AMBIGUITY AND TECHNIQUE IN THREE NOVELS BY GRAHAM GREENE

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by

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Abstract

Graham Greene's complex protagonists remain sympathetic before the reader in spite of serious flaws. They are not "good" or "bad" characters, but simply human; their wrong actions become mixed with ambiguous motives, and the reader is left with more questions than answers. It is a careful technique by which the author creates such ambiguity around his protagonists. Greene's choices in narrative style show the protagonists' motives and actions from many different perspectives; thus he avoids the "easy" answers. The same narrative style, however, gives the reader a unique and intimate perspective from which to view the protagonists, resulting in the relationship which enables the reader to see, in Scobie's words, *the heart of the matter*. As a result, the reader discovers that there is much good in a character with immense problems and withholds judgment on even the worst offender. Though ambiguous in many ways, the protagonists are accepted as simply human. This study attempts to examine the ambiguity of Greene's protagonists and the technique that lies beneath it.

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Introduction

In the first volume of Graham Greene's autobiography, A Sort of Life, he writes,

> If I were to choose an epigraph for all the novels I have written, it would be from [Robert Browning's] *Bishop Blougram's Apology*:
>
> 'Our interest's on the dangerous edge of things,
> The honest thief, the tender murderer,
> The superstitious atheist, demi-rep
> That loves and saves her soul in new French books --
> We watch while these in equilibrium keep
> The giddy line midway.' (115; quoting Robert Browning)

Greene's protagonists, who comprise a mixture of saintliness and sin, tend to walk that "dangerous edge of things," keeping "the giddy line midway." To describe them as simply round, not flat, is insufficient. The complexity of these characters is such that though they have serious faults, the reader continues to have sympathy for them. In The Power and the Glory, The Heart of the Matter, and A Burnt-Out Case, we find such truly "human" characters who balance the positive with the negative. The whisky priest is guilty of drunkenness and fornication, yet he yearns to serve his God beyond simple, traditional piety; Scobie is guilty of immense pride, yet he wishes to sacrifice himself for others and may yet find mercy; and, though Querry appears

indifferent to those around him, he is nonetheless eager to help at the leproserie.

In most readings[1] of the novels, however, the protagonists are seen mostly in a positive light; the reader overlooks the protagonists' negative traits in favour of a positive interpretation. Greene creates his main characters in such a way that the reader can overlook the faults and identify with that which is common in all human beings. It is only upon a close, objective reading, remaining detached from the protagonists' perspectives, that the reader discovers various levels of ambiguity within the main characters. Yet, though ambiguous, the protagonists are lovable sinners about whom the reader cannot make simple, one-sided judgments; the reader is, in fact, left with more questions than answers.

As a master of "plotting", Greene uses a careful technique of fleshing out a simple plotline to create such complex and ambiguous protagonists. In A Sort of Life, he writes, "Now when I write I put down on the page the mere skeleton of a novel -- nearly all my revisions are in the nature of additions, of second thought to make the bare bones live" (190). Significantly, the "flesh" which Greene adds to his skeleton makes it live by the addition of multiple perspectives and literary devices which are responsible for much of the

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[1] My use of the terms "readings" and "reader" refer to the *common* reader, for whom Greene suggests the novels were written. Opinions of individual critics, of course, may vary.

novel's ambiguity. The simple plot, containing the events and possible development of the protagonist, is "fleshed out" to contain elements which allow Greene's narrator to comment on the protagonist while remaining virtually hidden. The seeming silence of the narrator preserves the illusion of reality and lifelikeness, while narrative devices quietly distort any clear, simple impression the reader may have of the protagonist. As a result, in each novel there are various levels from which the character can be viewed, or commented upon, and each level combines or conflicts with the others to create the complex, ambiguous protagonist over whom the reader puzzles.

Though this essay concentrates primarily on the ambiguity surrounding the protagonists and the technique which creates that effect, it is essential to discuss other literary elements during the course of explanation. Discussing characters naturally requires discussion of the characters' actions and, therefore, the novels' plots; and discussing the author's technique must involve not only the narrator who presents the character but other elements which are involved as well. Henry James, in The Art of Criticism, notes that we cannot talk about character, description, dialogue, incident, technique, and style as if each were a unit:

> People often talk of these things as if they had a kind of internecine distinctness, instead of melting into each other at every breath, and being intimated, associated parts of one general effort of expression. ... A novel is a living thing, all in one and continuous, like any other organism, and in proportion as it lives will be found, I think, that in

> each of the parts there is something of each of the other parts. (173-4)

Hence in discussing the ambiguity surrounding Greene's protagonists, it is essential to bring in other elements. Part Two of this essay will focus largely on narrative technique and how that technique is developed to create the ambiguity which surrounds the protagonists. In discussing narrative technique, however, certain parameters must be established. This essay will discuss various literary devices, but the discussion will focus mostly on four general areas: telling and showing, action and summary; centre of consciousness as point of view; alternative perspectives as point of view; and smaller, silent devices which the narrator uses to present the protagonist before the reader. Each of these areas will be further limited to relevant discussion of the protagonists' ambiguity and the technique by which it is created. Upon examining the ambiguity of the protagonists and the intricacies of Greene's technique, it is hoped that this essay will provide a better understanding of Greene's work, as well as the paradoxical *human condition* with which Greene was fascinated.

More than Meets the Eye: Ambiguity in Greene's Protagonists

At the end of The Power and the Glory, the reader is left with the impression that the whisky priest has finally succeeded in following his calling. He seems to have recognized the folly of his past, accepts martyrdom, and those who have known him appear to have been influenced by his example. The parallels between the priest's life and that of Christ, noted by various critics,[2] again suggest his success, and the new priest at the end of the novel implies resurrection. Yet such a simple, surface reading does not account for many of the novel's elements. The whisky priest may have influenced those around him, but was it an influence of any significance or a simple, momentary impression? Furthermore, did the priest ever really change? He recognizes his own sin and ineptness for the priesthood, at least in the traditional sense, and he comes to realize that he can be used by God regardless of his sin. In the process, he recognizes the folly and falsity of his

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[2] For various discussions and interpretations of the parallels to Christ and other biblical allusions, see Francis Kunkel's The Labyrinthine Ways of Graham Greene (Mamaroneck, NY: Appel, 1960), David Pryce-Jones's Graham Greene (London: Oliver and Boyd, 1963), and R.W.B. Lewis's "The Trilogy" in The Picaresque Saint (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1959).

pious and luxurious past. Yet Greene explains elsewhere that "the priest, for all his recollection of periods in his life when he was different, never changed" (Allain 136). The priest's life ends in his own failure, much as it was at the beginning of the novel. Yet we cannot condemn him, and there is still a sense of hope at the novel's end. We are left with many questions, and Greene avoids simple answers to these questions by carefully and quietly undermining the positive qualities which suggest the hope at the novel's end.

When we first meet the whisky priest from a close, internal perspective, he has begun to face his own reality as he looks into the pool at the face "which reflected back at him" (59). He is no longer the comfortable priest of his past. He is "like any ordinary man" without the evidences of his priesthood (60). He has long since given up "feast days and days of abstinence," the altar stone, the chalice, his wine, and later he even loses his case and papers; eventually he gives up the "little ball of paper: it was like the final surrender of a whole past" (118). He is no longer the pious priest of a parish; he is a *whisky priest* with an illegitimate child, and he is running from the law. Yet the priest's new life as a fugitive marks more than a fall from the traditional sense of goodness and morality. It also begins a process of recognition. The simple recognition of his less-than-saintly ways is not surprising: "The words proud, lustful, envious, cowardly, ungrateful -- ... he was all these things" (89), and to the suggestion of the pious woman -- "we

have a martyr here" -- the priest responds with a giggle (126). But when faced with the filth and poverty of prison, he recognizes that his days of piety and priestly functions were little better:

> What an unbearable creature he must have been in those days -- and yet in those days he must have been comparatively innocent. That was another mystery: it sometimes seemed to him that venial sins -- impatience, an unimportant lie, pride, a neglected opportunity -- cut you off from grace more completely than the worst sins of all. Then, in his innocence, he had felt no love for anyone; now in his corruption he had learnt ... (139; Greene's ellipses)

The recognition of false piety returns at the beginning of Part Three as the priest finds himself, once again, in the slothful ways of his earlier days as a "pious" priest. Shortly after his arrival at the Lehrs's, he recognizes that "perhaps Mr Lehr was right; he had lived easily once and here he was, already settling down to idleness again" (162). Soon "he could feel the old life hardening round him like a habit, a stony cast which held his head high and dictated the way he walked, and even formed his words" (167-8). Again he comes to a point of recognition: "God might forgive cowardice and passion, but was it possible to forgive the habit of piety?" (169).

As a result of his recognition, the whisky priest accepts the arrival of his Judas and is betrayed into the hands of the lieutenant to go toward martyrdom -- or so it seems. Giving up piety and idleness and accepting his role may not be the priest's only motive for returning to meet his death. His recognition of false piety is blurred as he begins to wonder: "Perhaps ... I have

lost the faculty of judging -- that woman in prison may have been the best person there" (177). The priest's return may also be a simple escape. He had never before believed himself worthy of service or of martyrdom. Earlier in the novel, he wonders if, with such an example as his, "it [had] become his duty then to run away?" (64).

> If he left them, they would be safe, and they would be free from his example. ... But it was from him ... they took their God. ... Wasn't it his duty to stay, even if they despised him, even if they were murdered for his sake? even if they were corrupted by his example? He was shaken with the enormity of the problem. (65)

The mother of his child asks him pointedly, "'Do you think God wants you to stay and die -- a whisky priest like you?'" (79); and he believes himself to be "without grace enough to die" (71). Though he had earlier longed for the peace of death, he refused it, believing, "It's my job not to be caught" (78). What has changed to make it his job? We only know that the priest discovered the ease with which he could settle back into a pious and comfortable life; he knows he must avoid such a life, and death may be an easier choice than a life of poverty and service. After all, he had earlier admitted that it was his nature to hate poverty, and his career as a priest was to provide his comfort. His acceptance of death is a reaction to his recognition, but it is unclear whether that acceptance is a form of sacrifice or escape.

Greene also suggests that the changes in the priest, during his physical and spiritual journey, may not be as significant as they first appear. Undoubtedly, he does at first appear to change. His admissions to his fellow prisoners are nothing short of a confession, and "he was moved by an irrational affection for the inhabitants of this prison" (127). When in the village at the beginning of Part One, he cannot address his people as "children" because "it seemed to him that only the childless man has the right to call strangers his children" (62); but in prison, he can. The priest seems to recognize that even as a sinner he can be useful:

> But God was merciful. There was only one reason, surely, which would make Him refuse His peace -- if there was any peace -- that he could still be of use in saving a soul, his own or another's. (129)

As a result, "he began to feel an overwhelming responsibility for this pious woman" (131). He expresses similar thoughts to the lieutenant:

> "But it doesn't matter so much my being a coward -- and all the rest. I can put God into a man's mouth just the same -- and I can give him God's pardon. It wouldn't make any difference if every priest in the church was like me." (195)

The priest's authority is from God, a source of perfection, so that his means always work towards a good end.

Yet the priest does not act on his words. Earlier in the novel, he knew "he was a man who was supposed to save souls, ... [but] he was aware of his own desperate inadequacy" (82). As a result, he attempts to bargain with

his own soul for that of another: "Oh God, give me any kind of death -- without contrition, in a state of sin -- only save this child" (82). His feeling of inadequacy does not change, and his attempts to save souls rarely take the form of action. Though he admits that God can still use him, he has little faith to act on that belief. He does not trust in the power of God, nor the grace of God, to save him. He is reluctant to receive grace and forgiveness, believing himself to be "without grace enough to die" (71). And though he believes that "he could still be of use in saving a soul" (129), at his death he does not believe that God had used him: "He felt only an immense disappointment because he had to go to God empty-handed, with nothing done at all" (211).

The priest's lack of faith affects his final duty to the American. He cannot accept his own advice concerning the American's past:

> "But that need not be so important. It only belongs to this life, a few years -- it's over already. You can drop it all here, in this hut, and go on for ever ..." He felt sadness and longing at the vaguest idea of a life he couldn't lead himself ... words like peace, glory, love. (189; Greene's ellipses)

The Priest tries to pray for the American, "but he prayed without conviction. At the best, it was only one criminal trying to aid the escape of another -- whichever way you looked, there wasn't much merit in either of them" (190).

The primary reason for the priest's lack of faith is his pride. Though he admits his cowardice and his unworthiness to serve as a priest, he has an immense self-importance. He surrenders his past life and piety but not his

pride. Significantly, he recognizes that the half-caste "had an immense self-importance; he was unable to picture a world of which he was only a typical part" (97). But the priest is little different. He remains as the only priest in the state only because of pride. He tells the lieutenant, "'It would have been better, I think, if I had gone too. Because pride was at work all the time. Not love of God. ... It was all pride. Just pride because I'd stayed. I wasn't any use, but I stayed'" (196). Moreover, the priest believed that his importance was such that he could affect God Himself. He explains that love of God is "wanting to protect Him from yourself" (173).

It is the priest's pride and lack of faith that result in a self-reliance which resists change. Significantly, "he couldn't say to himself that he wished his sin had never existed, because the sin seemed to him now so unimportant and he loved the fruit of it" (128). He did not have the faith to believe that he, and God, could love Brigitta while disapproving of the sin which conceived her. As a result, during the confession of an unnamed character, "he wanted to say ... 'when we love our sin we are damned indeed.' But the habit of the confessional reasserted itself ... (my ellipses) [and] he said, 'Mortal sin ... danger ... self-control,' as if those words meant anything at all" (172; Greene's ellipses). He could not participate in true confession, telling himself, "What was the good of your confession when you loved the result of your crime?" (176), and "he couldn't believe that anyone anywhere could rid him

of his heavy heart. Even when he drank he felt bound to his sin by love" (173). Because of his pride and independence, he resists change which depends on the mercy of others -- even God.

As the whisky priest nears his own death, again there is no change. "He looked as if he had abandoned everything and been abandoned" (205). He feels love only for his daughter -- "the love he should have felt for the world." His efforts to pray become only "another failure" as the words "were becoming formal again, meaning nothing" (208). He becomes confused, and only the brandy helps to calm him as he is "sick with fear" (209). Finally, on the morning of his death,

> he was confused, his mind on other things: it was not the good death for which one always prayed. ... He only felt 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. ... He felt like someone who has missed happiness by seconds at the appointed place. He knew now that at the end there was only one thing that counted -- to be a saint. (210)

These final moments of the whisky priest stand in stark contrast to the story of Juan, the little saint. Yet Juan is part of a tale told by a pious mother, and his story reads much like a fairy tale. The whisky priest, however, is very real and very human. The shortcomings which call for his judgment also call for the reader's sympathy. His story is very human and may, indeed, be the better "saint's tale".

A positive aspect of the priest is the apparent effect on those around him. Though he never believed himself even close to sainthood, his influence seems to remain after his death. The lieutenant appears unsettled after the execution: "There was something brisk and stubborn about his walk, as if he were saying at every step, 'I have done what I have done.' ... The dynamic love which used to move his trigger-finger felt flat and dead" (220). Mr Tench watches the priest's death and "remember[s] the little man rising bitterly and hopelessly from his chair that blinding afternoon to follow the child out of town"; "the little fellow had spoken English and knew about his children" (217), and Tench is visibly moved by his death. Coral Fellows, it seems, is no less affected by the priest's influence. Mr Fellows recognizes a change in Coral after the priest's departure: "'But the odd thing is -- the way she went on afterwards -- as if he'd told her things'" (214). Coral's own experience, recounted earlier, supports the suggestion of her change. She finds that "a horrible novelty enclosed her whole morning: it was as if today everything were memorable" (54-5). The boy, Luis, changes as well. He no longer sees the lieutenant as heroic as he spits on the butt of his revolver, and he finds Juan the saint almost unreal in comparison to the little whisky priest.

Yet there is also much evidence to suggest that the priest's influence on others might not have been as significant as it first appears. We find that the lieutenant "couldn't afterwards remember anything of his dreams except

laughter, laughter all the time, and a long passage in which he could find no door" (207); but has he been affected by the priest, or is it only because "the last priest was under lock and key [and] there was nothing left to think about," leaving him "without a purpose"? (207). Mr Tench, in watching the execution, is associated with the natural scavengers of the area: "he and the vultures looked down together" (216). He remembers "the little man" (217), and he is moved to sympathy because it "was like seeing a neighbour shot" (216). The sight convinces him to leave the country, but there is little to indicate that it changed him in any other way. Coral's change may be related more to "her woman's pain" (54) than to the priest; Greene leaves the answer ambiguous. The boy Luis is obviously affected by the whisky priest's death, but his interest may be only that "he felt cheated and disappointed because he had missed something" (220); and when the new priest arrives, the boy's action of putting "his lips to his hand" is reminiscent of the formal piety that the whisky priest had renounced (222).

Ultimately, we cannot really know the outcome of the characters' lives. If we judge them simply by their actions, we are like the pious woman of the jail. At the novel's end, the priest has little hope; but earlier he recognized that "hope is an instinct only the reasoning human mind can kill" (141); and he tells the lieutenant, "'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" (200). The priest may not have hope, but he may yet have a chance, even if he does not recognize it. Though an unchanging failure, his salvation may be recognized by everyone but himself. Greene does not imply that we can know the answers, but leaves a cloud of ambiguity around the priest. Anything less would imply a simplicity which would not have the same effect as the "humanity" of the priest. That effect is largely focused on the reader: it is the humanity and complexity of the priest, and his struggles on "the dangerous edge," which make him so appealing to the reader.

In The Heart of the Matter, Greene again creates a protagonist who maintains the equilibrium of positive and negative traits. Yet Greene's own perception of Scobie, and that of his readers, approach opposite ends of the balance. In Ways of Escape, he writes,

> I had meant the story of Scobie to enlarge a theme which I had touched on in The Ministry of Fear, the disastrous effect on human beings of pity as distinct from compassion. ... The character of Scobie was intended to show that pity can be the expression of an almost monstrous pride. But I found the effect on readers was quite different. To them Scobie was exonerated, Scobie was a 'good man', he was hunted to doom by the harshness of his wife. (101)

That a single novel can produce such diverse reactions suggests an ambiguity which allows varied interpretations; hence it also suggests a carefully created protagonist who does, indeed, walk the "the dangerous edge". The well-

rounded character of Scobie balances legality with morality, responsibility with prideful pity, and sacrifice with damnation, leaving the reader to ponder the many levels of complexity.

Scobie's legal entanglements are typical of his character. While he is involved in obvious wrongdoings, he is difficult to condemn. Only in the strict legal sense can he be found guilty. When he finds the letter from the Portuguese captain, he "knew he should have taken the letter and gone; he could do no good with his sympathy" (50). He also knows that opening the letter was "irrevocable, for no one in this city had the right to open clandestine mail" (53). He, "against the strictest orders, was exercising his own imperfect judgement" (53). He also uses poor judgment in accepting a loan from Yusef which compromises his position as a police officer by involving him in a conflict of interest. When visiting Yusef later, his thinks of "the little room where nearly two months ago now he had lost his integrity" (148); "he had returned to the scene of a crime. [It was] useless to tell himself that he had committed no offence" (149). Finally, Scobie allows himself to be blackmailed by Yusef. As the worst of his legal crimes, "the package in his pocket seemed to him to weigh as heavily as a gun against his thigh" (201). He is guilty of smuggling.

Yet, though Scobie's actions are wrong in the eyes of the law, the rigid demands of the law are subjected to the moral considerations in Scobie's

mind, and the reader is allowed to share those thoughts. When dealing with the Portuguese captain, Scobie discovers that "against the beautiful and the clever and the successful, one can wage a pitiless war, but not against the unattractive: then the millstone weighs on the breast" (50). Moreover, Scobie, though in need of money, refuses the captain's bribe. His actions are not based on any selfish motives, but because he feels pity for the captain, and "he had committed himself to a belief" (54). While others "had been corrupted by money, he had been corrupted by sentiment" (55).

Scobie's loan, though a serious conflict of interest, is a simple business arrangement, and it is taken as a last resort: the banks had refused to give him the loan. We also note that Scobie intends to reveal full details to the commissioner. When he finally does, in the manner of a confession, he adds, "'Do you want my head?'" The commissioner replies, "'I need your head, Scobie. You're the only officer I really trust'" (185). Scobie's conflict of interest in accepting the loan is quickly absolved by giving the commissioner his confidence and by the commissioner's admission of trust.

Scobie's reaction to blackmail demonstrates a selfless concern for others. When he is put *in Yusef's hands*, he replies, "'I wouldn't mind that so much. But to put three people in your hands ..." (199; Greene's ellipses). He is less concerned with his own guilt than with the effect it would have on Louise: "He remembered the telegram signed Louise Scobie: *have been a fool*

stop love. It would be a cold welcome, he thought" (200; Greene's italics). Again, Scobie's illegal actions are based on his unselfish concern for others. Though his actions may be wrong, the reader reserves judgment because of the circumstances. Yet Scobie cannot be absolved of all wrongdoing; for all his concern and selflessness, he does break the law, and both burning the letter and smuggling the package could have had serious legal-political ramifications; it is on the moral level, in the debate between civil duty and personal pity, where Scobie walks the fine line of "the dangerous edge".

In Scobie's relationship with Louise, Greene notes that "to [the readers] Scobie was exonerated, Scobie was a 'good man', he was hunted to doom by the harshness of his wife" (Ways 101). Indeed, it is not difficult for the reader to imagine Louise as the archetypal, nagging wife. She shows little concern for Scobie's feelings when he is passed over for the commissioner-ship and tells him, "'I was so upset I came out of Mass before the end. It's so mean of them, Ticki. You can't take it lying down. You've got to think of me'" (24). Her desire to go to South Africa is based on the same self-centredness, and her constant nagging is extremely irritating. Her general relationship with Scobie is reflected in Greene's metaphor: "A vulture flapped heavily upwards" while Louise decides to "pick at a little cold meat" (25).

Yet the reader must not simply shrug Louise off as a limited character, a shallow, nagging wife. Though it may be difficult to discover, there is a

certain depth to her. Wilson, though hardly admirable himself, finds Louise fascinating,[3] and in speaking with him Louise reveals a depth to her understanding that is surprising. She has no illusions of love with Scobie and recognizes the sincere efforts of the "poor dear" (77); perhaps most importantly, she notes the basis of Scobie's actions: "'he has a terrible sense of responsibility'" (79). Even Scobie notes that "she always saw a little farther than he hoped" (97). Finally, when returning to her adulterous husband, Louise does not resume her role of the nagging wife; instead, she tells Scobie, "'I've made a lot of resolutions while I've been away. Everything now is going to be different. I'm not going to rattle you anymore'" (206). Knowing Scobie's "terrible sense of responsibility" (79), she could easily have attacked him with his own guilt; but she does not.

We must recognize that much of the relationship's failure lies in Scobie's court. Irritating as Louise may be, we cannot overlook the fact that Scobie "never listened while his wife talked" (26). It is no surprise that the reader receives the negative image of Louise through Scobie's consciousness. He reveals his low expectations of her in his thoughts of

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[3] Significantly, the section describing Louise from Wilson's point of view was written in original draft but printed only in later editions. Greene had omitted it initially but reinstated it to improve the reader's impression of Louise (Greene, Ways of Escape 101).

> the scene ahead: I shall go in and say, 'Good evening, sweetheart,' and she'll say, 'Good evening, darling. What kind of a day?' and I'll talk and talk, but all the time I shall know I'm coming nearer to the moment when I shall say, 'What about you darling?' and let the misery in. (56)

In examining the relationship between Scobie and Louise, Greene uses a particular metaphor to describe Scobie in his home: "And besides he was happy here, sitting where the rat had sat, in his own world" (41).

Scobie's actions and thoughts, however, cannot be condemned so easily. His motives are pure, even if severely problematic. He is very defensive of Louise, believing, "This is what I've made of her. She wasn't always like this" (32). He knew that "no man could guarantee love forever, but he had sworn ... that he would at least always see to it that she was happy" (59). He expresses concern for her and feels a genuine responsibility for her person, thinking, "Poor dear, she loved him: she was someone of human stature with her own sense of responsibility, not simply the object of his care and kindness. The sense of failure deepened around him" (96). Body 2

But Scobie's feeling of responsibility for Louise's happiness is a serious problem. He has an almost neurotic compulsion to pity another human being, and his pity is "distinct from compassion" (Greene, Ways 101). He continually reasserts Louise's need of him and his responsibility for her: "The less he needed Louise the more conscious he became of his responsibility for her

happiness" (21). He attaches an imagined and extreme importance to his presence in her life:

> If I could just arrange for her happiness first, he thought, and in the confusing night he forgot for the while what experience had taught him -- that no human being can really understand another, and no one can arrange another's happiness. (85)

Scobie's illusion of importance is directly related to his immense pity "as distinct from compassion." Compassion implies a sense of selflessness, but pity is the result of pride. It is significant that although Scobie did not listen to Louise when she bickered, neither can he accept her when she is changed: "he couldn't tell [Louise] the entreaty that was on his lips: let me pity you again, be disappointed, unattractive, be a failure so that I can love you once more without this bitter gap between us" (254). Scobie's pride demands that he look down at her; it inspires his compulsive need to be needed, to influence, and to be responsible for those he could pity. Hence he limits his pity to those who seemed less fortunate than himself: "He had no sense of responsibility towards the beautiful and the graceful and the intelligent. They could find their own way" (159).

Greene refers to Scobie's need to pity as "the expression of an almost monstrous pride" (Ways 101), and Scobie's tremendous sense of self-importance is extended beyond the confines of his marriage. "'I even plan for other people,'" he tells Wilson. "'My plans always start out well'" (73). But

if they end poorly, it is not from lack of effort; it is from delusion caused by an inordinate pride. He feels his responsibility is unlike that of others: "This was a responsibility he shared with all human beings, but that was no comfort, for it sometimes seemed to him that he was the only one who recognized his responsibility" (122). The phrase "he was the only one" is symptomatic of Scobie's prideful sense of responsibility. He also recognizes that "despair is the price one pays for setting oneself an impossible aim" (60), but he does not change. In his first encounter with Helen he notes that "the face was ugly with exhaustion" (121), and he later finds that "the ugliness was like handcuffs on his wrists" (159). Having recently treated Louise to a trip to South Africa, "it was as if he has shed one responsibility only to take on another" (122). Scobie has found another victim for his pity, and by inflating the influence of his presence on others, he thinks Helen, like Louise, changes because "he was beginning to form her" (179).

Scobie's predicament, which ends in his attempted suicide, is the result of his pride and pity. When the child at Pende dies, Scobie feels relieved of the extra burden. He later tells Helen, "When [people] are dead our responsibility ends. There's nothing more we can do about it. We can rest in peace" (155). But Helen and Louise are still alive, and Scobie cannot shed his strong feeling of responsibility for them. His affair with Helen causes him to embark "for the first time in his life on the long, legalistic arguments of

deceit" (161). Yet his deceit fools no one but himself. There are few who do not know about his affair with Helen, but Scobie believes his secret is safe. He also deceives himself with the illusion of his importance to Louise and Helen. He questions himself, "Do I, in my heart of hearts, love either of them, or is it only that this automatic pity goes out to any human in need -- and makes it worse?" (206); but he never understands his pride as the source of the problem. He wonders, "Couldn't this for [Helen] be just the end of an episode?" (196), and Helen offers, twice, to end the problem by simply ending their relationship; but Scobie cannot simply end the relationship with Helen, just as he cannot with Louise. He thinks, "O God, I can't leave her. Or Louise. You don't need me as they need me" (233), and he believes that only by being free of him could Louise and Helen be truly happy:

> Why do they need me? ... Why can't they leave me in peace? .... He wanted happiness for others and solitude and peace for himself. ... "They wouldn't need me if I were dead. No one needs the dead. The dead can be forgotten. Oh God, give me death before I give them unhappiness." (189)

To simply end the affair with Helen would, in Scobie's prideful mind, be unbearable for her; hence "virtue, the good life, tempted him in the dark like a sin" (186). Even after the death of Ali, which causes Scobie to realize that he must "clean up, whatever the cost" (249), he refuses to accept Helen's assurance that "everything will be okay" and thinks, "if I were dead, she would be free of me. ... This for her is the hard way" (251). He also refuses

the cries of God in his conscience, which say, "But can't you trust me to see that the suffering isn't too great?" Scobie replies, "I can't make one of them suffer so as to save myself. I'm responsible and I'll see it through the only way I can" (259). As a result he cannot simply "settle his affairs ... [and] come back in a few days' time and take God with a clear conscience" (224).

Significantly, as if to preserve his memory and influence even after death, Scobie leaves a message beneath Helen's stamp: "*I love you*. She can't take that out, he thought with cruelty and disappointment, that's indelible" (262). Although he wants to relieve Helen and Louise of himself, he cannot bear to be easily forgotten. Scobie's prideful sense of responsibility results in a prideful death, believing it has meaning, and the same pride wishes to remind Helen of his memory. Yet Greene's metaphor implies another suggestion relating to Scobie's death: "Only the vultures were about, gathering around a dead chicken at the edge of the road" (230).

The final and most exasperating evidence of Scobie's pride is his desire to save God from himself. Greene maintains that "suicide was Scobie's inevitable end; the particular motive of his suicide, to save even God from himself, was the final twist of the screw of his inordinate pride" (Ways 102). Scobie, early in the novel, thinks that "somewhere on the face of those obscure waters moved the sense of yet another wrong and another victim, not Louise, not Helen" (162). When he is able to skip communion, he tells

himself, "God had just escaped me, but will He always escape?" (213), and he finally states in prayer, "They are ill with me and I can cure them. And you too, God -- you are ill with me. ... You'll be better off if you lose me once and for all. ... You'll be at peace when I am out of your reach" (258). He believes that only by his death "[will they] be safe from me, Helen, Louise, and You" (262). Ultimately he believes that he must save God and others from himself by being a Christlike sacrifice for them. "I am the cross," he tells himself, and "he made one last attempt at prayer, 'O God, I offer up my damnation to you. Take it. Use it for them,'" (225). It is, indeed, a strange and elaborate twist of pride that makes Scobie believe he is the sacrifice necessary for the happiness of others.

Yet, regardless of Scobie's pride, his sense of responsibility, to the extent of self-sacrifice, is admirable. Though Scobie could rarely pray for himself, he always thinks of and prays for others -- most notably Helen and Louise. His death, though it may be seen as an escape, is no less than a sacrifice in Scobie's mind, and that state of mind has a particular source which draws only more sympathy for Scobie. We are told that "he had been in Africa when his own child died" (125), so that Louise alone faced the death of their daughter. When he stays with the dying child at Pende, "he thought: this is what parents feel year in and year out, and I am shrinking from a few minutes of it. ... 'Father,' he prayed, 'give her peace. Take away my peace for

ever, but give her peace'" (125). The memories of Scobie's past instill a sense of guilt and responsibility, though not necessarily at a conscious level, and he is willing to sacrifice his own peace -- which he was able to preserve by his absence at his daughter's death -- to comfort the child. Significantly, Scobie's major decisions, based on pity, are surrounded by child images. He tells Louise, "I'll manage somehow," while she lies beside him "clutching one of his fingers like a child" (44), and as a result he arranges the loan from Yusef. When the Portuguese captain laments, "A man is ruined because he writes to his daughter," Scobie replies, "Daughter?" and finds that "then the millstone weighs on the breast" (50); "that had been the turning point, the daughter" (56). The first appearance of Helen has similar associations. She is described through Scobie's consciousness: "Her arms as thin as a child's lay outside the blanket" (121). Although we recognize Scobie's sense of responsibility as rooted in pride and somewhat neurotic, we must also recognize the psychological aspect of his character and the past which weighs on his mind and influences his actions and motives.

Scobie's serious problem of pride does not prevent the novel from closing on a note of hope. The events surrounding Scobie's death, as well as those leading up to it, again suggest a shade of ambiguity. While Wilson and Louise are quick to condemn Scobie's actions, the novel also suggests an alternative viewpoint. Even as the reader notes Scobie's sacrifice more than

his pride, mercy is emphasized to counter Scobie's belief in his own damnation. Again, the two opposing views balance one another. Scobie's previous thoughts about suicide show a very definite, traditional view on the subject. Father Clay states that suicide "'is too terrible. It puts a man outside mercy'" (86); and in Scobie's dreams, "it suddenly occurred to him that this was an act he could never do. Suicide was out of his power -- he couldn't condemn himself for eternity -- no cause was important enough" (94). But Scobie is willing to sacrifice his soul in spite of his knowledge: "One should look after one's own soul at whatever the cost to another, and that's what I can't do, what I shall never be able to do" (184).

Yet Scobie also shows, early in the novel, a second side of the same issue. We discover that "the pious ejaculations [regarding suicide] of Father Clay irritated Scobie" (88); and we sense his annoyance at the pious, rigid "rules" of Catholicism. Scobie also suggests that "'we'd forgive most things if we knew the facts ... A policeman should be the most forgiving person in the world if he gets the facts right'" (81). He asks himself later, "If one knew ... the facts, would one have to feel pity even for the planets? if one reached what they called the heart of the matter?" (124).

There is also the question of whether Scobie was successful in attempting suicide. Greene loads the previous chapters with hints that Scobie's invented angina may be real. In his car, "the pain made him

physically sick, so that he wretched over the wheel" (219). Later we watch as "nausea twisted him again on his knees" (220), and within a few pages "he felt as if his blood had ceased to run: when he tried to lift his arm it dangled uselessly from his shoulder" (222). Visiting Yusef, Scobie "found his left hand was trembling on the desk and he put it between his knees to hold it still. ... He wiped the sweat off his forehead and he thought for a moment: This is just a sickness, a fever ..." (245). His symptoms increase in frequency, including "pain under his mouth like the beating of a bird's heart" (251). Finally, as the time of his death draws nearer, "the nerves tingled from his shoulder to his wrist" (260), and "he felt a constriction in his breast worse than any pain he had ever invented to Travis" (261). As he prepares to die, "his heart beat and he was held in the nausea of an awful reality" (263), and the account of his death is filled with the words "heart" and "heartbeat," followed by his collapse. Such a collapse is symptomatic of angina; the overdose of drugs would result in a slower, sleepier death. But whether Scobie succeeds in his suicide or not, he remains guilty of the intent. Yet Father Rank assures Louise, "'Don't imagine you -- or I -- know a thing about God's mercy. ... The Church knows all the rules. But it doesn't know what goes on in a single human heart'" (272). Perhaps Scobie's belief that "I'm damned for all eternity" is subjected to his own qualifying addition: "unless a miracle happens" (232).

We are left, again, with more questions than answers. We cannot absolve Scobie, seeing him merely as "a 'good man' ... hunted to doom by the harshness of his wife" (101); but neither can we condemn him for his pride. He makes the wrong decisions and is hindered by inordinate pride, but that pride extends, in a sacrificial manner, toward others. His actions may be wrong, and his perception distorted, but he sincerely believes he is helping others. Like the whisky priest, he confronts many problems while missing many more, but we cannot know the true resolution of his fate. Scobie may be proud and foolish, but he is very human, and the reader easily identifies with him.

Like the whisky priest and Scobie, Querry in A Burnt-Out Case is difficult to understand because of the ambiguity surrounding his character. The action seems to progress positively throughout most of the novel, yet it leaves the reader with a sense of bewilderment at its end. Querry's preoccupation with himself and his resultant isolation appear to be remedied by his African experience. The hope created by his apparent remedy, however, is disappointed by the senseless bullet from an idiot's gun. Such a conclusion to the action leaves the reader with mixed reactions, including confusion and ambiguity -- feelings which are more pronounced at the novel's

end than in any previous section. In addition, the reader is left wondering: is Querry cured; and does he ever regain religious faith?

Querry begins as a nameless "passenger" but immediately becomes the focus of the novel. His nameless presence reflects the many "unknowns" about him, and his humorously parodic statement, "I feel discomfort, therefore I am alive" (9), suggests his peculiarity. It is only "after a month [that] he spoke to the doctor" (27), and Querry reveals that he would not have stopped at the leproserie "if the boat had gone any farther" (28). He simply drifts there like a mysterious stranger, and the mystery continues to surround his identity. His problem, though narrated in detail, is never clearly identified. He maintains that he is simply "bored" from his all too successful life in Europe, and Dr Colin believes the problem is psychological; yet Querry continually faces his state of disbelief, and even the good doctor, the atheist, tells him, "'You're too troubled by your lack of faith, Querry. You keep on fingering it like a sore you want to get rid of'" (192). It remains unclear whether Querry's problem is purely psychological or also spiritual.

The mystery that surrounds Querry remains at the novel's end by means of his senseless death. The event is unexpected because his character appears to have undergone a positive progression and, unlike the predicaments of the whisky priest and Scobie, the account of Querry's experience gives few hints of the unfortunate fate that is to come. The reader

expects Querry to be like the burnt-out cases "who lose everything that can be eaten away before they are cured" (110); but Querry loses his life, and it is unclear if he is cured.

Looking back at Querry's experience, however, we find hints that our hope may not be realized. The most notable example is the parable of the jeweller. Having associated himself with the jeweller by his slip of the tongue --"building" instead of "jewellery" -- Querry continues the tale but does not end it. The jeweller is left at the point of recognition, and we are not told what becomes of him. At the end of Querry's "story" -- the one he lives -- we know little more about him than about the jeweller; he, like the jeweller, seems to be at a point of recognition, but both stories are cut short.

In tracing the events which led to Querry's misfortune, we are again troubled; the events are kind deeds. Querry's trip to Luc is a favour for Dr Colin, and taking Marie along appears to be an act of sympathy -- so is comforting her in the hotel. Yet the trip sets the events in motion, taking Marie along develops the situation, and comforting her in the hotel provides the basis for the entire misunderstanding. The results of Querry's kind acts are Rycker's accusations and Querry's death. Rycker's words, "'... and this is my reward'" (190), would be better suited to Querry. For our hero, there is no sense of poetic justice. His good deeds are repaid by death.

Looking back through the novel, however, there may be a sense of poetic justice, even if it is far from "true" justice. Querry's fate is not entirely because of Rycker; Rycker is merely the jealous husband. If one were to lay blame, it is Marie's "half a lie," based on "the tortuous logic of her argument" (183-4), which sets the final events in motion. Marie uses Querry for her own ends and is indifferent to the possible consequences. Her only thought is that "'they'll have to send me home, won't they?'" (185). In hearing her story and *logic*, Querry makes a significant recognition: "'I just had to escape,' she explained apologetically. For the first time he was confronted by an egotism as absolute as his own. The other Marie had been properly avenged: as for *toute à toi* the laugh was on her side now" (184-5). Earlier he had said of the other Marie, "'She was my mistress. I left her three months ago, poor woman -- and that's hypocrisy. I feel no pity'" (74). Indeed, Querry comes full circle and ends on the receiving end of pride and indifference. He is simply being treated as he had treated others.

Greene also undermines Querry's apparent change and "cure", but not before strongly suggesting a positive change. The first indication of change in Querry is the "measure of natural confidence [that] had grown between Querry and Deo Gratias" (53). When no one will accompany Querry to investigate Deo Gratias's disappearance, he is willing to go alone, and he spends the night in the forest with his terrified friend. The apparent change

of attitude continues as Querry shows sympathy toward Marie Rycker. During his first night in the hotel at Luc, he did not go immediately to bed; instead,

> he sat and wondered what he ought to do to comfort [Marie] if the doctor told her in the morning that she was pregnant. He was reminded of the long night's vigil with Deo Gratias. It had been fear then too that he had contended with. (150)

Querry's actions at Luc appear to be a continuation of the sympathy he has learned at the leproserie. We are eager to agree that working at the leproserie allows Querry to shift his focus from himself to the fears and suffering of others, and that his character changes accordingly.

Querry's thoughts, at times, suggest a similar progression toward a cure. Early in the novel, though he can feel only discomfort and not pain, "it occurred to him that one could still feel the reflection of another's pain when one had ceased to feel one's own" (76). The ability to sense pain once again appears to change Querry, and his efforts at the leproserie alleviate his chronic boredom. He tells Dr Colin, "'You know I am happy here'" (94). He also insists that "'we have to [know ourselves] if we are to be cured'" (111), and his parable of the jeweller suggests that he is beginning to understand the nature of his problem. Finally, after his talking to Parkinson in the manner of a confession, "it seemed to Querry that some persistent poison had been drained from his system" (123). In the final chapter of the novel, he directly addresses the issue. He tells Dr Colin in their final conversation, "'I think I'm

cured of pretty well everything, even disgust. I've been happy here'" (193). Querry no longer remembers what he wrote in his diary at the beginning of his voyage. He replaces "'I feel discomfort. Therefore I am alive'" with "'I suffer, therefore I am'" (186). His indifference appears to have been alleviated, and Dr Colin later remarks, "'I think he was [cured]. He'd learned to serve other people, you see, and to laugh'" (198).

Querry's laughter is yet another indication that he is being cured. It is developed symbolically from an early point in the novel. Querry begins his journey in "his own region where laughter was like the unknown syllables of an enemy tongue" (15), and he wonders "when it was that he had first begun to detest laughter like a bad smell" (15). Yet soon after his first symbolic act, having spent the night comforting Deo Gratias, Querry's conversation with Dr Colin ended with "an unexpected sound [that] made the doctor look up; Querry's face was twisted into the rictus of a laugh. The doctor realized with astonishment that Querry had perpetrated a joke" (59). Querry's laughter, suggesting a change in him and his eventual cure, is also the final sound he makes before his death. He appears to have learned "the unknown syllables of an enemy tongue"; the syllables suggest the cure to his indifference and isolation.

Not to be simplistic, however, Greene undermines each of these indications of Querry's cure. While searching for Deo Gratias, Querry wonders

if "perhaps he was driven only by a vestige of intellectual curiosity" (55), and he later explains his sacrifice of comfort by saying, "'I've never much minded physical discomfort. And after about an hour when I tried to move my hand, [Deo Gratias] wouldn't let it go'" (57). Querry dismisses any notion of sympathy or caring in his assurances to Dr Colin: "Curiosity. Pride. Not Klistian love" (82). If we are not convinced by Querry's remarks, the narrator reveals that Querry's sympathy for Marie Rycker may not run as deep as we imagine. Soon after Querry compares his situation with "his long night's vigil with Deo Gratias," we are told that "[Querry] felt no pity, only irritation. She had forced herself on him and she was threatening now to spoil his night's sleep" (150). Just as Parkinson, Rycker, and Father Thomas have a tendency to misinterpret Querry's actions, the reader may also be confusing Querry's indifference with sympathy. After all, when Rycker arrives at Luc, Querry abandons Marie to her husband, saying, "'She's his responsibility'" (167).

The symbol of laughter becomes complicated as well. While a symbol of hope through much of the novel, it is also closely associated with Querry's death. "'He laughed at me,'" Rycker repeats both before and after shooting Querry (190, 195). Querry's explanation, "'Laughing at myself'" (196), suggests the irony of the situation. Yet it is significant that his laughter is directed toward himself. He has expressed no real concern for Rycker and Marie, and he makes little attempt to solve the situation. He simply goes to

Dr Colin's room and leaves the situation behind him. A sense of preoccupation with himself is hinted at once more, and he finds his death to be "'absurd or else ...'" (196; Greene's ellipses). We do not know what is on his mind; possibly, Querry is examining his own existence once more before his death.

We must also examine the possible change in Querry's religious beliefs. Has his belief been renewed? The Superior has hope for Querry's soul as he cites Pascal, saying, "'A man who starts looking for God has already found him'" (198). Yet his statement comes shortly after an expression of his doubt: "'You spoke just now as though he had been cured.'" "'I thought perhaps you meant that he was beginning to find his faith again'" (198). Dr Colin shares the same mixed views. His response to the Superior is, "'Oh no, not that. Only a reason for living'"(198). Yet during his last conversation with Querry, he notes, "'You're too troubled by your lack of faith, Querry. You keep fingering it like a sore you want to get rid of'" (192). The doctor seems to doubt that Querry is without faith.

Even Querry does not shed much light on the subject, for it is as ambiguous as his apparent cure. It is possible that even Querry cannot answer the question; his denial of belief and his preoccupation with its loss seem to suggest a half-belief; he appears unwilling to commit to either extreme. He tells Dr Colin, "'I don't want to understand or believe. I would have to think if I believed. I don't want to think anymore'" (175). Yet immediately he

wonders about his already noticeable change: "He had walked out into the bush unable to hear their laughter and their infantility. How was it that he could sit here now and smile with them?" (175). Perhaps Querry's belief would not mean that he "would have to think." His final words, "this is absurd or else" (196), may be related to his belief, and the jeweller's absurdity in Querry's parable is contrasted to a "simple and uncomplex heart" (158-9); perhaps that is Querry's alternative -- an alternative of belief without complex thinking. We do not know. The statement provides the final twist to the novel's ambiguity.

In terms of his main character, Greene attempts to avoid making either a direct or implied statement. While slighting the irresponsible press through Parkinson and attacking the proud piety of the Ryckers of the world, he leaves the case of Querry, and Querry's quest for answers, unclear and unresolved. Greene clouds the solution to avoid "preaching" to the reader as Father Thomas would do; nor does he tell the reader what to think, as Parkinson would do. Like the Superior and Dr Colin, Greene hints at more than one solution. The result is a delightful element of ambiguity which leaves the reader to wonder. Yet regardless of how Querry's outcome is perceived, it is unlikely that the reader will condemn him. Like the little priest and Scobie, Querry walks the dangerous edge. Indifferent or not, Querry's deeds and the experiences he shares with the reader cause the reader to sympathize.

The Techniques of Ambiguity

The ambiguity surrounding Greene's protagonists is the result of a carefully planned technique. Far from simply telling a story, or merely developing a character, Greene loads his plot with both obvious and less obvious devices which allow him to control the perception of his protagonist. Hence he confuses not only the facts about the protagonists but also the reader's reaction. His art lies in the way he tells his story. His narrative technique is highly structured and uses subtle, yet complex, methods to cause the reader to identify with a protagonist who is far from perfect. As noted in the previous section, Greene's complex protagonists can be very disillusioned and almost foolish, but the reader still accepts them with little judgment. It is a carefully planned narrative technique which achieves that effect.

Greene's choice to *show* characters and events, instead of *telling* about them, allows the reader to experience events with the protagonist and, as a result, develop a sense of identification. Greene's use of a character's consciousness as a perspective through which to view the action is itself a type of showing -- and will be discussed later in this essay -- but Greene also

demonstrates a careful control of what is told and what is shown through that perspective, and of exactly how events are told or shown. Telling is, for the most part, used in a very limited manner. Greene's narrator rarely explains motives or expresses judgment of the characters; he lets thoughts and actions speak for themselves so that the reader may experience the situation with the character. Mark Harris explains the technique by saying, "I shall not *tell* you anything." "I shall let you eavesdrop on my people, and sometimes they will tell the truth and sometimes they will lie" (117). Greene could easily use the same phrase. He allows the reader to see the characters' actions and hear their speech, and he shows the thoughts of his filter-character in a stream of consciousness style. Telling is restricted to a peculiar type; and authoritative, judgmental telling is notably absent. When the narrator tells about something, he does so only from the point of view of the third person. As a result, what is being told is a reflection of the filter-character's consciousness and not at all objective. If the narrator tells the reader how the filter-character feels, he is not merely telling about the character but actually reflecting that character's thoughts and feelings. This type of telling gives the narrative a stronger sense of psychological realism and adds intimacy to the reader's experience. The technique of showing events through the protagonist's eyes is supplemented by the experience of the protagonist's thoughts and opinions as they are reflected by the narrator. To become more intimate yet, the narrator may

allow the protagonist's thoughts to flow freely and unmediated in a stream of consciousness style which is, again, a type of showing. The methods are often combined so that when we are told about a character, it is in the midst of the same being shown. The result is a closeness between reader and protagonist which could not otherwise be realized.

In The Power and the Glory, we are told that the priest "was moved by an irrational affection for the inhabitants of the prison" (127). Although the phrase is a fact told by the narrator, it reflects the priest's state of mind and does not stand out as an authoritative comment. We must also recognize that the statement does not stand alone but follows the priest's intimate conversations with the inmates and his confessions of weakness. What is told, then, follows naturally from what is shown. As we watch the priest in the prison, his feelings, previously shown through his actions and reflected by the narrator, are exposed by his thoughts which are revealed by a stream of consciousness:

> The old man seemed to be uneasily asleep; his head lay sideways against the priest's shoulder, and he muttered angrily. God knows, it had never been easy to move in this place, but the difficulty seemed to increase as the night wore on and limbs stiffened. He couldn't twitch his shoulder now without waking the old man to another night of suffering. Well, he thought, it was my kind who robbed him: it's only fair to be made a little uncomfortable. (129)

What we are told reflects the character's thoughts; and what we are shown, we see through the character's eyes. By adding to these methods the bare

thoughts of the protagonist's consciousness, the reader is able to know him more intimately and personally. The resulting relationship causes the reader to reserve judgement and to be sympathetic to the priest's shortcomings.

At Scobie's turning point in The Heart of the Matter, we again see a combination of techniques. The narrator does not directly state that Scobie decides to approach his problem differently; instead he reveals it through Scobie's appearance and thoughts:

> He drove with his eyes half-closed, looking straight ahead: he told himself, now, today, I am going to clean up, whatever the cost. Life is going to start again: this nightmare of love is finished. It seemed to him that it had died the previous night under the petrol drums. (249)

The section begins by showing Scobie's determination through his appearance and moves into a stream of consciousness. The final quoted line, though it breaks the stream of consciousness technique, is still narrated from Scobie's point of view and therefore reflects his consciousness. The intimacy of knowing Scobie's thoughts follows appropriately after the similar, yet more powerful, effect of the previous section which shows, by a combination of techniques, Scobie's tearful, deeply moving reaction to Ali's death. Through Scobie's mournful eyes we see "the body [as it] lay coiled and unimportant like a broken watchspring under a pile of empty petrol drums" and "the seal grey neck [that] had been slashed and slashed again." We then move deeper into Scobie's mind, hearing his thoughts: "Yes, ... I can trust him now" (247).

As we follow his thoughts closely, we gradually see him standing over the corporal and Ali, saying, "'I loved him'" (248). Greene effectively combines a technique of showing events through Scobie's eyes with Scobie's actual thoughts, resulting in a feeling of intimacy and identification between reader and protagonist. The same feeling allows the reader to understand Scobie's feeling of responsibility for Ali's death, yet, because of the intimacy between character and reader, the understanding is of a sympathetic nature.

A similar technique has a different effect in A Burnt-Out Case. During Querry's excursion in the forest, searching for Deo Gratias, the combination of showing action and revealing thoughts produces a peculiar effect of ambiguity. The narrator reflects Querry's suggestion that "it is easy ... to mistake indifference for sympathy" (53); he later adds that "perhaps he was being driven only by a vestige of intellectual curiosity" (55). We are also told that Querry "had lived with inertia so long that he examined "his 'interest' with clinical detachment" (56). Each of these statements, it must be noted, is a reflection of Querry's own thoughts concerning himself and not an objective opinion. In the midst of sharing these thoughts we watch Querry walking through the forest alone, armed with a failing flashlight, and hearing the "harsh" animal sounds. He faces all the fears and dangers the forest brings as he takes "Deo Gratias's hand to reassure him" and prepares to spend the night alone with him (54-7). Significantly, Querry's thoughts

suggest a detachment that defies sympathy while his actions suggest an act of selflessness and caring. As we are told about one and watch the other, the ambiguity of his motives increases: is Querry's indifference already being alleviated, remaining only in his own mind, or are his actions truly based on mere curiosity? The ambiguity remains present throughout the novel.

The technique of showing action may have significant effects, but we must not assume that showing is always preferred to telling. Wayne C. Booth suggests that good fiction involves choices of "what to dramatize fully and what to curtail, what to summarize and what to heighten" (64). Greene uses telling, in the form of summary, for the significant effects achieved by what it does not do. His telling is, again, from within a character's mind, so it does not stand apart from the flow of the narrative. In Part Three of The Power and the Glory, the passage describing the recent events of the half-caste's experience is summarized and retold very simply:

> It appeared that he was afraid of the lieutenant, who resented the fact that the priest had escaped, and so he planned to slip across the border, out of reach. He got his chance at night, and on the way -- it was probably on this side of the state line, but who knew where one state began and another ended? -- he came upon the American. (180)

The reduction of events to a minimum can achieve varying effects. One such effect is excitement. Greene explains that

> excitement is simple: excitement is a situation, a single event. It musn't be wrapped up in thoughts, similes, metaphors. A simile is a form of reflection, but excitement is of the moment when there is not

> time to reflect. Action can only be expressed by a subject, a verb and an object, perhaps a rhythm -- little else. Even an adjective slows the pace or tranquillises the nerve. (Sort 199)

Yet minimal detail to enhance the effect of action is different from the minimal detail of summary. The example quoted above is far from exciting and contains quick, simple descriptions of action. We do not see the half-caste trekking across the Mexican states as the rains begin; we, like the priest, simply meet him on the other side of the border. There is no excitement and no action -- only summary. The choice of summary can be explained by two reasons. First, showing the half-caste's journey would be repetitive: the reader has already travelled the distance with the priest, and showing the same journey through a less important character would hardly be warranted. More importantly, however, Greene's use of telling and showing is largely controlled by his narrative purpose. Showing the action of the half-caste's journey would interrupt the narrator's point of view, but having it described in summary through the priest's consciousness preserves the narrator's focus.

Greene uses a slightly different technique in relating the fate of Coral Fellows. Her death is not shown but merely implied. Showing her death would, indeed, have the potential for a powerful and moving narrative, but the focus would move away from the priest. Instead, Greene allows Coral's death to improve the reader's relationship with the priest. We feel the priest's "sad curiosity" and his bewilderment at the confusion in the empty Fellows's hut,

and we identify with him as "he felt as if he were cleaning up after a death, deciding what would be too painful to keep" (143). In contrast, we observe Mr and Mrs Fellows's reactions with less intimacy as they simply feel that "they had both been deserted" (213). Yet Mr Fellows speaks of "the way [Coral] went on" after the priest's visit. In both passages, Greene carefully arranges events to reflect on the priest. By not showing Coral's death, and by showing reactions to her death, Greene projects sympathy, that would otherwise be felt for Coral, onto the priest. AWK phrasing

There is a similar use of telling and summary in The Heart of the Matter, and it is again to the benefit of the protagonist. Though we can imagine Louise's reaction at the news of Scobie's unfaithfulness, we do not see it. We only hear her tell Wilson, "'It's why I came home. Mrs Carter wrote to me'" (268). Showing Louise's reaction has the potential for a delightful caricature, but it would have broken Scobie's point of view. Although the narrator shifts filter-characters throughout the novel, shifting to Louise's point of view, or to any other point of view, to watch her reaction would have been disastrous to Scobie's character. Not only would his unfaithfulness appear cruel, but the reader would become detached from him because Scobie's illusions, which preserve the reader's sympathy for him, would no longer be shared by the reader. If the reader were to watch Scobie meet Louise, knowing the real reason why Louise was returning, Scobie's illusion that no

one knew of his affair would appear foolish indeed. But by allowing the reader to share that illusion until after Scobie's death, the same illusion creates sympathy because Scobie and the reader were fooled together, and the confidence they share remains unaffected.

In A Burnt-Out Case, Greene again preserves the reader's sympathy for Querry, but he does so in a slightly different way. Querry's positive traits are explicitly shown: we watch him with Deo Gratias in the forest; we see the comfort he gives to the child-like Marie; and we experience the change he brings to the leproserie. Querry's negative traits, however, are rarely shown; he mostly speaks of them. He tells about his past life, with its abstract thinking and his emotional abuse of women, but those actions are almost never shown. His dream about "a girl whom he had once known and thought he loved" shows only her reaction to his lack of suffering but does not show why she is upset with Querry; we are only told that "he didn't share her suffering" (31). Even Querry's act of leaving Marie to face Rycker in Luc has little effect. He tells Parkinson, "'She's his responsibility'" (167), and the subject of the conversation quickly changes. It is much later that Marie tells Querry, in quick summary form, of the "ghastly" events that followed (184). Significantly, she explains the situation only after Querry has been wrongly accused by Rycker. As a result, the reader's sympathy has been extended to the victimized Querry, and Querry's abandonment of Marie seems unimportant

by comparison. The use of summary, in the form of conversation, minimizes Querry's negative traits in the light of the positive traits so clearly displayed through action.

Greene's careful use of telling and showing demonstrates the importance he places on the perspective of his character-filters. His choices of technique deliberately focus attention on the protagonist and support the reader's identification with the protagonist. The intensity of that focus is made possible by use of third-person narration. Booth suggests that "the most important unacknowledged narrators in modern fiction are the third person 'centres of consciousness' through whom authors have filtered their narratives" (153). Such narrators are, perhaps, the most significant aspect of Greene's technique. As the reader shares the experience of the protagonists who walk "the dangerous edge," it is difficult to remain detached and objective. The whisky priest's drunkenness and fornication, Scobie's pride, and Querry's indifference become difficult to condemn because judgment is withheld by sympathy and identification. Booth suggests that an author can create sympathy for his protagonist by "control of inside views" (245). He explains that "the solution to the problem of maintaining sympathy despite almost crippling faults" lies in using the protagonist as the third person focus through which events and ideas are related (245).

The whisky priest in The Power and the Glory becomes appealing to the reader by two uses of "inside views". The first is the sense of recognition within the priest's mind:

> He drank down the brandy like damnation: men like the half-caste could be saved, salvation could strike like lightening at the evil heart, but the habit of piety excluded everything but the evening prayer and the Guild meeting and the feel of humble lips on your gloved hand. (169)

As the priest "damns" himself with brandy, the reader concentrates not on the priest's vice, nor on his piety, but on his state of mind. It is not an outside, objective voice which associates the brandy with damnation; it is the priest's own thoughts. The priest's harsh judgment of himself inspires the reader to sympathy which reserves judgment. In addition to the sense of recognition, the priest's confusion increases the reader's sympathy. Because there is no authoritative voice to clarify events and judgments, the reader shares the protagonist's confusion. The priest discovers that "even when he drank he felt bound to his sin by love. It was easier to get rid of hate" (173); yet in his confusion, the priest is not able to distinguish love of sin from love of sin's result. His love for his daughter makes him unable to regret his fornication; he does not separate the act from the result. He is also deluded in suggesting that for any person, "loving God ... [is] wanting to protect Him from yourself" (173). In believing thus, he does not realize that it may be God who is

protecting the priest through grace. Before his death, the priest quickly looks back over his life and feels his failure:

> It seemed to him, at that moment, that it would have been quite easy to be 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 there was only one thing that counted -- to be a saint. (210)

In the priest's confusion and feeling of failure, the reader becomes yet more attached. There is no authoritative voice to condemn the priest, but only his own thoughts which the reader shares. In addition, Booth suggests that without the support of a commenting narrator, the filter-character may be "of the kind that will seem most sympathetic if presented as an isolated, unaided consciousness" (274). There is, indeed, no authoritative voice to suggest hope for the priest, and the reader is eager to sympathize with the priest's isolation. That sense of isolation has been built up throughout the narration of the priest's experiences and thoughts. Greene increases the effect by sometimes distancing his narrator from his protagonist. When the priest attempts to help the American, we read that "at the best, it was only one criminal trying to aid another -- whichever way you looked, there wasn't much merit in either of them" (190). The voice speaking the words is merely a reflection of the priest's thoughts, but it has the effect of judging the priest. Though the priest often judges himself, this statement is so direct that it gains the appearance of having authority and reliability beyond the limitations of the

priest. As a result, the priest is isolated not only by the lack of a supporting commentator but also by a condemning voice which, although it comes from the priest's mind, appears to hold more authority. Placed in the midst of the priest's desperate, if unsuccessful efforts, the isolation again draws sympathy and opposes the voice of judgment.

A similar technique is the basis for Scobie's success as a character in The Heart of the Matter. Scobie, as the primary "filter" through which events are narrated, becomes almost heroic in his struggle only because the reader shares his point of view. Scobie's actions, if viewed from another angle, are less heroic. But the reader shares Scobie's experiences through Scobie's consciousness and, therefore, accepts many of Scobie's conclusions. When Scobie thinks of himself as a necessary sacrifice and rejects God, the reader does not find him objectionable. If another voice had related the events, Scobie would appear foolish. But, instead, we enter Scobie's mind to see "the heart of the matter" as he sees it:

> The voice was silent in the cave and his own voice replied hopelessly: No. I don't trust you. 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 can't shift my responsibility to you. If I could, I would be someone else. I can't make one of them suffer so as to save myself. I'm responsible and I'll see it through the only way I can. (259)

Scobie's rejection of God has the same effect on the reader as his sense of responsibility for Helen and Louise. His perspective is faulty and distorted by

pride, but because the reader has shared Scobie's perspective for much of the novel's course, it is difficult to view him objectively even when his point of view becomes obviously unreliable. That is, his unreliability *should* be obvious, but it is not. Booth explains, "In reacting to [the character's] faults from the inside out, as if they were our own, we may very well not only forgive them but overlook them" (249-50). Scobie's foolish pride in thinking "I am the cross" goes almost unnoticed (225), and his distorted vision of sacrifice seems almost valid. His confused state of mind, focused through the narrator, can be used to "break down the reader's convictions about truth itself, so that [the reader] may be ready to receive *the* truth when it is offered to him" (Booth 285). Hence, on initially encountering Scobie's thoughts, we accept his view of sacrifice and fail to recognize his pride. Because such a technique gains immense psychological depth, Scobie's thoughts have the illusion of reliability. Booth articulates the effect nicely, saying, "Generally speaking, the deeper our plunge, the more unreliability we will accept without loss of sympathy" (164). As a result, by the time Scobie decides to commit suicide, the reader is so intimately involved in the thoughts and struggles Scobie experiences that it is nearly impossible to remain objective. Even Scobie's more noticeable faults, including the superiority he feels over others and the resulting pity he feels for Helen and Louise, become forgivable because "we know him in a view which in real life we never obtain of anyone but

ourselves"; "we view his egotism almost as our own: it is deplorable, but there it is" (Booth 280-1). As readers, we have a difficulty remaining objective as we view Scobie from the inside, looking out.

Greene changes the technique in A Burnt-Out Case. There is less need to control the reader's sympathy for Querry because, as suggested above, Querry's faults are less obvious than his usefulness and good deeds. While the whisky priest and Scobie are often failures because of their flaws, Querry is very effective in spite of his flaws, and the cause of his dreadful fate lies in the flaws of others. Because Querry is already likeable as a character, Greene does not use third person narration for the usual effects. In fact, he does quite the opposite. Though Querry's actions give little evidence of his flaws, his point of view reveals the indifference which we would otherwise not see. The result is a "centre of consciousness" which remains much more distant from the reader, unlike that of the whisky priest or Scobie. There are few long passages of introspection where the reader experiences Querry's internal struggles; instead, there are thoughts of indifference which keep the protagonist at a distance from the reader. Even the story of the jeweller is remarkably detached and leads to little introspection by Querry. At its end, he simply thinks, "the King is dead, long live the King. Perhaps he had found here a country and a life" (159). Such a short reaction to his own story is typical of Querry's indifference. His struggle remains on a very shallow level. "'I don't

want to think any more'" (175), he tells the doctor, and he does, indeed, keep his thoughts to a minimum. When his shallow introspections do occur, they simply reveal motives, at least as Querry sees them, and they are not often sympathetic. As noted above, Querry's motives for helping Deo Gratias and Marie are ambiguous. The effect of the third person narrator, however, is to suggest negative motives. We find only phrases such as "intellectual curiosity" (55) and "he felt no pity, only irritation" (150). Hence Greene uses the "control of inside views" not to increase sympathy but to counteract it. The minimal narrative intrusion only suggests Querry's indifference, contrasting his positive actions, and creates the ambiguity which surrounds Querry's predicament.

In creating a complex and ambiguous protagonist there must also be alternative perspectives, that support or oppose the protagonist, from which to view the action. Returning to Booth's suggestion that "the most important unacknowledged narrators in modern fiction are the third person 'centres of consciousness' through whom authors have filtered their narratives" (Booth 153), we must recognize that Greene does not limit himself to a single consciousness. In each novel, the narrator shifts to other consciousnesses to give alternative perspectives which may influence the reader's view of the protagonist. The varying perspectives are carefully fitted into a highly

structured framework, and that framework differs slightly with each novel. The Power and the Glory, for example, is divided into four "parts", each of which further subdivides into chapters, and then into subsections which are divided only by a blank line. The Heart of the Matter has an even more complex system of divisions. It is divided into three books, which are in turn divided into parts, then into chapters, and finally into numbered sections. A Burnt-Out Case has similar divisions of parts, chapters, and numbered sections but, like The Power and the Glory, it has no division of books. The relationship between these divisions and narrative perspectives is similar but not identical in the three novels.

The Power and the Glory has a distinct and easily recognized relationship between general structure and narrative point of view. Most of the priest's experience, seen from his point of view, is contained within the middle two parts. If the reader were to look only for the novel's main action, at least in terms of the protagonist, then Part One and Part Four can almost be ignored. Their importance lies not in action, but in perspective. They begin and end the novel to form a frame of alternative perspectives around the action of Parts Two and Three. In returning to Greene's idea of "bare bones" (above 2), Parts One and Four consist mostly of flesh -- "mostly" because although these parts are made of other viewpoints reflecting upon the protagonist and his actions, they occasionally add to the action with new

development -- the whisky priest's death, for example, is recounted only from Tench's point of view. The alternative perspectives -- which are those of minor characters whom we might call bystanders, taking the name from chapter four of Part One -- are essential in adding life to the protagonist, as well as creating the effect of ambiguity in the novel.

The Heart of the Matter and A Burnt-Out Case have a less distinct structure. Unlike The Power and the Glory, which frames its action with alternative perspectives in Parts One and Four, these two novels intersperse such perspectives amongst the other sections of the novel. The point of view may change within a part, a chapter, or sometimes even a section. The Heart of the Matter begins with one section from Wilson's point of view, but the second section of the first chapter already changes to Scobie's view. A Burnt-Out Case begins with Querry's point of view, but he remains an anonymous "passenger" and the narrator is only slightly intrusive, giving a sense of distance and alienation. Both novels end with perspectives other than those of the protagonists, though the divisions are different. The Heart of the Matter ends with an entire "part" from alternative perspectives, while A Burnt-Out Case ends with only one section of the final chapter from Querry's perspective.

In each novel, the narrator's change in perspective is most important at the novel's end, though the earlier changes in perspective are essential in

leading up to the final break in point of view. The final perspective(s) form the denouement to the action which has been rising since the beginning of the novel and which has recently climaxed. Previous changes in perspective give another view of events or characters, influencing the reader's perspective of the protagonist, but they are overshadowed by the dominant centre of consciousness. They gain significance in the novel's final section(s) because they leave the novel's final impression on the reader. The protagonists are no longer present except in memories, and the other characters will reveal, more fully than before, their own perspectives on the recent action of the novel. In most cases, they suggest that the protagonist's perspective was unreliable and based on his own illusions: the priest may not have been the failure he thought he was, Scobie's sacrifice was not the necessary factor he believed it to be, and Querry may have changed more than he believed.

From the whisky priest's perspective, the reader sees his cowardice and failings, and the priest's own feelings of defeat draw the reader's sympathy. In reaching Part Four of the novel, however, the revised, positive opinions of the novel's other characters suggest hope. Although, as noted in the first part of this essay, the priest's influence on those characters remains ambiguous, there is still hope inspired by their reactions. Mr Tench, the lieutenant, the boy Luis, José the married priest, and Captain Fellows all indicate that the priest has had some sort of an influence on those around

him. By using their perspectives, Greene's narrator can suggest the possibility of the priest's influence without making a direct statement. There is no authorial voice to tell the reader that each of these characters has been changed forever by the priest's presence; we simply enter their minds to discover that he has caused them to think, and the final result is yet unknown.

The fact that readers see Scobie as "a 'good man'... hunted to doom by the harshness of his wife" (Greene, Ways 101) suggests that the same readers see events primarily through Scobie's eyes. When the reader is allowed to see events unfold without the limitations of Scobie's perspective, it becomes clear that Scobie's perception is distorted -- we noted earlier, for example, that Louise appears much different from Wilson's point of view. Yet Scobie's distorted perspective remains dominant and the reader is unwilling to turn against the disillusioned hero. The psychological intensity and the realism of Scobie's perspective is so powerful that the change in perspective at the novel's end has a peculiar effect. As we watch Louise and Wilson hovering over Scobie's diary, we become defensive and unwilling to accept their perspective. Even though Scobie is no longer present, he remains in the memories of the reader as much, or probably more, than in the minds of the characters. Louise and Wilson, though less deluded than Scobie, appear to be judgmental because they do not know *the heart of matter* as the reader does

(267-9). Helen's thoughts turn to prayer as she ponders the loss of Scobie (270-1), and we realize that he may have had more of an influence on her than we previously suspected. Father Rank, who previously felt inadequate as a priest, finally comes through with the words the reader wants to hear. Each of the alternate perspectives, instead of exposing Scobie's illusions, simply reinforce the reader's admiration of him. But again, as in all three novels, the perspectives are limited to the respective characters through which they come, and there is no authorial voice to settle the final questions.

A Burnt-Out Case ends with similar effects. The unobtrusive narrator of the final section appears to be narrating from the Superior's point of view, but because the section is made almost entirely of conversation, the reader discovers the final thoughts of both the Superior and Dr Colin. They enforce the suggestion that Querry was "cured" even if they disagree about the nature of that cure. In previous sections, however, the alternate perspectives serve another function. Just as Querry's point of view suggests his indifferent motives rather than increasing sympathy, alternative perspectives are used in an unusual way. Instead of suggesting the unreliability of Querry's point of view, the other perspectives may, in fact, lend support to it. Although Querry's point of view suggests the shallowness of his indifference, most other perspectives not only verbally support Querry but share a common

theme which seems to justify Querry's indifference. The Superior tells Dr Colin that

> "it would be a good thing for all of us if we were even more superficial. There's no real harm in superficial judgment, but if I begin to probe into what lies behind that desire to be of use, oh well, I might find some terrible things, and we are all tempted to stop when we reach that point." (23)

Querry's indifference is much like superficiality and his shallow, limited introspection is positively contrasted to the opposite extreme portrayed in Rycker. From Marie's point of view we see that Rycker thinks too much about himself and his personal interpretation of theology. "'You don't think I'm capable in my small way of going through the Dark Night of the Soul?'" he asks his wife (67). His intense introspection leads to his distorted perspective and his estrangement from his wife. A bit of Querry's indifference could improve Rycker's personality, and it is also contrasted to the search for motives by others. Although Querry recognizes that his motives may be detached and impersonal, he leaves the question alone and continues to aid the leproserie. Other characters show the dangers of searching for motives. From the Superior's point of view we see Father Thomas's limited understanding as he says, "'Well, I do look for motives'" (87) and finds motives in Querry which are not truly present. Parkinson is little better as he distorts motives and, as we learn through Dr Colin's consciousness, "drew his rapid, agile, erroneous conclusions" (107). Both Father Thomas and Parkinson

would clear much of their own distortion if they learned to be a bit more indifferent. Hence the alternative points of view do not undermine Querry, but in fact support the one element of Querry's character which the reader might call a flaw.

The narrator may, at times, remain separate from any character's consciousness and silently suggest judgments of his own. This is almost a second narrator, without the limitations of the filter-character, and he may speak to support or correct the first narrator. In Greene's novels, the narrator does not separate himself from the filtering consciousness to speak explicitly; but he does comment outside the perspective of the characters. By using a variety of literary devices to carry his commentary, he can comment while remaining less noticeable and thereby preserve the novel's realism.

One of the simpler methods of commenting quietly is the use of scenery. From the scene of a given situation, Greene's narrator draws on elements to provide the atmosphere and metaphors with which he will silently comment on the protagonist and his surroundings. This type of commenting is also one of the most hidden because the narrator can quietly comment from his own point of view while speaking through the character's point of view. As the reader sees events from the filter-character's perspective, the narrator quietly inserts his own comments on those events. The Power and the Glory,

for example, opens from Tench's perspective, but it is the independent perspective of the narrator which provides the atmosphere and hints at the social conditions of the state. Tench recognizes the atmosphere of death and decay around him, arousing "a faint feeling of rebellion" in him (7), but it is the narrator's technique which implies, by use of scenery, the darkness of the situation. He describes the "vultures" who watched with "shabby indifference"; he emphasizes death in showing the "bust of an ex-president, ex-general, ex-human being" (7). The negative atmosphere is further reinforced by the additional negative phrases: "the man said *nothing* at all," "the Treasury which *had once been* a church" (7; italics added); "*Nothing* to do. *Nobody* would come to see him before five"; "a few feet of *damaged* coil" and "a *rotten* cord" (8; italics added). The narrator's use of negative phrases to create the atmosphere is a useful device to comment on the protagonist. While the setting is in a state of death and decay, a spiritual wasteland, the priest appears lively and fertile. The silly giggle, the "unstable hilarity" (9), and the illegitimate child which make the priest imperfect and human stand in contrast to the rigid, death-like state of the society. By the use of contrast, the narrator comments quietly, but favourably, on the priest.

Greene uses a similar technique in The Heart of the Matter. From the setting which he so vividly describes, he draws metaphors which his narrator might use to comment on characters. The use of metonymic metaphor to

comment not only preserves the realism of the text but also hides the narrator's comments amongst the scenery, avoiding the break in point of view which would be necessary for the narrator to comment explicitly. The narrator comments on Louise, the nagging wife who is by no means a popular character with the reader, by use of metaphor. As Louise complains about her desire to go to Sough Africa, Scobie says, "'Look at that little beggar,' ... pointing at the house lizard that always came out upon the wall about this time to hunt for moths and cockroaches" (57). When Louise challenges his hopeful suggestions, we note that "his eyes followed the lizard as it pounced" (58). Finally, Louise's trip is foreshadowed by the same metaphor: "'Ticki, I've got nothing except you, and you've got -- nearly everything.' The lizard flicked across the wall and came to rest again, the wings of a moth in his small crocodile jaws" (59). The lizard is only one example, however. The most notable example of this technique is the presence of the vulture. As noted earlier in this essay, Louise's nagging presence is emphasised by her association with the vultures. "A vulture flapped heavily upwards" while Scobie persuades "Louise to pick a little meat" (25). When she leaves for south Africa, "the vultures took off from the roof" (98); and when there is "no sign of Louise's departure or presence," "a *late* vulture settled for the night" (103; italics added). After Scobie's death, the metaphor describes both Wilson and Louise as they discuss Scobie's late actions: "They didn't kiss; it was too

soon for that, but they sat in the hollow room, holding hands, listening to the vultures clambering on the iron roof" (268). But if Louise is like a scavenger to her husband, and Wilson little better, Scobie himself is shown in a similarly negative view. His pitying attitude toward his wife is based on pride and lacks a certain respect, and the narrator emphasizes that fault with the metaphor of the rat. Scobie's emotional distance from his wife, because he "couldn't understand such bare relations of intimate feeling," is reflected by the image of him "sitting where the rat had sat, in his own world" (41). When Scobie goes to see about Pemberton, Wilson checks upstairs to "see whether there's a rat in the bedroom" and "stood just inside the door and clapped his hands softly, but no rat moved" (82); and after Louise is gone, Scobie is more contented because "he had done his duty" by keeping her happy; meanwhile, "in the bathroom a rat moved" (103). We also note his comparison to a cockroach, which, like Scobie, is carefully watched by Wilson: Wilson "shifted his seat uncomfortably on the sharp edge of the bath and watched a cockroach like a large blood blister on the wall" (64); "He got up from the bath, and the cockroach flashed into hiding" (65). Significantly, the use of metonymic metaphor appears to always paint a negative picture. It is a device used not to inspire but to control or limit sympathy.

Setting provides quiet comments in A Burnt-Out Case as well. Although we recognize the familiar use of metaphor when Querry and Marie

notice, at Luc, "a dead piedog stretched in their track waiting for the morning vulture" (149), that type of specific, static metaphor is rare in the novel. Greene, instead, uses a larger, developing metaphor. The obvious parallel of leprosy and Querry's indifference to life develops throughout the novel and is supported by other elements of the setting. The boat trip, which "goes no farther" (20) into the dense jungle suggests Querry's journey of isolation on which he is a nameless "passenger"; and the leproserie as a place of healing suggests the possibility of Querry's eventual cure. An unusual aspect of the metaphor, however, is the fact that it is not only the narrator's device: the novel's characters often use the same metaphor to describe Querry's condition. Querry, in his dream, says, "'I can't feel at all, I am a leper'" (31), and Dr Colin tells the priests, "I think the cure is nearly complete" (178). The doctor and the priests debate the nature of Querry's cure by extending the metaphor to psychological and spiritual realms. Significantly, the narrator uses the metaphor differently. He begins by associating Querry with Deo Gratias, who is "cured, but ... a burnt-out case" (21). Deo Gratias's "mutilation was the alternative to pain," and "Querry did not suffer" because of his own form of mutilation (25). Yet the narrator does not use the metaphor to discuss the nature of Querry's problem and cure, as the other characters attempt to do. Instead, he uses it to foreshadow the possible outcome of Querry's problem. We are told that while leprosy was curable, it remained "a psychological

problem" (18); Querry's "disgust of praise" is cured by his stay at the leproserie (193), but the resulting psychological problem of his indifference is more difficult to cure. We are also told, of Deo Gratias, that "the stump seemed useless, but it was extraordinary what a mutilated hand could be taught to do" (17). Querry, meanwhile, though thoroughly "mutilated" by the public, nonetheless proves to be extremely helpful at the leproserie. Finally, the narrator uses Dr Colin's thoughts to foreshadow Querry's unfortunate end. The doctor is dismayed that "it was from the other diseases [not leprosy] that most of his patients died" while "Querry tagged at his heels" (47). The problem of Querry's indifference may or may not be close to a cure, but the reader can never know. Querry's life is cut short by yet another disease: his fame, which cannot be cured. As he continually defends himself against the pious and absurd outbursts of Rycker, Parkinson, and Father Thomas, the same public image makes him the centre of Marie's plot. Significantly, although the narrator provides much information about Querry through the use of metaphor, it is not judgmental and does not suggest a solution. While individual metaphors in the other novels make a definitive statement to balance the effect of other devices, the major, developing metaphor of Querry's condition simply remains ambiguous.

Another of the more notable methods which the narrator may use to comment is the presence of other characters to whom the protagonist can be

compared and contrasted. Unlike metaphor, which the narrator may use to stand outside the filter-character's consciousness, character seems to be outside the narrators' realm. If the narrator tells the story, but does not create it, then he has little control over the other characters. He may even control the reader's responses to a character and affect any aspect of that character by silent devices, but the characters themselves are the creation of the author. Yet the narrator can, in fact, control how the characters may be used. By stressing particular features of a character and giving subtle hints that two characters should be compared, the narrator encourages the reader to do so. The result is yet another technique by which the narrator may quietly comment on his protagonist. In addition, while Greene's narrator may not always represent the author's own views, and may even be undermined in the text, using other characters to comment on the protagonist gives the appearance of an authorial view, and author and narrator become less distinguishable.

While the reader may argue that secondary characters in The Power and the Glory have little life of their own, at least in comparison to the fully realized whisky priest, it is that very characteristic of the novel which adds to the character of the whisky priest. Minor characters are, indeed, one-sided, but the side they show is a distinct comment on a similar or contrasting feature of the priest. The lieutenant and the pious woman of the prison are

notable examples. Each contributes to the development of the whisky priest's character beyond the literal level. In using the lieutenant as authorial comment, Greene specifically portrayed him as a contrast to the priest. In Ways of Escape, he writes,

> I had not found the idealism or integrity of the lieutenant of The Power and the Glory among the police and *pistoleros* I had actually encountered -- I had to invent him as a counter to the failed priest: the idealistic police officer who stifled life from the best possible motives: the drunken priest who continued to pass life on. (68)

Greene's narrator describes the priest carefully to ensure that the reader does not miss the association with the priest: "There was something of a priest in his intent observant walk -- a theologian going back over the errors of the past to destroy them again" (24), and his room "looked as comfortless as a prison or a monastic cell" (24). As a result, we recognize that the lieutenant is everything we would expect the priest to be. He rules his life through integrity and ambition, and "he felt no need of women" (23). He has "the dignity of an idea" (23) and a "sad and unsatisfactory love" for the children (57). It is from such love that he draws his power. The narrator explains, "It was for these he was fighting. He would eliminate from their childhood everything which had made him miserable, all that was poor, superstitious and corrupt" (58). It was "he who really cared [about the state]. He was indifferent to his personal future" (56). The pious woman from the prison also suggests what the reader might expect from a priest. She is very self-assured in applauding

the acts of the priests who took the bastard child away from the old man and made her hate him. "They acted quite correctly" (124), she says. She is also eager to applaud the supposed bravery of the whisky priest, saying, "We have a martyr here ..." (126; Greene's ellipses). Her prison sentence is very "correct" as well: she "had good books in [her] house" (129). She appears to be a "good" woman, unlike the priest who is guilty of drunkenness, fornication, and slothfulness.

Yet if these characters stand in contrast to the whisky priest, they do not portray a negative image of him. Though the priest would do well to have the lieutenant's integrity and vision, he admits his limitations and accepts the "lower" class as his equals; as a result, he is much more effective than the lieutenant and the pious woman. The lieutenant, so strict and visionary, remains alienated. His gesture of affection toward Luis suggests his failure: "He pinched the boy's ear and saw him flinch away with the pain; they scattered from him like birds and he went on alone" (58). In the end, his "dynamic love .. felt dead," and "the boy crinkled up his face and spat" at him (220). He is isolated and sterile, unlike the fertile priest; both he and the pious woman from the prison lack the same sense of "humanness". The woman "had the intense tiresome note of a pious woman," and the priest "had always been worried by the fate of pious women. As much as politicians, they fed on illusion" (127). Her "good books" fill her "with unbearable pride," and the

priest recognizes that "he had done nothing to shake her complacency" (129). Moveover, regardless of what the priest tells her, she cannot accept that he is a "bad priest" until he refuses to interfere with the intimate couple in the corner of the cell. Her mind is changed because he can "sympathize with these animals" (131); the woman cannot appreciate his gestures because she is "above" such people. Like the lieutenant, the ideas to which she clings become a barrier between herself and others; the priest, though far from perfect, has no such barriers.

Greene also uses secondary characters to comment upon and reflect his protagonist, Querry, in A Burnt-Out Case. These characters serve Querry's character by acting as foils and mirrors. Not by coincidence, the three less-admirable characters of the novel are closely associated with Querry's problematic past. That past is marked by not only indifference, but by a strong sense of the abstract in Querry's lifestyle and work. "'The use of what I made was never important to me,'" he tells Dr Colin. "'When I made something I made it for my own pleasure. ... I wasn't concerned with the people who occupied my space -- only with the space'" (44). He goes on to say that "'self-expression is a hard and selfish thing. It eats everything, even the self. At the end you find you haven't even got a self to express'" (46). Querry reveals that his indifference is rooted in the abstraction of his art. The purpose of his art lies not in its serviceability but in pure aestheticism. The

human factor of his work has been entirely removed, and the resulting problem is echoed by Rycker, Father Thomas, and Parkinson. Rycker is little more than a Pharisee. His mind is so filled with abstractions of moral philosophy that he lacks common sense. Even love is subjected to his ruthless ideology, so that his claim to "'believe very profoundly in love'" is made "as some men might claim to believe in fairies" (36). With Father Thomas he shares the concern that the leproserie's focus is on supplies and practical issues rather than the salvation of the lepers' souls. "'A well, Querry, a well against a human soul'" (40), Rycker laments, just as Father Thomas notes that

> his companions ... spent their lives with small concerns which they could easily discuss together -- the cost of foot-baths, a fault in the dynamo, a holdup at the brick-kiln, but the things which worried him he could discuss with no one. (88)

Rycker and Father Thomas do not understand that people respond better to a helper and problem-solver than to a preacher of abstract truths, while Parkinson yields to the abstract motives of his journalism rather than printing truth. He thrusts truth aside to make way for attractive half-truths and deceptions, knowing that "'nobody notices things like that'" (112). He shares the abstract thinking patterns of Rycker and Father Thomas, and together these negatively portrayed characters suggest a view of Querry's past life which the reader would not otherwise receive. Seeing Querry's good deeds

and only hearing of his past life provides a positive portrait of the protagonist, but to discover that Querry is much like the less likeable characters, as Querry himself suggests, balances the positive with the negative. These same characters, however, ultimately provide hope for Querry. They reflect Querry's preoccupation with the abstract, and by identifying with them, Querry has hope of recovery. Querry's dislike of Rycker, aside from obvious reasons shared by almost everyone, is linked to the abstractness he recognizes in himself. He later tells Rycker, "'I begin to think we are not so different, you and I'" (145). He also suggests that Parkinson is his "looking-glass" (116); like Querry's architecture, Parkinson's "art" must stand as he wishes to see it. The abstract qualities become most important to the artist. Likewise, though giving up his art is Querry's first step toward recovery, his self-preoccupation continues. The human factor of life is still lost in his abstract thoughts, resulting in his isolation and indifference. By confronting his past through Rycker, Father Thomas, and Parkinson, who share a common problem in different forms, Querry has hope for recovery from his solipsistic state.

Our positive view of Querry is increased by the other priests and Dr Colin, who stand in contrast to the three characters previously mentioned. When Querry asks Dr Colin if he can "cure" his problem, we receive the first indication of the positive influence Querry's experience will have on him. His past life is contrasted to Dr Colin and the priests (other than Father Thomas)

who do not let abstract theories and concepts stand in the way of their work; they choose a more practical approach. Dr Colin shares no faith with the priests, yet this causes no problem as they bind together for a common cause:

> In the struggle with the common enemy [Dr Colin and the Superior] had become close friends -- Doctor Colin was even known occasionally to attend mass, though he had long ago ... lost faith in any god that a priest would have recognized. (20)

Dr Colin and the pragmatic priests do not let ideas and abstractions get in the way of practical work, and they are what Querry begins to become. They suggest a hope for Querry's future. By following their example, Querry helps others in a selfless manner, begins to share their pain, and seems to be cured of his solipsism. Though he may not share their ideologies and, in fact, suggests his own indifference, he overlooks these facts and makes a difference at the leproserie. He can no longer be compared to Rycker, Parkinson, and Father Thomas; instead he becomes useful like the other priests and Dr Colin. Though the narrator never comments explicitly on Querry's past, present, and future, he uses other characters to make suggestions.

Conclusion: Graham Greene and the Human Condition

Significantly, the devices which Greene deploys, or allows his narrator to use, show his protagonists in a positive light more often than not. Showing and telling, point of view, alternative perspectives, and the narrators' hidden comments rarely undermine the reader's opinion of the protagonists. The use of devices to improve the reader's image of the protagonists may explain why readers accept Greene's far-from-perfect characters so whole-heartedly, and why Greene sees Scobie's inordinate pride while the readers see a hero. Yet not all devices serve that purpose. Greene also uses devices to illumine the negative aspects of his protagonists; these devices may be fewer, but they are nonetheless present. Such negative views help to balance the generally positive portrayal of the protagonist. This balance is a necessary element of Greene's technique because a narrator who only praises the protagonist quickly becomes suspicious. Greene's more balanced approach, though still slanted, appears more reliable in creating the likeable though imperfect hero; and a hero of modern fiction is more appealing, generally speaking, if he is not perfect, but truly human.

The "dangerous edge" which the protagonists walk is almost a paradox: there is much good in a character with immense problems -- but such a discovery requires the intimate perspective which Greene creates in his fiction. It is that perspective which creates the sense of ambiguity around the protagonists. In essence, there are almost two types of ambiguity which combine into one. There is the ambiguity of the reader's response: the cold facts, which try to condemn the protagonists, are countered by the reader's desire to accept the same characters -- the characters are thoroughly likeable in spite of their faults. As a result, there are no "good" or "bad" protagonists, but only human ones. Without the well-developed relationship between readers and protagonists, however, it is unlikely that the reader would reserve judgment. From an unbiased perspective, the reader uncovers more questions about the protagonists than answers, resulting in the ambiguity surrounding the novels' action. But such a perspective is difficult to maintain as the readers begins to know the protagonists more intimately. Greene's technique reflects his theme on the human condition. Using his method of supporting his protagonists through narrative technique, he allows the reader to see, more clearly, *the heart of the matter*.

We must also note that Greene's exploration of ambiguous characters, or, in fact, the perplexing human condition, is by no means limited to the three novels discussed in this essay. The Honorary Consul contains the fallen priest,

Léon Rivas, who is also a would-be murderer, and the adulterous Dr Plarr. Yet Dr Plarr remains helpful and likeable in spite of his faults, and Rivas ultimately gives his life to assist Plarr. In Monsignor Quixote, we find the protagonist wondering, "Am I ... incapable of feeling human love? For, if I am, then I must also be incapable of feeling love for God" (140). He is a heavy-drinking, ineffectual priest plagued by doubts, and, like the whisky priest, he recognizes his own failure. Yet, at the novel's end, Father Quixote defends his faith and, though he would never have believed it, becomes a martyr. Like the protagonists in the other novels, these characters demonstrate the capacity for good in even the most unlikely candidates.

In Brighton Rock we discover a similar technique with an unusual twist. Because the protagonist, Pinkie, demonstrates a greater capacity for evil than the protagonists already mentioned, the reader's view of him may not remain as positive. For Pinkie, murder and deception are a way of life. Yet even Pinkie is not all evil. His hardness, which results from a difficult childhood, begins to break down at certain points in the novel. He often fights to retain his hard exterior, finding that "you could lose vice as easily as you lost virtue, going out of you from a touch" (137). At the movie with Rose,

> the Boy began to weep. He shut his eyes to hold in his tears, but the music went on -- it was like a vision of release to an imprisoned man. He felt constriction and saw -- hopelessly out of reach -- a limitless freedom: no fear, no hatred, no envy. (179)

If Pinkie inspires the reader to sympathy at all, it is only because he is trapped in a way of life created by a nightmarish childhood. Unlike the whisky priest, Scobie, or Querry, Pinkie is not essentially "good". His motives are as corrupt as his actions. Yet after sharing Pinkie's thoughts for much of the novel, the reader cannot help but have a sense of hope for him. Also, at the novels end, the Priest tells Rose, "'You can't conceive, my child, nor can I or anyone -- the ... appalling ... strangeness of the mercy of God'" (246). The theme of mercy, so common in Greene's work, takes an unusual twist in this novel; Rose's hope for Pinkie's soul, inspired by the priest's words, is about to be shattered by the recording Pinkie left behind. Hope is created, and hope is destroyed. Yet the reader has seen the potential for good in this complex character, and Greene leaves many questions unanswered. We must admit, however, that the effect is not as striking as in the novels discussed above. Because Pinkie has so great a capacity for evil and so few redeemable qualities, there is less ambiguity around him. The intimacy of his perspective helps improve the reader's perception of him, but not to the same extent as the other novels. The paradox of the human condition, though present in Brighton Rock, is not rendered as clearly and has less effect on the reader. It is only in the other novels, discussed in Parts One and Two of this essay, that Greene truly masters his technique.

In creating the ambiguous protagonists, who exemplify the complex and perplexing human condition, Greene supplies no simple answers. He presents characters whose source of goodness is also the source of their problems, and who can be accepted in spite of their obvious and often significant faults. As a novelist, he fulfils his function by introducing the characters and asking the questions in an elaborate manner; the responses and the answers he leaves to the reader, so that we may search, even as Greene's protagonists search, to discover answers within and beyond ourselves.

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