

Visual Theologies
in Graham Greene's
'Dark and Magical Heart of Faith'

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Abstract

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This study explores the ways in which Catholic images, statues, and icons haunt the fictional, spiritual wasteland of Greene's writing, nicknamed 'Greenland'. It is also prompted by a real space, discovered by Greene during his 1938 trip to Mexico, which was subsequently fictionalised in *The Power and the Glory* (1940), and which he described as 'a short cut to the dark and magical heart of faith'.

This is a space in which modern notions of disenchantment meets a primal need for magic – or the miraculous – and where the presentation of concepts like 'salvation' are defamiliarised as savage processes that test humanity. This brutal nature of faith is reflected in the pagan aesthetics of Greenland which focus on the macabre and heretical images of Christianity and how for Greene, these images magically transform the darkness of doubt into desperate redemption. As an amateur spy, playwright and screen writer Greene's visual imagination was a strength to his work and this study will focus on how the visuality of Greene's faith remains in dialogue with debates concerning the 'liquidation of religion' in society, as presented by Graham Ward. The thesis places Greene's work in dialogue with other Catholic novelists and filmmakers, particularly in relation to their own visual-religious aesthetics, such as Martin Scorsese and David Lodge. Key figures in Greene studies – including Leopoldo Duran and Michael Brennan – have explored his complex spiritual journey. However, this thesis will argue that his visual imagination needs considerable reappraisal, particularly in relation to contemporary theological debates regarding idolatry, iconicity and re-enchantment. It will also connect these debates with the works of figures like Jenny Franchot and Grace Davie, who are interested in the cultural importance of religion in contemporary society.

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Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is of my own composition and that it contains no material previously submitted for any other degree of qualification. The work in this thesis has been produced by me, except where due acknowledgement is made in the text. I confirm that this thesis does not exceed the prescribed limit of 80,000 words, including the main text and any footnotes but excluding the bibliography.

Dorcas Wangui

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Introduction : Greene's

unheimlich belief

This study explores the playful space between sacred and profane; the space which searches outside of religious genres in order to push the margins of orthodox Christianity and redefine concepts like holiness and deity. Many modern representations of religion in our post-Christian era can be categorised as holy pastiche, the portraits of the divine which the internet has mischievously resurrected from the catacombs of Christian history. Take for example the traditional festival of Easter or what has been renamed as a digital 'Zombie Jesus Day', the day when Jesus returned from the dead with the red-leather jacket style of a ghoul from the eighties. The internet declares him to be the only zombie who will let you eat his flesh and who died for your sins only to come back for your brains. This digital trend alleges that along with Lazarus, Jesus was the original zombie; he is named after the vogue of television shows like *The Walking Dead* (2010-2017), which revel in the possibility of a supernaturally dystopian future. The holy pastiche of both pictures could be turned into the most disconcerting Easter cards ever invented, in their efforts to parody the festivals and sacraments of the Christian faith. Zombie Jesus plants the idea of a Christ who awakened from the tomb with paranormal behaviour that would later be followed by the bizarre rituals of his faithful followers during their acts of communion. The popularity of Zombie Jesus extends into merchandise, clothing and jewellery. There is even a following for Zombie Virgin Mary. This craze is perhaps the most current example of holy pastiche we have, which derives its aesthetic inspiration from Catholicism.

It highlights how the art of the Catholic Church is being transformed into an alternative aesthetic which openly secularized communities are engaging with. The organisation found at www.zombiejesus.org describe themselves as a group who see the rise of the undead as a great time to celebrate spring, visit family and eat chocolate. What would Zombie Jesus do? He would celebrate also.¹ The creators of this quasi-festival are not taking advantage of the Christian calendar to cause offense or blasphemy, but to re-establish the need of family and friends in traditions that are now globalized into mass spectacles. Zombie Jesus brings Easter back to its word-of-mouth origins, while highlighting the strange and cultish roots of Christianity.

Like Zombie Jesus this study is interested in the darker representations of the Christian faith. It originated from a fascination with the doubleness of religion; the edge of faith that is caught between dualisms of *heimlich* and *unheimlich*; like the familiar love of God and the unrecognisable wrath of his judgement. This study is rooted in the liminal space between the sacred and secular. It is the space that modernity is built upon which I believe offers a contemporary religion that blurs the lines between good and evil.

I first found this when I was researching religious references in contemporary literature after I began to wonder if the doubleness of *heimlich* and *unheimlich* could articulate the fundamental symmetry of faith (vice /virtue for example) and if the word uncanny could be used to describe how religion in the modern world has become a *doppelgänger* of itself because it is both traditional and yet unknowable. Uncanny in its secular appearance on currency (which gives evidence to the way it bubbles underneath the weight of cultural repression), and uncanny in how religion re-enacts what a Freudian scholar might name the 'return of the repressed' in secularised society. To think of the uncanny as a religious space is to think about Christ as the

greatest religious allegory of the critical axiom that the *unheimlich* is ‘everything which ought to have remained secret and hidden but has come to light’.² It is also to think of the *heimlich* doubling in Christ which is both tame and gothic; a Christ born in a manger and yet also immortalized in his dark crucifixion. The symbolism of the crucifixion is yet another religious space which is uncanny, depicting the gruesome brutality of a Roman death – a criminal’s death which linguistically epitomised curse and taboo – miraculously brought into the light of salvation, liberation and triumph.³ This is a dualism between the familiar symbol of the cross and the unsettling brutality of a Roman crucifixion.

The Bible itself is also caught in its own duality after becoming the most widely distributed and best selling book –*heimlich* in this respect –which is culturally absorbed into western language as the epitome of civilizing aphorisms and yet it is also banned in certain countries and in particular times through government censorship and at its root is filled with unreadable holiness and extreme violence - *unheimlich* in its gruesome mystery. Noah’s ark is not the only time that the Bible speaks through dualism as the doubleness of the text is also inherent in its form –the collection of books is split into two parts. This is one way of reading the Bible: one side devoted to the free gift of universal mercy and grace for everyone, while the other is founded by an elite nation who has to secure their salvation through sacrifice and strict separation from others. Two covenants which parallel two key figures Adam and Christ; and which illustrates the theology of how the two covenants operate in reversing motions.

There is a nice symmetry in this: Death initially came by a man, and resurrection from death came by a man. Everybody dies in Adam; everybody comes alive in Christ.[...] We follow this sequence in Scripture: The First Adam received life, the Last Adam is

a life-giving Spirit. Physical life comes first, then spiritual—a firm base shaped from the earth, a final completion coming out of heaven. The First Man was made out of earth, and people since then are earthy; the Second Man was made out of heaven, and people now can be heavenly.⁴

This passage explains how the theological symmetry between Adam - the image of God - and Christ - the image of the invisible God - is used to articulate dualisms between life & death, obedience & disobedience, victory & defeat and curse & restoration. Christ is described as the second Adam in this context because both men are figures at the head of humanity, both innocent and pure and both give life in either a physical or spiritual way. These rulers are both tested in different ways that double the nature of humanity itself – the idea that we are all connected to both the frailty of Adam and the redemptive struggle of Christ. We can take the language of doubleness further when we consider that the parameters of redemption are based around heaven and earth or the physical the spiritual. In modern terms we have named these spaces the sacred and the secular. Though we live in a time that has declared itself to be secular, where the metanarrative of God should be long laid to rest, we find that what should have been dead according to Nietzsche is actually hidden in the open through the use of images and symbols.

I began to look for appearances of Messianic symbols in a range of genres as broad as children's fiction, postcolonial literature and modernist narrative. Although the writers I chose had little in common, I discovered a playful use of the figure of Christ through their individual use of symbolism, blasphemy and politics. I took for example the popular series of Narnia, which transports the figure of Christ into a new genre of children fiction. *A River Between* (1965) written by Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, who utilized the figure to represent a national independence, Fyodor Dostoevsky's *The*

Brothers Karamazov (1880) to explore the politics of religion, Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight* (2005) to blur the boundaries between light and dark and Mikhail Bulgakov's *Master and Margarita* (1967) to show the other side of Christ - his antithesis Satan. The metaphor of the messianic had been turned into fantastical representations of biblical creatures and Gothic monsters; a *heimlich* lion who carries redemption in his roar and an *unheimlich* vampire who brought life after death. Christ in these texts was presented as a commodified image that could be either magical, vacant of meaning, or gruesome and monstrous. The dualism that I saw in these messianic figures intersected good and evil at the borders of a new Christ. This twist is something I inadequately described as Gothic religion- a worship of all things supernatural or magical. This supernatural has become a new 'sacred' which blurs the boundaries between the two and problematizes epistemological understanding between good and evil.

This supported my view that the *unheimlich* is a space which borders on the religious which can be seen when we look back at Freud's essay on 'The Uncanny' where religious references are used such as: 'a holy *heimlich* effect', 'Pharaoh's *heimlich* councillor' – Joseph and a veiling of the divine presence of God which surrounds him with a certain '*Unheimlichkeit*'. Freud implies via Daniel Sander's German dictionary -*Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache* – that there is something about the *Unheimlich* which has a particularly religious element.⁵

Specific scriptures are cited in the essay such as the particular verse: 'In the secret of his tabernacle he shall hide me *heimlich*' This is taken from the fifth verse in Psalm 27 where David speaks of the presence of God as a secret refuge; its walls are familiar and comfortable but they also act to conceal and hide David from his enemies. This verse is among many scriptural references to the *heimlich* process as German biblical

translation offers us more than forty instances of *heimlich* secrecy and concealment. One of interest comes from the book of Job, where Job confesses ‘now a thing was secretly [*heimlich*] brought to me, and my ear received a whisper of it.’ Another translation by Wycliffe expands that: ‘Truly a hidden word was said to me, and my ear caught it like the stolen whispers of private speaking.’⁶

Taken as singular accounts these theological scriptures might mean nothing if not understood in a broader etymology of Christ, who the prophet Isaiah has been interpreted as referring to as a Messiah of *heimlich* concealment; a Messiah who miraculously kept his identity hidden so he could reveal it at the appointed time:

And to whom has the arm of the Lord been disclosed?..He has no form or comeliness, that we should look at him and no beauty that we should desire Him...we did not appreciate His worth or have any esteem for Him.⁷

Freud himself believed that one of the functions of religion was to make mankind feel ‘at home in the uncanny’. He argues this in his native German ‘*heimisch im Unheimlichen.*’ – which he wrote in his essay *The Future of an Illusion* (1927). For Freud a life of religion should provide a strategy for navigating through unhomely existentialist questions, and yet we can argue the very principle of religious holiness require a level of unhomely regard to the world. A theological consecration. A process of being set apart. There is a calling for *unheimlich* homelessness, and it is perhaps in this duty that the believer should feel at home. In this sense, religious uncanniness is a life-long experience which does not disappear with conversion. Take the conversion of the writer Grahame Greene. Greene wrote his Catholic fiction on the borderlines between saints and sinners and displayed his own brand of conflicted Catholicism. In

literary representations of religion, there is no one more apt to illustrate the doubleness of God than Greene.

‘Greeneland’ is the hazy phrase that has been critically coined to describe the fictional world which Greene’s characters inhabit. It is a space that is often fraught with ethical contradictions and theological grappling. It is this disorder and doubt that makes Greeneland the perfect setting to explore the dualism of Christianity, as Greene constructed a religious dystopia that manifested itself through the liminal space between sacred and secular. This is where this study was born. In the shadows of novels like *The End of the Affair* (1951), which are engaged in the dualisms of faith and reason, known and unknown.

The thesis will start by focusing on the ‘Catholic Novel and Visuality’ and trace Greene’s position in the lineage of Catholic writers, like J.K. Huysmans, Evelyn Waugh and François Mauriac. Though Greene did not like to call himself a Catholic novelist, this chapter will argue in accordance with critics like David Lodge who believe that elements of Catholicism are unavoidable in the symbols which Greene uses as to depict the nature of human experience. This chapter will address the relevance of the Catholic imagination in Greene’s writing, which unlike his persona, cannot be separated from symbols of faith.

Though writers like J. R.R. Tolkien create fictional worlds that reflect the metaphysical realities of salvation and emphasise the presence of God / good in the world and not merely his absence; Greene’s fiction is involved in a more complicated process of light and dark that is not afraid to reside in grey areas of doubt and uncertainty. This chapter will consider Greene’s fiction as a example of Catholic

fiction where God's presence is omitted but his representation through art and sculpture are abundant.

This chapter will also focus more broadly on the return of the visual repressed through looking at Evelyn Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited* (1945) and the presentation of the chapel as a space simultaneously filled with bad art and rekindled faith. This chapter will look at the image of the chapel as type of religious house which is as crucial to the Catholic novel as the haunted house is key to the Gothic novel. It will compare the presentation of religious houses in Greene's fiction with Evelyn Waugh. It will argue that the visuality of churches, chapels and cathedrals often usurps the verbal parameters of Catholic fiction in a way that gives these buildings a comforting and nostalgic presence during the modern absence of God.

The next chapter, 'Icon:Idol' follows on from the 2010 study *Graham Greene: Fictions, Faith and Authorship*, written by Michael Brennan, which acknowledges the religious aesthetic of Greeneland through its fascination with iconography. This topic is little more than a footnote compared to the heavier dualities of faith and doubt / hope and despair which Brennan's study focuses on, however this chapter will expand on this topic to argue that Greene presents icons as a type of simulacrum in order to critique the empty commodification of redemptive symbols in the Catholic Church. It traces the history of the icon from its pagan origins up until its modern use in the cluttered catholic aesthetic, where it has now involved in a type of sentimental kitsch which the modern world cannot abandon, as evident in the sentimental images of the Christmas nativity, the cross and the Virgin Mary.

This chapter is situated in the field of aesthetics and art history which has been pioneered by thinkers such as W T Mitchell and Hans Belting. The images which are

spoken of are treated as texts in their own right, full of connotative and denotative ability and studied in their relation to the complex conversion of Greene. As a former Anglican, Greene's voyeurism of Catholic images creates a tension between inspiration and indignation that leaves Greene's characters in a space of anxiety concerning the mass production of religious images. The controversy of selling the sacred is discussed in *Monsignor Quixote* while also being related to Jenny Franchot's study on the commodification of religious fragments in the modern world.

The pinnacle of this type of commodification lies in the figure of the Virgin Mary, who is discussed as a foundational icon for Greene throughout his literary career because she represents the feminine love of God. The prevalence of the marian image in Greene's fiction is studied via Andrew Greeley's sociological work, *The Femininity of God*.

The chapter also focuses on the play *Carving a Statue* (1964) for its grotesque representation of God being transformed into Satan, which is a Catharistic process that is indicative of the pagan history of Christianity. It questions why Greene's intellect was so inspired by heretical movements and how he transformed the figure of the priest into his own type of modern heresy.

Chapter 3, 'Magic: Miracle' is inspired by Greene's own affinity for supernatural magic. For example during his 1990 interview with Marie-Francois Allain, Greene confessed how he believed that the magical characteristics of Catholicism were 'more 'rational' than such abstract religious ideas as the Holy Trinity'. Though, in this instance, Greene confessed to a personal belief in magic and the superstitious (perhaps what we would now term the Gothic) during an earlier interview in 1957 with *Life* magazine, Greene also stated that he was finished with any controversial element of

the miraculous in his writing because ‘he was rather bored of the subject now’. As the previous chapter was based on the linguistic overlap between Icon: /Idol this chapter is also structured around the binary of magic and miracle. This chapter questions Greene’s differentiation between magic/ miracle and why he was more linguistically comfortable with the superstitious than with the idea of a religious miracle.

This chapter acknowledges the element of fantasy in prominent Catholic fiction that is overlooked in the realist narratives that Greene creates. These elements are notable in the dream sequences which span his writing that brood over pagan representations of the sacred, while also being evident in his presentation of martyrs who partake in a type of literary resurrection. The darkest parts of *Greenland* suggest that suicide is a type of magic that is strongest through the image of the cross where ‘Christ has killed himself: he had hung himself on the Cross as surely as Pemberton from the picture-rail’.

It focuses on Greene’s representation of the supernatural in *The Lawless Roads* (1939) and *The End of The Affair* (1951) which allows the analysis to be separated via England and Mexico. Greene’s representation of the miraculous is more sceptical closer to home, as *The End of the Affair* and even one of his plays *The Potting Shed* (1957) depict the use of everyday miracles or enchanted coincidences where the greater good triumphs despite everyday struggle. The chapter argues that Greene’s everyday miracles are separate to the ‘dark and magical heart of faith’ that he experiences on during his 1939 trip to Mexico. The chapter discusses this trip as a quest, pilgrimage and an escape for Greene. A key text for navigating the element of travel in this novel is John Urry’s study on *The Tourist Gaze* and how it can be used to link religion and tourism in places such as Lourdes.

This chapter is interested in the location of Lourdes and its recreation of the miraculous in the work of filmmaker Jessica Hausner. This film is used to critique religious tourism and how that the supernatural is another commodity which is manufactured and liquidated in modernity.

The final chapter, 'Greene Screen' will focus on the relationship between Catholicism and cinema as presented by the cinematic style of Greenland and Martin Scorsese.

This chapter will compare the styles of both thinkers and the way in which both writers grew up with practice of movie going, among their religious activities. It will trace their representation of modern journeys of lost faith, which finds its redemption through suffering and destruction. This journey is portrayed in narratives such as *Silence* and *Brighton Rock* where the self-destructive forces of religious anguish bring about tension between faithfulness and despair. The sense of inner turmoil which pervades both Greene and Scorsese's imagination is described as type of religious noir which is built around the idea of Catholic guilt. The tension between lost faith and reason is something that Scorsese describes eloquently in his discussion about faith. This chapter will argue that redemption through religious noir is type of literary inheritance that many Catholic thinkers owe to Greenland and is still evident today in modern television and film.

This conclusion will summarise how Graham Greene's 'dark and magical heart of faith' relates to contemporary society through its dilution of symbols into secular spaces. It will attempt to re-define the concept of the sacred in contemporary life and summarise how writers like Greene have added to the deconstruction of religion.

It will argue that the Catholic aesthetic has recovered from its battle with iconoclasm through the presentation of heretical images which resurrect the sacred into a darkly

gothic form. The conclusion will acknowledge the counter argument of Greene being mistakenly championed as a man of faith or even a Catholic novelist of any measure – arguing instead that Greene’s Catholic imagination was inescapable from his writing and inadvertently shows how religion predominately survives in secular culture through images.

If anyone has mastered the art of living in-between the familiar and unfamiliar parts of faith it is Graham Greene.⁸ This thesis is a visual study which goes in search of the ‘dark and magic heart of faith’; a phrase Greene coined to describe the Gothic space of religion, where the symbols of mass give way to the more supernatural awakenings and manifestations.

This space reflects Catholic salvation itself, which is a type of visual special-effect through its use of icons, frescoes, sculptures and mosaics. It has become a postmodern, Baudrillardian playground of symbols and simulacra, which for Greene, are defunct from every use apart from sentimentality. In our cyber world, the symbol has triumphed over its meaning, with brands becoming more popular than their products. Interestingly, Freud discusses the symbol when he describes how: ‘an uncanny effect is often and easily produced when the distinction between imagination and reality is effaced.....when a symbol takes over the full functions of the thing it symbolises’.⁹ Go back to the original example of the lion used in C.S Lewis’ *Chronicles of Narnia* (1950-56). This messianic image betrays biblical connotations which flicker on and off but are more than a figment of the imagination. Christ is present in this image as the novel enacts a struggle between absence and presence; that of the absence of commodified images compared with the presence of biblical doctrine. In essence, this thesis argues against Greene’s disavowal of his literary Catholic status and his denial of the imaginative space called ‘Greenland’. Even a

quick examination of the iconography included in Greene's fiction is enough to make a claim of the validity of Catholicism in his literature.

Though Greene would undoubtedly have disliked studies such as this one, from critics who doggedly go after the tone of the sacred in his life's work, these studies are necessary in their sociological ability to discuss the re-enchantment of the world and the persistence of the language and visuality of the sacred. This however, is not just a study of the literature of Greeneland; it is also concerned with theology, aesthetics and issues of religious commodification – and behind it all lies the re-enchantment of the world and the unshakability of sacred images in secular society.¹⁰ In its study of the sacred visuality of the cross, saints, priests and images like this, this study argues that people cannot stand to live in a disenchanted world and often cling on to the language of religion, in order to describe their need to believe. It explores their need for the impossible and the supernatural. The gratification of this need is found in the liquidation of the religious aesthetic, which has broken down the language of the sacred, piece by piece, through commodified and reinvented images.¹¹ The visual aesthetic of Christianity which is often found in the Catholic terror of modern horror movies, still refers back to the power of the sacred, and in particular, the power of the Catholic aesthetic to ward away evil. It does so in many ways that are complimentary and sympathetic to Roman Catholicism, while also portraying the modern fascination with supernatural evil. Greene himself was very concerned with the heretical undertones of Christian history and began to not only redefine the Catholic aesthetic but also the process of salvation through his own heresy of corrupted good and necessary evil. The theologies of Greeneland are attempting to solve the riddle of good which for Greene was a term that had no utility in the modern world, even appearing outside the natural psyche of the Catholic priest. This thesis argues that it is

only through the mode of suffering that saints can defamiliarise the theology of moral goodness and gain understanding of the mercy of God.

This study situates itself in the presence of the Catholic imagination which Andrew Greeley believes is enchanted in its own particular way.

Catholics live in an enchanted world, a world of statues and holy water, stained glass and votive candles, saints and religious medals, rosary beads and holy pictures. But these Catholic paraphernalia are mere hints of a deeper and more pervasive religious sensibility which inclines Catholics to see the Holy lurking in creation. Catholics find their houses and surroundings haunted by a sense that the objects, events and persons of daily life are revelations of grace.¹²

Greeley speaks of the Catholic aesthetic through the language of the Gothic and the metaphor of haunting, thus making the implicit connection between Catholicism and the supernatural. This comes from the modern association of ‘Catholic paraphernalia’ with *unheimlich* gothic exhibitions. By this I speak of the dark side of Catholicism that is haunted by possession and evil manifestations. Where the revelations of grace are often frightening and terrible where the stigmata of saints is presented as a menace and not a miraculous blessing. Greene’s aesthetic backdrop of Catholicism can be overlooked as an example of the stiff orthodoxy which he himself resisted, however, the use of these symbols leads us to realise how the modern ascent of the image has made significant space for the sacred in an age that is famously jaded with religion. Indeed the age of images does seem to coincide with the re-enchantment of spirituality, mindfulness and the paranormal.

The presentation of ‘gothicised’ religion is a subject of debate in books such as: *The Gothic and Catholicism: Religion, Cultural Exchange and the Popular Novel, 1785-1829* by Maria Purves (2009) and *Catholicism, Sexual Deviance and Victorian Gothic Culture* by Patrick O’Malley (2006) . These books consider the negative presentation of Catholic symbols as an example of anti-Catholicism. This study will add to this debate by discussing the implications of anti-Catholicism in the post-war or modern period. In the case of Greenland, Anti-Catholicism takes the form of Anglican suspicion that renders the Catholic aesthetic as a type of religious kitsch and considers the pagan origins of Christianity as evidence of magic which is far removed from the orthodoxy of sacraments and liturgy. Greenland argues that the mystery of God remains intact when it is unreachable and is compromised when commodified into art, processions and offerings. The process of selling salvation is itself *unheimlich* in the way that it uncovers something that should have remained secret, intimate and hallowed. When Greenland describes the presence of chapels, rosaries and sacraments this is juxtaposed with the absence of faith in commodified religion, which has liquidated all that is holy. ‘Liquidation’ in this instance is a term borrowed from Graham Ward’s study on *True Religion* (2002) which will be used as the methodological navigation through the field of religious commodification – particularly looking at the liquidation of the visual symbols of Catholicism. Ward’s argument, which does not use liquidation in the sense of religious termination but more as its increased dilution and dispersal beyond communities of faith, is germane to the way that images and symbols of faith are deployed in Greenland beyond the confines of ‘church’ and ‘saints’.¹³

Take for example the damaged rosary that is mentioned in *The Honorary Consul* (1973). This image betrays the broken aesthetic of Greenland itself, which is heavily

influenced by the artistic imagination of the Catholic Church, but also views this imagination through the defective lens of scepticism and indignation. Greene's fiction becomes a site where the rituals of Catholic worship are 'othered' and made strange through the act of looking and the figure of the voyeur. This is a particular element which is unique to the life of Greene, who was himself a playwright, screenwriter and amateur spy. He is the Anglican voyeur who gazes upon the Catholic Church and the space of the sacred through his own broken lens.

The broken aesthetic of Greene's authorship is a term that will be used frequently throughout this thesis, to summarise Greene's Kafkaesque disillusionment with the bureaucracy of the church and its liquidation of salvation. One of the key places he finds solace in is 'the dark and magical heart of faith' which he stumbled upon during his travels to South America and which he recreates in *The Power and the Glory* (1968):

At sunset on the second day they came out on to a wide plateau covered with short grass. A grove of crosses stood up blackly against the sky, leaning at different angles-some as high as twenty feet, some not much more than eight. [...]The priest stopped and stared at them. They were the first Christian symbols he had seen for more than five years publicly exposed- if you could call this empty plateau in the mountains a public place. No priest could be concerned in the strange rough group; it was the work of Indians and had nothing in common with the tidy vestments of the Mass and the elaborately worked out symbols of the liturgy. It was like a short cut to the dark and magical heart of faith – to the night when the graves opened and the dead walked.¹⁴

Greene is describing the ancient Indian burial ground which he stumbled across in his travel narrative *The Lawless Roads* (1939). This fictional account does not include Greene's assessment of the indigenous religion of the Indians, which he described during his Mexican tour as a 'dark, tormented, magic cult.' In the stiff 1938 atmosphere of anti-Catholic secularisation saints were becoming a dying breed – and yet 'Christianity went on in its own frightening way'.¹⁵ The terror that Greene speaks of is supernatural magic, the magic of resurrection and holy-spirit healing. He uses the instance of the 'spittle mixed with the clay to heal the blind man' as an example of the 'religion of the earth.' The magic of the earth again relates to the holy 'lurking' in creation as seen through the Catholic imagination; it proves that holiness has the power to break out of traditional books and boundaries.

That is why the 'dark and magical heart of faith' is germane to this study because of the way it interprets the gothic setting of a grave yard through the Catholic imagination; turning it into a peculiar religious space where concepts collide like: resurrection / ruin and orthodoxy / magic. It is also a metaphor for the place where Greene's fiction is written, a place which attempts to get to a truth that is deeper than rationality. It pursues the essence of faith which has not been tampered with by globalized religion or elaborate sacraments. There is a core belief in Greenland of something, whether it be the beauty of sin or the benefit of suffering, even if is not in the benevolence of God himself.

Greene's 'dark and magical heart of faith' is a personal space of authorship but also a cinematic one where the audience is called upon to behold the theatre of faith; the battle of Greene's characters to overcome their own darkness along with the darkness of the church. The age-old drama between good and evil is fragmented into individual grappling against the dogmatic forces of doctrine, denomination and clerical

depravity. It allows us to question why faith in modernity attempts to minimize its miraculous mystery and how this mystery is still present in the visual symbols of faith. The plateau of crosses that Greene witnessed were a smaller scale of the Hill of Crosses in Lithuania, seen across, which is a pilgrimage site where thousands of tiny effigies and crosses have been brought by Catholic pilgrims since the nineteenth century. The fact that this place of pilgrimage is still an attraction for people who are not practising Catholics shows how modernity is concerned with deconstructing the idea of the sacred and relocating it within art, travel and humanity itself. The liquidation of redemption is not necessarily a negative trait of contemporary culture, as it allows for the transcendence of truth to permeate outside church walls.

Throughout his life Greene declared himself to be a secular atheist, a Catholic atheist and a Catholic agnostic. As much as Greene disavowed the literary genre of ‘Catholic novelist’ his imagination could not escape from the aesthetic of the Catholic Church. His novels are pervaded with the visual staples of faith that infringe on everyday spaces to mark them with sacred histories. In *The Third Man* (1949), for example: ‘Dr Winkler’s waiting room reminded Martins of [...]an antique shop that specializes in religious *objets d’art*. [...] Even the high-backed hideous chairs looked as if they had once been sat in by cardinals.’¹⁶ Throughout his *oeuvre* Greene works to visually defamiliarise the sacred space as he sits with his readership in strange sacred places and presents the enchantment of Catholicism through a Gothicised and corrupted language.

His writing stirred a reception of popular and critical success because of the way it used Catholicism to depict the superstitious, the beauty of failure, the savage nature of salvation and the presence of doubt as the magical characteristic of faith in adulthood. Greene wrote from within the paradoxes of faith, himself claiming that ‘to be a

Catholic... is to believe in the devil'¹⁷ The idea of Greene's fallen heroes is written about by Frederick Karl who maintains that

Greene believes that from impurity will come purity, from demonism saintliness, from unbelief belief, from vice virtue, his 'heroes' often seem closer to demons than to saints.... Greene has staked everything on his "demonic hero," who, by turning all accepted values upside down, has come to understand God through knowledge of the devil.¹⁸

His whisky priest for example – from his novel *The Power and the Glory* – is a figure who is corrupted but still counted on the side of the angels. Is this what we could call grotesque holiness? Greene's great attraction to the 'grotesque holiness' is seen through the way his fiction makes a path through dimly lit doctrine and sceptical conversions. The dark side of faith can be understood as many things: as crusades, or the inquisition, as the violence of the Old Testament or the politics of theocracy; but for Greene is this darkness was a profoundly individualised experience. The characters of Greeneland reflect Greene's own imagination, which thrived from the creative energies of blasphemy and heresy that Greene used to combat his own adolescent ennui. Greene's ravenous imagination knew no bounds in its treatment of religion as his Catholic conversion was not an evangelical miracle, but more of an intellectual experiment motivated by his love for his first wife, Vivian. This began on a day in 1926 when a young Graham Greene walked his dog to a 'sooty neo-Gothic Cathedral' which possessed 'a certain gloomy power because it represented the inconceivable and the incredible' Catholic aesthetic which would led Greene to join the long list of literary Christian converts that consisted of writers such as Oscar Wilde, Evelyn Waugh, C. S. Lewis, H. G. Wells, G.K. Chesterton, T.S. Eliot and J.R.R. Tolkien.¹⁹ Greene's intellectual motivations are perhaps best matched with

Oscar Wilde who claimed in an interview three weeks before he died that ‘much of my moral obliquity is due to the fact that my father would not allow me to become a Catholic. The artistic side of the Church and the fragrance of its teaching would have cured my degeneracies.’²⁰ Both Wilde and Greene approach the Catholic Church through its use of art and theatre to transform the gospel into a heavenly drama played out on earth.

Greene would go on to craft some of the most perplexing Catholic fiction with deep rooted contradiction and disillusionment. His exhibition of weariness is again evident during his conversion where he was given the name of Thomas ‘the doubter and not Thomas Aquinas’ at his reception into the Roman church²¹. It was this doubt that became the muse for his fiction, as he attempted to paint a representation of God which was a reflection of the doubt Greene felt about himself, the church and humanity. The Catholicism that Greene knew presented the sacred not only with suspicion but with disorder - disorder amidst the concerns of suffering, doubt and loss of faith. The church became a darkened space that questioned and confused the orthodoxy of religion, just as Greene’s icons became tombs of post-belief which were portrayed through modernist disorder.

At the centre of Greene’s own ‘dark and magical heart of faith’ is the literary echo of T.S Eliot’s ‘Waste Land’. Greene’s metaphorical plain is picking up from where Eliot left off in its attempts to offer a cultural re-enchantment of the Catholic aesthetic after the theological absence of God. The presence of Eliot in Greene’s fiction is argued by Fred Crawford in his study, *Mixing Memory and Desire: The Waste Land and British Novels*, where he argues that Greene’s entertainments contain frequent allusions to the Eliot’s poem and his novels attempt to solve this waste-landesque dilemma.²² Bernard

Bergonzi reiterates this argument when he identifies the remnants of this poem in Greene's Mexican themed narratives:

I am reminded of the moment in part V when the traveller, in this 'decayed hole among the mountains' finds 'tumbled graves' and an 'empty chapel' which is only 'the wind's home' [...] There is another suggestion of *The Waste Land*, when he writes, 'there was an even older world beyond the ridge; the ground sloped up again to where a grove of black crosses stood at all angles like wind-blown trees against the blackened sky. This was the Indian religion – dark, tormented, magic cult.' These crosses deeply stirred Greene- they reappear in *The Power and the Glory*- and prompted searching and disturbing reflections on the nature of religion: 'here, in the mountainous strange world . . . Christianity went on its own frightening way'.²³

It is among the grove of black crosses that critics argue that Greene plays out his theological hide-and-seek with God; hiding the emotionless Catholicism he left back home in England and seeking out this wild, and at times Gothic aesthetic of Catholic secrecy that has been driven to the edges of Mexican society. The perspective of the *Waste Land* is used by Greene to solve his characters' spiritual dilemmas, which testifies to the power of this poem in literary consciousness – and is used in way that allows Greene to explore sociological questions about the role of religion in modernity. Greene attempts to solve the sacred complexities of his characters with the miracle of everyday faith, which aims to move from the harrowing spiritual pain of Catholic childhood, and accept its own version of a bruised, yet living, faith. This of course means that the workings of *Greenland* are more than just literary entertainments, or a backdrop for the negative aspects of post-war life. It is the literary inheritance of the absence of God and the waste-land of modernity – taking Eliot's

imagery of the Anglican burial service into the tropical plains of Mexican Catholicism, where it is resurrected into the new form of stumbling unbelief, which re-imagines the darkened presence of God through the broken Catholic aesthetic of ruin and pagan ritual.

In Greene's world, ethics are not illustrated through the simple monochrome of good and evil. God cannot simply be good and the devil be 'bad'. There is an unfamiliar approach to faith which defamiliarises Catholic worship and theology in a manner that renders it grey; realistically mundane yet monstrously brutal, traditionally orthodox yet intellectually shocking. For example, this is evident in the way that Greene views the death of Christ, which he defamiliarises as a type of suicide that is no different to that of a modern man driven to despair: a man like Pemberton, a local police inspector who killed himself before leaving a note implying that his death was due to a debt which he could not pay back.

But they taught us that God has sometimes broken his own laws, and was it less possible for him to put out a hand of forgiveness into the suicidal darkness than to have woken himself in the tomb, behind the stone? Christ has not been murdered – you couldn't murder God. Christ has killed himself: he had hung himself on the Cross as surely as Pemberton from the picture-rail.²⁴

This is taken from Greene's popular 1948 novel *The Heart of the Matter*, which narrates the story of Catholic convert Henry Scobie – a British Intelligence Officer – and his waning faith as it journeys through temptation, despair, injustice and failure. Scobie's life is stalked by the feeling of strange unfamiliarity as he navigates spaces he struggles to recognise such as: prayer, sacrament, ritual and his own identity. The sacred space in this text is full of latin prayers which lay dead on Scobie's lips like

‘legal documents’ and is also cluttered with Catholic art which represents ‘a series of events that had happened a long time ago’, events which nobody can recollect in the modern world – such as the saint ‘whose name nobody could remember’. The unfamiliarity of the sacred space is depicted through the same poetical language that Matthew Arnold used in 1867 to describe the ‘melancholy, long, withdrawing roar’ of the retreating ‘sea of faith’ in ‘Dover Beach’. (II.19-20.1867)

Greene’s creation of Scobie reflects his own experience with conversion, which can be a process that is more conflicted and alienating than first thought. The conversion of Greene is something that is continually caught between the ‘lovely baroque churches’ and the ‘surroundings of pious ugliness.’²⁵ Graham Ward has observed how:

Greene composes his novels on the edge of the incredulous, seeking out new terrain where what is visible and reasonable and familiar meets what is invisible, miraculous and *Unheimlich*. The literary act of persuading, of taking the reader on an imaginative journey that requires the suspension of belief, ends in the tense possibility of welcoming what is strange and highly dangerous: an act of faith. The narratives deliver the reader to the portal of a potential conversion.²⁶

This thesis will argue that the salvation portrayed by Greene brings his fiction to a point of redemption where the ways of man are justified to God and redemption occurs not because of the church, but despite it. It focuses on how the role of unbelief in Greenland becomes a process of *curation* in Greenland, where the symbols of faith, including for example the steeple, the rosary and the graveyard, are collected in a modern exhibition of the Catholic aesthetic. (This is visually evident in the way

these images are reproduced in the Greene's collection of modern Vintage Classic book covers). Greene's own disavowal of his status as a Catholic writer must be paired with his curation of Hail Marys and Our Fathers which litter his novels and still have a usefulness in the life of his fallen characters, particularly in their moments of fear and doubt, and as a type of evidence of what used to be. This haunting of lost faith also brings us to the idea of *Catholic guilt*, which is a huge feature of not only Greeneland but the works of modern Catholic directors like Martin Scorsese, who showcase how the greatest struggle known to the Catholic has nothing to do with sickness or doctrine, but is about a harrowing sense of guilt and the idea that the fall of mankind is repeated in cyclical loops; where mankind is perpetually not measuring up to the grace and aesthetic of the Catholic faith. It is this specific guilt that keeps on taking backward glances towards what Robert Browning's Bishop Bloughram calls 'the dangerous edge of things', towards the Mother of God and the box of confession, where the mercy of God lives. Redeeming the Catholic from his own sense of guilt becomes a type of literary process that Greene is undertaking, where, like Scorsese argues, they can learn to accept their unbelief and be honest about their own lack of faith.²⁷

In Scorsese and Greene's search for grace they find that the hyperreal images of the saints do nothing to articulate the brutality of salvation which has no respect for human flesh and is a type of theological call for dying to self. When this thesis refers to the work of *savage salvation* it is talking about the process of *suffering*, particularly about Catholic suffering, which is a prerequisite for entry into the realms of Greeneian Grace. This type of suffering acts at times as a type of Gothic shadow that looms over the characters in their quest for salvation.

The reference to the specific study of all things Gothic is at the periphery of this thesis, and is borrowed in order to explore the relationship between Catholicism and its darker history of pagan representations, heretical imaginings and historical prejudice. This study will look at how these darker representations focus on the underlying language of the Gothic beneath the Catholic aesthetic, and speak of idolatry, supernatural evil and the work of a Manichean God.

Greene's gaze on the Catholic aesthetic which mixes fascination and repulsion, is in many ways interacting with literary ideas of anti-Catholicism. The only difference is that Greene performs this critique from inside the Catholic aesthetic, with a self-lacerating quality that is only happy with the destruction of piety, sentimental kitsch of Catholic art. The idea of anti-Catholicism in academia has been studied by thinkers such as Patrick O'Malley and Maria Purves, who focus on its relation to the eighteenth and nineteenth century. This study aims to look at this same connection of the Gothic and the Catholic, with a modernist emphasis on the Greeneian uses of iconography and colonial magic. This study in some way relates to this tradition of existing scholarship, taking it into the new direction of modern literature and film. It also aligns itself with the tradition of the Gothic to explore the way that Catholic motifs such as the priest, the confessional and the sacred space have been Gothicised in their Greeneian presentation of Manichean evil, supernatural magic and commodified corruption. I do not believe that Greene is a type of Anglo-Catholic religious secularist, but there are many parts of religion that he disagrees with, and his fiction is not only painting the weakness of humanity but also religion itself. Catholic faith is something in Greene's imagination that exhibits a simultaneous fullness and emptiness and something that does not fully understand the modern need for saints – modernised saints that are not removed from the fragility of human weakness and sin.

The greatest rebellion in the Greeneian imagination is the rejection of the hyperreality of sainthood, in order to create a new type of sacred anti-hero. When *The Power and The Glory* declares that ‘There are no more saints and no more heroes’ – this is Greene’s literary gauntlet which challenges the Catholic faith to modernise its perspective and history; awakening the traditions of heroism with experiences that express nihilism, guilt and despair (*Power*, 220).

In a similar way to Maria Purves, Greene also shows a sympathy for the Catholic church and its images of suffering, and the promise that suffering can be exchanged for the mercy of God – this same optimistic thread is cultivated in Greene’s work and at the centre of his religious imagination. Greene rejects labels of scepticism and secularism in favour of his own belief in the power for the mercy of God:

Some critics [...] have this idea of Greeneland, as they call it, as a fictional universe in which all one’s characters are either drunken priests or adulterous wives. They call me a pessimist, but I’m not. I have often tried [...] to show the mercy of God. You cannot show it by portraying only virtuous people; what good is mercy to the virtuous? It is in the drunken priests that you can see mercy working. And I call that optimism. But they call it Greeneland, as though it bore no relation to the real world. And yet, one is simply trying to describe the real world as accurately as one sees it.²⁸

Greene’s presentation of the mercy of God in the real world he lived in became accurate, for him, because of its lack of virtue. Though this fallen virtue is often projected onto the corrupted process of the Catholic church, they become in many ways, the personal problem of the author and his readership of sinners. Just as the sinner is at the heart of gospel, so too does Greene succeed in creating a community of

readers of varying levels of faith but equal amounts of weakness and wrong doing. In the world of Greene, we are all lapsed believers, or what he terms as ‘spoilt priests’ – because we so often do not do justice to the calling of purpose within ourselves and live our lives in the mode of heroic failure.²⁹ This is the accurate world according to Graham Greene and this has become our modern obsession.

Chapter One:

The Catholic Novel and Visuality (Huysmans, Waugh & Greene)

The Religious Novel

In a review of the Catholic fiction of François Mauriac, Jean-Paul Sartre indirectly commented on the religious novel itself when he wrote in 1947 that 'God is not a novelist. Neither is Mauriac'.³⁰ Underneath Sartre's criticism is a core belief that an imagination sold out to religion can never align with the freedom of the modern novel. As a quasi-response to this stance, the Catholic writer Flannery O'Connor confessed that: 'The Catholic novelist doesn't have to be a saint; he doesn't even have to be a Catholic, he does, unfortunately, have to be a novelist'.³¹

In this admission are two things: namely, that the religious novel is made when reality is given as much esteem as faith, and when the writer disciplines himself with the everyday mysteries of modern living. The danger of religious frameworks to enforce their abstract truth in the novel is also a concern of George Orwell who states in 1940 that:

The atmosphere of orthodoxy is always damaging to prose, and above all it is completely ruinous to the novel, the most anarchical of all forms of literature. How many Roman Catholics have been good novelists? Even the handful that one could name have usually been bad Catholics. The novel is practically a

protestant form of art; it is a product of the free mind, of the autonomous individual.³²

In this respect, Orwell sheds light on why Jean-Paul Sartre, and others like him, would forever find scruples in the religious writings of François Mauriac whose mind, in their opinion, was enslaved by its redemptive imagination - an imagination that could not comprehend modern reality and its rejection of orthodoxy. The religious novel, according to Orwell, is not made great by its redemptive impulses, but rather by its darker desires for what is heretic, pagan and idolatrous. It is the visuality of these dark fetishes that fascinates the work of 'bad Catholics' like Graham Greene, who turns his eye towards the supernatural materialism of religious worship. Greene was both fascinated and repelled by the physical worship of the saints, which he explored in his late novel *Monsignor Quixote* (1982.) His observations of these traditions was suspended between their offer of religious inspiration and their auctioning of bizarre magic.

Greene's fiction shows that if God were to become a novelist, his pen would mark the tones of doubt just as it would with faith. It is this which makes Greene a 'good novelist' while also identifying him as a 'bad Catholic'. Greene's work cannot be used as the epitome of good or bad, or even of the religious novel itself - whose very definition is inherently problematic. The 'Catholic Canon', if we were to imagine that such a mutuality could be found, is shadowed by writers who were *almost* believers, who deliberately rejected their faith or who never claimed it in the first place.

Catholicism is something that many writers are either born into or have impolitely thrust upon them by their readership. Greene clearly saw himself as part of the last group, differing from writers like Evelyn Waugh and Joris-Karl Huysmans who worked hard to achieve faithful endurance after conversion.

This chapter will discuss voyeurism that is involved in the Catholic novel through visualities of hell, monstrosity and the crucifixion. It will seek to define the genre of Catholic fiction, asking in-turn: Where did the Catholic novel come from? Who is in the Catholic Canon? What obligation does a writer, who happens to be Catholic, owe to the traditions of the Church? These questions stem from the need to understand the persistence of the Catholic novel in our proudly-professed secular society - a society that takes curious joy in curating religion itself; through its images, artefacts and buildings. The work of Huysmans, Waugh and Greene shows the preservation of the Catholic aesthetic in modern culture via the representation of chapels, crucifixion art and pilgrimage journeys and also shows how this aesthetic itself has been affected by processes of tourism and commerce. This chapter will argue that Greene's position among the line-up of literary Catholics is one that aligns his broken Catholic aesthetic with a history of heretical Catholicism that is exhibited in writers like Joris-Karl Huysmans. It will also argue that the Catholic novel aids in the curation of religion itself by the broadcast of its sacred gaze, which looks upon the artefacts of religion in the modern world. This sacred gaze engages religious fiction with the habit of 'looking'; looking at saints, statues, paintings, symbols and shrines – and it is in the act of looking that we catch novels like *The End of the Affair* (1951), *Brideshead Revisited* (1945) and *The Cathedral* (1898). The sacred gaze in these novels is used to articulate the long work of conversion as Catholic characters return to the space of the church, which is a place that is both repressed and sought after in each novel. It is in the church that Sarah's offstage conversion returns to haunt her. It is in the church that Charles Ryder's repressed fascination with Catholicism is finally expressed. It is in the church that the pilgrim, Durtal, has a revelation of the hidden economy of religion and salvation. The church, in relation to these writers, is not seen as an enemy but as a

site of wrestling and transformation. It gives evidence that faith and fiction can indeed coexist, or in the words of Flannery O'Connor that 'The Church should make the novelist a better novelist'.³³

It should give him, or her, the right space to explore the nagging thoughts of reality in this culture of nihilism. These types of ontological questions often creep up on our Catholic characters while they are engaging in the habit of the sacred gaze. Where there is the struggle to believe in morality or salvation, it becomes the novel's duty to lend his gaze, as conflicted as it may be, in the ultimate service of grace – a type of grace that is repackaged in the literary world as 'emotional recognition and significance.'³⁴ The act of looking extends the visuality of the Catholic novel into the writing process; a process where the novelist can now articulate his own sacred vision through gazing at Romanish iconography.

The novelist doesn't write to express himself, he doesn't write simply to render a vision he believes true, rather he renders his vision so that it can be transferred, as nearly whole as possible, to his reader.[...] to jar the reader into some kind of emotional recognition of its significance.³⁵

Before entering into debate about visuality of the religious novel, it is important to note that the greatest reason for the pictorial language of salvation stems from the Catholic church and its flamboyant history with visuality and art. In 1999 Pope John Paul II wrote an open letter addressed to artists. The letter appealed for a stronger alliance between the artists of the world and the Catholic community in reflection of the sacred art of Classical and Middle ages. In it Pope John Paul brushed away dust from Old Testament iconoclasm to explain that the incarnation of Christ, turned him

into a visible icon of the invisible God, thus transcending the dogmatic skirmish of divine representation.

In literary terms, Christ became the epiphany of the mysterious metanarrative of God, which then made way for subsequent epiphanies of 'God made flesh' through the images made by artists that attempted to comprehend his beauty and truth. The Pope argued that this world 'in which we live needs beauty in order not to sink into despair' and it is the artist himself who holds a special relationship to beauty as this is the vocation bestowed to him by the divine.³⁶

This vocation is unique in the way it places the artist in the same position of God during the dawn of creation - both receiving creative inspiration from the Holy Spirit, both looking upon the work of their hands with a sense of admiration. Pope John Paul discusses the need for renewed dialogue between art and the Christian community in a time when the modern age has diminished cultural interest in the Gospel message but also explored how the darkest parts of the individual soul still hold a desire for redemption. The pontiff correctly describes how 'art remains a kind of bridge to religious experience' and some would add, a type of civilizing redemption in itself.³⁷

In summary the Church needs art. It needs musicians, architects, painters, sculptors, and writers. It cements the view from the Second Vatican Council that the Church is an unmistakable 'friend of the arts and has historically sought their 'noble help' throughout the ages. In the turmoil of modernity, the church continues to cry out to its visual and literary priests to continue to call attention to the sacred drama of salvation.

Unfortunately, the present time is marked, not only by negative elements in the social and economic sphere, but also by a weakening of hope, by a certain

lack of confidence in human relationships, which gives rise to increasing signs of resignation, aggression and despair.³⁸

The provocative role of modernity is discussed by the papacy as ‘the synthesis of all heresies’. Despite the melodramatic condemnation of modernity in the encyclical *Pascendi dominici gregis*, there is nonetheless a historical fog of disenchantment which covered the Catholic community. This modern fog covers any representations of beauty in a bleak and morbid haze; but it is in this disenchantment of ‘resignation, aggression and despair’ that places like Greenland have thrived, along with its noir like representation of faith.

Three questions on the Catholic novel . . .

In response to the first question of where the literary line-up of ‘bad Catholics’ begins, critics have cited Elizabeth Inchbald’s *A Simple Story* (1791) as good examples of the first Catholic novel - while curiously neglecting the entrance of St Augustine’s *Confessions* in the fourth century as the first Western (and Catholic) autobiography in literature. Thomas Woodman cites Inchbald’s tale of Jesuit-inspired romance as the first ever English novel which could be considered Catholic, written in the wake of the 1780 Gordon Riots and a prelude to the future of Catholic emancipation in Britain.³⁹ Although the novel is valued for its contribution to gender and feminism studies, its Catholic themes also shape the novel which is created via Jesuit culture.

Bernard Bergonzi enters his own contender, the historical novel *The Betrothed* (1827) as one of the greatest European novels set in the seventeenth century which is entirely permeated by Italian Catholicism.⁴⁰ He cites this novel as unique in the way it writes from the heart of Catholic culture to an audience immersed in total devotion –

although this same 'uniqueness' could also be cited in Augustine's *Confessions*, which is written from the centre of Christian history with the clerical purpose of conversion. Some biographers of Elizabeth Inchbald would argue that *A Simple Story* is not relevant to a chapter concerning 'The Catholic Novel' because her novel 'is not about the Catholic Church' and she is ultimately not a Catholic novelist 'because she succeeded in making her religion felt only in a negative way'.⁴¹

If the first statement is correct then that would mean that Inchbald's novel would be decidedly out of the Catholic canon while modern thrillers like *The Da Vinci Code* could take its place. If the second comment is correct, then this would mean that the paradoxical writing of Greene could not be considered as Catholic fiction; which supports the biggest literary confession of Greene -that he was not actually a Catholic writer at all- which has fallen on deaf and biased ears of critics such as myself.

The inclusion of *Confessions* as the first Catholic novel is difficult to defend because of its edifying and non-literary purpose - which again brings us back to the intrinsic problem of the genre; its lack of consensual boundaries and leaves our first question open to interpretation.

In response to the second question (who is in the Catholic Canon?) the term 'Catholic Canon' may in itself be unhelpful because it is a imprecise description which could refer to either: fiction composed by Catholics (those who convert to the faith, are married into it, or who are outside of its tradition but have confessed the Nicene creed), fiction predominantly read by Catholics, fiction concerning stories of Catholic redemption or fiction written by writers who have childhood connections with the Catholic Church. For example, should the fiction of Alexander Pope and F.Scott Fitzgerald be rendered Catholic because of their proximity to the Church? Some

critics would cry out, no. Other writers and thinkers with connections to the Catholic Faith include Anne Rice, Ernest Hemingway, William Shakespeare and Oscar Wilde, to name a few.

The genre of the 'Catholic Novel' also does nothing to distinguish the type of Catholicism that is being addressed, be it Latin or Eastern churches. Neither does it explain the subclasses underneath these classifications. Byzantine? Alexandrian? East Syrian? West Syrian? Though the word itself, 'Catholic' speaks of the 'universal doctrine' of a single religion practised around the globe, the history of Catholicism is imbedded with schisms, movements, conflicts, councils and theological disputes. It is a safe assumption to hold that the 'universal doctrine' of Catholicism has failed to be represented by one almighty and undivided church. When paired with the vogue of literary taxonomy, a term like the 'Catholic Novel' is not comprehensive enough to describe the works of divergent writers like Shusaku Endo, J. R. R. Tolkien and Graham Greene. A definition of this genre that attempts to yoke these varying styles and perspectives together might suggest that what makes these novels eligible for entry into a Catholic Canon is an authorial intention that is distinctly separate from covert evangelism or theological teaching. This definition seems reasonable, until we think of narratives such as *Brideshead Revisited* or *The Lord of the Rings*, novels which differ in their mode of realism but which, we might argue, share similar theological motivations to show the triumphant forces of grace and the goodness of mankind.

Questions that could also be asked include: How 'Catholic' does the Catholic novel need to be? Should elite writers be chastised for including personal aspects of faith into their presentations of secular society? Are the fantastical parts of faith part

of the natural human imagination? Critics giving comprehensive definitions of the Catholic Novel argue it is:

a work of substantial literary merit in which Catholic theology and thought have a significant presence within the narrative, with genuine attention to the inner spiritual life, often drawing on Catholicism's rich liturgical and sacramental symbolism and enriched by the analogical Catholic imagination.⁴²

In this definition, by Marian Crowe, there is no indication as to what end – either positive or negative- the richness of Catholic imagery should be in service of; or if it should be used for utilitarian purposes at all. Crowe acknowledges the presence of a Catholic reality in these types of novels, but does little to expound any specific requirements of authorial intention; 'genuine attention to the inner spiritual life' and 'substantial literary merit' would be read by readers like Orwell as terms that do not get along.

In his chapter concerning the Catholic Novel A.A De Vitis discusses how 'God suddenly become popular' in modernist England as it became the literary vogue to be converted to either Anglicanism or Roman Catholicism. He speaks of how writers like Aldous Huxley, Rex Warner and Christopher Isherwood (along with Waugh and Greene) decided to clean up the metaphorical waste land of society left by T.S. Eliot. The waste land left since science had evicted God from society and art had inherited the redeeming responsibility of the church.⁴³

In response to the third question concerning the obligation of writers to the purpose of edification, Greene himself argued against any religious responsibilities in his art when he wrote in a letter to Elizabeth Bowen in 1958 concerning his artistic disloyalty to the church

If I may be personal, I belong to a group, the Catholic Church, which would present me with grave problems as a writer if I were not saved by my disloyalty [...] There are leaders of the Church who regard literature as a means to one end, edification. That end may be of the highest value, of far higher value than literature, but it belongs to a different world. Literature has nothing to do with edification. I am not arguing that literature is amoral, but that it presents a personal moral, and the personal morality of an individual is seldom identical with the morality of the group to which he belongs. You remember the black and white squares of Bishop Blougram's chess board. As a novelist, I must be allowed to write from the point of view of the black square as well as of the white: doubt and even denial must be given their chance of self-expression.⁴⁴

Although Greene showed no qualms in identifying himself as a believer with lapsed faith, whose fiction is the best example of the Orwellian assertion that elite Roman Catholic fiction need not be written for any purposes of edification, his letter also takes the definition of Catholic literature beyond the characteristic of being a 'bad Catholic'; as he himself sees the role of a Catholic writer not as an apologist or evangelist but as an artist. He believes that an artist can portray the wounds of an intellect grappling with faith, alongside the bruises of a faith that has grappled with intellect. In painting both the 'black and white squares' of morality, Greene does more than present a demonized heretical gospel, but instead shows the faith of adulthood earned through anguish as opposed to Sunday School naiveté.

Though writers like Evelyn Waugh found deep profanity with the way Greene presented a type of sin which had no eternal consequence and alleged that he wrote through the "Quietest heresy" - which was an allegation also echoed in the Swiss

theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar when he criticized Greene for his Miltonesque presentation of the “mystique” of sin – what Waugh and Balthasar neglect to inform us is that elements of heresy are a definitive factor of the modern Catholic Novel.⁴⁵ Greene's position in the history of Catholic fiction takes the genre beyond suffering and despair; beyond apostasy or advocacy. It is the portrait of the artist as a sinner and as anything but a saint. This disavowal of sainthood is also seen in other writers such as François Mauriac and Leon Bloy, as the Augustinian portrayal of Catholic devotion cannot be maintained in the modern canon against the struggles of Darwin, Freud and Marx. In turn these writers voice their struggle with their double identities as writers and believers; Mauriac states that to be a true saint one ‘could not write novels’ and Bloy is also defeated in his saintly pursuits when he confesses that ‘I could have become a saint, a worker of wonders. I have become a man of letters.’⁴⁶

In a roundabout way the question of if such a thing as a ‘Catholic Canon’ could exist; Waugh, Balthasar, Mauriac and Bloy argue that indeed it does, and it has pledged a lifetime of service to representing the artist as a fallen man. Thus the shared trait between these writers seems at first to be the Orwellian assertion that saints cannot write fiction. Although perhaps what the removal of sainthood implies, is that Catholicism can no longer be entered through the orthodoxy of the front door and must be slipped into via the ‘concealed door’ of heresy, doubt and the occult.

The Concealed Door of Heresy

The concealed door is a phrase borrowed from the French Catholicism of François Mauriac. The French Religious Canon is a genre that inherently rejects the Anglicizing of Catholic fiction. This is true in the case of Greene in particular, whose

Catholic novels may have had a more 'secure reputation' in the global canon of world literature than the limited writing of Britain and England.⁴⁷ This regional approach to Catholic writing in general excludes the works of American and Japanese writers like Flannery O'Connor and Shusaku Endo and does not acknowledge the debt that is owed to the literary Catholicism of French revivalist writers like J.K Huysmans.

According to Bergonzi, Greene himself kept a keen interest in French Catholic writing and his interest was also rewarded with their enthusiastic readership of his fiction, including their own critical studies concerning his work which dated long before any Anglo-Saxon contribution.⁴⁸ Neil Sinyard also argues the same point when he states that in modernist England 'Greene, though widely read, was rarely considered as being of sufficient stature to figure on the syllabus of a university English Department' (as Greene did not embrace the avant-garde and his style cannot be defined by the limits of a single decade). This is then compared to French institutions of higher learning where *The Power and The Glory*, even now in the twenty-first century, was recently set as text for the National Examination of university teachers.⁴⁹

In speaking about the anglicized Catholic tradition, Mauriac admits to feeling an illicit kinship of familiarity with Greene:

The work of an English Catholic Novelist - of an Englishman returning to Catholicism - such as Graham Greene's *The Power and The Glory*, at first always gives me the sensation of being in a foreign land. To be sure, I find there my spiritual fatherland, and it is into the heart of a familiar mystery that Graham Greene introduces me. But everything takes place as though I were making my way into an old estate through a concealed door...⁵⁰

Mauriac speaks of religious experience through the metaphor of homecoming; as though the old Catholic estate is now made alien by the overgrown moss of modernist society, yet it still holds those familiarly strange secret passages. This secret passage to enchantment needs to be entered illegally through the language of apostasy and doubt that Mauriac and Greene both share.

Although much has been written about Greene's personal readership of Mauriac in part due to his admission that he was a great admirer of his work and also admitting that 'If my conscience were as acute as Mauriac's showed itself to be in his essay, 'God and Mammon', I could not write a line'.⁵¹ Bergonzi claims that Mauriac's influence on Greene is made ambiguous by Greene's later disavowal of his previous statement and critical exaggeration of his earlier sentiment. This argument is tempered by the view of A.A De Vitis who argued that both Greene and Mauriac wrote against their Roman Catholic backgrounds in their appreciation of evil and the beauty of sin in a complex and inscrutable world.⁵²

The idea of entering Catholicism through a 'concealed door' is very reminiscent of T.S Eliot's assertion that 'Satanism itself [...] was an attempt to get into Christianity by the back door', a back door entrance of Catholicism found by the breadcrumbs of heresies like Manichaeism that are indicated in the writings of Greene, Mauriac and J.K. Huysmans.⁵³ The presentation of sin and evil in both Greene and Huysmans's fiction is one of the key commonalities of Catholic writers. The Catholic novel has gone beyond its ecclesiastic purpose of bringing edification and instruction; but it has also evolved beyond its artistic purpose of unravelling the beauty of creation in service of the human soul. Now the emerging trend in the Catholic novel becomes the way the shadow of the Gothic, of sin and sacrilege, looms over the writer in his quest for grace. Mauriac admitted that Catholic critics were not unjust in their detection of

the corrupting elements of heresy in his fiction, as seen in his *Flesh and Blood* (1954) and *Therese Desqueyroux* (1927), as it prowled over his writing 'in the [same] way it prowls over cemeteries which are nevertheless dominated by the [sign of the] Cross'.⁵⁴ The Vatican sniffed the odour of heresy in Greene's fiction which, in part, stems from his preoccupation with sinners more than saints, but Greene's and Mauriac's greatest interest is in the way the mercy of God intervenes in circumstances and creatures of despair:

If there is a reason for the existence of the novelist on earth it is this: to show the element which holds out against God in the highest and noblest characters - the inner-most evils and dissimulations; and also to light up the secret source of sanctity in creatures who seem to us to have failed.⁵⁵

The greatest example we have in Greeneland of a creature of failure comes in the form of Pinkie, our choir boy killer, from *Brighton Rock* (1938). Even Pinkie's pursuit of mortal sin and the ensuing judgement of hellfire and brimstone cannot prepare him for Greene's greatest narrative intention – 'You cannot conceive, nor can I, of the appalling strangeness of the mercy of God'.⁵⁶

So even in the midst of mortal sin, doubt and apostasy – the Catholic novel's heretical impulses can still be used in service of grace. Thus the documentation of the 'failed creature', that known theologically as 'the fallen man', is a captivating pursuit for the religious novel – and in particular the message of how the 'fallen man' can evade the destiny of hell.

When Greene writes how 'The Church does not demand that we believe that any soul is cut off from mercy', he speaks on behalf of mercy and suggests that the Catholic novel portrays this as the greatest heresy known to unbelievers. (*Rock*.268.)

This is evident in the works of David Lodge whose place in the history of the spiritual novel is undoubtedly different to that of previous writers like Greene, but who writes in his 1981 novel *How Far Can You Go?* (this title was changed in the US to *Souls and Bodies*) that “at some point in the nineteen-sixties, Hell disappeared. No one could say for certain when this happened. First it was there, and then it wasn’t.”⁵⁷ This is Lodge’s post-modern version of Virginia Woolf’s ‘On or about December 1910 human character changed [at some point in the nineteen-sixties we got rid of hell]

Different people became aware of the disappearance of Hell at different times. Some realised that they had been living for years as though Hell did not exist, without having consciously registered its disappearance. Others realised that they had been behaving, out of habit, as though Hell were still there, though in fact they had ceased to believe in its existence long ago. By Hell we mean, of course, the traditional Hell of Roman Catholics, a place where you would burn for all eternity if you were unlucky enough to die in a state of mortal sin. On the whole, the disappearance of Hell was a great relief, though it brought new problems.⁵⁸

Lodge implies that the contemporary characteristic of the spiritual novel is the abolishment of Catholic hellfire and brimstone, or the creation of new ideas of ‘hell’.

Indeed, in the words of the John Paul II, hell as a literal place where sinners are sent to suffer is no longer a part of official Catholic doctrine.⁵⁹ Gone are the days where damnation could stir fear in the hearts of society; which leads us as readers to ask: if hell has disappeared in the Catholic Novel, what has it been replaced with? Critics have argued that it has been replaced with ‘ghettos, war camps, prisons, hospitals, undergrounds, mines and other spaces of entrapment’ in the modern world and is still

evident in the literature of Toni Morrison and Margaret Atwood.⁶⁰ Rachel Falconer argues that many experiences of the contemporary world revive the language of medieval hell: ‘To even the basic facts about the trenches of the First World War, the Stalinist purges of the 1930s [...] to paraphrase Voltaire’s remark about God, if Hell hadn’t existed, we would have to invent it.’⁶¹

Secular society has relocated hell to earth; for example, George Steiner believing that hell is more than a mental fear or a metaphor – it has been made into truth. He argues that Holocaust literature is the pinnacle example of hell in contemporary literature and Steiner’s research finds much resemblance between the spatial organization of the Nazi concentration camps and traditional iconographies of hell.⁶² This supports the assertion that Hell in itself is a type of visibility, emphasized in Dante’s *Inferno* and modern disasters which are frequently described by survivors as scenes from hell. The visibility of a hell is underlined in the film adaptations of *Brighton Rock*, in the form of a Dante *Inferno* rollercoaster. This is not the only time that hell makes an appearance in *Greenland* as it also appears, in its own form, in *The End of the Affair*. Just as contemporary debate would argue that Hell has been transformed into an internalised gaze, which casts its infernal eyes towards guilt, morality and decency. Lodge implies that the theology of hell has been transformed into a self-policing consciousness, which is habitually performed from the remnants of a Catholic past. In the case of *Greenland* this is Sarah from *The End of the Affair*, who habitually makes the sign of the cross on her forehead although she has lost the Catholic faith which she was baptised into.

Greene’s religious self-governance is the key element which makes his prose take on ‘a self-lacerating quality, rubbing at the raw wounds of scepticism, rather than soothing characters with the swaddling clothes of prayer’ as described by one reader.⁶³

It is not only Greene's brutal scepticism which categorises his fiction as a religious work in the age of secularism, but there is also a visual element in his narratives which brands them with a signature that is uniquely Roman Catholic. When Greene claims that he is not a Catholic novelist, his disavowal is only correct because his fiction attempts to transgress the restraints of orthodoxy. If we apply this with Lodge's concept of hell we can see that hell is not present in Greene's fiction in the orthodox way, the way for instance that it is in the work of Huysmans, but it is present through his portrayal of 'mortal sin' – which was a type of dread that had not yet died in his mind, although characters like Pinkie from *Brighton Rock* regarded hell as more familiar and less unsettling than the grace of God. Greene could conceivably be regarded as the last fashionable writer to contemplate the implications of damnation, as there is a guilt in him which created a peculiar envy for those who were damned without any ambiguities. Greene's interaction with hell is argued to be unoriginal by George Orwell; who believed that lure of hell spans back to writers a century before and Greene 'appears to share the idea, which has been floating around ever since Baudelaire, that there is something rather *distingué* in being damned; Hell is a sort of high-class nightclub whose entry to which is reserved for Catholics only.'⁶⁴ Unlike Baudelaire, however, Greene takes the distinguished mark of damnation with no trace of middle-class intellectual ease – but instead with a flagellating stubbornness to walk the line between dogma and doubt.

His fiction refuses to be categorised as simply religious, which is reflected in the way critics like Jessica Sequeira do not label Greene's body of work as 'Catholic Fiction' but introduce it instead as 'Faith Noir' – a term helpful in highlighting how the cynical, broody and optical elements which are characteristic of Greene's style, are also present in cinematic noir.⁶⁵ Film Noir is a retrospective genre that is used to

describe the post-war shift in Hollywood cinema, which reflected the suspicion and tension of the time period. Translated as ‘dark film’ the term was coined by French film critic Nino Frank in 1946, to categorise the silhouetted frames of many American crime thrillers. In using the word noir to describe Greene’s special brand of Catholic fiction, Sequeira is implying that the same mood of noir- its disenchantment, misery, alienation, bleakness, distrust, ambiguity, moral corruption, guilt and desperation also relates to the style of Greenland. Greene’s faith is portrayed through its noir aspects of gritty realism and his adult-orientated view of faith which is particularly dark and venomous. Greene worked for many years as a film critic and scriptwriter so cinema was clearly at the heart of his fiction. The espionage thrillers which Greene’s early writing career focused on became prime material for the cinematic noir canon and provided a convenient overlap between Greene’s oeuvre and Hollywood dark film. “Catholic Noir” is a powerful term that offers a very useful way of describing the specific branch of the Catholic Canon that relates to Graham Greene

This *noir* spirit of the age was embedded in Greene’s tone as an artist; not due to a fashionable vogue of his choosing but as an intricate connection to his visual love of the camera and his gaze on the Catholic aesthetic which was haunted by the ennui of realism. The post-war atmosphere of dark melancholy is something that Greene was already familiar with, something that his literary eye projected onto the visual spectacles of Catholicism. (Just as he did in *The Lawless Roads*, where the violence of Mexico is used a metaphor for war-time Europe.) The natural noir edge of his work would later be adapted into the Hollywood dark films of the age such as *The Third Man* (1939), *Ministry of Fear* (1944), *Brighton Rock* (1947), *The Fallen Idol* (1948) and *This Gun for Hire* (1942) and dub him as one of the forefathers of this dark visual style. Greene’s interaction with the noir-like darkness of damnation, hell and mortal

sin are in a sense inherited from writers like J.K Huysmans who wrote about the darkness of occultism in modernist Paris. His controversial novel *Là-Bas* (1891) othered the noble art of the church into a grotesque and sinful noir of heretical worship and black mass. Greene himself treads into the marshland of literary hell in his 1966 novel *The Comedians*. This novel is centred around the socio-political hell of Haiti – a place Greene visited in 1963 and resulted in him publishing an article in the *Sunday Telegraph* called ‘The Nightmare Republic’ where he wrote in detail about daily terror of Haitian living. Greene’s own attraction to the political climate of this republic has been described by critics as a reflection of his narrative affinity with the wretched side of things:

Haiti summed up just about everything that Greene required in a foreign destination, especially one that he intended as the setting for a novel. It was distressed; tropical, ramshackle, overcrowded, poor and on the brink of a civil war. It was governed by a bogeyman. It was famous for its brothels and its slums and its weird expressions of religious faith- Catholicism and a mishmash of African ritual.⁶⁶

Greene’s novel features the reign of the thirty second president of Haiti, François Duvalier, and gained the commercial success of a 1967 film adaptation while also being accused by the Haitian Department of Foreign Affairs, as a piece of fiction written by:

‘A liar, a cretin, a stool-pigeon. . . unbalanced, sadistic, perverted. . . a perfect ignoramus. . . the shame of proud and noble England. . . a spy . . . a drug addict. . . a torturer.’⁶⁷

Duvalier's denouncement of Greene highlights the political motivations of the novel, which did pander to an authorial impulse for social justice, despite Greene's claim that the novel was not based on real people. Greene transposes the historical truth about the brutal and unfair regime of this President for Life, who was also known as 'Papa Doc' – who in the novel is described as Baron Samedi; 'the same some gave to the President as an alternative to Papa Doc – we dignified his shambling shabby figure with the title of Baron Samedi, who in the Voodoo mythology haunts the cemeteries in his top-hat and tails' (*Comedians* 24). Greene borrows the language of sorcery throughout the novel as an analogy for the political debauchery of dictatorship. His novel also introduces cultural consciousness, the Tonton Macoute, which were Papa Doc's hellish militia and raised more awareness about the poverty and corruption of the Haitian state.

Hell in the novel is a type of 'Catholicism liberally sprinkled with Voodooism' that replaces official religion.⁶⁸ It offers Greene the perfect opportunity to explore his Manichean curiosity and transpose the black mass he witnessed in his journalistic travels, into the world of Greeneland. Latin prayers, a swinging censer and hieroglyphics of ash are used in Greene's fictional mass, where a Voodoo priest put a live rooster 'in his mouth and crunched through the neck. Then, using the neck like a tube of red-brown paint, he made mystic designs upon the earth floor'. (*Comedians*.180) Just as in 'the dark and magical heart of faith', the black mass is the crossover of fact and fiction. It is the liminal space where the Gothic worship of Catholics is used to articulate the Catholic imminence of evil – which is as real as the imminence of God in all things.

Hell in fin de siècle Paris

In *Satanism, Magic and Mysticism in Fin-de-siècle France*, Robert Ziegler writes: “Perhaps the most spectacular manifestation of fin-de-siècle supernaturalism was the country-wide explosion of reports of the meetings of secret cults and the bloody rituals of Satanic societies.”⁶⁹ In other words: in *fin de siècle* France, Satan had never looked so good. When J. K. Huysmans published *Là-Bas /Down There* it caused an immediate scandal in France. Huysmans serialized the novel in the newspaper, *L’Écho de Paris*, and readers wrote in early and often to express their revulsion, threatening to cancel their subscriptions if the series was not halted. Not long afterward, when the book itself came out, it was banned from sale at railways, thus ensuring that it loomed all the larger in the public imagination. The outrage stemmed from the book’s frank depiction of Satanism—culminating in a Black Mass, vividly described. Its protagonist, a novelist named Durtal, has pursued his interest in the occult to its logical conclusion, and he was startled to learn that a thriving underworld persists in contemporary Paris. The main focus of the novel, the mystery surrounding the life, change, and death of one of the most infamous serial murderers/paedophiles of the past thousand years, the fifteenth century French knight and nobleman Gilles de Rais, who is believed to have killed (and in many cases, raped beforehand) somewhere between eighty to two hundred children of both genders (with some estimates ranging as high as over six hundred) between 1435 and his trial and execution in 1440. In particular, Huysmans focuses on the traditional account that de Rais may have become a Satanist during this time. Huysmans conducted extensive research for the novel embedding himself among a group of Satanists; he was disenchanted with ordinary life, and he wanted literature to present a thrilling alternative to daily reality. Critics would go on to argue that he went too far. He grew so distressed by the darkness and

evil in *Là-Bas*—and, perhaps, in his own mind as the novel’s subtitle is “A Journey into the Self”—that he came to regard it as ‘a black book’.⁷⁰ What is most interesting is perhaps the degree to which Satanism here is presented as reliant on and subordinate to orthodox Catholicism. The greatest heretics are often fallen clergy - much of the weird ritual described in *The Damned* is utterly reliant on consecration of the host, and one of the most horrifying aspects of de Rais' career is the degree of devotion he maintains throughout his unbelievable child-killing. In the end, in the face of excommunication, a Church tribunal actually accepted his repentance and re-admitted him into the fold, inconceivable crimes apparently atoned for. Huysmans' protagonist seems to in some sense admire de Rais' wild swing from monster to martyr, as preferable to the blander religion and modernity of his own time.

Huysmans himself wrote in one of his earlier novels that ‘Worshipping the Devil is no more insane than worshipping God’ when theories like mysticism stir the pot of ill-defined religious belief into occultism.⁷¹ Although historically the Papacy has argued that Catholic literature should be in service of the sublime beauty of creation, the genre itself is caught up with the heretical imagination and is more concerned with the ugly beauty of sin, apostasy and suffering in the everyday world. Although *Là-Bas* is unique in the extent of its submersion with occult practises, it does partake in the portrayal of Gothic Catholicism which is perpetuated through the language of the visual. The noir presentation of the Roman Catholic church in media and cinema is an extension of the aesthetic of Catholic literature itself; which in turn is inherited from the classic tradition of sacred murals and the affinity between church and art. The liminal space between sublime and Satanist, between the beautiful and the ugly is a redemptive trope that has been explored in the modern Catholic canon - highlighting how both elements are involved in understanding redemption. This is also quietly

present in the architectural history of Churches and Cathedrals which fixate their gaze on both angels and demons and provide the visual black and white of Bishop Blougram's chessboard.

In service of monstrosity

We could argue that the mode of Gothic and noir infringes on the visuality of Catholicism. This mode, however, is not completely modern and has, from a Catholic perspective, been evident in the dark edges of religious architecture for years, which dedicates itself to Gothic representations of otherness. All over Europe, countless numbers of grotesque animals leer down from medieval churches and cathedrals. Even as far back as the twelfth-century, a French monk named St Bernard of Clarivaux asked:

What are these fantastic monsters doing in the cloisters under the very eyes of brothers as they read? . . . What is the meaning of these unclean monkeys, these savage lions and monsters creatures? To what purpose are here placed these creatures, half-beast half-man [...] Surely if we do not blush for such absurdities we should at least regret what we have spent on them.⁷²

When speaking of 'such absurdities' St Bernard's comment could apply to the hermaphrodite figures carved into the wooden beams in Canterbury Cathedral in Kent, some of which display bristling moustaches and full breasts.⁷³ In her book, *Medieval Menagerie* Janetta Benton explores how these absurdities originated from the imagination of the Middle Ages, which was fascinated with mythological animals featured in murals, manuscript, sculptures, stained glass and tapestries. Her study, adapted from a series of formal lectures presented at the Metropolitan Museum of Art

(New York), highlights how the art of Medieval Christendom is filled with fanciful representations of: griffins, dragons, unicorns, mermaids and gargoyles. Although these animals are inherited from the classical mythology of the ancient world, not all these ancient creatures survived as many like Medusa, Pegasus, Minotaur and Sphinx largely disappeared in the sacred art of the middle ages.⁷⁴

One of the composite beasts which have survived, even until this day, is the gargoyle which peers down from the perches of many notable Cathedrals like the Notre Dame in Paris. These ghouls or gorgons have inspired art-historical studies of well-known sculptures such as *The Gargoyles of Notre-Dame; Medievalism and the Monsters of Modernity* written by Michael Camille. Camille describes how the grotesque gargoyles who peer down from the looming architecture of this Cathedral are modern restorations which have reconstructed the imagined past of its medieval origins. The identities of these strange creatures have many names ranging from 'the Vampire' to 'the Devourer' which in a sense he believes mimic the alleged heretical spirit of modernity.⁷⁵ Camille also adds that although these gargoyles became a contentious point for restorers, they were championed as crucial during the modern project by Eugene Viollet-le-Duc and would go on to be set loose as global guardians of a future Gothic revival. Although it is clear that the nineteenth century restoration of this Gothic monument did sharpen the claws of the vertical chimeras and the horizontal gargoyles that decorate its stone, these sculptures were not entirely new as their fragmentary remains were remnants from thirteenth and fifteenth century Paris. Art historians maintain the authenticity of these grotesque sculptures enhanced by the modern restoration of the facade: 'On every corner of the balustrade birds have come to perch, demons and monsters have come to squat. These picturesque figures have

just been re-established; the originals exist no more, but some of them, in falling have left their claws attached to the stone.’⁷⁶

These monstrous religious guardians evolved from their original functionality as water spouts incorporated into the architectural drainage system. Etymologically, the word gargoyle originated from the French term *gargouille* (which itself originates from the Latin term) which can be translated as throat; as these sculptures act as the throat of the church which spits away rainwater and reduces structural decay.⁷⁷ Western European languages provides a variety of words to describe these creatures; in Italian *grónda sporgente* means an architecturally ‘protruding gutter’, in German *Wasserspeier* translates as ‘water spitter’ and the Dutch *wasterspuwer* is the almost identical ‘water vomiter’. The French term is most closely related to the English use of the word, with the French verb *gargariser* providing the origin of the word gargle.⁷⁸

Many sculptures grasp their chests and throats as if vomiting away the rain and also functioned to frighten birds away from nesting in rain gutters. The irony that these demonic bodies would garnish the exteriors of many houses of Catholic worship is perhaps only a paradox made clear due to hindsight, but in the medieval age they reflected the frightening battle between heaven and hell and the preoccupation with vice and sin. These repulsive ghouls appear to be fleeing from the church, or at least from the cleansing water of Christ.

The architectural practice of decorative water sprouts was used in antiquity through the civilization of the Egyptians and Greeks.⁷⁹

Their true origin and purpose is argued to be 'visual intimidation' which educated the largely illiterate Christian population in the theological drama of forces unseen,

spiritual guardians against evil - ironically designed to keep evil from entering and my personal favourite, the strategic tactic of warfare which mounts the heads of enemies to declare victory. This theory derives from the seventh century French folklore of La Gargouille - a formidable dragon who lived in a cave near the River Seine and terrorized nearby villages – swallowing ships, causing fiery destruction and flooding. Saint Romanus (Bishop of Rouen) agreed to vanquish the dragon if all the townspeople agreed to be baptised, (an evangelical strategy also used in the legend of Saint George) and on his return mounted the dragons neck and head to his church where it would act as a water spout.⁸⁰ All the academic research in the history of the gargoyle make a distinction between the outside and inside of the church space – despite the fact that grotesque creatures feature in sacred interiors also. Benton argues that presence of these domesticated demons could be because they symbolically redeemed themselves by labouring in the service of the church as waterspouts and were rewarded by being allowed entry into the sacred space. She uses the argument of English architect and historian Francis Bond who claims that the truest purpose of the gargoyle was symbolic: ‘the idea being that the Church overcomes and converts to good uses even the most monstrous forms of evil.’⁸¹

Literary critics in their own research have compared the paradox of the Catholic gargoyle to the doodling writer who in process doodles on the margins of his pages. The sculptor who carved fantastic gargoyles can perhaps be considered analogous to the illuminator who doodled on the manuscript, for in both cases artistic liberties have been allowed at the peripheries of the church and the page. The manuscript illuminator working outside the main illustration of the text, like ‘the sculptor working at the outer edge of the church, could create fantasies largely beyond traditional artistic restrictions.’⁸²

The element of fantasy in the Catholic novel could be easily described as the doodling presence of dark and heretical imaginings. Huysmans' noir imaginings of what he called 'divine befoulment' – that would go on to inspire the heresy of writers like Greene in the future who embraced the grotesque doodles of sin.

One great example of doodling with sin is the curious dream sequences that Greene creates in *The Power and The Glory* and *Monsignor Quixote*, that heavily emphasize the grotesque nature of hell and pagan worship. Dreaming of hell takes place frequently in the narrative of Greene's whisky priest who is stalked by an inner conflict of hidden sin and unworthiness. Not only does he dream about his hellish anxiety, but he also has nightmares about grotesque saints who turn their eyes 'this way and that, waiting for something [...] with an awful expectancy'. (*Glory*, p.173)

These dream sequences display the unifying trend in the visual Catholic fiction of depicting what is ugly and grotesque in the search for redemption. Stephen Schloesser cites how this is the most significant trait in twentieth century Catholic literature: 'you show me the world as ugly as you can, and I will conclude that there are deep, mysterious, occult, forces at work in it'.⁸³

Ugliness then, rather than beauty (as the Vatican would prefer), becomes the vocation of the modern Catholic writer who embraces the monstrous reality of sin and suffering as proof that the forces of evil are not mythical; but brutally present in the modern struggle of the religious apologist. Schloesser names J.K Huysmans as the 'great-grandfather of twentieth-century Catholic Revivalism' because of his literary presentation of the hysteric 'modern' body as a reflection of the crucified body of Christ.⁸⁴ Huysmans could also be considered the literary grandfather of Greene's broken Catholic aesthetic through his own use of a 'dolorist aesthetic', an aesthetic

that relies on the redemptive properties of suffering –this is what Robert Ziegler names as dolorism- which run parallel to the suffering of some of Greene’s key characters from *The Power and The Glory*, *Brighton Rock*, *The End of the Affair* and *The Lawless Roads*.⁸⁵ Greene’s fiction and travel writing all include stories of people who suffer great spiritual pain that is either due to mortal sin, the loss of faith or religious persecution.

If the suffering of everyday faith in the Greene’s novels can be traced back to Huysmans’ ‘dolorist aesthetic’ then Greenland could also owe its origin to the visual history of crucifixion art. This is because Huysmans himself was fascinated with the Gothic dolorism that is portrayed in the monstrous art of Grunewald’s *Crucifixion* panel, and describes in great detail the painting’s presentation of the swollen and flea-bitten flesh of Christ, which is far removed from the ‘debonair Golgothas of the Renaissance’, or the Galilean dandy with curly hair and a youthful face. Huysmans is fascinated by the physical subversion of the Christian Adonis into a figure ‘made ugly’ by the weight of sin and suffering.⁸⁶ He would have been aware of the origin of this painting which was commissioned by medieval monks for use in a hospital constructed to treat patients with skin disease. Thus the agony of Christ’s own suffering would bring comfort and hope to the spectating patients in this community of broken and grotesque bodies.⁸⁷ Accepting the broken body is a reflection of the sacrament of communion itself, and how the ugliness of Christ’s death is the ultimate grotesque and also the pinnacle of visuality in the Catholic novel. This might explain why suicide is a recurrent theme in Greenland, for example in *The Heart of The Matter* where it is declared ‘Christ has killed himself: he had hung himself on the Cross as surely as Pemberton from the picture-rail’.⁸⁸ Through Huysmans appropriation of Grunewald’s cross, critics like G. A. Cevalco argue that his taste for

religious art and liturgy has had a lasting impact on English literature, in particular the works of Oscar Wilde and Evelyn Waugh.⁸⁹

Huysmans wrote during the *fin de siècle* and his ornate style contained the decadent themes of ruin and the disturbance of natural order. Much of Huysmans work was autobiographical and together his novels form a literary *bildungsroman* of faith. The protagonist of *La Bas/ The Damned* is also found in two of his following novels, *En route* (1895) and *La Cathedrale* (1898). These final novels are a trilogy which tell the story of his protagonist's religious retreat into the monastery of Notre Dame.

Huysmans was also an art critic and much of *La Bas* draws on the rich context of Catholic art and its changing aesthetic. Critics have also separated his career into a trilogy of muses: naturalism, decadence and Catholicism.⁹⁰ The failures of one theory pushed him to the next as the limits of naturalism to address the supernatural lead Huysmans to write decadently about the fall of natural order in his ultimate quest for divinity. In speaking on the radical shifts in his career and his spiritual conversion after *La Bas* Huysmans said:

There exists the world of people who divide my work in two parts: before my conversion and after my conversion, and who would absolutely want to persuade me that I must retire, efface, annihilate the first. These people do not understand that in life and in the work of an artist there is a unity, and that, notably, this work forms a whole that is everything.⁹¹

The trend of literary conversion is something that aligns Huysmans with Wilde.

Though Huysmans' link to Wilde's *Dorian Gray* is well known (both writers converted to Catholicism in later life and Joseph Pearce explains the influence of Huysmans on Wilde in his study *Literary Converts*),⁹² few people know of Waugh's

borrowing of a gilded tortoise from Huysmans' 1884 novel *Against Nature* / *A Rebours* in his 1945 novel *Brideshead Revisited*. At first reading the obscene tortoise that is given as a gift from one character to another in Waugh's story is described by critics as a parody of the 'domination of manufactured modernity over nature'; it is a critique of the way the beauty of sublime creation can never truly be copied by human ingenuity.⁹³ It is clear to me, however, that the author is doing more with this tortoise than displaying a suspicion toward the modern age but making a comment on the mass proliferation of religious objects.

When Christopher Chilton describes the protagonist of Huysmans' *Against Nature*, as a man from a Jesuit upbringing, who 'fills his home with religious texts and paintings of the crucifixion but professes no faith', we are reminded of the Waugh's aristocratic Catholic family from *Brideshead* - the Marchmains- who are without faith yet engrossed in their own incomplete Catholic aesthetic that haunts them and continues to burn even after their aristocracy fades away.⁹⁴ This aesthetic flame overlaps with the overarching theme of grace in the novel, seen through the literal candles in the family chapel which are restored during wartime use, and show that the builders (and we also suspect God's) efforts are not in vain. *Brideshead* gives us an example of the visuality of sacred spaces and their quiet theology which continues to burn in the televised and cinematic adaptations of Waugh's novel.

Looking In Chapels

Brideshead can be described as an eloquent twentieth-century working out of the book of Ecclesiastes. It is the story of the vain search that, for the wise, ends with what Solomon found – God. It is easy to miss this biblical reference in the narrative,

Waugh quotes its most famous phrase in the epilogue: "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." Then he quickly adds, "and yet that is not the last word."⁹⁵ Waugh's beautifully evocative tale of the destruction of a family, a home, a way of life, a soul, ends in the finding again of all that is worth finding.

Though modern readers describe this book as a story about social-climbing, homo-erotic love, religion and Oxford; there is also the theme of conversion in the novel as many characters are reconciled to some realisation of divine grace. This involves Lord Marchmain on his deathbed, Julia in her rejection of her immoral affair with Charles, Charles in his admiration of the chapel and Sebastian in his sanctuary with a monastery. A quotation from Chesterton's story - "The Queer Feet": "I caught him, with an unseen hook and an invisible line which is long enough to let him wander to the ends of the world, and still to bring him back with a twitch upon the thread" is cited twice in the novel and is chosen as the title of the third book; reiterating the idea of divine redemption, almost predestination – which overcomes profanity and sin. The salvation narrative is all encompassing in Waugh's worldview - it swallows the world whole. As the process of redemption is ongoing in the novel, although at many times frustrated, the Catholic Church is often a topic of conversation in the Marchmain house and embedded within the visuality of the space:

Religion predominated in the house [...] the daily mass and Rosary [...] an ivory Madonna, a plaster St Joseph (*Brideshead*. 121-122.)

Though the novel is essentially a 'Cinderella story' of a middle-class boy scooped up by the aristocracy this deserving poor boy is allowed into the sacred circle and allowed to gaze at the magnificence and opulence of the upper class. It is this gaze that is at the heart of the narrative causing him to fall in love with the entire family;

perhaps also falling in love with the Catholic space of the chapel. Though readers often skip over this sacred space in preference for the more prestigious locations of Oxford and Mayfair, the conclusion of the novel reveals Waugh's idea that the chapel would outlast all other parts of the estate, which would eventually be taken over by the battalions and brigades of War. Out of the two redemptive symbols in the novel – the fountain from Rome and the family chapel – only one of these symbols endures while the other becomes another casualty of war:

That fountain is rather a tender spot with our landlady; the young officers used to lark about in it on guest nights and it was looking a bit the worse for wear, so I wired it in and turned the water off. Looks a bit untidy now; all the drivers throw their cigarette ends and the remains of the sandwiches there, and you can't get to it to clean it up, since I put the wire around. (*Brideshead*. 327).

Where the grandiose fountain which was once ornamented with water sprouting lions and described through the redemptive language of: new found beauty, conversion, and life-giving water is the elite Catholic symbol which represents the aristocratic baroque. It is not the symbol chosen by Waugh to outlive the trampling boots of the first war; preferring instead the forgotten space of the chapel which is deliberately scorned in the novel as 'a monument for *art nouveau*' – representing how simple craftsmanship pioneers over mass-production as taught by William Morris and John Ruskin. (*Brideshead*. 79-80. 39.)

Waugh claimed that the novel was steeped in theology but the theologians would not recognise it and there is a quiet theology in the visuality of an arid fountain and a chapel lit by candlelight. Candles are interestingly used in the cinematic adaption of *Brideshead* (2008) to negotiate this controversial space through dimness that obscures

the weight of religious art. Director Julian Jarrold enhances the end scene by allowing Charles Ryder's hands to halt mid-air as he resists his urge to extinguish the solitary candle in the empty chapel, before deciding to let it burn through the darkness. The *mis-en-scene* of the ending uses light to slowly in show how the gradual light of the stained glass reflects the slow process of conversion throughout the whole novel and the surrounding darkness of wartime Europe. Though the chapel can be read as a type of sacred visuality, many would also view this space through its sexual politics and its symbolisation of religious tourism.

I will touch on the first of these very briefly. The great house which Waugh based *Brideshead* on (his author's note equally confirming and denying his biographical inspiration 'I am not I, thou art not he or she; they are not they') is the English Manor estate of Madresfield (in Worcestershire) home to the Lygon family and the scandal of Lord William Lygon, whose homosexuality was an open secret discovered by King George V. The themes of God, scandal, separation, exile and reconciliation overlap between the Marchmains and Lygons. Diplomat and diarist Harold Nicolson recalled a dinner at Madresfield when he was asked by an astonished fellow guest, "Did I hear Beauchamp whisper to the butler, 'Je t'adore'?" "Nonsense," Nicolson replied. "He said 'Shut the door.'" Even though Nicolson knew that the other guest had indeed heard correctly.⁹⁶

Lord Lygon was also a major patron of the Arts and Crafts movement who redecorated the family chapel as a gift to his wife. Sebastian's explanation of his Catholic faith, which rests his belief, not in doctrine or dogma – but rather in the loveliness of an idea (like the story of the Nativity) is in line Wilde's attraction to the Catholic church which rested on the appeal of its lovely aesthetic; and supports the discriminatory correlation between homosexuality and the Anglo-Catholicism as

expressed so eloquently in *Brideshead* by cousin Jasper ‘Beware the Anglo-Catholics. They are all sodomites with unpleasant accents.’ (*Brideshead*.28.)

Rather than interpret the sacred space of the chapel through the sexual politics of the novel, it is more important to me to consider how Waugh facilitates trips to this unashamedly religious space which is the motive of sight-seeing and tourism. On their first trip to the chapel Sebastian declares ‘You wanted to do sight-seeing; how about this?’ (*Brideshead*. 39.) And Charles admits from his artistic perspective that ‘Probably in eighty years it will be greatly admired’. (*Brideshead*. 89.)

What is important about this second statement is how it predicts the consumption of sacred spaces through the avenue of tourism, which is the only framework that allows modern audiences entry into religious culture. There is something in the twentieth century that blurs the boundaries between tourism and pilgrimage (‘Pilgrimage often invites tourism, while tourism entertains the possibility of pilgrimage experience’) though critics have pointed out that medieval pilgrimage was not ‘immune from forms of commodification’ normally associated with later periods of secular travel.⁹⁷ Indeed churches are unique in the way they are sold to both believers and non-believers, with both cathedrals and pilgrimage sites appealing to the masses. In 1988 churches and cathedrals were ranked as the third most popular leisure pursuit for overseas tourists in Britain.⁹⁸ Eighty years after the publication of *Brideshead*, churches not only function as places of worship but also as historical monuments and centres for cultural events.

Charles unwittingly implies how the visuality of Roman Catholicism would go on to play a role in its own commodification; as spaces like the chapel would be consumed not by worship theology but by aesthetics, condensed into objects and accessories. It

is also important to remember that what is ultimately sold here is not the souvenirs or the entrance to historical cathedrals, but the gaze itself. The most important scene in *Brideshead's* presentation of redemption is essentially a wordless act of gazing.

Waugh does not even allow us to overhear the prayer Charles utters in the chapel, 'an ancient, newly-learned form of words' acquired, we assume, after his conversion.

(*Brideshead* 322.) All we are given is the lamp which burns before the altar like a holy fire and this light is seen through a sacred gaze that leads to more revelation in the narrative than any sacrament or liturgy.

In this small scene, we find a technique that is also utilised in *Greenland*, which I will refer to as the 'theology of looking'. Looking in itself can initially be thought of as an innocent act; which is why the field of visual studies that focuses particularly on the gaze aim to reveal that the presumption of seeing as a passive act is predominantly wrong. This is because vision takes place on historical and social levels which both act as frameworks for how images are encountered - as discussed by David Morgan in his book on *The Sacred Gaze: Religious Visual Culture in Theory and Practice*.

Morgan describes the sacred gaze as an act of seeing which invests a viewer, image or encounter with a religious significance, arguing that vision is an intrinsically cultural act and practice that is at the heart of religious communities. Though the modern Catholic Church shows great examples of the sacred gaze through its missional images and devotional art, it has also perpetuated its historical struggle between religion and visibility as seen in 1912 when Pope Pius X prohibited the use of projections in churches because he claimed they diminished the sacred space.⁹⁹ The Catholic novel is not immune from its own negotiations with sacred looking as writers like Evelyn Waugh connecting his writing to ideas of the Beatific Vision when he writes:

Perhaps in the mansions of Limbo the heroes enjoy some such compensation for their loss of the Beatific Vision; perhaps the Beatific Vision itself has some remote kinship with this lowly experience; I, at any rate, believed myself very near heaven, during those languid days at Brideshead. (*Brideshead*.77).

Here the glory of God is substituted for the aristocratic beauty of the *Brideshead* estate, which is a type of sublimity that encroaches on the gates of heaven itself. This may be Waugh's theological implication to the Catholic foundation of the Marchmain family and the lingering conversion of Charles Ryder; or another allusion to the heavenly pleasures of youth which are filled with a bliss not far removed from the satisfaction of eternal beauty. The 'languid' lifestyle of Waugh's Catholic dandy, Sebastian, is a contributing factor to his inability to encounter the Beatific Vision – he is described as having 'unseeing eyes' during his drunken nights at Oxford - and is argued to only see the mirage of his Arcadian world which parallels a state of grace that nourishes fleeting beauty. (*Brideshead*. 31.)¹⁰⁰ The Beatific Vision in the Catholic novel has also been explored in Flannery O'Connor's work whose Christian vision is concerned with the role of sight in glimpsing the good in all creation – which has been described as vastly different from its contemporary outlook of existentialist which is in essence a problem of failed sight.¹⁰¹

The theology of looking is not only expressed through Waugh and O'Connor's language of beauty and goodness but is also evident in a much more complicated way in a novel like *The End of The Affair* (1951). Greene uses the sacred gaze to defamiliarise the Catholic aesthetic through its cadence of suffering and materialism. The novel uses the sacred space of the church to explore the idea of looking when Sarah, a closet Catholic, escapes her marriage troubles by retreating into

a local church (as similarly dim and empty as the *Brideshead* chapel) on the corner of Park Road.

I walked up the church, *looking* at them one after the other (*Affair* .88)

I *looked* at that material body on that material cross (*Affair*.89).

I *looked* up at that over familiar body, stretched in imaginary pain, the head drooping like a man asleep (*Ibid.*)

Looking at the inside of the church on Park Road does little to add to Sarah's 'faith', in the same way that the biblical act of looking saved afflicted people in the Old Testament. (The Lord said to Moses 'Make a snake and put it up on a pole; anyone who is bitten can look up at it and live.')102 Sarah's looking is conflicted with accusations of materialism and superstition, as she performs the sign of the cross on her forehead – despite her evident scepticism- we see the echo of Charles Ryder during his first visit to the chapel who also copied the physical sign of the cross for what he could only explain as good manners. (*Brideshead*.39.) Both Sarah and Charles – in relation to Catholic faith – perform the function in the narrative of the unbelieving voyeur who gains both pleasure and discomfort from their gaze of the Catholic space. At the end of both novels, it is the viewers of faith – as opposed to the practising saints – who undergo some sort of conversion with both Charles and Maurice believing in the existence and flame of God; though Maurice does so begrudgingly with his own brand of what Bernard Schweitzer calls misotheism, which does not struggle with the existence of God but with his unabated cruelty towards mankind.¹⁰³

Maurice's anger is the mitigation of the hostility and suspicion *The End of The Affair* displays toward Catholicism, which is articulated through its systematic attack of its

aesthetic. Sarah's gaze in the chapel scene on Park Road differs from its parallel scene in *Brideshead* chiefly because it is a much more frustrating passage of disillusionment, which rebels against the artistic expressions of Catholic belief. Sarah's ambivalent relationship with the physical body itself, which she equally wants to destroy and indulge, is articulated through her various acts of looking. Christ's body is subject to a voyeur's gaze in similar relation to her lover Maurice while also causing deep feelings of repulsion and sickness when she is with her husband Henry (*Affair*. 88).¹⁰⁴ Greene uses the masculine body of Christ as a space of undue confusion and romantic torment for Sarah. This scene does not use the visual aesthetic of Catholicism like the ending of *Brideshead* in the service of conversion, but instead instigates deep conflict that rips the sacred aesthetic in two. The only near conversions we have lie in the mental realm as Sarah realises her own materialism through her inability to love a spiritual vapour without a connection to a physical body. This of course brings her back to where the scene started, looking at the crucifixion, and its gruesome otherness which has been mass produced and commercialised. The novel uses the voices of Henry and Maurice to condemn the church of materialism in the face of Sarah's naïve prayer for a miracle. The idea that the gaze has fallen victim to the powers of global consumerism is the driving force behind the chapel scene in *The End of the Affair*, which wrestles against the way the spiritual world attaches its enchantment to material objects that are in turn deeply embedded in the magical aesthetic of Catholicism. The mysterious process of transubstantiation (where the bread and wine offered as a sacrament during the Eucharist, becomes, in reality, the blood and body of Christ) is used as an example of magical consumerism which does not answer to symbolic art; but to overarching dogma produced by Rome. This scene does not succeed in its attempt to fully explicate the connection between

Catholicism and materialism which is a topic that is deeply embedded into the structure of the novel. When David Morgan describes how religious economies are essentially cultures of exchange where believers trade their credit for salvation; making pilgrimage to barter their promises and petitions to the divine while also engaging in prayer to illicit credit to draw from heavenly treasures, we can see how Sarah in *The End of The Affair* barter her way to the miraculous realm when she takes the position of the religious petitioner engaging God in a sacred exchange. In Morgan's cold assertion that humans have always competed for the scarcity of goods, with religion providing no exception, we can feel the mocking stare of the sceptics from *Brideshead* and *The End of The Affair* who have grown weary of the price of salvation.¹⁰⁵

As an unwilling voyeur of the stark nudity of the crucified body, Sarah is reminded that Christ came to earth in bodily form, which only serves to remind her of the own failures of her adulterous body, a body which she hates and believes should not hold the sacred 'vapour' of God. Greene's frequent use of this word to describe the cosmic and vague form of the divine is the semantic bridge which connects these parallel church scenes together. Greene would no doubt have read *Brideshead*, which had been published six years before *The End of The Affair*, and used his own exegesis to render Waugh's burning flame a representation of the vapour of God – which would then go on to be incorporated into his own writing. Though Sarah and Charles are gazing at different objects, this materiality does not take away from their theological similarity – the vapour of Christ.

Looking at the Crucifixion

What this sacred defamiliarisation in *The End of The Affair* helps to signify to us is how the overwrought symbol of the crucifixion is the pinnacle model for looking that the Christian faith has to offer. In *God's Gym: Divine Male Bodies of the Bible*, Stephen Moore argues that the central spectacle of Christianity is the figure of a tortured man, whose grisly pain has been tamed into bland resignation.

I gazed uneasily at the others visiting this spot...I tried to imagine what brought them there. Was it a historical curiosity about the Middle Ages, or the same desire that brings people to horror movies, or sexual desire invested in bondage and discipline? I was there too.¹⁰⁶

You could be forgiven for thinking this was someone talking about the Crucifixion, rather than witnessing an exhibition focusing on the instruments of torture. The silence or lack of language to describe the brutality of the crucified Christ is noted by Moore who comments on the 'verbal constipation' of New Testament which tersely describes the act in three words; 'they crucify him' (Mark 15.24.)

It is as if the act of looking is the only reasonable response to such suffering, which is why gazing at this harrowing scene has become an unavoidable part of salvation and Christian living – and is annually repeated through the images of Easter. These images aim to transform onlookers from spectators who scrutinize from an audience to beholders of divine grace. As mentioned before Huysmans *La Bas* (The Damned) touches on the different ways of looking at the Calvary scene, through its similar emphasis to the masculine body of Christ in religious art. Huysmans' protagonist speaks of the different types of Christ that have been presented throughout art history. For many centuries Christ was shown alive and open-eyed as he peacefully

surrendered to the divine will of his father. It was only a matter of time before history produced a new type of Christ with his head fallen in despair and his eyes barely open. Christ's own gaze in crucifixion art has also altered with this tide of brutal realism which has affected his inability to behold his father above with trust and humility. In *La Bas* he can hardly see at all 'Encircled by a ragged crown of thorns [...] one lacklustre eye half-open in which a shudder of terror and sorrow could be detected'. (*Damned* 8.) The problematic nature of gazing at the explicit cruelty of the cross is demonstrated cinematically by *The Passion of the Christ* (2004) which subverts meek representations of Christ's suffering for merciless abuse of a graphic nature. The deliberate tone of the film is discussed by the producer, Mel Gibson when he states that did not want to see 'Jesus looking really pretty. I wanted to mess up one of his eyes, destroy it.'¹⁰⁷ As a veteran actor within the field of action, a disfigured eye would be commonplace in Gibson's day to day roles. The gore itself is not what interests critics like David Morgan who is much more preoccupied with what this mutilated gaze signifies to its devout audience:

His determination to destroy Jesus's eye seems emblematic, as if he intended to assault the very means of vision. By violating the eye Gibson eradicates the view of Jesus as pretty and effeminate, as well as the theology, piety, politics and lifestyle that many believe correspond to that prettiness and effeminacy. Gibson wants to destroy an entire way of seeing and install in its place a manly Jesus [...] The film plunges viewers into a protracted agony in order to wrench from them the devotional gaze.¹⁰⁸

Gibson's devastation of the devotional gaze is not surprising considering how critical consensus has deemed that the act of gazing destroys with its harmful power evident as early as the antique myth of Medusa and Narcissus. This negative discourse of

looking is intensified in the modern world through its associations with power and surveillance.

When Morgan speaks of the devotional worship of an effeminate Jesus he refers to the spiritual ideology of the popular American picture called the *Head of Christ* (1924) painted by Warner Sallmann; for its use of the idealised gaze of a gently passive Christ. He finds this representation, which is the ideal conception of Christ for many people, at the very heart of Gibson's visual violation. Perhaps what *The Passion* is most clearly articulating is not just the disjunction between looking and the sacred ('you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live') but the need for the sacred gaze to go beyond ordinary ways of seeing.¹⁰⁹ Morgan's research in the area of visual theology claim that the act of looking is bound to religious identity as submitting one's gaze to the image of Christ can be interpreted as a type of visual piety. This is interesting when applied to *The End of The Affair* where Sarah's refusal to submit her gaze to the Catholic aesthetic solidifies her own lack of religious identity in the narrative.

The gaze used in *The End of The Affair* to rebel against materialist worship is comparable with Huysmans *The Cathedral/La Cathédrale* (1898) which is also a novel that enters the catholic aesthetic of the church through acts of looking and themes of conversion. The visuality of the Cathedral looks beyond the art of the church and towards mass spectacles of pilgrimage like the grotto of Lourdes. In *The Cathedral* and *The Crowds of Lourdes* (1906) Huysmans expressed outrage at the commercialization of religious shrines, attacking the presence of the economic market which was so evident in the pilgrim culture.

But God, who forced La Salette on the world without availing Himself of the means of fashionable notoriety, now changed His tactics; with Lourdes, advertisement appeared on the scene. This it is that confounds the mind: Jesus condescending to make use of the wretched arts of human commerce; adopting the repulsive tricks which we employ to float a manufacture or a business. And we wonder whether this may not be the sternest lesson in humility ever given to man, as well as the most vehement reproof hurled at the American abominations of our day—God reduced to lowering Himself once more to our level, to speaking our language¹¹⁰

This critique of the shrine of Lourdes is essentially an anti-capitalist cry against the phenomena of sacred memorabilia; arguing in support of the modern overlap between Christianity and capitalism (as argued by Max Weber's *The Protestant Work Ethic and The Spirit of Capitalism*) anticipating how the modern church would build theme parks while the economy would build banking havens to house rich saints. The key question that this anti-modern critique is dying to ask is: does capitalism destroy spirituality? It is the joy of the Catholic novel to test the strength of faith under the weight of doubt, sin, despair and lust; with the congregational lust for commerce and business proving to be stronger than the individual sins of everyday life.

In the opening of *The Cathedral*, the pilgrim, Durtal, laments over the ruin of the shrine of 'La Salette' which arose from organic fame to be replaced with the 'American abominations' of merchantable shrines in the religious economy. Beyond the fictional musings of Durtal, Huysmans himself struggled with the materialist selling of salvation and was unable to reconcile himself fully with contemporary worship practices. After writing *La Cathédrale* and before he composed *Les Foules de Lourdes* he took the time to visit Lourdes personally; writing in his correspondence

of the improper trafficking of sacred goods and the ‘prostitution of the divine’.¹¹¹ This outlook on the practices of Roman Catholic worship would go on to be articulated in Greene’s own fictional world when he would write about the money making business of Sainthood in *Monsignor Quixote* (1982), which aligns pilgrimage not only with capitalism but also to sexual exploitation as the priest describes how it would be better to parade the Virgin naked through the streets than to clothe her in the riches of this world. The priest is wounded in an attempt to save the Virgin’s statue after it comes crashing to earth like ‘the end of an orgy’ where the money is tossed away into the crowd inciting a riot.¹¹² The mixing of money with the femininity of the virgin mother equates to the sexual taxonomies of debauchery.

Though Huysmans and Greene found the economy of salvation an ugly topic, both authors were drawn to the aura of pilgrimage for its precise power to invoke authentic piety which had been lost among the spectacles of Roman Catholicism. Huysmans would go on to speak highly in his correspondence of the joy of walking eating and sleeping ‘to the sound of *Ave Marias*’ ringing from the Middle Ages.¹¹³

Commentators write on how the ‘tension between the shrine’s vile modernity and its capacity to re-create a lost worship from the Middle Ages’ became artistic inspiration for Huysmans’ imagination. This very same tension is at the heart of Greene’s ‘dark and magical heart of faith’; as an outworking of the Catholic vision and its ensuing problems amidst modern culture. Both Huysmans and Greene teach us of the modern perils of materialism which loom over the pursuit of the beatific vision in the Catholic novel. Simply put, that the beatific vision is propped up by accumulating amounts of religious kitsch which Catholic converts often identify as alien;

Not a single shop is without its medals and candles and rosaries and scapulars and pamphlets full of miracles; both old and new Lourdes are crammed with

them; even the hotels have them on sale; and that goes on in street after street for miles [...] and all these things grow bigger and better and larger as you get nearer the new town; the statues swarm increasingly and end by becoming, not less ugly, but enormous.¹¹⁴

The national success of the Lourdes shrine forced the church to confront its commercial activities; which is also seen in their active discouragement of turning the holy pilgrimage into a tourist holiday – an 1898 guidebook asserting that ‘this guide is not made for tourists but for pilgrim’- as the Church attempted to cover its self from the modern gaze of tourism while also implying that the tourist and the pilgrim could never be united.¹¹⁵ In speaking on the miraculous economy of Lourdes in his journalistic career Greene wrote about how we are still ‘apt to think of this as an unmiraculous age. The miracles of Lourdes are cures [...]But this is an age of visions as well as cures’.¹¹⁶ Greene remedies the strict papal separation between seeing and believing (Blessed are they who have not seen and yet have believed) by describing how the new ‘Dark Age’ of modernism is given the exact same ‘consolations as our ancestors’- which are holy visions and the ability to see the divine.¹¹⁷

The vision of God in the ‘Dark Ages’ of literary individualism is the predicament of Catholic fiction in the modern world and it is in search of this type of sight that writers do damage to the sacred imagination with their encounters with the beauty of sin, the commerciality of salvation and the ugliness of grotesque holiness. Writers like Huysmans and Waugh and Greene use the Catholic novel to address key issues about what it means to be Catholic; showing how contemporary salvation barter with modernity through the currency of broken symbols -whether it be a solitary flame in a neglected chapel or a darkened church full of grotesque bodies, holiness flickers in

presence of darkness - and redemption lives on in the visual world of many Catholic writers, even when the flame of conversion has dwindled.

Chapter Two: Icon: Idol



Figure One: Virgin on a Plane, from 'Father Patrick Moore of the Scarborough Foreign Mission sits next to the Lady of Fatima en route to the Port of Spain', *New York Times*, April 20 1990.

I do not like to hear Protestants speaking with gross and uncharitable contempt even of the worship of relics. Elisha once trusted his own staff too far; nor can I see any reasonable ground for the scorn, or the unkind rebuke, of those who have been taught from their youth upwards that to hope even in the hem of the garment may sometimes be better than to spend the living on physicians.¹¹⁸

The Mary Metaphor

Let me start with a story about heaven. It is a childhood story which Andrew Greeley tells in his study on *The Catholic Imagination* that starts on a day when God, in a

similar way to a mayor surveying his town, is touring his heavenly city and finds some undesirable characters wandering around. After seeing this, God heads out to the first gates of the city to find Peter the gatekeeper.

‘Well, Simon Peter, you’ve let me down again.’

‘What have I done this time?’ the gatekeeper said with a loud sigh.

‘Haven’t you let in a bunch of people who have no business being here at all?’

‘I have not,’ says Peter.

‘Well then who has?’

‘You don’t want to know.’

‘Yes, I do.’

‘Well,’ says Peter with an even louder sign, ‘didn’t I tell them that there’s no way they can come in and then don’t I slam the gate on them?’

‘And then what?’

‘Then don’t they go around the back door and doesn’t your mother let them in!’¹¹⁹

Although slightly indulgent, this anecdote does advocate for the popularity of the Marian image through the way she symbolises the feminine side of God. The Madonna has become a cultural symbol, for many, which is easier to digest than the idea of Jesus or the Almighty Father. She is the irresistible image of a mother and her baby which ultimately speaks of the way God loves his creation, and her image suggests that there is an aspect of femininity in God’s love which is capable of loving

the church like a mother (along with a father) - giving fertility to a world overwhelmed with death and mortality. Andrew Greely cites this as the core appeal to the 'Mary metaphor' - the very reason why her image is so enticing to artists- because it is an allegory for the mother love of God.

Publishing his book in the year 2000 Greely argues that the Mary metaphor is in some degree of trouble; Catholic feminists abandon her, fewer artists paint her likeness and her image is allegedly fading from cultural consciousness.¹²⁰ Yet we find that Greene engages powerfully with her image, exalting her as the pinnacle of Catholic aesthetic. Mary is always in his imagination in both sacred and blasphemous forms, as a lifelong companion in his literary journey. In this way he is very much like his contemporary Father Patrick Moore, whose photo 'Virgin on a plane' is featured at the beginning of this chapter, carrying a statue of the Madonna on his evangelistic travels with a Canadian Foreign Mission Society around the world. The statue of Mary accompanied Father Moore across land, sea and air for ten years, acting as an object lesson and metaphor for peace. Although Greene's reasons for carrying the image of the Madonna is less evangelistic, he equally pioneers the right to use her image to inspire everyday people. Those who argue against this right are cited by John Ruskin in his *Stones of Venice* as 'speaking with gross and uncharitable contempt' for the use of relics and sacramental objects.¹²¹ Andrew Greely also finds this contempt within the Catholic community where intellectuals argue that the image of the Madonna has been abused in strange movements and cults.¹²² Though iconoclasm was a valid fear for Christendom Greene himself found piety – originating from the Latin *pietas* and relating to words like pity and pittance – more unnerving than the sin of idolatry.

Greene's fiction details how the true criminality of the saintly images lies in the interpretation of redemption which they offer; a salvation that removes all traces of

humanity while requiring saintly perfection. Thus Greene's drunken priest becomes the narrative translation of an earthly salvation where sufferings of human weakness are the only requirement for grace. This chapter will discuss the use of iconography in Greene's fiction- in dialogue with debates concerning the vice of piety, religious commodification and fetishism.

In any serious discussion of the iconography which permeates Greeneland, we must begin with Mary. The Mary whom Greene agrees is 'our tainted nature's solitary boast'¹²³ according to Wordsworth, and the Mary whom Greene defends against accusations of idolatry in his journalistic articles on 'The Dark Virgin' and 'Our Lady and Her Assumption'. As a journalist Greene was fascinated with her disappearance from historical narratives after the day of Pentecost, in comparison with her many posthumous visitations across the world.¹²⁴

Although Greene's fascination with the Madonna is found throughout the nooks and crannies of his literary and journalistic career, it is curiously present in his personal life as well. The Virgin became the cause of Greene's first encounter with his wife Vivien, after she reprimanded him on his use of the word 'worship' in relation to Catholic 'veneration' of the Mother of God in an article he wrote for the *Oxford Outlook*. Michael Brennan discusses how Greene went on to worship the glorified and saint-like virginity of the female protagonist in his first published novel, *The Man Within* (1929), which of course echoed his idolisation of Vivien. The novel tells the romance of Andrews, a young smuggler-on the run after informing on his criminal gang – who falls in love with a saintly girl that encourages him to go to court and testify against the people pursuing him. Towards the end of the novel Andrews becomes this Hamletesque figure who struggles with his own indecisive cowardice.

Brennan describes how the novel's 'insistently devotional female iconography' was replicated in Greene's correspondence with Vivien, where he wrote that 'miracles will be done at your grave' as he imagined kissing her sleeping lips beneath a crucifix.¹²⁵ At this stage in his writing career the Mother of God was clearly a strong inspiration for Greene's literary imagination and the potent iconography of *The Man Within* would temper into more diluted forms in his later fiction. If one was to give a quick tour of the chronicles of the Virgin in Greeneland you would see how she is shrunk to the size of a doll in *Brighton Rock* - where she is won as a prize on Brighton pier. This is comparable to the statue of Mary that is a silent witness during a seduction scene on the journey of the Orient Express in *Stamboul Train*, and almost as memorable as the virgin who came to life during *The Honorary Consul*, ascending from her altar in an Argentinean Church, to diffuse a bomb.

In *Brighton Rock*, the Mother of God is a commodity that is found in the Palace of Pleasure, past the slot machines and peep shows, displayed in the shooting booth. The small doll is something that Pinkie later tosses at Rose telling her to 'stick it up in your room and pray' (*Rock*. 21) In the 2010 cinematic adaptation of this novel, this is the first scene where Pinkie's violent nature is suggested. Staring directly into the camera, gun in his hand, firing repeatedly with chilling ease; our choir boy shoots not at his gangster enemies – but at the Madonna in miniature form. In this way, the director aligns Pinkie's hellish nature with his heavenly past, suggesting that, through his mortal sin, he is indeed destroying his redemption and shooting down his chances of heavenly clemency from the Mother of God. To stretch this even further, Pinkie is theologically shooting at the commercialisation of sainthood and the cheap transcendence of the Madonna in replicated form – lamenting the fact that she is no

longer a beautiful secret whispered in Latin, but now a mass-produced version of an old and faithful enigma.

In *Stamboul Train*, ‘the presence of a pink-and-white Madonna gave the whole situation a kind of conscious blasphemy’ (*Train* .73). She is like a superstitious omen overlooking the sin of Josef Grünlich, a fugitive on the run that is eventually caught and deported back to Vienna. The Madonna appears moments before Grünlich, who is posing as a man called Anton in order to seduce a middle-aged maid for him to access her master’s hidden safe. The Madonna works to both stall Grünlich’s seduction and foreshadow the mortal sin of committing his first murder, which he does when he shoots his maid’s master twice in the back. The Madonna is a part of Grünlich’s imagination as even before his encounter with the pink and white statue, he automatically slips into the repetition of a childhood Hail Mary prayer, while he creeps around a dark and dangerous roof. The incorporation of the Mother of God into the modern criminal psyche is similar to Pinkie’s moral duality in *Brighton Rock*, and the works of other Catholic artists such as Martin Scorsese – which I will discuss in Chapter Four, which focuses on Catholic cinema.

The Madonna also appears in *The Honorary Consul* which is a novel that features the fervent veneration of Saints in provincial Argentina. This is an easy place to combine the holy worship of the Mother of God with the seedy and base matters of everyday life. For example, in commenting on his visits to a brothel, Charley Fortnum

remembered how Teresa would count the peso notes and afterwards lay them on the ledge below her saint’s statue as though they were the result of a collection in church. (*Consul*. 74.)

This is a scene that continues from the white and pink Madonna from *Stamboul Train*, to perch on the bare table of a South American prostitute, who cannot live without her wages and her devotion. The Madonna does not remain still for long as her silent witness of the immorality of the brothel is transformed into her political animation concerning bomb control, as she is used by Greene to personify the message of peace, not war.

This is not the first time that the image of Mary is used by Greene as a political metaphor to articulate the struggles of Europe during the Cold War. In 1950 Greene published an article in *Life* magazine, called 'The Assumption of Mary.' In it, he used Mary as a framework to express his own views against communism and war. Greene writes as a sceptic detailing the fables and visions he had heard, in which Mary was said to have appeared. The article was a response to parallel Marian doctrine of the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption, which Greene believed also argued the church's position against the modern presentation of humanity as material and not spiritual. It is in the figure of the Virgin Mary that worshipful observers like Greene may be comforted with theological ideas of resurrection and life after death. It is also in the feminine love of Mary that the intrinsic value of one human life, of one beloved child, can be re-emphasized. This is a type of supernatural good that combats the political heresies of war which Greene warns about when he writes:

But Catholics today cannot remain quite untouched by the general heresy of our time, the unimportance of the individual. Today the human body is regarded as expendable material, something to be eliminated wholesale by the atom bomb [...] no crosses today mark the common graves into which the dead of London and Berlin were shovelled [...]The Resurrection of Christ can be

regarded as the Resurrection of a God but the Resurrection of Mary foreshadows the Resurrection of each one of us.¹²⁶

In this quote Greene is arguing the Catholic position along with his personal conviction of the eternal worth of the individual body and soul, especially during a time where the totality of war and annihilation brought a new definition of suffering. This for Greene, is exactly the time for the image of Mary, for the power of her visual gospel of maternal love.

Greene dubbed the Mother of God as ‘a woman of a hundred geographical titles’¹²⁷ whose posthumous life has grown into a global economy of memorabilia, pilgrimage and in some cases, cultish fandom. This process of selling salvation is something which Greene, with his modernist anxiety towards mass production, distained.

Selling the Sacred In *Monsignor Quixote*

The discourse in Greenland against the money making business of sainthood is comically addressed in *Monsignor Quixote*, Greene’s most likeable later work, which is a comic pastiche of *Don Quixote* and centres on the mischief of a Spanish priest (Monsignor Quixote), his Communist Mayor sidekick (Sancho) and his decrepit motor car, a Seat 600 which becomes the modern day translation of Don Quixote’s horse - Rocinante. A good case of wine is kept in the back seat of the car as the pair travel around Spain to buy new vestments for the priest, who has recently been elevated to the rank of a monsignor through a clerical error that is unknown to him.

During their adventures Monsignor Quixote encounters a feast where participation in a religious procession is auctioned away (along with absolution of sins) for the

bargain price of thirty thousand pesetas - the equivalent of more than a thousand pounds. After this auction, a statue of the Virgin is carted out to the masses, to the horror of Monsignor Quixote -who cannot condone the sight of her holy image covered entirely with money. 'It was impossible to see the robes for all the paper money- hundred-peseta notes, thousand-peseta notes, a five hundred-franc note and right over the heart a hundred-dollar bill.' ¹²⁸ The language of commerce is used by Greene to highlight how the economy of salvation has become a monetary transaction between priests and laity. The thought that the Church would make money out of the agony of Christ deeply troubles the Monsignor and is an anxiety that is thematically echoed in novels like *The Power and The Glory*, where the box of confession is likened to a back-alley transaction. (The type of transaction where a landowner can be forgiven for murdering a peasant.) While the fugitive priest is on the run from Mexican persecution, he meets a police officer who embodies the suspicion of secularism and justifies the reasons why the law kills not the men of God, but the *ideas* of God. These ideas are found to be, not only a fiction, but a capitalist fiction – which makes them even worse in the mind of the Mexican lieutenant. The officer argues:

Its your ideas[...] you are so cunning you people. But tell me this -what have you ever done in Mexico for *us*? Have you ever told a landlord he shouldn't beat his peon- oh yes, I know, in the confessional perhaps, and it's your duty, isn't it, to forget it at once. You come out and have dinner with him and its your duty not to know that he has murdered a peasant. That's all finished. He's left it all behind in your box. (*Power*. 191-192.)

He finishes his rant by saying, 'No more money for saying prayers, no more money for building places to say prayers in.' (*Power*. 192.) Greene is suggesting that at the

heart of this lieutenant's personal persecution against the clergy, is their sacred exploitation of the poor.

As the Monsignor ironically asks why the Virgin will not accept spare change in her extravagant procession, the hundred dollar bill that Greene uses to cover her heart becomes undeniable evidence in his trail against capitalist religion. This trail thematically stretches across Greene's body of work where the war between communism and capitalism is key. In *The Honorary Consul*, a political thriller centring on a botched kidnapping by revolutionaries who attempt to take the American ambassador but get the Honorary British Consul instead, one of the terrorist kidnapers (a lapsed priest) declares: 'We will make a good Marxist of you yet. Of course God is evil, God is capitalism. Lay up treasures in heaven – they will bring you a hundred per cent interest for eternity.' (*Consul*.223). The priest-turned-revolutionary translates the evils of the church as an interpretation of God himself who is seen as the CEO of a heavenly business and misotheistically accused of divine corruption.¹²⁹

Misotheism, according to Bernard Schweizer, is the untold story of hating God that goes *beyond* atheism and agnosticism. Schweizer argues that it follows on from nineteenth century Nietzsche and is closely related to the 'professional' atheism of thinkers like Richard Dawkins, bringing together a collective of people who sensibly, emphatically and ideologically reason themselves into a hatred of God. Greene is in the lineage of misotheists who rather than struggling with atheistic doubts about the existence of God struggle with his cruel and malevolent character, grappling with his behaviour like a criminal being dragged into account before a furious tribunal. In his introduction to *Hating God: The Untold Story of Misotheism*, Schweizer argues that literature is the greatest vehicle for misotheism, originating with the biblical trope of Job's wife when she told him to 'curse God and die'.¹³⁰ To continue this argument,

The End of the Affair would sit quite comfortably within a canon literary God-hatred. Greene tells the story of Henry, who, after the death of his wife Sarah, talks himself into believing not only the existence of God – but his orchestration of ruin and unhappiness:

I sat on my bed and said to God: You've taken her, but You haven't got me yet. I know your cunning. Its you who take us up to a high place and offer us the whole universe. You're a devil, God tempting us to leap. But I don't want Your peace and I don't want Your love. I wanted something very simple and very easy: I wanted Sarah for a lifetime and You took her away. With your great schemes You ruin our happiness like a harvester ruins a mouse's nest: I hate You, God, I hate You as though You existed. (*Affair*. 159)

Divine corruption in this instance is centred around the grief of a God who was unable to save one of his Catholic saints. God is seen by Henry as a tempting heresy who asks for the risk of faith, without the guarantee of happiness or safety. Greene expresses this dichotomy by capitalising each reference to sacred, while also disavowing sacred demands of devotion. The only response which the novel, which also describes itself as a 'record of hate', offers in response to divine corruption is an anti-prayer of defence: 'O God, You've done enough [...] leave me alone for ever'. (*Affair*, p.160)

Henry is not alone in his accusations of divine corruption within Greenland. Greene's most atheistic characters also argue that the threshold of organised religion has transgressed into the economic market, as seen in the way they describe how redemption is bought and sold to the highest bidder: 'God was a fiction invented by the rich to keep the poor content.'¹³¹ The sacred exploitation of saints and suffering is rejected in novels like *Stamboul Train* (1932), which, though marketed as an

entertainment, is interested in the haunting presence of childhood Catholicism in the life of wayward criminal, Dr Paul Czinner.

There had been his duty to God. He corrected himself: to a god. A god who had swayed down crowded aisles under a bright moth-worn canopy, a god the size of a crown-piece enclosed in a gold framework. It was a two faced god, a deity who comforted the poor in their distress[...] and a deity who persuaded them, for the sake of a doubtful future, to endure their pain. (Train.100)

Here the capitalisation of one deity is replaced with the commercialisation of a smaller 'god', replicated throughout all of Europe in his national cause to bring comfort and control to illiterate peasants, to persuade them that sacred contentment can be found amidst the divine corruption of the elite. Czinner, in the opposite process to Charles Ryder in *Brideshead Revisited*, 'had blown that candle out with his own breath'; attempting to leave the haunting of sacred exploitation behind him – though sometimes he finds himself mid conversation 'in memory [...] kneeling in darkness, making his act of contrition'. (Train,105) Though like Henry in *The End of The Affair*, God is presented by Czinner as a type of 'fiction', this is a fable that provokes great outrage and indignation in Greene's dramas and entertainments.

In *Monsignor Quixote*, it is this righteous anger that aligns sainthood to not only capitalism, but also to sexual exploitation – where the Monsignor describes how it would be less offensive to parade the Virgin naked through the streets than to clothe her in the riches of this world. 'Put down our Lady. How dare you [...] clothe her like that in money? It would be better to carry her through the streets naked.' (Monsignor.220). This occurs when Monsignor Quixote and Sancho stumble upon a feast procession where poor villagers make way for them to witness a sacred auction

where people can buy both ‘salvation for his sins’ and ‘the best place among those who carry Our Lady’. (*Monsignor*. 218.)

The Monsignor vocalises the outrage he feels towards this type of religious embezzlement when he comically confronts a Mexican priest and publicly tussles with him to the delight of the crowd who shout ‘Hit him. He’s only a priest.’

Monsignor.221). With blood curving around his right eye Monsignor Quixote throws the priest aside and angrily pulls away the currency from the statue’s robes. This causes the statue to tip drunkenly to the side as the crowd surges forward to salvage the money in a sacred riot. Blood stained and bruised, the Monsignor is wounded in his attempt to save the Virgin’s statue when it comes crashing to earth like ‘the end of an orgy.’ The money is tossed away into the crowd, further inciting the riot

Monsignor.222). Though the scene is a contender for the most comical moment in *Greenland*, it personifies a wider debate between Catholicism and commodity.

The connection between religion and economy, which is evident in the rise of religious paraphernalia, stems from the capitalist trend of merchandising faith. All economic markets are based on the targeting of specific human desires - the sacred desire for truth, beauty and transcendence that has been capitalised on throughout the ages. This means that when we are discussing Catholic commodities, we are also discussing key relationships between supernatural desire and commercial strategy.

The idea of commodity fetishism in itself is a theory that is upheld by theological and religious analogy. Marx borrows from the fetish of idolatry in order to discuss the fetishising of capitalist goods – monetary items becomes the false object of worship in the same way that icons are. For Marx the idea of the ‘commodity’ is inherently religious because of the history of materiality in religious worship. To quote Marx himself he argues:

A commodity appears, at first sight, a very trivial thing and easily understood. Its analysis shows that it is in reality a very complicated thing, abounding in great metaphysical subtleties and theological niceties.¹³²

Or perhaps Rubem Alves said it best when he argued: ‘if the mystery of religion is the mystery of desire is revealed as power, power is transformed into a new religion.’¹³³

Both these thinkers show that the relationship between desire and commodity will forever link the sacred with the sellable – only what is sold is a fantasy of religion, a version of sentimental romanticised kitsch.

This is supported by Jenny Franchot, who in her book *Roads to Rome*, argues that the aesthetic commodity of the Catholicism is selling the most sought after commodity to artists and creatives; romance. She describes how the Italian Catholicism of Renaissance Rome is a type of visuality that has loomed high over the literary world for many years and has acted as poetic inspiration for literary mysticism:

It is a fact that has attracted but little notice, which nevertheless is worthy of serious consideration, that much of the popular literature of the day is tinged with a spirit of mysticism and romance [...] which gives beauty and power to the Romish system . . . We love to contemplate objects and scenes invested with pomp and glory and mystery, and the Romish system provides largely for the gratification of this feeling. Hence it may be called the religion of romance. [...] Scarcely does a poetic fragment or a novel appear, but you find this infusion of Romish superstition and idolatry. Thus the poison of their system is infused in our literature; the mind is imperceptibly corrupted and ensnared, and the way gradually prepared for the spread and triumph of the Romish religion.¹³⁴

Sacramental scenes of worship provide an artistic gratification that is reproduced in Catholic writers like Greene, who are ensnared by the contemplation of glory and mystery. Franchot argues that religious idealism is at the heart of Catholic commodities, and it is their 'idealist essence' which appeals to the modern consumers of sacred romance. This is very similar to the Mexican romance that Greene witnesses in his travel fiction, *The Lawless Roads* (1939), where the essence of idealism is found in the ruins of desecrated churches. There is a great optimism that Greenland finds in the silenced places of worship and among the priests who are driven out and shot. It is an optimism of real faith. A faith that surpasses childhood nostalgia or polite custom. Though Rome itself is filled with the power and beauty of Italian Catholicism, the romance of Rome is viewed as cheap transcendence in comparison to the secrecy of persecuted faith where:

God didn't cease to exist when men lost their faith in Him; there were always catacombs where the secret rite could be kept alive till the bad times passed: during the Calles persecution God had lain in radio cabinets, behind bookshelves. He had been carried in a small boy's pocket into prisons; He had been consumed in drawing-rooms and in garages. He had eternity on His side.
(*Lawless*. 39-30.)

Here the omnipresence of God is turned into a visual romance. This romance in the context of western faith is sold off into the liquidated forms of the nativity and also processions and feasts of famous saints. The Greeneian auction of the Marian procession turns iconicity into commodity, rented out to the masses – which is the process of sacred commodification that Jenny Franchot believes has been enacted in the modern world:

Religion's scaled-down dimensions register our possession of it instead of its of us. As memento of our Western childhood, religion is thus miniaturized into objects available for visual appropriation as commodity, souvenir, or ornament.¹³⁵

For Greene the commodities which Catholicism sells are not only those of saints and absolution but priestly blessings and pilgrimage. As Greene's fiction acts as a voice which speaks with indignation against the commodification of redemption, it also laments over the desecration of the saintly aesthetic which can stir hope in the hearts of those, like himself, who are on the threshold of belief. In Greene's mind the fictional auctioning of a Marian procession was a farce and the iconoclast destruction of a Marian shrine was a tragedy.

This is evident through Greene's use of melancholy when he discusses the iconoclasm of Renaissance England. He does this when quoting from an anonymous sixteenth century poem, 'A Lament for Our Lady's Shrine at Walsingham', concerning a shrine of the Virgin (found in Norfolk) which was destroyed by Henry VIII:

Weep, weep, O Walsingham

Whose days are nights,

Blessings turned to blasphemies,

Holy deeds to despites.

Sin is where our Lady sat,

Heaven is turned to hell,

Satan sits where Our Lord did sway –

Walsingham, O farewell!¹³⁶

Greene refers to this poem in *Stambol Train* - a novel which takes us aboard the orient express that travels from Belgium to Istanbul- where one of his characters admits that ‘he sometimes felt an unreasoning resentment against those who nowadays were born without religious sense and were able to laugh at the seriousness of the nineteenth-century iconoclast.’ (*Train*.100).

It was not a useless act of mischief on Cromwell’s part to shatter statues.
Some of the power of the Virgin lay in the Virgin’s statue, and when the head was off a limb gone and the seven swords broken, fewer candles were lit and the prayers said at her altar were not so many. (*Train*. 56-57)

Just as in the weeping of Walsingham, Greene defends the veneration of Mary by reminding us of the power of an image to transfer hope and faith; the same faith, if we remember at the beginning of this chapter, that Ruskin argued was caught in the gospels by touching the material hem of Christ’s garment.

Greene showed no such patience with the materialist tendencies of religious worship and many times connected it with the supernatural power of the Catholic aesthetic, which relies on the theological magic of transubstantiation and resurrection: ‘magic is your cross, your resurrection of the body, your holy Catholic church, your communion of saints.’ (*Affair*.137.) Greene identifies how, from a logical perspective, these ideas are nothing short of magic realism. He even compares the Latin prayers of daily

devotion as a formula of ‘hocus pocus’, as if their utterance became an ingredient in a pagan potion of witchcraft. (*Matter*. 140.)

The physical body of Christ is also another material obsession that overwhelms the visual aesthetic of the sacred, and one that Greeneland often refers to as an unsightly example of Ward’s notion of ‘cheap transcendence’¹³⁷ – or what Greene would term as God being ‘too accessible. There was no difficulty in approaching Him. Like a popular demagogue He was open to the least of His followers at any hour.’ (*Matter*. 141.) The materiality of Christ is a great struggle in iconography, which relies on his physical body:

‘Of course it’s a very materialistic faith. A lot of magic...’

‘Is magic materialistic?’ I asked

‘Yes, Eye of newt and toe of frog, finger of birth-strangled babe.

You can’t have anything more materialistic than that. In the Mass they still believe in transubstantiation. [...] So today I looked at the material body on that material cross and I wondered, how could the world have nailed a vapour up there? (*Affair*. 88-89.)

The constant reminder of this type of the body of Christ is a type of engagement with Gnostic repulsion at the ugliness of the material world. Greene’s characters frequently refer to the ‘hideous’ world of iconography – they are not only speaking of the vulgar taste of bad art; but about the core root Gnosticism and its rejection of the world.

The power of the saintly image is best illustrated through Greene’s whisky priest in *The Power and The Glory*, Greene’s most famous novel, who is transformed into a

religious martyr before admitting before his death that ‘He knew now that at the end there was only one thing that counted – to be a saint (*Power*. 209). The folklore of sainthood is a thread which runs throughout this novel, as we see in the young protagonist who relishes the spectacular story of Juan, a national saint and martyr, as narrated to him by his mother. After the death and consequent veneration of the whisky priest, the boy offers the truism of the entire novel: ‘There were no more priests and no more heroes.’ (*Power*. 219). This sound-bite from the tatters of Mexican Catholicism leave the novel in a place of hollow disenchantment as seen through the eyes of a young boy; a boy who symbolises the need for icons and saints above the dangers of idolatry.

Greene’s own need for the mother of God is seen in his argument that she, like the image of God, is a type of visuality that cannot be destroyed. The image of the Madonna is a type of personified grace to Greene and speaks of his own need for her articulation of the mercy of God and her anecdotal back door entrance into heavenly places. He comments on the ‘odd’ attitude of iconoclastic fury towards her image – which is as impossible to destroy as destroying humanity itself. He does so in the fictional parallel to the Indian burial ground which made up ‘his dark and magical heart of faith’ – now translated into Greenland in *The Power and the Glory*. This burial ground is discovered by our favourite whisky priest who discovers ‘one or two crosses [that] had been smashed by enthusiasts’, an angel with a broken wing and of course, the figure of the Madonna.

One image of the mother of God had lost ears and arms and stood like a pagan Venus over the grave of some forgotten timber merchant. It was odd – this fury to deface, because, of course, you could never deface enough. If God had been like a toad, you could have rid the world of toads, but when God was like

yourself, it was no good being content with stone figures – you had to kill yourself among the graves. (*Power*. 99.)

The addition of the brutalised image of Mary into Greene's 'dark and magical heart of faith', gives us an insight into understanding how crucial this icon was for Greene's religious imagination. Mary is the saint that Greene relied upon to critique the defacing fury of enthusiasts, by describing how the eradication of iconography would mean killing 'yourself among the graves' to die in this dark, magical place.

K i t s c h C a t h o l i c i s m

The term *kitsch* is a borrowed word from the German language which is translated to literally mean 'trash'. It has come to be universally used to describe art or design that is considered by many people to be ugly or without style, but enjoyed by many people for sentimental or ironic reasons. The sentimental kitsch of a lava lamp that is reminiscent of sixties teenage angst, does not fully articulate this Germanic word, which has the capacity to differentiate between high and low art, between real art of good taste and value and replicated art produced for the masses. The artistic history of Roman Catholicism has made it fertile ground for the seeds of kitsch representation, especially concerning Christ and his saints. The reproduction of saints, icons and crosses into cheap art, or plastic art as Greene calls it, speaks of the modern overflow of religious paraphernalia. The greatest significance of these religious items has nothing to do with individual devotion but is entirely concerned with society's habitual consciousness of ritual and religion. They are a type of sacred repression bubbling over in modern consciousness. This demonstrates how art acts as therapy for religious hunger and reality overload.

Critics like Roger Scruton argue that the collectable kitsch of Catholicism is a type of sacred precursor to the sentimental garden gnomes that fill many houses. This is because the ‘kitschification’ of religion is modern strategy used to make the sacred more palatable – easier to manage, similar to the baroque, but in smaller doses.

Simply put Scruton argues that:

Kitsch is not in the first instance an artistic phenomenon but ‘a disease of faith’. Kitsch begins in doctrine and ideology and spreads from there to infect the entire world of culture. The Disneyfication of art is simply one aspect of the Disneyfication of faith [...] The world of kitsch is in a certain measure a heartless world, in which emotion is directed away from its proper target toward sugary stereotypes.¹³⁸

Here Scruton is arguing, amongst many things, that kitsch is primarily about the sugary stereotypes of sainthood, piety and priesthood. It is the deficiency and disease of a faith that cannot comprehend the true suffering of the saints and the true price of piety. It is in this sugary atmosphere that a place like Greenland begins to add its unique flavours of heresy, humanity and the brutal process of believing, to season the sweetened Disneyfication of religion. In Greene’s novels the sugary simulacra of saints are smashed, because they themselves have become the worst type of idolatry. The visuality of icons undergoes a process of defamiliarization, allowing Henry to declare at the conclusion of *The End of The Affair*: ‘if you are a saint its not so difficult to be a saint. Its something he can demand of any of us.’ (*Affair*.159)

What is being reproduced in Greenland is not the sentimentality of kitsch, but the sinner at the heart of Christianity who overtakes the stereotype of the icon. As Greene goes about desecrating the world of kitsch and popular art, he finds himself in

the same place that Scruton believes modern art to be: ‘caught between two forms of sacrilege; the one dealing in sugary dreams, the other in savage fantasies’.¹³⁹ The icons in Greenland are caught between this sacred and savage dichotomy – their sacred beauty is either ravaged by capitalist manipulation, childhood memories, secularist persecution or pagan hauntings. Greene’s own opinion of Catholic kitsch is discussed in *The Lawless Roads* and *The End of the Affair*.

In his 1938 film review of *An English Man At Home*, Greene comments on the idea of kitsch or what he terms as ‘bad art’ when he writes:

It has already become a wartime habit for reviewers to iron out their criticism. The poor old British film industry has had another knock better not say anything to do it further harm. The result, one supposes, will be the survival of the worst. Art in England after three years of war may if we are not careful resemble art in Germany after three years of Nazi dictatorship. Far better to sharpen our pencils and stab the poor thing to death, no art is better than bad art, for somewhere in some ruined barn an ignorant peasant may begin to whittle at a stick.¹⁴⁰

The kitschification of British cinema and its post-war rise of bad art, was something for a screenwriter like Greene was grossly intolerable. This type of impatience for bad art was something that was again demonstrated in *The End of the Affair*, and its particular reference to:

a Roman church full of plaster statues and bad art [...] they were like bad coloured pictures from Hans Anderson, they were like bad poetry but somebody had needed to write them, somebody who wasn’t so proud that he hid them rather than expose his foolishness. (*Affair*.88.)

British kitsch was a thing of great theological foolishness to Greene, who found ‘bad art’ an example of how God uses ‘the foolish things of the world to confound the wise’. (1 Corinthians 1:27.) Greene’s approach to Mexican kitsch however, was much more sympathetic, which is a compassion greatly demonstrated in *The Lawless Roads*.

When Greene talks about the landscape of Mexico, he imagines that the Romantics would have enjoyed its natural landscape as a scene that they would call ‘sublime’ and ‘awe inspiring’ – allowing Mexican Catholics the skill of sensing ‘God in the most barren regions’. The inspiration of this type of desert worship is described many times, particularly when Greene describes his visit to Templo del Carmen in witness benediction as the evening dropped:

To a stranger like myself it was like going home – a language I could understand [...] The Virgin sat on an extraordinary silver cloud like a cabbage with the Infant in her arms above the altar; all along the walls horrifying statues with musty robes stood in glass coffins; and yet it was home. One new what was going on. Old men came plodding in in dungarees on bare feet, tired out with work, and again I thought: how could one grudge them the gaudy splendour of giltwork, the incense, the distant immaculate figure upon the cloud? The candles were lit, and suddenly little electric lights sprayed out all round the Virgin’s head. Even if it were all untrue and there was no God, surely life was happier with the enormous supernatural promise than with the petty social fulfilment, the tiny pension and the machine made furniture.

(*Lawless*.48-49.)

It is as if Greene is appealing to his other opinion on ‘bad art’ in the Catholic church, telling himself that surely life is better for the poor plodding peasant, if he can have

the Virgin on his side – or better yet around his neck. Mexican kitsch in this instance brings relief in the midst of poverty and a better choice than national secularism which offered no hope, comfort or heavenly reward. This kitsch is also a challenge to witnesses like Greene – who found no comfort in the luxury of a ‘church full of plaster statues and bad art’. It is here in Greene’s empathy that he feels the need for humble art of the icon – as for persecuted Catholics, the kitsch of bad art is their lifeline to faith and perseverance. This is the type of empathy that is expressed in Shusaku Endo’s *Silence*, which portrays the power of religious art, establishing them as an unshakable type of kitsch.

Greenland does not only focus on the kitsch of Marian idolatry, it also takes a brief glimpse at the idolatry of the cross - the most commodified religious image in history, to highlight how it has been endlessly replicated into an image of sentimentality.

Greene speaks of the idolatry of Chiapas, a Mexican state he visited during his travel writing which went on to inspire the plot in *The Power and The Glory*. The Catholic oppression that Greene witnessed during his visit to Mexico stirred up questions about the native use of the symbol of the cross: ‘Now that the Body of God could not be found in any church in Chiapas, was the wooden image taking on a terrible and erroneous importance?’ (*Lawless*.182.) In engaging with the image of ‘the great crucifix’ which stood ‘in the centre where the soapbox orator should have stood’ Greene questions if it is approached, on a day like Good Friday, through ‘formal superstition, like not walking under a ladder and throwing salt over the shoulder? Or was there a darker and more passionate idolatry?’¹⁴¹ Greene’s fiction does not defend the cross in the same way that he upholds the Virgin and the power that her image bequeaths.

In literature the cross can be curiously presented as a force of habit or Freudian slip bubbling out of the trauma of Catholic childhood as it is shown in Colm Toibin's contemporary travelogue *The Sign of the Cross* (1994). Toibin named the book after his traumatic recollection of his father's death where he could only calm himself by making the sign of the cross over the imaginary body he envisioned in his trauma.

The trauma of the cross is one which delineates a biblical curse, relating back to the Jewish belief that 'cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree' 'You must bury the body that same day, for anyone who is hung is cursed in the sight of God' which refers to the ancient laws which the Israelites were given by Moses under their old covenant.¹⁴²

The cross is the symbol of death but also a symbol which is deeply embedded in cultural consciousness and mass production. It is even used to protect against what is heinous and monstrous despite its own monstrous past. A past which has seen the capital punishment of Roman crucifixion ideologically transformed to represent the single most commodified symbol of redemption in history. The image of the cross is very prominent in the visually ornate setting of Catholicism and also acts as a perfect piece of gothic furniture, macabre furniture which is argued to give the genre its most signature feature.¹⁴³ The uncanny trauma of the cross has been tamed and

commercialised into a church entity, though its collective history still flickers in the Catholic decoration of iconography and symbolism. 'A grove of crosses stood up blackly against the sky [...]It was like a short cut to the dark and magical heart of faith – to the night when the graves opened and the dead walked.' (*Power*.153.) This 'dark and magical heart of faith' hints at the narrative behind the black 'grove of crosses' which speak of death and the resurrection of bodies – perhaps bodies which were raised on the night of Christ's crucifixion or a walking dead of a more sinister kind.¹⁴⁴

Greene wrote about the ‘irrational paranoia’ of the cross in both *Monsignor Quixote* and *The End of The Affair* through the priest and Sarah – the closet Catholic:

As they drove away Father Quixote made the sign of the cross. He was not himself sure why, whether it was as a protection against the perils of the road or against hasty judgements, or just a nervous reaction. (*Monsignor*.80.)

I walked out of the church in a flaming rage, and in defiance of Henry and all the reasonable and the detached I did what I had seen people do in Spanish church: I dipped my finger in the so-called holy water and made a kind of cross on my forehead. (*Affair*.90.)

The Monsignor’s use of the cross as a comic force of habit satirises the veneration of a symbol that has been commodified to such an extent, it has lost its original meaning. In the instance of Sarah, the sign of the cross on the forehead from her middle class perspective is almost heretical. The nervous tick in *Monsignor Quixote* is turned into Sarah’s religious performance in *The End of the Affair* that is best understood through the othering of fervent Latin Catholicism. Sarah acts out the cross in a manner which she theatrically copies from the Spanish church, apathetically referring to the water as ‘so-called holy’. The cross on the forehead is an act of rebellion against the predictable orthodoxy of her marriage and the reasonable atheism of her husband. It is her willingly taking sides with this type of strange idolatry that is more aligned with the supernatural than with salvation. This occurs in a scene where she sits in a dark church on the corner of Park Road and begins to defamiliarise the statues of Christ as bestial and cruel. She unwittingly labels this aesthetic as kitsch, because although she knows they are in bad taste, referring to them as ‘bad coloured pictures’ and ‘bad poetry’, she tolerates them for their undeniable sentimental value. Through her

antagonism towards these images Sarah illustrates how, for many, the icon is nothing more than a trinket displayed in a mother's sitting room which no one can convince her to throw away and whose function as a representation of God is farcical.

The Grotesque Icon

I can imagine you dangling on a cross. Bony and elongated. Stuck up in one of those new cathedrals they are always building nowadays to prove to someone that they still believe. They never show the Father- He's pre-Christian. He worries them. He's incomprehensible. But the Son – He's one of us. A subject for every *petit maître*.

[Little master]¹⁴⁵

This is taken from one of Greene's eight plays - *Carving a Statue* which focuses on an old sculptor's work of fifteen years – a carving of God himself. *Carving a Statue* is perhaps the closest that Greene's writing allows us to tread towards ideas of the idol / icon debate as the very idea of carving a statue would be considered by iconoclasts as equivalent to a graven image. Although the play has never been received well by critics, Greene himself admitted that it was in fact his favourite play.¹⁴⁶ Greene scatters theology throughout the play, which in its wake we can attempt to follow and gather. The play meets him at a point where he is stuck on the head of his statue and how he can present the wickedness of God in the right eye and his mercy and benevolence in the left. This is because he views the nature of God the Father as conflicting and inconsistent with the Catholic notion of 'Our Father who art in heaven' a benevolent Father who will not lead his people into temptation but deliver them from evil, whose name is hallowed and whose kingdom will be seen on earth. The sculptor uses the language of misotheism to point out how after the atom bomb dropped and the plagues and the earthquakes came – God did not suffer. He is

carving the specific part of the Godhead which worries him and his anxieties are manifested in the way he discusses the contradiction of the trinity which he believes others God the Father as ‘incomprehensible’ and ‘pre-Christian’.(*Carving*.73)

Is the sculptor inferring that God the Father is like a pre-Christian pagan idol? One who is more satisfied with blood sacrifices and ritual than with Mass and benediction? The sculptor himself is a cruel father in the play and his obsession with his statue leads to the neglect of his son. The ideology of the loving Father is deconstructed on a human and divine level through the theme of pagan sacrifice: we can see how ‘just as God the Father willingly allowed His son, Jesus, to die- in a sense, killed him- so our sculptor has a right to demand a sacrifice of his boy’- which in this context turns out to be the death of the girl he intends to marry.¹⁴⁷ The play suggests that representing God is a process which our *petitmaître* over complicates with his realist theology, which results in a God lacking in love and tenderness. The very ‘primitive’ feet of the statue remind the sculptor of the pride of Lucifer himself - ‘The brightest of the angels. Now he’s dropped like a parachutist through the skies. Look – his feet touch the earth and he stands there, conqueror of the world’ (*Carving*. 3.262). The sculptor can no doubt comfort himself with the notion that the problem is not with himself, but with mistaking divinity for God, when his hands have really been chiselling the grotesqueness of evil. The image of evil is a theme which Greene often uses alongside the image of God, as seen in the way one of his whisky priest’s laments that ‘Evil ran like a malaria in his veins’ and ‘he carried Hell about with him’. (*Power*. 173).

Greene steeped his fiction in an enchantedly heretical imagination that was influenced by Manichean and Catharistic perspectives. Brennan argues that Greene uses the energy of heresy to illuminate God with a realism which shows that he is not an angry God with a stick in his hand or a bearded grandfather wrapped in lofty clouds. Just as

mortals are he is filled with both good and evil, and representations of him become grotesque slips of his underlying nature. Thus the statue that is carved by our *petitmaître* shows how Greene uses the mode of gothic to infringe on the aesthetic of sainthood and the definition of the sacred.

Holding the Mother of God by the Hair

The implicit question which Greene's fiction asks in its presentation of iconography is whether saints should be defined as icons or idols. The fundamental problem of iconoclasm is the linguistic definition between these two words which are often used interchangeably. The distinction between idol (*eidolon*) and icon (*eikon*) is one which is blurred and not easily fixed. It is easy to unwittingly slip from one to the other.

This inherited confusion is articulated by Bruce Benson who comments on how the distinction comes undone due to our human tendency to transform icons into idols.¹⁴⁸

Though this is true to some extent, the etymological trajectory of both words suggest that these concepts are so intimate at the root that we do not know if we should name something idol or icon.

A look in any dictionary will explain how an icon is defined as an image that is used to remind people of God; whereas an idol is an image that is worshipped because it is mistakenly believed to be God. Greene's fiction entertains us through its endless flickering between icon and idol. Although Greene would personally define the Madonna as an icon, he presents characters who refer to her as if she were a voodoo doll holding mystical power in a modern context. With this I speak of Pinkie from *Brighton Rock*, Greene's choir boy gangster, who wins a Marian doll on Brighton pier:

In the Palace of Pleasure he made his way past the peepshows, [...] The shelves of dolls stared down with glassy innocence, like Virgins in a church repository. The boy looked up [...] he thought – Hail Mary . . . in the hour of our death. ‘I’ll have six shots,’ he said. [...] with the smell of gunpowder on his fingers, holding the Mother of God by the hair [...] ‘Take the doll [...] I just won it in one of those shooting booths (*Rock* 20-21).

Just as Pinkie held the Mother of God ‘by the hair’ Max Von Boehn describes religious dolls as a hybrid made up of ‘half a toy and half an object of religious devotion’ and ‘the true origin of the puppet show.’¹⁴⁹ Thus we can understand Scott Cutler Shershow’s assertion that there is a ‘semantic link between the doll, the puppet, the idol’ as he gives the example of the sixteenth century word for puppet ‘maumet’ or ‘mammet’ which originally was used to describe an ‘idol’.¹⁵⁰ In his 1995 study *Puppets and Popular Culture* he goes on to take this semantic meridian further by identifying how the word ‘marionette’, another alternative type of puppet, is rooted in the French word for Mary. Suggesting that the marionette symbolises no other than the Virgin Mother herself. This again highlights the key inquiry of icon/idol that Greeneland undertakes and also explains the language of the protestant reformation when it compared icons with puppets through its pun between ‘puppetry’ and ‘popery’.¹⁵¹

The Gothic history of the ~~Estre~~ Easter Bunny

To be aware of the pagan history of Christendom is itself a valid explanation for the affinity between the idol and the icon. Perhaps the greatest example of this is in the sixth century when Pope Gregory the Great urged Augustine of Canterbury to adapt

Catholicism to the customs of the Anglo-Saxons by using their temples and simply cleansing them with holy water, alternative altars and relics. Putting these temples to Christian use would allow the people, according to the Pope, to climb to the high places of faith by small steps rather than impossible leaps.¹⁵² Moreover in Ireland the monks and the missionaries appropriated large amounts from Irish paganism and believed that their Pagan goddess Brigid was the mother of Jesus reincarnate. Even the very festival of 'Easter', a tradition which can appear unassuming, originates from 'Eastre' the feast of the goddess of dawn - Eastern- whose symbols of fertility include rabbits and eggs.¹⁵³

The idea that icons are born of heavenly miracles is problematized by studies like Hans Belting's *Likeness and Presence* which asserts that actually, the heritage of saints is born from 'the realm of tombs.'¹⁵⁴ Belting's phrase refers to ancient portraits of the deceased which Christianity allowed to be left on tombs for private family veneration. These types of commemorative images began to move into the public space at a time of a mass influx of new believers in Rome and also when the image of a revered believer began to be replicated in order to appear on the graves of others, which as Belting describes, was used to 'assist in their salvation.'¹⁵⁵ This rise in mass participation led to a new phase in cult images called the 'Votive' image which by definition identified that certain individuals were the clientele of a particular saint from whom they obtained protection and blessing.¹⁵⁶ Even here, at the grass roots level of icon historicism, we can identify how the saint is turned into a commodity of desire and exchange value.

This critique could be at work in *Brighton Pier*, as Pinkie carries the 'Mother of God by the hair' our gothic sensibilities wait for this doll to stir or dissonantly awake – as a piece of animated automaton. This paranormal tradition of the doll is not far from the

enchantment of the Magical Icon which shows its magic by either weeping, bleeding or making some sort of noise. Joe Nickell compares the definition of a miraculous icon with that of a *poltergeist* which linguistically comes from the German word for ‘noisy spirit’. This type of spirit is classed as ‘paranormal phenomena characterized by physical disturbances: furniture is moved, smaller objects are sent sailing through the air, and similar disturbance take place, including outburst of tapping sounds or of water streaming unaccountably from fully intact walls.’¹⁵⁷

The ghostly elements of magical icons are something which is sensed in cultural representations of Catholic horror – where miraculous instances such as stigmata are interpreted as signs of paranormal or demonic activity.¹⁵⁸ The weeping or bleeding icon also correlates with Graham Ward’s assertion that postsecularism has resulted in the liquidation of religion which has been sold, piece by piece to the world, and turned into the special effect of ‘cheap transcendence.’¹⁵⁹ The trickery of ‘cheap transcendence’ equates to the living room kitsch of Catholic iconography, though it does not strictly refer to physical objects like statues or paintings. Though the idol itself is described in biblical scripture as a physical object, the idea of the idol as purely physical excludes conceptual idolatry that is perpetuated through ideology. This is what Denys Turner argues when he says that ‘for the Christian, *ideology* and *idolatry* are synonyms’¹⁶⁰ Benson engages with this debate when he highlights how the term which the New Testament repeatedly uses for idols (*eidolon*) can also refer to images and concepts. He writes that ‘John’s concern [in 1 John 3 18-19]¹⁶¹ seems to be less for material representations than *intellectual* representations of God.’¹⁶²

I would argue that what we see when we gaze upon the iconography of Greene’s fiction is a questioning of the construction of God – a questioning of how we approach an intellectual concept of perfection, omniscience and unattainable divinity. Thus the

idol in Greenland becomes a critique of this subtle type of conceptual idolatry which is hidden within the concepts, judgements and dogma of Catholic ideology. It is Greene's sincerest wish that piety would give way to humanity - which is also a desire that is shared with John Ruskin when he addresses the 'proper sense of the word idolatry' in his timeless *Stones of Venice*.

In Greenland, piety is a type of visual religiosity that is also considered a type of sin:

God might forgive cowardice and passion, but was it possible to forgive the habit of piety? [...] He drank the brandy down like damnation: men like the half-caste could be saved, salvation could strike like lightning 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. (*Power*.166.)

Piety is the gloved hand of orthodoxy that excludes the beauty of passion and the weakness of fear. It is a type of obedience that does not take into account the real nature of humanity. This is the same humanity that Christ spoke of when he said: 'before the rooster crows today, you will disown me three times.'¹⁶³ Greenland is concerned in this same way about the betrayals of faith that are seen in disciples such as Peter, Thomas and Judas – they were familiar with cowardice and greed. Their images are a far better juxtaposition to Greene, than the pious visuality of perfect saints.

Defending bad Catholics

Idolatry is, both literally and verily, not the mere bowing down before sculptures, but the serving or becoming the slave of any images or

imaginations which stand between us and God, and it is otherwise expressed in Scripture as “walking after the *Imagination*” of our own hearts. [...] And in this sense, which of us is not an idolater? (*Stones*. 451.)

John Ruskin was prolific writer, art critic, campaigner, painter, draughtsman, social commentator, and also - in one of his brief appendixes in *The Stones of Venice* – Catholic Apologist. Ruskin argued that the fruit of the Protestant reformation became spoilt when self-interest and boastful theology became idolised as ‘true worship’. He believed that the iconoclastic smashing of statues could not break the Catholic Imagination just as the burning of Tyndale bibles could not dissipate the Protestant imagination.

Ruskin references a passage from Jeremiah where national calamity struck the Jews because their ancestors worshiped idols: ‘And ye have done worse than your fathers; for, behold, ye walk every one after the imagination of his evil heart’.¹⁶⁴ Matthew, Jeremiah and Ruskin illustrate the way the heart is prone to build its own altars of lust and imagination which pale in comparison to ‘the poor and untaught Christians who are this day lying prostrate before crucifixes, Bambinos, and Volto Santos, [who] are finding more acceptance with God, than many Protestants who idolize nothing but their own opinions or their own interests’. (*Stones*. 451.)

Ruskin offers a resolution to the debate of Catholic idolatry by suggesting that it is how believers engage with Christ that is paramount above any preferred rituals or theology:

[...]For indeed it is utterly impossible for one man to judge of the feeling with which another bows down before an image. From that pure reverence in which

Sir Thomas Brown wrote, “I can dispense with my hat at the sight of a cross, but not with a thought of my Redeemer,” (*Stones*.453.)

To return, to where we started, Andrew Greeley - Catholic Priest, novelist, sociologist and journalist - takes the defence of Catholic worship further by describing how Catholic worship is not the result of materialist paraphernalia but a divinely enchanted imagination:

Catholics live in an enchanted world, a world of statues and holy water, stained glass and votive candles, saints and religious medals, rosary beads and holy pictures. But this Catholic paraphernalia are mere hints of a deeper and more pervasive religious sensibility which inclines Catholics to see the holy lurking in creation. As Catholics, we find our houses and our world haunted by a sense that the objects, events and persons of daily life are revelations of grace. ¹⁶⁵

Greeley’s assertion rests on the assumption that there is a particular Catholic mode of religion which is unique and set apart from generalised faith. For him this mode is that of sacrament which believes that the concept of holiness itself can be seen, touched and experienced on earth. Thus the sacramental imagination is also the expression of a type of Catholic reality where the divine is felt through what is imminent and near - differing from Protestant ideas of transcendence which, according to Greeley, are distinctly different. He argues that where we find Protestants anxious over the risk of superstition and idolatry, Catholics are in turn disconcerted with a world where God’s presence is only marginally manifested. Greenland is a unique combination of both types of imagination with the Anglo-Catholic eye of Greene flickering between sacramental grace and suspicious fetishism.

Although there is an underlying accusation against the idolatrous nature of Catholicism, Greene also leaves space to describe the theology of Genesis 1:27, which speaks of the way humanity is created in the likeness of God:

But at the centre of his own faith there always stood the convincing mystery – that we were made in God’s image. God was the parent, but he was also the policeman, the criminal, the priest, the maniac and the judge. Something resembling God dangled from the gibbet or went into odd attitudes before the bullets in a prison yard or contorted itself like a camel in the attitude of sex.
(*Power*. 98.)

Here Greene’s imagination stands somewhere between sacred sacrilege and sacred omnipresence, as allows the theological fullness of God to overflow into every crevice of humanity. I believe that Greene representation of the pervading image of God, is more than a theological mode of tongue-in-cheek, facetiously aimed at fervent believers. Greene is more than capable of investing in doctrines which he believes to be germane in their explanation of the fallen nature of man. Genesis 1:27 offers a type of exegesis that could potentially align the parenthood of God, to the maniacs who are his children. It argues that like the famous whisky priest, Greene’s own faith revolved around the ‘convincing mystery’ that every sinner is something that resembles God – and something that resembles his great mercy.

In philosophy, this type of reoccurrence with the image of self, can be thought of as a type of personal obsession. In Greenland there is a certain narcissism that occurs when characters are confronted by the presence of icons, which serve to reduce their heavenly musings into personal and mundane worries. This is something that relates to the work of French philosopher Jean Luc Marion, who convincingly argues

that idolatry is the sacred failure of self-absorption. This argument shifts the traditional definition of idolatry, from the worship of an image, to the worship of an image that reflects the self.

Marion argues in his book *The Idol and Distance* that the definition of an idol, which has a separate function from the profound mystery of an icon, is the idol's ability to mirror the observer and gaze into his reflected desires like a sacred mirror. This invisible mirror is something that returns to the beholder his own observation of individual struggle and is unable to offer a divine gaze of transcendence. This is the narcissistic feat of the idol; its imitation of a heavenly presence that is limited by the nagging thoughts of earth. This is something that is very evident in *The End of the Affair*, where Sarah's observance of the sacred plaster statues in a Roman Church, does nothing but cause her lament about herself, offering her no transcendent relief or hope. The crucifixion of Christ opens up this stream of consciousness about her own morality, the guilt she feels about her affair and the tension she cannot ignore in her marriage. This narcissism is not worship, but it could well be Marion's 'invisible mirror', which speaks to Sarah of her own sins.

I hated the statue, the crucifix, all the emphasis on the human body and all it needed. [...] I remembered that they believed in the resurrection of the body, the body I wanted destroyed forever. I had done so much injury with this body [...] I thought, instead of my own body, of Maurice's. [...] I thought of a new scar on his shoulder[...] (*Affair*.87).

Marion and Greene are both essentially writing about the process of seeing, using the idea of the gaze to look back and forth between the sacred and the profane. One minute remembering sacred duties to 'be kind at breakfast, kind at lunch when he's

home' with the next thought interrupting this wifely peace by remembering certain lines that ran down her lover's face. The dark church in Park Road can articulate nothing other than the muddle of Sarah's thoughts. The icons which 'bore no relation to ourselves' and 'had promised something and which had given me something in return – stretching out of the vague into concrete human life' - land in the tangible world of hopes and fears and are unable to move past the concrete of sin itself. (*Affair*.87).

The 'concreate of human life' also overshadows the iconography of *The Heart of The Matter* (1971), where the martyrdom of saints is used as a mirror to reflect the suicide of Scobie and Pemberton. This novel focuses on the suffering of Scobie, who is an agonising Catholic that cannot not reconcile his sin of adultery with the grace of God. Just like Sarah, this mortal sin causes moral turmoil that can only be described as the guilt of Catholic mortality. Scobie's story eventually ends in his death as he seeks an escape from the consequences of his moral ambiguity. As he overdoses on sleeping pills, the narrative gazes at presence of an icon – which is used to mirror the act of suicide itself. This is a Greeneian theme in the novel, which chooses to mirror the death of the messiah with the self-slaughter of his saints:

But they taught also that God had sometimes broken his own laws, and was it less possible for him to put out a hand of forgiveness in the suicidal darkness than to have woken himself in the tomb, behind the stone? Christ had not been murdered – you couldn't murder God. Christ had killed himself: he had hung himself on the Cross as surely as Pemberton from the picture-rail.¹⁶⁶

He pushed the tablets in his mouth six at a time, and drank them down in two draughts [...] He said aloud, 'Dear God, I love. . .' but the effort was too great

and he did not feel his boy when it struck the floor or heat the small tinkle of the medal as it span like a coin under the ice-box – the saint whose name nobody could remember. (*Matter*. 249.)

The Protestant Voyeur

Jenny Franchot discusses the role of the Protestant Voyeur in Catholicism when she cites a religious Unitarian who anxiously comments how:

The Church of Rome is dramatic in all its features. It seems to be its office, and its very essence to act Christianity, and to hold out in exterior exhibition that, which in its true light, no eye but God's can see. No wonder the Church of Rome is fond of sacraments, when the definition of one so admirable suits herself – she is an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual church.

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Greene's novels are often caught up in a debate which both accuses and defends the theatrics of the Roman Church. Though *The End of the Affair* attacks the kitsch art of the church and Sarah hated the statues, the crucifix, all the emphasis on the human body' she also highlights how Greene uses the grotesque body as a site of religious conversion where saints battle with lust, despair and humanity. (*Affair*. 87-88.)

The theatrical experiences of Catholicism are curiously subtle in comparison to the spectacle of contemporary Christian megachurches which George Sanders argues transform the worshiper into a consumer. He jokes how 'In many churches, one is more apt to locate a video screen than a sacred icon' and how 'The aural spectacle alone can be quite literally seat-shaking' as the expansive auditorium with theatre-style seating and smoke generators present a 'decidedly enchanted experience' which

creates the scene of a spectacle.¹⁶⁸ Though we can argue alongside this that the Catholic church is an equal spectacle - 'The baroque cathedral is not better than the auditorium, but it echoes with distinctly enchanted, and enchanting, voices'.¹⁶⁹ Andrew Greely asks us to imagine Köln, a German city, and how it is dominated with great cathedrals like The Dom which in themselves are not really churches but sacred museums which remind us of a thousand years of history. Even in the local church the rituals of Catholicism can sometimes appear, from the outside, like spectacular theatre – though in the case of Greenland it is a type of spectacle that is empty at its core.

This emptiness is perfectly depicted during Greene's 1938 trip to Mexico, to study the repercussions of a government campaign of anti-Catholicism, where he witnessed how:

[...] the church was scrupulously clean, a heavy curtain hung before the altar, and Christ lay dead among the flowers. The walls were crammed with dark old eighteenth century portraits of bishops and saints set in heavy and tortuous guilt. It gave an effect of fullness- and of emptiness, like a meeting where the leader had gone. Nothing meant anything anymore (*Lawless*. 173)

This anticipates the work of philosopher of the postmodern, Jean Baudrillard, or more specifically his chapter on 'The Divine Irrelevance of Images' taken from his larger work - *The Precession of Simulacra*. Like Greene, Baudrillard talks about the *heimlich* double between an 'effect of fullness and of emptiness' and when applying Baudrillard's hyperreality onto the images of Catholicism we are reminded of Greene's own affinity with simulacra which he presents through a hyperreality of Mary, perpetuated through the micronarratives of her allegedly miraculous

appearances – the sacred inability to distinguish between what fables are real, and what are mere imitations of stories. Which articulate a genuine veneration for the divinely maternal love and which offer a pastiche of merchandised devotion. Some people would also define sainthood as a hyperreality because it is a fabrication that is consumed as a reality, an idol that is worshiped as a representation of God, it borrows from a symbol which no longer exists. Thinking of the visuality of saints as a type of hyperreality, emphasises how the worship of the empty images is the fascination of modern society – though in *Greenland* the allure of sacred simulacra is used to grapple with theological questions concerning the obsolete utility of iconography.

In *Brighton Rock*, for example one character experiences a distinctive experience of religious images: ‘Belief in her mind had the bright clarity of images, of the crib of Christmas’ (*Rock*. 262). The narrative of any faith is littered with images that embody certain events and traditions, Greene gives us the example of the nativity as just one image of Christian hyperreality; a hyperreality of sainthood through stained glass windows which are consumed as religious images of empty fascination. The bright clarity of the ‘crib of Christmas’ is juxtaposed with the dark eighteenth century portraits of saints and bishops who are represented with an added and tortuous weight.

For Baudrillard, all Western faith engages in this struggle between sacredness and representation and he presents his own simulacrum of this commandment when he writes: ‘I forbade that there be any simulacra in the temples because the divinity that animates nature can never be represented.’¹⁷⁰ For Andrew Tate this fake biblical red herring ‘playfully suggest[s] fundamental problems regarding representation, reality and the sacred.’¹⁷¹

The fundamental problem with divine representation is not limited to the fear of blasphemy and idolatry but also stems from an ‘overwhelming, destructive truth’ which divine images suggest is ‘that ultimately there has never been any God, that only the simulacrum exists, indeed that God himself has only ever been his own simulacrum’.¹⁷²

There was no hope anywhere he turned his eyes: the dead figure of the God upon the cross, the plaster Virgin, the hideous stations representing a series of events that had happened a long time ago.¹⁷³

The work of Baudrillard suggests that Greene’s repulsion with ‘hideous’ statues of Christ and his saints are related to the deadness they suggest – to how they immortalize the fear that God is his own simulacrum.

One can live with the idea of distorted truth. But their metaphysical despair came from the idea that the image didn’t conceal anything at all, and that these images were in essence not images, such as an original model would have made them, but perfect simulacra, forever radiant with their own fascination.¹⁷⁴

Everywhere we look, the broken icon signals the bankruptcy of the Church whose assets seemed to have dwindled into sentimental piety. In Greenland, the Virgin Mary can sit side by side with slot machines, flashing quoits and shooting booths because of its modern exchange value as a commodity – but is also used by Pinkie for his personal sense of warped piety. Greene’s fiction, though overflowing with images of saints and icons, provokes questions about what it means to be holy and how holiness itself transcends stereotypes, cultures and most importantly – sin.

Piety is something which Greene presents as a type of fetish, one which is consumed with robotic ritual that lacks real humanity. Greene comments on magical Catholic fetishism in *A Burnt-Out Case* (1960) when a captain comments on how: ‘They call me the great Fetishist,’ He added with a smile and nodded at the Holy Family and the pull-out altar over the cupboard where he kept the cartridges for his gun and fishing-tackle.’¹⁷⁵ Greene sets the novel in a remote Congolese leper colony where the fetish worship of the ancestral God ‘Nzambi’ is juxtaposed with the Catholic rituals and veneration of saints.

Greene’s use of the word fetish relates to Baudrillard’s argument of the ‘pure fetish’ of a broken television or ‘vacuum cleaner or watch, or a car out of gas [which] are still prestige elements in the African bush.’¹⁷⁶ This is the same way that a picture of the Holy Family and a ‘pull-out-altar’ are considered as prestige articles in a leper colony where death has the greatest power. Just as Baudrillard discusses the veneration of broken commodities, Jenny Franchot also explores the idea of broken faith and how the remnants of religion are treasured as broken artefacts in secularised culture:

Stereotypes of lost belief appear most typically in museums, on public television, or in history movies: in all three places visibility is critical. We gaze on accoutrements and art of past centuries- saintly faces, Biblical scenes, church interiors, crucifixes. [...]Such images and texts filling museums and libraries are, for secular culture, the Other, the loss by which, ironically, we have come to know ourselves: we are not belief. We are that which we have lost.¹⁷⁷

Lost belief in Greenland is a process which plagues faith, a type of Catholic faith which broods over unbelief and cynicism and uses the aporia of the icon to articulate

the nostalgia of remembering how to believe. Greene uses the process of ‘losing religion’ to undergo a literary curation of the sacred which demonstrates the cultural difficulty in leaving religion behind. The collection of images that Greene uses in his fiction testify to the literary remnants of God which are hidden in plain sight – and attributed to the decadence of Catholic aesthetic. Though Franchot argues that this visuality is ‘othered’ into the realm of non-belief, Greeneland itself believes that non-belief in itself, is a type of simulation that is magically flickers images of hope. Salvation is a process that cannot be halted, both for the Catholic writer and the everyday reader. It cannot be shaken off as easily as assumed, even after a life time of public disavowal.

In an interview entitled ‘Why I am still a Catholic’, Greene refers to the transportable nature of the Mass that is similar to traveling Mother of God, where this chapter’s opening photo began. The portable nature of iconography and sacraments is something that gives the sacred more translatability and miniaturises the paradoxes of non belief. Though Greene placates his personal faith with claims of agnosticism, he still enjoys the friendship of Father Leopoldo Duran and his special permission to ‘say the Mass in Latin and say it anywhere, so if he comes here he says it at the table. And if I’m travelling with him, he’ll say Mass in the hotel room’. In this way, the aesthetic of the sacred is still useful to an agnostic like Greene, who also confesses to carrying a ‘photograph of Padre Pio in my wallet’ in his own secret gesture of Romish extravagance. Greene’s agonistic doubt, is not so far removed from the travels of Father Moore, with the Canadian Foreign Mission Society around the world. Just as the statue of Mary sat side by side with him across land, sea and air for ten years, so too does Greene argue:

If you go off in an aeroplane and something begins to go wrong, you don't say an 'Our Father', you say a 'Hail Mary'. Most people do, I think [...] I automatically say a 'Hail Mary' when the plane leaves the ground. I've only had two crash landings in my life, and I'm not afraid of aeroplanes, but I do it almost automatically. ¹⁷⁸

Chapter Three:

Manufacturing Magic

Divine Miracles or Enchanted Coincidence ?

Jessica Hausner's 2009 film, *Lourdes*, is one of the closest examples we can find of modern cinema's interaction with the historical occurrence of Catholic miracles. Revolving around the iconic pilgrimage site, Lourdes, in the Southwest of France this film follows a group of wheelchair bound Catholics, alongside other people with varying disabilities, that are on different journeys of faith and uncertainty. Though Hausner herself - who describes herself as a probable atheist, who sometimes weakens into the position of an agnostic – has no belief in miracles; her film attempts to record their occurrence through the tone of unbiased documentation. Hausner admits that she neither wanted to 'give Catholic answers' to the problems of faith, or mock the devotion of suffering and sick pilgrims.¹⁷⁹ In her discussion with the Bishop of Lourdes, in order to gain permission to film, Hausner persuaded him of her intentions to 'question faith and also the miracles' and reveal ambiguous the nature of the miracles, which is something she believes is reflected in Catholic thought. The film is described by the British Film Institute as 'a study of faith and despondency that is at once coolly detached and deeply humane' and focuses on the ambiguous nature of a miracle received by a wheel-chair user.¹⁸⁰ The detached perspective of the narrative is unable to sustain the miracle throughout the film; which in itself is a reflection of the doubting minds of the Catholic pilgrims.

Hausner's lead character – Christine – suffers from severe multiple sclerosis and is unable to feed and clothe herself. During her stay as a pilgrim she dreams that The Virgin Mary appears to her and in her earnestness to hear her voice, Christine stands up to hear more clearly, not realising that she is no longer paralysed. When she regains use of her limbs and is able to walk with the aid of a walking stick, some of her fellow pilgrims are eager to call it a miracle with even doctors regarding her transformation as extraordinary. It is only as the film progresses that Greene's question about the repercussions of the miraculous are explored. Some pilgrims ask why she was healed in comparison to those with stronger faith? Some predict that it will not last and we suspect that her own mother, is eager to regain her role as her carer. When Christine's legs momentarily give way her wheelchair is brought back to her and although declaring she does not need it, the weight of communal doubt leads to her surrendering to the familiar; she slides down into her wheelchair and into her former life. Though this single act of resignation is portrayed as a minute instance of sacred tragedy, it does indeed question the authenticity of the miraculous and its performative nature.

Other questions that are asked in the movie concerning the definition of miracles, come from sceptical pilgrims themselves, who ask a priest 'Is God good or is he all powerful? For if he were good and all powerful, then he could heal all people.'¹⁸¹ This sceptic's lack of faith is also glimpsed when he mouths a joke about the Virgin Mary choosing Lourdes as an idyllic holiday destination because – unlike Jerusalem – she had never visited there before. Though crude, the commercial critique of religious tourism is a mode that opens up even more questions about the justice of healing-for-profit. Is God good for hire? Should he be renamed the all powerful profitable one? Why doesn't he heal everyone? The priest suggests that indeed 'He does. But for

some it is more discreet. Its on the inside. Take a person in despair, who suddenly finds meaning to life. That too is a miracle.’¹⁸² This ‘inside miracle’ is very reminiscent of the everyday miracles which Greene suggested in texts such as *The Potting Shed* (1957) and *The End of the Affair* (1951), where the language of the *impossible* is used in order to describe divine intervention. It is only by comparing Greene’s notion of an ‘everyday miracle’ with John Caputo’s notion of religious impossibility, where the return of religion, relies on the sacred return to the language of the impossible. Caputo argues that what believers love when they declare a ‘love for God’, is actually a love for the imperceptible – for that which cannot be explained or predicted.¹⁸³ Whenever something is described as impossible, Caputo would argue that it has not reached the realm of the sacred – because what is sacred or supernatural is, by definition, outside the nature of human nature capability. Biblically speaking, religious impossibility refers to manna from heaven and the parting of the red sea. It is a type of vocabulary that struggles with the basic articulation of the name of God, whose holiness transcends the definition and comprehension of man.

The impossible is a defining religious category [...] For with God, as Gabriel told a very surprised virgin, everything is possible, even the impossible. That is what we mean by God. The impossible, if I may be so bold, is all part of a divine day’s work for God, part of God’s job description. Of, a virginal conception is not all part of a day’s work for the rest of us, but the Scriptures are instructing us about the miraculousness of life, about those unforeseeable events, large or small, that elicit an “it’s a miracle!” from us. [...] That is why religious narratives are filled with so many miracle stories, which are stories of transforming change more stunning than anything Lewis Carroll dared imagine could happen to Alice – virgins becoming mothers, mountains moving on

command, seas parting, the dead rising from the grave [...] The Scriptures are filled with narratives in which the *power of the present* [emphasis my own] is broken and the full length and breadth of the real open up like a flower, unfolding the power of the possible, the power of the impossible beyond the possible, of the hyper-real beyond the real.¹⁸⁴

Caputo speaks of transcendence as a necessary type of hyperreality, where the ambiguous mysticism of the sacred is unfolded in the revelation of beauty. This mystic beauty feels no need to explain itself, or mitigate its depth with rational judgment. What the miraculous offers is new type of reality, where the illusion of suffering and weakness is broken by the promise of something new. This newness can often break up the fallow ground of the difficulty of believing, especially in Greenland. Belief is a bitter pill to swallow amidst modern consciousness, but it is relief from this kind of empiricism that pilgrims seek after, or as Caputo would argue, it is their craving for the unimaginable which produces an impossible restlessness in their minds.¹⁸⁵ The Virgin Mother and her unfaithful Greeneian pilgrims, are driven by a love for the more-than-possible, a love for what is supernatural and better than reality. What they seek is not the healing touch of saint, or a sacred relic, but the everyday power to transcend Catholic guilt and the miraculous mercy of the love of God:

religious people are lovers; they love God, with whom all things are possible.

They are hyper-realists, in love with the impossible, and they will not rest until the impossible happens, which is impossible, so they get very little rest.¹⁸⁶

The restlessness of the impossible, which produces weariness with mundane living and the sustainability of miraculous life, is a key feature of Greenland and its relation

with the supernatural. Getting very little rest in novels like *The Heart of the Matter*, is not only a consequence of seeking out the supernatural, but also from dealing with the consequences of its existence, which is a threat to everyday living and ‘*the power of the present*’. Though the present, in the life of sick pilgrims, holds great literary despair – it is a more comfortable tense that the promise of a heavenly future – which for Greene is never guaranteed.

Nobody here could ever talk about a heaven on earth. Heaven remained rigidly in its proper place on the other side of death, and on this side flourished the injustices, the cruelties, the meanness that elsewhere people so cleverly hushed up. (*Heart.26*)

The *power of the present* is strong in the imagination of Greene’s characters, where sin is described as sometimes having the potential to produce beauty, enjoyed in its imminent glory; despite its harrowing guilt. (*Power.126.*) Heaven remains a word that is dead on the lips, though the colours of despair and injustice are more tangibly visible. In this way the frame of religious impossibility helps us understand the Greenian fascination with the miraculous, tempered by its grudging definition of small, reasonable, everyday miracles.

In *The Heart of the Matter*, the language of the impossible is linked with the haunting power of despair, as both of these concepts which are entangled in the mind of Scobie, Greene’s fallen police officer. Scobie is caught between the dichotomy of divine impossibility and heavenly despair and confesses that ‘Despair is the price one pays for setting oneself an impossible aim’ – perhaps the moral and Catholic aims of devotion to God and devotion to your spouse, both of which Scobie cannot sustain.

(*Matter*.50). It is during a tumultuous visit to the confessional that Scobie realises his all-consuming feelings of despair:

When he came out of the box it seemed to Scobie that for the first time his footsteps had taken him out of the sight of hope. There was no hope anywhere he turned his eyes: the dead figure of the God upon the cross, the plaster Virgin, the hideous stations representing a series of events that had happened a long time ago. It seemed to him that he had only left for his exploration the territory of despair. (*Matter*. 205).

Despair in Greenland is the companion to the impossible aims of faith and even more impossible representation of saints. When this feeling of hopelessness begins to grip Scobie's mind, his only prayer has nothing to do with the Hail Mary or Our Father – but is the request for the miraculous; 'he knelt and prayed: the only prayer he could rake up[. . .] He prayed for a miracle, 'O God convince me, help me, convince me'. (*Matter*. 204.) The type of miracle that Scobie asks for is not a John Caputo miracle, it is not the Alice in Wonderland type of miracle, it does not involve the healing of the body or a rising from a wheelchair. What Scobie desires is mental clarity and spiritual peace. These are the type of miracles that are sought after by Greene's characters, who want to be freed from the spiritual pain of modern disenchantment. Overcoming the despair of Greenland, with its self-agonising attachments, is a type of miracle itself – one with which Greene is in need of, to save his fiction from its own self-lacerating gaze. Though the implications of the miraculous, and its impossible realities, does have the power to break into the shell of Greene's fiction, it does so with the sobering reality of the metaphorical distance between good and evil. Greene liked to keep this distance as small as possible, which is why the nature of the impossible is something

he eventually rejected, though it was discussed in *The Potting Shed* and *The End of the Affair*.

The Potting Shed, for example, is a play that centres on the return of a man to the potting shed that he hung himself in as an adolescent, and was allegedly brought back to life by his priestly uncle. The play features the same narrative trope as *The End of the Affair*, in which we witness a character's desperate plea to 'anything that might exist' appearing to be inexplicably answered amidst the pendulum between coincidence and divine providence.¹⁸⁷ This type of miracle was described by Greene in an interview with *Life* magazine as a 'contract in the dark', a contract that Sarah from *The End of the Affair* made when she prayed that her lover Bendrix would survive a fatal bomb blast and another contract that a Catholic priest made when he prayed over the body of his lifeless nephew 'Take away my faith but let him live.'¹⁸⁸ Both Bendrix and James (the priest's nephew) became 'resurrected' Lazarus figures in narratives that attempt to present the dichotomy between fundamentalism and rationalism. The element of the miraculous is cushioned by the safe distance of the sceptical perspectives of both narrators, who edge towards the conclusion that the events in question were enchanted coincidences where greater good triumphed despite everyday struggle.

On returning to the site of his alleged resurrection James confesses:

I went down to the potting shed. And suddenly I wasn't frightened. There was nothing ghostly there. The ground wasn't holy. There were no voices and whispers and messages. Only the boxes of seeds and the gardening tools, and I thought perhaps even miracles are ordinary. There was a girl in the village that people had thought had died do you think perhaps things like that are happening everywhere? (*Shed*. 138).

The Potting Shed mimics the unheimlich process of uncovering; where what should have remained secret and hidden has come to light.¹⁸⁹ The uncanny light transforms the shed into a safe place for James rather than a psychological stronghold that represents mysterious childhood trauma. The everyday miracle that occurs in the play becomes the narrative of an estranged son returning home, where the alienated silence of baffled childhood finally gives way to a revelatory voice. This would also mean that the ordinary miracle hidden in *The End of the Affair* has nothing to do with life or death, but is the witness of a man who empties himself of hate (hate for Henry, Sarah and God) and who uses the tone of misotheism to shake his fist at heaven, until he so empties himself of rage that at the end of the novel he becomes able to put his hand on his rival's arm in a motion of solidarity and strength.¹⁹⁰ Greene himself used his writerly career to empty out his frustration at the language of the miraculous, which is a fascination that ebbed and flowed throughout his body of work. In his post-war play, *The Living Room*, published in 1953, Greene wrote that 'Leaving the miraculous out of life is rather like leaving out the lavatory or dreams or breakfast'. Yet ever a man of paradox he would go on to give an interview in the same year he published *The Potting Shed* where he claimed 'One thing I can assure you is there will be no more miracles' because you see he had grown 'rather bored with the subject now'.¹⁹¹ To add to this, in 1981 Greene gave a rare interview to Marie-Francoise Allain, found in her book *The Other Man: Conversations with Graham Greene*, where he took the opportunity to confess that he had experienced a small miracle after he prayed in a church to Padre Pio: priest, stigmatist and saint, to restore a tense relationship with a friend whose attitude, he reports, changed from that moment into a calm that was 'more striking than the sudden healing of a skin-disease.' Although Greene

acknowledges that this could have been a coincidence, he preferred to think of it as ‘magic’.

Greene’s use of the word magic, in relation to the miraculous, highlights the role of superstition in his imagination, although he reported to Allain that the supernatural made quite a late appearance in his life, as ‘I only became superstitious when I started to accept the existence of God, and therefore of miracles.’¹⁹² His discussion of the paranormal is taken even further in another interview that was conducted in Paris, this time with John Heilpern (‘On the Dangerous Edge’) where he states that he had no difficulty in accepting the paranormal: “It seems to me reasonable that great distress can travel [...] If a voice can come through on the radio, why not a voice or emotion hundreds of miles away through the air?”¹⁹³ It is noteworthy that Greene’s discussion of the paranormal is more in line with the vogue of gothic than with any sort of religious definitions of the mystical. The travel of ‘great distress’, ‘voice or emotion’ is vague enough to refer to tropes of the Gothic which haunt Greene’s imagination.

Despite Greene’s declared ease with the supernatural when faced directly with Catholic phenomenon, via Greene’s witness of the stigmata of Padre Pio, he displayed a greater measure of distress and alarm. The miraculous is also something that frightened Greene; as witnessing Father Pio’s hands he was convinced that he ‘was not a man who looked as though he suffered from a nervous disorder.’ Greene was so convinced of his power that he ‘refused to approach him and speak with him.’ Explaining to the friends who brought him along that he was too afraid it would ‘upset my entire life’.¹⁹⁴ This same train of thought is expressed in one of Greene’s travel accounts (*The Lawless Roads*) where he asks ‘Suppose there was a miracle, suppose out of some box a voice

did speak. . . it was a horrifying thought that life could never be the same again; one couldn't go on living as one had been living.'¹⁹⁵

In answer to the question of what would happen in the event of a miracle, (what emergency exit could be located as quickly as possible?) brings us back to Jessica Hausner's 2009 film, *Lourdes*, where this chapter began.

Lourdes, like *Greenland*, highlights how the miraculous provides moments of escape – glimpses of mystical intervention in ordinary living- that are always followed by a return to the pragmatism of reality. When one of Greene's Catholic kidnappers, from his Argentinean based novel *The Honorary Consul* (1973), makes the throw-away comment of how 'a miracle is very much like a crime' ; this line depicts how the miraculous is working in Greene's imagination. As it flees, like a fugitive, from his middle-class sensibilities. Living from the middle, is always the position that Greene has adopted, not only from a perspective of faith but also with his feelings of hate and love:

Two countries just here lay side by side [...] I was an inhabitant of both counties: on Saturday and Sunday afternoon of one side of the baize door, the rest of the week of the other. How can life on a border be other than restless? You are pulled by different ties of hate and love. (*Lawless*.13.)

The crime of the miraculous is always watched by those in the middle. Whenever the hint of heaven begins to break through the realism of characters who do not believe, or those who almost believe, Greene ensures that his middle-class sensibilities are represented to placate the tone of the impossible. Rose cannot believe in her hyperreality of good, without the narrative shadow of Pinkie. Sarah cannot be content with her miraculous answer to her prayer, without the righteous anger of her husband and her

lover. A young Mexican boy cannot believe in the miraculous power of martyrs, without the chilling noose of the police lieutenant. This means that Greenland is a place policed by the middle and by the representation of both sides of everything. What we find is that the biggest threat to this type of position is the language of the miraculous, because the miraculous comes from the outside of human capability and logic - and not from the middle. It is of no surprise that Greenland is restless about the definition of the miraculous, and its fantastical ability to subvert the strength of sacred liminality; a type of liminality that stands at the door and knocks, but is unsure of who will answer first – miraculous good or Manichean evil. This uncertainty is one of the reasons that the power of sacred impossibility is moderated in Greenland and redefined as an everyday process.

By looking at how Greene is always pondering on the process of the miraculous, we can see how its very definition is being theologically watered-down through the way the idea of the impossible is made to interact with modern medicine and technology. I speak specifically of the police lieutenant in *The Power and The Glory*, who laughs at the primitive idea of the miraculous: ‘The Indians, yes. Why, the first time they see an electric light, they think it’s a miracle’, highlighting how the problem of the miraculous has become, above all, a linguistic one.¹⁹⁶ For the lieutenant, the realm of the miraculous is not only laughable, but a simple case of semantic misrepresentation. What one man calls a miracle, is what another calls a lightbulb – which would make the miracle nothing more than a type of melodrama. What we find in Greene’s entertainments is that even the most middle-class sensibilities enjoy elements of drama and sensationalism – even if this drama does include representations of sacred impossibility. The first moment of witnessing a lightbulb-like invention creates within every society, a type of awe of impossibility.

Though the lieutenant highlights the affinity of indigenous worship with a belief in the miraculous, also highlighting how spaces like the ‘dark and magical heart of faith’ are historically connected with the otherness of pagan worship and native practices, he does so from the imagination of the British middle class; and their curiosity for miraculous melodrama. Though the lieutenant’s words suggest that the foolery of native worship of the radiance of a lightbulb is far removed from westernised superstition, this does not fully comprehend the presence of the impossible in many narratives of modernity, which itself became a literary waste land in need of sacred semantics.

Oh, it isn’t a case of miracles not happening—it’s just a case of people calling them something else. Can’t you see the doctors round the dead man? He isn’t breathing any more, his pulse has stopped, his heart’s not beating: he’s dead. Then somebody gives him back his life and they all—what’s the expression?—reserve their opinion. They won’t say it’s a miracle, because that’s a word they don’t like. Then it happens again and again perhaps—because God’s about on Earth—and they say: There aren’t miracles, it is simply that we have enlarged our conception of what life is. Now we know you can be alive without pulse, breath, heart-beats. And they invent a new word to describe that state of life, and they say that science has again disproved a miracle.” (*Power*. 198-199).

This is the voice of Greene’s whisky priest, who acts as an apologist for the possibility of the miraculous in modern day life. It is interesting that Greene uses the sacred vocation of the priest in a similar way to the secular role of the police officer – to enlarge the ‘conception’ of human life while also minimising the conception of the impossible. In Greenland, miracles are not only disproved by the power of science,

but by the agony of human doubt – which is also found in priests. Just as Christine’s miracle, in Hausner’s cinematic *Lourdes*, was ‘disapproved’ and weakened by the weight of scrutiny; so too does the Greeneian inspection of the impossible often lead to a resentment of supernatural miracles and fundamentalist belief. Greene shows the problematic connotations of fundamentalism which the word ‘miracle’ entails and the consequent squabble of how Christians should label the impossible.

Squabbling over sacred labels is a luxury that is not afforded to the pilgrims and ‘peasants’ of Greenland. Those who are in the most need for a miracle do not have to wonder if they should term it miraculous or coincidence. Paranormal activity or magic occultism? The power of the human body or perhaps the power of the divine universe?

In Greene’s imagination, the persecuted poor simply populate heaven with their supernatural goodness. This idea of ‘populating heaven’ is a theme that Greene repeats in his Mexican travel account. At the beginning of the novel he describes how faith began to form in his unhappy childhood, where he ‘slowly, painfully, reluctantly’ began to populate heaven with images of the Mother of God and ‘the cause of the damned’(Lawless.15.) As Greene imagines the inhabits of this ‘ravaged world’ beginning to encroach on the sinless city of heaven, he is humbled to witness a type of supernatural good that is worthy of heavenly calling. The great impression that the Mexican pilgrims left in Greene’s mind is highlighted in his 1940 essay ‘Don in Mexico’ where Greene defends Mexican persecution from the reports of a ‘heartless’ Cambridge Professor who, after visiting two tourist resorts, claimed that ‘As to religious persecution, it is so far as my experience goes, and as far as I have been able to find out by inquiry mostly imaginary.’¹⁹⁷ Greene defends the goodness of crowds

who were targeted by police gunfire when they ‘were setting up an altar in the ruins of a church’. For Greene, it was these pilgrims who populated heaven and personified the church. Though ‘A church to the professor was an interior, a style of architecture’ it was to Greene something entirely different.¹⁹⁸ It was pure humanity itself and its beauty could never be described as ecclesiastical. It was the dim light of goodness that shone in the ‘dark and magic heart of faith’, where the precious nature of faith had now become a state secret, a sacred whisper for the need of the miraculous.

It is no wonder that the language of the sacred impossibility comes so easily to Mexican pilgrims, whose supernatural good is a type of fantasy that is almost an envy for Greene and his lifelong struggle with the edges of faith. To hold a sacred belief without the entanglement of Catholic guilt is a simple glory in the land of Greene, where the greatest miracle of war wrecked realism, is the sacred fantasy of the impossible.

F a n t a s y i n C a t h o l i c F i c t i o n

During his teenage years Greene wrote a short story about the fairy-tale union of ‘King Realism’ and a maid called ‘Fantasie’ which was published *The Berkhamstedian*. It was entitled ‘The Tyranny of Realism’ and from a literal perspective allegorised his belief that fantasy and realism did not have to clash in archaic dichotomy against each other.¹⁹⁹

By citing the orthodoxy that acts as a religious background to Greenland, we are falling into the critical camp that embittered Greene due to their lack of recognition at the ‘fantasy element’ in his fiction. Greene claimed that critics refused to grasp the importance of fantasy in his narratives, as seen in the ways that they avoided

discussing things like the dragon that is mentioned in *The Human Factor* (1978) or overlooking the intrusion of dream sequences in the majority of his fiction. Greene admits to Marie François Allain that these modes of fantasy were escapist at times, while in other scenarios were the result of Green's own history with dream analysis through his experiences of therapy, to tame the nightmares of his youth.

Though magic in literature is often limited to youth in children's fiction, the magic of Greene's Catholicism, his affinity for martyrs and miraculous primitivism, is a type of literary engagement with good and evil that extends into the tradition of British fantasy writers like J.R Tolkien and C.S. Lewis.

Greene, Tolkien and Lewis share the feat of smuggling theology into popular fiction through their tales of pilgrimage, sacrifice and a perpetual battle against evil. Though some would argue that there is no magic in Greene's key entertainments, such as *The Power and The Glory*, and no obvious inclusion of mystical battles to save humanity from impending evil, there lies, nonetheless, in Greene's imagination the possibility of real evil in the world – which is also the same undertaking of fantasy writers. Greene is not afraid to delve into the murky waters of evil, which he confesses is the major pattern of thought in his writing:

I was not on the classical side or I would have discovered I suppose, in Greek literature instead of Miss Bowen's novel the sense of doom lies over success – the feeling that the pendulum is about to swing. That too made sense; one looked around and saw the doomed everywhere [...] Anyway she [had given me my pattern – religion might later explain it to me in other terms, but the pattern was already there – perfect evil walking the world where perfect good can never walk again, and only the pendulum ensures that after all in the end justice is done.²⁰⁰

In describing his favourite childhood novel, *The Viper of Milan* (1906), and how it showcases the ambiguities of human nature; Greene aligns his own writing style with the supernatural Gothic of Marjorie Bowen. Bowen wrote many titles under a plethora of pseudonyms and became known for her literary use of gothic tropes, such as her 1909 novel *Black Magic*, which features its narrative on the life of a medieval witch. In the introduction to a volume by Bowen called *The Bishop of Hell: and other stories*, Hilary Long describes the ‘tales of terror’ as an example of how Bowen became ‘a master of the macabre’. Long aligns Bowen with the Gothic revival of writers like Ann Radcliffe, and describes how she adds to this British genre by weaving tales of ‘terror and mystery out of the commonplaces of everyday life.’²⁰¹ This is the vision that Bowen birthed in Greene, in honing his ability to look and see ‘doom’ everywhere – the doom of evil represented in its fantastical form.

Critics argue that although there is no cinematic or commercialised magic in Greene’s *Power and The Glory*, this same novel holds many similarities with Tolkien’s fantasy of *The Lord of The Rings* as both novels exhibit elements of realism and fantasy.

Thomas Wendorf argues that:

Both the whisky-priest and the ring-bearer are reluctant heroes whose journey leads them where they had not intended to go but where they find they are compelled to go by their sense of calling, the priest because he is a priest, Frodo because he is the ring-bearer. Frodo often moves forward [...] without hope, and the whisky priest, even when he has accepted martyrdom over escape, has little hope for his own salvation or much conviction that his death will prove honourable in the eyes of God or others.²⁰²

Wendorf goes on to list how both journeyers are ‘swallowed’ by their evil surroundings which are marked by ‘heat, filth desolation and danger’, in their fugitive pilgrimages where they are also forced to show mercy to people who have betrayed them – a type of mercy that proves vital in both stories to the accomplishment of their journey. He argues that the sacrament at the heart of both novels is their ‘renunciation of power’, where both heroes give up their most prized possession – in the case of Greene, this is the very life of the priest.²⁰³

To return to the influence of Marjorie Bowen, both Tolkien and Greene write their fiction with their eyes turned towards issues of evil in lives of men. Greene’s fiction does not depend on the celestial and perfect goodness of humanity in order to define the totality of evil, which is a force that Greene so clearly believed was everywhere, even to be found in the heart of God himself. Greene does not portray the goodness of the heroic history of celestial sainthood and martyrdom. His saints, though complicated in their morality and beliefs, redeem themselves through their motivation to always help those who are damned. The desire for mercy in Greeneland, becomes the new definition for supernatural good which fights for the mercy of God in a world that is permeated with evil.

Though this moves away from the literary taxonomy of fantasy, it is in line with C.S Lewis’s notion that the genre of fantasy is ‘any narrative that deals with impossibles’.²⁰⁵ It is clear that what Greene and Tolkien are really doing, on a critical level, is engaging with ideas, previously mentioned, concerning the impossible. Greene and Tolkien’s philosophy of the miraculous is an interaction with Caputo’s sacred impossibility, who, writing many years after *The Power and The Glory* and *The*

Lord of the Rings, argues that ‘The religious sense of life kicks in when we are solicited by the voices of the impossible, by the possibility of the impossible, provoked by an unforeseeable and absolute future.’²⁰⁶

Caputo argues that the impossible presents us with a space where we are meet with a greater and unexplainable power, something that overshadows us and causes us to respond with feeble surrender. To imply that something is impossible is to point to our limited minds and capacities, and how something above our limited potential now enters into the arena of what is ‘religious’ and ‘supernatural’ because it is impossible.²⁰⁷ For Greene and Caputo the miraculous lies in the realm of the impossible. In the very idea of it we can be brought face to face with something that exceeds our limited power and potency.

While Tolkien and Lewis believe that this power can only be depicted by steering away from literary realism, Greene’s realist fiction resonates with Muriel Spark’s opinion that ‘A supernatural process is going on under the surface of all things’.²⁰⁸ That miracles are strange coincidences with the everyday which threaten to disturb our sensibilities. Though Greenland may differ from the fantasy world of Middle earth or Narnia, it operates on the same assumption of a magical drama between good and evil – and is framed on the same literary strategy that centres on bringing a revelation of the deeper realities of mankind to its readers. Characters like Pinkie in *Brighton Rock* and Bendrix in *The End of The Affair* personify Greene’s expedition into the psychology of good and evil, and his portrayal of the process of grace involved in the lives of those who deserve it the least. In an article for the *Times Literary Supplement* on the modes of Catholic fiction, Peter Hebblethwaite explained how it is ‘a vulgar

error to identify the supernatural with strange and otherworldly phenomena rather than seeing it as human experience viewed in its deepest and fullest dimensions.²⁰⁹ This relates to Greenland and the redemptive forces bubbling underneath characters captured in intense struggles with morality and hope.

Quest / Flight / Pilgrimage in *The Lawless Roads*

To truly come to a conclusion about Greene's eventual stance on the miraculous – we must bring our focus again to *The Lawless Roads*; the place where miracles were first manifested in magical and mysterious ways. After Greene was commissioned to write a book in 1939 entitled *The Position of the Church in Mexico*, his travel account became a journey where Greene immersed himself in the political and spiritual conflicts of Mexican Catholicism – on a tour which juxtaposed the aesthetics of European and South American faith. As Greene roamed through scenes of Mexican poverty, he observed how indigenous pilgrims still worshipped in the aftermath of violent catholic oppression; leading him to foster a growing admiration for the religion of the Indians - 'with their wild beliefs and their enormous if perverted veneration, to shame the Catholic into *some* action'. (*Lawless*. 123.) The book was later retitled as *The Lawless Roads*, which is a line taken from Edwin Muir's poem *Hölderlin's Journey* (1937), Muir's imaginary account of the journey that Hölderlin took in 1805 – from France to Germany - to pursue the married woman he loved, who died before he reached her. The journey, taking several weeks, was taken on foot and when he arrived Hölderlin was 'ragged and out of his mind'.²¹⁰ Muir declares at the beginning of his book that 'the Journeys and Places in this collection should be taken as having a rough-and-ready psychological connotation rather than a strict temporal or spatial

one.’ In this manner, Greene shares the use of this pilgrimage metaphor with both Muir and Höderlin.

Flight from mental mosquitoes

Greene could have felt pathos for Höderlin’s mental state, which is akin to the despair and discomfort that he felt as an ‘English man abroad’ in the majority of his travel narratives. As Höderlin starts his journey from the French town of Bordeaux, Muir opens the poem with the assurance that ‘When Hölderlin started from Bordeaux | He was not mad but lost in mind’.²¹¹ Greene was almost ‘mad’ on the 16th January 1938 when he complained to his brother Hugh about being unable to complete *Brighton Rock*: ‘My damned novel is giving me worse hell than any other [...] my nerves as a consequence are in tatters [...] I want to get out of this bloody country.’²¹²

Greene sailed to America thirteen days later and in his state of mind endured a trip characterised by his antipathy for Mexico – ‘I loathed Mexico [...] Here were idolatry and oppression, starvation and casual violence’ - odour and decay gave the impressions of a country which Greene perceived through its wildness and confusion. (*Lawless*.184.)

Though his travels narrative is characterised with discomfort and weariness, the time he spent in Mexico did inspire the characters and events of *The Power and Glory* and allowed him to escape, as Norman Sherry observes, from the incessant workload and stresses of London.²¹³ Back home, in early 1938, Greene was faced with a libel case from the actress Shirley Temple after writing a film review of the film *Wee Willie Winkie* for the paper *Night and Day*; where he joked about the appeal of the child actress’s ‘dimpled depravity’ to ‘middle-aged men and clergyman.’²¹⁴ As editor of the

weekly magazine Greene would later have to pay £600 of the £3,500 damages that were awarded by judges to Twentieth-Century Fox and Shirley Temple. This financial strain would lead to the eventual collapse of *Night and Day*.

Norman Sherry depicts the critical reception to Greene's aversion for Mexico when *The New York Times* highlighted the curiosity of how 'wherever he went, ugliness stalked him and leered at him from things and beasts and humans'. Greene became 'one who infallibly attracts to himself bad food and bad smells and bad people. One suspects that, even at the North Pole, Mr Greene would be harassed by mental mosquitoes'.²¹⁵

In my opinion these 'mental mosquitoes' of Greene's travel writing can be accredited to one of two things. Firstly, Greene's opinion that the symbols of Romanist worship were not simply a decadent and stylish art, but in some parts of the world became real invitations for persecution and suffering. *The Lawless Roads* portrays the depth of secrecy and danger involved in everyday acts of worship. Greene later described this as part of the many facets of Catholicism. 'Catholicism was no longer symbolic, a ceremony at an altar with the correct canonical number of candles, with the women in my Chelsea congregation wearing their best hats, nor was it a philosophical page of Father d'Archy's Nature of Belief. It was closer now to death in the afternoon.' (In the conclusion to *The Lawless Roads* Greene views the mass in Chelsea as 'curiously fictitious' when compared to the suffering of Christians in Mexico.)

Secondly, Greene's writerly approach to human behaviour was explained by one of his contemporaries at Heinemann as a style which saw no use for 'softer human

emotions'. His own cousin Barbara Greene suggests that 'Apart from three or four people he was really fond of, I felt that the rest of humanity was to him like a heap of insects that he liked to examine, as a scientist might examine his specimens, coldly and clearly [but she adds] He was always polite.' Greene's prose sought out the base and primal representations of humanity; even his representations of faith were centred on sordid believers who Greene used to highlight the duality of grace and squalor.

Squalor in itself is a guilty pleasure for Greene, whose fiction is attracted to the seedy parts of humanity. There is an undisputable ugliness in Greene's documentation of Mexico, which he would surely have defended as a desire to ease himself into authentic native scenes, a practice he displays when he writes: 'I changed my hotel – it was too brand new- for a dustier, noisier, more native brand'. (*Lawless*.68.)

The word Greene equates to 'seedy' is 'native' - a description he uses in an earlier travel narrative, *Journey Without Maps*, based on his trip in 1935 to the heart of Liberia. Greene confessed in this travelogue how he experienced a 'deep appeal of the seedy' and the way this liminal space between civilisation and primitivism allowed him to reflect on the obsolete traditions and aesthetics of Europe: 'This may explain the deep appeal of the seedy. It is nearer the beginning; like Monrovia its building has begun wrong, but at least it has begun; it hasn't reached so far away as the smart, the new, the chic, the cerebral'.²¹⁶

The monrovia buildings which have begun 'wrong' are no doubt inspired by Edwin Muir's description of how 'without fear the lawless roads | Ran wrong through all the land', where Muir compares the fearlessness of the lawless roads to the 'all moving things so still and sad'.²¹⁷ Both pilgrims set out in search of a deity whom is

already dead. As Hoderlin searches for his muse – Diomtima - whom he knows to be dead, Greene also visits the ruined churches of Las Casas during Holy Week where God is equally as dead as Diomtima because ‘Christ lay dead among the flowers’. (*Lawless*. 173). The emptiness of these pilgrimages is echoed in Greene’s broken ascetics:

Nothing meant anything any more; it was just sentiment to spread the flowers and drapery; the Host wasn’t here. [...] - well, it was Easter, we were celebrating the death of God. This emptiness and desolation was right, in a way.[...] all the symbols of God’s presence and nothing there at all – just flowers and drapery and cardboard angels starting from the wall with a trumpet in their hands to blow a trump for nothing. (*Lawless*. 173-174).

Here there is a doubling of the presence of a living God and the absence of ‘nothing at all’ as God becomes both living and dead; symbolically powerful and yet empty of power.²¹⁸ For the Catholics suffering under the weight of government persecution by President Calles God had surely abandoned them in their time of need.

We see in *The Lawless Roads* how amidst the ugliness of Mexico there remain moments of religious pathos, where the suppression of religion allowed for the bravery and authenticity of normal believers - and we witness how places like Chiapas offered a wild and romantic faith that Greene’s Catholicism was drawn towards.

Quest for Inspiration

With that said, Greene's search for artistic inspiration in indigenous spaces did lead him to dehumanize native practices through an energy we can easily associate with primitivism. The figure of the intellectual aboard was spurned by the precursory winds of this practice – which were most evident in notable modernist figures like Pablo Picasso. Greene's interest in the figure of 'the native' in his (somewhat contrived) prehistoric dwelling is established through this same movement; an aesthetic that was attracted to tribal objects and non-western art as an inspiration for modernism.

British primitivism in the early twentieth century was, in-part, fuelled by the discovery of Russian art and literature in the period where Anton Chekhov and Fyodor Dostoevsky were translated into English and the Russian ballet first appeared in London theatres. Darya Protopopova discusses this, along with the explanation of how British figures like Roger Fry and Virginia Woolf used examples from Russian art to advance their 'campaign for modernity and liberation in fiction and fine arts.'²¹⁹

Though primitivism has its roots in art history and is greatly concerned with the artistic return to nature, it is also concerned with the commodified artefacts of tourism and the visuality of many sacred aesthetics. Primitivism can be thought of as more than a type of appropriation of cultural aesthetics: as it was a type of retaliation against the belief of western superiority and the civilising status of western society. In the same language of orientalism, primitivism was also concerned with what we might term as the noble savage and the concept of otherness. This in itself is nothing new but is a type of language that is used to describe fascination with the native artistry of different races. Greene's preoccupation with 'the dangerous edge of things' is in a sense not only a literary or sacred reference, but also a physical reference to the many

countries that he discovered in his journalistic writing, where the border between the west and the non-west became a repeated point of interest. Allowing him to step out in search of the primitive and behold the savageness of the sacred. In his study on the otherness of the Catholic religion, what is interesting about Greene's study of the figure of the native is that he is not drawn to the natural romanticised beauty of the native; but the native's harrowing despair, his suffering agony and his worldly translation of the dark side of Christianity. Even in the tropical heat of Africa and South America there is a unified sense the colonial rituals of lavish belief, are as disorienting as the overcrowded aesthetics of Romanish worship.

Greene's primitivism was in part due to the literary inspiration he took from Joseph Conrad. *The Man Within*, *The Name of Action* and *Rumour at Nightfall* are Greene's young and sentimental narratives which he later admitted were influenced by Conrad. Cedric Watts describes in his essay 'How Joseph Conrad Haunted Graham Greene' that although Greene went on to disavow Conrad's 'worst novels' and vow to never again read his fiction - a vow which he kept for more than a quarter of a century – though his Greene's subsequent trips to Africa were a conscious emulation of Conrad.²²⁰ He kept a Congo diary just like his predecessor and also quoted from it in his travel writing. Watts describes how Greene aligned his perspective on Africa with Conrad's portrayal of the 'heart of darkness' as a mirror of the unconscious European mind.²²¹ Conrad's darkness is at work within Greene, resulting in echoes of literary savagery that is not only a cultural thing, but in Greenland becomes a mode of belief and unbelief. Greene's own confession of his borrowed Conradian darkness is found when he says:

The 'heart of darkness' was common to both of us. Freud has made us conscious as we have never been before of those ancestral threads which still

exist in our unconscious minds to lead us back. The need, of course, to go back and begin again. Mungo Park, Livingstone, Stanley, Rimbaud, Conrad [,] represented only another method to Freud's, a more costly, less easy method, calling for physical as well as well and mental strength. The writers, Rimbaud and Conrad, were conscious of this purpose, but one is not certain how far the explorers knew the nature of the fascination which worked on them in the dirt, the disease, the barbarity, and the familiarity of Africa.²²²

Darkness in this sense becomes a literary appropriation for the English man abroad who is attempting to connect with not only the surroundings of 'barbarity' and 'dirt', but with his literary predecessors and the Freudian idea of the unconscious mind - perhaps even the *unheimlich* mind. Darkness for Greene and Conrad was something to be uncovered; it was *unheimlich* concealment which holds the promise of revelation. Greene's use of the word 'familiarity' relates to the process of the uncanny; taking something that was once familiar and which has now become unfamiliar.²²³ Taking the familiar ritual of sacrament, mass and liturgy - that Catholic mode of approaching God - and making it unfamiliar and strange through the entanglement of colonial superstition. Taking the unfamiliarity of faith - which in Greenland is classed as despair - as a repressed memory, pushed down into agnostic doubt but sure to bubble over in an uncanny effect of sacred *déjà vu*. The darkness of London. The darkness of Mexico. The darkness of an African jungle. All hold within them the seed of despair and the need for the miraculous.

Greene himself would go on to embrace this darkness, and see its despair as a part of worldwide modernity. We see this through the way Greene ended *The Lawless Roads* in the air raids of London with the looming threat of Nazi Germany; as the mood of violence and oppression in Mexico become the concluding metaphor for the wartime

state of mind. Greene also reveals a certain regret in the conclusion to *The Lawless Roads*, as in ‘the grit of the London afternoon’ where there is always ‘a crime of violence’ he asks ‘ I wondered why I had disliked Mexico so much [...]I tried to remember my hatred. But a bad time over is always tinged with regret. [...] Why – on the Gulf – had that seemed bad and this good? I couldn’t remember. (*Lawless*. 223-224.)⁴ Greene defends his aversion for certain parts of the Mexican state by praising its miraculous and magical elements. He admits that his attraction to the primitive steams from his belief that it is more natural than the draconian doctrine of theology:

I still believe in magic, even in the art of writing. If Catholicism has succeeded in reaching the remotest corners of Africa, its no doubt because of certain magical characteristics. Its sense of magic is closer to the African than the abstractions of the Methodists and Anglicans. I’m inclined to find superstition or magic more ‘rational’ than such abstract religious ideas as the Holy Trinity.

I like the so-called ‘primitive’ manifestations of the Faith ²²⁴

Greene finds in the primitive a nostalgia for archaic symbols which are far removed from the political corruption and hierarchy of organised religion. His witness of how the native imagination used Christian symbols is the only relief in the novel from the heaviness of squalor and ruin. It is these borrowed symbols from Christianity which provide a sense of home for Greene during his pilgrimage - ‘A little image of Christ and something in the woman’s manner of courtesy, gentleness and resignation suggested that I was among friends. I told her I was Catholic – it was like opening a strange door in a foreign town and finding an old friend inside’. (*Lawless* 174.) This sense of home also becomes an aspect of Greene’s ‘primitivism’.

⁴ This type of admission protects Greene from the literary criticisms of racism that Conrad has faced by African writers like Chinua Achebe.

Greene's quest for inspiration in *The Lawless Roads*, not only leads him to seeking out literary darkness in Mexico, but also to being inspired by the aesthetic of ruined spaces – and in particular the way the idea of the ruined church, far exceeded, any extravagant ecclesiastical architecture of Greene's emotionless faith. Greene confessed to the way his Mexican travels transformed his Catholicism in the way that he found emotionally touching, compared to his previously detached beliefs. This would lead him to describe how the destruction of sacred spaces made them more holy; more aligned to the bloodied suffering of Catholic martyrs and apologists:

Yet this ruined palace and chapel were as beautiful as anything out of the Middle Ages- I don't think it was the bullet marks which made it so, the holes knocked in the walls for Pancho Villa's machine-guns. Has the Church in Mexico, I thought, been maligned if it created works of art so late as this? I have no sympathy with those who complain of the wealth and beauty of a church in a poor land. For the sake of another peso a week, it is hardly worth depriving the poor of such rest and quiet as they can find in the Cathedral here.
(*Lawless*. 41.)

In this quote the bullet holes of Mexican secularism are theologically akin to the stigmata of Christ himself, where Greene can tangibly touch and feel the cost of salvation and the brutality of true faith. It is not surprising that Greene found this physical proof of faith inspiring, as the baptismal name he picked for himself – Thomas the doubter – parallels the holes knocked into the sacred space of Mexican faith.

The space of the ruined church is something that Greene found more comforting than the grandiose and hideous icons he speaks of in his western based novels. It is a type

of ruin that would echo in Greene's mind even when he returned to London where he would write in correspondence after the blitz in 1940 that: 'London is extraordinarily pleasant these days with all the new open spaces, and the rather Mexican-effect of ruined churches.'²²⁵ It is no surprise that the idea of ruining a church, whether through secularist persecution or a war-time bomb, gave Greene a type of freedom to escape from the harrowing Catholic aesthetic of the church – and step into the spacious arena of a faith without doctrinal walls.

Pilgrimage of Illusion

One of Greene's favourite places in Mexico was Chiapas, a state which he described as full of 'wild mountain and old churches and swallowed ruins and the Indians plodding by'. (*Lawless*. 194.) It was when Greene travelled across the mountains into Las Casas that he truly viewed the magic symbols of indigenous religion:

This was the Indian religion – a dark tormented magic cult. The old ladies might swing back and forth in the rocking-chairs of Villahermosa, the Catholics might be dying out 'like dogs', but here in the mountainous strange world of Father Las Casas, Christianity went on its own frightening way. Magic yes, but we are too apt to minimize the magical element in Christianity – the man raised from the dead, the devils cast out, the water turned into wine. The great crosses leaned there in their black and windy solitude, safe from the *pistoleros* and the politicians, and one thought of the spittle mixed with the clay to heal the blind man, the resurrection of the body, the religion of the earth. (*Lawless* 171.)

Citing the healing of a blind man from the Gospels, Greene envisions the earthy clay that was used by Christ as a healing balm – the same earth that Christ wrote in when faced with an adulterous woman, the same earth that God used to create Adam. When he speaks of the ‘religion of the earth’ he implies the sacramental belief that world is this enchanted space where the sacred is infused everywhere; the pagan, the heart of darkness, the Indian burial ground. The earth its self gives a type of magical evidence for the fullness of God, which will outlast the political battle between Church and state.

What most impressed Greene about the Indians is how they clung to the aesthetics of Christianity in a political atmosphere of persecution and anti-clericalism. The particular group of natives he refers to are the Chamula Indians, who, according to Norman Sherry, only accepted part of the Christian faith after the Spanish conquest of Mexico. They gravitated towards the theatrical aspects of faith like the processions, incense, medals and rosaries, while also turning the saints into individual gods. While visiting a cemetery usually used for the celebration of the Catholic day of the dead, Norman Sherry describes how watching the twenty foot crosses at night fall was a ‘deeply moving and religious experience, but not a Christian one’.²²⁶ He offers the opinion that Greene’s perception of the Chamula Indians was romanticised by these unexpected symbols, which I would add, would have placated our disgruntled English man abroad and given him theological familiarity in an unknown land. Greene stumbled across these familiar symbols while studying religious frescoes of Jose Clemente Orozco in Mexico City - whose murals focused on the figures like ‘The Indian’ and ‘The Missionary’ where he glimpses the ‘stolen symbol – the cross, the agony’ but then goes on to defend Orozco’s theft of the cross by claiming: ‘we have no right to criticize – Christianity itself adapted the feast days and the holy places of

older faiths. In Mexico City the Cathedral is built on the site of the great Aztec temple'. (*Lawless* 71.)

The romanticised Christian symbols of the Chamula Indians are balanced out with the illusion of manufactured miracles which Greene personally experienced when he witnessed 'a talking saint' during his Mexican tour. Spurred on by the activities of Holy Week in Las Casas Greene went out in search of Saint Miguelito, a talking saint kept in a box by a poor Mexican farmer – whose legend had spread as far as Tabasco and was causing a religious revival. (*Lawless*.191.) Greene then travels to Sanoyo on Easter Sunday, and arrives at a home where the atmosphere seems right for a miracle –pilgrims leaving the house weeping while hypnotic music played in the yard outside. It is in Greene's haste to seek out this phenomenon that he asks the aforementioned question 'what happens afterwards to the people who are present at a genuine miracle?'(*Lawless*. 190.) The thought that life would be forever altered by the impossibility of a miracle is horrifying to Greene and shook his religious scepticism.

When Greene finally encounters this home-made toy saint he concludes with relief that 'This wasn't the setting for a miracle; there was something astute and amateurish about the whole thing'. (*Lawless* 192.) The saint itself was a woman's doll with crimped hair that could not speak because it was Sunday. Greene left that house expecting 'half a dozen San Miguelitos in Chiapas'. (*Lawless* 192.) This experience must have remained in Greene's imagination when he later talked about the criminality of the miraculous in the context of South America, where ('a miracle is very much like a crime'²²⁷) suggesting that it is criminal in its counterfeit nature. It is criminal in its need to defend itself against accusation.

What Greene witnessed through his experience with San Miguelitos was the effect of secular magic, which is built upon the premise of illusion. Though we expect to find secular magic in the circus or through ingenious card tricks, Simon During points out the historical overlap between secular and religious magic. In his 2002 book on *Modern Enchantments: The Cultural Power of Secular Magic*, he argues that Jewish ritual was grounded on magical practises and competitions, - barely less so than their pagan rivals. So, for instance, the canonical story of Jewish triumph over their enemies – namely Moses and his battle with the Egyptian Pharaoh to release the oppressed Israelites from their slavery - includes a magic contest.

The Lord said to Moses and Aaron, ‘When Pharaoh speaks to you and says, ‘Produce your marvel,’ you shall say to Aaron, ‘Take your rod and cast it down before Pharaoh’ It shall turn into a serpent. . . ‘ Aaron cast his rod in the presence of Pharaoh and his courtiers and it turned into a serpent. Then Pharaoh, for his part, summoned the wise men and the sorcerers, and the Egyptian magicians, in turn, did the same with their spells; each cast down his rod, and they turned into serpents. But Aaron’s rod swallowed their rods.²²⁸

This incident intertwines the paths of both illusionary and supernatural magic which is something that that is also blurred in literary history when Christopher Marlowe – after being charged with atheism – defended himself with the sneer that ‘Moses was but a juggler’. During maintains that the performance of turning a stick into a snake remains popular with current Indian street conjuring and finds it humorous that the Church was eager to present Aaron’s feat as a miracle rather than as magic – so that it would not be tarnished with occultist practises.

Greene himself blurred the definition between the miraculous and the occult when he refers to Catholic sacraments as a type of Shakespearian magic exhibited in the cauldrons of *Macbeth's* witches. The sceptical narration of Bendrix in *The End of Affair* argues that Catholicism is a 'very materialistic faith' because the magic of transubstantiation, where the sacrament of bread and wine becomes miraculously transformed into the substance of Christ during the Eucharist, is the equivalent to 'Eye of newt and toe of frog, finger of birth-strangled babe.'²²⁹ The criminality of this miraculous transformation is all but an illusion for Bendrix; an illusion that steams from the talking saints of Chiapas.

Behind Greene's fascination with the heresy of Manicheanism was his Gnostic belief that life was, in essence, unbearably painful and evil. For Greene, this belief is often found lurking behind the sacred, in this way Greene is part Misotheist and part Manichean – displaying at different points in his writing career a hatred towards the carnal limitations to the physical body and also towards the unavoidable damnation of this same body. For Greene, the material world was never able to transcend into the theological promises of renewed resurrection life. Instead, it would seem that despair was the destiny of humanity – a type of despair that not only perceived the human soul as fallen, but also God in himself as divinely entangled with darkness and evil.

Green's representations of the images of saints momentarily puts the flesh on hold from its habits of carnality. Though the literature of Greenland continues to theologially indulge the impulses of the flesh, it does so with a deep sense of awareness about the distance between the carnal and the consecrated and how the Manichean is bridging this gap by destroying the material world, and the material body under the weight of spiritual suffering. Greene was quick to spot Manicheanism in other writers like Charles Dickens, who he describes 'in many of his later books,

creeps in, unrecognised by the author, the eternal and alluring taint of the Manichee, with its simple and terrible explanation of our plight, how the world was made by Satan and not by God, pulling us with the music of despair?’²³⁰

It is in the Dickensque presentation of worldly good and evil, that Greene can hear the soft subtle echo of divine intervention or predestination, and can imagine a miraculous hand stooping down to save modern saints from their suffering. The literary struggle between the spiritual forces of good and evil, is also interested in the way the magic of Manicheanism is capable of presenting the devil as an angel of light. This Manichean vision of God is referred to as his night side in *The Honorary Consul*:

The God I believe in must be responsible for all the evil as well as for all the saints. He has to be a God made in our image with a night-side as well as a day-side. When you speak of the horror, Eduardo, you are speaking to the night side of God. I believe the time will come when the night-side will wither away, like your communist state, Aquino, and we shall see only the simple daylight of the good God. You believe in evolution, Eduardo, even though sometimes whole generations of men slip backwards to the beasts. It is a long struggle and a long suffering, evolution, and I believe God is suffering the same evolution that we are but perhaps with more pain. (*Consul*. 224).

The picture of a suffering God, one who bleeds for his people, is one that rejects his image as a sacred hyperreality. One that mocks his capacity for the miraculous as though theologically asking: if you are the king of the jews, save yourself. The idea of divine suffering in Greene’s imagination is his literary incarnation of a God who sits at the table of Greeneian despair – sharing in the pain and limitation of Gnosticism. This in many ways is a mode of disenchantment with the language of the miraculous,

where the power of sacred impossibility is not strong enough to remove the thorn of literary despair.

Greene describes his own creed of suffering in *A Burnt-out Case*, a novel that is heavily focused on the sick and the weary, the broken and disfigured; and where the presence of darkness - the dark and magical heart of faith perhaps - is a type of mercy which falls over 'the ugly and the deformed'. Arriving anonymously in a leper colony in the Congo, a disenchanted architect – who is likened in the novel to a 'spoilt priest' - witnesses the unnecessary suffering of the sick under the weight of a mutilating disease which results in high suicide rates. Discussing the tragedy of sickness, he is told by a priest:

Wouldn't you rather suffer than feel discomfort? Discomfort irritates our ego like a mosquito-bite. We become aware of ourselves, the more uncomfortable we are, but suffering is quite a different matter. Sometimes I think that the search for suffering and the remembrance of suffering are the only means we have to put ourselves in touch with the whole human condition. With suffering we become part of the Christian myth. (*Case*. 114).

Suffering has the power to bring together the human condition and the Christian myth; it is in the aesthetic of suffering that the thorn of despair finds a new purpose: reinventing manichean trials into a type of magic suffering. The peace that falls around the suffering saints in *A Burt-out Case* is described as 'a little death'. The pain of despair and the little death of the flesh. It is no surprise that the disfiguring nature of leprosy, which attacks the flesh of man, results in a greater sense of spiritual awareness in Greene's priestly characters, who view the materiality of the body to be less important than the transcendent nature of the soul. Indeed, the physical suffering

of the colonial lepers is a shadow compared to the spiritual grappling of Querry, and it is in this atmosphere that a miracle occurs, though not the kind that we as readers would expect. There are no healed bodies or raised lepers. There are even no conversions of faith. We instead witness how the world-weariness of a lost artist, Querry, finds a new purpose for living and serving others. This is the everyday miracle of an artist and one we would argue was immensely powerful to Catholic writers like Greene.

T o o f r i e n d l y w i t h t h e D e v i l

Thomas Woodman describes how one of the reasons for the miraculous/ supernatural in Catholic fiction, is its obsession with supernatural evil and the demonic. This tradition is evident in William Blatty's *The Exorcist* (1973) and is discussed briefly in Wendy Perriam's *The Stillness, The Dancing*, where a Reverend Mother tells the heroine of the story:

I am sorry to say it Anne, but you are getting far too friendly with the Devil.

Once you give him the smallest crack to put a claw in, he's got you hard and fast, fouling up your mind and then your body.²³¹

Indeed, Catholicism is a stream of Christianity which has been historically renovated into a Gothic playground. *Stigmata* (1999), *The Convent* (2000) and *The Devil is Inside* (2012) are some of this growing genre in film that we helpfully title as a brand of 'holy terror.'²³²

This again relates back to Ward's commercialized 'stigmatas and sacramentalisms' in post-religious culture, although now we can add that this commercialization is most

prevalent in a Catholic setting.²³³ Maria Purves outlines the particular attitude that Roman Catholicism is surrounded with in Gothic fiction, one of ‘othering’, desacralization and superstition. She argues that ‘what many critics see in the Gothic is a distorted religious iconography’²³⁴. In these readings, Christian emblems are not only emptied of all traditional meaning but are also filled with demonic significance’, as the trappings of Catholicism provide the exotic backdrop for fanaticism, odd behaviour and symbols of superstition.²³⁵ Thus the Gothic has transformed the sacred heterotopia into a new macabre spectacle. Previously holy cathedrals, stain glass windows, incantations and rituals are now de-familiarized in the traditional sense and open to the rebellious taints of evil and terror. This new perspective of Catholicism in particular is pointed out by Purvis as a Protestant form of anti-Catholicism that aims to show protestant readers, the obviously empty show of the Roman Church.

This is very much apparent in text like *The Brothers Karamazov* (1880) where the parable of *The Grand Inquisitor* sets up the relics of the Roman church to flicker like the pure simulacra Dostoyevsky perceives them to be. From an Orthodox perspective this parable is consciously anti-Catholic which is also proven when the priest declares that the church has chosen to turn away from Christ in their ‘holy’ greed for power and influence over mankind, making their true appearance to be grotesquely disfigured and demonic - like a sacred type of Dorian Gray.

The idea of the grotesque disfigurement of the Church is recurrent in Greene’s dream sequences from *The Power and The Glory* and *Monsignor Quixote*. Greene’s characters dreams of a type of disfigured Christ in dreams that resound with Gothic dissonance:

He remembered a dream he had had of a big grassy arena lined with the statues of the saints – but the saints were alive, they turned their eyes this way and that, waiting for something. He waited, too, with awful expectancy. Bearded Peters and Pauls, with Bibles pressed to their breasts watched some entrance behind his back he couldn't see – it had the menace of a beast. Then a marimba began to play, tinkly and repetitive, a firework exploded, and Christ danced into the arena - danced and postured with a bleeding painted face, up and down, up and down, grimacing like a prostitute, smiling and suggestive. He woke with the sense of complete despair that a man might feel finding the only money he possessed was counterfeit. (*Power*. 173).

He had a dream – it was one of those final dreams one has before waking of which even the small details stay hauntingly in the memory. He was searching for Father Quixote, who was lost. The Mayor was carrying the purple socks and he was worried because the mountainous path Father Quixote had taken was very rough for a man barefooted. Indeed, he came here and there on traces of blood. Several times he tried to shout Father Quixote's name, but the sound always died in his throat. Suddenly he emerged on to a great marble paving and there in front was the church of El Toboso from which strange sounds were coming. He went into the church, carrying the purple socks, and perched up on top of the altar like a sacred image was Father Quixote, and the congregation laughed and Father Quixote wept. The Mayor woke with a sense of a final, irreparable disaster. The dark had fallen. He was alone²³⁶

The tears of Father Quixote and the smile of Christ give both characters a feeling of inexplicable despair when they wake. For the priest in *The Power and The Glory*, this despair is linked to the idea of illusion, as Christ (with his face covered in paint)

becomes transformed during a primordial pagan ritual, which the priest envisions while he is giving mass in a Mexican village. The fear of waking up discover that the only money you possess is counterfeit is not an atheistic statement about the illusion of religion itself – but rather one concerning the counterfeit nature of the priest; who feels he is unworthy to perform priestly duties as he is a fugitive full of despair, has broken his priestly vows by fathering a child and awaits his capture with ‘awful expectancy’. This fear of inadequacy is also embedded in the Mayor’s dream when he discovers Father Quixote weeping at an altar while the congregation sneers. The intrusion of these dreams in the narrative are used to highlight the fragile humanity of Greene’s priests; who display the humble magic of redemption that is fraught with unworthiness. It was during Greene’s time in Latin America that he had an epiphany concerning the politicized struggle of priests (Like Father Lopez) who aided Mexican workers in organising a strike against unfair wage cuts. The martyrdom of men like these, willing to give up their lives for the good of the Church, became an undeniable source of magic for those in doubt of their faith.

Chapter Four:

Greene Screen



Figure Two: Protesting Martin Scorsese's "The Last Temptation of Christ", 1 August 1988, Photo:Getty Images

Celluloid Saints in Catholic Cinema

I'd always wanted to make a film of the life of Christ, ever since I first saw Him portrayed on the screen in *The Robe* when I was eleven years old. I was an altar boy, and I was taken by our diocesan priest on a little field trip up the Roxy. He hated the film for its absurdity, but I'll never forget the magic of walking down the lobby and getting a glimpse of

the gigantic CinemaScope screen for the first time. And when I heard the music in stereophonic sound, it became confused in my mind with the Gregorian Chant for the Mass for the Dead, at which I used to serve every Saturday morning at 10.30. [...] So, with the confusion of these experiences in my mind, the whole film became a holy experience[...] I made the association between going to the cathedral and going to the movie theatre at a very young age . In fact, as kids we used to joke about Mass being the same show everyday.²³⁷

These are the words of Martin Scorsese, arguably the most famous Roman Catholic film director of our time, one who openly draws on his religious tradition to portray salvation to modern movie audiences. Scorsese has received multiple honours and awards throughout his film career, including a lifetime award from the American Film Institute and regular appearances in the British Film Institute's (BFI) polls and surveys of the great modern films. The BFI also honoured him with his own season of Scorsese-curated screenings to begin their 2017 programme and described his contribution to cinema as 'unique and unparalleled'.²³⁸

Scorsese counts himself, along with Greene, as part of the questioning faithful who often find paradoxes within their Catholic history. Catholic doubt is one of the similarities between Scorsese and Greene which is due to Scorsese's depiction of what he described as 'the power of the spirit on the wrong road.'²³⁹ The wrong road often appears in Scorsese's films to lead his most troubled characters on their road to epiphany. This wrong road uses criminality and violence as a path to redemption and is a type of realisation that cannot be found unless it is searched for in the darkest of places. This process is similar to the tortured salvation that is worked out in the dark

places of Greenland, and offered to characters who are caught between darkness and light.

For example, Scorsese's Charlie from *Mean Streets* (1973) is very similar to Pinkie from Greene's *Brighton Rock*. Charlie, in a similar way to Pinkie, also struggles with an inner dilemma between the sacred and profane and is also obsessed with the consequences of sin and religious hellfire. This compulsion for penance is reiterated in the opening voice-over, in which Scorsese himself declares that: 'You don't make up for your sins in church. You do it on the streets. You do it at home.'²⁴⁰ Throughout the film, which tells the story of a boy torn between his New York mafia ambitions and an overwhelming sense of Catholic guilt, Charlie is constantly plagued with his scepticism regarding church pews and traditional church salvation. He presents the assertion that real redemption should be found outside the Catholic church— on what I am sure Scorsese would deem as 'the wrong road'. *Mean Streets* is a highly biographical tale with Scorsese admitting that:

My voice is intercut with Harvey's [Charlie] throughout the film, and for me that was a way of trying to come to terms with myself, trying to redeem myself. It's very easy to discipline oneself to go to mass on Sunday mornings. That's not redemption for me: it's how you live, how you deal with other people, whether it be in the streets, at home or in an office.²⁴¹

This is a Scorsese's modern definition of salvation, which does not give away extra points for church attendance but instead aims to permeate every sphere of life with spiritual significance. In coming to terms with himself, Scorsese is also liberating his audience to think of their own journey outside of typical church attendance. In this way *Mean Streets* is asking questions about how we appropriate salvation, how we

brand it and the context we place it in. Scorsese is participating in his own type of redemptive rewriting- whether it is a good man nailed to a boxcar by thugs, or a taxi driver drowning in the filth of a neon Sodom and Gomorrah; he takes pride in translating the hieroglyphics of Catholicism into the urban world. He shows how modern spirituality works outside the framework of denominational doctrine to bring fresh imagination to old theology. This chapter will think about the connections, continuities and parallels between Greene's visual imagination and the cinema of Martin Scorsese. It will address the representation of evil in Scorsese's films and the debt that the auteur shared with Greene to Roman Catholic doctrine and ritual. Finally, it will turn to aspects of the Catholic visual legacy in the representation of priests in contemporary film and television.

Scorsese, just like Greene, is in the business of making the holy tradition more relatable, by showing us how redemption can also be found in the most unlikely of places. This unconventional aesthetic is similar to the wounded faith that is often found in *Greenland*, a type of faith that revels in the dark places of religious doubt and can only be illuminated with sparks of everyday grace. This light flickers in the bleakness of lost faith and in hearts that long to believe in Catholic mystery and magic. Although Scorsese candidly confesses that 'Over the years I've drifted away from the Church, I'm no longer a practising Catholic, and I've questioned these things' he simultaneously describes Jesus as a character who 'glows in the dark' – and still holds a fascination for his narrative of salvation.²⁴² This is akin to another confession from Greene in his later life to his confidant, Spanish priest Leopoldo Duran, that 'Each day I have less and less faith' while also uttering in the same breath that 'The trouble is I don't believe my unbelief'.²⁴³ In many ways Greene and Scorsese hold their unbelief up to the flickering light of cinema, in order to study their

capacity for wandering and doubt. They approach Catholic salvation with a meticulous eye, like a taxidermist who studies a dead creature in order to celebrate the intricacies of its previous life. They take painstaking care to present faith in a life-like state, although it is abundantly clear that this preservation of religion is for the purpose of the artful eye – a literary and celluloid exhibition of the specimen of faith.

In this way Scorsese and Greene become Hollywood taxidermists who use the Catholic aesthetic in their neon display that studies Catholic non-belief in the modern world. The novelist and the director both use symbols, plastic figurines and gothic churches in ways that show them to be, in most instances, the only remnants of faith to survive the rationale of modern living. These miniature remnants of organised religion remind us of Jenney Franchot's argument that 'religion has become its own relic' and highlight how Catholic literature and celluloid is a great example of the way:

religion now dwells before us as a visual and textual fragment to be remembered precisely as that which is not us [...] a "seeing" that understands its self as a not believing.²⁴⁴

In this way Greene and Scorsese dwell before the memorialisation of Catholic doubt which highlights not only the difficulty of faith, but the difficulty of apostasy – especially when mixed with the sentiment of nostalgia. The fragments of the Catholic faith that appear in Greene and Scorsese's fiction is not only a cultural souvenir of the past; but is a personal representation of the history of both thinkers – who in many ways owe their supernatural imaginations to the richness of the Catholic tradition. Though the Mother of God, the rosary and the steeple are all working together in the mind of the Scorsese's and Greene's audience to deliver epiphanies of grace, these

optimistic remnants of faith are free to be rejected at any time; useful only for their curation of beliefs-gone-by.

For Greene and Scorsese, although the Catholic aesthetic had become the ‘same show everyday’, it was still a show that held latent visual power to promote hope and magic. Scorsese himself viewed the cinema as a type of redemptive and holy experience in itself; something which he discussed while speaking about his picture - an adaptation from Nikos Kazantzakis’ 1953 novel, *The Last Temptation of Christ* – where Scorsese’s definition of church and cinema spill over into an experience that infuses the cinema with sacred relevance. This is a relevance that testifies to the importance of telling modern stories of faith, despite the controversy that accompanies them.

How do you tell the story of Christian faith? The difficulty, the crisis, of believing? How do you describe the struggle? There have been many great twentieth century novelists drawn to the subject – Graham Greene, of course, and François Mauriac, Georges Bernanos [...] understood the conflict of faith, the necessity of belief fighting the voice of experience. The voice that always urges the faithful – the questioning faithful – to adapt their beliefs to the world they inhabit, their culture.²⁴⁵

Scorsese speaks here for the Catholic artist ‘fighting the voice of experience’ – defending the enchantment of the sacred realm in the modern crisis of believing. This chapter’s opening illustration (see figure one) is an example of the difficulty of telling the Christian faith and the controversy of using the wrong road to reach redemption. It highlights the complications Scorsese encountered when he attempted to adapt the life of Christ into cinematic culture. The photo shows a protest outside the Plaza cinema in

Piccadilly London, on the twelfth of September 1988. The main placard in the photo defends Jesus Christ against what many saw as a cinematic attack against his Godhead, by Scorsese's controversial telling of his story in *The Last Temptation of Christ* (1988). It would make sense that Scorsese's own celluloid offering of the life of Christ would be one that aimed to make the messiah more human and tell his story in a way that made 'the life of Jesus immediate and accessible to people who haven't really thought about God in a long time'.²⁴⁶ This film was met with violent protest, in most part due to its depiction of Christ in an act of sexual intercourse with a woman, and was boycotted and banned in numerous countries. Although the process of the film removed originally notorious lines like 'God sleeps between your legs' and took on a more intimate look at a Christ who was immersed by doubt, regret and fear, parts of the Catholic community could still not accept its creative licence to read between biblical lines and advocate cinema as space to explore sacred images.²⁴⁷ Celluloid saints are continued evidence of the currency of the religious market, which is no longer sold as a whole; but reproduced piece by piece, as minute examples of spirituality, mindfulness and meditation.

G r o w i n g u p w i t h t h e m o v i e s

What other kinship lies between these two great Catholic artists? Brought up in fervent American-Italian Catholicism, Martin Scorsese was as drawn to the pageantry and theatre of sacramental worship as Greene was during his childhood in Berkhamsted. Scorsese became the altar boy whose specialty was the early morning funeral mass on Saturday and who also visited the cinema with a young parish priest to see the biblical epic *The Robe* (1953).²⁴⁸ This mentoring relationship proved

important in the way that it exposed Scorsese to music and movies – it no doubt influenced his belief that he had a calling to be a parish priest himself. At different points in his childhood Scorsese toyed with these idea of taking up the sacred calling of either a missionary or priest, though his family and the Italian people in his neighbourhood had little love or respect for these vocations. Scorsese's lapsed Catholicism was due, among other things, to his struggle with the discipline of priestly celibacy. He was expelled from the seminary of Cathedral College after only one year because he had fallen in love and was uneasy with the unnatural lifestyle of holy isolation.²⁴⁹ In the midst of all this Scorsese was always a film buff and admitted that his life only comprised of 'movies and religion' which equipped him to bring church to the big screen and translate the Roman Catholic aesthetic into his own brand of sordid and sacred salvation

For a young Scorsese, the awe of the movie theatre is only comparable to the grandeur of Cathedral architecture; it was an experience that holds the same weight of sacredness and excitement. As a previous film student, this is a memory Scorsese would have found re-affirmed in the works of Erwin Panofsky who argued, in 'Style and Medium in the Motion Pictures', that film is 'the nearest modern creation of a medieval cathedral' because they embody the same amount of collective artists in collaboration.²⁵⁰ For Panofsky, the producer, director, and screen writer were sacrilegiously taking the place of bishop, architect and scholastic advisor; though for Scorsese, this exchange was something to be celebrated and not lamented. The cinema offers a vivid view of the auteur's creation in the same way that a Cathedral does. It allows you to sit in a mind of borrowed visual imagination and enter the gates of the artist's spiritual life, were previously reserved for silent and intimate moments. When Scorsese refers to Mass as 'the same show everyday' he is also setting up the modern practice of picture going as

a type of religious act, a gathering to behold the awe of a heavenly drama, to silently contemplate the grappling and often salvation of everyday sinners.

Greene's own history with films is evident in his work as a film reviewer, first at Oxford as a student and then more professionally for magazines like *The Spectator* and *Night and Day*. In his collected film reviews between 1935-40, found in *The Pleasure-Dome*, Graham Greene admits to watching more than four hundred movies with a sense of curiosity and anticipation. The narratives he encountered in the luxurious and bizarre Empires and Odeons he was invited to, provided him with an escape from his own writing process, which included four novels and a travel book during this time period. Greene also admits to the dangers of film-reviewing, not just involving his libel suite concerning Shirley Temple but referring to an envelope he received which enclosed what he described as 'a piece of aristocratic shit' that was perhaps the reward of his cruel fun against a certain French marquis, giving us the best example of Greene's colorful history with the art of picture going.²⁵¹

According to David Lodge, Greene belonged to the first generation of British writers (including his contemporaries, Evelyn Waugh, Henry Green and Christopher Isherwood) who 'grew up with the movies', and whose works would therefore be unavoidably affected by a lifetime of cinema going. Lodge argues in the foreword to Greene's novella *No Man's Land* (2005), that the silver screen taught Greene how to hold his readers in 'the coils of a suspenseful plot' while telling unsettling moral tales that evoked 'character and milieu with the verbal equivalent of cinematic close-ups and pans.'²⁵² Though Lodge implies that the visual fluidity of the movies is reflected in the momentum of Greene's famous entertainments and their ability to depict the tempo of action and crime, he also touches on how it is embedded in Greene's writing process itself and the way he visually crafted his narratives. This process is the same as

Christopher Isherwood when he acknowledged that ‘I am a camera, with its shutter open, quite passive, recording, not thinking’ and ‘if you are a novelist and want to watch your scene taking place visibly before you, it is simplest to project it onto an imaginary screen’.²⁵³ Both Greene and Isherwood would go on to become Hollywood screenwriters who would need to incorporate the presence of the camera into their writing style. Greene confirmed this type of ‘cinematic imagination’ in his 1969 interview with Marie-Francoise Allain where he revealed that:

When I describe a scene, I capture it with the moving of the cine-camera rather than with the photographer’s eye- which leaves it frozen. In this precise domain I think the cinema has influenced me [...] I work with the camera, following my characters and their movements.²⁵⁴

Here Greene admits to the way visuality is a core part of his artistic imagination, and connects his pen to both religious and cinematic pictures; he compares this to a similar way that the paintings of the impressionists had a great influence on writers he respected like Joseph Conrad and Ford Madox Ford, though Greene maintains that their suspicion of the cinematic medium limited their work with less movement and motion than his own fiction.²⁵⁵

When Isherwood confesses that he is fascinated by films and is ‘a born film fan’ he echoes a cinematic turn in the tradition of British fiction, one that was caught up with parallel issues of modernism and postwar life. In an article on ‘Literary Debate’ the BFI describes the history of cinema which demonstrates how ‘the [British] screen has always had a lifelong fascination with the page’. Greene is mentioned as ‘the most cinematic 20th century writer’ who draws from a history of adaptations from Shakespeare, Dickens, Austen and Mary Shelley to name a few.²⁵⁶

Greene and Isherwood were not the only ones whom was enthralled by this history of British cinema, as Waugh himself was also a habitual filmgoer throughout his life and also acted in an amateur film titled *The Scarlet Woman*, during his time as an Oxford undergraduate.²⁵⁷ Two of Waugh's published works, *The Balance* (1925) and *Vile Bodies* (1930), are preoccupied with the genres of silent and comic film and Waugh often mentioned the usefulness of the cinematic imagination in his writing process. This is even embedded in the professional advice he gave to friends in the process of manuscript writing. To one friend he asks:

Could you not perceive Maria Pasqua's life as a film?[...] I mean the mechanics of the imagination. Instead of seeing it as a historical document, imagine yourself watching a film.[...] with the continuity [...] dramatic emphasis and scenery of a film.²⁵⁸

While to another writer he suggests:

Don't make everything said. This is the inestimable value of the cinema to novelists (don't scoff at this as a cheap epigram it is really very true) [...] MAKE THINGS HAPPEN. Have a murder in every chapter if you like but do something. GO TO THE CINEMA and risk the headache.²⁵⁹

Though the commercial nature of film production and Hollywood itself repelled Waugh and provoked scorn concerning the 'headache' of the modern world, Waugh nonetheless 'retained the habit of attending the local cinema every week in his postwar experience as a country gentleman'.²⁶⁰ Other film-going contemporaries like Henry Green were also alleged of making 'a point of watching a film every afternoon and every evening of his Oxford life'. This binge-watching anecdote emphasizes Lodge's claim that not only are we dealing with the first generation of British writers who 'grew

up with the movies' – but writers who were early film addicts that showcased the compulsive allure of the cinema. In defense of this cinematic infatuation, it is important to note that Green was participating in more than scholarly procrastination when he 'felt extremely ill and everyday went alone to a cinema after which [he] tried to write.'²⁶¹ Green saw the cinema as a place of forgetting both his writerly guilt and the tension of pre-war Europe, which he confessed in his autobiography *Pack my bag* (1940) when he wrote:

Those were the days of silent films[...] For me the darkness, that is the light subdued[...] here was the place in which to work out the sense of guilt [...] all of this when Rome was perhaps already burning.²⁶²

For modernist writers like this, the cinema became a place of not only forgetting reality, but creating a new one. The guilt that plagued the act of writing, even the act of religious faith, was worked away in the silence of 'light subdued' – in the potential of fixing those dramatic feelings of guilt and fear in a new type of image; for it is in the flickering lens of celluloid that the fragments of modernism come together. It is the working out of literature, though now screenwriters like Greene confess to becoming 'the forgotten man', who hides in the light subdued and is fascinated by the darkness.

Greene's fascination with the dark noir of humanity did not always translate perfectly onto the flickering screen. Though nearly every novel he wrote was eventually made into a film, of the many adaptations of his novels, only *The Third Man* (1949), directed by Carol Reed, which Greene scripted himself, has attained classic status.²⁶³

Alternatively, a young Scorsese's inspiration for filming the life of Christ would continue into his adult work through his continued use of crucifixion pose by many of his prominent male characters, including his wild tale of *The Wolf of Wall Street* (2013)

and the many other times we have seen one of his characters with arms stretched wide like Christ. Greeneland is also interested in this type of sacred and profane mingling within the cinematic space, as we see in Greene's late fiction like *Monsignor Quixote* (1982), where the secular images of the Spanish CinemaScope, entertains the runaway priest who is haunted by the sacred space which follows him into the darkness of the theatre – where he views a pornographic film called *The Maiden's Prayer* and confesses that 'I was afraid to break the silence. There is something holy in silence.' (*Monsignor*, p.131.)

Just as Greene's priest views the cinema as a holy and dark spectacle, Scorsese too aligns the darkness of the pictures to his duty as an altar boy where he witnessed the pale bodies of Saturday morning funerals that must have coloured his young mind with its sacred darkness. It is the magic of the cinema space that sweeps Scorsese away from his altar boy childhood, although this 'dark and magical' experience is as much religious and it is cinematic, as both Greene and Scorsese would agree that the greatest show on earth is the divine show – the eternal pageant between heaven and hell which is embedded in the aesthetics of Roman Catholicism. The tidy aesthetic of angels and heaven is not the inspiration behind the brutal salvation of Greeneland or Scorsese- both artists are attracted to the primal and pagan scrambling after God, not as a high priest robed in his lavish vestments but as Cain fleeing after he killed Abel and became forever cursed.²⁶⁴

Regarding ancient religions [...] where they sacrificed 500 five-year-old children, or the blood sacrifices of the Israelites, finally up to the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross, and beyond that the sacrifice of the Mass – there has obviously been a 'civilizing' of religions, I feel, but this primal instinct towards bloodletting is still part of our subconscious. Travis in *Taxi Driver*, is an Old

Testament figure in that sense: in order to be righteous and correct the only answer was to call down the wrath of God.²⁶⁵

From this admission about one of Scorsese's most famous movies, we can also see how the kinship between these two artists is not only due to the 'power of the spirit on the wrong road' but also to their Old Testament version of salvation; which not indicates divine wrath or vengefulness, but is intrinsically caught up in the grief of religious failure and grappling with moral legalism. What is more important than Greene and Scorsese's shared fascination with the translation of religious icons and images onto the big screen is the shared sense of grief in their work which flows from their equally flawed Catholic faith. Although both men walked away from the theological teachings of Catholicism, Scorsese remains influenced by and engaged with surrounding Catholic culture, as evident in his recent cinematic effort (of two decades) to adapt Shusaku Endo's 1966 religious novel, *Silence*.

R e d e m p t i o n t h r o u g h s u f f e r i n g

The story of Christian faith, as told through Catholic cinema, is one that can best express its difficulty and crisis through the process of suffering. This epiphany of spiritual pain is something that is reiterated again and again in Scorsese's films – now most potently evident in *Silence* (2017). The cadence of redemptive suffering is depicted so strongly in Greene's and Scorsese's work that you could be forgiven for thinking that it is a uniquely Catholic enterprise. Although suffering, persecution and martyrdom cannot be limited to the Christian faith itself, Greene and Scorsese do highlight the distinctive type of spiritual pain which is articulated best in Scorsese's *Mean Streets* (1973) when a character played by Harvey Keitel puts his finger over the

flame of a church candle; while explaining via voice over as he burns himself that there is a difference between physical and spiritual pain : ‘The worst of the two is the spiritual’.

Silence retells the story of two Portuguese Jesuit priests who travel secretly to Japan in search for their mentor, Father Ferreira, whom they fear has abandoned his faith by publicly apostatising and taking on a Japanese identity. Though any peasant Christians caught practicing their faith are subject to torture and even death, it is not their apostasy that is the goal of the states’ persecution, but rather it is the fallen priests who are used as an example to their flock of the follies of western religion.

Silence is arguably Scorsese’s most Catholic film, this is evident in its initial preview before an audience of four hundred priests at the Vatican, predating its Hollywood release. Scorsese’s twenty-year journey to tell the story of lost priests from seventeenth century Japan endeavours to translate the beauty of the original tale in cinematic detail. *Silence* brings an intimately powerful look into the nature of Catholic persecution and suffering. Just as in the original novel, the persecution of these Japanese Christians revolves around pictures and the Catholic aesthetic. Anyone suspected of practicing this alien and unnatural faith is asked to prove their loyalty to Japan by stepping on the image of Christ with their foot. When witnessing the hunt for these Christian images, even the lost priest themselves became useful in their service to the Japanese authorities by becoming religious customs officers who searched for any contraband images of Christianity in foreign goods. It is easy to feel that it is the visual nature of Christianity that the Japanese inquisitors found so offensive. Its iconography proved impossible to wipe out, and its pervasive images carried with them the arrogant claim of universality. The Japanese inquisitor compares the fervour of the Catholic missionaries to ‘the persistent love of an ugly woman’ and claims that

although truth must be universal some seeds die in the wrong climate – and Japan is a swamp which would eventually destroy the seed of the Vatican padres. One thing that this cultural swamp cannot destroy is the devotional worship of the Catholic aesthetic. Even in this dangerous climate of intense religious persecution, the signs of God are still needed for the strength of everyday saints. These objects are often made from wood or wicker from plant stalks. Father Rodrigues worries that ‘they value these poor signs of faith more than faith itself’ – and yet it is these humble images that prove the strongest when Father Rodrigues dies clutching a small figure of Christ. In the end his faith is cut off from the global network of mass, vestments and creeds. He becomes a man from no particular church, preaching no particular doctrine, representing no particular denomination; a man clinging to the cross. He is clinging to a martyr who gives him divine strength. Scorsese here is pointing not to Christ, but to the Japanese farmer who first fashioned this image and gifted it to Father Rodrigues before he was then crucified in the sea while his family and village and padre watched. It is these types of memorable images, despite being trampled on and scorned by apostates, that appeal to the imagination of Scorsese and Greene. It is how they tell the story of the Catholic faith and the difficulty of wiping out visual remnants of salvation.

R e d e m p t i o n t h r o u g h c r i m e

Critics love to frequently identify the cinematic traits in Greene's fiction. For example, in his preface to the tie-in edition of *Brighton Rock*, J.M. Coetzee detects in Greene's

prose from the start that his ‘novels had borne the imprint of the cinema a preference for observation from the outside without commentary, tight cutting from scene to scene, equal emphasis for the significant and non-significant’.²⁶⁶ Coetzee signposts the influence of Howard Hawks in the violent depiction of *Brighton Rock*, referencing Hawks iconic *Scarface* (1932) as a potential influence on the writing of Greene’s 1938 gangster entertainment. Though Greene admitted to seeing *Scarface* in 1933, he thought it was inferior to earlier 1931 films such as *City Streets* and *The Front Page*, but critics argue he still gleaned ideas from Hawks’ picture which would appear in his upcoming novels *A Gun for Sale* and *Brighton Rock*. Both these novels would use the mob violence of Hawks’ *Scarface* as seen in their parallel openings, where both novels set the scene with ‘a murder planned and executed by a completely remorseless underworld character’.²⁶⁷ Other cinematic similarities between these films include their use of holiday violence, with Greene’s mob characters carrying out murders during Christmas and Whitmonday while Hawks’ narrative takes advantage of Valentine’s Day for Tony Camonte to decimate an entire rival gang via machine-gun. It is no wonder that the American distributors of Greene’s original adaptation chose to retitle the film *Young Scarface*, to not only allude to intertextuality with Howard Hawks but to the youthfulness and childishness of both protagonists. When critics like Carlos Clarens describe ‘essential childishness’ as Camonte’s most vivid trait, we are also reminded of the disturbing relationship with youth and criminality that Pinkie’s character embodies.²⁶⁸ The violent crime of our choir boy killer is a trend that dominated British fiction, which its penchant for the golden age of writers such as Agatha Christie. In a place like Greenland, even murder is not out of sync with the process of salvation, which grapples with lapsed saints and remorseful sinners. Crime becomes the backdrop for miraculous revelation, mainly concerning how Catholic practices and symbols

cannot be shaken away even in the darkest criminal imaginations. It is during the power of the wrong road the Catholic narratives of Greene and Scorsese perform a metamorphosis of the soul – where spiritual pain is brought to the forefront of criminal drama.

Redemption through self- destruction

Scorsese's films frequently explore the brutal nature of redemption which, in a number of religious traditions, often requires the blood offering of self-destruction. When Zora Neale Hurston declares that 'Half gods are worshipped in wine and flowers. Real gods require blood', she almost comprehends that in certain fiction, especially Catholic fiction, the divine requires even more than blood; he demands penance, purgatory, guilt and suffering.²⁶⁹

The fictional places of both Greenland and Scorsese often show us how redemption can be found through self destruction. Take for example the spiritual pain of Travis Bickle, from the centrepiece of Scorsese's filmography, *Taxi Driver* (1976), played by Robert De Niro, who undergoes a very violent outworking of his epiphany about the psychological and spiritual hell of New York. Film critics like Lawrence Friedman describe Travis' epiphany as his own type of 'holy calling' which attempts to redeem him from the pitfalls of personal and cultural evil²⁷⁰. These evils consist of all the passengers in Travis' taxi; the 'animals' that emerge under the flickering neon lights of Scorsese's noir; 'whores, skunk pussies, buggers, queens, fairies, dopers, junkies, sick, venal' as Travis calls them. He thanks God for the rain which washes away the homo-sapien garbage from the streets, though he is confident that 'some day a real rain will come'.²⁷¹ Travis' 'holy calling' leads him on a redemptive arc that uses the

trauma of his veteran wounds to transform him from a vengeful psychopath into a public champion.

Travis' taxi is a mode of modern connection, from one location to another, but his journey shows his own breakdown, alienation and distorted impulses. Scorsese himself responded to the original script through the motif of a disintegrating city in need of repair:

When you live in a city there's a constant sense that the buildings are getting old, things are breaking down, the bridges and subways need repairing. At the same time society is in a state of decay [...] So that sense of frustration goes in swings of the pendulum, only Travis thinks its not going to swing back unless he does something about it. It was a way of exorcizing those feelings[...]²⁷²

There is a subtle exorcism that occurs in the film: although the night crawlers are momentarily banished from Travis' mind, the rain does not wash them away from the sidewalks. Scorsese's neo-noir style uses the motif of darkness to signify mental decay of life after war.

The violent suffering of Scorsese's *Taxi Driver* is fueled by a great sense of loneliness, which is deliberately written into the script by screen writer Paul Schrader. Schrader admitted when writing the film that the mental portrait of Travis, his isolation, suicidal thoughts, obsession with alcohol, handguns and pornography, came from a reflection of his own life. Schrader quotes an American novelist who argues that loneliness is not a rare and curious phenomenon but a commonality of all human existence.²⁷³ In the world of Schrader and Scorsese loneliness is one of the greatest epiphanies of modern living. It is out of this loneliness that Travis Bickle nurtures his quasi- salvific mission to cleanse the streets of New York from their Sodom and

Gomorrah ways through his own self-destruction. (This echoes the biblical narrative of Genesis 19. Redemption through violence, as controversial as it may seem, is a grim reality of biblical history – from the imagined caricatures of Noah’s Ark to the brutal crucifixion itself - and is a process that Scorsese does not shy away from in his own cinematography. The troubles of Travis, or as he refers to himself ‘God’s lonely man’, are reemphasized in the continued collaborative works of Scorsese and Schrader which produced a triad of narratives that did not end with *Taxi Driver*, but would continue with *Raging Bull* (1980) and culminate with the controversy of *The Last Temptation of Christ* (1988). Lawrence Friedman argues that all three films are variations on the theme of redemption through self-destruction²⁷⁴ and supports this with Schrader’s own admission that *The Last Temptation* was ‘the final panel of the triptych. No more middleweights; this time we’ll deal with a heavyweight sufferer’.²⁷⁵ This suffering is very similar of Greenland, it is the celluloid that captures both the saint and the sinner in the shadow of waning candlelight. It is suffering that is most powerfully remembered through images; it has birthed its own visual economy in the modern world; one which is adept at silently articulating what cannot be spoken of: malnutrition, genocide and disaster. Catholic art lives between the spaces of suffering and art, and the particular works of Greene and Scorsese have made religious suffering into its own kind of spectacle.

David Dark, for example, argues that the explanation for the ever-present story of redemption through suffering and self-destruction comes from the modern hunger for apocalypse.²⁷⁶ To be clear this is not a hunger for destruction or catastrophe, or a working out of Freud’s death drive; it is a desire for more, a desire for meaning. Although apocalypse has been distilled to focus only on the impending destruction of civilization, true apocalypse is defined by epiphany and revelation. It is the voice of

the prophet crying out: ‘Behold, I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth; shall ye not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert.’

(Isaiah 43:19.) This desert of modern faith that is caught up in the crisis of believing does not suggest impending destruction for the doubting Catholic but the cosmic significance of spiritual pain and groaning. It suggests that this anguish can be exchanged for something greater. It is the wilderness that ‘maximises the reality of human suffering and folly before daring a word of hope [...] The hope has nowhere else to happen but in the valley of the shadow of death’.²⁷⁷

Redemption through Valleys and Shadows

The Catholic imagination of Scorsese and Greene is in many ways comfortable with the Hebraic landscape of ‘the valley of the shadow of death’ (Psalm 23:4). I say this because the biblical significance of valleys does not exclusively refer to death, but acts as a precursor to resurrection and new life. Take for example Ezekiel’s vision of the valley of dry bones; this is the original image of an army of the resurrected dead. When God gave the prophet a bird’s eye view of a valley full of the skeletons and asked him ‘can these bones live?’, he was setting Ezekiel up to witness the marvel of the valley – a place where death turns into life, where danger, suffering and evil can equally be met with comfort and a closeness to God.²⁷⁸ In Greene’s classic noir thriller, *The Third Man* (1950), the theme of the new life in the valley returns. Scorsese himself spoke of Graham Greene’s novella and screenplay in an interview where he commented on his belief that the picture was more than a thriller – and I would add more than a noir – because it spoke to him about the charms of evil, again reinforcing the idea of religious noir. Though Greene commented on how his novels would always outlast their

cinematic counterparts, some have recognised the significance of Greene's films and dubbed him as a possible father of noir.

Though not set in an overtly Catholic context, *The Third Man* is a narrative that is entirely driven by the promise of redemptive justice for the killing of Harry Lime, which is entrusted to the protagonist Holly Martins as the quest he must complete before he can peacefully return home. When a supposedly deceased Harry Lime climbs out of the sewers of Vienna, he is also climbing out of a type of valley and into a resurrected life. The intrinsic idea of being brought back to life is also found in the seed of the narrative, which Greene claimed came from the idea of a man going to a friend's funeral only to find the deceased standing at the graveside. In Greene's correspondence to Catherine Walston, he excitedly wrote

I believe I've got a book coming [...] all the ideas I had – the first sentence of the thriller about the dead Harry who wasn't dead, the Risen-from-the-dead story, and then the other day in the train all seemed to come together.²⁷⁹

In studying this theme of resurrection in Greene's writing, Charles Drazin argues that it is a meridian that goes back to his earliest years as a novelist, even back to 1929 when he wrote a short story titled 'The Second Death' about a dying man who is haunted by the image of his previous life, and the idea that he has already died. This makes him view his resurrected life as some sort of second chance, a chance to repent and live a moral life.²⁸⁰

The Third Man is not only concerned with the valleys and shadows, but moreover with the idea of hiddenness. In his book *Arts of Darkness: American Noir and the Quest for Redemption*, Thomas Hibbs argues that film noir rose in a time of social crisis that drove the overtly bleak genre in search of meaning through narratives of redemption and

salvation. Hibbs goes on to argue that the dark functions of noir reflect Pascal's idea of pursuing the hiddenness of God, which is a feature that bubbles underneath the troubled and cynical surface of the genre.²⁸¹ Hiddenness is a key theme in Greene's *Third Man*, which the mode aids through its use of darkness and shadow, the narrative testifies to the theological truism of what is done in the dark will eventually come to light- though I would argue that the greatest theme which is pursued in the dark hiddenness of Greeneland is faith in the mercy of God. This is true in the case of Harry Lime, who hides within his black-market villainy a divine hope of grace. When asked by his friend Rollo Martins about his childhood faith, 'You used to be a Catholic'; he confesses 'Oh, I still *believe* old man. In God and mercy and all that.' (*Matter*, p.88) Lime, just like his literary counterpart Pinkie, is on a journey to accepting not only his mortal sin – but his desperate need to believe in the magic of heaven, even a heaven that excludes him.

This literary trope of damnation that is expressed in both Harry Lime and Pinkie originates from Greene himself, who admits in his non-fiction how his affinity for hell nurtured within him a quiet need for the relief of heaven.

And so faith came to me shapelessly, without dogma [...] something associated with violence, cruelty, evil across the way. I began to believe in heaven because I believed in hell, but for a long while it was only hell I could picture with a certain intimacy [...] I began slowly, painfully, reluctantly to populate heaven. (*Law*, p.14-15.)

We witness Greene's 'certain intimacy' with heaven and hell in the screenplay for *The Third Man* where the comical porter, who works in the building for the deceased Lime, declares that he is already in hell – while pointing upwards - or perhaps in heaven while signalling downwards. The confusion between these polarising moralities reflects how

the supernatural evil of hell was always the ‘savage elementary belief’ that prevailed in Greene’s imagination. When Greene discusses his British contemporaries, such as Henry James, who believed in ‘supernatural evil, but not in supernatural good’ he was setting up his fiction to search for the supernatural good that can often be found in pagan places like ‘the dark and magical heart of faith’.²⁸² The search for supernatural good in moral ambiguity is the heart of *Greenland* itself, which interprets the Catholic aesthetic through light and shadow—this type of religious noir is similar to the Catholic anguish and quest for mercy that infuses other literary noirs such as Robert Bresson’s film *Diary of a Country Priest* (1951).

This film depicts a priestly noir which invokes images of despair, alienation and exile. Scorsese’s reference to ‘God’s lonely man’ is a germane description of the priest originally depicted in Georges Bernanos novel, whose suffering and eroding faith would go on to be captured in French film. Bernanos, in a comparable way to Greene’s whiskey priest in *The Power and The Glory*, presents the priest as a weak vessel and focuses his inner struggle on the frailty of his faith. Scorsese himself identified personally with the journey of this onscreen priest when he saw Robert Bresson’s adaptation in the mid-sixties. Remembering how key this film was helped him understand who God was, Scorsese recalls how:

Every character in that picture, with the possible exception of the older priest, is suffering. Every character is feeling punished and most of them are inflicting punishment on each other. And at one point, the priest has an exchange with one of his parishioners, and he says to her: ‘God is not a torturer. He just wants us to be merciful with ourselves.’ And that opened something up for me. That was the key. Because even though we feel that God is punishing and torturing us, if we’re able to give ourselves the time and space

to reflect on it, we realize that we're the ones doing the torturing, and we're the ones we have to be merciful with.²⁸³

Scorsese goes on to talk about how he re-created this sense of torture in *Raging Bull*, the autobiographical story of boxer Jake LaMotta, because his protagonist often punishes those around him as a symptom of the torture he feels within himself and must learn to 'live with himself' and accept the goodness of others.²⁸⁴ This highlights how the cinematic canon that is created in the religious liturgy of Bernanos, Greene and Scorsese, defines salvation as an agonising process of self-acceptance, of coming to terms with religious doubt and the human need for the mercy of God. Within this history of religious noir and its millennia of onscreen priests, Greene begins the work of attempting to redeem the moral ambiguity of villainous priests from their early Gothic conventions. It is in this way that Greenland the Gothic novel are both concerned with dark Christianity, with pagan rituals and supernatural occurrences. Just as the rise of the Gothic novel has always relied on the Catholic aesthetic for its backdrop, whether it be the monastery, the convent or the confessional, these same spaces are used by Greene to explore transgression, obsession, murder and guilt. Just as the Cathedral was used as a Gothic trope in texts like *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) and *Murder in a Cathedral* (1935), Greenland would continue to explore the convention of church-going in its own transgressive manner – and search for the remnants of mysticism and good in these heretical traditions.

Redemption through bad priests

Alas! My poor Church, so picturesque, so noble, so superhumanly pious, so intensely dramatic. I really prefer the New Statesman view, shabby priests counting pesetas on their fingers in dingy cafes before blessing tanks.²⁸⁵

This comes from the most famous of Greene's filmic commentary in 1936 review of *The Garden of Allah* which was based on a Robert Hichens novel that details the homecoming of a wayward Trappist monk, after he flees his monastery and marries a devout woman who later rejects him for breaking his vows to God. In commenting on this picture Greene mocks the renegade monk who meets an orphaned heiress in a Moroccan dance hall and is married by a Catholic priest in an Anglican service. Greene foreshadows his own famous shabby priest in this review along with unknowingly commenting on the meridian of protagonists with broken vows to God that demonstrate how a man of God can also be a man of crime, which is a type of duplicity that Greene presents when he writes: 'A miracle is very much like a crime' in *The Honorary Consul*. (THC, p.144)

Images of Greene's priest and his gunman are pinned to a wall side by side in *The Power and the Glory*. This juxtaposition is merged into the figure of Leon Rivers who is not only a devout priest but also participates in the kidnapping of an alcoholic and unimportant American ambassador. Greeneland does fantastically at portraying how the idea of criminal Catholic underworld is not only melodramatic and Manichean but entirely entertaining and thought provoking. *The Honory Consul* also does this which is also emphasized in its epigraph which quotes Thomas Hardy when he wrote: 'All things merge into one another, good into evil generosity into justice, religion into politics'.²⁸⁶ It is the merging of the monk into the murderer, highlighting that the essence of religion is not stiff or wooden but fluid in motion and able to merge into anything. In

speaking on the changing role of the priest in Greenland, Greene told Marie-Francoise Allain:

My favourite book, the one that bothers me least, is *The Honorary Consul*, and no doubt the next is *The Power and the Glory*. [...] I've succeeded in showing how the characters change, evolve. *The Power and the Glory* was more like a seventeenth-century play in which the actors symbolise a virtue or a vice, pride, pity, etc. The priest and the lieutenant remained themselves in the end. . . Now in *The Honorary Consul*, the doctor evolves, the priest too, up to a point. By the end of the novel they have become different men.²⁸⁷

In this instance we can see how Greenland is a great model for the evolution of the priest and his growth beyond simple virtue and vice. He has been re-imagined with all of the capabilities of humanity, though Greene is wrong to assume that this type of re-imagining is a particularly modern effort. The British Gothic novel has reimagined the role of the 'man of God' for many years in literary fictions that go back as far as 1762 to the pre-Gothic novel written by Thomas Leland called *Earl of Sailsbury* which was written by an Irish clergy man and featured the typically grotesquely evil monk. Interacting with this type of literary history is something that Greene's fiction is tasked with doing and many instances Greenland is a type of Catholic visuality that show us the progression of Gothic Catholic and the return to the enchantment of salvation.

We see how this route of return to the orthodox, is a pattern that is also found in modern Catholic themed cinema. Famous films plucked from the Catholic horror genre often utilise the unorthodox presentations of Gothic Catholicism in order to demonstrate the power and eternal victory of traditional faith. Take for example a film like *The Exorcist* (1973). Adapted by William Peter Blatty from his 1971 novel, this film provided a

pivotal link from the Catholic-inflected piety of Golden Age Hollywood to the demonic world of latter-day horror. It is not the first cinematic depiction of demonic possession and exorcism, but it may be the first film to depict the power of religion over evil in a post-Christian culture. *The Exorcist* wavers intriguingly between faith and doubt, with the priests finding as much reason to dismiss the possession as to accept it. Despite its sometimes-lurid Hollywood excess, it is imbued with a genuinely religious spirit reflecting a quest of faith and spiritual curiosity. Critics argue that the film did not cast the Catholic church in a wholly negative light as many members of the church actively collaborated with the making of the film and vocations to the priesthood increased for a time – as did visits to the confessional. In this curious way the film has been reviewed as ‘the greatest advert for Catholicism that the world has ever seen’ because it establishes the absolute power of the sacred against forces of evil. A few latter-day horror films that have also taken the same absolutist stance are *The Exorcism of Emily Rose* (2005) and *Deliver Us From Evil* (2014) and *The Conjuring* (2013 & 2016) It is a testament to the visual impact of *The Exorcist*, and perhaps a lingering awareness of spiritual hunger in our culture, that the genre remains vital more than forty years later.

Images of monsters such as zombies, vampires and white walkers are not a modern secularized phenomenon, but a negotiation of the sacred monsters that have prowled the edges of Catholic architecture for centuries. The modern acknowledgement of these creatures again relates back to Ward's commercialized ‘stigmatas and sacramentalisms’²⁸⁸ in post-religious culture, although now we can add that this commercialization is most prevalent in a Catholic setting. Now, apart from the protestant motivation, the transgressive idea of ‘holy terror’ can also be seen, according to Purves, as ‘a genuine expression of spiritual crisis’.²⁸⁹ For David Skal, it is not societies' funeral of the institution of religion, but more like the ‘reinvigoration’ and

reinvention of Christian values.²⁹⁰ This is, of course, after what I would call the new age of Christianity, where the idea of good has been so deconstructed from its opposite that it has now been rendered almost broken or at least useless. Now the interaction of what is dark and what is religious helps to keep the sacred somewhat alive, still wriggling on the table like a severed limb.

Holy terror then emerges as a type of cultural resurrection- a remedy for the death of God - only now we find that the Lazarus who emerges from his tomb is also a blood relative of Frankenstein, a villain and the hero emerging as one.

Just as Greene stripped away the threads of the Catholic aesthetic to reveal the innate duality embedded in the within us so too does contemporary film aim to unravel the true madness which lies within. Greenland has taught film how supernatural evil does not solely belong in the drama of heaven's gates and hells flames, which also draws from famous Gothic tropes like Jekyll and Hyde and the doppelgänger. When literary tropes like this focus on the maddening divisions of human nature, critics like Alison Milbank argue that 'this duality is our hope and not [our] despair'²⁹¹ for it is in places like Greenland that we learn how the horror of suffering and religious doubt lead to the presence of the greatest heresy known to modern logic: which is of course hope, a type of hope that is both suspicious and nostalgic in a society of disenchanting readers.

God is not dead; he's at the movies

Though the most famous obituary in literary history reads: ‘God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him’, in 1996 French film critic André Bazin declared that God has never been dead in the secular age but has simply relocated his existence to the rise of art, entertainment and the movies.²⁹² Bazin undermines Nietzsche’s glee in the greatest metaphorical murder in modern history, by declaring that ‘the cinema has always been interested in God’ because the ‘cinema is in itself already a kind of miracle’.²⁹³ The survival of God after his *Third Man* style disappearance is something that is unknowingly embedded in Nietzsche writing when he uses the language of the sacred after declaring that God is no more. When he asks, ‘What festivals of atonement, what sacred games shall we have to invent?’ in order to cope with the death of religion, he demonstrates a great dependence on the linguistics of the sacred and how even the obituary of God is not the end of the vernacular of religion and faith. Instead it demonstrates the opposite, the cultural need for ‘sacred games’ and ‘festivals of atonement’ that reveal the scattered remnants of God in the modern world.

These remnants are found in the history of cinema, and seen in Bazin’s argument of how the original blockbusters of cinematic history could not resist retelling the Gospel story or the acts of the early church. These are films such as *The Passion Play* (1898), *Ben Hur* (1907), *The Life of Moses* (1909) and *From the Manger to the Cross* (1912) to name a few. Bazin categorises these films as either priest or nun tales, saintly hagiography or theological creed made visual – though all three types exploited the popular belief in the miraculous. Although Bazin focuses on the re-telling of the bible as the main requirement for religious cinema, the search for God in the movies does not stop there. Take for example *Star Wars* (1977), which many people interpreted as a theological film – director George Lucas confessed that:

I don't see *Star Wars* as profoundly religious. I see *Star Wars* as taking all the issues that religion represents and trying to distill them down into a more modern and easily accessible construct [...] Religion is basically a container for faith. [...] I put the Force into the movie in order to try to awaken a certain kind of spirituality in young people [...] I wanted to make it so that young people would begin to ask questions about the mystery. [...] I think it's important to have a belief system and to have faith.²⁹⁴

Lucas's quasi-religious motivations become an outworking of what Graham Ward describes as a liquidation of religion, where formal religion is sold off, piece by piece to perpetually appear in the strangest of places, which he discusses in *True Religion*.²⁹⁵ Christopher Deacy makes a similar case when he argues that film is fertile with religious significance and cites critics like Margaret Miles who argue that 'Christian churches have relinquished the task of providing life orienting images'.²⁹⁶ Deacy cites Conrad Oswald who argues that the enlightenment did not emancipate Europe from the shackles of religion but even today in contemporary society is still defined by its own paradox:

We are uncomfortable with religion, yet we are faced with it at every turn. It is not the case that religion is fading with the secularization of society; rather religion is being popularized scattered and secularised through extra-ecclesiastical institutions. We find ourselves in a contradictory age in which secularity and religious images coexist.²⁹⁷

Modern society still shows lingering interest in phenomena like witchcraft, ghosts, possession and magic, though the resurrection of these things are now celebrated as fantasy, science fiction and supernatural horror. The dark and magical heart of faith

does not only belong in Greenland but also to writers like Stephen King who desire to explore the difficulty of representing an allegedly dead faith, now resurrected into its fantastical afterlife. In speaking of the spiritual orientation of his fiction Stephen King writes:

Too often, in novels that are speculative, God is kind of kryptonite, and that's about all that it is, and it goes back to Dracula, where someone dumps a crucifix in Count Dracula's face, and he pulls away and runs back into his house. That's not religion. That's some kind of juju, like a talisman. I wanted to do more than that. I wanted to explore what that means to be able to rise above adversity by faith, because it's something most of us do everyday. We may not call it Christianity. I wanted to do that. I wanted [The Stand] to be a God trip.²⁹⁸

In this quote King is doing something interesting. He is interweaving the history of the Gothic novel with religion today and finding a way to merge supernatural talismans into everyday faith. This is, if I may say so, at the heart of Greenland and its desire to piece together the remnants of the Catholic faith from the broken aesthetics of anti-clericalism.

Critics also maintain that institutional 'religion shows no sign of disappearing and even experiences periodic resurgences.'²⁹⁹ This critical assertion by Peter Williams is reflected in the literary works of Neil Gaiman who argues in his book *American Gods* that one of the New God's of America constitutes from TV and Film. This idea is embodied in the new Goddess called Media who feasts on the cultural worship of popular entertainment that comes from the billions of cameras and screens that litter the world. Gaiman allows Media to take whatever form is best suited to her, whether

is be monochromatic TV icons or technicolour sex symbols – her form may change but her power does not. When asked to describe herself by the protagonist Shadow Moon she replies:

I'm all sorts Shadow. The screen is the altar. I'm the one they sacrifice to. Then till now Gold Age to Golden Age. They sit side by side, ignore each other, and give it up to me. Now they hold a smaller screen on their lap or in the palm of their hand so they don't get bored watching the big one. Time and attention, better than lamb's blood.³⁰⁰

Gaiman's presentation of this goddess reiterates critics like Margaret Miles who assert that 'American People now gather around cinema and television screens rather than in churches to ponder the moral quandaries of American life'³⁰¹. This pondering has also been described as 'Doing Theology over Popcorn' and suggests that traditional forms of hermeneutics have given way to Hollywood versions of alternative theology. Some of these popcorn dogmas originate from literary narratives written by Margaret Atwood, Dan Brown along with Neil Gaimain, which both showcase the current theology offered on American networks. Alternative theology is also found in films such as *Noah* (2014), *Exodus God's and Queens* (2014) and *Calvary* (2014), which has also seen the rise of the genre of behind-the-scenes of Catholicism personified in drams such as *The Keepers* (2017) and *Spotlight* (2015).

R e d e m p t i o n t h r o u g h N o i r

That the very fabric of dark films lends itself to redemptive processes of light is argued by Christopher Deacy in *Screen Christologies*, who believes that the theological significance of noir originates from its acknowledgement of the fallen world and the possibility of redemption through suffering.³⁰² Film Noir is a fabric woven of many threads, with its inception fuelled with the taxonomy of hindsight. Nino Frank was one of the first critics to first speak on the genre of 'dark film'; through even at this point it was referred to as the 'police genre' because of its exploration into the criminal psyche. Some current film critics have suggested that film noir is not limited to the role of the erotic femme fatale or the fashionable detective with his coat and hat. Thinkers like Christopher Deacy, Cheryl Exum and Eric Christianson argue that the bare bones of this genre are religious in nature, often sharing affinity with biblical and Hebraic tradition. Exum argues that the original image of the femme fatale is embodied in the biblical figure of Delilah, who fits in with the description of the dangerous sirens of noir who are 'half predator, half prey, detached yet ensnared, she falls victim to her own traps'.^{303 304} Delilah of course sets a trap for her Israelite lover Samson, so she can betray him to his enemies in return for money; her trap leads to the thousands of victims who are killed in Samson's final act of mass revenge. Another affinity between these two genres lies with the trend of the noir hero and that of bad priests. Dark film is famous for portraying hero figures who are no longer honest and hold a mysterious past – like the policeman who has been corrupted by bribes - which has also made a way for the rise of the cinematic fallen priest; this motif is seen in Greene's *The Power and the Glory* and Scorsese's *Silence*. Whether it is fathering a child despite vows of celibacy or hiding symbols of faith after apostasy, these two priests led very different lives publicly than they do domestically as they follow in the noir tradition of ambiguous male protagonists.

These religious anti-heroes owe a debt to noir, that even today is being played out in TV adaptations such as *Carnivale* (2003), *Preacher* (2016) and *The Young Pope* (2016). All three of these shows interpret the vocation of priesthood through cynicism, corruption and melodrama – and although their *mis-en-scene* is not filmed in black and white – the spirit of noir lives in them and the darkness of their spiritually themed plots.

This spirit is something that can be argued to be conceived many centuries before Nino Frank, even evident in the Judeo-Christian ruminations of Old Testament. Take for example the book of Ecclesiastes, which expresses its worldview through a philosophy which brings into question the order of the universe and acts as the biblical guidebook for existential crisis. The author of the book, traditionally believed to be King Solomon, is a disenchanted figure who struggles with the futility of life and the brevity of human life. The book is filled with truisms such as ‘there is nothing new under the sun’ and begins its story by confessing that life is mere ‘vanity’ and meaningless in nature; because the fate of men and beasts are the same – ‘all are from the dust, and all turn to dust again.’³⁰⁵ The only theme that saves Ecclesiastes from its own despairing nihilism is ‘the fear of God’, which seems to be the only human act that can bring satisfaction. The author also touches on the dissatisfaction with the cyclical patterns of work – ‘What do people gain from all their labours at which they toil under the sun?’³⁰⁶ While also confessing that his own scholarly pursuits brought him equal measures of awareness and anxiety:

Then I applied myself to the understanding of wisdom, and also of madness and folly, but I learned that this, too, is a chasing after the wind. For with much wisdom comes much sorrow; the more knowledge, the more grief.³⁰⁷

The grief of life is the perspective that Deacy identifies as the powerlessness of human effort to alter the oblivion and death of eternity.³⁰⁸ Just like Ecclesiastes, *film noir* seeks redemption from the boundaries and struggles of our human existence. This is why the ambiguity that surrounds many noir narratives is inclined to be interpreted through the language of salvation and affirmation. Noir historians like R. Barton Palmer in his 'Moral Man in the Dark City' argues that the very gaze of American Noir is inclined to look towards religious themes like grace because of the spiritual revival that occurred during its inception in the late forties and fifties. This time witnessed a formal rise in church membership and the evangelism of leaders like Billy Graham, which lead a deeper interest in moral experiences and the utopian belief that 'man both individually and collectively might overcome the destructive forces within his nature and create [...] 'a sane society' in which love could triumph over self interest.'³⁰⁹

The cinematic descent into criminality and darkness was the complementary tone to postwar evangelism and the moral value inherent in the American Dream. Another religious feature of the noir genre is its frustration with national identity, as many noir thriller threaten the grandeur of American Dream through their motifs of espionage and corruption. Christianson argues that many biblical texts testify to the instability of the nation of Israel, who continually frustrate their entry into God's promised land. He suggests that is in the nature of Noir to sabotage the utopian place through its own ambiguity and alienation.³¹⁰ Greenland itself is very far from an utopian promised land, it is instead the undermining threat of the goodness of God through Manichean ambiguity of good and evil. This is seen clearly in *The Comedians* (1966), where Greene uses the superstitions of Haitian Christianity to mingle Catholicism with voodoo. The farcical ceremonies which are detailed in the novel offer the same

nihilism that is found in Ecclesiastes, only this time, this vanity is directed at the Catholic Church and the darkness embodies the ambiguities of faith itself. Greenland is so shadowed by its own ambiguity, that it can never offer the satisfaction of the promised land because it will always remain half way to God and halfway to the devil.

Greene's own association with the religious aspects of film noir are most evident in the way he uses the language of paradox and duality as literary juxtapositions of light and dark. Greene's affinity for what Robert Browning, in 'Bishop Bloughram's Apology', named 'the dangerous edge of things' manifests itself in the way his narratives teeter on the brink between faith and despair, love and betrayal and logic and superstition. Greene uses the light of childhood faith to cut across the sacred gloom of religious ennui. The magic of, for example, a resurrection in Post-war Vienna brings a type of religious glimmer to not only the urban location of *The Third Man*, but the broken aesthetic of Greenland itself – which as born from the landscape of an author on the brink of his equally sentimental and absurd faith.

A few years after the 1949 publication of *The Third Man*, Greene would create a character in one of his short stories that would engage in a captivating debate about the role of belief in the life of a Catholic novelist and the secret journey back to childhood orthodoxy. Greene details the psyche of Pierre Morin, a French Catholic writer, and how he struggles with the burden of being a famous Catholic. Morin confesses to Dunlop, an English wine seller who himself is not Catholic, that:

Curiosity is a great trap. They used to come here in their dozens to see me. I used to get letters saying how I had converted them by this book or that. Long after I ceased to believe in myself I was a carrier of belief, like a man can be a carrier of disease without being sick.³¹¹

The very tempting response to a quote like this, which is taken from ‘A Visit to Morin’ (1959), is to look for traces of Greene himself and his own journey of faith in the public eye. Critics like David Lodge and Bernard Bergonzi have argued strongly for authorial representation in this short story with Lodge believing that Morin as a novelist is a ‘composite caricature’ of Greene and the canon of French Catholic writers who equally encourage and offend a whole nation of Catholic saints, while Bergonzi reminds us that Morin’s rejection of his celebrity Catholic status is close to Greene’s own, which he wrote about in his *Ways of Escape* when he confessed ‘I felt myself used and exhausted by the victims of religion’.³¹² If I were to add to these author centred interpretations, I would only argue that ‘A Visit to Morin’ shows us more than the desire for privacy in the public sphere. In the same way that Thomas Hibbs argues that film noir is based on the theology of ‘the hiddenness of God’, so too is the noir of Greenland based on different levels of hiding.

On the outer level it is indeed concerned with hiding redemption and agonising salvation in bleak places of despair and doubt. This is if we believe Greene is speaking from his own experience with being ‘a carrier of belief’ despite his own personal impulses towards the incongruity of sacraments and sacred relics; then the landscape of Greenland becomes this place where an author can hide his discomfort with being categorised a Catholic novelist. But then it is also involved with hiding its own discomfort with religious fervour and fundamentalism so as not to become ‘a man without faith, who had better hide himself quickly so as not to discourage others’.³¹³ Then on the deepest level, Greenland’s most repressed desire is its need to hold on to its faith, despite its own self sabotaging cynicism, as even a character like Dunlop who begins Greene’s narrative without any faith declares while referring to a bottle of brandy that ‘people are not only hungry and thirsty in that way’.³¹⁴ This is the voice of

Greene. This is the voice of re-enchantment in the modern word. When Morin educates Dunlop about the difference between faith and belief, and how it is possible to lose belief without losing faith – we can hear the echo of Greene’s own interview with Marie-Francoise Allain where he explained his rejection of the ‘belief’ of Catholic theology and devotion despite his maintenance of the basic truth as a whole.³¹⁵ In this way Greene’s unorthodox and liberal impulses lead him back to orthodoxy, in the same pattern that we witness in his short story. Faith without belief is not enough for Morin who despite never wanting to ‘help anyone believe’ would never ‘take a hand in robbing them’ of the sacredness of their faith.³¹⁶ Though Morin’s Catholicism no longer exists as whole, which has resulted in him no longer taking communion in his annual trip to midnight mass on Christmas Eve, an event that he assures is full of the very worst Catholics, he still clings to his wraith like faith like a man mourning over a grave. His desire to be restored to his faith is very much evident when he confesses to Dunlop how:

I can tell myself now that my lack of belief is a final proof that the Church is right and the faith is true. I had cut myself off for twenty years from grace and my belief withered as the priests said it would. I don’t believe in God and His Son and His angels and His saints, but I know the reason why I don’t believe and the reason is – the church is true and what she taught me is true. For twenty years I have been without the sacraments and I can see the effect. The wafer must be more than wafer.³¹⁷

Morin’s response to the magical nature of transubstantiation which is the wafer becoming the body of Christ while the wine becomes the blood that was shed on the cross, speaks of the longing for a faith that is more than decorative and aesthetic. That

is more than the absurd ritual or religious drama. It is the voice of a man wanting to believe. It is the gleam of light under the weight of religious noir.

R e d e m p t i o n t h r o u g h e v i l

Many people view Greene's work as a space of hidden doctrine, where the plot and narrative often coincide with orthodox and heretical doctrines. This reflects Greene's own religious psychology that is fraught with conflicting theologies of the personhood of God. In Greene's own opinion there is no orthodox path to salvation that is not interfered with by the presence of alternative theology. There is a critical trend in identifying a Jansenist streak in Greene's work, for example his novel *Brighton Rock* which critics seem convinced that 'the Jansenist present not only in Pinkie's consciousness but throughout the imagery of the narrative is offset by the daring and contradictory suggestion of redemption through the mystery of the flesh'.³¹⁸ Greene himself avoided being termed a Catholic writer, no doubt shrinking from the prospect of becoming a literary theologian. Indeed he spent much of his time defending himself from criticism from Catholics who charged that his novels were at best theoretical and at worst -heretical. When asked in an interview about the presence of Jansenism in his work Greene replied

People who think they are getting at Jansenism in my novels usually do not know what Jansenism really means. They probably mean Manichaeism. This is because in the Catholic novels I seem to believe in the supernatural evil. One gets so tired of people saying that my novels are about the opposition of good and evil they are not about good and evil but about human beings.³¹⁹

The Manichaeian aesthetics of Greene are showcased in novels such as *The Honory Consul* and *The Comedians* where Greene writes ‘you believe that evil is necessary then you are a Manichaeian like myself.’ Though Greene no doubt enjoys the playful nature of this ancient belief in the duality of nature; it is in the Manichaeian magic of the dark and magical heart of faith which transforms it from a place of death into a place of life, turning the doctrine of damnation and death into one of hope. Greene himself speaks of this type of hope in his continual defence of his body of work from accusations of Jansenism:

Mr Anthony Burgess cradle Catholic though he is, or perhaps because he is seems rather wobbly in his theology or he would realise that my novels which cast doubt on the doctrine of damnation are tinged with the very opposite of Jansenism. With what he might well consider to be the damnable doctrine of hope.³²⁰

It is Greene’s signature style to turn hope itself into a type of paradox. Splitting hope in two, courtesy of his broken aesthetic, it is very possible that this Manichaeian worldview opened the door for the cinema’s future interaction with Catholicism. Greene participates in a genealogy of evil in as much as Milton’s *Paradise Lost* does, where both authors are very concerned with the language of sin and fascinated by the way the methods of God often fall short in their own special miscommunication to mankind. On seeing the brilliance of Milton’s satanic star it is no wonder that writers like Greene spent so much effort in articulating the dark psyche of religious drama, vocalizing the beauty of sin and demonstrating the suffering of everyday belief.

The Manichaeian universe is the chosen backdrop for much fantasy and horror films in contemporary cinema. This same struggle between light and dark even remains

in post-apocalyptic films where organised faith and religion has ceased. It would seem that Manichaeism has been smuggled into modern blockbusters that aim to depict what Greene described as his supernatural evil – whether it is Sauron or Voldemort, evil is considered relevant in an age when religion is not. Our modern understanding of evil owes a debt to Catholicism and its darkened aesthetic. Aspects of Catholic culture have often been ghoulish in the way it displays the severed heads, hands, feet, fingers, and other body parts of honoured saints in golden containers that are prominently displayed in important churches. This library of limbs sometimes goes on tour, as body parts are sent to visit churches far and near, to show how the holy is often found lurking in the dead.

The rise of the gothic genre relies heavily on the Catholic tradition and modern pop culture feeds from figures like Dracula in its inception of the Catholic Horror genre. Catholicism is a stream of Christianity which has been historically renovated into a Gothic playground. *The Exorcist* (1972), *Stigmata* (1999), *The Convent* (2000) and *The Devil is Inside* (2012) are some of this growing genre in film that we helpfully title as a brand of ‘holy terror.’ When it comes to fighting vampires and performing exorcisms, the Roman Catholic Church has the heavy artillery.

Maria Purves outlines the particular attitude that Roman Catholicism is surrounded with in Gothic fiction, one of othering, desacralization and superstition. Previously holy cathedrals, stained glass windows, incantations and rituals are now de-familiarized in the traditional sense, and open to the rebellious taints of evil and terror. This new perspective of Catholicism in particular is pointed out by Purves as a Protestant form of anti-Catholicism that aims to show ‘Protestant readers, the obviously empty show of it [the Roman Church]’.

The trappings of the Roman Church provided an exotic background, but, more than that, were symbols of superstition, fanaticism, and odd behavior. What many critics see in the Gothic is a distorted religious iconography. In these readings, Christian emblems are not only emptied of all traditional meaning but are also filled with demonic significance.³²¹

This argument is key to the understanding of many negative representations in Catholic fiction, but, it does not account for the role that Catholic guilt plays in the Gothicising of its own aesthetic. This is evident in writers like Greene and Waugh, who defamiliarise the scared space through feelings of alienation, doubt and mysticism. I will refer to how this literary process is mimicked in the cinematic adaption of *Brideshead Revisited*, which uses the mode of the Gothic to articulate the haunting of Catholic faith. Waugh's tale of aristocratic nostalgia was adapted for television in 1981 and subsequently adapted for cinema in 2008. Though the film was less successful than its eleven episode television serial, it does succeed in its ability to utilise the idea of space; and in particular how the mode of Gothic uses the language of entrapment and claustrophobia. Kathleen Urda argues in 'House of Horrors: Brideshead Revisited at the Movies' that the film adaptation reimagines the novel with a much darker tone of a man haunted by the space of the past and the space of the tragic estate. The adaptation bears the traditional marks of a Gothic story with its oppressive villain, persecuted innocents and ancient haunted space from which escape is impossible. The director of the film presents Brideshead as containing 'a slightly more sinister presence when you realise the characters are fatally locked into it and can't escape from it'.³²² This is the same sinister God of punishment that was present in the artistic imagination of Scorsese, evident in the way he confesses:

I was in my early 20s, and I was growing up, moving beyond the idea of Catholicism that I'd held as a child. Like many children, I was overwhelmed and deeply impressed by the severe side of God as he was presented to us — the God that punishes you when you do something bad, the God of storms and lightning. This is what Joyce was dealing with in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, which also had a profound effect on me at that time.

When Scorsese refers to the Catholic revolt of a writer like James Joyce, who was also another altar boy that lost his youthful faith in-part 'due to his sexual appetites', he presents for us the triangulation of similarity between himself, Joyce and Greene – who begin to form a modern tradition of lost Catholicism. It is clear that these three artists work out their religious angst throughout their body of work, but cannot deny the common sense of certain doctrines of sin and their encompassing feeling of guilt. Joyce himself is described as feeling 'he must choose between continual [Catholic] guilt and some heretical exoneration of the senses.'³²³ Though Joyce, in a similar way to Mauriac, had to choose to either master his fiction or his faith, Greene is more confidently in the realm of a writer who attempted to study both, and make art out of his religious struggles and shortcomings.

This is perhaps the greatest characteristic of modern Catholic writers who follow in the footsteps of Joyce and the way 'he did not simply deny his faith but instead transformed its structures into the basis of his artistic creed'.³²⁴ The twitch on the invisible thread is at work in the Catholic imagination of many modern artists like Greene, Joyce and Scorsese who have undergone both the 'loss' of faith and its transformation into artistic and cinematic currency.

Conclusion: Priestly Legacies

The work of Graham Greene was more closely entwined with my own pursuit of a literary career than that of any other contemporary writer [...] it suggested that it was possible to be all the things that an artistically inclined adolescent dreamed of being – rebellious, bohemian, shocking to the bourgeoisie – while writing within a framework of Catholic faith and practice³²⁵

Now comes the unenviable task of explaining what this all means, of lining up the threads of aesthetics, theology and the Gothic within the fabric of Greenland and how it is woven into the inheritance of contemporary society. How we all live, in different measures, is affected by our own sense of familiarity; with our own desires and with the world around us. Greenland in its essence, depicts the modern disorientation of mankind surviving without the sacred – and in particular, a church surviving without its prestige and indulgences. The bruised face of Catholicism often lifts up its face in the literary landscape of Greene's imagination, to encourage the modern man in his own journey of suffering. Now that God has been invited to partake in his own crown of thorns, the overfamiliarity of piety can be broken to reveal the desperation of true faith; which is a faith for martyrs, a faith for criminals, a faith for those dying to believe.

The most important impression we can have, as a community of readers, with the sacred entanglements of Greenland – is a sociological awareness of the role of religion in contemporary society. Through the doubting and denying style of Greene's Catholic faith, we can witness the way that many in the world around us have no problem with the idea of the supernatural – but endless trouble with the practices of organised religion. Grace Davie describes this as 'believing without belonging' and

describes how religious professionals in our current spiritual climate, do not have to cater to an unbelieving society, but a half-believing one. Though the skylines of modern Britain are still populated by the steeple and the cathedral, church attendance is a half-hearted practice among those who choose to consume certain gospels. It is the half-believing biblical knowledge of the Corinthians love chapter. It is the half remembrance of those who are buried in accordance to the book of Genesis – ashes to ashes, dust to dust:

By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return³²⁶

It is the half faith of the nativity and the practice of gift giving. These are the habits of the half-believers, the community of modern saints who still find the sacred space useful and hard to let go of. Davie argues that society is still aware that:

these churches still have a place at particular moments in the lives of British people, though they are no longer able to influence – let alone discipline – the beliefs and behaviour of the great majority of the population.³²⁷

A lack of discipline is the same weakness of Greenland, where the sacred aesthetic, which is alive with inspiring possibilities, does not have enough intellectual influence to sustain grace in the lives of Greene's characters. It is in moments of crisis that they find themselves seeking out grace – which itself is a biblical mimicking of the tone of Psalms and its depiction of sacred literary grappling. Just as the psalmist wrote:

I thought about the former days, the years of long ago; I remembered my songs in the night. My heart meditated and my spirit asked: "Will the Lord reject forever? Will he never show his favour again? Has his unfailing love vanished

forever? Has his promise failed for all time? Has God forgotten to be merciful?
Has he in anger withheld his compassion?³²⁸

These are the same questions asked in Greenland, in a land that is heavy with sacred disappointment and similar to the biblical cry for help in Psalm 77. This biblical passage reads like a melancholy prayer of modernity, a biblical waste-land of lament and sorrow. Sacred lamentation is not simply a type of sinful distrust of providence, but a uniquely human feeling, displayed by the incarnated Christ when he cried out: ‘*Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani*’ or ‘My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?’.³²⁹ Being afflicted, in agony, and full of complaint is the experience of the struggling saint. Just as the Psalmist, who is familiar with the feeling of despair – asks if the mercy of God is cut off from generation to generation, so to does Greene, in his troubled literature seek out the effects of disenchantment from one literary generation to another. One such writer who can be counted in the lineage of Greenland is David Lodge.

Greene’s Inheritance

Lodge’s novel *The British Museum is Falling Down* (1965) offers a satiric and comical approach to the struggles of Catholic living and academic life. Its hero, Adam Appleby, is a post-graduate student working on his thesis and also a practising Catholic. Though Adam and his wife are happily married with three children and comply with the Catholic method of a natural approach to contraception, Lodge uses this to create a great fear in Adam’s academic life, that his wife might be perpetually pregnant. As he attempts to submit his PhD thesis before his scholarship money runs out, Lodge uses the life of a student in his reading room space - of the old British

Library - as a metaphor for his own technique of mimicry which catalogues the lineage of his own reading. Lodge writes many parts of the book in the style and pastiche of authors such as James Joyce, Franz Kafka, Joseph Conrad and Henry James; he even starts the novel with an Oscar Wilde reference to how ‘Life imitates art’, which not only sets up the relationship between fiction and reality; but also between fiction and fiction, from one generation to another. Lodge describes the metafiction of his novel in his afterword of 1981 when he writes:

no doubt the use of parody in this book was also, for me, a way of coping with what the American critic Harold Bloom has called ‘Anxiety of Influence’ – the sense every young writer must have of the daunting weight of the literary tradition he has inherited, the necessity and yet seeming impossibility of doing something in writing that has not been done before³³⁰

Blooms’ historic essay, which argues that new fiction is primarily created by the stimulus of old fiction, also foretells the biggest struggle of good authorship – overcoming the power of previous writing in order to achieve contemporary immortality. Lodge’s fiction articulates the same anxiety which Greene felt towards his literary lure of Joseph Conrad. The idea of inheritance through the traditions of British fiction, is a type of ongoing intertextuality which continues to interact not only with the process of writing, but with the visualities of the mind itself. It is the images of writers which often reappear in the canonical future of developing work, like the way that Chesterton’s ‘twitch upon the thread’ continues to pull on the perspective of writers like Lodge and Greene. Lodge’s Catholic vision is fascinated with the ‘rebellious, bohemian’ images of Greenland which are a type of visual ‘Anxiety of Influence’. The Catholic framework of faith became a type of influence which Lodge did not seek to overcome but draw power from:

My own early novels transposed some characteristically Greeneian themes – belief and unbelief, transgression and guilt – into a less luridly lit, more suburban milieu, but not without some stylistic echoes.³³¹

These ‘stylistic echoes’ of Greene are found in *The British Museum is Falling Down*, where Lodge incorporates his mode of writing into the literary allusions of the metanarrative. This allusion is found when Adam, our Catholic academic, walks through “a green baize door,” into an area of the Reading Room that is restricted to staff. The reference to this particular image is taken from the opening of *The Lawless Roads*, where Greene describes himself as being ‘alone in mournful happiness in the dark’ and divides his childhood memories into the ‘two countries’ of education and spirituality (*Lawless*. 13). Lodge offers his own pastiche of this when he writes:

He [Adam Appleby] was in another country: dark, musty, infernal ... It was as if he had dropped suddenly from the even pavement of a quiet residential street into the city’s sewers. He had crossed a frontier – there was no doubt of that; and already he felt himself entering into the invisible community of outcasts and malefactors – all those who were hunted through dark ways shunned by the innocent and the respectable ... Voices, sharp and authoritative, were raised on the other side of the door. He had a sudden vision of the capture, the indictment and the punishment, and stumbled blindly towards a flight of stairs. He grasped the bannister like salvation.³³²

This quotation is a marker for all the literary trademarks of Greene’s frame of mind. We can use it as type of interpretation to the ‘dark and magical heart of faith’, which, for Lodge, is the ‘community of outcasts’ who are ‘hunted’ in the ‘dark, musty, infernal’ realm. It is the relocation from the suburban streets, into the shadowy

underground sewers – perhaps even the sewers that were used in *The Third Man*, as a place for hiding before a narrative moment of revelation. The transgressions of Greenland are interpreted through the mood of ‘capture’, ‘indictment’ and ‘punishment’, and salvation is grasped in a frantic flee from danger; it represents familiarity in the disorientating act of rebellion. The metaphor of salvation in this quotation is necessary in the way that it stops Adam from stumbling and falling. This theological metaphor is a parallel to the concerns of Greene concerning mercy and the divine, which is not as far removed from hope as he would like to believe. Leopoldo Duran argues that Greene’s biggest frustration throughout his life, was that he did not believe enough. Duran was a Spanish Roman Catholic priest, who had a friendship with Greene that lasted more than twenty years – up until the time of Greene’s death in 1991. Duran speaks of Greene’s belief when he argues that:

‘the constant purpose of his prayers – and he never, even in his most forlorn moments, stopped praying a little every day – was to ask God that he might ‘truly believe’ and that ‘his faith might be increased.’ When he told me that he asked God for ‘belief’, I argued, using the worlds of Pascal which Greene puts into the mouth of the Father Superior, in *A Burnt-out Case* when he is talking to Doctor Colin about Querry’s faith:

You remember what Pascal said, that a man who started looking for God has already found him.³³³

This quotation highlights how, in Duran’s mind, Greene could never be classed as a non-believer as the theological ‘anxiety of influence’ was something he could not overcome. Duran believed that Greene had already found God, or at the very least, the process of God which are retold in the everyday struggles of saints and priests – it is

the priests of Greenland who articulate the half believing struggle of faith and offer modern hope for those caught between the countries of grace and despair.

Paradoxical Priests

Greene's private writing also testifies to the paradoxes of faith and despair which lodged themselves in his mind, causing him in one sentence to confesses 'I am to a certain extent an agnostic Catholic' and in another to write:

One must distinguish between faith and belief. I have faith, but less and less belief in the existence of God. I have a continuing faith that I am wrong not to believe and that my lack of belief stems from my own faults and failures in love. Now paradoxically [...] I find myself grateful to those two priests for reawakening my belief – my belief in the Christian religion if you like [...] the attempt to get rid of the fairy tale makes me for the first time in years begin to believe in it again.³³⁴

In his own words, written to his close friend, Greene confesses that he is an agnostic Catholic who dares to believe in fairy tales – perhaps even the fairy tale of the paradoxical priest saving not only a nation of sinners, but also saving himself.

Greene foreshadows his own brand of fugitive shabby priest in the 1936 review he gave for the film *The Garden of Allah*, (which is quoted again here):

Alas! My poor Church, so picturesque, so noble, so superhumanly pious, so intensely dramatic. I really prefer the New Statesman view, shabby priests counting pesetas on their fingers in dingy cafes before blessing tanks.³³⁵

This review foretells a modern meridian of protagonists with broken vows to God, which are in part due to the old influence of Greenland and remain even to this day with the rise of Television serials such as *The Young Pope* and *Preacher*. Both these shows are the evolution of the story of the renegade monk and both strive to show how vows of justice, love and humanity can be accomplished in secular society. One man is a Texan outlaw on a journey to find God and the other is the chain-smoking American pontiff of Rome. The visual staples of both narratives promotes puffing smoke in priestly collars. They are a reminder of Greene's assertion that 'It is in the drunken [or smoking] priests that you can see mercy working.' It is in this notion that these humorously heretical priest owes a debt to the redemption of Greenland, which though it may drag itself through reasonable doubt is still sure to arrive. *The Young Pope* and *Preacher* both follow in the Greeneian tradition of paradoxical priesthood. This is seen in the opening episode of *The Young Pope* when he makes a confession of non-belief. Kneeling before the house of God with a fellow priest he confesses:

God my conscience does not accuse me because you do not believe I am capable of repenting and therefore I do not believe in you. I don't believe you are capable of saving me from myself. [...] I am saying that I don't believe in God.

This climatic revelation at the end of the episode reveals a small glimpse of a crisis of faith, of everyday doubt in the life of a believer. The family resemblance between Greene's paradoxical priests and Paolo Sorrentino's *Young Pope* lies in their shared habit of ennui and their imaginative power to defamiliarize the Catholic aesthetic through their problem of boredom.

Preacher gives us another example of a terrible priest who does not believe in his own God. During the pilot episode we are very aware that our preacher, Jesse Custer is conflicted between his old life as a criminal and his new life as a man of God. When provided with the opportunity to deliver righteous vengeance on a woman beater, when a young boy pleads with him to intervene on behalf of his abused mother, the audience gets to glimpse a volatile minister with a certain violence in his veins that could interfere with his holy calling.

In attempting to describe his own fascination with priests Greene writes three essays focused on different types of priests entitled: ‘The Oxford Chaplain’, ‘The Paradox of a Pope’ and ‘Eighty Years on the Barrack Square’, where he goes into detail not only about other literary presentation of priests (from writers like Evelyn Waugh) but his own opinion of the tradition of the papacy and its relevance to modernity.

Greene begins ‘The Oxford Chaplain’ by speaking about *The Life of Ronald Knox*, which was a priestly biography written by Waugh. After reading this biography Greene argues that:

A priest presents even more difficulties to his biographer than a writer. As with an iceberg, little shows compared with what lies beneath [...] we have the sense of breaking into a life more private and exclusive than a bedroom. [...] His biographer [...] must write a life of his hero which excludes the hero’s chief activity.³³⁶

From this small excerpt we can see how Greene is lining up the figure of the priest with the literary tradition of the hero, stemming from his belief that ‘priests are as necessary to the Church as the apostles of the darker, poorer, more violent world’. Greene speaks of meeting priests in Vietnam, Kenya and the Congo, and their

essential role in colonial poverty. The culturized specificity of priesthood is something that is reemphasized in Greene's assertion that 'every Catholic has his favourite type of priest'. In response to this we could argue that Greene's favourite priests, were the priests that needed saving, whose private life was unseen and yet dramatically brought to life through the language of sinful despair and Catholic guilt.

Greene is also fond of the political priest, who reemphasizes the heroic tradition and he talks about this in 'The Paradox of the Pope' when he described in 1951 how the Pope gave the impression

'of a man patiently waiting for martyrdom. He has already barely escaped it.[...] Hitler was said to have uttered the threat that would raze the Vatican to the ground [...] Now again the danger threatens. The Church's borders are widespread, in Poland and Korea, but war travels fast these days. Hitler was handicapped by the presence of the Church in Germany: in Russia the Church is represented only a few priests in hiding.'³³⁷

Priests in hiding are heroes in Greenland. They risk their life for a martyrdom that is not purely a hyper reality of piety, but a political stand against social injustice. This makes them more than men of the collar, this makes them heroes.

Another aspect in his essay 'Eighty Years On The Barrack Square', where he talks about *Journal of a Soul: Diary of Pope John XXIII*, is Greene's fascination with the humanising of the papacy through confessions of weakness and frailty. Greene found it fascination to pursue this thread of papal weakness that ran throughout the journal, which he referred to as 'the presentation of [papal] faults.' The perceived weakness of a priest is something that becomes a literary obsession for writers like Greene and Georges Bernanos. When the journal speaks of the real pleasure to

‘observe the silence and tranquillity of the flesh’, we can almost hear the ‘dark and magical heart of faith’ argue that the only real way to silence the priestly flesh is through suffering, martyrdom and death.

David Lodge explains, by quoting T.S Eliot’s essay on Baudelaire, why he believed Greene was obsessed with the idea that the sinner was at the heart of Christianity:

So far as we are human, what we do must be either evil or good; so far as we do evil or good, we are human, and it is better in a paradoxical way, to do evil than to do nothing: at least we exist. It is true to say that the glory of man is his capacity for salvation; it is also true to say that his glory is his capacity for damnation. The worst that can be said for most of our malefactors, from statesmen to thieves, is that they are not men enough to be damned.³³⁸

It is the language of hyperbole that Lodge cites as being so typical of Greeneland, and its particular stress on the presentation of moral corruption. Though Lodge describes Eliot’s quote as ‘pernicious nonsense’ indulgent in exaggeration, he does admit that its thrilling paradox once leaped out to him in the same way that it would have appealed to Greene. The morality of ‘the dark and magical heart of faith’ is something that had a deep effect on Lodge during the teenage part of his life. The separateness of Greene from other writers like James Joyce, and the Greeneian interest in the deep flaws of everyday humanity – which is at war with the secular societies in which they navigate – brought to Lodge a new awareness of the supernatural dimension of existence and its applicability for literary telling.

The literary prestige of Greene’s writing was far removed from the Catholicism that Lodge encountered in his parish church, which he described as ‘philistine’. Lodge himself explains how he chose, unlike Joyce, not to rebel against an oppressive weight

of religion in order to fulfil his artistic vocation. Instead, Lodge found a ‘positive act of self-definition to remain a practising Catholic, and a source of ideas, symbols and moral dilemmas which writing, especially prose fiction, could draw on.’³³⁹

Though Lodge admits in a similar way to Greene, that his faith became ‘demythologised’ throughout his writing career, up to the point that he could recognise that he no longer believed in literal terms of the creeds and doctrines he was reciting at Mass every Sunday -though he also admits, ‘they did not lose all meaning and value’.³⁴⁰ In this way Lodge is sharing a type of unbelieving meridian with Greene, where the aesthetic of Catholicism is something that he could also not bear to part with and something which still held some source of value to him – whether it be in sentimental kitsch or the language of sacred impossibility, the symbols and icons of Romanish belief continue to haunt Lodge in not only composing his own fiction, but in his comprehension of the ‘dark and magical heart of faith’. Both of these writers become can be thought of personifications of the Catholic writer in ‘A Visit to Morin’, who does not let his own stumbling sense of belief, get in the way of the faith of his audience.

In private, Greene was more relaxed about the testing of his faith which is evident in the private correspondence he shared with his close friends. The intimacy of the friendship that Leopoldo Duran shared with Greene is evident in the way Greene wrote for Duran a personal book, with odd sentences compiled into an album which became known to them both as Picasso. Picasso contained comments, reflections and original writing which Greene used to tie his thoughts more closely with his concerns of theology and literature. Leopoldo quotes some of these personal notes in his biography: *Graham Greene: Friend and Brother*. This account argues that faith was a

great strain on the literary mind of Greene, he was an agnostic who ‘never stopped praying and begging God for hope’. In Picasso Greene asks:

Was Thomas Becket a Saint? He had faith, he was a martyr, but . . .

‘If I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.’

Did Becket love? Unfortunately St Paul gives a definition of love which includes hope. And many of us today find hope even more difficult than love. There is an English hymn which I have always liked, ‘Abide with me’, and I always misquote one line. The hymn reads, ‘Help of the helpless, O abide with me’, but I always find myself saying, ‘Hope Of the hopeless’³⁴¹

When Greene quotes 1 Corinthians 13, the love chapter of often recited at weddings, he is speaking from the sociological space of half belief – of occasional church attendance and modern disenchantment. However, what must also be said, is that Greene is quoting outside of this sociological stereotype in his reference to the more unknown verses of the chapter. Greene’s writing has the flexibility to move within and outside of half-belief. When Greene articulates the importance of his need for grace and his lifelong search for it, he is really commenting on how the struggle of almost believing has nothing to do with love – but with hope and it is the figure of the hopeless man which is at the centre of Greene’s Christianity. This is the same man who is at the centre of Greene’s favourite hymn, ‘Abide with me’ which speaks of the ‘darkness’ and ‘gloom’ of earth’s vain shadows – written only to emphasise the yearning for a sacred space amidst the darkness.

Duran argues that Greene's 'embattled faith' could be likened to Miguel de Unamuno, a novelist and interwar intellectual who believed that 'Life is doubt, and faith without doubt is nothing but death.'³⁴² This quotation is echoed in the biography of Duran, who argues that the obsessive doubt of Greene's literary career could never be overcome; because, like his shabby priest, Greene would only find his peace through the process of death:

I can testify that Graham Greene's faith was in a state of constant inner struggle with itself and it obsessed him[...] Did he not once call it a malign virus from which one could never be cured? I know very well that this illness provided him with some of the high points of his life, and it was the reason, as we shall see, why he died so happily and peacefully.³⁴³

Duran also refers here to the great serenity that Greene allegedly felt during the final years of his illness and death. The bleak despair of Greenland seemed absent in the manner of Greene's death, as the doctor who attended to him on his sickbed also testified:

I can only find one explanation for such an admirable attitude. It is the first time I have ever seen someone respond to the circumstances with such greatness of heart. I believe this was due to the exceptional clarity of mind which enlightened him up until the very end. But in my view [...] there must be more to it than that. Only a faith free of any doubt can explain such complete serenity at the moment of death.³⁴⁴

Introduction

¹ For more information visit www.zombiejesus.org.

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³ 'Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us: for it is written, cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree.' (Galatians 3.13.)

Christ was made into a curse whose condemnation brought theological freedom for humanity.

⁴ 1 Corinthians 15: 21 -49.

⁵ Sigmund Freud, 'The Uncanny', pp. 217-256

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Isaiah 53. 1-3.

⁸ Dermot Gilvary, *Dangerous Edges of Graham Greene: Journeys with Saints and Sinners* (London: Continuum, 2011) ; Michael Brennan, *Graham Greene: Fictions, Faith and Authorship* (London: Continuum, 2010) ; Bernard Bergonzi, *A Study in Greene: Graham Greene and the Art of the Novel* (Oxford; Oxford University Press, 2006) ; A.A. DeVitis, *Graham Greene* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap New York, 1964).

⁹ Ibid [Freud].

¹⁰ Re-enchantment is a term used by the sociologist Zygmunt Bauman ; 'All in all, postmodernity can be seen as restoring to the world what modernity presumptuously, had taken away; as a re-enchantment of the world that modernity tried hard to dis-enchant'. Zygmunt Bauman, *Intimations of Postmodernity* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. x.)

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¹² Andrew Greeley, *The Catholic Imagination* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), p. 1.

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²¹ Graham Greene, *A Sort of Life*, p. 121.

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²⁵ Graham Greene, *The Lawless Roads*, p. 97 & 84.

²⁶ Graham Ward, 'Belief and Imagination' in *Theology and Literature after Postmodernity*, ed. by Alison Milbank and others (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), p.90.

²⁷ Martin Scorsese, 'Silence: Interview with Martin Scorsese', *La Civiltà Cattolica*, 3 March 2016.

²⁸ Bergonzi, p. 107.

²⁹ Graham Greene, *A Burnt-Out Case* (London; Vintage, 2004), p.101.

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