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ABSTRACT

In the novels of Graham Greene acts of betrayal appear with some frequency. Treachery and untrustworthiness are salient leitmotivs in all of Greene's novels and a study of his fiction indicates that the most significant form of betrayal is marital infidelity. The latter has received much critical comment but the causes and effects of marital infidelity in the novels have never been analysed or elucidated.

This thesis examines the themes of marital infidelity, its causes and its effects in Greene's early novel, The Name of Action, The Heart of the Matter, which stands at midpoint in the author's canon and the latest novel, A Burnt-Out Case. In each novel marital infidelity is discussed in terms of existential philosophy and the thesis purports to show that specific existential concepts can illumine and indeed account for the presence of the marital infidelity theme. I have not confined my study to one system of existential thought, such as that of Sartre, but have made use of concepts in the philosophy of Heidegger, Jaspers, Marcel and Kierkegaard.

The thesis does not indicate to what extent Greene was influenced by contemporary existential thought. Instead it argues that his novels mirror such favourite existential themes as alienation, the absurd, nothingness, the instability
of love and lack of communication between human beings, and that these themes are intimately linked with acts of betrayal in the novels.

The study indicates that lack of communication can be regarded as the primary cause of betrayal and, indeed, Greene sees betrayal as the central evil wedded to human nature, the evil of original sin.
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The critic Robert O. Evans holds that Graham Greene has been moving in the direction of existentialism since the publication of Brighton Rock and that "The Quiet American appears to bring to fruition a philosophy that has tended to become more and more existentialist in nature." He suggests that "aesthetic existentialism" is the variety Greene seems most familiar with:

"If God did not exist," wrote Dostoyevsky, "everything would be permissible." At exactly this juncture aesthetic existentialism, which seems to be the variety Greene is most familiar with, parts company with Christian doctrine. That everything is by no means permissible, even without God, might be a roundabout way of stating the central doctrine of Greene's book.

There are, of course, various schools of existentialism; but they are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Indeed they have in common the one fact of the concrete existence of the human being, the one concept that existentialism is a philosophy of the concrete rather than the abstract. "Existentialism seeks to restore," says William Barrett, "a much more primitive sense of the word 'philosophy'... namely, the ancient sense of philosophy as a concrete way of life, rather than an abstract set of propositions."

2 Ibid.
More pertinently—and this will be developed incidentally in the study of the novels—the existentialist, perhaps more than Kant, seems to be acutely aware that most situations "demand that someone be treated as a means or else there would be no ends for anyone."\(^4\)

Now both existentialism and traditional philosophy lay claim to the title of *philosophia perennis*. The traditional system argues that its claim is founded on the fact that philosophical knowledge is primarily universal knowledge. This, of course, Querry, in *A Burnt-Out Case*, would deny.

The existentialist contends, as Joseph Mihalich has shown, that reality is revealed in the context of the individual's subjective experiences—which for the individual are more significant and meaningful than transcendent abstractions.

Existentialism bases its claim to the title of *philosophia perennis* on the uniqueness and immediacy of everyman's concrete existence and the individuality of the actions that contain it.\(^5\)

While existentialism has been noticed in Greene's fiction, no commentator has seen this philosophy as an explanation of the theme of betrayal. Perhaps Greene was not aware that he was dramatizing an existential dialectic. Whether this is the case or no, an existential dialectic is present in his fiction and this study purports to show that existentialism and its natural corollary, determinism and/or fatalism can be elucidated through the theme of betrayal as it manifests itself in the acts of marital infidelity.


Specifically, the novels show parallels with the following existentialist ideas: self-deception, anguish (angoisse), the role of the Outsider, love as an unstable human emotion, personal worthlessness and subsequent suicide, denial of God's help, fatalism and chance, the absurdity of life, the universal implications of each act, situational ethics, lack of communication between human beings and bad faith. The novels also mirror the idea that the world and people are hell. It should be noticed that these existential ideas are not all present in each of the novels. Examples of each, however, can be found in Greene's fiction. This thesis does not argue that Graham Greene was in any way influenced by contemporary existential thought, nor that he deliberately set out to write existential fiction as, for example, Sartre did. The thesis shows a parallel between specific existential ideas and marital infidelity in each novel. The existential ideas illumine and account for betrayal.

The marriages in the novels of Graham Greene are notoriously bad. All of them appear doomed to failure. Such couples as the Fellows in The Power and the Glory whose marriages are not yet marred by patent infidelity have serious misgivings about love. Indifference grows rapidly in those marriages.\(^6\) Marital irresponsibility and indifference, the unhappy marriage, the broken marriage are all salient features of Greene's fictional universe.

The marital difficulties experienced by Greene's men

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\(^6\) The only possible exception is the marriage of the Lehrs, in The Power and the Glory.
and women can be explained by the fact that the typical Greene hero firmly holds that Love between human beings is unquestionably the most unstable human emotion. One might argue that this pessimism can be traced back to Greene's early concept of human love. In an essay called "The Revolver in the Corner Cupboard," Greene writes,

I was seventeen and terribly in love with my sister's governess—one of those miserable, hopeless, romantic loves of adolescence that set in many minds the idea that love and despair are inextricable and that successful love hardly deserves the name. 7

Peter Quennell, one of Greene's contemporaries at Berkhamsted school, is quoted by Pryce-Jones as saying that even at the present period, when I reread his books—those sombre chronicles of sin and suffering, where every form of pleasure is naturally suspect, every love affair inescapably doomed... I sometimes feel that I am confronting the spirited schoolboy in a more accomplished and more portentous guise. 8

But it seems to me that Greene's fictional marriages end in betrayal for a reason far more significant than Greene's early conditioning. Marriage is unquestionably a transcendent act. It involves a decided committment to vows and norms which transcend human selfishness and the dictates of the flesh. But it is precisely this committment to norms and vows which the typical Greene hero, pursued as he is by those whom he has betrayed and pessimistic about divine justice


8 Peter Quennell, as quoted by David Pryce-Jones, Graham Greene (London: Oliver and Boyd, 1963), p. 6.
and the goodness of human nature, will not accept. The Greene character, like Fowler in The Quiet American, or Querry in A Burnt-Out Case is an existentialist because for him the truth is subjective. There are no transcendent norms that determine human behaviour. And when, like Scobie in The Heart of the Matter or Pinkie in Brighton Rock, they do recognize norms, it is with the hope that God will forgive the sins of the past at the final hour. As Scobie tells his mistress:

... You are right, of course: it (the Church's law) ought to prevent all this. But the villagers of Vesuvius go on... And then, against all the teaching of the Church, one has the conviction that love—any kind of love—does deserve a bit of mercy. One will pay, of course, pay terribly, but I don't believe one will pay forever. Perhaps one will be given time before one dies.

Since so many of Greene's characters believe that there is that temporality about the truth, departures from norms are to be seen situationally, and acts of betrayal such as marital infidelity are dependent on the exigencies of any given situation.

There is a decided leitmotiv of unfaithfulness in Graham Greene's novels. Critics, like Sean O'Faolain who believes that "this general unfaithfulness is symbolical of mankind's eternally renewed Judas kiss," see the tendency

9 Even in Greene's latest work, A Sense of Reality, Wilditch, the hero of the story "Under the Garden," confesses his agnosticism, his doubts about a future life.

10 The Heart of the Matter, p. 231.

to betrayal as an integral part of human nature which Greene discovered "is not black and white but black and grey." Others like William D. Ellis, see Greene's preoccupation with betrayal as an obsession motivated in great measure by the conditioning forces of his childhood experiences. He writes,

just as the earlier experience of an all-pervasive evil forced a belief in hell, so the later, less egotistical and therefore more morally mature knowledge of men's treacheries and sufferings and of their occasional sacrifices for others gave to Greene a dim conception of his major theme. 

Certainly, a number of critics have noticed Greene's preoccupation with betrayal. There is some disagreement about the reason for this preoccupation. At any rate, in spite of differences, they are all agreed on the prominence of betrayal in the novels. Walter Allen has pointed out that Greene's preoccupation with betrayal, "whether of a man by himself or of one man by another, together with its opposite quality of loyalty, runs through Greene's earlier novels." A study of Greene's later fiction indicates that it is not confined to the early pieces. Sean O'Faolain is of the opinion that his persistent theme is betrayal under one form or another... This may be why there is such a strong sense of grievance in all his

12 The Lost Childhood, p. 16.


work, a certain sulkiness in his attitude to life... Everybody cheats Greene in Greene's world.\textsuperscript{15}

Douglas Jerrold, a close friend of Greene for many years, has this to say: "There is always on his horizon somebody who has betrayed one's natural distrust of human nature, someone one has loved."\textsuperscript{16} And David Pryce-Jones, while he does acknowledge the prominent vein of pessimism which characterizes Greene's Weltanschauung, suggests that Greene's concept of betrayal might not be altogether pessimistic since "through betrayal comes salvation, although not all men are worthy to receive it."\textsuperscript{17}

The prominence of adultery and illicit sex relations have also received considerable attention. Francois Mauriac, for example, is aware of Greene's skill as a novelist and asserts that

\begin{quote}
\textit{nous sentons que c'est cela, cette présence cachée de Dieu dans un monde athée, cette circulation souterraine de la Grâce, qui éblouit Graham Greene, bien plus que la façade majesteuse que l'Église temporelle dresse encore audessus des peuples.}\textsuperscript{18}
\end{quote}

But the prominence of adultery apparently upsets him, and Wallace Fowlie has reminded us that "although Mauriac greatly admired the almost secretive way Graham Greene treats the

\textsuperscript{15} \textit{Up. cit.}, p. 74.


\textsuperscript{17} \textit{Up. cit.}, p. 17.

\textsuperscript{18} "La Puissance et la Gloire," \textit{Renascence}, I (Spring, 1949), 26.
religious problem in his writing... he confesses to feeling disoriented and even ill at ease in the world of the English novelist. And Greene's preoccupation with adultery is not at all confined to his novels. It is equally prominent in the play, The Living Room, where it is the most significant form of betrayal, and it appears with some frequency in Greene's short stories.

It should be noticed that betrayal is not confined in the novels to overt acts of treachery such as betrayal of confidence, premeditated adultery, betrayal of friendship; it involves too, self-betrayal, self-deception and certainly the most serious form of betrayal—the attempted or successful suicide. Suicide is quite prevalent in Greene's fiction. Suicide can be regarded as the ultimate betrayal since it is a betrayal of the self, a betrayal of existence and certainly a betrayal of God. But again, though mentioned quite often by critics, suicide as the ultimate

19 Spiritual Problems in Contemporary Literature, p. 227.

20 For Greene adultery is by no means a rare sin. Indeed it is as commonplace as loss of faith. Thus, in the short story "A Visit to Morin," Morin in an interview with his curious visitor Dunlop, a non-Catholic, is at pains to explain why he cannot go to confession. "I thought you made it perfectly clear that you had lost your faith," Dunlop says. Morin's answer underlines Greene's preoccupation: "Do you think that would keep anyone from the confessional? You are a long way from understanding the Church or the human mind, Mr. Dunlop. Why, it is one of the most common confessions of all for a priest to hear—almost as common as adultery... A Sense of Reality, p. 93.

betrayal has never been philosophically examined although Elizabeth Sewell has charged that the novels point to an apotheosis of suicide which results in a decadent inversion of life and death. 22

I have examined the theme of betrayal in all of Greene's novels but have isolated one aspect of it, marital infidelity, in the early novel *The Name of Action* (1930), *The Heart of the Matter* (1948), which stands at midpoint in Greene's canon, and his latest novel, *A Burnt-Out Case* (1962), for purposes of concision. All quotations from the novels are taken from the editions listed in the bibliography. All the material listed in the bibliography has been examined. In certain instances I have not quoted existentialist writers from primary sources. I have found that the commentators on existentialist literature evoke in me insights more relevant to my thesis. I have consulted *The Lost Childhood and Other Essays*, *Twenty-One Stories*, *The Living Room* and *A Sense of Reality* as an aid to my understanding of the theme of betrayal in the novels.

Chapter I

The Theme of Betrayal in *The Name of Action*

*The Name of Action* was published in 1930. It is a curious, rather obscure piece, quite pedestrian in style. This novel, nominally set in the nineteen-twenties, Kenneth Allott calls "a Ruritanian (sic) fantasy almost equally divorced from the representation of the contemporary scene." The novel was later suppressed by the author on the ground that it was quite juvenile, but it is significant in that betrayal is the most important theme in *The Name of Action*. Allott links this novel with *The Man Within* and faults both because "in them Greene is concerned with ideas at the expense of the visible world, and that the ideas—notably of the sex-relationship between men and women—unchecked by the continuous pressure of actuality, are too crudely obsessive."

Oliver Chant, the quixotic hero of the novel, journeys to Trier with the intention of using his money to bring about the downfall of Trier's puritan dictator, Paul Demassener. But as the story progresses one realises that Chant's motives are not altogether dictated by revolutionary

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fervour. The truth is, Chant is propelled by a lust for the dictator's beautiful wife, Anne-Marie, whose photograph he has seen in an illustrated magazine. This ulterior motive is deeply buried in Chant's subconscious mind, but by the close of the novel it is clear to him that his principal motive was to make a cuckold of Paul Demassener, and while he does succeed in seducing Anne-Marie, her subsequent rejection of him plunges the hero into a black despair that brings thoughts of suicide with it.

Oliver Chant is guilty of self-deception and indeed, like Scobie, he realises this:

Moving towards her blindly in his self-made night, he said: "I'm not Demassener. I want you." When he spoke the words he did not mean them. They were flung out of his heart in insincerity because he could not bear to abandon his hopes suddenly, without forewarning. But when his hands, thrusting beneath her coat, felt her body, deceit was shrivelled up like a husk touched by flame.3

Sartre argues that human nature is indeed capable of self-negation, self-denial and certainly, Chant is faced with an existentialist choice. He can deny himself and direct his self-denial outward for a greater good or he can seduce Anne-Marie and by that very act, betray his own society. More pertinently, he can betray the society of the rebels he has willingly joined. By becoming sexually involved with the dictator's wife Chant jeopardises the outcome of the revolution. And this is precisely what he proceeds to do. Oliver Chant is guilty of what Sartre

3 The Name of Action, p. 273.
calls "mauvaise foi," since by failing to recognize his self-deception, he chooses to indulge the dictates of the flesh and decides that the good of the revolution is less significant. Like Scobie, Oliver Chant lies to himself. "To be sure," says Sartre, "the one who practices self-deception is hiding a displeasing truth or presenting as truth a pleasing untruth. Self-deception then has in appearance the structure of falsehood."5

Marital difficulties are prominent in this very early novel. Paul Demassener loves his wife but because he is impotent he cannot consummate this love. He suffers an existential angoisse as a result. His suffering, like that of the existential tragic hero, is not motivated by guilt feelings. It is fundamentally the result of a profound despair, a terrible sense of estrangement and loneliness, the pain that follows from his futile efforts to find a meaningful existence. Like the suffering of Chant, Bendrix in The End of the Affair,6 Fowler and Querry, there is nothing Christian nor anti-Christian about it. The suffering is existential; there is no remorse, and in the case of Fowler, no desire to undo what has been done. This is at the hub of their suffering. As Robert O. Evans has underscored, "with no possibility of confession or

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5 Ibid., p. 243.
6 Bendrix is the hero in The End of the Affair.
remorse, existential anguish is a great load for the human soul to bear, and Greene makes it clear that Fowler realizes the price of his dreadful freedom..."7 Demassener is essentially the first of many Greene characters who are tragic figures because they cannot realize their goals. Indeed the Christian existentialist Marcel, as Dr. Kingston has indicated, believes that the basis of tragedy is the "realization that our ideals have no existence in the broken world."8 And there can be no doubt that for Paul Demassener the world is indeed broken. It is too much damaged by sin. In an interview with Chant the dictator remarks that Frau Schultz, a brothel-keeper, is "outside humanity."9 Chant cannot understand this:

"I don't understand that," Chant said. "No? It sometimes seems to me that I am the only man existing who can see these things as they must appear to a God who is not smirched by living in the world."10

Mihalich contends that "the Outsider's position in the world is that of a man in spiritual hell, the situation of a man of special abilities and talent condemned to an existence that frustrates and bores him."11 While Demassener and Chant do not, as Scobie and Querry do, experience a

8 French Existentialism (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1961), p. 35.
9 The Name of Action, p. 78.
10 Ibid.
spiritual anguish, the frustration of their aims brings thoughts of suicide with it. Heidegger, as Helmut Kuhn has pointed out, holds that "estrangement involves loneliness. It holds the individual in solitary confinement within the impervious walls of his individuality." The loneliness of the Greene hero stems, not only from the fact that he is a victim of betrayal, but also from his serious efforts to know both himself and others. Chant has a glimpse of the dictator's loneliness:

His position at the head of the table with his back to the open window emphasized his loneliness, and Chant caught for an instant a glimpse of what his motive had been in thus seeking an audience; it had been an effort to escape momentarily from the loneliness inevitable to power and to find some understanding in another.

Kuhn is convinced that contemporary existentialist literature is haunted by the vision of an estranged world... Albert Camus, in The Stranger, shows the passage of an individual through crime and punishment which do not touch him... And the Orestes of Sartre suffers from a similar plight: he is an exile even in his native A gos, and always has been one, even in his boyhood.

There can be little doubt that Paul Demassener is an exile in his own country, a fact which Greene underlines at the close of the novel when Chant has to smuggle the wounded dictator out of Trier.

13 The Name of Action, p. 76.
Both Paul Demassener and Oliver Chant are Outsiders as Albert Camus sees the existentialist Outsider. The dictator is alone because his role in marriage is minimal and because there is absolutely no communication between Anne-Marie and himself. And Chant is an Outsider because, like Andrews in *The Man Within*, he has betrayed the society of his fellows. R.E. Hughes has noticed the frequent “allusions to apartness and isolation”\(^ {15}\) in *The Quiet American*. This specific theme is prominent in all of Greene’s novels and might well be regarded as the central theme of *A Burnt-Out Case*. Hughes sees it as the nerve touched by Greene in *The Quiet American* and adds that it is “the problem which Sartre perceives with desperation, which Camus explores with discomfort, and which psychologists and sociologists have defined as perhaps the most serious malady of our culture.”\(^ {16}\)

Anne-Marie Demassener is bitterly frustrated by her husband’s impotence and develops a melancholic indifference which will later result in adultery with Chant. In his first meeting with the couple Chant senses that from their behaviour all is not well with their marriage. We find him brooding:

> Why the shudder, Chant wondered, the envy in the eyes, and the sense of tension between him and his wife. Was there a lack of appreciation?\(^ {17}\)

Chant’s concept of marriage is decidedly pessimistic and


\(^{16}\) Ibid., 42.

\(^{17}\) *The Name of Action*, p. 65.
it is this same pessimistic outlook that is to characterize the marital philosophy of other Greene heroes. 18 Chant finds it difficult to believe that Frau Weber's marriage—as indeed all marriages—could ever be happy, that there could ever be a happy rapport between husband and wife. Anne-Marie's marriage has been a failure, and his desire to marry her after the defeat of her husband is frustrated when, thinking of Frau Weber's union, he realizes that

... was a haven to which neither he nor Anne-Marie Demassene could ever come. They were born in an age of doubt and to a class which wished to know too much. She would never make "a good wife and a good Catholic," in that calm, tender and unquestioning way, nor he a good husband. They would speak to each other in double meanings, guard the heart with evasions, misunderstand the plainest speech, quarrell over clauses. And at the end—if they lived together so long—they would have no expectation but decay, no claim to any sentient eternity, and only a half-hearted hope. The compensation he supposed was rapture. It was difficult to believe that Frau Weber had ever possessed that. 19

This philosophy of love as the most unstable human emotion is the philosophy embraced not only by Chant, but also by Scobie, Querry and Rycker. This philosophy of instability is intimately associated with the existentialist thinker, Karl Jaspers, whose pessimism, characterized by the idea that man is often a victim of "absolute chance," is so

18 It is a conspicuous feature of the following marriages: Milly Drover's in It's A Battlefield, Mr. Drewitt's in Brighton Rock, Scobie's in The Heart of the Matter, Sarah Miles' in The End of the Affair, Fowler's in The Quiet American and Rycker's in A Burnt-Out Case.

19 The Name of Action, pp. 283-84.
similar to the pessimism of Scobie and Querry. For Jaspers,

there is nothing stable, nothing absolute in
this world, but everything in constant change,
finite and split into opposites. The Whole,
the Absolute, and the Essential cannot be found
in it. Instead, we experience a shattering
of our existence in situations of absolute
chance, conflict, suffering, guilt and
death. They either throw us into despair,
or they awake us to an authentic choice of
ourselves and of our destiny.  

In this early novel, which Kenneth Allott thinks has
a "phosphorescent romantic sensibility," the theme of
betrayal takes the form, for the most part, of marital
infidelity. Anne-Marie, pushed to despair, decides to
commit adultery with Oliver Chant. She tells him,

What use is that sort of love to me? I
am not old and tired. I was another man's
mistress before I was his wife. And yet
I've been faithful to nothing, for five
years. I can't stand it any longer. You
can have me if you want me. He doesn't
want me. 

And so she betrays her husband. But this adultery is only
an overt act which she has already committed in thought
several times before. She has prepared herself for adultery,
and her illicit relations with Chant are the culmination
of acts her fancy has already indulged in. Chant realises
this when she tells him, "you are a strange young man. You
trust me to deceive my husband? And you are right, of course..."

20 F.H. Heinemann, Existentialism and the Modern
22 The Name of Action, p. 272.
23 Ibid., p. 53.
Not only has Anne-Marie betrayed her husband by committing adultery, she has also betrayed his confidence by revealing his impotence to Chant who, after the fashion of the typical Greene hero, betrays this confidence by giving the information to Weber, the dictator's arch enemy. Weber, the writer of scurrilous verse against Paul Demassener, promptly tells Trier "that Demassener is impotent and his wife a whore." It is at this juncture that Greene underscores the terrible evil, the intolerable burden of betrayal when he has Chant brooding on the fact that to have lived with a woman for years... disclosing every weakness, every secret of body and mind with a complete trust, and then find your secrets told to a stranger, that must be a worse pain than any physical betrayal.

The evil of betrayal, betrayal as perhaps the worst sin of all, announced in this early novel, is to be echoed again by the whisky-priest in The Power and the Glory.

Despair is a conspicuous leitmotiv in the novels of Graham Greene. Trapped by despair, the Greene hero deliberately kills himself or makes a very good attempt to do so. Often Greene treats despair allegorically as in The Heart of the Matter. "One glimpses," writes Donat O'Donnell, "part of an obscure allegory. The policeman searches a ship named

24 Ibid., p. 308.


26 In The Power and the Glory the priest tells the mestizo, "We shall be lucky if we haven't worse (on our consciences)." "He's only killed and robbed. He hasn't betrayed his friends." —— p. 239.
Hope, commanded by a weeping child, and finds only despair.\textsuperscript{27} This idea of a "weeping child" is linked to Scobie's concept of Helen Rolt, the child whose short-lived marriage has brought her only despair, and in the end, thoughts of suicide. Scobie's broken rosary, for example, is quite obviously a symbol not only of his broken spiritual life, but of the despair to come. It is this very rosary which is used as the token to lure the boy Ali to his death.

Most of Greene's heroes—and Oliver Chant and Paul Demassener are no exceptions—have a deep sense of personal worthlessness. And this is the heart of the matter. Like Andrews, in\textit{The Man Within} and Conrad Drover in\textit{It's A Battlefield}, the Greene hero is convinced, long before he has committed an act of betrayal, that he has no personal value. This conviction is further strengthened when he betrays others. Kenneth Allott mentions that "it should be evident that Andrews' wish for peace, for a permanent reconciliation of his two selves, is a death-wish."\textsuperscript{28} The fact is, most of Greene's heroes—and this is particularly true of Scobie, the whisky-priest, Sarah Miles, Conrad Drover and Querry—have this relentless death-wish. And it is not surprising that they do. "The human being," says Sartre "is not only the being by whom negatités are disclosed in the world; he is also the one who can take negative

\textsuperscript{27} Maria Gross (New York: Oxford University Press, 1952), p. 71.

\textsuperscript{28} Op. cit., p. 58.
We find Chant brooding:

in his heart he longed to be able to share the coffin with the priest. It lay now alone beneath the feet of Christ like a winter field lit by a few stars. But in its barrenness lay the seed of new life. In his own heart which lived and expanded with breath and contracted with pain and despair there seemed no such seed...

Sartre contends, and quite rightly, that once a person is deprived of his sense of personal value by another, or deprives himself of it, despair and possible suicide is the result.

This accounts for Paul Demassener's despair and death-wish:

"If these were not lies," Demassener said, "do you think I should care who printed the thing? Do you think I should care"—he opened his hands with a gesture of abnegation—"if you finished and shot me?"

"I'm unarmed," Chant said. "I am sorry. The chance that you might have the courage to shoot prevented my asking Captain Kraft to stay."

For Oliver Chant life is no longer worth living because he has been betrayed by the very things he firmly believed in. Despair increases:

Faced in this place, where God was not a cloudy aspiration but a concrete hope or fear, Chant discovered how closely his own mind had been tethered to abstract words, which now had betrayed him. He had believed

29 Kaufmann, op. cit., p. 241.
30 The Name of Action, pp. 297-98.
31 Kaufmann, op. cit., p. 241 et passim.
32 The Name of Action, p. 318.
in freedom. Freedom tomorrow was to be a struggle between Kapper and Paul Demassener, with death almost certainly for many and the end of it all the defeat of something only partly bad by something only partly good. He had believed in love. Love now was the struggle of two bodies to possess each other. 33

Plunged into despair, betrayed by his ideals, doubtful about his personal value, Oliver Chant deliberately places himself in such a situation that he can be easily shot by the authorities. He thinks,

Over now the dreams of a romantic revolution, of winning Anne-Marie Demassener in the old way, without cunning, intrigue, all the new world's lies and clear self-knowledge of lust. The bridge-head swept into light and back into darkness and the car came on. Chant flung the revolver across the road and heard it falling down the opposite slope. I won't live. I don't want to live, let them shoot. 34

Because of adultery, the lives of Anne-Marie, Paul Demassener and Oliver Chant are ruined. And Anne-Marie, realising the seriousness of her crime decides that she will never marry again. This, she believes, will be "a kind of faithfulness." 35

In this early novel, then, the hero is guilty of self-deception. As in The Heart of the Matter, self-deception leads to adultery and the latter brings with it a questioning of the stability of love, anguish and despair, a sense of personal worthlessness and subsequent thoughts of suicide. Bad faith, already prominent in this early work, is a

33 Ibid., p. 291
34 Ibid., p. 250. Italics are mine.
natural consequence of a lack of communication between human beings. This lack of communication, a central tenet in existential thought, is, ultimately, the cause of Oliver Chant's pessimism and accounts for acts of betrayal in the novel.
II

The Theme of Betrayal in The Heart of The Matter

Adultery as betrayal is unquestionably at the hub of Scobie's problems, his sufferings and eventual suicide.¹ It becomes abundantly clear to the reader of The Heart of the Matter that the most salient trait of Henry Scobie's character is his profound pity for other human beings. Pity is a strange sentiment in Scobie which, unlike professional corruption, is so dangerous because "you couldn't name its price."²

It has been suggested by some commentators³ that Scobie's profound pity for the innocent, the exile, the suffering human being, brings about his ruin. And certainly a strong case can be made for this claim. Now Scobie's sense of pity is at times commendable. But like Oliver Chant, both Scobie and Helen Rolt are guilty of self-deception. Self-deception causes Scobie to betray his wife by committing adultery with the child-woman, Helen

¹ Adultery as betrayal is equally prominent in The Man Within (1929), It's A Battlefield (1934), England Made Me (1935), Brighton Rock (1938), The End of the Affair (1951), The Quiet American (1955), A Burnt-Out Case (1961). It is also the motivating factor of the young boy's corruption in the short story, "The Basement Room," and it motivates the suicide of Rose in the play, The Living Room.

² The Heart of the Matter, p. 55.

³ See Donat O'Donnell's Maria Cross, p. 63 et passim.
Scobie deceives himself into thinking that his attraction for Helen is in no way motivated by lust, that his sense of justice and honesty will obviate any illicit relations with her, that she is in the main an incarnation of the innocent child adrift in the world. He sees her as a "stupid bewildered child" who has to be protected from Bagster the philanthropist. Her seeming ugliness both repels and attracts him:

...he watched her with sadness and affection and enormous pity because a time would come when he couldn't show her around in a world where she was at sea. When he turned and the light fell on her face she looked ugly, the temporary ugliness of a child. The ugliness was like handcuffs on his wrists.

And again,

She said "I was in the school team for two years," leaning forward excitedly with her chin on her hand and one bony elbow upon a bony knee. With her white skin—unyellowed yet by atabrine and sunlight—he was reminded of a bone the sea has washed and cast up!

"The ugliness was like handcuffs on his wrists," thought Scobie and that thought is of the utmost significance. The point is, Scobie is altogether enmeshed in Helen Holt's web of ugliness.

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4 Helen Holt is a somewhat stereotyped Greene character. She has the same naive characteristics of the child-women Milly Drover (It’s A Battlefield), Lucia Davidge (England Made Me), Rose (Brighton Rock), Phuong (The Quiet American), Marie Rycker (A Burnt-Out Case).

5 The Heart of the Matter, p. 170.

6 Ibid., pp. 171-72.

7 Ibid., pp. 145-46.
and is forced to confess his self-deception:

When the sound of Bagster's feet receded, she raised her mouth and they kissed. What they had both thought was safety proved to have been the camouflage of an enemy who works in terms of friendship, trust, and pity.  

Scobie and Helen Rolt commit adultery and from this point onwards Scobie will proceed from one degradation to another. The act of betrayal has set in motion a series of evil acts whose tide Scobie is unable to stem. Because of pity and self-deception Scobie is guilty of a number of infringements all of which are essentially acts of self-betrayal. Because of pity Scobie opens and destroys the Captain's letter and is guilty of professional indiscretion by borrowing money from the racketeer Yusef. Because of adultery he is blackmailed into smuggling for Yusef and becomes a partner to the murder of his faithful boy, Ali. Because of adultery he is guilty of sacrilege and, plunged into the abyss of despair, he commits the unforgivable sin—he kills himself.

This series of events seems to make of Scobie a victim of a very pronounced fatalism and determinism. Scobie is decidedly aureoled with a halo of suffering and there is every indication that he is a victim of a number of fortuitous circumstances. The vein of fatalism in The Heart of the Matter has been noticed by Raymond Jouve who points out that "comme dans une tragédie antique ou Shakespearienne, la fatalité paraît ici si puissante que la liberté semble ne plus exister que pour faire souffrir l'homme accable par le...

3 Ibid., p. 173.
destin."9

For the atheistic existentialist life is quite meaningless and while Scobie is no atheist, he certainly does not trust God and says so quite emphatically.10 Indeed there is some question in Scobie's mind about divine justice. Scobie cannot reconcile suffering with God's love. It is inconceivable "that the child should have been allowed to survive the forty days and nights in an open boat—that was the mystery, to reconcile that with the love of God."11 Since the world is meaningless and cruel,12 since divine justice is questionable and Truth relative the world for Scobie, as well as for Sartre and Jaspers, is hell. One is reminded of the devil's answer to doctor Faustus' question: "Why, this is hell, nor am I out of it."13 Helmut Kuhn claims that

the despair over an unresponsive and meaningless world, the turning away from it toward a dreamland which is only a painted veil covering primal negation, death longed for with voluptuousness...a love which destroys the beloved one, a greatness of soul which is paralysed by langour and disfigured by the blemish of a guilt past

9 "La Damnation De Scobie?" Etudes CCLXIII (November, 1957), 169.

10 The Heart of the Matter, p. 117.

11 Ibid., p. 125. This sense of divine injustice was announced in It's A Battlefield, is quite pronounced in England Made Me and is reechoed in A Burnt-Out Case.

12 The Heart of the Matter, pp. 17, 32.

repentance and redemption—all these somber inventions of contemporary imagination haunt Keirkegaard's anonymous writings. 14

"These somber inventions," particularly the idea of "a guilt past repentance and redemption," certainly haunt The Heart of the Matter. Because of adultery Scobie sees himself as, and actually becomes, a victim of a kind of malevolent fate lurking in the universe. 15 Allott believes that

Scobie's degradation like the whisky-priest's saintliness, seems to be imposed by experience. What turns the well-fed parish priest into the suffering servant and Scobie into an unjust man is a force that appears as something largely outside them. 16

Scobie seems to be a victim of a tremendous force beyond his control. He discovers that

he couldn't shut his eyes or his ears to any human need of him: he was not the centurion, but a man in the ranks who had to do the bidding of a hundred centurions, and when the door opened, he could tell the command was going to be given again—the command to stay, to love, to accept responsibility, to lie. 17

He tells himself,

Of course there's the ordinary honest wrong answer: to leave Louise, forget that private vow, resign my job. To abandon Helen to Bagster or Louise to what? I am trapped, he told himself,


15 Cf. Greene's fatalism with the fatalism of Thomas Hardy and Herman Melville, notably the novels Tess of the D'Urbervilles and Moby Dick.


17 The Heart of the Matter, p. 203.
catching sight of an expressionless stranger's face in the mirror, trapped. 18

In a discussion of Greene's characters, M.G. Barlow suggests that they seem to be victims of "une énorme machine, irrationnelles, inhumaine." 19 Scobie seems to be no exception. Scobie is aware of the fatalism dominating his life. "You are a just man," Yusef tells Scobie. Scobie answers,

I never was Yusef. I didn't know myself, that's all. There's a proverb, you know, about the end is the beginning. When I was born I was sitting here with you drinking whisky, knowing... 20

There is an echo of this in one of Greene's favourite verses:

   In ancient shadows and twilights
   Where childhood had strayed,
   The world's great sorrows were born
   And its heroes were made.
   In the lost boyhood of Judas
   Christ was betrayed. 21

This fatalism with its existential nuances has disturbed many commentators. It has led Sean ÓFaoláin to the conviction that Greene has misgivings about free-will. He links Graham Greene with the neo-pascalians, Bernanos, Julian Greene, Mauriac, Céline, Ayme, Camus, Faulkner, Moravia and Orwell and adds that they are

18 Ibid., p. 243.
20 The Heart of the Matter, p. 274.
21 The Lost Childhood, p. 17. The verse is from A.E. Housman's poem, Germinal.
anti-humanist, anti-heroic, highly sceptical about man's inherent dignity...
full of misgivings as to the nature of free-will.  

Pryce-Jones associates Greene with Edward Upward and Rex Warner and concludes that

it is the particular sense of the single person's impotence in the face of gigantic, and because gigantic, inevitable and irreversible calamities, that is shared between these writers.

R.W.B. Lewis points out that "all these characters (Pinkie, Scobie, the whisky-priest), we are made to feel, are coping with circumstances beyond their power. The dice is loaded against them. Nobody in Greene's novels, stands a dog's chance." And Marie-Beatrice Mesnet argues that

Freedom cannot be equated with free-will. But if freedom is merely the power to choose, then Greene's novels would appear to be dominated entirely by fate.

and so because of the machinations of an esoteric fate—and this has the flavour of Jaspers' "absolute chance," Sartre's concept of the world as "absurdity" and Heidegger's concept of man as a being "thrown into the world" to suffer—Scobie finds himself trapped by the consequences of an act he might well have avoided had he

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26 Heinemann, op. cit., p. 116.
27 Kuhn, op. cit., p. 33.
not been guilty of the original act of self-deception:

He thought: So all this need not have happened. If Louise had stayed I should never have loved Helen: I would never have been blackmailed by Yusef, never have committed that act of despair. I would have been myself still... But, of course, he told himself, it's only because I have done these things that success comes. I am of the devil's party... I shall go now from damned success to damned success... 28

"I think," the Commissioner tells Scobie of his promotion, "Colonel Wright's word was the deciding factor. You impressed him, Scobie." 29 But Scobie has already felt "the pale papery taste of his eternal sentence on the tongue." 30 "It's come too late, sir," he answers.

The Heart of the Matter, published in 1948, might be regarded as the midpoint in Greene's canon. It marks the culmination of the theme of responsibility and pity announced in the entertainment, The Ministry of Fear. Once again the hero's attitude to marriage is pessimistic. One has the unmistakable impression that the Greene hero cannot be a partner of a happy marriage. Nor does he expect marriage to bring lasting happiness. Pryce-Jones is convinced that the novels of the nineteen-thirties image this fact:

29 Ibid.
30 Ibid., p. 250.
31 Ibid., p. 253. This idea of success coming too late is pronounced in It's A Battlefield and The Power and the Glory. Scobie's problem is closely akin to Conrad Brover's, whose despair and suicidal tendencies are already well rooted when his brother's death sentence is repealed.
Each friendship or love will bring the arrow on the indicator a little nearer death and corruption, for this is the nature of human existence. Time will bring love, love will bring betrayal, betrayal will bring corruption.32

This is the philosophy that is crystallized in The Heart of the Matter. Scobie sincerely believes that intimate relationships between human beings are doomed to failure, pain and frustration. He shares this belief with Wilson, whose capacity for betrayal is a conspicuous trait of his character:

At the word books Wilson saw her [Louise's] mouth tighten just as a moment ago he had seen Scobie flinch at the name of Ticki, and for the first time he realized the pain inevitable in any human relationship—pain suffered and pain inflicted. How foolish we were to be afraid of loneliness.33

In other words, for Scobie and Wilson hell is other people and this pessimism is an essential concept in the philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre.34 Further, for Scobie the world as hell and other people as hell are ideas intimately linked. Life is compared to a prison and this side of heaven is characterized by injustices and cruelties. Scobie believes that

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,


33 The Heart of the Matter, p. 80.

cruelties, the meannesses, that elsewhere people so cleverly hushed up.35

Even the decor and furnishings of Yusef's room "had an eternal air like the furnishings of hell."36

Scobie refuses to equate love with happiness. This is the lesson marriage to Louise has taught him. For Scobie and Karl Jaspers, love and happiness are temporary. "No man," thinks Scobie, "could guarantee love for ever..."37

In this world, which for the Greene hero is invariably a battlefield,38 happiness is an absurdity:

> What an absurd thing it was to expect happiness in a world so full of misery... point me out the happy man and I will point you out either selfishness—or else an absolute ignorance.99

"It's a mistake to mix up the ideas of happiness and love,"40 Scobie tells his mistress. And again,

... but he watched the other two with sad envy. They were still inhabitants of the country he had left. This was what human love had done to him—it had robbed him of love for eternity.41

Wilson too, shares Scobie's pessimistic outlook:

(Wilson) wondered how all that dreary scene would have appeared if he had been

35 The Heart of the Matter, p. 32.
36 Ibid., p. 159.
37 Ibid., p. 59.
38 "The central metaphor of Graham Greene is that this world is a battlefield," says Robert Barnes. He adds, "all the fictional elements in his novels...are integrated with it." "Two Modes of Fiction: Hemmingway and Greene," Renascence XIL (Summer, 1962), 195.
40 Ibid., p. 230.
41 Ibid., p. 288.
victorious, but in human love there is never such a thing as victory: only a few minor tactical successes before the final defeat of death or indifference.  

Scobie's philosophy lends further point to the idea that hell is other people. He knows that love brings self-deception with it. Helen Rolt is disturbed because she has already forgotten her husband who has been dead only eight weeks. "What a little bitch I must be," she confesses. But Scobie has a ready answer:

You needn't feel that. It's the same with everybody, I think. When we say to someone, 'I can't live without you,' what we really mean is, 'I can't live feeling you may be in pain, unhappy, in want.' That's all it is. When they are dead our responsibility ends. There's nothing more we can do about it. We can rest in peace.

Jacques Maduane has intimated that Scobie's unhappy marriage might well stem from the fact that "Louise est neurasthenique comme Mrs. Fellows...Elle est une de ces Anglaises qui ne peuvent se fier a la rude verite des pays tropicaux." Whether this is the case or no, Scobie's unhappy marriage has conditioned his conviction that lack of trust, nagging, indifference are integral parts of marriage. Helen chides him for seemingly ignoring her at the beach. Scobie explains that he was in a hurry. This does not satisfy her:

42 Ibid., p. 241.
43 Ibid., p. 167.
44 Ibid., p.
"You are so careful, always," she said, and now he realized what was happening and why he had thought of Louise. He wondered sadly whether love always inevitably took the same road.\textsuperscript{46}

Moreover,

he wondered whether, if this went on long enough, she would be indistinguishable from Louise. In my school, he thought wearily, they learn bitterness and frustration and how to grow old.\textsuperscript{47}

Hell is other people, and therefore one cannot expect marriages to survive. One's marriage will end in failure or betrayal. Sartre's philosophy of Object versus Subject is at the root of Scobie's philosophy that hell is other people. This Sartrian concept aids in an understanding of Scobie's pessimism. It will also account for the failure of Kycker's marriage in \textit{A Burnt-Out Case}. Sartre contends that

\begin{quote}
we play a kind of rather serious game with other people in which we attempt to assert our Subjectivity while the other attempts to dilute this subjectivity by seeing us as Object.\textsuperscript{48}
\end{quote}

The result is that this makes one lose absolute freedom and pure consciousness. This in its turn gives rise to a peculiar brand of existential anguish which Scobie experiences. Since existence precedes essence and one exists and fashions one's image at one and the same time, then, says Sartre,

"The image is valid for everybody and for our whole age."\textsuperscript{49}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{46} \textit{The Heart of the Matter}, p. 191.  \\
\textsuperscript{47} Ibid., p. 194.  \\
\textsuperscript{48} Hinalich, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 18.  \\
\end{flushright}
One's responsibility is much greater than one might have supposed, because it involves all mankind. Once I decide to perform an act or make a specific choice, "I am responsible for myself and for everyone else. I am creating a certain image of man of my own choosing. In choosing myself, I choose man." As Mihalich has indicated,

Freedom means a great deal more in Sartre's system than many who are attracted to it ever come to realize. Freedom has another side, and this is anguish. And anguish is rooted in the awareness of each human being that his choices and his actions involve not only himself but all men.

For Sartre then, an act has universal implications, and this brings existential anguish. This concept is crystallized in Scobie's broodings on human responsibility:

It was as if he had shed one responsibility to take on another. This was a responsibility he shared with all human beings, but there was comfort in that, for it sometimes seemed to him that he was the only one who recognized it. In the cities of the Plain a single soul might have changed the mind of God.

This situation of anguish is progressive and culminates in the act of despair, suicide.

Scobie betrays his wife because he is essentially an existential situationalist. As we have seen, Truth for the existentialist is subjective. There are no transcendent norms. "Truth is functionalized through appropriation by

50 Ibid.
51 Ibid., p. 18.
52 Mihalich, op. cit., p. 17.
53 The Heart of the Matter, p. 126.
the concrete individual. By the same token it is temporalized.

If the measure of man is the being and the actions of the individual, there is no possibility for recourse to an objective code of behaviour to guarantee the consistent discharge of man's duties to himself and to others.

For Scobie there are times when it is better to lie than to tell the truth because you might, by telling a lie, alleviate the suffering of someone. There are times when it is better to commit adultery because by so doing you might save another from the lust of a worthless philanderer. There are times when it is better to commit sacrilege because if you did not another would suffer terribly.

The truth, he thought, has never been of any real value to any human being—it is a symbol for mathematicians and philosophers to pursue. In human relations kindness and lies are worth a thousand truths. He involved himself in what he always knew was a vain struggle to retain the lies.

There is another reason why Scobie's marriage ends in failure and betrayal. It is rooted in the existential idea that there is a decided lack of communication between human beings. Moreover, one can never come to know and understand another human being. This lack of communication Greene

54 Kuhn, op. cit., p. 52. Cf. functioning of Truth with Fowler's temporality of truth in The Quiet American, p. 112.


56 Marcel More in "The Two Holocausts of Scobie," Cross Currents (Summer, 1951), 48, charges that with Scobie the lie has all the symptoms of a true psychic disease.

57 The Heart of the Matter, p. 59.
symbolises in that scene where Scobie reads the letter from Helen's father. Thus,

Scobie read: Terribly grieved for you dear child but remember his happiness. Your loving father.
The date stamp with the Bury mark made him aware of the enormous distance between father and child. 58

We find Scobie brooding,

If I could just arrange for her happiness first, he thought, and in the confusing night he forgot for a while what experience had taught him—that no human being can really understand another and no one can arrange another's happiness. 59

Jaspers argues that man "remains a non-object to himself which cannot be exhausted by knowledge, it can only be experienced." 60 And Marcel, as Mihalich has underscored, points out that

When I learn to live my own life as fully as possible, I reap a double reward. The more I succeed in knowing myself in the enlightened experience of my being, the more I understand and sympathize with others who share in common the burdens of finite existence. 61

And this is what Scobie as well as other Greene heroes, notably Andrews in The Man Within, and Thomas Fowler in The Quiet American, simply will not or cannot do. Scobie has never known himself and quite flatly tells Yusef so. 62

It is quite true that Scobie has pity for the pain of both

58 Ibid., p. 169.
59 Ibid., p. 84.
60 Heinemann, op. cit., p. 70.
61 Mihalich, op. cit., p. 28.
62 The Heart of the Matter, p. 274.
Louise and Helen, but in the case of his wife, it is pity directed at her as Object and not as Subject. The truth of this is underlined by the cold fact that Scobie does not love his wife.

There is absolutely no communion of spirit in the marriage of Louise and Scobie. The pivotal thesis of Marcel's ontology of love may be regarded as esse est coesse. But between Scobie and his wife there is communion neither of the spirit nor of the flesh. What little communion there was before the arrival of Helen Rolt, Scobie has betrayed by adultery. Certainly, betrayal can be regarded as a violation of communication between human beings. And one cannot communicate because one does not know oneself or another.

In betraying Louise, Scobie makes an existential choice. Although fatalism is a prominent vein in the novel, Scobie is never denied free-will. The choice for Scobie—as it is for Thomas Fowler—is a relatively small one but with large consequences. This, the existentialist believes, is often the case in real life. Evans reminds us that according to Sartre and Heidegger, man is surrounded by a multiplicity of facts, or phenomena; it is what he makes of them... that causes him to become what he is. In this sense existence precedes essence... Man is what he is and is fully responsible for what he has become.

63 Mihalich, op. cit., p. 27.
64 See Evans' article on existentialism in The Quiet American, op. cit., 242.
65 Ibid.
By his choice, Scobie renounces God forever and is fully aware that he has done so. He suffers the Kierkegaardian pathos of human choice. William Barrett in his essay, "Existentialism As A Symptom of Man's Contemporary Crisis," writes,

Our fundamental choices in life do not permit us this degree of control (as in a scientific experiment), because they do not permit us this degree of detachment. We have to choose here and now, and for the rest of our life, and the alternative we renounce is lost forever. We could be completely experimental about our own lives only if we were immortal...but as death is real and our lives finite, every choice is also a renunciation, and this is why Kierkegaard speaks of the pathos of human choice.66

Scobie tells Helen, "I'll always be here if you need me as long as I'm alive."67 That, for Scobie, "constituted an oath as ineffaceable as the vow by the Ealing alter."68 Moreover, Scobie fully understands the consequences. He broods,

In the future—that was where the sadness lay. Was it the butterfly that died in the act of love? But human beings were condemned to consequences. The responsibility as well as the guilt was his—he was not a Bagster; he knew what he was about.69

There are three reasons why Scobie kills himself.

66 Spiritual Problems in Contemporary Literature, p. 147.
67 The Heart of the Matter, p. 205.
68 Ibid.
69 Ibid., pp. 174-75.
Oliver Chant had suicidal tendencies precisely because he had betrayed another person, and Scobie kills himself because he has betrayed his wife, his faithful boy, Ali and his God. And the three acts of betrayal are intimately associated with one another. The one leads to the other and the cumulative effect is despair and lack of trust in God. Because he will not give up Helen, Louise is doomed to a life of pain and, as Scobie sees it, God will continually be slapped in the face. When Ali becomes a threat to happiness of Louise and Helen, Scobie becomes a very definite, if inactive accomplice to the boy's murder. The despair, growing in virulence since the first act of adultery and his sacrilegious communion, overwhelms him. He comes upon the dead body of Ali and,

O God, he thought, I've killed you:
You've served me all these years and
I've killed you at the end of them.
God lay there under the petrol drums
and Scobie felt the tears in his mouth,
salt in the cracks of his lips. You
served me and I did this to you. You
were faithful to me, and I wouldn't
trust you. 70

Scobie cannot continue to betray his wife and God, and he cannot abandon Helen. There is only one way out of the impasse—he must destroy himself.

Like Andrews, Conrad Drover, Oliver Chant, Anthony Farrant, the whisky-priest, and the Captain of the Esperança who fears that his soul "in all this bulk of

70 Ibid., p. 277.
flesh is no larger than a pea," Scobie has a sense of personal worthlessness. This is, indeed, a recurring leitmotiv in the novel. He has made Louise what she is—an object of pity and pathos for others. He has deprived her of financial and social rewards by failing to win the Commissionership, and he has failed her as a husband. He is even a failure as a man:

He walked rapidly downhill from the bank with his head bent. He felt as though he had been detected in a mean action—he had asked for money and had been refused. Louise had deserved better of him. It seemed to him that he must have failed in some way in manhood.

He is convinced that he has failed Helen too:

"I couldn't have been as lonely as I am now," she said...
"I'm sorry," Scobie said, "I've been such a failure..."

As the despair attendant on betrayal increases, Scobie thinks that "there was only one person in the world who was unpitiable—himself." This sense of personal worthlessness only, of course, increases his despair. Because of it, he places himself beyond the help of God. Oliver Chant had made a furtive attempt at suicide, but Scobie succeeds in...
killing himself.

Finally, Scobie kills himself, because he deliberately refuses to accept the help of "God". He sits in the church, and in his fancy, he has an argument with God. He tells God;

But you'll be at peace when I am out of your reach... You'll be able to forget me, God, for eternity.77

God answers:

...And now you push me away, you put me out of your reach... Can't you trust me as you'd trust a faithful dog? I have been faithful to you for two thousand years.78

Scobie's reply is emphatic:

No. I don't trust you. I love you, but I've never trusted you. If you made me, you made this feeling of responsibility that I've always carried about like a sack of bricks.79

R.W.B. Lewis has said,

Scobie's refusal to go on trying, was, in Catholic theology, a denial of God's willingness to co-operate on the battlefield totally at contrast with his final hope that God would co-operate in mercifulness beyond the battlefield.80

Helmut Kuhn has indicated that "the Nothingness which the Existentialist encounters is the shadow of the repudiated God,"81 and Mihalich writes, "according to Marcel, the ills of our broken human society are in large part due to the

77 Ibid., p. 289.
78 Ibid., pp. 289-90.
79 Ibid., p. 290.
practically unanimous refusal to invoke God's powerful intercession."\(^{82}\)

Scobie is faced with a conflict that is closely akin to Jaspers', "the law of the day and the passion of the night." The law of the day, "imparts order to human life; it demands clarity, coherence, fidelity, reasonableness... But the passion of the night breaks down every order and plunges man into the abyss of nothingness."\(^{83}\) Scobie cannot reconcile the demands of God with the demands of his sense of responsibility. He cannot solve the problem of Louise and Helen. He cannot abandon Helen and he cannot continue to hurt Louise and God. A powerful tension is set up. For Jaspers the ultimate term of this polarity and perpetual tension of human existence is shipwreck.\(^{84}\)

Jaspers is convinced that

human existence in the world is destined to suffer shipwreck. The unity and unification of the world is rationally conceivable but, in practice, it is an abortive enterprise. Even in its desire for Transcendence, existence meets with the antagonistic passion of the night which cannot be reconciled with the good law of the day...
Therefore in the face of the menacing forces which bear down upon my existence, it is my duty not only to continue the struggle, but to intensify its vigor.\(^{85}\)

\(^{82}\) Op. cit., p. 89.


\(^{84}\) Ibid., p. 197. Notice that Greene symbolises the shipwreck of human existence in the ruin of Helen Rolfs's life, which is set in motion by a literal shipwreck.

\(^{85}\) Ibid., pp. 197-98.
Scobie refuses to continue the struggle against the conflicting tensions of his life. He gives up the ship by killing himself. Scobie's suicide can be regarded as the direct result of his act of adultery. More than that, it is the culminating act of his self-betrayal. It is a betrayal of the self, since it is a deliberate repudiation of all confidence in the self. It is also a betrayal of his own existence.

Scobie's suicide has received the attention of several critics. R.W.B. Lewis, for example, holds that "it might well be that the suicide of Dick Pemberton...who hangs himself and whose mode of death affects Scobie enormously—may have released in Scobie a congenital self-destructive impulse." And indeed Scobie's frequent dreams of Pemberton and of the latter's suicidal note would seem to support Lewis' claim:

...for a moment he was reminded of that other letter signed "Dicky" which had come back to him two or three times in dreams.

Kenneth Allott maintains that both "Andrews and Scobie commit suicide and suicide is the ultimate escape—life, not the police or a political rival, is the enemy evaded."


87 The Heart of the Matter, p. 156.

But Scobie's suicide can be further interpreted in the light of existentialist philosophy. Scobie, as we have seen, considers himself to be a trapped man, trapped by his sin, trapped by his pity and responsibility, trapped by external forces which he does not understand. In his analysis of Sartre's philosophy of suicide, Dr. Kingston points out that Sartre maintains that "because human existence discovers itself to be trapped on the slippery ladder of time, there is always the tendency to escape, to fall off by committing suicide." Scobie sees suicide as the only way out of the prison of his sin. Moreover,

Sartre believes that the temptation to suicide is very strong for the free man who realises what tremendous responsibility he has in such an inhuman world where God does not exist. Furthermore, men who find themselves abandoned...must choose whether they will continue to exist or deny their existence by committing suicide. Man, who introduces nothingness into being, must at some time consider the possibility of introducing nothingness into his own being—that is, suicide.

The key words here are those of responsibility and

89 Cf. Scobie's suicide with the suicide of Rose in The Living Room. They seem to be both motivated by the spurious desire not to go on hurting someone. Hugh Dickinson, however, in the essay, "Lack of Love," Renascence Vi (Spring, 1954), points out that "Rose's suicide, though similar to Scobie's...is much more plausibly motivated. And it seems to me that Greene is at greater pains, here, to reassure us that it does not represent damnation; for young Rose is shown in such a state of shock, if not temporary insanity, that her responsibility is extremely doubtful." — p. 167.


91 Ibid., pp. 40-1.
abandonment. They both play significant roles in the story of Scobie. Scobie's sense of abandonment by others is profound: he feels himself betrayed at all points. Louise discovers his adultery, Wilson discovers his dealings with Yusef and Father Rank can give him little help. Losing the habit of trust, Scobie allows Yusef to murder Ali. Finally, as Pyrce-Jones has mentioned, "he is cornered by Louise's return and her insistence that he should take communion, which he cannot do in a state of sin. It is as if God too had betrayed him." 

The motivation of Scobie's suicide might well be crystallized in Marcel's analysis of sacrifice and suicide. For Marcel,

the person who commits suicide is one who denies his availability to others. Suicide is essentially a refusal, a resignation. Sacrifice is essentially a union. Whether he believes in eternal life or not, the one who sacrifices his life is acting as if he did believe in it, whereas the one who commits suicide is acting as if he did not believe.

It can be argued that Scobie's suicide is partly motivated by his desire not to go on offending God. Clearly, Scobie sees his existence as an offense to God. Moreover, unless he destroys himself he will continue to make Louise and

92 We are reminded again of Sartre's concept that "existing itself is fraught with confusion and bad faith..." Mihalich, op. cit., p. 14, and Heinemann's comment that "Sartre's world is a world in which the affirmative is transformed into the negative, the normal into the abnormal, good faith into bad faith, and truth into falsehood." — Op. cit., p. 125.


Helen suffer. To this extent his suicide may be regarded as a sacrifice. But Scobie is very emphatic about life and the world as hell and repudiates God's help.

In *The Heart of the Matter* Greene reaches a peak of artistic perfection equalled only once before in *The Power and the Glory*. Since the publication of *Brighton Rock* Greene's skill as a novelist had been considerably perfected. In *The Heart of the Matter* his probing finger is more penetrative than it had been in the very early fiction. In a short essay on Greene Richard Church writes, "his sentences cut like broken glass. They have a splintered sharpness, like the stark beams of light that cut obliquely across the pictures of El Greco." There is, however, no change in Graham Greene's thematic material. Scobie is a far more credible character than Oliver Chant; yet both men are ruined by adultery. They are both guilty of self-deception and self-betrayal. They share a common pessimism about love and marriage. The concept of bad faith, announced in *The Name of Action*, is a decided leitmotiv in *The Heart of the Matter*, and lack of communication, so subtly underlined in the earlier work, accounts for Scobie's ultimate betrayal, his suicide.

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The Theme of Betrayal in *A Burnt-Out Case*

In Graham Greene's latest novel, *A Burnt-Out Case*, the vexed question of marital difficulties again arises. Indeed, the death of the hero Querry is the culmination of Rycker's unswerving conviction that his wife Marie has committed adultery with Querry.

The institution of marriage is seen in the same pessimistic light in *A Burnt-Out Case* as in *The Heart of the Matter* and *The Name of Action*. Querry, contemplating the marriage between priest and Church, draws a parallel:

Those who marry God, he thought, can become domesticated too—"it's just as humdrum a marriage as all the others... this marriage like the world's marriages was held together by habits and tastes shared in common between God and themselves— it was God's taste to be worshipped and their taste to worship, but only at stated hours like a suburban embrace on a Saturday night."

For Querry, "love isn't one of the commonest characteristics of marriage." Scobie's distrust of love, conditioned by the belief that "it had robbed him of love for eternity," is once more announced in Querry's remark, "I think I have

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1 *A Burnt-Out Case*, p. 8. We are reminded of the fact that in *Brighton Rock* Pinkie is repelled by his parent's coition on Saturday nights.

2 Ibid., p. 71.

3 *The Heart of the Matter*, p. 288.
always liked my fellow men. Liking is a great deal safer than love. It doesn't demand victims..."4 For Querry, marriage is actually the result of brainwashing; it is an institution designed to protect one, perhaps, from the insecurity and loneliness of old age. "People hang on to a marriage," he says, "for fear of a lonely old age or to a vocation for fear of poverty. It's not a good reason..."5

It is not surprising then, that in this atmosphere that nurtures distrust of marriage and love one should find an unhappy marriage. The marriage of Marie and Rycker is patently one of sexual convenience. As in the case of Scobie and Louise, Rycker sees Marie as Object. She becomes a thing of pleasure for Rycker and not a Subject with individual freedom. As the novel develops, Marie tries by subterfuge to assert her subjectivity.

Marie, the latest child—woman, is a semi—literate girl and like her husband—for all his hollow piety—spiritually immature. She has the fey innocence of other child—women and the naiveté of Pyle in The Quiet American.6

4 A Burnt-Out Case, p. 80.
5 Ibid., p. 169.
6 The nuns at the convent think that Marie is an innocent child. Querry answers, "Oh, innocent... I daresay you are right. God preserve us from all innocence. At least the guilty know what they are about." — p. 182. This remark brings to fruition a concept prevalent in Greene's work and paralleled with the existential idea that hell is other people: the idea of innocence as evil. The concept was fully explored in The Quiet American. Pyle's naive, disturbing innocence handicaps his desire to do good and eventually works his ruin. Pryce—Jones has succinctly explained Greene's philosophy of innocence in this way: "Greene argues that a man can be innocent even though his actions are of a kind
It is precisely because of her innocence that Marie Rycker ruins the life of Querry to the extent that she has made him a victim of the anger of her husband. Had she chosen not to indulge in subterfuge, Querry might well have found a raison d'être. In a word, hell is other people.

Marie recognizes, in spite of her naiveté, that she has a certain utility for Rycker and understands that only by freeing herself of Rycker can she find meaningful existence, an existence in which she is Subject and not Object:

She refused to believe that this was the end, growing old in solitude with her husband and the smell of margarine and the black faces and the scrap metal, in the heat and the humidity. She awaited day by day some radio signal which would announce the hour of liberation. Sometimes she thought that there were no lengths to which she would go for the sake of liberation.

Towards the close of the novel she does go to dire lengths in an effort to rid herself of her husband. She makes an existentialist choice with full knowledge of the consequences. Sartre would argue that since her subjectivity is being threatened, she has to choose whether to remain an Object with her freedom destroyed, or become an individual. To state it existentially, Marie, like Thomas Fowler, is faced customarily agreed to be harmful to society... But if a man retains his innocence, he has no way of putting it into practice, because if he does, he is running counter to accepted definitions, and a single man cannot challenge a whole society. Innocence therefore is cruel and ironic in this world, and in the long run more harmful than corruption." Op. cit., p. 22.

7 A Burnt-Out Case, p. 137.
with remaking her future. She prepares to enter what Sartre has called a "plan de l'engagement libre." For Marie Rycker, method and outcome do not really matter. It is her free resolve that counts and this is at the heart of Sartrian existentialism. Sartre makes it clear that existentialism is a philosophy which "defines man in terms of action... it tells him that the only hope is in his acting and that action is the only thing that enables a man to live... we are dealing with an ethics of action and involvement."

Marie frames Querry by insisting that he is the father of her unborn child. To this extent Querry is decidedly a victim after the fashion of most Greene victims. "One is struck," writes Francis Wyndham, "when reading the earlier books, by the invariable presence of the element of pursuit: the pursuit of a criminal by the police, a traitor by those whom he has betrayed, a victim by his persecutors." And Frank Kermode flatly states that "Querry is to have his suffering... He dies not for his own crimes but for those of Ryckers; as in The Heart of the Matter this is a case of victimage..." Pryce-Jones contends that "Querry dies

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8 Sartre, as quoted by Robert O. Evans, op. cit., p. 247.
for the mistaken assumptions and stupidities of others. Once again we noticed a parallel with the Sartrian concept, hell is other people. It is a nuance easily discernible in Querry's victimage and is at the root of the failure of his only marriage and his subsequent treatment of women.

Certainly, the same element of pursuit noticed by Wyndham in the early novels is to be found in the later ones as well. Querry is quite obviously a persecuted man. He has come to the leper colony simply to be alone. Granted, he is guilty of self-deception by imagining that he can ever escape the human condition, that like Fowler in The Quiet American he can escape being engaged. The Sartrian concept of involvement is mirrored in Querry's attempts to escape the absurd world. As Mihalich has indicated,

A fundamental premise in Sartre's doctrine is the need for the individual to be consciously involved, to belong, to be engaged. The result is that man acts not in a kind of socio-personal vacuum, but rather in the context of a concrete situation in which he himself is necessarily involved.

But Querry does come with the intention of being completely alone and is persecuted by the theological dilettante Rycker, and the contemptible machinations of Parkinson. Doctor Colin, angry that Querry has had to endure persecutions—and this further underlines the idea that people and the

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12 Op. cit., p. 95. Querry, Scobie and Fred Hale, in Brighton Rock, as Christ figures—as far as their sacrifice goes—is a theme worthy of serious consideration.

13 It is a conspicuous feature of The Man Within, The Power and the Glory and The End of the Affair.


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world are hell—has this to say:

The Fools, the interfering fools, they exist everywhere, don't they? He had been cured of all but his success; but you can't cure success, anymore than I can give my mutities back their fingers and toes... Success is like that too—a mutilation of the natural man... 15

The naive Marie Rycker, in her attempt to assert her subjectivity, betrays her husband and by deliberately involving Querry in subterfuge, ruins once and for all his chances of becoming involved in the human condition. By her betrayal she has forced her husband to commit murder.

In a word, for Querry and Rycker, Marie is hell. Indeed both Rycker and Parkinson16 are hell for Querry. As D.J. Dooley has put it, "Querry is on the way to discovering a pattern in existence when the absurd world intervenes." 17

At this juncture the theme of isolation must be noticed since by isolating himself Querry—and the same is true of Fowler—hopes to escape the absurd world, the world of bad faith. As Parkinson says,

perhaps you won't believe me, but there was a time when I was interested in style...
What the hell of a long life it is, isn't it? 18


16 Parkinson practises the same unscrupulous journalism as Minty in England Made Me. As human beings they are both repulsive.


18 A Burnt-Out Case, p. 159. Cf. this remark of Parkinson's with, "it seemed to Scobie that life was immeasurably long. Couldn't the test of a man have been carried out in fewer years?" — The Heart of the Matter, p. 52.
And Doctor Colin remarks, "your god (sic) must feel a bit disappointed when he looks at this world of his."\textsuperscript{19}

Such favourite existentialist themes as alienation, nothingness and the absurd are reflected in the actions and thoughts of the principals in \textit{A Burnt-Out Case}. Querry repudiates thought and he certainly repudiates solidarity with others. Dooley reminds us that "he has reduced himself to the barest of existential situations in which he knows that he exists only because he is slightly aware of discomfort."\textsuperscript{20} In Querry's own words: "I feel discomfort, therefore I am alive."\textsuperscript{21} After the fashion of Camus' exile,\textsuperscript{22} Querry alienates himself from an irrational society; he turns his back on the absurd world only to find that it, in the persons of Rycker, Parkinson and Marie, intervenes in his life. He becomes a victim of Marie Rycker's betrayal of her husband. Monsieur Barlow has noticed the Camusian theme of isolation in Greene's fiction. He holds that Greene's characters are "parfaite illustrations de ce qu'il appelle, après Camus, le thème de l'étranger..."\textsuperscript{23} Henry A. Grubbs remarks that "the world of Graham Greene is not too different from the world of Albert Camus."\textsuperscript{24} Clearly, like Meursault in \textit{L’Etranger},

\begin{itemize}
  \item 19 \textit{A Burnt-Out Case}, p. 196.
  \item 21 \textit{A Burnt-Out Case}, p. 3.
  \item 22 Meursault in \textit{L’Etranger}.
  \item 24 "Albert Camus and Graham Greene," \textit{Modern Language Quarterly}, X (March, 1949), 34.
\end{itemize}
Querry's and Thomas Fowler's participation in life is minimal.

Querry's philosophy is a true reflection of Sartre's *neantir*. He disregards everything. It is as if his philosophy were, "I disregard everything else that does not interest me at the moment. Querry is guilty of "the terrifying egoism of exclusion." In a word, Querry, and the same is true of Hall in *England Made Me*, and Fowler, lacks responsibility for other human beings.

Still, one cannot escape the human condition. One is implicated in it by virtue of existence and sooner or later, Greene is saying, the bad faith of others will reveal itself in the form of betrayal, particularly adultery, planned or actually committed. Querry is a victim of bad faith. Even before he has time to settle in the leper colony Rycker betrays his promise not to reveal Querry's incognito, and Querry knows this:

It could have been no one but Rycker who had betrayed his whereabouts; the ripple of Rycker's interest had gone out across half the world like radio waves, reaching the international press.

Querry's attempt to escape the absurd world fails; and the futility of his efforts is underlined in the apparent absurdity of his death, a death, we will notice, brought about by marital infidelity on the part of Marie Rycker. As he is dying, Querry has sufficient strength to mutter, "absurd,

25 "William D. Ellis, op. cit., 241

26 *A Burnt-Out Case*, p. 146.
this is absurd or else..." Greene adds, "but what alternative, philosophical or psychological, he had in mind they never knew."27

After the governor's party Rycker, stimulated by drink, talks the reluctant Marie into bed with him and a child is conceived. This is without doubt the turning point in the lives of Rycker, Marie and Querry, for the act, in the eyes of Marie, constitutes a betrayal. At the convent she confesses to Querry:

"The night I slept with you properly was after the Governor's party."
"What on earth are you talking about?"
"I didn't want him. The only way I could manage was to shut my eyes and think it was you."28

Marie Rycker is guilty of marital infidelity, not because as her husband imagines she had spent what was in fact a harmless night in an hotel with Querry, but on the ground that she had violated her marriage vows in thought. A physical act does not constitute sin. Betrayal, as indeed all sin, is essentially a mental operation. And one must remember that it was a subterfuge deliberately designed to free herself of her husband.

Sartrian existentialism, if it is at all founded on strict logic, must have as one of its corollaries, a relativistic and pragmatic view of human behaviour. The self, and only the self, is the judge of whether an act is intrinsically good or bad. The Truth is by no means transcen—

27 A Burnt-Out Case, p. 192.
dent for Sartre, Keirkegaard and Heidegger. Indeed for Sartre, only the absolute "Nothing" is transcendent and his philosophy might well be described as an attempt to bring nothingness back into the world and establish the transcendent Nothing. Instead, truth is subjective and functional. Clearly, existentialism as philosophy can encourage a selfish approach to human existence in that it places the claims of the self above all others. It can encourage "the terrifying egoism of exclusion," and indeed, both Marie and her husband are guilty of this form of selfishness. Her act of betrayal, motivated by her desire for individuality, is nevertheless perpetrated at the expense of others. Similarly, Rycker's love for Marie, founded as it is on her sexual utility, is actually love of the self. As James Noxon has well said, "the religiousness of Rycker is sheer self-deception. He remains with his immature but charming wife and the deplorable Parkinson at the aesthetic level of egocentric hedonism." Marie, by placing the claims of the self foremost, causes the sacrificial suffering of Eummy. Ellis argues that

Everyman who excludes the aims of others in favor of the claims of self, Greene is saying, commits a treachery which ultimately causes another to endure sacrificial suffering. Every man mature in moral nature becomes ultimately either a Judas or a Christ.30

Marie Rycker convinces herself that she is guilty of


betrayal, not only because she is a poor wife, but on the ground that she has betrayed her country:

she did not foresee that one day she would begin to know Luc better than she knew the Rue de Namur. With the tenderness that came from a sense of guilt she wiped Rycker's face with a handkerchief soaked in eau-de-cologne, even at the risk of waking him. She knew that she was a false colon. It was like betraying one's country—all the worse because one's country was so remote and so maligned.31

She confesses that her marriage is a failure. Her husband will not permit her to read in bed, more pertinently, to read romanticized fiction. Her marital failure she attributes to her poor education. "The nuns did their best," she owns, "but it simply didn't stick."32 Clearly, this is by no means the principal cause of the failure of her marriage. The marriage fails principally because for Rycker it is better to marry than burn and Marie can mitigate the threat of the flames. In a word, Rycker treats her as a means to an end—a philosophy which we have seen operates in the mind of Oliver Chant. Hazel Barnes has told us that "the existentialist seems to be more acutely aware than Kant that most situations demand that someone be treated as a means or else there would be no ends for anyone."33 Of equal importance as a contributing factor in the failure of the Rycker

31 A Burnt-Out Case, p. 136. Notice the tone of personal worthlessness so common to Greene's characters.

32 Ibid., p. 148. Cf. this remark of Marie with Pinkie's, "perhaps when the christened me, the water didn't take," in Brighton Rock, p. 131, and Mrs. Bertram's, speaking of Sarah Miles' baptism, "I always had a wish that it would take, like vaccination," in The End of the Affair, p. 160.

33 Op. cit., p. 112. The italics are mine.
marriage is the lack of communication between husband and wife. There can be no rapport between Rycker and his wife because he insists on seeing her as a means, as an Object.

It is important to notice Quarry's relationship with women because it parallels and indeed illumines Rycker's relationship with Marie. D.J. Dooley has mentioned that "Quarry's love affairs have illustrated Sartre's view of love as always a using of another." Because he has used women in this way Quarry causes the death of a girl named Marie and loses his wife.

But unlike Camus' Meursault and certainly like Thomas Fowler, Querry experiences no remorse, no anguish. He puts aside the vanity of art and nothingness, the nothingness of Sartre and Kierkegaard is his condition. He has never been able to communicate with the women of his love affairs because as he himself tells us, "human beings are not my country." Querry tells us that "self-expression is a hard and selfish thing. It eats everything, even the self. At the end you find you haven't even got a self to express." This is precisely what happens to Querry and by the end of the novel Rycker, convinced that he is personally worthless, struggles for self-expression, a fact underlined when he kills Querry. Like Rycker, Querry saw his wife and the other


36 A Burnt-Out Case, p. 41.
women of his love affairs as objects. In fact "he can discover no scientific or purely natural reason why others should exist for him as anything more than objects." And when he performs an action not done for love of self, he wonders for whose love it can possibly have been done.

The stability of the Rycker marriage is further undermined because of the man's distrust of love, his misgivings about his wife's fidelity. He tells Querry, "the fathers don't realize...just suppose that we weren't properly married, she could leave me at any time." Rycker's efforts to inculcate a love of God in Marie is founded on the spurious and certainly selfish belief that it would obviate any infidelity she might have planned. Querry tries to reassure him,

"If she loves you..."
"That's no protection. We are men of the world, Querry, you and I. A love like that doesn't last. I tried to teach her the importance of loving God. Because if she loved Him, she wouldn't want to offend Him, would she? And that would be some security..."

Rycker's doubts about his wife, his anxieties, are the natural results of bad faith and lack of trust. A Burnt-Out Case has that atmosphere of untrustworthiness so prevalent in Greene's fictional world. Donat O'Donnell has commented on the untrustworthy character of Greene's men and women.

37 D.J. Dooley, op. cit., p. 351.
38 A Burnt-Out Case, p. 36.
39 Ibid., p. 37.
He sees it as a leitmotiv in *The Heart of the Matter*.\(^{40}\)

He writes,

untrustworthiness, unreliability—this is a key concept and the words are constantly recurring: servants, witnesses, drivers, guides, strangers, friends, each main character in turn, almost all are, or seem at some time to be, untrustworthy. This is so of all Mr. Greene's work and especially of *The Heart of the Matter*.\(^{41}\)

The similarities between the world of Sartre and Greene's fictional world are evident when it is recalled that Sartre's world is a world in which "there is neither goodness, nor value, nor even sense...it is bad and absurd."\(^{42}\)

Sartre commits himself "against the good will of man, believing in the prevalence of bad faith."\(^{43}\) Again, Rycker's fears and anxieties have the flavour of Heidegger's philosophy of fear and anxiety:

For Heidegger, dread differs from fear or anxiety in that the latter experiences are always directed to some specific object—we are always afraid of or anxious about something. On the contrary, dread is always dread "of or about" but never of or about this or that.\(^{44}\)

Rycker is afraid of something specific—his wife's infidelity. And his lack of trust increases his fears.

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\(^{40}\) It is also prominent in *The Man Within, It's A Battlefield, Brighton Rock, The Power and the Glory, The End of the Affair, The Quiet American.*


\(^{42}\) Heinemann, *op. cit.*, p. 131.

\(^{43}\) Ibid.

\(^{44}\) Mihalich, *op. cit.*, p. 43.
Like Scobie's marriage, the Rycker marriage is a failure, because it lacks the security of love. For Rycker as well as for Bendix in The End of the Affair, love and happiness are not synonymous. Rycker quarrels with his wife:

"You don't believe I am capable in my small way of going through the Dark Night of the Soul? I am only your husband who shares you bed..."
She whispered, "I don't understand..."
"What don't you understand?"
"I thought that love was supposed to make you happy."
"Is that what they taught you in the convent?"  

There are two reasons why love cannot bring happiness. Firstly, it is too transient and, in any case, will bring betrayal. Now this pessimistic view of love is quite noticeable in Greene's novels and while one cannot maintain with any justice that it is Greene's personal vision, it is startlingly akin to Sartre's pessimistic view of human relationships. Dr. Kingston relates that in Sartre's The Reprieve the sexual act between Ivich and her lover, which takes place at the same moment as the meeting at Munich, ends in betrayal and the Munich agreement will end in the same way. "According to Sartre," adds Kingston, "that is the nature of all human relationships, diplomatic or otherwise."  

Secondly, neither Rycker nor Scobie is really in love with his wife.  

45 A Burnt-Out Case, p. 63.  
47 Sartre says, "for the existentialist there is really no love other than one which manifests itself in a person's being in love." Existentialism and Human Emotions, p. 32.
The sense of personal worthlessness so pronounced in Oliver Chant and Scobie, is equally prominent in Rycker. And it is intimately associated with the betrayal of his wife. Rycker believes that he is a victim of betrayal because his wife has spent a night in an hotel with a man whose amorous activities in Europe were well-known. But Rycker does not entertain the thought that the night might well have been harmless. He wants to believe that his wife has committed adultery with Querry, and this desire stems from his sense of spiritual and intellectual inadequacy. In a way he sees Querry's betrayal of him as good for his damaged ego and the unscrupulous Parkinson recognizes this:

"I think he wants to believe the worst. It makes him Querry's equal, don't you see, when they fight over the same girl." He added with a somewhat surprising insight, "he cannot bear not being important."

And even though Querry has used women selfishly, he lacks the self confidence required to go on living. He too has a sense of personal worthlessness. The Superior at the leper colony tells Doctor Colin that Querry, he believed, had a great capacity for love. Doctor Colin is doubtful:

I'm not so sure of that. Nor was he. He once told me that all his life he had only made use of women, but I think he saw himself always

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48 A Burnt-Out Case, p. 186. Parkinson, however repulsive he might be, often gets surprising insights. Thus he echoes the philosophy of Jaspers that man is unknown to himself when he tells Querry, "how do you know that Rycker's not right about you? We none of us really know ourselves..." p. 108.
in the hardest possible light...49

Convinced of their personal worthlessness, both Querry and Rycker perform acts that are basically motivated by despair. In the case of Rycker it is the act of killing Querry. It does not matter that Querry has not committed adultery with Marie; the point is that Rycker is convinced that he has and that is enough for him. In the case of Querry it is a willing acceptance of death. As it is in most of Greene's characters, the death-wish in Querry is strong. And it is always the result of a profound despair. Mention has already been made of the similarity between Querry and Camus' Meursault. Querry would agree with Camus that "there is only one truly serious philosophic problem: that is suicide. To judge that life is or is not worth living, is to reply to the fundamental question of philosophy."50 Querry's willing acceptance of death, underscored by his refusal to stay away from the drunk Rycker, armed with a gun, is a tacit resignation from life. And the despair that has motivated this act might have been obviated by trust, by faith in himself and God. As Kierkegaard would say, there is only one answer to radical despair and that is radical trust. There can be no faith without trust in God. Faith


requires a leap and Querry refuses to take this leap. Like Scobie Querry is guilty of repudiating faith and trust in God. D.J. Dooley mentions that Evelyn Waugh "sees Querry as an example of spiritual sloth, the condition in which a man is fully aware of the proper means of his salvation and refuses to take them because the whole apparatus of salvation fills him with tedium and disgust." Dooley adds, "Querry's repeated assertions that he does not want to understand or believe would seem to support this view."

A Burnt-Out Case then, is Graham Greene's latest exploration of the consequences of lack of trust, marital infidelity and subsequent despair. Because of Marie Rycker's lie a series of events are set in motion and neither Querry nor Rycker is able to stem the tide. At the end of the novel Querry goes to his death and Rycker has initiated proceedings to have his marriage annulled. But Marie has won her argument to be treated as Subject.

51 In The End of the Affair, Bendrix says, "you are a devil, God, tempting us to leap." - p. 186.

52 Evelyn Waugh, as quoted by D.J. Dooley, op. cit., p. p. 350.

53 Ibid.
Conclusion

The parallels between specific existential concepts and acts of betrayal in the novels have been drawn. There can be no doubt that the sufferings experienced by the hero of each novel are brought about by the original acts of self-betrayal and self-deception. In the case of each hero marital infidelity brings with it anguish, a sense of personal worthlessness and thoughts of suicide. Both betrayer and betrayed see the world and people as hell. They question divine justice and repudiate God’s help. They see life as meaningless and absurd and question the good faith of other people. Inevitably, they develop a relativistic approach to life, and because they are convinced of the futility of knowing themselves and others, their communication with their marriage partners is minimal. They question the stability of love and become Outsiders and victims of the machinations of the untrustworthy.

As I have indicated in the Introduction, Greene might not have consciously set out to dramatize the theme of betrayal existentially. But Graham Greene is a man of his times and it is inconceivable that he would be ignorant of the philosophy of existentialism now enjoying a wide currency. To what extent existential philosophy influenced his personal vision of life and subsequently his fictional world is a problem this thesis has not been concerned with.
I have indicated the parallels and the reader is invited to draw his own inference.¹

As a result of my study of Graham Greene's novels, I have arrived at a formula which, I believe, adequately describes the typical Greene hero. He is invariably a relativist and, as we have seen, relativism is a natural consequence of the philosophy of existentialism. They live as they see fit.² Invariably, the Greene hero has a deep sense of personal guilt. They are isolated beings in a hostile environment and are constantly running away from themselves, from others and from God. They trust no one and they all experience an existential angiosse.

¹ It has become increasingly clear to me that the idea of betrayal together with the stark reality of the evil wedded to human nature are concepts Greene may have gleaned from the writings of Henry James. A study of Greene's essays on Henry James indicates that James' influence on Greene's fictional world has been profound. The style of Greene's early novels is noticeably imitative of Henry James and the preoccupation with betrayal, so noticeable in some of James' pieces, is already taking root in Greene's early fiction. Indeed Francis Wyndham thinks that The Quiet American written as late as 1955, "is a version of the theme, beloved by Henry James, of American optimism and innocence at sea in an old world of violence and corruption..." — Graham Greene (London: Longmans, Green and Company, 1962), p. 24. Greene himself owns that "the world of Henry James is a world of treachery and deceit..." — The Lost Childhood, p. 36. In the same essay Greene writes, "it was only on the superficial level of plot, one feels, that James was interested in the American visitor; what deeply interested him...was the idea of treachery, the "Judas Complex..." — Ibid., p. 44. Certainly, when we study Greene's fiction we discover, perhaps not surprisingly, that it too is a world of treachery and deceit, that Greene too has a "Judas Complex."

² The most notable examples of relativists are: Oliver Chant, Conder, Anthony Farrant, Pinkie, the whisky-priest, Scobie, Fowler, Bendrix, Quarry. Rose in the play, The Living Room is equally relativistic in her approach to life.
Finally, they have a remarkable capacity for betrayal.

A handful of critics have suggested reasons for Greene's preoccupation with betrayal, with sin, with evil, and at this juncture it is well to examine Greene's preoccupation. The Catholic critic, Francis Fytton has charged that Greene's preoccupation with betrayal and suicide might well reflect a certain morbidity in his own personality. Fytton sees Greene's obsession within a biographical context and claims that "Greene has a preoccupation with sin that sometimes looks like a preoccupation with evil; almost, in fact, a relishing of evil for its own sake: a somewhat refined and even fastidious vice of the intellect." Mary McCarthy, in an essay that could be regarded as a diatribe, writes:

Religion in Greene has a monotonously bootleg character; spirited into the plots, it is linked with the vices of drunkenness and tedious adultery... If Graham Greene's works, in the aggregate, are tiresome, for all their gift for suspense and "leave a bad taste in the mouth," this does not detract from their appeal, for pornography has always been tiresome while catering to an appetite for novelty; it cannot escape this fate.

The charges of both commentators might well be too subjective and indeed Herbert A. Kenny makes this pithy observation: "Greene has a great sympathy with sinners

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3 "Graham Greene: Catholicism and Controversy," The Catholic World, 180 (December, 1954), 175.

4 Ibid. This charge is not substantiated and frankly, is unfair to the novelist.

(those of the flesh at least) as indeed, we all should, for it is only to have sympathy with ourselves."⁶

Moreover, Greene has underscored in his novels, notably Brighton Rock, The Power and the Glory and The Heart of the Matter, the idea that nobody can really understand the strangeness of God's mercy. Raymond Jouve has crystallized this aspect of Greene's work in this way: "il ne s'agit plus d'un problème que l'homme puisse résoudre, mais d'un mystère dont Dieu seul détient le secret."⁷

Again, one can say with some justice, that in his fiction, notably The Power and the Glory and The End of the Affair, Greene argues that the sinner, after the fashion of St. Augustine,⁸ has a remarkable capacity for saintliness. Fundamentally, Greene is an eschatologist and I suggest that Harold C. Gardiner's statement, "Greene disturbs because he makes us face now what we would prefer to consider later,"⁹ might well account for certain vituperative criticism directed at him.¹⁰

It is conceivable that by frequently dramatising

⁷ "La Damnation De Scobie?" Etudes (Novembre, 1949), 177.
⁸ Cf. St. Augustine's "'God, give me chastity, but not right now,'" with Scobie's, "God can wait, he thought: how can one love God at the expense of one of his creatures?" The Heart of the Matter, p. 203.
⁹ "Graham Greene, Catholic Shocker," Renascence, I (Spring, 1949), 14.
betrayal and its consequences existentially, Greene might be stressing the urgent need for loyalty in a world where the broken trust is as commonplace as adultery. Indeed, Walter Allen has said that "in this insistence on loyalty, of trust in a world of broken trust, Greene has obvious affinities with Conrad." William D. Ellis claims that as a result of Greene's travels in Mexico and Africa the man sensed that his religious concepts of good and evil were rooted in the primeval nature of all mankind; and the novelist sensed that his personal vision of the workings of the human heart possessed universal validity.

I suggest, by way of conclusion, that for Graham Greene, betrayal is the most evil aspect of human nature. It is a violation of the communication between human beings and as such, is the cause of bad faith and the evil that results from this. Betrayal is, as it were, the primal evil, the aboriginal calamity.

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1934
Born Diego Martin, Trinidad, W.I., son of Arthur and Alice. Secondary education at St. Mary's College, Port of Spain, Trinidad, W.I.

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Began undergraduate studies at Assumption University of Windsor. Granted Archbishop O'Connell Memorial Nursery and appointed to editorship of Kaleidoscope for two years.

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Graduated from Assumption University of Windsor with a Bachelor of Arts degree in English.

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Commenced graduate studies at Assumption University of Windsor. Awarded teaching fellowship.

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Accepted teaching position at Fatima College, Port of Spain, Trinidad, W.I.

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Completed requirements for the degree of Master of Arts at University of Windsor. Awarded part time faculty membership for the academic year 1963-1964.