

list, but it is a safe guide if we would know what true spirituality consists of.

We must learn to look upon our life of union with our Lord as a many-splendoured thing; we must be prepared for times when the mist and the driving rain blot out its radiance and when, bathed in sunshine, it is of unendurable beauty. We must cultivate a cheerful outlook yet not be astonished or dismayed if it sometimes fails us—

*But (when so sad thou canst not sadder)
Cry:—and upon thy so sore loss
Shall shine the traffic of Jacob's ladder
Pitched between Heaven and Charing Cross.*

*Yea, in the night, my soul, my daughter,
Cry:—clinging Heaven by the hems;
And lo, Christ walketh on the water
Not of Gennesareth, but Thames.*



MR GREENE'S SAD MEN¹

ARNOLD P. HINCHLIFFE

GRAHAM GREENE'S last two works of prose fiction are very encouraging. No one can deny Greene's competence in the early work, nor his rightness in choosing characteristic themes of the times (violence, *cauchemar*, sex and sin) and treating them in suitable modes (the employment of cinematographic devices, newspaper techniques and popular psychology), but the high estimate of Greene, particularly on the continent (he shares it with Somerset Maugham, it appears), has always raised doubts among his serious English readers. There is the central problem of his obvious commitment to Roman Catholicism which affects the reader; and, it is fair to say, irritates both Catholic and non-Catholic reader. Writing as a Catholic, I should say that the main burden of complaint is the meretricious nature

¹*The Quiet American*: a novel, 1955. *Our Man in Havana*: an entertainment, 1958.

of this involvement. We can admit that Greene can and does present the conditions of salvation and damnation with vivid effectiveness; Pinkie, wandering through the back-streets of Brighton in the early morning, presents us with the sensation and the dilemma:

He heard a whisper, looked sharply round, and thrust the paper back. In an alley between two shops, an old woman sat upon the ground; he could just see the rotting and discoloured face: it was like the sight of damnation. Then he heard the whisper: 'Blessed art thou among women', saw the grey fingers fumbling at the beads. This was not one of the damned; he watched with horrified fascination: this was one of the saved.

Here observation, comment and dramatic effect are neatly contained in the presentation; but following the technique of the film, Greene simplifies his characters until they bear the complexity of his moral problems very uneasily. Greene in fact rigs situations and contrives characters for the statement of personal attitudes rather than the demonstration of a dilemma which his characters and situations could universalize. The use of Catholic dogmas, occasionally verging on the erroneous, to complicate the plot, is another example of the unscrupulous nature of his involvement. Greene is, moreover, too often distracted from ordinary humanity and therefore from ordinary sins by his pre-occupation with the curious sin. The reader feels that ordinary sin does not interest Greene, and that, conversely, interesting sins are a mark of sanctity. There is another critical point of view of course; but this represents an honest, non-partisan reaction to Greene's early novels: *Brighton Rock* or *The Heart of the Matter*. *The Power and the Glory* was better than the other novels precisely because its plot and theme coincided more closely; the central figure of a whiskey priest automatically involved the reader in pursuit, violence and sin, but also in dogmatic theology—in considerations which seemed artificially forced in the cases of Pinkie or Scobie. Greene is not a writer who demonstrates the Catholic way of life so much as a latter-day romantic who has used Catholicism—the idea for example expressed by the priest at the end of *Brighton Rock* that Catholics are more capable of evil than anyone else, and more in touch with the devil than other people—as a Gothic touch to his novels. It comes as a relief to his admirers to discover in his recent work, side by side with the

early competence and undisputed power of sensational writing, a detachment and strength his early writing lacked; and the dimensions of humour and humanity added to Greenland.

The Quiet American is about Thomas Fowler (in the sense that *Moby Dick* is about Ishmael or *Daisy Miller* about Winterbourne); it is also an examination of the consequences of American innocence abroad, faced with a duplicity that is no longer restricted to Europe but now includes Asia (Fowler actually uses the phrase 'European duplicity', thus confirming the idea that Greene had the Jamesian myth in mind); consequences which are, however, not merely explored from a European standpoint, but also in terms of Fowler's moral involvement. He is the Christ/Judas figure so typical in Greenland; Alden Pyle is dead at the beginning of the novel, and when alive has no moral doubts. Thomas Fowler (Doubting Thomas) is the sad man: middle-aged, cynical, a newspaper man (i.e. a writer), married to a High Anglican (not a Catholic—a useful shift) who will not divorce him. He unites in his person, successfully, the various levels of the story: political, criminal, spiritual and sexual. The novel opens as he waits for the quiet American (whom, he knows, he has just betrayed); Fowler, who believes that 'nothing nowadays is fabulous and nothing rises from its ashes'; who has become *engagé*, though it is against the first article of his creed:

The human condition being what it was, let them fight, 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 an opinion is a kind of action.

For him death is the only absolute value that has meaning:

Lose life and one would lose nothing again for ever. 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. The nightmare of a future of boredom and indifference would lift.

The rejection of the fabulous is, however, ambiguous; when he is face to face with the probability of death—waiting for the permanent thing—he suddenly finds he wants warning of it to prepare himself: for what he does not know nor how! He rejects the fabulous as qualification for the nightmare, and yet looking

at the ridiculous Hollywood-style Cadoist cathedral he *wonders* whether faith is possible here, or for that matter back in the Norman church of his wife's faith:

But I had never desired faith. The job of a reporter is to expose and record. I had never in my career discovered the inexplicable.

Yet the quiet American is inexplicable: innocent and yet capable of causing great harm—a leper without his bell, who believes that everyone must believe in something. Fowler replies that he certainly believes in individuals and facts, but not in -isms and -ocracies which are abstract creations divorced from human experience. Words like liberty mean nothing, and if God exists the world is meaningless; yet again, in pain, he prays to the God he does not believe in. And it is the individuals who trap him, Alden Pyle or the murdered Vietnamese who involve him. Not merely does Pyle threaten his personal *status quo* with his mistress Phuong, but in the name of Democracy he butchers innocent people. Fowler jests at, resists the implications of Pyle's Democracy and the moral quantity York Harding defines as the Third Force, until the bomb outrage convinces him that he cannot remain uninvolved: that, as both Heng and Captain Trouin severally remark, to remain human you have to take sides. He also realizes that you cannot blame the innocent: you must either control them or eliminate them. So the situation of Judas is forced upon him, with a friendly gesture if not exactly a kiss. Yet even at this eleventh hour he seeks to evade the responsibility:

'Don't bother. Just come to the Vieux Moulin—or meet me here.' I handed back the decision to that somebody in whom I didn't believe; you can intervene if you want to: a telegram on his desk; a message from the Minister. You cannot exist unless you have the power to alter the future.

But God does not intervene; Pyle is murdered and everyone is relieved; even the Americans, who are hurt, but not personally involved. The book has a happy ending in the sense that Fowler gets his divorce, and Phuong comes back:

Everything had gone right with me since he died, but how I wished there existed someone to whom I could say that I was sorry.

There is, Fowler recognizes, nothing picturesque in treachery and distrust.

In a sense the book is a confession to the reader; and partially

to Vigot who besides being a policeman reads the very relevant Pascal:

“Let us weigh the gain and loss”, he quoted, “in wagering that God is, let us estimate these two chances. If you gain, you gain all; if you lose, you lose nothing.”

I quoted Pascal back at him—it was the only passage I remembered.

“Both he who chooses heads and he who chooses tails are equally at fault. They are both in the wrong. The true course is not to wager at all.”

“Yes; but you must wager. It is not optional. You are embarked.” You don't follow your own principles, Fowler. You're *engagé*, like the rest of us.

Vigot, who is relieved by the death of Alden Pyle, simply wants to know; he offers Fowler the chance to see himself as he really is, both involved and obliged to gamble. And Fowler recognizes that with the police indifferent and Phuong placidly forgetting Pyle, he was the only one who really cared for the quiet American.

The morality of the novel, the sense of nightmare, does not arise because Fowler is a Catholic and therefore in a special situation, but because as a unbeliever (and therefore more characteristic of our pagan times) he incorporates the earlier restricted anguish of Pinkie and Scobie in a more general dilemma. His work as a reporter brings him daily into contact with life at its most sensational and human, yet he buries himself in the opium dream of noncommitment; even in his private life he tries to remain uncommitted. Helen's letter to him refusing a divorce reveals him as he never has the courage to see himself: you pick up women like your coat picks up dust; we are apt to be more involved than you are; now you seem to be planning to leave another woman because I can tell from your letter that you don't really expect a 'favourable' reply; 'I'll have done my best'; aren't you thinking that? Would you, she asks, actually marry her? Marriage after all does not prevent Fowler from leaving a woman, it only delays the process! Love too has its victims. Yet Fowler sneers at Pyle for being a romantic, for being hurt when reality does not match up to his cherished ideals. Pyle pays for his romanticism by dying; Fowler is forced into action, and action against someone he really cares for. The importance of the confessional is not, as Vigot points out, merely secrecy; sometimes a man wants to see himself clearly as he is, sometimes he is just

wary of deception. This is Fowler's poignant position at the end of the novel: forced into an action which hurts. On another level he is about to regularize his position with Phuong, and accept responsibility there; and if she is to see Cheddar Gorge there is even the possibility that Fowler will face up to his responsibility as a newspaperman and return to the job in England, and 'the kind of house that has no mercy'.

Our Man in Havana is not a novel; Greene calls it an entertainment. This is not the place to discuss what difference Greene exactly intends. It is lighter than *The Quiet American*; but unlike his other entertainments it lives up to its name in the normal sense of the word because Greene has discovered a sense of humour; and the book—for the first time?—has a happy ending. It is as ridiculous to rule out happy endings as it is to demand them. That is, *Our Man* is not less 'real' because it has a happy ending than the other books which have not. In *Our Man*, too, Greene does for the British Foreign Office what he did, peripherally, for the American Foreign Service in *The Quiet American*. Only the touch is less biting; though hardly less devastating. He also calls it a fairy-story (though it was immediately supported in real life in a sensational way!) and as such the qualities of madness and sanity, childhood and adulthood, dream and reality are opposed and confused in the action of the book.

Jim Wormold is the serious man of the Herbert epigraph: again middle-aged, this time divorced, with a seventeen-year-old daughter, Seraphina (home name, Milly—a Jamesian echo?). Wormold sells vacuum cleaners with only moderate success, and at the beginning of the book is worried about the financial future of his lovely but wilful daughter. She is a Catholic, safe in 'her strange world of candles and lace and holy water and genuflections' where her father can never follow her. Although his wife has deserted him (and is presumably now of no faith at all) she has left a Catholic on his hands, and he scrupulously adheres to this condition of a mixed marriage, namely to see that she is brought up as such:

He had no faith himself, but he never wanted by any action of his own to weaken hers. Now he felt a fearful responsibility; at any moment she would be denying the existence of God.

Here we have a non-Catholic respecting the promise that he

made to a Catholic now in apostasy; and the task is not easy. Apart from Milly's tremendous physical beauty (even in Cuba where sex is the main trade), Wormold himself is insecure; that he is still called 'Mr' by Hasselbacher or a bank clerk is a measure of his insignificance. He was deserted by his wife because he would not act: 'do something, act some way, any way at all'. He is totally the victim of his terrible notion of duty, and an easy victim for Hawthorne. Hasselbacher has told him he should dream more; reality is not something to be faced in our century, and Hawthorne's offer (Hawthorne, romancer *par excellence* in the American literary tradition of the book, with his Lamb's *Tales from Shakespeare* and unbelievable recruitment tactics in a lavatory) seems a way out, entry into a dream which will do no harm, and produce the necessary money. There is, as Hasselbacher points out, no moral problem here: lie. They, kingdoms, republics and powers, don't deserve the truth; as for the money, they get it from ordinary people. Wormold, then, will play the clown:

The cruel come and go like cities and thrones and powers, leaving their ruins behind them. They had no permanence. But the clown whom he had seen last year with Milly at the circus—that clown was permanent, for his act never changed. That was the way to live; the clown was unaffected by the vagaries of public men and the enormous discoveries of the great.

Yet just before shooting the agent Carter, Carter calls him a clown, and Wormold soon discovers that the joke has another side: the side of the victim. There are fictions and fictions:

He was glad that she [Milly] could still accept fairy-stories: a virgin who bore a child, pictures that wept or spoke words of love in the dark. Hawthorne and his kind were equally credulous, but what they swallowed were nightmares, grotesque stories out of science fiction.

Greene here is using Jamesian variants of the writer; as Fowler was a newspaperman, so Wormold becomes a kind of writer, an imaginative writer with his Saturday night essay—and he succeeds very well. Beatrice soon perceives how he treats his agents like characters in a novel, but unfortunately his agents correspond to people in real life, and in real life they suffer the consequences of his fictional careers for them. They—powers, thrones and dominations—accept the fictions as real, the vacuum cleaner (ironically named the Atomic Pile Cleaner!) as a new and deadly

weapon, and a series of accidents and alarms culminates in attempted murder at a democratic American luncheon; it is small consolation to Wormold to say: the dog it was that died:

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

He realizes that Milly may be in danger as much as himself, and after the murder of Hasselbacher he follows up a suggestion of Hasselbacher's: he uses the whiskey miniatures to play a game of checkers—when you take a piece you drink it: a natural handicap. He gets the Chief of Police drunk, borrows his gun and murders the counter-agent Carter: this is action with a vengeance. Next he confesses his fraud, is brought back to England, promoted to a Secret Service Training College and promised an O.B.E.—because his madness cannot be recognized without making a fool of the whole Intelligence Machinery. Beatrice, spurred on by memories of her former husband's solemn inhuman devotion to UNESCO, defends his actions to this Machinery:

I told them even if I'd known I wouldn't have stopped you. I said you were working for something important, not for someone's notion of a global war that may never happen. . . .

All the lettered organizations and abstract nouns are meaningless; words like peace, freedom, justice are no longer believable; indeed 'They' have not left much to believe in, not even disbelief. So Wormold working for his daughter's future was working for something very important; a human being:

I can't believe in anything bigger than a home, or anything vaguer than a human being.

This restates the argument between Pyle and Fowler in *The Quiet American*: Pyle argues that belief is necessary—nobody can go on living without believing in something; but Fowler says he can believe in facts—that he has his back to the wall, that there is a sten gun over there. He can believe in facts and individuals, not -isms and -ocracies.

For Beatrice the problem of their future is not that Wormold's madness has offended, but that he will never be quite mad enough. As far as Milly is concerned their future is settled; she appears to have grown up and accepted Beatrice's advice not to accept formulas: If there's a God, he's not a God of formulas.

Though in the middle of the book her acceptance of Wormold and Beatrice getting married seems improbable, at the end she accepts it plausibly: pagans can do almost anything—they are lucky! And when the old lady in the Temperance Hotel is shocked at Wormold's kissing Beatrice, she quietly remarks that it is time the old lady learned a little about life. She has learned this; it was, after all, and still is only Hawthorne and his organizations who belong to 'the cruel and inexplicable world of childhood'.

Chapter 2, *inter alia*, shows Greene's light touch with Catholicism; neither irreverent nor pompous, it leaves him free to incorporate it in the story of three human beings, Milly, Beatrice and Wormold. Clearly Greene is interested in human beings; Beatrice and Milly and Wormold are not simply parts of a theological allegory; and Wormold particularly is the old Greene figure transplanted: compelled into action. The sad man is cock of all his jests: the serious man wins the victory! Pinkie, for all the seriousness with which Greene treats him, is not a human being; he is a container for Péguy's holy sinner. Humour and humanity have entered the nightmare world of Greene; and in these days of organizations, blocs and alliances—the thrones, powers and dominations of our day—nothing is more important nor more relevant than the laughter of Mr Greene's sad man.



BLESSED MARGARET WARD

P.C.C.

LIKE many other members of the Catholic gentry in penal times, Margaret Ward had to earn a livelihood in domestic service. She was born in Cheshire at Congleton and went to live in London with another gentlewoman named Mrs Whitall, probably in the capacity of companion or housekeeper.

The Catholics of the district around Bridewell, where she lived, were much agitated by the plight of a secular priest named Richard Watson who was imprisoned in the gaol there. Margaret