go back further for innocence may be only a "slobbering mouth, a toothless gum pulling at the teats, perhaps not even that," for it might only be found in the "ugly cry of birth."[45]

---

[43]Francis L. Kunkel, The Labyrinthine Ways of Graham Greene (New York, 1960), 91. Subsequent quotations from this work will be taken from this edition.

[44]The Lawless Roads, 119.

[45]Twenty-One Stories (New York, 1966), 13, 8, 9. Subsequent quotations taken from this collection will be from the same edition.

Rather than representing a composite of positive virtues, innocence at its best is no more than a neutral element in the Greene world. For whenever innocence does survive childhood or adolescence it serves only as a gauge to measure good and evil in those around them. On this aspect of innocence as a neutral factor, Barbara Seward wrote: "Those capable of good do respond to innocence with a mingled sense of pity and protective, if often tragically misdirected, duty towards an evanescent, rare, and vulnerable condition," while "those incapable of good respond with anything from callous exploitation to unmitigated sadism." They do serve, however, she adds, "an important, but nonetheless secondary role, the role of agent in exposing the forces of good and evil which are the primary subject of Graham Greene's novels" (86).

When no longer neutral, innocence becomes lethal. If the innocent resembles Philip in Greene's short story "The Basement Room," it is enough that the witch remains safely outside the nursery door. "Why," Philip asks, "did you wake me up so early?" And his response to his early trauma will be suppression. Feeling "less sheltered than he had ever been," because "other people's lives for the first time touched and pressed and moulded," he decides in regard to Mrs. Baines, the nursery witch, "to suppress the thought of her, ram it down deep."[46]

For the involved protagonist, on the other hand, the fact that the witch exists at all is a call to action. The danger, however, emerges when that involved person remains innocent. Then the situation becomes

---

[46] Twenty-One Stories (New York, 1966), 13, 8, 9. Subsequent quotations taken from this collection will be from the same edition.

increasingly serious for uninformed action is dangerous: mere good intentions are not a valid excuse, nor are they the guarantee of good results. Because he constitutes a menace, the innocent do-gooder resembles in Greene's words the "dumb leper who has lost his bell," who without this warning to others and this reminder to himself, wanders "the world meaning no harm." The involved innocent, then, no longer a neutral, constitutes a negative element in the Greene world. In such a way Alden Pyle, one of the protagonists of The Quiet American, becomes an active, and hence, destructive force. He also bears out Greene's idea that "too much treachery is always nourished in the little over-worked centres of somebody else's idealism."[47] More idealistic than intelligent, more romantic than realistic, Pyle, with a tourist's eye-view of Vietnam, follows his impulse to rescue Phuong from Fowler, by upgrading her from native mistress to Beacon Hill wife (158), and, more seriously still, to interfere in the political and military life of the country.[48] For Pyle is another Greene character who is journeying with the "wrong map." Fowler tries to convince Pyle that General

---

[47]The Confidential Agent, 100.

[48]Fowler, less hypocritical than Pyle, states that as far as Phuong is concerned he refuses to be governed by good intentions: "Suddenly," he narrates, "I couldn't bear his boyishness any more. I said, 'I don't care that for her interests. You can have her interests. I only want her body. I want her in bed with me. I'll rather ruin her and sleep with her than, than — look after her damned interests' " (52). Less emotional at other times, Fowler knows that Phuong at any rate has a designing sister who does nothing but look after her interests. Significantly "Phuong" means "Phoenix" and Fowler predicts that when he and Pyle no longer exist, Phuong will be ensconced between her native husband and child, her interests having then been settled once and for all.

Thé, a warlord with a few thousand bandits, is not the answer to Pyle's dream of a Third Force, untainted by communism or colonialism. Relentlessly, stubbornly, Pyle mounts his little white charger, "armoured by his good intentions and his ignorance" (158), undeterred by Fowler's greater experience. Fowler, the European and dégagé journalist, exhorts Pyle:[49]

> I hope to God you know what you are doing. . . I know your motives are good; they always are. . . I wish sometimes you had a few bad motives; you might understand a little more about human beings. And that applies to your country too, Pyle. (126)

Pyle's failure to foresee the unfortunate results of his course points up that where innocence is ignorance it is, as much as anything, ignorance of consequences. For in choosing to be a factor, yet without knowing the facts, Pyle mistakenly hits a crowded civilian market rather than a military objective. Yet when Fowler looks for signs of contrition in this erring enthusiast (whose blundering mission is to save-the-world-from-communism), Pyle replies that these civilians had merely been "war casualties" who had, after all, "died in the right cause." It is here that Fowler points out the egotistical aspect of innocence at work in Pyle. For Pyle, like others of his type, remains undisturbed as long as his physical comfort enables him to carry his "nursery peace" into adulthood. To Pyle's facile reasoning, Fowler counters "Would you have said the same, if it had been your old nurse with her

---

[49]The so often pointed-out dichotomy in James' work — that between the innocent American and the corrupt and sophisticated European — is given another twist in The Quiet American, for it is Fowler who is ultimately involved and Pyle who is ultimately corrupt.

blueberry pie?" (173)

Innocence is doubly negative. It is not only ignorant of consequences, it is also ignorant of suffering. They who do emerge from behind the nursery door and who, finding themselves in the middle of life with its injustice, its responsibilities, and its pain, may like Philip in "The Basement Room" be anxious to forget. "Having received already a larger dose of life than he had bargained for. . . he was scared."[50] Philip emerged and retreated; Pyle refused to emerge. In both cases the heart has become atrophied. For as Leon Bloy wrote, "Man has places in his heart which do not yet exist, and into them enters suffering, in order that they may have existence." This passage used by Greene as the epigraph to his novel The End of the Affair illustrates the necessity of crossing the threshold from innocence to knowledge. Pyle, Fowler points out, was, on the other hand, "as incapable of imagining pain or danger to himself as he was incapable of conceiving the pain he might cause others" (54). If sensibility is a passage to another stage of moral being, Pyle remains on very much the same plane as Pinkie and James Raven and Harry Lime. The reader learns that Raven, the gunman in A Gun for Sale,

> would never realize other people; they didn't seem to live in the same way as he lived; and though he bore a grudge against Cholmondeley, hated him enough to kill him, he couldn't imagine Mr. Cholmondeley's own fears and motives. (39)

Pinkie is also described as one who cannot see through other

---

[50] Twenty-One Stories, 12.

people's eyes or feel with their nerves. It was only music, which Pinkie dreaded, that caused certain rudimentary emotions to start to awaken. Fowler relates Pyle to the emotionally atrophied, when he claims that whenever Pyle sees a dead body he cannot even see the wounds for it represents to him only a "Red menace, or a soldier of democracy." Completely insulated against another's pain each sacrifices others to his own ends: Pyle to a benighted idealism; Pinkie to a lucid Satanism.

Anthony Farrant has already demonstrated the danger of innocence living in a rapacious world. For innocence in the end becomes self-destructive. Hence it is not merely negative in the sense that it is dangerous to those who find themselves in its path — being ignorance both of consequences and of another's pain — but, it becomes in the end a double-edged weapon, turning finally against the innocent person himself. In this way Pyle's innocence becomes an agent for his own undoing. Fowler assures the French Sûreté:

> he was too innocent to live. He was young and ignorant and silly and got involved. He had no more of a notion than any of you what the whole affair's about, and you gave him money and York Harding's book on the East and said, "Go ahead. Win the East for democracy!" He never saw anything he hadn't heard in a lecture hall, and his writers and his lecturers made a fool of him. (24)

Although Fowler has come East to die, he will survive Pyle. For Fowler in the end must provide for Pyle's demise rather than his own. Having built himself a <u>cocon</u> <u>douillet</u> with opium and Phuong's passionless presence, Fowler insists that he is <u>dégagé</u>. In so insisting, he denies his true motivating principle which has been, rather than

indifference to another's pain, what might be termed a superfluity of sensibility.

His reaction to Pyle's market-day massacre is typical rather than exceptional for he is no mere witness of events, as he tries to declare

> "I'm not involved. Not involved," I repeated. It had been an article of my creed. The human condition being what it was, let them love, let them murder, I would not be involved. My fellow journalists called themselves correspondents; I preferred the title of reporter. I wrote what I saw; I took no action — even opinion is a kind of action. (27)

Yet after Pyle's massacre, which Fowler happens to witness, Fowler is compelled to petition his assistant to report the catastrophe, stating that he is too shocked to think of the event in "terms of a cable."

Although Fowler shows more than a usual degree of self-awareness, he continues to deny his involvement with humanity. "'I know myself,'" he expounds to Pyle, "'and I know the depth of my selfishness. I cannot be at ease (and to be at ease is my chief wish) if someone else is in pain, visibly or audibly or tactually.'" Continuing to bruit his emotional bankruptcy, he adds: "sometimes this is mistaken by the innocent for unselfishness, when all I am doing is sacrificing a small good. . . for the sake of a far greater good, a peace of mind, when I need think only of myself" (107).

His very inability to suffer another's pain, however, causes Fowler, in contrast to Pyle, to accept responsibility. This is particularly apparent in an episode in which Pyle and Fowler have taken shelter for the night in a watch tower manned by two Vietnamese soldiers. One is

wounded in a cross fire:

> I thought, poor devil, if we hadn't broken down outside his post, he could have surrendered as they nearly all surrendered, or fled at the first call from the megaphone. But we were here — two white men — and we had the sten and they didn't dare to move. When we left, it was too late. I was responsible for that voice crying in the dark. I had prided myself on detachment, on not belonging to this war, but those wounds had been inflicted by me just as though I had used the sten, as Pyle had wanted to. (106)

With his refusal to shield himself from pain, Fowler further recounts: "I made an effort to get over the bank into the road. I wanted to join him. It was the only thing I could do, to share his pain. . . ." (106) Unable to crawl to the soldier's side because of his own injured leg, Fowler, finally, felt vast relief when he was told the boy was dead. "I was happy. . . . I didn't even have to suffer much pain after the hypodermic of morphia had bitten my leg" (107).

Later events proved both Fowler and Pyle wrong when Pyle asserts, "'You kept it up all right; even after your leg was smashed you stayed neutral.'" Fowler reveals his wisdom in his answer: "'There's always a point of change. . . . some moment of emotion'" (173). Fowler, of course, has never been deaf to the call of pain, and in his forthcoming active involvement he proves that he also knows that "'one has to take sides — if one is to remain human'" (168).

It is Pyle's market-day massacre that becomes the cue for Fowler's commitment for he realizes the intractability of innocence, that "all you can do is control or eliminate the innocent," for you can't blame the innocent, they are guiltless."[51] Having tried to control Pyle,

---

[51] A Burnt-Out Case (New York, 1962), 182.

and having failed, Fowler is forced to eliminate him. As a last expedient, he arranges that Pyle be found dead in a canal.

Just as Fowler acknowledges the guiltlessness of the innocent, so Querry, the protagonist of A Burnt-Out Case, is similarly aware. Querry remarks of Mme. Rycker: "Oh innocent. . .I daresay you are right. God preserve us from all innocence. At least the guilty know what they are about" (89-90). Querry's awareness that innocence must be sacrificed so that guilt may come into being shows up innocence as a negative factor, not only on the plane of empirical experience, but according to Greene's canon, on the metaphysical plane as well.

Working from the assumption that innocence in respect to human experience is at best a neutral factor, at worst a negative factor, Greene further damned innocence as negative in the man-universe relationship. It is reprehensible in this sphere as well, for it is evil, and not innocence, which becomes the agent for good in a fallen and corrupt world. While innocence must cede to evil that good can emerge, guilt forms the transitional link. Guilt which has risen from the knowledge of evil induces an additional knowledge: the knowledge that one is rarely without blame and that the blameless act is an almost complete impossibility. With these ideas in mind, Barbara Seward wrote:

> A sense of guilt is then the prerequisite to the attainment of true virtue. Just as the innocent and happy fall short because they lack real awareness of evil and the wholly sinful fall short because they are blinded by pride to their own blame for evil, those characters in Greene who attain some measure of stature attain it because they accept their share in the universal taint. . . .

She then elaborates:

> Greene once suggested that "all we can really demand is the divided mind, the uneasy conscience, the sense of personal failure (speech to the "Grand Conférence Catholique" at Brussels, 1947) and in his novels he has given to each of his sympathetic protagonists a sharply divided mind, a more than uneasy conscience. (89-90)

An illustration of how guilt becomes the prerequisite to good can be found in the renegade priest in The Power and the Glory. He demonstrates in his flight from the Mexican government which has outlawed religion, just how one can, through one's personal suffering, come to an understanding of another's pain; of how one can through one's own sinning become tolerant of the sins of others. In this way the priest differs radically from Pinkie. For as Barbara Seward pointed out above, it is those who are blinded by pride who can never feel another's pain nor feel more than contempt for his shortcomings. The sinning priest reflects on the changes he recognizes in himself when he remembers how he had formerly lived, immured in his comfortable parish: "What an unbearable creature he must have been in those days," he ponders, "and yet in those days he had been comparatively innocent." He realizes the difference himself, however, for he knows that "then in his innocence, he had felt no love for anyone, now in his corruption he had learnt."[52] It is, then, through the loss of innocence, that the possibility develops — that of moving toward a higher moral plane, for without the loss of innocence, the so-called heroic virtues, those of the saints — their patience, their moral and physical fortitude, and

---

[52]The Power and the Glory (New York, 1958), 187. Subsequent quotations from this work will be taken from this edition.

their love — could never come into being.[53]

---

[53]Along with the burgeoning of guilt and of love from the branch of withered innocence, come two other concepts closely related to the loss of innocence — vicarious suffering and vicarious sin. One example of the former concept comes from Greene's novel The Heart of the Matter, where the Portuguese captain remains convinced that his daughter's goodness will counteract his own sins. In the case of the renegade priest in The Power and the Glory who prays for his own damnation in exchange for his natural daughter's salvation, there is someone else who will in turn intercede for the sinning priest: for Coral Fellows, who has vowed to protect him, has become his daughter in the spirit who will intercede for him in heaven. Pinkie likewise depends on the principle of vicarious suffering. Believing that Rose will be a willing sacrifice to his transgressions, Pinkie analyzes the situation: "She was good. . . and he was damned; they were made for each other" (Brighton Rock, 180). It is after Pinkie's suicide that Rose's real mission begins. It begins with her query: "And if there's a baby?" The priest whom she addresses replies: "With your simplicity and your force. . . . Make him a saint to pray for his father" (Brighton Rock, 317).

The principle of vicarious sin which is explored as a minor note in Greene's writing is an extension of the conception of vicarious suffering. Such nefarious beings as Pinkie, Raven, and Harry Lime appear to sin that others may be saved. Greene comes close to Dostoevsky here, with Dostoevsky's thesis that the sinner or the murderer is really the benefactor because he exonerates others from guilt. When, for instance, the elder Dostoevsky is killed by his serfs, the son who had desired his father's death is relieved of the necessity for murder. In Freud's study, "Dostoevsky and Parricide," Freud claims that such vicarious innocence produced a positive sense of gratitude in Dostoevsky, that: "Dostoevsky's sympathy for the criminal is, in fact boundless, it goes far beyond the pity which the unhappy wretch has a right to. . . . A criminal is to him almost a Redeemer, who has taken on himself the guilt which must else have been borne by others. There is no longer any need for one to murder, since he has already murdered; and one must be grateful to him, for except for him, one would have been obliged oneself to murder. . ." (The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Vol. XXI, 190). Dostoevsky himself, like his created character Ivan, is able to remain legally, if not morally, guiltless of the father's murder.

The theme of vicarious sin is brought out in Greene's entertainment A Gun for Sale where Raven, sacrificed to society for his harelip, plays the role of scapegoat. A. A. DeVitis pointed out Raven's role as the evil, yet innocent scapegoat:

> The action of the book moves against the Christmas season,

To have lost innocence is tantamount to having entered the world of love, suffering, and responsibility — the world of experience. Rose had lived in the world of the Brighton slums where, although she had lost innocence, she had, by some miracle of personality, retained her goodness. But according to Greene this impoverished world of Nelson Place is part of "the coast" or "the border" and is, for this reason, a less treacherous world than the sinless and empty chromium world where Rose must confront Ida Arnold. For Rose's is the world of experience: "in the hole were murder, copulation, extreme poverty, fidelity, and the love and fear of God" (175).

Experience calls for involvement. Brown, the protagonist of the recent novel The Comedians has given the term "comedian" to himself and to others to indicate their lack of involvement. Martha Pineda cannot protest that others "were only a sub-plot affording a little light

---

[53](cont.) against the cheap religious images, "the plaster mother and child, the wise men and the shepherds," against the betrayal of Christ by Herod — and by Judas. Raven, the hero, makes an association with himself and the holy family for whom there had been no room at the inn. He is angered that the myth of the Birth of Christ, the god who died for sinners, is perpetuated by a godless nation." ("Allegory in Brighton Rock," Modern Fiction Studies, 111, 3 [Autumn, 1957], 217). Like Christ, Raven also suffers a double betrayal: betrayed by Herod, for as an infant, Raven too is marked, and betrayed by Judas, in the person of Anne Crowder and by his birth defect which becomes a mark of recognition to his pursuers and persecutors.

Pinkie also shows traces of alignment with Christ for he too is excluded from the inn. There is no room at the hotel for Rose and Pinkie on their wedding night and at closing hours "they stood on the pavement and heard the door of the Crown closed and locked behind them — a bolt grind into place. . . ." (Brighton Rock, 249).

relief," but that she should be included goes against the grain:

> "For Christ's sake," Martha said in English, as though she were addressing me directly, "I'm no comedian." We had forgotten her. She beat with her hands on the back of the sofa and cried to them in French now. "You talk so much. Such rubbish. My child vomited just now. You can smell it still on my hands. He was crying with pain. You talk about acting parts, I'm not acting any part. I do something. I fetch a basin. I fetch aspirin. I wipe his mouth. I take him into my bed."[54]

Detachment in so many of Greene's characters comes from either the blind pride of the opportunistic or of the insidious, fear, or in Fowler's case, his hypersensitivity to pain. When once involved, other protagonists yearn for the peace and passivity of their former state. Fowler, although involved in others' pain, has also tried to maintain a kind of "nursery peace." As Miriam Allott pointed out: "he identifies Phuong with 'peace' and loves her for her stillness and serenity, while death seems to him to be 'the only absolute value' because it puts a stop to despair."[55] In a former and more turbulent love, peace was completely lacking because his foremost fear was for the death of love:

> I was terrified of losing her. I thought I saw her changing — I don't know if she really was, but I couldn't bear the uncertainty any longer. I ran towards the finish just like a coward runs toward the enemy and wins a medal. I wanted to get death over.[56]

---

[54]The Comedians (New York, 1966), 141. Subsequent quotations taken from The Comedians will be from this same edition.

[55]"The Moral Situation in The Quiet American," Graham Greene: Some Critical Considerations, ed. Robert O. Evans (Lexington, Ky., 1963), 200.

[56]The Quiet American, 96.

Just as Fowler's was a quest for peace, so it was with other protagonists of the Greene world. Dr. Czinner, Scobie, Arthur Rowe, and Sarah Miles seek, as does the Mexican priest, an escape from the struggle embodied in existence. Czinner in having failed to bring off his coup d'état, accusing himself of having betrayed his people, feels disappointment, rather than relief, that he may still survive. He realizes that only death would be his true security, yet it is "his distasteful duty to escape if he could."[57] Similarly D., the revolutionary of The Confidential Agent, instead of fleeing when he had the chance, "went stubbornly back up the street; he had to go on trying until they shut him up, hanged him, shot him, stopped his mouth somehow and relieved him of loyalty and let him rest" (244). The Mexican priest realizes "now that the immediate fear was over, he felt only regret. God had decided. He had to go on with life, go on making decisions, acting on his own advice, making plans," for he was, he knew "like the King of a West African tribe, the slave of his people, who may not even lie down in case the winds should fail." "Let me be caught soon. . . . Let me be caught," he prays. For he like many would rather die, but he also knows that "we have to go on living."[58]

The death wish which these protagonists evince is not only manifested in a desire for peace but, as is the case with Fowler as well as other Greene protagonists, in a desire for purity. This is vouched for

---

[57]Stamboul Train, 217.

[58]The Power and the Glory, 186, 25.

in Fowler's nostalgia for the blameless act. Miriam Allott wrote that at the end

> his job is secure; his divorce will come through; he will be able to marry Phuong; she will stay with him now that Pyle is dead. But the shadow of Pyle remains. Even when the wonderful telegram arrives and Phuong knows that she is to have security which she had earlier sought with Pyle, the shadow is still there. (204)

Even though Fowler is forced to move against violence and stupidity, his sensitivity impels him to regret his liquidation of Pyle. Therefore he is left reflecting at the end of the novel the problem that "everything had gone right with me since he died, but now I wished there existed someone to whom I could say I was sorry" (183).

The death wish in Fowler also takes another form, as is true with other Greene protagonists, the desire that life be seen not as a state of flux, but all-of-a-piece — that is, patterned and permanent, for he states:

> From childhood I had never believed in permanence, and yet I longed for it. Always I was afraid of losing happiness. This month, next year, in three years. Death was the only absolute value in my world. Lose life and one would lose nothing again forever. I envied those who could believe in a God and I distrusted them. I felt they were keeping their courage up with a fable of the changeless and the permanent. Death was far more certain than God, and with death there would be no longer the daily possibility of love dying. (49-50)

There is yet another aspect of existence which will continue to torment Fowler. In a conversation with Pyle, Pyle had declared his belief in God, for without God, he asserts, life wouldn't make sense. Fowler's rejoinder to this statement is that to him it didn't make any sense with Him. It is to this end, too, that death is attractive to

Fowler: for if life is impermanent and chaotic, it is also meaningless, a mockery to man's reasoning powers. Fowler narrates his views on the "absurdity" of death. He describes a stream he has crossed in Vietnam clogged with corpses:

> I too took my eyes away; we didn't want to be reminded of how little we counted, how quickly, simply, and anonymously death came. Even though my reason wanted the state of death, I was afraid like a virgin of the act. I would have liked death to come with due warning, so that I could prepare myself. For what? I didn't know, nor how, except for taking a look around at the little I would be leaving. (44)

Not only does Fowler desire the state of death, but more nihilistically still he desires, in lieu of that unattainable sense of purpose, a manifestation of a complete meaninglessness — a state of illusionlessness, a state redolent of Gatsby's final view which Nick Carraway supposes when he may have looked on an "unfamiliar sky through frightening leaves and shivered as he found what a grotesque thing a rose is and how raw the sunlight was upon the scarcely created grass."[59]

Such a courting of death and a mockery of its own mockery is seen in Greene's protagonist Wilditch of "Under the Garden," who entertains a similar desire to strip away all illusion:

> Why then go back now and see it in other hands? Was it that at the approach of death one must get rid of everything?. . . . Perhaps the man who had ridden the horse around the countryside had not been saying good-bye, as his biographers imagined, to what he valued most: he had been ridding himself of illusions by seeing them again with clear and moribund eyes, so that he might be quite

---

[59]F. Scott Fitzgerald, The Great Gatsby (New York, 1953), 162.

> bankrupt when death came. He had the will to possess at that absolute moment nothing but his wound.[60]

---

[60] The Sense of Reality (New York, 1963), 8-9. Subsequent quotations from this work will be taken from this edition.

PART IV

BEYOND THE GREENE BAIZE DOOR

The stages traveled by Greene's saints as well as his other autonomous characters are both consistently and vividly represented in Arthur Rowe's progress. This protagonist of Greene's entertainment The Ministry of Fear not only completes symbolically, as Pinkie Brown does literally, the trajectory from life to death, but he also makes the more complex and hazardous journey back from death to life.

Additionally, Rowe brings out in his journey toward self-fulfillment the fact that even though Greene's protagonists are living in a fallen world, what the reader confronts could be more correctly designated as "falling man" rather than fallen man. For each undergoes a series of falls, rather than a definitive fall. Arthur Rowe has suffered one of his falls before the story begins. His stages, beginning with this fall, are indicated by the titles of the individual books and chapters. The first of the series encompased is treated in "Book One: The Unhappy Man." This fall from innocence is further explicated by the subtitles: "Between Sleeping and Waking" and "Out of Touch." Here Rowe suffers a sense of exile from his earlier innocence, for although legally acquitted, he continues to judge himself guilty of the mercy-killing of his wife. He continues to ask himself: "Mercy for whom?" Was it mercy for her, who perhaps could not bear her pain, or for himself, who could not bear to see her suffer?

Isolated by his sense of guilt, Rowe severs contact with all those who may know of his "crime," and hopes that while he continues to live

in wartime London, either he, or the world which knew his guilt, will be destroyed by the blitz. While longing to return to the lost Eden of his childhood, innocence is ironically restored to Rowe through amnesia. The book entitled "The Happy Man" and the chapter "Conversations in Arcady" show his figurative return to his former innocence, for Arthur Rowe quite literally awakes in a new nursery world — the nursing home of a Dr. Forester. The process of regaining memory which is a process of rebirth, an effort to regain a foothold on life, is told in "Book Three: Bits and Pieces," while his victory, which includes his full realization that any reintegration into life will include the renewal of pain and responsibility and love, is recounted in "Book Four: The Whole Man" in the chapter entitled "Journey's End."

Retreating from a world in which his own act led to his self-indictment, Rowe resembles his author's potential saints. For Rowe, like Major Scobie and Sarah Miles and the Mexican priest, as well as Pinkie, his anti-saint, has gone in for simplification. Rowe's means of simplification, like theirs, is an effort to return to that stage of life where the advantages of a "nursery peace" are still enjoyed. In order to achieve this elemental peace Rowe strives to remove twenty years from his consciousness. To this end he has taken furnished rooms and had "simply not bothered to make any alterations. There he managed to build up a certain womb-like atmosphere rereading The Old Curiosity Shop and David Copperfield "which he read as people used to read the Bible, over and over again, till he could have quoted chapter and verse, not so much because he liked them as because he had read them

as a child, and they carried no adult memories" (15). At night this room becomes even more completely a deputy-nursery for it is then that his landlady's furnishings fade and the "little light that went on behind the radio dial had a homely effect like a night light in a child's nursery — a child who is afraid of the dark," and over the air a "voice said with hollow cheeriness, 'Good night, children, good night' " (17).

Otherwise Arthur Rowe was like a "man camping in a desert" for in his nostalgia for simplification, he desires the removal of the immediate scene. The fact that buildings toppled, that familiar scenes disappeared in the air raids was a real source of satisfaction to Arthur, for he reasoned:

> Perhaps if every street with which he had association were destroyed, he would be free to go — he would find a factory near Trumpington. After a raid he used to sally out and note with a kind of hope that this restaurant or that shop existed no longer — it was like loosening the bars of a prison cell one by one. (16)

And although Arthur never goes back to Trumpington in his native Cambridgeshire, he stumbles on his childhood in miniature one Sunday afternoon. Walking through a wartime and familiar London, recognizable by the "untide gaps between the Bloomsbury houses — a flat fireplace halfway up a wall, like the painted fireplace in a cheap doll's house" and the commonplace "sound of glass being swept up" (1), Arthur Rowe turns a "corner of the sunny afternoon" and runs headlong into life.

It is a fête which precipitates him into life, for it

> called him like innocence: it was entangled in childhood, with vicarage gardens and girls in white summer frocks, and the smell of herbaceous borders and security. (1)

This call to innocence proves a siren's call for "pacing round the railings he came toward his doom." In the white elephant stall he finds with an "ache of the heart" a dingy copy of The Little Duke.[61] There was indeed, Rowe decided, "something threatening, it seemed to him in the very perfection of the day," and when he gives by the purest chance the signal which entitles him to the cake, suddenly "the bunting and good cheer," "the inevitable clergyman," the "bustling lady in the print dress and the floppy hat," all the smiling faces, turn sinister. For the cake conceals microfilm plans for the enemy. Rowe's refusal to surrender the cake does not end the unpleasantness. He is pursued by one of their agents and his lodgings are destroyed in the night's air raid, either by chance or purpose.

Another attempt at eliminating Arthur Rowe is also perpetrated through his "fatal flaw," his attraction toward innocence, for any suspicion which he might have entertained regarding the Austrian "refugee" siblings is dispelled by their appearance. To Rowe, Willi and Anna Hilfe looked more like "two children who liked stories" than like enemy agents.

In this second attempt, Rowe is saddled with another "murder"

---

[61]Quotations from Charlotte Yonge's work of juvenile fiction, The Little Duke have been effectively used as epigraphs to each chapter of The Ministry of Fear. Other echoes of the childhood world of innocence reflected in juvenile fiction can be detected in the frequent reiteration of the hero's full name and the simplicity of the syntax: "Arthur Rowe looked wistfully over the railings. . .," "Arthur Rowe's eyes filled with tears. . .," "Arthur Rowe stepped joyfully back into adolescence," "the treasure-hunt was being hastily concluded, but this time there was nothing for Arthur Rowe."

faked at a séance and soon afterwards Rowe himself dies figuratively in a third attempt to eliminate him. The bomb which explodes, however, causes him to lose his memory — not his life.[62]

Rowe awakens, not to the disintegrating world of war-torn London, but to the sunlight and the springtime of another Eden. The Garden is set somewhere in remotest England where the war has not penetrated:

> The garden was a rambling kind which should have belonged to childhood and only belonged to childish men. The apple trees were old apple trees and gave the effect of growing wild; they sprang unexpectedly up in the middle of a rose-bed, trespassed on a tennis-court, shaded the window of a little outside lavatory like a potting shed[63] which was used by the gardener — an old man who could always be located from far away by the sound of the scythe or the trundle of a wheelbarrow. (143)

---

[62]The site of this would-be assassination is an excellent example of the empty and graceless chromium world — the world which has created the "separation of body and spirit" which Greene hates.

> This was a modern building; the silence was admirable and disquieting. Instead of bells ringing, lights went off and on. One got the impression that all the time people were signalling news of great importance that couldn't wait. This silence — now that they were out of earshot of the whistle and sigh — was like that of a stranded liner; the engines had stopped and in the sinister silence you listened for the faint depressing sound of lapping water (The Ministry of Fear, 113).

The complexity of the building and the analogy with a liner becomes a forewarning of the fate of another liner, the relic of a lost world depicted in "A Discovery in the Woods," a short story whose closing lines "Why aren't there any giants now?. . . . He's six feet tall and he has beautiful straight legs," (A Sense of Reality, 119), bears Greene's admonishment concerning the pity of what man has already done to himself, out, to its logical conclusion.

[63]Although the potting shed here does not have the characteristic use it holds in other Greene works, a "symbolic cul-de-sac in which the individual is placed to work out his own redemption," (Catharine Hughes, "Innocence Revisited," Renascence XII [Fall, 1959]), it is yet a recurrent image in the Greene microcosm. Pinkie's "epiphany" occurs in a garage for it is in a Metroland garage which had never been

It is from this garden that Rowe, who is now known, even to himself, as Digby, must dig his way out.

As even the garden of Eden had its serpent, this garden too becomes a setting for treachery. For where the "garden faded gradually out into paddocks and a stream and a big untidy pond" (143-144) there is an island, and more centrally located there is the "sick bay." Despite these settings for evil, Rowe or Digby, is encouraged to retain his new innocence. A feather-bed atmosphere of "nursery peace" is accumulated around him. He is told "the great thing, you see, is not to worry. You've had your share of the war for the time being. . . . You can lie back with an easy conscience" (124).

But Digby begins to sense that all is not well in his artificial paradise. Refusing to keep the nursery door closed to the voice of pain, Digby heeds the appeals of Major Stone, kept in the "sick bay" for his supposed violence. Digby-Rowe now gropes for truth in the pond and

---

[63](cont.)used for a garage," it had become a kind of potting shed" (Brighton Rock, 154) that he realizes the fallacy of his "between the stirrup and the ground" last-minute act-of-contrition policy. The potting shed in Greene's play of that name is the scene of all the mystery which lay around James Callifer's rejection by his parents.

Catharine Hughes stated that "the cul-de-sac has been a deserted railway car, a Mexican prison, a jungle hut, a mud tower, a living room, a garden shed. The walls and furniture all differ, but the problem within the walls is always the same" (47). To Hughes' list, the following "sheds" might also be added: the cubicle in the Pitt Street brothel visited by Wilson; the Indian fortune-teller's "revelations" in a hotel bathroom. Arthur Rowe's visit to the fortune-teller's tent at the fête with his somewhat prophetic request "Don't tell me the past. Tell me the future," which happens to be the signal for the deliverance of the fated cake which plunges Arthur into life in The Ministry of Fear; Dr. Czinner acknowledges the sterility of his wasted life in a railroad shed at Subotica, etc.

the "sick bay." They were, he reflects, like the "underside of a stone: you turned up the bright polished nursery home and found beneath it this" (163-164).

The wrench away from a happy state of oblivion is heroic. Reluctantly Digby descends into the "sick bay"—his own unconsciousness in one sense, the world of another's pain in another sense — to reunite himself with the living. While he makes the descent as Digby, the ascent is Rowe's:

> As he quietly closed each door behind him he felt as though he were cutting off his own retreat. . . . Ahead of him was the green baize door he had never seen opened. . . . he was back in his own childhood, breaking out of dormitory, daring more than he really wanted to dare, proving himself. He hoped the door would be bolted on the other side; then there would be nothing he could do but creep back to bed, honour satisfied. . . . But that door, too, had been left unlocked, unbolted. As he passed into the passage beyond, the green baize swung to with a long sigh. (161-162)

Whether the sigh is for regret over Rowe's second-time-lost innocence or whether it is a sigh of relief that ignorance will once again be thrust way back into the past where it belongs, Rowe is nonetheless delivered anew into the world of experience. He will not remain like Philip of "The Basement Room," who surrenders his responsibility once and for all. "Let grown-up people," Philip decided, "keep to their world and he would keep to his, safe in the small garden between the plane-trees. . . . you could almost see the small unformed face hardening into the deep dilettante selfishness of age."[64]

---

[64] Twenty-One Stories, 21.

Rowe accepts the world even though he learns that it will never be all-of-a-piece, that his books — on Captain Scott, Oates, and Damien — had lied. He learns that "adventure didn't follow the literary pattern, that there weren't always happy endings" (218). Thrown back with a jolt into the world of experience, "Rowe was growing up; everything was bringing him nearer to hailing distance of his real age" (226). He is, looking through the open door, undergoing the trajectory from ignorance to knowledge which must be made through suffering or guilt. It was his compassion for Major Stone which had propelled him through the green baize door — the borderland between innocence and knowledge and he now thought of Digby as a stranger, a "rather gross, complacent, parasitic stranger whose happiness had lain in too great an ignorance." He knows now that "happiness should always be qualified by a knowledge of misery" (163).

At the same time the journey into the "sick bay" marks a return to the seedy world of experience for this hidden aspect of the nursing home was:

> at the end of the passage where the tap dripped, a large, square, comfortless room with a stone floor divided in half by a curtain — it had probably once been a kitchen. . . . there were ends of cigarettes upon the floor and nothing was used for its right purpose. A clock and a cheap brown teapot served as book-ends. . . . The tap dripped into a fixed basin and a sponge-bag dangled from a bed-post. A used tin which had once held lobster paste now held old razor-blades. The place was as comfortless as a transit camp; the owner might have been someone who was just passing on and couldn't be bothered to change so much as a stain on the wall. An open suitcase full of soiled underclothes gave the impression that he hadn't even troubled to unpack. (194)

Asking himself if it is possible that real life be like this, a minor character answers for him: "this is rather a dingy hole," but "we've come to terms with it of course" (194).

Now as he emerges from his nursing home or nursery into the world, he confirms that he had for a while no longer understood suffering because he had forgotten that he had ever suffered. Now he must learn his way again in the world of experience and suffering:

> It's as if one had been sent on a journey with the wrong map. I'm ready to do everything you want, but remember I don't know my way about. Everybody else has changed gradually and learnt. The whole business of war and hate — even that's strange. I haven't been worked up to it. I expect much the best thing would be to hang me. (194)

Arthur Rowe is not permitted to yield to this last vestige of the death wish, for acquitted of the second "murder" which was foisted on him, he is awakened not only to the world of guilt, pity, and responsibility through Major Stone, but to the world of love and further pain with Anna Hilfe. For Anna has abandoned her brother and his political fantasies to share the world with Arthur Rowe. Rowe "had hoped that wherever Anna was there would be peace; yet coming up the stairs a second time he knew that there would never be peace again while they lived" (266-267).

PART V

WHO WOULD BE A FATHER?

> Wasn't it better to take part even in the crimes of people you loved, if it was necessary to hate as they did, and if that were the end of everything suffer damnation with them, rather than be saved alone?[65]

This excerpt taken from Graham Greene's entertainment The Ministry of Fear could well serve as an epigraph to the present sections which deal primarily with his novel The Heart of the Matter. For while each was written with Africa in view, The Ministry of Fear, written as a sort of escape from Africa, was merely pervaded by its influence; The Heart of the Matter, on the other hand, written five years later, is a return to, rather than an escape from, the African milieu. Additionally, while both works were set against the background of World War II, The Ministry of Fear, more immediately concerned with the home front during the Battle of Britain, is a plea, among other things, for wartime solidarity. The Heart of the Matter, far removed from the front, is concerned with the private struggles of a certain Major Henry Scobie, Deputy Police Commissioner in a British West African colony.[66]

In both works Greene explored two of the lesser known aspects of

---

[65]The Ministry of Fear, 155.

[66]The setting for The Heart of the Matter is Freetown, Sierra Leone, where Greene had a wartime tour of duty with the Foreign Office during the year 1942-43. It was written "in what spare time from work I could allow myself in Freetown," Greene writes in his introduction to In Search of a Character: Two African Journals (8).

the heart: the emotion of pity and the psychology of betrayal. Here Greene's emphasis on the relationship he saw between the map of Africa and the human heart should be recalled. His Journey Without Maps is the account of his first trip to Africa when he travelled through Liberia and Sierra Leone. In Search of a Character: Two African Journals is the record of a later trip made to the Congo region. In both he wrote that Africa was always for him the continent that most resembled the human heart — both for its contour and for its enormous unexplored interior.

Scobie, the protagonist of The Heart of the Matter, indeed penetrates farther than most into these unknown regions, for in setting himself an impossible goal, that of trying to get through life without hurting those he loves, he runs into insuperable difficulties. Of these, his protective feeling toward Louise, his wife, is an example. He keeps trying against his own judgment to arrange for her happiness, knowing "what experience had taught him — that no human being can really understand another and no one can arrange another's happiness."[67] Yet at the same time unable to deny solace to those for whom he feels responsible, Scobie will move from an almost complete contentment and an almost complete rectitude, through the territory of lies, misdemeanors, illegal practices, sin, and despair, to possible damnation.

But in violating religious and legal codes, Scobie will illustrate one of the paradoxes of the Greene world, a paradox which is stated in

---

[67]The Heart of the Matter (New York, 1960), 84. Subsequent references to The Heart of the Matter are taken from this edition.

the epigraph to The Heart of the Matter. The quotation is from Péguy and it states that "Le pécheur est au coeur même de chrétienté. Nul n'est aussi compétent que le pécheur en matière de chrétienté. Nul, si ce n'est pas le saint." Scobie will prove the thesis that he who sins is in fact closest to redemption. Barbara Seward explains this paradox, writing that

> the whole journey from guilt through retribution, which is commonly reserved for the doers of evil, becomes in Greene's novels the prerogative of good men and the chief differential between the good and the deficient. Assuming that corruption is inescapable and that suffering is man's sole means of expiation, Greene repeatedly favors his redeemable characters with a sense of guilt so overwhelming that it exists with or without precipitating situations and demands for its appeasement an appalling price of pain. (84)

Pity in Greene's thought is a corollary of guilt, as Barbara Seward explains further:

> Pity then, being compounded with pain, not only evolves from guilt but serves as a form of atonement. Reflecting in a small way Christ's great act of atonement, pity is the one virtue that still can save us from damnation. But salvation is not simple. In fact, Greene's pity at first glance seems to pull its possessor around full circle, swinging him from guilt through a suffering arc to a new-old starting point in guilt. (92)

The fact that good must logically emerge, whenever it does emerge, from evil, in a world as corrupt and continually falling as Greene's, is also supported by Marie-Béatrice Mesnet. Miss Mesnet claims that it is through God that "a new meaning is given to everything: natural signs are inverted, so that what was negative can be made positive. "Human failures," she adds, "as well as human potentialities are turned to good use."[68]

---

[68]Marie-Béatrice Mesnet, Graham Greene and The Heart of the Matter: An Essay (London, 1954), 79. Subsequent quotations from this work will be taken from this edition.

It is therefore in respect to his human potentialities that Greene's sinner must be considered; and it is for this reason that sin has become on more occasions than one the path to sainthood in Greene's novels. There is in Sarah Miles, for instance, another Greene protagonist, a potential saint, climbing in the novel The End of the Affair through adultery to possible sanctity. It was in corrupt human love that Sarah first yearned for divine love. The proximity of sin to sanctity is also encountered in the case of the anonymous Mexican priest of The Power and the Glory who is treated by Greene as another candidate for beatification. For although the priest never succeeds in abjuring his sins, although he suffers because he is aware of these sins, he never in his modesty recognizes the truly saintly qualities he does possess. Another critic, A. A. De Vitis, also confirms Greene's contention that the greatest saints have been men with a more than normal capacity for evil, cites both Mary Magdalene and St. Augustine as obvious examples.[69] Dr. Fitzpatrick, a dentist, whom Greene encounters in Mexico, relates in The Lawless Roads the story of a priest who is the prototype for the priest in The Power and the Glory. The dentist claims that the priest in his death was "little loss, poor man" but, he adds, "who can judge what terror and hardship and isolation may have excused him in the eyes of God?" (150)

Just as the drama which involves the Mexican priest and the English adulteress must be understood in order to realize their potentiality

---

[69]Mentioned in his work Graham Greene (New York, 1964), 105.

for sainthood, so the conflict which enmeshes Scobie must be taken into consideration to see, in him, another candidate for sainthood. In its briefest terms his drama is the following: Although Scobie is singularly content in his career and his post in a West African colony, Louise has always disliked the colony. But it is when Scobie is by-passed for promotion that she decides she must leave. She plans to remain in South Africa until Scobie's retirement. In order to send her there, Scobie is forced to borrow money from a highly disreputable source, from Yusef, a Syrian trader. Yusef is suspected of trafficking with the Vichy French territories across the border.

Scobie, who is very susceptible to the weak and the childlike, especially since the death of his only child, a nine-year-old daughter, becomes entangled by pity when the victims of a torpedoing arrive in the colony. There are two who especially evoke this emotion: a dying child and the childlike nineteen-year-old widow, Helen Rolt. Forced to watch the child die, Scobie is unable to endure her pain and prays that God will take away his peace forever in exchange for the child's peace. It appears that God immediately sets the terms of Scobie's bargain into operation: for through pity for the young widow Scobie finds himself involved in an adulterous and stormy affair with Helen Rolt.

The opportunistic Yusef who admires Scobie and desires his friendship intercepts a note from Scobie to Helen which he will use for blackmail purposes. For Louise, alerted by the gossips of the colony, is now on her way home. Yusef will hand the incriminating note over to her unless Scobie helps him smuggle some diamonds out of the colony.

Failing to realize that Louise already knows of his liaison with Helen, Scobie complies with Yusef's demands in order, he hopes, to protect Louise's happiness.

The fact, however, that Scobie, whenever he betrays those he loves and those for whom he feels responsible, betrays because he himself has been seduced by sentiment, is brought out clearly in the episode of the Portuguese captain. For this episode reveals in miniature the book-long struggle that Scobie sustains with God, and it is not the promise of an actual reward but the captain's love for his daughter that tempts Scobie into a betrayal of his trust as an official of the Colonial Police. The captain as a neutral has gone against the wartime navicert regulations in concealing on his ship a letter addressed to his daughter in Leipzig. It is the daughter, Scobie realizes, who is the turning point in this situation, for in reading the letter Scobie is convinced that the captain loves her with complete commitment — mais que a vida — as Scobie loves Louise, Helen, and God. Betrayed or bribed by love, Scobie protects the captain by burning the letter rather than turning it over to the authorities.[70]

Louise's heart, however, never betrays her. "Kindness and pity

---

[70]The episode of the Portuguese captain is one example of the unity established between the text, theme, and title, The Heart of the Matter. They are organically united through the repetition of the word "heart." The captain says ". . . for the English I feel in the heart an enormous admiration"; "My heart. . . is full of admiration for your great struggle"; Scobie reflects that "the man kept on speaking of his heart" (45). The captain professes reliability with an "on my honour, gentlemen, my hand upon my heart" (46). The same image has also crept into his letter to his daughter: "my heart bleeds" (53). [Italics have been added.]

had no power with her: she would never have pretended an emotion she didn't feel."(15) It is she who is most responsible for pushing Scobie toward suicide. Her strategy has been to use their Catholicism as a weapon to separate Scobie and Helen. She does this by forcing Scobie into a dilemma: to either renounce his mistress or take communion in a state of sin. In choosing, Scobie must decide either to break his vow made on behalf of Louise's happiness, betray his responsibility to Helen, or betray God. He chooses the two women — for he cannot desert Helen and does not realize that Louise is aware of the affair. He chooses against God because he feels his responsibility for the two women is the more immediate. Yet, in taking God at communion in a state of sin, he suffers in seeing God as his victim. God appears to him as a picture of "a bleeding face, of eyes closed by the continuous shower of blows: the punch-drunk head of God reeling sideways"(264).

Because of his "betrayals" Scobie has learned to distrust others as well as himself. He sees himself as the police officer who has betrayed his trust, as the adulterer, and finally as the violator of yet another commandment. For in allowing Ali, his faithful servant, to be killed, Scobie becomes, he is certain, a type of Judas. In betraying one of His creatures, he has betrayed God himself. It is from this act — the worst of Scobie's career — that he is led into committing the greatest sin for a Catholic — suicide.

Despite his transgressions, Barbara Seward also brings support to the hypothesis that Scobie, too, may belong with the other potential saints in Greene's pantheon. To this effect she presents her argument

which she has taken from The Power and the Glory: "We were made in God's image — God was the parent, but He was also the policeman, the criminal, the priest, the maniac, and the judge" (93). And Scobie fills all of these roles: as policeman he feels he has a case against God because as a responsible man he is sure the job chose him as much as he chose it; in the very act of putting the case to God, Scobie shows himself as the judge — a role which he also fills on the temporal level; as priest Scobie is a servant of God, whether he serves Him directly through prayer and ritual, or indirectly through his service to his creatures; as maniac, he is one who follows, even to his own destruction, his policy of responsibility; and as criminal — one who has accepted bribes and tacitly agreed to murder — he indeed encompasses the terms of Péguy's paradox which may be paraphrased as "the closer to hell, the nearer to heaven."

Despite Scobie's own certitude, some of Greene's critics are less certain than Scobie that he will suffer eternal damnation.[71] For

---

[71]Kenneth Allott and Miriam Farris (whom A. A. De Vitis has referred to as Greene's ablest critics) in their book-length study The Art of Graham Greene (published in 1951 and reissued in 1963), written in the first person singular, have this to say about Greene's critics: "Morton Zabel and Walter Allen are in my opinion the only English-speaking critics of Greene whom the reader will find it very profitable to consult" (14).

The writer would like to increase the roster of respectable Greene critics to include A. A. De Vitis, Barbara Seward, Herbert R. Haber, Carolyn D. Scott, Anthony Burgess, David Pryce-Jones, and Gwenn R. Boardman. Too many, however, have gone completely overboard either because of hostility to the author's religion or, in the case of co-religionists, over the subject of Scobie's suicide. Among those "heresy-hunters," who cannot see beyond his suicide, are Lynette Kohn and Francis L. Kunkel. Each overlooks the fact that Greene sometimes allows his protagonists to condemn themselves when he, the author, is

which she has taken from The Power and the Glory: "We were made in God's image — God was the parent, but He was also the policeman, the criminal, the priest, the maniac, and the judge" (93). And Scobie fills all of these roles: as policeman he feels he has a case against God because as a responsible man he is sure the job chose him as much as he chose it; in the very act of putting the case to God, Scobie shows himself as the judge — a role which he also fills on the temporal level; as priest Scobie is a servant of God, whether he serves Him directly through prayer and ritual, or indirectly through his service to his creatures; as maniac, he is one who follows, even to his own destruction, his policy of responsibility; and as criminal — one who has accepted bribes and tacitly agreed to murder — he indeed encompasses the terms of Péguy's paradox which may be paraphrased as "the closer to hell, the nearer to heaven."

Despite Scobie's own certitude, some of Greene's critics are less certain than Scobie that he will suffer eternal damnation.[71] For

---

[71]Kenneth Allott and Miriam Farris (whom A. A. De Vitis has referred to as Greene's ablest critics) in their book-length study The Art of Graham Greene (published in 1951 and reissued in 1963), written in the first person singular, have this to say about Greene's critics: "Morton Zabel and Walter Allen are in my opinion the only English-speaking critics of Greene whom the reader will find it very profitable to consult" (14).

The writer would like to increase the roster of respectable Greene critics to include A. A. De Vitis, Barbara Seward, Herbert R. Haber, Carolyn D. Scott, Anthony Burgess, David Pryce-Jones, and Gwenn R. Boardman. Too many, however, have gone completely overboard either because of hostility to the author's religion or, in the case of co-religionists, over the subject of Scobie's suicide. Among those "heresy-hunters," who cannot see beyond his suicide, are Lynette Kohn and Francis L. Kunkel. Each overlooks the fact that Greene sometimes allows his protagonists to condemn themselves when he, the author, is

although he was accessory to Ali's murder, and although he has in his

---

[71](cont.) not condemning them. Kunkel goes on to declare "Neurotic Scobie mixes religion with pity to make the combination sound noble to himself. . . . The Church's mandate to perform charitable deeds is construed by Scobie as sufficient reason not to put his own soul first" (Francis L. Kunkel, The Labyrinthine Ways of Graham Greene, 126-127).

John Atkins reports in his book Graham Greene: A Biographical and Literary Study (London, 1957) that "Catholics were worried by The Heart of the Matter. Waugh said it was a 'mad blasphemy.' Greene was puzzled: 'I wrote a book about a man who goes to hell — Brighton Rock — another about a man who goes to heaven — The Power and the Glory. Now I've simply written one about a man who goes to purgatory. I don't know what all the fuss is about'" (193).

Greene is again quoted by Francis L. Kunkel in answer to those who were shocked by the suicide motive. In an interview with Henry Hewes, Greene is quoted as saying "Of course, suicide is a mortal sin. But who is to say that a person committing suicide is in a state of mortal sin just because he dies without having confessed his mortal sin?" (The Labyrinthine Ways of Graham Greene, 160).

Of The Heart of the Matter in particular Allott and Farris write:

> The Heart of the Matter is a Catholic novel (at least in Greene's sense of a novel written by a Catholic) and its theological implications have been teased out at great length by many amateur theologians and anti-theologians, not to mention a few professionals, most of whom too readily forget that they are dealing with a piece of fiction, not an actual case-history. If Scobie's fate is ambiguous, it is because the facts given in the novel admit of several interpretations. In life there would be the hope of unearthing further facts already known. But in dealing with a character in a novel there can be no new facts to discover; and for this reason most of the exercises in casuistry are as irrelevant to a valuation of The Heart of the Matter as a Victorian essay on Hamlet's obesity to literary criticism of the play. Similarly, the attempts to transform Scobie into the hero of an Existentialist novel seem to me beside the point. Discussing the meaning of The Heart of the Matter is doomed in advance to sterility if it does not take into account that the words composing the book have been organized primarily with an artistic, rather than a philosophical or theological intention.
>
> Certainly one of the aims in his novel is to make Scobie's goodness and fall equally convincing: without this his fable must lack tragic intensity. He writes as a sensitive and intelligent Catholic, that is, as a man for whom the moral law exists, but who does not find its application easy. . . . Greene has not worked out the

despair committed, for a Catholic, the greatest sin of all — for his suicide might logically reveal the greatest alienation from God — he does, nevertheless, reveal, instead, a sacrifice made for others: for the dying child, for his wife, for his mistress, and for God. Such critics believe that God will accept, rather than the words of the bargain made on behalf of the dying child, the spirit of sacrifice entailed in this bargain made with God. His suicide is also committed in the spirit of sacrifice for he has already told God "You don't need me as they need me.

---

[71](cont.) precise worth of his characters by a kind of moral calculus; he has simply seen them. He has presented a story, presented it, perhaps he would feel, sub specie aeternitatus. (214-215)

A. A. De Vitis believes that it is "equally wrong for Allott and Farris to minimize the importance of the religious theme, for it is the frame of reference within which the narrative develops:

> Neglecting the spiritual conflict within Scobie reduces the novel to a spiritual tour de force; these critics do not fully appreciate the intense spiritual drama which is the novel's reason for being. They diminish the aspect of recognition and misunderstand the theme of betrayal, interwoven with Scobie's intense love of God, which are fundamental to the comprehension of the book. It is more nearly correct to accept Scobie's Catholicism as something akin to the Fatality of Greek drama. (Graham Greene, 98)

De Vitis further claims that

> the point to consider in a discussion of The Heart of the Matter is not why Greene uses a religious theme but how; it is important to decide whether or not his use of a religious theme invalidates the novel as a work of art. . . The problem then of whether Major Scobie is "saved" or not according to the teaching of the Catholic Church becomes a minor consideration; for the novel presents a personal moral — Scobie's moral — which may not coincide with that of orthodox Catholicism. (97-98)

It is the Frenchman Marcel Moré who believes, along with the present writer, that Scobie was a saint who offered himself for others and for God and that the interest of The Heart of the Matter is to show how a man who offers himself for others may, even when he appears to be a criminal and a sinner, be, instead, a saint ("The Two Holocausts of Scobie," Cross Currents, 2 [1951]).

You have your good people, your Saints, all the company of the blessed. You can do without me" (259-260).

PART VI

THE COAST

The particular West African colony which forms the setting for The Heart of the Matter is truly representative of Greene's conception of "the Coast" or even "the border." For like other examples he has given of these two territories, it is a region where corruption is never concealed but always candidly revealed. And Scobie is unique in the Greene world, as well as in this novel, in being one of the few Europeans who truly loves the Coast. He loves it for the truth it tells about human nature, for there he reminds himself "you didn't love a pose, a pretty dress, or a sentiment artfully assumed."

Thus the question which he addresses to himself is purely rhetorical, for he already knows the answer when he asks:

> Why. . . do I love this place so much? Is it because here human nature hasn't had time to disguise itself? Nobody here could ever talk about a heaven on earth. Heaven remained rigidly in its proper place on the other side of death, and on this side flourished the injustices, the cruelties, the meannesses that elsewhere people so cleverly hush up. Here you could love human beings nearly as God loved them, knowing the worst. (32)

Scobie's detractors, of course, hate the Coast for the very reason Scobie loves it. Harris, a cable clerk, complains among other things of the Negroes who have taken on a thin veneer of European culture. He compares them to the natives of the bush:

> A man's boy's always all right. He's a real nigger — but these, look at 'em, look at that one with a feather boa down there. They aren't real niggers. Just West Indians, and they rule the Coast. Clerks in stores, city council, magistrates, lawyers — my God. (5-6)

Harris's admission that it's all right up in the Protectorate, but

that the Negroes on the Coast are becoming pseudo-white men, is merely voicing in a cruder way Greene's own contention that "the Coast" everywhere stands midway between the chromium world and the bush, serving, in a sense, as a warning of the separation of body and soul, matter and spirit, and of how far men have strayed away from their original innocence toward the metallic world of spiritual sterility.

Yet it is the prigs themselves, those such as Harris, who bring with them into the Coast the aspirations of their "empty graceless chromium world." And one of the methods they import is exclusion. Fellowes, who fingers "his Lancing tie for confidence," is one of the members of the Cape Station Club who knows how to play such a game, as does another, Reith, who once had been completely successful in Nigeria where he had excluded everyone from his solitary table! "There are limits" is their password effectively used to exclude new applicants.

Another device for maintaining their immunity to any values which go beyond the surface is a status-game played with housing. Louise, who takes such a game seriously, has nonetheless been defeated. She can only look up at the reflected glories of Cape Station where

> on a low ridge of hills. . . the bungalows of the station lay among the low clouds; lamps burned all day in the cupboards, mould gathered on the books — nevertheless these were the houses for men of his rank (15).

Scobie, who realizes how much it has meant to Louise to remain in the flats below even though their billet has advantages over those in the beclouded heights, reflects that "women depended so much on pride. . .

pride in themselves, their husbands, their surroundings. They were seldom proud, it seemed to him, of the invisible" (15). Having brought whatever emphasis the chromium world makes on the superficial into the colony, each remains comfortably blinded to whatever lies either above or below the surface of matter.

An episode in which Scobie tears his hand on a splinter is an example of this desire to live only on the surface. Here Louise, who "cannot bear the sight of blood," refuses to see the hand until it is bandaged, yet once rendered sterile, and hence innocuous, she can now readily take

> the bandaged hand tenderly in hers. . . . She was not afraid of the clean white bandage; it was like a patient in a hospital with the sheets drawn tidily up to the chin. One could bring grapes and never know the details of the scalpel wound out of sight. She put her lips to the bandage and left a little smear of orange lipstick. (38-39)

The employment of protocol, cant, custom, and creed is another commonly used method which Louise has adopted as a buffer against life, and because her purpose is to gloss over existence, even her literary tastes are only a cover-up to conceal an otherwise commonplace mind. In this respect she closely resembles another one of Greene's immature and shallow women, Trixy Fellows, a minor character in The Power and the Glory. For neither has gained through her experience either compassion or a deepened world view.

Louise demonstrates this fact in a scene in which she reluctantly scans her child's photograph and comes up with only a sadly extroverted solution to her unhappiness. Yet she believes that she can write of experience: "I'm sure," she tells Scobie, "I could make a little

money writing. Mrs. Castles says I ought to be a professional. With all this experience." Ironically when Louise adds "with all this experience" she gazes "through the white muslin tent as far as her dressing table." There her eyes meet the portrait of her dead daughter taken in the white muslin of her confirmation. Louise looks away, adding: "If only we could go to South Africa. I can't bear the people here" (18).

But Scobie dreads the idea of retirement in Louise's artificial world — whether in a South African bungalow or an English cottage, it would be a surrender to Louise's world of art curtains, pretty tiled baths, the no-longer-so-young "pylon" poets and Virginia Woolf's novels.[72]

Scobie is drawn to the Coast too much to wish to leave it, for he knows it employs no cover-up. Here the wounds festered in the damp, they never healed. Scratch your finger and in a few hours there would be a little coating of green skin" (96); here the sky "wept endlessly around him" during the rainy season, in the knowledge "that this world is undoubtedly one of God's failures; here the dead pye-dog "lay in the gutter with the rain running over its white swollen belly"; here the sea itself takes on some of the corruption of the land it washes for "across the black slow water he could just make out the naval depot ship, a disused liner, where she lay, so it was believed, on a reef of empty

---

[72]Greene has written of Virginia Woolf and E. M. Forster that their characters "wandered like cardboard symbols through a world that was paper thin." He saw Trollope's world, on the contrary, as three dimensional. Of one of his characters Greene wrote: "His unimportance in the world of the senses is only matched by his enormous importance in another world" (The Lost Childhood, 69).

whisky bottles" (33).

Standing on the jetty with two of his native policemen, Scobie comes across human corruption in a very concentrated form, the bottle of voodoo medicine being as potent and as foul as the gossip of the colony:

> They shone their torches with self-conscious assiduity from one side to another, lighting the abandoned chassis of a car, an empty truck, the corner of a tarpaulin, a bottle standing at the corner of a warehouse with palm leaves stuffed in for a cork. Scobie said, "What's that?" One of his official nightmares was an incendiary bomb: it was so easy to prepare. . . . "Let me see it," he said, but neither of the policemen moved to touch it. "Only native medicine, sah," one of them said with a skin-deep sneer.
>
> Scobie picked the bottle up. It was a dimpled Haig and when he drew out the palm leaves the stench of dogs' pizzle and nameless decay blew out like a gas escape.

Associating the odor of corruption with the cruelty and snobbery and assorted human pettinesses he has recently seen at the Club, "a nerve beat in his head with sudden irritation. For no reason at all he remembered Frazer's flushed face and Thimblerigg's giggle." They had just treated Louise, who could sometimes be the worst snob in the station, to some of her own medicine.

> The stench from the bottle moved him with nausea, and he felt his fingers polluted by the palm leaves. He threw the bottle over the wharf, and the hungry mouth of the water received it with a single belch, but the contents were scattered on the air, and the whole windless place smelt sour and ammoniac. The policemen were silent: Scobie was aware of their mute disapproval. He should have left the bottle where it stood: it had been placed there for one purpose, directed at one person, but now that its contents had been released it was as if the evil thought were left to wander blindly through the air, to settle maybe on the innocent. (34-35)

Scobie is always attracted toward the innocent because he so fully

recognizes "the pity of it," the pity that innocence is always imperilled in a world where even the "scandalmongers at the Secretariat fulfilled a useful purpose" for "they kept alive the idea that no one was to be trusted." And that "was better," Scobie reminds himself, "than complacence" (35). In also taking the "pity of it" into consideration, Barbara Seward reminds her readers that not only pity but the horror and the terror which always threatens innocence is "not an end in Greene's writings but a beginning," because "just as in the lives of his characters awareness of guilt is the first step towards glory, so in his novels awareness of nightmare is the first step towards affirmation" (95).

It is his search for affirmation that leads Scobie to find the truest representation of a world made up of mingled strands of good and evil right on the Coast, and it is for that reason that the "magic of the place never failed him" because it is here that "he kept his foothold on the very edge of a strange continent" (35).

PART VII

NOT POPPY, NOR MANDRAGORA

When one approaches closer to "the heart of the matter" it becomes apparent that Scobie does not, as do other protagonists in the Greene world — Sarah Miles and the renegade Mexican priest are examples — commence with evil as a prelude to good. For Scobie's sense of guilt which will set him on the path to possible sainthood begins not with adultery or fornication or the betrayals of a priest's obligations, but from the generosity of his own nature. His goals, which are never to hurt those whom he loves and to love God's creatures as God does Himself, lead Scobie, however, because of the complete impossibility of their fulfillment, into sin, and from sin and guilt, to ultimate good.

Thus Scobie is enacting the first paradox of the Greene world: that Scobie, who has sinned because of the absolutism of his nature and his goals, may end triumphant. As both policeman and judge, Scobie has the reputation of a good and honest man. As an absolutist for justice he has acquired a relativist approach: in court he knows that "no one could be adequate to so rhetorical a concept," a concept which is no more than the "grandiloquent boast of weak men" (7-8). He has learned to stop flinging himself into investigations with the ardor of a partisan; to stop seeking the heroic role of supporter of the meek and the downtrodden. Earlier he learned that those whom he had believed to be the poor and innocent had succeeded in entirely upsetting the scales of justice, for it was they who proved, in turn, to be the wealthy and hence, guilty capitalists. Scobie had known other men in the past who, having

failed to perceive this, had, in trying to winnow from the evidence "one grain of incontestable truth," been invalided out of the service. But Scobie has learned that "the guilt and the innocence are as relative as their wealth. The wronged tenant turned out to be also the wealthy capitalist, making a profit of five shillings a week on a single room, living rent-free herself" (148).

His acute sense of justice, however, has gained him ill will. This does not come from the animosity of the natives but from the British colony. For Scobie is regarded as both a challenge and a torment to both the British and the amoral Yusef, one of the rival leaders of the Syrian community. To the British it is undoubtedly the "daily beauty" in his life which makes theirs appear ugly; to Yusef, it is both the need to believe in Scobie's rectitude and the need to test it that goads him into harrassing Scobie.

Scobie realizes that he has been a wonderful hand at picking up enemies. He also realizes, now that he is turned down for the commissionership, that Louise would have been more successful in avoiding the "snakes" and in climbing the ladder to success.

Having arrived at a concept of justice which is relative in his public life Scobie reverses the procedure in his private life. Here his philosophy tends toward the relative too, but it is his acts which are absolute. If in his actions he must be the responsible man, he yet knows that the truth "has never been of any real value to any human being" but is rather "a symbol for mathematicians and philosophers to pursue." Scobie knows that in most "human relationships kindness

and lies are worth a thousand truths" (59). Knowing this, he also knows that "no human being understood another," that "love was the wish to understand," and that "presently with constant failure the wish died, and love died too," or changed into that "painful affection, loyalty, pity" (83) which he now feels for Louise. For "in human love there is never such a thing as victory: only a few minor tactical successes before the final defeat of death or indifference" (241).

It is here, however, that Scobie's relativist approach breaks down, for he cannot put his intellectual realization into practice. His mind embraces the relative concept that "no man can guarantee love forever," but his behavior continually denies it. He must act instead according to the promise he made during his wedding "fourteen years ago at Ealing, silently during the horrible little elegant ceremony among the lace and candles that he would at least always see to it that she was happy" (59).

In his faithfulness to so absolute a goal as the responsibility for another's happiness, Scobie has assumed the impossible; and in his determination to remain responsible regardless of circumstances, he has always been "half aware too, from the time he made his 'terrible' private vow that Louise should be happy, how far <u>this</u> action might carry him" (61).[73]

---

[73]The obsession with responsibility in <u>The Heart of the Matter</u> has been given comic relief in the episode in which the victims of the torpedoed ship are brought to a temporary infirmary. There is the Scottish engineer who keeps reiterating "ma responsibility"— responsibility to the owner of the sunken ship is the only thing that occupies his mind after forty days in a lifeboat and a five-day journey on foot to the

Because of the impossibility of the ideal Scobie has set for himself, Greene employs the image of the bearer or carrier taken from his own experiences of treks in Africa. For beginning with Scobie's earliest vow made on Louise's behalf, Scobie began to assume burdens which will later cause him to stagger and to fall. A relativist in his dealings with others, Scobie is an absolutist with himself. He knows that the load he has accepted will cause him to despair in the end; he knows that despair must be the price one pays for setting oneself an impossible aim, and he knows that he will follow the aim to its logical conclusion. If despair is the unforgivable sin, it is yet a sin "the corrupt man or evil man never practices"; for the corrupt or evil man, unlike Scobie, "never reaches the freezing point of knowing absolute failure." It is "only the man of good will" who "carries always in his heart the capacity for damnation" (61).

Such an inversion of values also underlines Greene's contention that guilt in a corrupted world leads to good and Péguy's view that "the sinner is closest only to the saint for depth of spiritual vision and Eliot's opinion that the most contemptible of all men are those not big enough to be damned, those spiritually unconscious who people the

---

[73](cont.)hospital. There is also the even madder Miss Malcott who thinks only of her mission in another colony who, when invited to rest, replies:

> "It's the last thing I want to do. . . I am not in the least tired." She shut her mouth between every sentence. "I am not hungry. I am not nervous. I want to get on. . . . I've been delayed two months. I can't stand delay. Work won't wait." Suddenly she lifted her face towards the sky and howled like a dog (121).

wasteland of the world."[74]

Adding the guilt of not being present at his daughter's death to his failure to fulfill his vow to protect Louise's happiness, Scobie adds considerably to his load of guilt when he must borrow the money from Yusef to send Louise to South Africa.

It is here that he begins to risk his own salvation, replying to her tearful entreaties with, "'Yes dear, I'll manage somehow.' He was surprised how quickly she went to sleep: she was like a tired carrier who has slipped his load. The load lay beside him now, and he prepared to lift it" (41).

After Louise's departure Helen Rolt is able to appeal to Scobie's sense of pity and responsibility in very much the same way.[76] At the very beginning of their liaison, for instance, she tightens the bonds of responsibility by declaring: "My God, how good you are. . . . I have a feeling that you'd never let me down." The words came to Scobie as a command that he would have to obey no matter how difficult" (172). For

> the responsibility as well as the guilt was his. . . . he

---

[75]Quoted by Seward, 88.

[76]Scobie can never be said to be guilty of the sin which was anathema to Hawthorne — Hawthorne's sin of pride, with which one feels free to convert another into an object for manipulation. For this reason Scobie rejects the Church as a carrier of his burden because he refuses to reduce a human being to an abstraction:

> to hear Father Rank telling me to avoid the occasion: never see the woman alone (speaking in those terrible abstract terms: Helen — the woman, the occasion, no longer the bewildered child clutching the stamp album. . . that moment of peace and darkness and tenderness and pity "adultery" (242-243).

> knew what he was about. He had sworn to preserve Louise's happiness, and now he had accepted another and contradictory responsibility. He felt tired by all the lies he would sometimes have to tell: he felt the wounds of those victims who had not yet bled. . . . Somewhere on the face of those obscure waters moved the sense of another wrong and another victim, not Louise, not Helen. Away in the town the cocks began to crow for the false dawn. (175)

The cocks are undoubtedly a reference to Christ's betrayal and Scobie sees himself as one who has betrayed God.[75] Scobie will, in fact, see himself rather than as a carrier as the Cross which God must carry on His Own back:

> God would never work a miracle to save Himself. I am the Cross, he thought: He will never speak the word to save Himself from the Cross, but if only wood were made so that it didn't feel, if only the nails were senseless as people believe. (249)

And in his responsibility for Ali's death, Scobie knows that he has also betrayed God. This, the worst event in Scobie's life, truly shows his moral deterioration for here, due to his own increasing self-distrust, Scobie begins to distrust one who has been faithful to him for fifteen years. In fearing that Ali may be erring, Scobie appeals to Yusef to make him "reliable." To Yusef, Scobie

> had told all his worries now — all except the worst. He had the odd sense of having for the first time in his life shifted a burden elsewhere. And Yusef carried it — he obviously carried it. . . . He made the startling claim, "I will look after you." (270-271)

Shifting his burden onto Yusef's shoulders is Scobie's most serious fall. The theme of falling is stated overtly in <u>The Heart of the</u>

---

[75]Betrayal of course is a norm of the Greene world, one which has already been pointed out.

Matter through Greene's use of Rilke's poem "Herbst" or "Autumn," a poem which Louise reads to Scobie just prior to his suicide:

> We are all falling. This hand's falling too —
> all have this falling sickness none withstands.
> And yet there's always One whose gentle hands
> this universal falling can't fall through. (296-297)

The poem underlines Greene's belief in "falling man" as opposed to "fallen man," as does this satirically stated comment on the same theme:

> The strained good humour, the jest with dry lips, went on and on: at lunch he laid down his fork for yet another "crack." "Dear Henry," she said, "I've never known you so cheerful." The ground had given way beneath his feet, and all through the meal he had the sensation of falling, the relaxed stomach, the breathlessness, the despair — because you couldn't fall as far as this and survive. His hilarity was like a scream from a crevasse. (298-299)

Because original sin had left in its wake only the proclivity for corruption rather than its certainty, the loss of innocence is often desirable. It is desirable when it is a necessary sacrifice made for others in a corrupted world. Yet Scobie, in his self-effacement, has overlooked the fact that his own sacrifices have been necessary ones, made on behalf of others.

By way of résumé, Scobie has fallen six times through sacrifice: once, in the episode of the Portuguese captain; two, in his borrowing money from a source he knows to be unreliable in order to send Louise to South Africa; three, in allowing his sympathy for Helen Rolt to turn into adulterous love; four, in allowing himself to be bribed by Yusef in order to protect Louise's happiness; five, in his tacit consent to Ali's murder in order to protect Louise's and Helen's peace of mind; and

six, in his taking God's body in communion without absolution. He sums the situation up for himself:

> If Louise had stayed I should never have loved Helen: I would never have been blackmailed by Yusef, never have committed that act of despair [Ali's murder], I would have been myself still — the same self that lay stacked in fifteen diaries; not this broken cast. (253)

Yet in his first as well as his subsequent falls sentiment has been the catalytic agent. It is only through sentiment that Scobie can be bribed, can join the "ranks of the corrupt police officers." Yet "they had been corrupted by money" whereas "he had been corrupted by sentiment. Sentiment was the more dangerous, because you couldn't name its price. A man open to bribes was to be relied upon below a certain figure, but sentiment might uncoil in the heart at a name, a photograph, even a smell remembered" (55). This was certainly true in the episode of the Portuguese captain; in borrowing from Yusef to cure Louise's unhappiness; in his involvement with Helen when in a moment which "they had both thought was safety proved to have been the camouflage of an enemy who works in terms of friendship, trust, and pity" (173); even in his betrayal of Ali and of God, Scobie has been seduced by sentiment. He tries to argue with God for those who need his more immediate help: "You can look after yourself. You survive the Cross every day. You can only suffer. You can never be lost. Admit that you must come second to these others" (248).

Scobie's exaggerated sense of guilt leads him also to an obsessed longing for peace and for innocence. His longing to escape into innocence is not so much a desire to return to an earlier stage of his

existence as it is for a simplification of his present existence. This type of simplification was available to Scobie in his treks into the bush with Ali. It is here also that Scobie has another opportunity to "slip his load" for Ali becomes the temporary carrier and even the nurse:

> He could see in the driver's mirror Ali nodding and beaming. It seemed to him that this was all he needed of love and friendship. He could be happy with no more in the world but this — the grinding van, the hot tea against his lips, the heavy weight of the forest, even the aching head. . . . (84)

It is especially on those occasions when Scobie suffers from malaria in the bush that Ali becomes the true carrier. Here Scobie truly enjoys a nursery peace, for

> when he opened his eyes Ali was standing beside him waiting for him to awake. "Massa like bed," he stated gently, firmly, pointing to the camp bed he had made up. Scobie obeyed and lay down and was immediately back in that peaceful meadow where nothing ever happened. (83)

The meadow which reappears in his dream seemed to be a part of an Eden before the Fall, where

> When he slept he went smoothly back into a dream of perfect happiness and freedom. He was walking through a cool meadow with Ali at his heels: there was nobody else anywhere in his dream and Ali never spoke. Birds went by overhead, and once when he sat down the grass was parted by a small green snake which passed on to his hand and up his arm without fear and before it

---

[77]Greene experienced the same sense of innocence in the bush for he wrote in Journey Without Maps: "I remember wandering around the village listening to the laughter and the music among the little glowing fires and thinking that after all, the whole journey was worth while: it did reawaken a kind of hope in human nature. If one could go back to this bareness, simplicity, instinctive friendliness, feeling rather than thought and start again" (234).

> slid down into the grass again touched his cheek with a cold friendly remote tongue. (83)[78]

Scobie's dreams and daydreams as well as his simplifications are projections of his great longing for peace, whether he seeks it in his office, which was furnished by a process of reduction of things to a "firm, friendly, unchanging minimum," or in the Mass. Here he resembles Arthur Rowe who recalls longingly the words: "'My peace I give unto you. Not as the world knoweth peace' and his eyes filled with tears."[79] To Scobie

> Peace seemed. . . the most beautiful word in the language: My peace I give you, my peace I leave with you: O Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world, grant us thy peace. In the Mass he pressed his fingers against his eyes to keep the tears of longing in. (61)

Such peace is almost attained by Scobie in the bush, but returning home, his desire for peace projects itself occasionally into a longing for complete nullity, for

> he dreamed of peace by day and night. Once in sleep it had appeared to him as the great glowing shoulder of the moon heaving across the window like an iceberg, arctic and destructive in the moment before the world was struck. (61)

---

[78]There is an insistence on snake images in this novel. Perhaps Greene here compares the snake of Eden before Eve's temptation, while the other images belong to the post-lapsarian world. "Louise could have steered agilely. . . and left the snakes alone" (10); Wilson's cummerbund behaved like "an angry snake"; in India he believed a "turbaned native held the coil," etc. (62); Ali's dead body "lay coiled" (276); the image of God coiled at the end of it (277); and "sentiment might uncoil in the heart" (55).

[79]<u>The Ministry of Fear</u>, 2.

In his desire for annihilation Scobie shows a similarity to most canonized saints: a basic dislike of life. In Scobie's case this dissatisfaction goes back to his absolutism and his choice of impossible goals. For with these aims

> it seems to Scobie that life was immeasurably long. Couldn't the test of man have been carried out in fewer years? Couldn't we have committed our first major sin at seven, have ruined ourselves for love or hate at ten, have clutched at redemption on a fifteen-year-old death bed? (52)

He also reflected "what an absurd thing it was to expect happiness in a world so full of misery. . . Point me out the happy man and I will point you out either egotism, selfishness, evil — or else an absolute ignorance" (128).

The wish for annihilation, for peace, for simplification in Scobie is, of course, a manifestation of the death instinct which Scobie states explicitly when he says "we are all resigned to death. It's life we aren't resigned to" (290).

And in entertaining a death wish — here the wish or instinct is directed towards others, as well as self — the desire is motivated by compassion for others, as well as by a yearning for simplification for himself. In a conversation with Helen he admits "when they are dead our responsibility ends. There's nothing more we can do about it. We can rest in peace." And he adds:

> "I had a child. . . who died. I was out here. My wife sent me two cables from Bexhill, one at five in the evening and one at six, but they mixed up the order. You see she meant to break the thing gently.". . . He had never mentioned this before to anyone, not even to Louise. Now he brought out the exact words of each cable, carefully.

"The cable said, Catherine died this afternoon no pain God bless you. The second cable came at lunch time. It said, Catherine seriously ill. Doctor has hope. . . . the terrible thing was that when I got the second telegram, I was so muddled in my head, I thought: There's been a mistake. She must be alive. For a moment, until I realized what had happened, I was — disappointed. That was the terrible thing. I thought: Now the anxiety begins, and the pain, but when I realized what had happened, then it was all right, she was dead, I could begin to forget her." (167-168)

PART VIII

THE TERROR AND THE PITY

In It's a Battlefield, which is, along with another early entertainment, The Ministry of Fear, a thematic forerunner of The Heart of the Matter, there is an exchange of opinion on two subjects which Greene considers of foremost importance — the subject of God's justice and the subject of His mercy. These two themes are more fully developed in the central drama of The Heart of the Matter which is the brief that Scobie sustains against God.

In the earlier It's a Battlefield, the prison chaplain is speaking with the Assistant Commissioner and states:

> "I can't stand human justice any longer. It's arbitrariness. It's incomprehensibility."
> "I don't mean to be blasphemous, but isn't that very like, this is to say, isn't divine justice much the same?"
> "Perhaps. But one can't hand in a resignation to God."
> The Chaplain adds, however, "And I have no complaint against his mercy."[80]

In approaching Scobie as a potential saint these concepts — that of justice and that of the incalculable extent of God's mercy — are crucial. Moreover, while Scobie entertains reservations concerning the application of these divine attributes in regard to himself, it is essential to note that he always argues for, and sometimes even expects justice and mercy for, others. Even when it becomes a matter of suicide, which is, for the Church, the unforgivable sin, Scobie holds out arguments of hope for others which he never considers for himself.

---

[80] It's a Battlefield (New York, 1962), 211.

Theoretically Scobie's thesis is that nothing should be impossible, even the unforgivable sin of suicide, for a God who is omnipotent:

> The priest's told you that it was the unforgivable sin, the final expression of an unrepentant despair, and of course one accepted the Church's teaching. But they taught also that God had sometimes broken his own laws, and was it more impossible for him to put out a hand of forgiveness into the suicidal darkness and chaos than to have woken himself in the tomb, behind the stone? (206-207)

The final point which Scobie makes in this argument is that "Christ had not been murdered," because "you couldn't murder God: Christ had killed himself, and hanged himself on the Cross as surely as Pemberton from the picture rail" (206-207).

The young official's suicide becomes a forerunner for Scobie's own, yet in his defense of Pemberton's act he shows his belief in divine mercy only where others are concerned. For he admonishes Louise with a "Don't talk nonsense dear. We'd forgive most things if we knew the facts" implying that God should have as much love for His creatures as Scobie has himself. Yet a priest who was Pemberton's neighbor views his act with the usual pessimism, forcing Scobie to reply, "'Poor Child,'" (for it seemed unquestionable to Scobie that there must be mercy for someone so unformed), "'Even the Church' Scobie adds, 'Can't teach me that God doesn't pity the young. . .'" (89)

A. A. De Vitis points out that it is often a priest who restores, in Greene's writing, the "balance and order in the world after the passions of men have spent themselves." Just as Ludovico at the end of Othello "reëstablishes law on the island of Cyprus and returns to Venice to relate with sorry heart the heavy deed that loads the tragic

bed,"[81] Father Rank defends Scobie. Opposing Louise's bitter arguments, the priest makes a defense for Scobie similar to the one Scobie made for Pemberton. Louise protests:

> "And at the end, this — horror. He must have known that he was damning himself."
> "Yes, he knew that all right. He never had any trust in mercy — except for other people."
> "It's no good even praying. . ."
> Father Rank clapped the cover of the diary to and said furiously, "For Goodness' sake, Mrs. Scobie, don't imagine that you — or I — know a thing about God's mercy.
> "The Church says. . ."
> "I know the Church says. The Church knows all the rules. But it doesn't know what goes on in a single human heart."

This last remark of Father Rank's points up the theme of the novel which, stated succinctly, is "Who knows?" — for men, regardless of the attempts of religious thinkers and philosophers, are still in the dark about what God desires for man. The dialog continues for Louise and Father Rank:

> "You think there's some hope then?" she wearily asked.
> "Are you so bitter against him?"
> "I haven't any bitterness left."
> "And do you think God's likely to be more bitter than a woman?"[82] he said with harsh insistence, but she winced away from arguments of hope.
> "Oh why, why did he have to make such a mess of things?"
> Father Rank said, "It may seem an odd thing to say — when a Man's as wrong as he was — but I think, from what I saw of him, that he really loved God.

---

[81] De Vitis, 103.

[82] A situation which closely parallels this occurs in Greene's play <u>The Living Room</u> where the priest, a Father Browne, reminds his maiden sister: "Stop it, Helen. We've had enough of this foolishness. God isn't unmerciful like a woman can be. . ." (126).

Louise has denied that she feels any bitterness, but her words betray her: "He certainly loved no one else," she said. To which Father Rank replies, "And you may be in the right of it there, too" (305-306).

In this respect Ali, Scobie's native servant, may serve, where Scobie's love for God is concerned, as God's surrogate — for what Father Rank is implying is that Scobie has, in his love for God, been both exclusive as well as inclusive, for in centering his love on God he has incorporated a concern and a love and a responsibility for His creatures as well. Louise querulously pointed out this love of Scobie's for Ali in two early conversations with Scobie. In one in which she complains: "You've never never loved anyone since Catherine died," Scobie replies, "Except myself, of course. You always say I love myself." Here Louise perceptively notes, "No, I don't think you do" (59). Yet earlier, in insisting that he does love himself above others she blunders on another truth. Scobie hopes that his bantering reply will be conciliatory. "No, I just love myself, that's all. And Ali, I forgot Ali. Of course I love him too. . . ." (19)

While Scobie truly loves Ali, it is fear and distrust — particularly self-distrust — that leads to his betrayal of Ali. For when he realizes how far he has himself fallen short of the trust expected of a police official, and of his own vow to preserve Louise's happiness, he demands of himself, "If I can lie and betray, so can others. Wouldn't many people gamble on my honesty and lose their stake?" and fearing that Ali may now be in the pay of his enemies he argues, "Why should I lose my stake on Ali?" (255)

Ali in truth has been faithful to Scobie for fifteen years, always waiting to resume his position on Scobie's return from leave in England. In this way, Scobie's final loss of faith in his servant parallels his loss of faith in God's justice and mercy, for Scobie has preferred, where God is concerned, to act according to his own sense of responsibility.

The guilt resulting from Ali's death will be the last straw for Scobie. For he, like the proverbial camel, has been carrying too great a load. Death has always induced a sense of guilt in Greene's positive protagonists and Ali's death added to the guilt for his dead child serves the same function as it does in Greene's other books. There is Arthur Rowe's guilt for his wife's death and D.'s guilt for his. Francis L. Kunkel points out that "D.'s near self-hatred is rooted in the delusion that he was somehow responsible for his wife's death, even though he was in a military prison at the time she was taken hostage and executed."[83] D. continues to feel that he brings bad luck to others.

When Scobie hears Ali's final "discarded finished cry," he knows then that one must drain the cup: "I missed that one death," he tells himself, "and now I must have them all" (286). The images bear him out for in response to Ali's cry he precipitately leaves behind in Yusef's office, "the moonlight shining on the siphon and the two drained glasses" (276).

Scobie's desire for reduction has left his own office furnished

---

[83]Kunkel, 66.

with little more than a pair of rusty handcuffs and a broken rosary. The rusty handcuffs will remain to be cleared away for they are the symbol of his imperfect but humanely human judgment; the broken rosary which had been sent as an article of faith to lure Ali onto the wharves at night is not only a symbol of betrayal but, when juxtaposed with the handcuffs, indicate the relationship between God's role and Scobie's in their relative spheres, or Scobie's role as it is opposed to God's. The broken rosary was never found among the debris where Ali lay. Searching for it, Scobie

> looked down at the body. . . . and for a moment he saw the body as something very small and dark and a long way away — like a broken piece of rosary he looked for: a couple of black beads and the image of God coiled at the end of it.

Scobie appears to be now directing his thoughts to God while he in fact directs them to Ali, one of God's creatures;

> Oh God, he thought; I've killed you: you've served me all these years and I've killed you at the end of them. God lay there under the petrol drums and Scobie felt the tears in his mouth. . . You were faithful to me, and I couldn't trust you.
>
> "What is it, sah?" the corporal whispered, kneeling by the body.
>
> "I loved him," Scobie said. (277)

That Ali, Scobie's native servant, and God merge at this point, as they will later at Scobie's death, is no accident.[84] For in another of Greene's works, The Power and the Glory, the renegade priest reflects that "loving God isn't any different from loving a man — or a child.

---

[84]Ali is, as his name indicates, a Mohammedan. His name is, of course, distinct from, but redolent of another name for God — Allah.

It's wanting to be with Him, to be near Him. . . . It's wanting to protect Him from yourself" (233). It is credible, then, that in loving Ali, Scobie loved God; and it is also believable that his faithfulness to Louise and to Helen, to the point of sacrificing his own life, also proves his love for God through His creatures.

That Scobie's love goes to these extremes is indicated again near the end of The Heart of the Matter when Scobie, dying, continues to fulfill his role as carrier. Here, like the renegade priest in The Power and the Glory, he realizes that responsibility only terminates with life. For the priest, who also longs for death, realizes that while it is the duty of the anti-clerical government to catch him, it is his own duty not to be caught, for he must continue to serve as long as he lives. Even after Scobie has taken the lethal dose of evipan, he still remains alerted by his sense of responsibility, for

> sometimes far away he thought he heard the sound of pain. . . . "Ali," he called, "Ali." It seemed to him as though someone outside the room were seeking him, calling him, and he made a last effort to indicate that he was there. . . all the time outside the house, outside the world that drummed like hammer blows within his ear, someone wandered, seeking to get in, someone appealing for help, someone in need of him. And automatically at the call of need, at the cry of a victim, Scobie strung himself to act. He dredged his consciousness up from an infinite distance in order to make some reply. He said aloud, "Dear God, I love. . ." (298-299)

With Ali's death the full terror and pity of life present themselves and are among the precipitating circumstances that lead to Scobie's suicide. Yet because of the "pity of it" Scobie must continue to act, and while he does fill his role of active responsibility, there are two minor

characters who do as God does on a higher level, that is, pursue Scobie in order to track him down. Of these two it is expedient to associate Wilson, the simpler, or the flat character, with the terror of life while Yusef, the more complex character, can be associated with the more complex emotion of pity.

It is Wilson who has been sent surreptitiously by the government to investigate the smuggling of diamonds out of the colony, and it is Wilson who, because of his self-loathing, must prove Scobie not only professionally dishonest but also personally a sham. For Wilson, like many of the British in the colony, considers Scobie's goodness a personal reproach. Hence it is envy which causes Wilson to explode: "Oh you are unbearable. You are too damned honest to live!" At the same time Wilson's "face was aflame, even his knees seemed to blush with rage, shame, self-depreciation" (139).

In addition to serving as a contrapuntal device to God's pursuit of Scobie, Wilson also becomes an ironic comment on the theme of love — not only God's love for Scobie and Scobie's love for God, but Scobie's love and responsibility for Louise and Helen. For Wilson's pseudo-romantic courting of Louise — he believes he can address another poem to her after he visits the brothel on Pitt Street — parodies the genuine emotion. Therefore his declaration that he loves her more than anything in the world, and Louise's rejoinder that no one loves in that way, anemically echoes Scobie's love which is truly <u>mais que a vida</u>.

Yusef, who is merely amoral where Wilson is immoral, is described by Greene at one time as "untrustworthy and sincere," at

another as both "sincere and shallow," and when Scobie comes to him at last to slip his load, he is greeted, Greene claims, with a combined "hope and apprehension." For Yusef, in his complexity, resembles the Portuguese captain in that each tests Scobie's integrity and regrets its final loss. Significantly the name of the captain's boat is the Esperanza, or Hope, and Scobie is, for both of them, a kind of last-ditch hope for an absolute of good and justice in the realm of human affairs.

In this way Yusef is as much an absolutist as Scobie himself; for in demanding the best in another he fears so much to find less than the best that he must constantly test its quality. Yusef relates how he first came to marvel at Scobie's goodness:

> You nearly caught me, Major Scobie, that time. It was a matter of import duties, you remember. You could have caught me if you had told your policemen to say something a little different. I was quite overcome with astonishment, Major Scobie, to sit in a police court and hear true facts from the mouths of policemen. You must have taken a lot of trouble to find out what was true and to make them say it. I said to myself, Yusef, a Daniel has come to the Colonial Police. (192)

Yusef desires Scobie's friendship and yet because his position in the colony is dubious must at the same time use him. Yusef, the entrepreneur, like Wilson, the spy, knows that intelligence is more valuable than honesty: "honesty was a double-edged weapon, but intelligence looked after number one" (184). Therefore, with the rationalism of an Iago, Yusef continues to play Iago to Scobie's Othello. Finding the "ocular proof" — not Othello's handkerchief, but in this case a letter which Scobie wrote as an all-or-nothing sacrifice to Helen — Yusef is able to completely undermine Scobie. Among the images that persist

in reinforcing the Othello analogy are the pillow episodes. These occur near the beginning of Yusef's campaign to find the weak spot in Scobie's defense. He visits Scobie who is suffering from malaria and says, "Sit up a moment, Major, and let me beat your pillows" (91); later he repeats his offer with "Let me pat your pillow, Major Scobie" (94). The allusions to the pillow with which Othello smothers Desdemona become even more insistent when Yusef's boy, questioned by Wilson, reveals: "My master he think Major Scobie very good man, sah. . . . Last time they have big palaver. . . . When Major Scobie go away one time he put pillow right on his face. . . . His eyes make pillow wet" (185).

The scene in which Scobie visits Yusef and in which his house is compared to a brothel recalls, of course, the Brothel Scene in Othello and serves to indicate the illicit affair they have engaged upon:

> the bungalow was divided into a succession of small rooms identically furnished with sofas and cushions and low tables for drinks like the rooms in a brothel. He passed from one to another, pulling the curtains aside, till he reached the little room where nearly two months ago now he had lost his integrity. On the sofa Yusef lay asleep. Like a woman who has made a loveless marriage, he recognized in a room as anonymous as a hotel bedroom the memory of an adultery. (159)

Like adultery, marriage is also an appropriate image in this episode, for Scobie "had trapped Yusef as effectively as Yusef had trapped him. The marriage had been made by both of them" (159). Some critics see these two characters so closely mated as to be doubles, Yusef the id, Scobie the ego of a single being.[85]

---

[85]Marie-Béatrice Mesnet also sees Yusef as a double who

Pity is, of course, an integral part of both Othello and The Heart of the Matter, and Scobie who has given so much of it to others asks himself, after he has lost his integrity, "Am I really one of those whom people pity?" (163) To Scobie this is almost as incredible as the idea that he would one day come to Yusef for help. Here again he resembles Othello who supplicates his tormentor Iago. In coming to Yusef in order to "slip his load"

> he felt an odd yearning towards his tormentor. The little white building magnetized him as though concealed there was his only companionship, the only man he could trust. At least his blackmailer knew him as no one else did. . . (266)

But when Yusef goes too far in fulfilling Scobie's wish to rid himself of an Ali he no longer trusts, Allott and Farris remind their readers that "Yusef is complicated enough to know his success," his success in having Scobie come to him at last "is also a failure" (233). Yusef's earlier voiced lament might well be his final word:

> ". . . formerly I was your friend."
> "You very nearly were," Scobie reluctantly admitted.
> "I am the base Indian."
> "The base Indian?"
> "Who threw away a pearl," Yusef sadly said. "That was the play by Shakespeare the Ordnance Corps gave in the Memorial Hall. I have always remembered it." (220)

---

[85](cont.)"impersonates the dark side of Scobie, as Scobie admits in his own words and with appropriate imagery when. . . he speaks of 'the dark furnishings of hell'" (30). Greene has worked with the theme of the double, it should be noted, in his earliest novel, The Man Within, where he used the passage from Sir Thomas Browne, "There's another man within me that's angry with me" as his epigraph.

PART IX

FOR NAUGHT DID I IN HATE

In answer to Yusef's desire to hear the philosophy of his life, Scobie responds:

> "I have none."
> "The piece of cotton you hold in your hand in the forest."
> "I've lost my way." (274)

The uncharted heart of the dark continent has been consistently employed by Greene to depict the ambiguous world in which his saints and lesser men must wander and make their moral choices. For this is a world where, despite the efforts the Church has made to provide explanations, continues to withhold meaning. Even where Greene himself believes in a sentient and loving God, both he as well as his protagonists feel lost in their conflicts between man's own desires and what man imagines to be God's desires for man. "A hint of an explanation," both as a phrase used rather centrally in The Heart of the Matter, and as the title of one of Greene's Twenty-One Stories, and as a remark made within that same short story — "Our view is so limited. . . . Of course there is no answer here. We catch hints" (119), underlines the theme of The Heart of the Matter as well as other of Greene's works. The theme more concisely stated can be reduced to "Who knows?"[86]

---

[86]Such a theme becomes more obviously Kafkaesque when it is parodied in the same novel. When Wilson "had decoded the telegram he would hand it to the long-suffering Commissioner, who had already probably received the same information or contradictory information from M. I. 5 or one of the secret organizations which took root on the

A large portion of such a question involves the problem of human suffering. This theme was approached in The Ministry of Fear and treated more exhaustively in The Heart of the Matter. For Scobie feels more acutely than others the enigma of the existence of suffering and the presence of an omnipotent and merciful God.

Allott and Farris have described the episode in which the torpedo victims arrive at the field hospital as the emotional center of The Heart of the Matter. Here Scobie ponders the theme:

> The lights inside would have given an extraordinary impression of peace if one hadn't known, just as the stars on this clear night gave also an impression of remoteness, security, freedom. If one knew, he wondered, the facts, would one have to feel pity even for the planets? if you reached what they called the heart of the matter? (128)

This passage also involves an unstated question, for why, Scobie also wonders, if man can conceive a pity for the planets as well as for all earthly things, can't God Himself be capable of the same pity for His own creation? It is here that the reader is confronted with yet another paradox: that of a creature who is seemingly more compassionate than his Creator. Yet Scobie "could not believe in a God who was not human enough to love what he had created" (125).

---

[86](cont.) coast like mangroves. Leave alone but do not repeat not pinpoint P. Ferreira passenger 1st Class. Ferreira was presumably an agent his organization had recruited on board. It was quite possible that the Commissioner would receive simultaneously a message from Colonel Wright that P. Ferreira was suspected of carrying diamonds and should be rigourously searched. 72391 / 87052 / 63847 / 92034. How did one simultaneously leave alone, not repeat not pinpoint, and rigourously search Mr. Ferreira? That luckily was not his worry. Perhaps it was Scobie who would suffer any headache there was" (The Heart of the Matter, 186-187).

It is the problem of suffering in what is usually considered its most acute form — that of a child — which comes into consideration here. For although Scobie is left with a dying child who is one of the torpedo victims, he knows that it is not

> that the child would die: that needed no explanation. Even the pagans realized that the love of God might mean an early death. . . but that the child should have been allowed to survive the forty days and nights in an open boat — that was the mystery — to reconcile that with the love of God. (128)

And while Scobie listened to the child's labored breathing, it seemed to him "it was as if she were carrying a weight with great effort up a long hill" (130), and when he heard the small voice say "Father," he knew that it seemed "inhuman" for him not to try to carry the burden of her suffering. It is here that Scobie becomes more clearly a father opposed to God, the Father, and it is here that he beseeches God to "look after her. Give her peace. Take away my peace forever but give her peace" (130).

Scobie, like Ivan Karamazov, the Mexican priest, and Greene himself, accepts reluctantly, if at all, the idea of vicarious suffering. The priest, like Ivan and Scobie, prefers to refuse salvation if what Ivan refers to as the "harmony" of the universe depends on the suffering of the innocent, or on damnation. The priest says:

> "I don't know a thing about the mercy of God: I don't know how awful the human heart looks to Him. But I do know this — that if there's ever been a single man in this state damned, then I'll be damned too." He said slowly: "I wouldn't want it to be any different. I just want justice, that's all."[87]

---

[87] The Power and the Glory, 269.

Like Ivan, Scobie also comes to an impasse with God. "There was bitterness between them," not because God had failed to give the child peace but because Scobie's sacrifice of his own peace in behalf of the child has also involved and destroyed the happiness of the women he loves. The following dialog takes place between Scobie and God:

> . . . If you live you will come back to me sooner or later. One of them will suffer, but can't you trust me to see that the suffering isn't too great?
> . . . No, I don't trust you. I love you, but I've never trusted you. If you made me, you made this feeling of responsibility that I've always carried about like a sack of bricks. I'm not a policeman for nothing — responsible for order, for seeing justice done. There was no other profession for a man of my kind, I can't shift my responsibility to you. If I could, I would be someone else. . . .
> So long as you live. . . I have hope. There's no human hopelessness like the hopelessness of God. Can't you just go on, as you are doing now? The voice pleaded, lowering the terms every time it spoke, like a dealer in a market. . . .
> No, he said, No. That's impossible. I love you and I won't go on insulting you at your own altar. You see, it's an <u>impasse</u>, God, an <u>impasse</u>. . . (290)

This dialog occurs shortly before Scobie's suicide. Scobie feels that he can no longer defraud God at His own altar by taking communion in a state of sin. Additionally, he can never abide by the Church's teaching that "One should look after one's own soul at whatever cost to another, that's what I can't do, what I shall never be able to do" (199), he says. As parent, policeman, judge, maniac, and criminal, Scobie responds to anyone who needs his pity. "I can't make them suffer so as to save myself. I'm responsible and I'll see it through the only way I can" (199). The problem arises again when Scobie speaks to Yusef and Yusef gives his advice on how to handle problems — especially women problems:

> "I have had much woman trouble in my life. Now it is better because I have learned the way. The way is not to care a damn, Major Scobie. You say to each of them, 'I do not care a damn. I sleep with whom I please. You take me or leave me. I do not care a damn.' They always take you, Major Scobie." He sighed into his whisky. "Sometimes I wish they would not take me" (270).

Scobie cannot accept "the way" Yusef points out, "the piece of cotton he holds in the forest," for earlier when Scobie fell into Yusef's trap through his letter of complete surrender to Helen, he replies to Yusef's demand, "Oh, Major Scobie, what made you write such a letter? It was asking for trouble," by "One can't be wise all the time, Yusef. One would die of disgust" (219).

The problem is, of course, that Scobie does "give a damn." For unlike some of Greene's protagonists — Pinkie is a striking example — Scobie, rather than being in search of a father, is one. "Pity is a mature passion," one of Greene's minor protagonists warns.[88] It is a mature passion particularly when it becomes the motivating force for responsibility and involvement. Because Scobie and Arthur Rowe of The Ministry of Fear are both "engaged," they are both launched on the same enterprise — life. Rowe will have to relearn what Scobie has always known, for on leaving the nursing home

> a phrase of Johns' came back to mind about a Ministry of Fear. He felt now that he had joined the permanent staff. But it wasn't the small Ministry to which Johns referred, with limited aims like winning a war or changing a constitution. It was a Ministry as large as life to which all who love belonged.

---

[88]Mr. Prentice of Scotland Yard tells Arthur Rowe "Adolescents don't feel pity. It's a mature passion" (The Ministry of Fear, 207).

If one loved one feared. . . . (267)

In the same way Anna Hilfe reminds Rowe that his killing his wife was really an act of mercy and that pity is a positive, not a negative factor in life: "'You think you are so bad,' she chides, 'but it was only because you couldn't bear the pain. But they' " — she refers here to the Nazi organization of her nihilistic brother, Willi Hilfe — " 'can bear pain — other people's pain — endlessly' " (155).

During his amnesia Rowe has picked up a volume of Tolstoy in the nursing home. Knowing Tolstoy only by means of his portrait, referring to him as "the old man in the beard," Rowe concludes that Tolstoy was wrong when he wrote, "I cannot acknowledge any State or nations. . . . I cannot take part." Perhaps because The Ministry of Fear is written during wartime, or perhaps because Greene always writes sub specie aeternitas, Rowe concluded that Tolstoy was wrong, that the man was too interested in saving his own soul to help others.

Although Rowe concludes that he is not interested in saving his own soul, Scobie is. If Scobie longs so avidly for peace, it is not just the solitary quarter hours that can be stolen in his office or on the treks with Ali into the bush, but it is mainly for eternal peace. Yet, because he must try to set things right in this world first, his felicity, whether temporal or eternal, will be his greatest sacrifice made to God and His creatures.

Because peace and action, as well as purity and action, are irreconcilable opposites, Scobie has had to forego his primary goal, peace, in his efforts to fulfill his secondary aims, to love God's creatures as

God does Himself and to never fail in his responsibility toward them. It is, of course, the impossibility of these aspirations which leads Scobie to ultimate despair. In this way he gambles his right to heaven jeopardizing the salvation of his own soul, he forfeits his hope for heaven and an eternity of peace on the basis that he cannot do as he has been taught to do, think only of himself.

Scobie, nevertheless, always assumes in his actions and his attitudes that "there was only one person in the world who was unpitiable — himself" (192). Yet God, it would seem, must be less absolute in his demands on Scobie than Scobie is in his self-demands. For a man who excuses others' shortcomings, realizing that "human beings couldn't be heroic all the time: those who surrender everything — for God or love — must be allowed sometimes in thought to take back their surrender," there should also exist a God who is no less compassionate or absolute in His own demands. Such a God must also realize, as does Scobie, that "so many had never committed the heroic act however rashly. It was the act that counted" (257). For this reason it is expected that God must surely forgive him as Donne also hoped for forgiveness when he argued:

> Thou knowest this man's fall, but Thou knowest not his wrastling; which perchance was such that almost his very fall is justified and accepted of God.[89]

Barbara Seward comes again to Scobie's defense, maintaining that his final despair derives from charity and from a "conviction that

---

[89]Quoted by Allott and Farris, 215.

one must love weakness and ugliness and failure because in all human existence there can be no real purity, beauty, success." And she adds, "While Dante was led to heaven by those qualities in Beatrice that reflected the light of ultimate Good, Greene's heroes are led by pity for man's loss of so much of that heavenly light." Here she implies that Scobie exceeds Dante in charity because where Dante began not with the baser Florentines, but with Beatrice, Scobie began with the dwellers of the Coast and of the chromium world. Where in "Dante love grows from admiration for the Godliness of Beatrice to a vaster admiration for the essence of God Himself, in Greene love grows from pity for man in suffering the loss of God to a vaster pity for God in suffering the loss of man"(93).

If Scobie has been tortured by the idea that he has been bribed by sentiment, it seems apparent that God has been suborned in the same way. If Scobie was seduced by pity for the Portuguese captain's love for his daughter, so is God swayed on behalf of one who sacrifices his peace, even his eternal peace, because he truly loves mais que a vida. In this respect it may be recalled that in return for Scobie's sacrifice of integrity the captain had brought him back a religious medal saying, "I have brought you this. It was all that I could find for you in Lobito. She is a very obscure Saint. . . . Santa. . . I don't remember her name. She had something to do with Angola, I think. . ."(220-221)

The last defense for Scobie lies, of course, in his humility: for Scobie, like the whisky priest, is humbled by his sense of inadequacy. Not only does Scobie die feeling that he has failed completely, but he

dies contrite for "he dredged his unconsciousness up from an infinite distance in order to make some reply. He said aloud, 'Dear God, I love. . . , ' "(90), but the phrase is never finished. Perhaps what he was unable to put into words were ideas similar to the dying thoughts of the Mexican priest who felt

> only an immense disappointment because he had to go to God empty-handed, with nothing done at all. It seemed to him at that moment that it would have been quite easy to have been a saint. It would only have needed a little self-restraint and a little courage. He felt like someone who has missed happiness by seconds at an appointed place. He knew now at the end there was only one thing that counted — to be a saint.[90]

The last that is known of Scobie is that "he did not feel his body when it struck the floor or hear the small tinkle of the medal as it span like a coin under the ice-box — the saint whose name nobody could remember"(299).

Is it not possible that Scobie may also be, like the unnamed Mexican priest, an unknown saint?

---

[90]The Power and the Glory, 284.

PART X

THE MAP: NEW PIECES COMING INTO PLACE

I

Wonder

Despite the danger involved in such a state or aspiration, Graham Greene has not completely rejected innocence. Innocence as a negative, even a deadly, quality was most apparent in the protagonist Alden Pyle in Greene's novel The Quiet American. But the unspoiled quality which Greene comes to endorse in his later work is quite different from the false innocence of that American who directed affairs in Vietnam from the basis of his ignorance. The innocence which Greene knows is still needed, while other forms must be rejected, is that which embraces a kind of power — "A quality of darkness. . . of the inexplicable, something which has to be taken as a symbol because it has no meaning for the conscious brain."[91] Such innocence is needed because service needs faith; art, a sense of wonder.

The sense of wonder is a response to true innocence. For wonder stems from what Herbert Read calls a "virgin sensibility" or the "innocent eye." Knowing that the creative spirit depends on this early view, Greene quotes Read, in his study devoted to this critic, as saying: "The only real experiences in life" are those "lived with a virgin sensibility — so that we hear a tone once, only see a colour once, see, hear,

---

[91]From an early essay by Greene, "Analysis of a Journey," quoted by Gwenn R. Boardman in a study entitled "Greene's 'Under the Garden: Aesthetic Explorations,'" Renascence, XVII, 4 (Summer 1965), 183.

touch, taste and smell, everything but once, the first time."[92]

As a phenomenon of childhood, the seven-year-old Wilditch in Greene's short story, "Under the Garden," also experiences this pristine type of vision. It is, however, a much older Wilditch who realizes what he has lost in the experience of living; it is the impact of the primal vision that he returns to recapture. It is only then that Wilditch recognizes the significance of the treasure which has been revealed to him underground. He now knows that "that was a sparkling mass of jewellery such as I had never seen before." In his effort to recapture the early experience he notes a fallacy in his recollection: for he was going to describe them as being "in all the colours of the rainbow, but the colours of the stones have not that pale girlish simplicity." The experience has been greater than the tags he had immediately begun to place upon it, for "there were reds almost as deep as raw liver, stormy blues, greens like a shadow in snow, and stones without colour at all that sparkled brighter than all the rest. I say I've seen nothing like it," Wilditch continues, now recognizing that a jaded perception, born almost in the act of viewing, had, nourished by time and experience, increased until "the scepticism of middle age. . .leads me now to compare the treasure trove with caskets overflowing with artificial jewellery which you sometimes see in the shop windows of Italian tourist resorts."[93] It is only in these late efforts to unbury his early

---

[92]"Herbert Read," The Lost Childhood and Other Essays, 138.

[93]The Sense of Reality, 51.

response to experience that Wilditch recovers a part of his virgin sensibility, a sensibility to which he can now add the power of adult judgment. This is the closest possible return to the innocent vision.

In seeking to regain this innocent vision, Wilditch returns to the scene of the adventure, Winton Hall. For it is there that he encountered those two ancient repositories of Power, Javitt and Maria, who live under the garden. In rereading his schoolboy account, which he has always assumed to be based on the experience, he discovers that he had not only omitted the external truth but the internal Truth as well. This adventure, which he can never assign with any degree of certainty to dream or actuality, while revealing more in the line of treasure than the actual hoard, appears to have been deliberately falsified in his youthful effort. The question which now plagues him in regard to the indistinctly recalled dream or happening is: "had he forgotten or was he afraid to remember?"

The distortion or falsification of facts has obviously crept into Wilditch's account as a result of the artificial world in which he grows up. Such a world is Greene's "sinless graceless empty" world which he designates as "chromium." To what extent, then, has truth been buried under a layer of sophistication? To what extent has early reading — The Romance of Australian Exploration, or even Treasure Island, lain between his narration and the facts?

On the other hand, how much guilt or responsibility is attributable to the more direct influence of this world? For his mother, trained in the school of the early Fabians, leans toward statistics,

eschewing all mysteries, even Wilditch's youthful "explorations" and the region of the garden known as the Dark Walk. His brother, concerned with problems in plumbing and management, has, despite his being in occupation all these years, found Winton Hall "a bit of a disappointment," and has no idea of what may lie under the garden.

Like other Greenelanders, Wilditch is fatherless. He admits, however, that in his dream or bona fide adventure, he listened to Javitt "as I could have listened to my own father if I possessed one" (31). In learning from such a deputy father that it is only "under the earth or over the earth, it's there you'll find all that matters" (30), Wilditch rejects the chrome-plated world for one of greater intensity:

> I could sit here now for hours, remembering the things he said — I haven't made out the sense of them all yet; they are stored in my memory like a code uncoded which waits for a clue or an inspiration. (33)

Gwenn R. Boardman, writing perceptively of "Under the Garden," claims that Javitt, the old man born with one leg, and Maria, a dirty old woman who quacks, "are prototypes of Power, that supernatural or spiritual force whose loss from the modern world Greene has so frequently mourned."[94] And it is in the sense of Power that Javitt can be equated with a father, or even an archetypal Father, for he is both the repository and transmitter of wisdom. Maria, on the other hand, is a force to be propitiated, the witch of the primitive bushland who still haunts, in their dreams, the children of the metallic world.

---

[94]Greene's "Under the Garden: Aesthetic Explorations," Renascence, XVII, 4 (Summer 1965), 183.

Both Javitt and Maria represent that Power which Greene insists is manifest in the devils or witches who initiate the young people of the African bush into life. He claims that their potency emerges from their simultaneous qualities of good and evil, as well as an element of black magic. Civilized man, Greene argues, need only find and recognize this synthesis of good and evil, because "to triumph over such forces we need only to find and recognize this power; flight is a weakness."[95]

This is, then, a portion of the innocent vision which is lacking in the civilized world. And this vision, in its loss, incorporates other losses — two auxiliary senses which Wilditch also experienced below the garden — a greater joy and a greater terror. For this he recognized in

> the strange balance — to and fro — of those days; half the time I was frightened as though I were caged in a nightmare and half the time I only wanted to laugh freely and happily at the strangeness of his speech and the novelty of his ideas. It was as if, for those hours, the only important things in life were two, laughter and fear. (34)

Although it was some time after writing his early account of his visit to Javitt and Maria that Wilditch finally escaped from the world of the surface and of surface values, it was, however, during the underground visit that he acquired the resolution that would change his life's

---

[95]This is what Greene insists is lacking in the watered-down religion of the chrome world. He wrote that "the Anglican Church almost relinquished Hell. It smoked and burned on Sundays only in obscure provincial pulpits, but no day passed in a Catholic Church without prayers for deliverance from evil spirits 'wandering through the world for the ruin of souls.'" (The Lost Childhood, 36)

course. For if Querry, the protagonist of A Burnt-Out Case, and Greene, in his Journey Without Maps and his In Search of a Character: Two African Journals, had made excursions into the "heart of darkness," Wilditch had early shown his penchant for a deeper exploration of life, using the Dark Walk — whose overgrown laurels were festooned with cobwebs — as his point of departure. While Wilditch journeyed in pursuit of Beauty, Querry in search of Peace, Greene found in his voyages, a vestige of Innocence. He found

> in the childhood of Africa what. . .was not a prelapsarian Eden, but the Eden at the moment the apple is to be plucked: neither guilty nor innocent of the forces of evil. There the childhood of the race is indeed acquainted intimately with the devil, the witch of our dreams; yet in that intimacy it has still not lost the instinctive ritualistic terror, the imagination that comprehends the supernatural.[96]

Again, the awareness of terror and joy was not the only reward issuing from Wilditch's underground adventure, for there below-ground Wilditch also encountered his life's goal. His purpose or goal was as meaningful and as undefinable as Querry's Pendélé. When Javitt showed him a picture of perfect Beauty — the daughter of those two grotesques — Wilditch knew he would search for her in every part of the world. As an early explorer in the garden, Wilditch had fallen on his métier, for he later comments: "It was as though the purpose of life had suddenly come to me as it must have come often enough to some future explorer when he noticed on a map for the first time an empty space in the heart

---

[96]Carolyn D. Scott, "The Witch at the Corner," Graham Greene: Some Critical Considerations, ed. Robert O. Evans (Lexington, Ky., 1963), 233.

of a continent" (48). Javitt and Maria's daughter must also have had some such intangible aspiration for Javitt said: "She went away, our daughter did, with a want looking for a want — and not a want you can measure in inches either or calculate in numbers by the week" (43).

In regard to Wilditch's quest and the possibility of its fulfillment, Javitt advised:

> Good luck to you, then. . . . You'll have to travel a long way, you'll have to forget all your schoolmasters try to teach you; you must be like a horse-trader and not be tied up with loyalties any more than you are here and who knows? I doubt it, but you might, you just might. (54-55)

Javitt's "who knows?. . . you might, you just might" is vastly important in the search for an aspiration, for whether it is a search for Beauty or any other absolute, it implies at least the possibility of its attainment.

The most important lesson Wilditch learns from Javitt, however, is another — disloyalty. And because Javitt and Maria are rogues — not only because of their unusual ugliness, their near-eternal lives, and their extraordinary manner of living them below-ground — but in their fresh view of things above-ground — they transmitted some of their roguery to their adopted son:

> Be disloyal. It's your duty to the human race. The human race needs to survive and it's the loyal man who dies first from anxiety or a bullet or overwork. If you have to earn a living boy, and the price they make you pay is loyalty, be a double agent — and never let either of the two sides know your real name. (44)

Wilditch is a rogue for he is one of the few who recover, at least in part, the "innocent eye"; he is again a rogue because in his

rejection of the chrome-world he wanders apart from the herd. The wisdom that Javitt and Maria have imparted to him is innocence, a quality needed not only by the artist but by the creative person in any walk of life. Such innocence has been lost by the chromium world. Javitt relates those who populate that world to

> people who keep nursery-gardens who look around all the time at the seedlings and. . . throw away any oddities like weeds. They call them rogues. . . . But sometimes you find someone who wants things different, who's tired of all the plus signs and wants to find zero, and he starts breeding away with the differences. . . . (42)

"And only when you get back to zero, to the base of things, there's a chance to start again free and independent" (41). While Wilditch's has been an aesthetic exploration, the same base, the same "zero" is needed for other types of creative endeavor. This "zero" is the true innocence, the blank page. It is not the innocence which is ignorance, but the innocence of knowledge, of the knowledge which comes from disloyalty of the saint or the rogue — the knowledge which indicates that it is time to begin again.

II

Faith

In Graham Greene's latest novel, The Comedians, there is a strange series of communications coming from a protagonist, generally known as "Jones" or "Major Jones." They concern a Mr. Smith, while Brown is the recipient:

> "There's something about him. . ." He added surprisingly, "He reminded me of my father. Not physically, I mean, but. . .well, a sort of goodness."
> "Yes I know what you mean. I don't remember my father."
> "To tell you the truth my memory's a bit dim too."
> "Let's say the father we would have liked to have."
> "That's it, old man, exactly. . . . I always felt that Mr. Smith and I had a bit in common. Horses out of the same stable."
> I listened with astonishment. What could a saint possibly have in common with a rogue? (209)

Innocence is the only parallel that Brown can discover between Mr. Smith, the presidential candidate running against Truman on the vegetarian ticket in 1948, and Jones who brought, wherever he wandered, his suspect name and rank and his talisman, a stolen Asprey cocktail-shaker.

Each is quixotic. Although Mr. Smith failed to win the election he appears two decades later in Haiti in order to establish a vegetarian center in Duvalier's land of terror. His theory is that by reducing acidity he can reduce passion in the human organism. Jones, Brown has begun to realize, entertains behind his apparent spiritual bankruptcy a deep commitment to an absolute. For where Mr. Smith recognized such ideals as Mankind, Justice, and the Pursuit of Happiness,

Brown speculates about Jones' commitment:

> I wondered whether perhaps in all his devious life he had been engaged in a secret and hopeless love-affair with virtue, watching virtue from a distance, hoping to be noticed, perhaps, like a child doing wrong in order to attract the attention of virtue. (286)

Therefore innocence in both Jones and Smith leads them into a commitment larger than themselves, a commitment which is a form of faith. In this respect Brown learns from Smith:

> "You were talking about your mission just now."
> "Was I? You must excuse me, talking about myself like that. Mission is too big a word."
> "I'm interested."
> "Call it hope." (16)

The quality of hope is the equivalent of faith — a faith without a religious belief perhaps — which in Mr. Smith fails to die even in the face of evidence. This is proven, because when his dream of a vegetarian center fails to materialize in Haiti he moves to Santo Domingo with the same purpose in mind. On the off-chance, however, he leaves copies of his vegetarian handbook — like a Gideon Bible — behind him. Jones, too, has faith in the lucky break, the off-chance. "One never knows," which is almost a parody of Greene's prevailing theme "Who knows?" is, as Brown suspects, "Jones' deepest research into the meaning of life" (12). It serves to indicate Jones' faith that he will someday achieve his dream — his own Never-Never-Land — a hotel on some lonely Caribbean island with a bar at the eighteenth hole. However, when he reaches his point of no return at the Haitian-Dominican border, the reader learns that Smith's brand of hope is transportable, Jones' is not. Hearing Jones' remark, which is related to him by

another, that "there is no room for me outside of Haiti," Brown remembers "the captain's cable from the office in Philadelphia and the message that the chargé had received. There was more in his past," he realizes, "than a cocktail-shaker stolen from Asprey's, that was certain"(304).

Another resemblance between this saint and this rogue is the satisfaction each achieves through service. By chance alone Jones becomes committed to Haitian liberty, a lucky break, too, in that he meets his Never-Never-Land in another form, in the form of virtue or respectability, and sooner than he expects. Brown relates, "He hadn't found his golf-course, but I really believe he was happy"(295). For once on learning of another's death Jones had commented: "'Poor bugger. . . . That makes him sort of respectable, doesn't it?' he added with a kind of yearning"(226). Before he joins the guerillas he senses his end and in his pursuit of virtue, his desire to "come clean" is manifested. Making an end of dissembling, he says, "I don't fancy a lot of lies after I'm dead. I've lied enough before"(283).

It is when Brown learns through another protagonist more of the fantasy Jones lives by that he sees still more clearly the similarity between Smith and Jones.[97]

---

[97]While Jones and Smith incorporate some traits of Greene's potential saints, so does Querry, the protagonist of the novel A Burnt-Out Case. While Querry travels away from civilization and success to find peace or death in the Congo, he learns from his native boy, Deo Gratias, of a Never-Never-land, Pendélé. All Deo Gratias can communicate of Pendélé is that it was a place he remembers from his childhood where, he recalls, "nous étions heureux."

> "He asked me to lend him back his cocktail-shaker. He said it's a mascot. . . . He says he'll return it when the guerillas enter Port-au-Prince."
> "He certainly has his dreams," I said. "Perhaps he's an innocent too." (263)

This, then, is the bond which Jones had intuited between Smith and himself — the rogue and the saint — for both are innocent. Theirs, like that of another character in The Comedians, the Haitian, Doctor Magiot, who had committed himself to yet another mystique, Communism, is the innocence of faith. For if dreams are a form of faith, faith is a form of innocence.

It is only those who are without dreams who are neither loyal nor disloyal. They are the non-committed. They are the Browns who know that

> the rootless have experienced, like all the others, the temptation of sharing the security of a religious creed or a political faith, and for some reason we have turned the temptation down. We are the faithless; we admire the dedicated, the Doctor Magiots and the Mr. Smiths, for their courage and their integrity, for their fidelity to a cause. . . ." (300)

In an earlier novel, The End of the Affair, Greene's author-narrator, Maurice Bendrix, speaks of both the saints and those "comic people, futile people, little suburban natures" already mentioned elsewhere by Greene. It is the latter whom Bendrix maintains are, in the

---

[97](cont.) In serving others Querry has found, unknown to himself, his Pendélé. For he has announced several times, "I am content here."

Querry also underlines the concept of faith derived from innocence — a credo quia absurdum. For as he dies he exclaims, "'Absurd. . . this is absurd or else. . .' but what alternative, philosophical or psychological, he had in mind they never knew" (A Burnt-Out Case, 192).

problem of artistic creation, those who "obstinately will not come alive." For sometimes, as in life, there is one character "who sticks, he has to be pushed around. . . And yet one cannot do without him. I can imagine a God," Bendrix continues, "feeling in just that way about some of us." The saints, however, differ, for:

> the saints one would suppose, in a sense create themselves. They come alive. They are capable of the surprising act or word. They stand outside the plot, unconditioned by it. But we have to be pushed around. We have the obstinacy of non-existence. . . Wearily God forces us, here and there, according to his intentions, characters without poetry, without free will, whose only importance is that somewhere, at some time, we help to furnish the scene in which a living character moves and speaks, providing perhaps the saints with the opportunities for their free will.[98]

It is the committed, Mr. Smith, Doctor Magiot, and even Jones, who have abided by the words of the sermon delivered at the funeral of the Haitian guerillas:

> Let us go up to Jerusalem and die with him. . . . The Church is in the world, it is part of the suffering in the world, and though Christ condemned the disciple who struck off the ear of the high priest's servant, our hearts go out in sympathy to all who are moved to violence by the suffering of others.

They have committed disloyalties because:

> the Church condemns violence, but it condemn[sic] indifference more harshly. Violence can be the expression of love, indifference never. One is the imperfection of charity, the other the perfection of egoism.

They have at the same time remained loyal because:

---

[98]The End of the Affair (New York, 1951), 232.

> In the days of fear, doubt and confusion the simplicity and loyalty of one apostle advocated a political solution. He was wrong but I would rather be wrong with Saint Thomas than right with the cold and the craven. Let us go up to Jerusalem and die with him. (304-305)

Brown had learned in school from his earlier deputy fathers — the Fathers of the Visitation — that the proof of any faith was the willingness to die for it. While Jones had seen a father in Mr. Smith, Brown had unconsciously thought of Magiot in terms of a father. For Magiot had not only loved Brown's mother, but Brown realizes with Magiot's death, too late, that never knowing "the day when my father died, if he had died. . . I experienced for the first time the sense of sudden separation from someone on whom as a last resort I could depend" (306). Fatherless and rootless, Brown remains among those who have chosen nothing except to go on living. It is significant then, that he who considers himself among those "rolled round on Earth's diurnal course, With rocks and stones and trees," drives a hearse and erects monuments after those he admired have died!

In the last analysis, it is those who have a true sense of disloyalty,[99] who have come to the true "sense of reality," that is, have seen

---

[99]Greene's disloyalty has served him in this respect for he wrote: "If I may be personal, I belong to a group, the Catholic Church, which would present me with grave problems as a writer were I not saved by my disloyalty. . . . You remember the black and white squares of Bishop Blougram's chess board. As a novelist, I must be allowed to write from the point of view of the black square as well as of the white: doubt and even denial must be given their chance of self-expression, or how is one freer than the Leningrad group?" (Quoted by De Vitis in his Graham Greene [New York, 1964], 44).

His disloyalty has also been an effort to get back to innocence even in religion. The Catholic Church was not only to him an active

the world as "all-of-a-piece." For they are those who in their return to innocence have recaptured the sense of wonder and of faith.

On the other hand, it is those who are so afraid of an innocence which may be ignorance that they live instead in ignorance of an innocence that is knowledge, who resemble Wilditch's mother. For even though the chromium world continues to make greater inroads, while the factory chimneys begin to appear beyond the garden at Wild Grove and council-houses appear outside the garden wall at Winton Hall, Wilditch realizes: "Poor Mother — she had reason to fear" (61).

99(cont.)force in the world which offered a "hint of an explanation" for the inquiring mind; it also represents a point of reference or a salient point from which he can diverge, for Greene felt as Mauriac who writes, "Above all I liked to be persuaded by Pascal that a search was always possible, that there could always be a voyage of discovery within revealed truth" (De Vitis, 139).

CONCLUSION

In the development of this study "Concepts of Sainthood in the Novels of Albert Camus and Graham Greene," each author has first been treated separately. In the individual treatments each has been studied in regard to his world view, the universe he has himself created, the hierarchy of values which he has depicted through the presentation of human types or "careers," and his delineation of the saints themselves. At this point, however, the two authors and their views will be treated in relation to each other, and it will be revealed that there are, among their differences, many similarities.

Of the similarities, the most basic is the concern which both authors feel for the damned, or the damnés. In this respect Camus has written: "Sens de mon oeuvre: Tant d'hommes sont privés de la grâce. Comment vivre sans grâce? Il faut bien s'y mettre et faire ce que le Christianisme n'a jamais fait: s'occuper des damnés."[100] The study shows how Meursault of Camus' L'Etranger is a type of Everyman, living under a sentence of death no more certain than that of the plague-stricken condamnés immured in the city of Oran.

Greene's concern with the damned has also been illustrated. Resorting to Péguy's pronouncements, Greene demonstrates that the sinner can be on a par with the saint in matters of Christianity. The study therefore shows how Scobie and the anonymous Mexican priest of

---

[100]Carnets, II, pp. 129-130 (Paris, 1964), 129-130. Subsequent quotations taken from this volume of Carnets will be taken from this edition.

The Heart of the Matter and The Power and the Glory, respectively, have sinned, yet in sinning have, perhaps, achieved sanctity. It also shows how Greene's protagonists again follow Péguy in their refusal to accept salvation when others are damned. Péguy's philosophy in regard to his own life is also used as the basis for incidents in Greene's novels and is expressed explicitly in Brighton Rock:[101]

> There was a man, a Frenchman. . . . He was a good man, a holy man, and he lived in sin all through his life, because he couldn't bear the idea that any soul could suffer damnation. . . . This man decided that if any soul was going to be damned, he would be damned too. He never took the sacraments, he never married his wife in the church. I don't know my child, but some people think he was — well, a saint.[102]

The episode in which the Mexican priest claims that if anyone is to be damned in his state he wishes damnation for himself, is cited in the study to illustrate this concept. The same type of concern for others is shown in the priest's offer to accept damnation in exchange for his illegitimate daughter's salvation and in Scobie's willing sacrifice of his eternal peace for an unknown child. The study also shows how such sacrifices are made on the secular as well as the religious

---

[101]Although Camus' Carnets contain the following citation without annotations, he appears to have read Brighton Rock as he certainly read The Heart of the Matter in French translation:

> Un homme (un Français?) saint homme qui a vécu toute sa vie dans le péché (n'approchant pas la Table Sainte, n'épousant pas la femme avec qu'il vivait) parce que ne pouvant souffrir l'idée qu'une seule âme fût damné, il voulait être damné aussi.

Camus adds: "Il s'agissait de cet amour plus grand que tous: celui de l'homme qui donne son âme pour un ami" (Carnets, II, 211).

[102]Brighton Rock (New York, 1938), 356.

The Heart of the Matter and The Power and the Glory, respectively, have sinned, yet in sinning have, perhaps, achieved sanctity. It also shows how Greene's protagonists again follow Péguy in their refusal to accept salvation when others are damned. Péguy's philosophy in regard to his own life is also used as the basis for incidents in Greene's novels and is expressed explicitly in Brighton Rock:[101]

> There was a man, a Frenchman. . . . He was a good man, a holy man, and he lived in sin all through his life, because he couldn't bear the idea that any soul could suffer damnation. . . . This man decided that if any soul was going to be damned, he would be damned too. He never took the sacraments, he never married his wife in the church. I don't know my child, but some people think he was — well, a saint.[102]

The episode in which the Mexican priest claims that if anyone is to be damned in his state he wishes damnation for himself, is cited in the study to illustrate this concept. The same type of concern for others is shown in the priest's offer to accept damnation in exchange for his illegitimate daughter's salvation and in Scobie's willing sacrifice of his eternal peace for an unknown child. The study also shows how such sacrifices are made on the secular as well as the religious

---

[101]Although Camus' Carnets contain the following citation without annotations, he appears to have read Brighton Rock as he certainly read The Heart of the Matter in French translation:

> Un homme (un Français?) saint homme qui a vécu toute sa vie dans le péché (n'approchant pas la Table Sainte, n'épousant pas la femme avec qu'il vivait) parce que ne pouvant souffrir l'idée qu'une seule âme fût damné, il voulait être damné aussi.

Camus adds: "Il s'agissait de cet amour plus grand que tous: celui de l'homme qui donne son âme pour un ami" (Carnets, II, 211).

[102]Brighton Rock (New York, 1938), 356.

level. From the entertainment, The Ministry of Fear, for instance, a citation stating that it is better to sin with those you love than be saved alone is used as an epigraph to the section on Scobie and The Heart of the Matter; while Arthur Rowe, the protagonist of the same entertainment, in criticising Tolstoy for being too interested in saving his own soul, inadvertently reveals the altruism of his own act — the mercy killing of his wife — an act for which he, nevertheless, condemns himself.

Whatever examples Camus and Greene offer in illustration of their concern for the damned also reveal another concern — their deep-rooted dissatisfaction with justice as it is administered on the physical plane, and as it is assumed to be administered on the metaphysical plane. The critic Carina Gadourek is among those who equate the sense of Camus' work with his interest in justice, for she writes: "L'oeuvre est conçue comme une acte de révolte visant à remplacer le christianisme que Camus qualifia de 'doctrine de l'injustice.' "[103] Camus, in his Carnets, II, includes this entry: "Nous devons servir la justice parce que cet univers est malheureux. De même, nous ne devons pas condamner a mort puisqu'on a fait de nous des condamnés de mort" (129).

To illustrate Greene's and Camus' concern with justice, there are two parallel court scenes which show the scepticism of these authors regarding temporal, and on the symbolic level, eternal justice. The first is from Greene's The Ministry of Fear and presents Arthur Rowe's reactions to his trial:

---

[103] Les Innocents et les coupables (The Hague, 1963), 226.

> . . . it might have a bearing. That's something I discovered when they tried me — that everything may have a bearing. The fact that I had lunch on a certain day alone at the Holborn Restaurant. Why was I alone, they asked me. I said I liked being alone sometimes, and you should have seen the way they nodded at the jury. It had a bearing. . . . As if I really wanted to be alone for life. . . . Even the fact that my wife kept love-birds. . . . They just had to find an excuse. [italics added][104]

In Camus' L'Etranger the court must find in Meursault's case une relation profonde, or "the vital link," as it is translated into English. Such a term replaces the "it may have a bearing" in Rowe's case, for Meursault finally realizes: "Je lui ai fait remarquer que cette histoire n'avait pas de rapport avec mon affaire, mais il m'a répondu seulement qu'il était visible que je n'avais jamais eu de rapports avec la justice."[105] Meursault then learns how his performance at his mother's funeral counts against him:

> Enfin est-il accusé d'avoir enterré sa mère ou d'avoir tué un homme? Le public a ri. Mais le procureur s'est redressé encore, s'est drapé dans sa robe et a declaré qu'il fallait avoir l'ingenuité de l'honorable défenseur pour ne pas sentir qu'il y avait entre ces deux ordres de fait une relation profonde, pathétique, essentielle. "Oui, s'est-il écrié avec force, j'accuse cet homme d'avoir enterré une mère avec un coeur de crimenel." Cette déclaration a paru faire un effet considérable sur le public, . . . et j'ai compris que les choses n'attaient pas bien pour moi. [italics added] (142)

The study also demonstrates how each author constructs a

---

[104]The Ministry of Fear (London, 1950), 35.

[105]L'Etranger (Paris, 1942), 99. Subsequent quotations from L'Etranger will be taken from this edition.

universe patterned to his philosophical view. These parallels are revealed within their created worlds. In considering Camus' creation, the first aspect that comes to mind is undoubtedly his lyrical writing, celebrating the mer, terre, soleil of his native Algeria. Yet Camus' use of such landscapes is two-fold. Algeria is depicted as a land of relative innocence which he compares with a Europe fully imbued with the knowledge of evil. This symbolic division is made between the Mediterranean (which both Camus and E. M. Forster equate with the human norm) and the darker Europe beyond its littoral. The Europe of snow, fog, and rain is described in Le Malentendu, Les Justes, and in the Amsterdam of La Chute. It is the Europe of nihilistic excess, the land of Stavrogin, of Stepan, of Marthe, and of Jean-Baptiste Clamence. Here the circular canals of Amsterdam recall the concentric circles of Dante's Inferno and here Clamence as a juge-penitent excels Camus' other robes rouges in the matter of human treachery.

In addition to contrasting European experience with African innocence, Camus makes use of a further symbolic division. In his North African landscapes he points out a duality existent in the world of nature itself. For nature, he insists, is two-faceted, containing both l'envers et l'endroit. Knowledge of this dichotomy cautions that man must stand in relation to this world of nature midway between oui et non — acceptance and rejection. The study has pointed out that while the African sun offsets the poverty and misery of Camus' early life, it also reveals itself as being the "black sun of death." Meursault relates his experience of this sun: "Je me sentais plus que les cymbales du

soleil sur mon front. . . . C'est alors que tout a vacillé. La m'a semblé que le ciel s'ouvrait sur toute son étendue pour laisser pleuvoir du feu" (90). Meursault illustrates the danger of complicity with nature for the four additional shots which he fires into the lifeless Arab show his consent and surrender to an absolute.[106] Tarrou, whom Camus presents as his saint, and who occupies a central position in the chapter "Albert Camus: The Temptation Toward Sainthood," also illustrates the danger of capitulating to nature. For Tarrou, in his death, which is no more than a higher form of suicide, in forsaking men and their tribulations, yields to his chronic desire for the "peace of stones."

A study of Greene's symbolic division of the world is made in the

---

[106]Even the sea, an aspect of nature which in Camus represents in turn a source of sensory delight, the catalyst for rare and transitory moments of recaptured innocence, and a symbol for freedom, is suspect. The darker aspect of the sea has been indicated in this study in the episode in which Tarrou and Rieux swim together. When they run into a cold current, "fouettés par cette surprise de la mer," they hasten their return to the world of men. (La Peste [Paris, 1947], 212)

In Greene's novels, however, the sea is invariably a hostile element, corrupted by "the coasts" it washes. In England Made Me (London, 1947), for instance, Anthony Farrant, commenting on Pericles, Prince of Tyre, exclaims: "What a wet play it is. . . the sea. And ooze" (225). (Anthony drowns in the sea he has always feared.) In Brighton Rock (New York, 1938), there are many examples to cite: below the pier, for instance, "on the bottom step between the mud marks stared up the tawny face of Violet Crow violated and buried under the West Pier in 1936" (205); again, "you could hear the sea pounding at the piles, like a boxer's fist at punchball in training for the human jaw" (324). The critics Allott and Farris write of the sea in Brighton Rock: "The blare of seaside music with sex as its main theme is the world's 'wet mouth' (a frequent image in the book) wailing its perverted longings" (op. cit., 159). And again in Brighton Rock, "The boy was staring over the side where the green tide sucked and slid like a wet mouth round the piles" (132). Camus oddly enough has used the same image: ". . . la baie tremblante de lumière comme une lèvre humide" (L'Envers et l'endroit [Paris, 1958], 54).

chapter, "Graham Greene: The Journey Toward Sainthood." While Camus' world has been seen as bi-partite, Greene's is tri-partite; where Camus', in more ways than one, is a two-dimensional world, Greene's is consistently three-dimensional. For Greene distinguishes on one plane —the lateral — between a "chromium world," a brittle artificial realm where custom and comfort conceal the evil which flourishes unconcealed in his seedy regions. The latter are "the coasts" or "borders," sectors which also include Greene's "abandoned" Mexican states of The Lawless Roads and The Power and the Glory. The Greene world also includes the still primitive world of the African bush. Where the chromium world is farthest removed, the coasts stand midway, the bush remains closest to true innocence, for it is, Greene claims, an Eden, not yet fallen but seen in the moment the apple is to be plucked.

In presenting a three-tiered world Greene also presents a three-tiered universe. Seen vertically this universe includes, in addition to the world itself as proving ground, the opposing eternities of Heaven and Hell.

The study has also shown how both Camus and Greene fear innocence. For in most cases innocence represents ignorance. Therefore in eschewing an innocence which is ignorance, each dreads what he thinks of as a "stupid human confidence." Particularly in La Peste, Camus shows the passive mass who are still, in the face of the epidemic "enfoncés dans la stupide confiance humaine, à peine distraits

par le départ de leurs préoccupations habituelles."[107] Such a false confidence is also shown in Meursault's trial and in the trial the youthful Tarrou (who was another "stranger" to legal procedure) attends where men in their self-importance and their "false seriousness" condemn to death one who is, along with themselves, already destined for death. Greene's Ida Arnold, concerned with what she considers Right and Wrong rather than Good and Evil (truer values in the Greene world), also tracks down a human victim in her "game" of vengeance. Alden Pyle goes further, instigating in The Quiet American, on the basis of his far from perfect human understanding, a course of action designed to destroy men in the mass. Camus and Greene present such types to point out the lethal aspect of an innocence which is ignorance.[108] To

---

[107] La Peste (Paris, 1947), 57.

[108] In illustrating the fearfulness of la stupide confiance humaine Greene and Camus have again used parallel images:

> Ida broke her way across the Strand; she couldn't be bothered to wait for the signals. . . . She made her way under the radiators of the buses; the drivers ground their brakes and glared at her, and she grinned back at them (Brighton Rock, 37).

Leon S. Roudiez writes of the automatic woman in L'Etranger whose behavior in crossing a street resembles Ida's:

> Ritualistic life can thus lead to a safe, well-adjusted pattern of automatic reactions, and Man is naturally grateful ". . . on comprend que la cérémonie, la fonction, le costume, la mode soient les dieux de ce monde" . . . . These, of course, are false gods, or devils at best, in the world of Meursault. It is precisely such a devil who appears in the first part of L'Etranger and proceeds to tempt the Christ-Stranger; he sits, in the guise of the small woman, at a table in Céleste's restaurant and does everything with the precise gestures of an automaton. When the woman is through, the Stranger, intrigued, follows her into the street and

this end, both authors have posited the fact of death as a reminder that men ultimately cannot prevail.

In depicting his world view, Greene has been accused of a nostalgie de la boue. But his interest in the squalor encountered on his "coasts" is judicious. Both Greene and Camus, in their concern with the damned, see, in the darker view of life, a truth. In Brighton Rock, for example, Rose Wilson's slum, which is peripheral to Ida's chromium world, does, if nothing else, graduate its children in the knowledge of evil. For this reason, if Greene sees a truer revelation of life in his border regions, Camus sees in his dark and war-torn Europe a region which, while it has lost innocence, has at least gained in acquiring a knowledge of evil.

In his concern with the damned each author is not only involved with the question of justice but with a factor that lies behind that question — evil. Camus, the non-Christian, is sufficiently at home in this subject for he wrote for his licencié ès lettres (philosophie) a dissertation entitled "Hellenisme et Christianisme: Saint Augustin et Plotin." With St. Augustine and the problem of evil in mind, he told the Dominicans of Latour-Maubourg: "Nous sommes devant le mal. Et pour moi il est vrai que je me sens un peu comme cet Augustin d'avant le christianisme que disait: 'Je cherchais d'où vient le mal et je n'en

---

108(cont.) watches her as she moves away with unbelievable speed and sureness. But he does not succumb, and the world of ritual remains foreign to him" ("The Literary Climate of L'Etranger: Samples of a Twentieth-century Atmosphere," Symposium, XII [Spring-Fall, 1958], 21).

sortais pas.' "[109] Louis R. Rossi, in a remark already cited in this study, asserts that "Camus proceeds by way of negation," for while "death defines liberty and gives meaning to life," he also states that in Camus' thought "the acceptance of guilt leads to innocence."[110]

The critic Barbara Seward, who has been cited frequently in this study, shows how Greene also follows St. Augustine: "In Greene," she writes, "atonement is important because it makes possible positive beauty wrung from the rag of human pain."[111] In the same way Lynette Kohn writes of Greene's "ultimate acceptance of St. Augustine's view that the recognition of evil is the first step toward grace."[112]

In Camus, because man is without God, and in Greene, because man is unsure concerning God's desires for man, man should himself, because he is capable of pity, assume responsibility as far as evil (death) and the happiness of others (life) is concerned. In regard to pity as morality, where Greene's protagonists are concerned, Barbara Seward writes:

> Neither the innocent nor the complacent nor the evil can approach it. Without a knowledge both of sin and one's own terrible fallibility, one cannot feel the responsibility for the unhappiness of others that forms a great part of Fowler's pity for war's innocent victims, of Scobie's for

---

[109] Actuelles, I (Paris, 1950), 217.

[110] "Albert Camus: The Plague of Absurdity" The Kenyon Review, XX (Summer 1958), 414-415.

[111] "Graham Greene: A Hint of an Explanation," The Western Review, XXII (Winter 1958), 90.

[112] Graham Greene: The Major Novels (Stanford, Calif., 1961), 13.

> Louise and Helen, or the priest's for his tainted daughter, of Rowe's for his dying wife. Without a knowledge both of anguish and one's own appalling inadequacy, one cannot feel the enormous sympathy for the world's brothers in failure that forms the remaining part of pity in Greene's conscience-stricken men." (91)

The sense of guilt leading to pity and responsibility brings forth another benefit, a pity for man in general, which induces solidarity. This has been seen in the sense of community experienced in La Peste, where not only Tarrou, Rieux, Grand, and Rambert join forces, but many of the otherwise passive mass rise to the occasion realizing that under the scourge of plague they are brothers together. Among Greene's protagonists it is the renegade priest who experiences most fully the sense of solidarity. When imprisoned, but still unrecognized, he tells the other prisoners of the price on his head:

> "Nobody here," a voice said, "wants their blood money."
> Again he was touched by an extraordinary affection. He was just one criminal among a herd of criminals. . . He had a sense of companionship which he had never received in the old days when pious people came kissing his black cotton glove.[113]

Greene's hero Scobie is also shown in the study to be led by his sense of pity to responsibility or commitment. Scobie cannot assume a passive role or trust only to God to do the right thing. In this way — in that he does not trust God to do what he himself feels is right for men — Scobie comes closer than any of Greene's characters to Camus' révoltés. Therefore both Greene and Camus recognize that in their sense of abandonment all are responsible, for all are criminals among

---

[113] The Power and the Glory (New York, 1958), 173-174.

criminals, condamnés among condamnés, or damnés among damnés.

Ultimately, however, in the matter of justice, Greene depends on the question of God's mercy, which he assumes is infinite. In Camus' Carnets, II, there are two entries concerned with metaphysical justice. One is a quotation from G. K. Chesterton: "La justice est un mystère, non une illusion" (284); the other, presumably Camus' own, is "Il n'y a pas de justice, il n'y a que des limites" (236). The former citation can be said to express Greene's view, the latter, Camus'.

If a concept of sin is to be expected in the world of a Catholic writer, it is surprising, on the other hand, to encounter such a concept in the world of a non-believer. Sin does exist in Camus' world. It consists of a lack of lucidity. Absence of lucidity can be seen in disloyalty to the world or to men, in the by-passing of this world, of this present, which is man's only certainty, for a proposed eternity of peace or a future utopia. Either manifestation involves the sacrifice of certainties for a future which may prove illusory. Camusean sin also embraces the sacrifice of self in a failure of the individual to push back veils of hypocrisy, layers of self-deception. Rachel Bespaloff in a line already quoted in this study includes all aspects of Camusean sin for she states, "Sin without God is nothing but the choice of the wrong freedom" (106).

This study also shows how each author establishes a hierarchy of values. These values are displayed in human types. In Greene's novels the saints, as well as the anti-saint Pinkie of Brighton Rock, and

some of the positive secular characters such as Arthur Rowe, D., Fowler, even Rollo Martins in The Third Man loom above the "maimed and the warped," the complacent, and the permanently innocent. In Camus' novels his hierarchy is demonstrated in his study of various "careers." Camus utilizes these careers symbolically because he believes as he wrote in 1945 in his Carnets, II, that: "La pente la plus naturelle de l'homme c'est de se ruiner et tout le monde avec lui." While insisting that man fight this impulse first in himself, he admits the difficulty: "Que d'efforts démesurés pour être seulement normal! Et quel plus grand effort encore pour qui a l'ambition de se dominer et de dominer l'esprit." He continues:

> L'homme n'est rien de lui-même. Il n'est qu'une chance infinie. Mais il est le responsable infini de cette chance . . . . Personne ne peut dire qu'il a atteint le limite de l'homme. Les cinq années que nous venons de passer m'ont appris cela. De la bête au martyre, de l'esprit du mal au sacrifice sans espoir, pas un témoignage qui n'ait été bouleversant. A chacun de nous revient d'exploiter en lui-même la plus grande chance de l'homme, sa vertu définitive. (152-153)

In order to discover man's definitive virtue the priest, doctor, teacher, judge, saint, hero are considered. The study shows how some are accepted as symbols of viable ways of life, others rejected. Of the hero and the saint, however, Camus writes in his notebooks: "L'héroïsme et la sainteté, vertus secondaires. Mais il faut avoir fait ses preuves."[114]

Antithetical as Greene's and Camus' views on sainthood will

---

[114]Carnets, II, 128.

prove to be, many basic similarities have been pointed out in the study:

1) Each saint is an absolutist, demanding (although never achieving) perfection for himself, yet relative in his demands on others. (An example presented in the study is Tarrou, for his code de la compréhension is based on the fact that "Tarrou est l'homme qui peut tout comprendre — et qui en souffre. Il ne peut rien juger.")[115]

2) Each saint has lost innocence and because he feels exiled is longing for reintegration into that former kingdom.

3) Yet while each is homesick for a lost realm, his nostalgia is based on a longing for the peace he has formerly known as an innocent, rather than for the ignorance this state implies. (The Mexican priest is one of the examples discussed in the study, for he recognizes the moral superiority of his role as sinner over his former complacent role as parish priest.)

4) In the case of each protagonist it is evil, in the form of death, which is responsible for his awakening from innocence.

5) This awakening to the knowledge of evil promotes a sense of guilt and pity which leads to the assumption of responsibility toward others.

6) In commitment (as in any kind of action) each protagonist learns the necessity of "soiling his hands." Yet in having to do so, each is appalled, for he longs for a lutte juste et sans violence. (Tarrou's realization that his saving men from governments founded on the

---

[115]Carnets, II, 70.

death sentence led to his being both directly and indirectly responsible for committing men to death is a case in point.)

7) Because each fears the impossibility of achieving perfection each fears what he refers to as "lapses" or "falls." To avoid these, each is tempted to adopt a passive role.

8) Nevertheless, in accepting commitment he struggles for a time, and it is when his "rocks" or "burdens" become unbearable that each arrives at an overt longing for death; his nostalgias for peace and purity become more acute and are then recognized as explicit death instincts.

9) Each saint's death, if not an actual suicide as in Scobie's case, is, nevertheless, a higher form of suicide, as in the case of Tarrou and the Mexican priest.

Although there are numerous similarities in the saints of these two authors, the dissimilarities are of great importance. Perhaps the greatest difference between Camus' and Greene's saints is the greater renunciation of ego in the latter. For although Scobie and the anonymous Mexican priest have been taught by their Church that they must think primarily of their own souls, their attitudes and their actions prove that they cannot think in egotistical terms. They prefer to sin for others rather than be saved alone. Even though Greene's saints will their death, each nevertheless responds to the call of others as long as life remains: in the condemned cell the priest still works for others; Scobie, dying, hears, or imagines he hears, voices calling to him for help and stirs himself to respond. Therefore the Mexican

priest and Scobie, despite their longings for peace and purity, not only act up to the moment of their death for others but die believing they have forfeited their eternal peace as well. If Greene's saints move closer to God in serving men, Tarrou does not, as might be expected, move closer to men but does, in his effort to supercede the human, move in the other direction, away from men. Thus leading a life without hope because it is without love, and not believing in an afterlife, Tarrou has always held out death as his trump card. He hopes to find his impossible ideal of peace and purity in annihilation.

In Camus' world his aspiring saint is paradoxically a sinner rather than a saint. As a révolté Tarrou's protest does not go far enough. He revolts only up to the time when he realizes that he cannot revolt and remain pure. Barring a clear-cut situation like the plague, where a man may believe for the time that he is fighting microbes and not men, Tarrou cannot revolt. Yet if evil exists and revolt is an expression of man's sense of injustice (as Camus asserts in L'Homme révolté), Tarrou's capitulations to evil or l'absurde are betrayals of the values for which his revolt was undertaken.

In an epoch where the lay saint has become a topic of wide interest (witness the interest taken in Albert Schweitzer, Simone Weil, Gandhi, even Camus himself), Tarrou fails as a candidate to sainthood. Inactivated by guilt — his peste intérieure — Tarrou sins against his own convictions born of lucidity. Marie-Béatrice Mesnet, although writing of Greene's protagonists, could also be speaking for Tarrou, for she states: "The yearning for peace, however, can sometimes disguise the

unheroic desire to avoid the effort to create our true self. . . for personality implies pain, and its realization brings suffering."[116] Tarrou shows in his excesses that he is ultimately more concerned with guilt than authenticity.

But to despair of Tarrou is not to despair of Camus. Where the saint is the hero of the piece for Greene, he is not the hero of Camus' writing. Ironically it is Tarrou's desire to be exceptional, that is, to be a hero of mankind that keeps him from being either a saint or a hero of the absurd. Rieux tells Tarrou that in order to be a saint it is necessary to live. It is Camus' heroes of the absurd, those who struggle as long as they live, who come closer than Tarrou to Greene's saints. And in their emphasis on good will, happiness, health, and human tenderness, they not only embrace the positive values of Camus' and Greene's worlds, but employ these values to fight nihilism in a world which includes both _love_ and _hate_.

Additionally both Greene's saints and Camus' heroes of the absurd pass beyond an innocence which they reject, knowing its base is ignorance, to what may be termed a new or higher innocence. Observing limits by rejecting Tarrou's divided mind or _peste intérieure_, each learns to live with his own "appalling inadequacy." The acceptance of reasonable, rather than complete culpability, leaves the way open for a new innocence found in a commitment larger than the self. Such commitments include the search for a new vision reached when man in his

---

[116] _Graham Greene and the Heart of the Matter: An Essay_ (London, 1954), 10.

"disloyalty," rejects the outworn for the new and viable; or when in the field of artistic creation, the virgin view of the child merging with adult judgment is synthesized into a new creation; or when man, reaching a sense of community or solidarity while working, struggling, creating, or playing, recaptures the joy of being human together.

A LIST OF WORKS CITED

1. Allott, Kenneth and Miriam Farris. The Art of Graham Greene. London, 1951.

2. Allott, Miriam. "The Moral Situation in The Quiet American," Graham Greene: Some Critical Considerations, ed. Robert O. Evans. Lexington, Ky., 1963. 188-206.

3. Atkins, John. Graham Greene. London, 1957.

4. Bespaloff, Rachel. "The World of the Man Condemned to Death," Camus: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Germaine Brée. Englewood Cliffs, N. J., 1962, 92-107.

5. Bloch-Michel, Jean. "Albert Camus et la tentation de l'innocence," Preuves, CX (April, 1960), 3-9.

6. Boardman, Gwenn R. "Greene's 'Under the Garden': Aesthetic Explorations," Renascence, XVII (Summer, 1965), 180-190, 194.

7. Bradley, A. C. Shakespearean Tragedy. New York, 1959.

8. Brée, Germaine. Camus. New York, 1964.

9. Burgess, Anthony. "The Politics of Graham Greene," New York Times Book Review (September 10, 1967), 2, 32, 34.

10. Camus, Albert. L'Envers et l'endroit. Paris, 1958 [first published 1937].

11. _____. Noces. Paris, 1950 [first published 1938].

12. _____. L'Etranger. Paris, 1957 [first published 1942].

13. _____. Le Mythe de Sisyphe. Paris, 1942.

14. _____. Le Malentendu, suivi de Caligula. Paris, 1944.

15. _____. La Peste. Paris, 1947.

16. _____. L'Etat de siège. Paris, 1948.

17. _____. Les Justes. Paris, 1950.

18. _____. Actuelles, I. Paris, 1950.

19. _____. L'Homme révolté. Paris, 1951.

20. Camus, Albert. L'Eté. Paris, 1954.

21. _____. La Chute. Paris, 1956.

22. _____. L'Exil et le royaume. Paris, 1957.

23. _____. Réflexions sur la peine capitale. (In collaboration with Arthur Koestler and Jean Bloch-Michel. Paris, 1957.

24. _____: Discours de Suède. Paris, 1958.

25. _____. Les Possedés. Paris, 1959.

26. _____. Carnets, I. Paris, 1962.

27. _____. Carnets, II. Paris, 1964.

28. _____. Notebooks 1935-1945, ed. Philip Thody. New York, 1965 [first published 1963].

29. Champigny, Robert. Sur un héros païen. Paris, 1959.

30. Chiaromonte, Nicola. "Albert Camus: In Memoriam," Camus: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Germaine Brée. Englewood Cliffs, N. J., 1962, 11-15.

31. Cruickshank, John. Albert Camus and the Literature of Revolt. New York, 1960.

32. _____. "Albert Camus," The Novelist as Philosopher: Studies in French Fiction, 1935-1960, ed. John Cruickshank. New York, 1962, 206-229.

33. De Vitis, A. A. "Allegory in Brighton Rock," Modern Fiction Studies (Autumn, 1957), 216-224.

34. _____. Graham Greene. New York, 1964.

35. Dostoyevsky, Fyodor. The Brothers Karamazov, trans., Constance Garnett. New York, n. d.

36. Doubrovsky, Serge. "The Ethics of Albert Camus," Camus: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed., Germaine Brée. Englewood Cliffs, N. J., 1962, 71-84.

37. Douillet, Jacques. What Is a Saint? Twentieth Century Encyclopedia of Catholicism, XLVI, ed., Henri Daniel-Rops. New York, 1958.

38. Evans, Robert O. "Introduction," Graham Greene: Some Critical Considerations, ed., Robert O. Evans. Lexington, Ky., 1963, v-xv.

39. Fiedler, Leslie. "No, In Thunder!" Esquire, LIV (September, 1960), 74, 76, 79.

40. Fitzgerald, F. Scott. The Great Gatsby. New York, 1925.

41. Fowler, Austin. Albert Camus's The Stranger, The Plague and Other Works: A Critical Commentary. New York, 1965.

42. Freud, Sigmund. "Beyond the Pleasure Principle," The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, XVIII, London, 1961, 3-61.

43. _____. "Civilization and Its Discontents," The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, XXI, London, 1961, 59-145.

44. _____. "Dostoevsky and Parricide," The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, London, 1961, 175-196.

45. Gadourek, Carina. Les Innocents et les coupables: essai d'exégèse de l'oeuvre d'Albert Camus. The Hague, 1963.

46. Greene, Graham. The Man Within. New York, 1964 [first published 1929].

47. _____. Stamboul Train. London, 1949 [first published 1932].

48. _____. It's a Battlefield. New York, 1962 [first published 1934].

49. _____. England Made Me. London, 1949 [first published 1935].

50. _____. Journey Without Maps: A Travel Book. London, 1950 [first published 1936].

51. _____. A Gun for Sale. London, 1936.

52. _____. Brighton Rock. New York, 1953 [first published 1938].

53. _____. The Confidential Agent. New York, 1959 [first published 1939].

54. _____. The Lawless Roads. London, 1960 [first published 1939].

55. Greene, Graham. The Power and the Glory. New York, 1967 [first published 1939].

56. _____. The Ministry of Fear. London, 1950 [first published 1943].

57. _____. The Heart of the Matter. New York, 1963 [first published 1948].

58. _____. The Third Man. New York, 1950.

59. _____. The Lost Childhood and Other Essays. New York, 1962 (first published 1951).

60. _____. The End of the Affair. New York, 1951.

61. _____. The Living Room. London, 1953.

62. _____. Twenty-One Stories. New York, 1966 [first published 1954].

63. _____. The Quiet American. New York, 1964 [first published 1955].

64. _____. A Burnt-Out Case. New York, 1962 [first published 1961].

65. _____. In Search of a Character: Two African Journals. London, 1961.

66. _____. A Sense of Reality. New York, 1963.

67. _____. Why Do I Write? An Exchange of Views Between Elizabeth Bowen, Graham Greene, and V. S. Pritchett. London, 1948, 27-33, 46-52.

68. _____. The Comedians. New York, 1966.

69. Hanna, Thomas C. The Thought and Art of Albert Camus. Chicago, 1958.

70. Hughes, Catharine. "Innocence Revisited," Renascence, XII (Fall 1959) 29-34.

71. James, William. Varieties of Religious Experience. New York, 1928.

72. John, S. Beynon. "Albert Camus: A British View," Camus: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Germaine Brée. Englewood Cliffs, N. J., 1962, 85-91.

73. Kaufmann, Walter. "Existentialism and Death," The Meaning of Death, ed. Herman Feifel. New York, 1959, 39-63.

74. _____. Religion from Tolstoy to Camus. New York, 1961.

75. King, Adele. Albert Camus. New York, 1964.

76. Kohn, Lynette. Graham Greene: The Major Novels, Stanford Honors Essays in Humanities, No. 4. Stanford, Calif., 1961.

77. Kunkel, Francis L. The Labyrinthine Ways of Graham Greene. New York, 1960.

78. Lehan, Richard. "Levels of Reality in the Novels of Albert Camus," Modern Fiction Studies, X (Autumn 1964), 232-244.

79. Lewis, R. W. B. "Albert Camus: The Compassionate Mind," The Picaresque Saint: Representative Figures in Contemporary Fiction. Philadelphia and New York, 1959, 57-108.

80. _____. "Graham Greene: The Religious Affair," The Picaresque Saint: Representative Figures in Contemporary Fiction. Philadelphia and New York, 1959, 220-274.

81. Luce, Clare Boothe, ed. Saints for Today. New York, 1952.

82. Luppé, Robert de. Albert Camus. Paris, 1963.

83. Madaule, Jacques. Graham Greene. Paris, 1949.

84. Maquet, Albert. Albert Camus ou l'invincible été. Paris, 1955.

85. Mesnet, Marie-Béatrice. Graham Greene and the Heart of the Matter. London, 1954.

86. Moré, Marcel. "The Two Holocausts of Scobie," Cross Currents, I(1951), 44-63.

87. Orwell, George. The Orwell Reader, ed. Richard H. Rovere. New York, 1949.

88. Peyre, Henri. "Camus the Pagan," Yale French Studies, XXV (Spring 1960), 20-25.

89. _____. Modern Literature: The Literature of France. Englewood Cliffs, N. J., 1966.

90. Picon, Gaëton. "Exile and the Kingdom," Camus: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Germaine Brée. Englewood Cliffs, N. J., 1962, 152-156.

91. Pryce-Jones, David. Graham Greene. London, 1963.

92. _____. "Graham Greene's Human Comedy," ADAM, XXI, No. 301-2-3, 21-38.

93. Quilliot, Roger. "Albert Camus's Algeria," Camus: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Germaine Brée. Englewood Cliffs, N. J., 1962, 38-47.

94. Rossi, Louis R. "Albert Camus: The Plague of Absurdity," The Kenyon Review, XX (Summer 1958), 399-422.

95. Roudiez, Leon S. "The Literary Climate of L'Etranger: Samples of a Twentieth-century Atmosphere," Symposium, XII (Spring-Fall 1958), 19-35.

96. Sartre, Jean-Paul. "An Explication of The Stranger," Camus: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Germaine Brée. Englewood Cliffs, N. J., 1962, 108-121.

97. Scott, Carolyn D. "The Witch at the Corner: Notes on Graham Greene's Mythology," Graham Greene: Some Critical Considerations, ed. Robert O. Evans. Lexington, Ky., 1963, 231-244.

98. Scott, Nathan A., Jr. "Graham Greene: Christian Tragedian," Graham Greene: Some Critical Considerations, ed. Robert O. Evans. Lexington, Ky., 1963, 25-48.

99. Seward, Barbara. "Graham Greene: A Hint of an Explanation," Western Review, XXII (Winter 1958), 83-95.

100. Stoltzfus, Ben. "Camus and the Meaning of Revolt," Modern Fiction Studies, X (Autumn 1964), 293-302.

101. Thody, Philip. Albert Camus: A Study of His Work. New York, 1957.

102. Trilling, Lionel. The Experience of Literature. New York, 1967.

103. Viggiani, Carl A. "Camus' L'Etranger," PMLA, LXXI (December 1956), 865-887.

104. Webster, Harvey Curtis. "The World of Graham Greene," Graham Greene: Some Critical Considerations, ed. Robert O. Evans, Lexington, Ky., 1963, 1-24.

105. Weisinger, Herbert. Tragedy and the Paradox of the Fortunate Fall. London, 1953.

106. Zabel, Morton Dauwen. "Graham Greene," Forms of Modern Fiction: Essays Collected in Honor of Joseph Warren Beach, ed. William Van O'Connor. Minneapolis, 1948, 287-293.

107. Zants, Emily. "Camus' Deserts and Their Allies, Kingdoms of the Stranger," Symposium, XVII (Spring 1963), 30-41.

108. _____. "The Relationship of Judge and Priest in La Peste," The French Review, XXXVII (February 1964), 419-425.

105. Weisinger, Herbert. Tragedy and the Paradox of the Fortunate Fall. London, 1953.

106. Zabel, Morton Dauwen. "Graham Greene," Forms of Modern Fiction: Essays Collected in Honor of Joseph Warren Beach, ed. William Van O'Connor. Minneapolis, 1948, 287-293.

107. Zants, Emily. "Camus' Deserts and Their Allies, Kingdoms of the Stranger," Symposium, XVII (Spring 1963), 30-41.

108. _____. "The Relationship of Judge and Priest in La Peste," The French Review, XXXVII (February 1964), 419-425.