

EVELYN WAUGH, GRAHAM GREENE, AND CATHOLICISM: 1928-1939

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis considers the development of Evelyn Waugh's and Graham Greene's Catholicism between 1928 and 1939. Focusing predominantly on Waugh's and Greene's novels, it investigates how their writings express Catholic ideas, as well how their faith informs their views of human nature, their political sympathies, and their criticisms of modern secular civilization. While it recognizes the important differences between Waugh's and Greene's thinking in this period (such as their diverging political sympathies and their uses of different forms and genres of writing), it also establishes some significant affiliations between their Catholic points of view. Both authors associate the increasingly secular condition of English society with themes of decay and disintegration, acknowledge the reality of Original Sin, and believe in a supernatural reality distinct from its earthly counterpart.

The Introduction provides an overview of Greene and Waugh scholarship, noting that there is currently no critical study devoted to the topic of early affiliations between these authors' Catholic principles. The first two chapters propose that the beginnings of Waugh's and Greene's Catholic perspectives can be detected in their early fiction. Chapter Three examines in relation to each other Waugh's and Greene's novels between 1930 and 1935. Chapter Four charts the development of their respective vantage-points in the period 1936-1938. The final chapter looks at the year 1939 and assesses the nature of these authors' Catholic views prior to the outbreak of the Second World War.

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EVELYN WAUGH, GRAHAM GREENE, AND CATHOLICISM: 1928-39

ABBREVIATIONS

INTRODUCTION: SETTING THE SCENE	1
1. CHAPTER ONE: ‘ON THE WAY TO ROME’	29
Bright Young People and Modern Society: “all they seem to do is to play the fool”	33
Suffering from an Almost Fatal Hunger for (Religious) Permanence	41
“Faster, faster!”: Caught Within an Avant-Garde Social Life that is Heading for a Crash	56
Conclusion: Late Modernism?	69
2. CHAPTER TWO: ‘SOMETHING TO CATCH HOLD OF IN THE GENERAL FLUX’	72
The Monotony of Endless Days	76
Virtuous Virgins and Promiscuous Whores	85
Varieties of Religious Experience	96
Conclusion: ‘the hope only of empty men’	106
3. CHAPTER THREE: DISCOVERING THE GROUNDS OF FAITH	112
Waugh’s Catholicism: Christianity Versus Chaos	117
The Desire for Religious Belief in a Secular World	138
Conclusion: ‘Catholic by omission’	157
4. CHAPTER FOUR: NEGOTIATING BELIEFS AND THE RISE OF POLITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS	161
Political Controversy and Catholic Commitment	167
Greene’s Catholic Social Consciousness	183
Conclusion: Catholic Critiques of Secular Societies	209
5. CHAPTER FIVE: ON THE BRINK OF WAR	213
Mexican Pilgrimages	218
The Nightmare World of Modern Secular Society	241
Conclusion: Catholicism and Civilization in the Face of War	251
CONCLUSION	256
BIBLIOGRAPHY	270

ABBREVIATIONS

- B* Graham Greene, *It's a Battlefield* (London: William Heinemann, 1934).
- BM* Evelyn Waugh, *Black Mischief* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1932).
- BR* Graham Greene, *Brighton Rock* (London: William Heinemann, 1938).
- CA* Graham Greene, *The Confidential Agent* (London: William Heinemann, 1939).
- CE* Graham Greene, *Collected Essays* (London: Penguin, 1978).
- DF* Evelyn Waugh, *Decline and Fall* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1928).
- EAR* Evelyn Waugh, *The Essays Articles and Reviews of Evelyn Waugh*, ed. Donat Gallagher (London: Methuen, 1984).
- EC* Evelyn Waugh, *Edmund Campion* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1935).
- EMM* Graham Greene, *England Made Me* (London: William Heinemann, 1935).
- GS* Graham Greene, *A Gun for Sale* (London: William Heinemann, 1936).
- HD* Evelyn Waugh, *A Handful of Dust* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1934).
- L* Evelyn Waugh, *Labels* (1930), in Evelyn Waugh, *Waugh Abroad: Collected Travel Writing*, intro. Nicholas Shakespeare (New York: Everyman's Library, Alfred A. Knopf, 2003): 1-178.
- LR* Graham Greene, *The Lawless Roads* (1939) (London: Penguin, 1947).
- LT* Graham Greene, 'The Lottery Ticket' (1938), in Graham Greene, *Nineteen Stories* (London: William Heinemann, 1947): 125-39.
- MW* Graham Greene, *The Man Within* (London: William Heinemann, 1929).
- NA* Graham Greene, *The Name of Action* (London: William Heinemann, 1930).
- NTD* Evelyn Waugh, *Ninety-Two Days* (1934), in Evelyn Waugh, *Waugh Abroad: Collected Travel Writing*, intro. Nicholas Shakespeare (New York: Everyman's Library, Alfred A. Knopf, 2003): 367-546.
- OSB* Graham Greene, 'The Other Side of the Border' (1936), in Graham Greene, *Nineteen Stories* (London: William Heinemann, 1947): 196-231.
- RN* Graham Greene, *Rumour at Nightfall* (London: Windmill Press, 1931).

- RP* Evelyn Waugh, *Remote People* (1931), in Evelyn Waugh, *Waugh Abroad: Collected Travel Writing*, intro. Nicholas Shakespeare (New York: Everyman's Library, Alfred A. Knopf, 2003): 179-366.
- RUL* Evelyn Waugh, *Robbery Under Law* (1939), in Evelyn Waugh, *Waugh Abroad: Collected Travel Writing*, intro. Nicholas Shakespeare (New York: Everyman's Library, Alfred A. Knopf, 2003): 713-918.
- S* Evelyn Waugh, *Scoop* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1938).
- ST* Graham Greene, *Stamboul Train* (London: William Heinemann, 1932).
- VB* Evelyn Waugh, *Vile Bodies* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1930).
- WA* Evelyn Waugh, *Waugh in Abyssinia* (1936), in Evelyn Waugh, *Waugh Abroad: Collected Travel Writing*, intro. Nicholas Shakespeare (New York: Everyman's Library, Alfred A. Knopf, 2003): 547-712.
- WE* Graham Greene, *Ways of Escape* (1980) (London: Penguin Books, 1982).
- WS* Evelyn Waugh, *Work Suspended* (1939), in Evelyn Waugh, *Work Suspended and Other Stories* (London: Penguin, 2000): 106-91.

INTRODUCTION: SETTING THE SCENE

When Graham Greene reflected upon the death of Evelyn Waugh, he wrote: ‘it was the death not only of a writer whom I had admired ever since the twenties, but of a friend’ (*WE* 198).¹ Greene’s esteem for Waugh was neither affected by the recognition that their ‘politics were a hundred miles apart’ nor by the knowledge that Waugh regarded Greene’s Catholicism as ‘heretical’ (*WE* 202). While Greene reveals that he was aware of Waugh’s writing from the nineteen twenties onwards, they only became friends in the nineteen forties, when they began writing to each other and visiting one another regularly.² They were brought together mainly by their shared status as Roman Catholic novelists. Greene converted to Roman Catholicism in 1926, prior to the publication of his first novel *A Man Within* (1929).³ When Waugh converted a few years later in 1930, he had already published two novels: *Decline and Fall* (1928) and *Vile Bodies* (1930). Despite converting early in their literary careers, neither author explicitly wrote about Catholic characters until years later when they produced what are now known as their first ‘Catholic’ novels: *Brighton Rock* (1938) by Greene, and *Brideshead Revisited* (1945) by Waugh. The protagonists in these texts are Roman Catholics and Waugh and Greene explore in detail aspects of Catholic orthodoxy (including issues of damnation and the nature of belief). Following these publications, these authors produced a further eight ‘Catholic’ novels between them, marking what critics have acknowledged to be the ‘Catholic’ phases

¹ Waugh died on the 10th April 1966, and Greene died on the 3rd April 1991.

² Greene and Waugh did review each other’s work prior to the forties (see Chapters Four and Five) and they worked together on Greene’s magazine *Night and Day* in 1937. However, they did not develop a close personal relationship until after the outbreak of the Second World War.

³ Throughout this thesis, whenever I use the term ‘Catholicism’ it is always of the Roman kind.

of their literary careers.⁴ A vast array of criticism has been dedicated to this body of work. Numerous critics have analysed the writers' friendship, compared their portrayals of Catholicism, and reflected more generally upon the nature of the post-war 'Catholic' novel in England.⁵ However, there is no detailed reading and comparison of the evolution of Waugh's and Greene's religious thinking in their early writings published prior to their so-called 'Catholic' novels. This thesis sets out to remedy this situation by examining the period that encompasses the late nineteen twenties through to the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939.

Working chronologically, I chart the development of what I determine to be each author's religious perspective, while simultaneously reading these perspectives in line with one another. While I do not argue that Waugh and Greene produced explicitly Catholic texts in this period (excluding *Brighton Rock*), I maintain that their writings (both fictional and non-fictional) are informed by their increasingly Catholic perspectives and that in them these authors enact criticisms of their contemporary secular culture. It needs to be acknowledged from the outset that it is problematic – and necessarily speculative – to relate novels to a Catholic belief system when such a

⁴ Waugh's 'Catholic' novels are commonly taken to include: *Brideshead Revisited* (1945), *Helena* (1950), *Men at Arms* (1952), *Officers and Gentlemen* (1955), and *Unconditional Surrender* (1961). Greene's 'Catholic' novels are commonly taken to include: *Brighton Rock* (1938), *The Power and the Glory* (1940), *The Heart of the Matter* (1948), *The End of the Affair* (1951), and *A Burnt-Out Case* (1960).

⁵ For example: Michael G. Brennan, 'Damnation and Divine Providence: The Consolations of Catholicism for Graham Greene and Evelyn Waugh', in William Thomas Hill (ed.), *Perceptions of Religious Faith in the Work of Graham Greene* (Bern: Peter Lang Publishers, 2002): 255-87; Peter Mudford, "'Quantitative judgements don't apply": The Fiction of Evelyn Waugh and Graham Greene', in Rod Mengham and N. H. Reeve (eds), *The Fictions of the 1940s: Stories of Survival* (New York, Palgrave: 2001): 184-202; James A. Devereux, 'Catholic matters in the correspondence of Evelyn Waugh and Graham Greene', *Journal of Modern Literature* 14.1 (1988): 111-26; Joseph Hynes, 'Two Affairs Revisited', *Twentieth Century Literature: A Scholarly and Critical Journal* 33:2 (Summer, 1987): 234-53.

system is not explicitly discussed or thematized in the texts. Indeed, I explore some of the possible aesthetic reasons behind the authors' decisions not to explicitly reveal their Catholic beliefs in their fiction until much later. The argument of this thesis is thus dealing with claims about intentionality, implication, and inference which are necessarily debateable and possibly contentious, but which nonetheless can be supported with evidence from the men's correspondence, their diaries, and their non-fiction.

While it is a critical commonplace to group Waugh and Greene together in the post-war period, my thesis suggests that there are significant correlations between these authors' respective religious standpoints in the inter-war years which demand critical attention. I am not claiming that Waugh and Greene necessarily influenced each other in this period, though they were aware of and respected each other's writing; nor do I ignore the ways in which their religious views differ. Rather, I attempt to trace how their Catholic thinking is expressed in their writing, and I compare how they implicitly in their fiction (and explicitly in their non-fiction) criticize their contemporary secular environments from similar religious viewpoints. I maintain that both Greene and Waugh suggest in their fiction that modern English society, along with Western civilization more generally, is disintegrating morally and socially due to an absence of religious values.

By analysing the Catholic perspectives of Waugh and Greene prior to the Second World War, my thesis opposes a body of critical work which maintains that these authors were more concerned with political and social (rather than religious) issues in this period. Patrick Allitt writes: 'Waugh's early postconversion novels and travel books [...] have little ostensible religious content. They show, rather, the development of his political conservatism and the sense (shared by many Catholics of his age) that the modern world was in a state of decay and practical dissolution'.⁶ Similarly, Mark Bosco

⁶ Patrick Allitt, *Catholic Converts: British and American Intellectuals Turn to Rome* (Cornell: Cornell University Press, 2000), 295.

claims that it was only ‘beginning with the novel *Brideshead Revisited*’ that Waugh ‘attempted to use Catholicism not only to frame the issues and crises of modern society but also to offer Catholicism’s vision and doctrine as an antidote to the present crisis in Western, and specifically English, civilization’.⁷ My thesis suggests that Waugh’s conservative views reflect his religious beliefs (and cannot be dissociated from them), and that as early as 1930 he explicitly posits the Roman Catholic Church as an antidote to what he perceives to be pervasive secular social and cultural decay.

Other critics reject the view that Waugh’s religious thinking develops incrementally during the inter-war years, so that for these critics the publication of *Brideshead Revisited* represents a radical departure in style and content from *Decline and Fall*. Robert Garnett claims that it is reductive to try and ‘reconcile’ these two novels and to attempt to ‘somehow graph Waugh’s career to produce a relatively plausible curve connecting these two antipodal points by way of the intermediate novels’.⁸ The only development that Richard Griffiths perceives is that of a ‘new element of seriousness’ in Waugh’s post-conversion writing, from *A Handful of Dust* (1934) onwards.⁹ I consider the notion that Waugh’s writing develops in terms of his strengthening religious perspective, so that views which are alluded to and hinted at in his early novels are explored in his post-conversion fictions in relation to religious issues. In my opinion, such issues become explicitly associated with Catholicism from *Brideshead Revisited* onwards.

In the first full-length study of Greene’s fiction, Kenneth Allott and Miriam Farris announce that ‘there is a sense in which Greene’s Catholicism is the least important thing about his outlook,

⁷ S. J. Mark Bosco, *Graham Greene’s Catholic Imagination* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 8-9.

⁸ Robert Garnett, *From Grimes to Brideshead: The Early Novels of Evelyn Waugh* (London: Associated University Press, 1990), 15.

⁹ Richard Griffiths, *The Pen and the Cross: Catholicism and English Literature, 1850-2000* (London: Continuum, 2010), 182.

that is to say, in connection with his books'.¹⁰ Their stance is supported by James L. McDonald, who maintains that Greene's deepest and most abiding concerns 'have always been social and political'.¹¹ Likewise, Griffiths states: 'Greene's novels of the mid-1930s contained very little in the way of explicit religious content'.¹² On the contrary, my thesis proposes that Greene implicitly and explicitly engages with religious matters from the very beginning of his writing career and that his Catholic perspective informs his political views and is reflected in his social concerns. William Thomas Hill is another critic who disagrees with the idea that there is an implicit religious dimension to Greene's novels written prior to *Brighton Rock*. Hill insists that Greene's fiction from *The Man Within* through to *A Gun for Sale* (1936) does not 'reflect so much a concern with religious issues as with the human condition in general'.¹³ Moreover, Hill claims that any interest that Greene 'does seem to have with the spiritual condition of his characters' appears to be 'muffled by a world in which his characters wander through heavy mists searching for some human identity'.¹⁴ S. K. Sharma similarly asserts that each of Greene's novels presents characters who are engaged in a quest for belief that 'is not confined to the religious experience alone, for Greene is concerned with the total experience of man'.¹⁵ In my view, and as I will argue below, Greene presents the spiritual conditions of his characters as the fundamental part of their human identity. In what follows, I demonstrate that his inter-war texts depict characters defined by their relationship with faith. Either they consciously or

¹⁰ Kenneth Allott and Miriam Farris, *The Art of Graham Greene* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1963), 17. This study was first published in 1957.

¹¹ James L. McDonald, 'Graham Greene: A Reconsideration', *Arizona Quarterly* 27 (Autumn, 1971): 197-209, 198.

¹² Griffiths, *The Pen and the Cross*, 161.

¹³ William Thomas Hill, 'Introduction: Reading the Faces of Faith in Graham Greene's Fiction', in William Thomas Hill (ed.), *Perceptions of Religious Faith in the Work of Graham Greene* (Oxford: Peter Lang Press, 2002): 1-28, 3.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ S. K. Sharma, *Graham Greene: The Search for Belief* (New Delhi: Harman, 1990), 27.

unconsciously yearn for faith, embrace it in various ways, or suffer the consequences of ignoring it altogether. While this 'faith' is not explicitly depicted as Roman Catholicism in these texts (other than in *Brighton Rock*), Greene establishes via religious imagery, references to life after death, and the contemplation of 'God' that the religious longings of his characters are of a Christian and – by association with his own faith – arguably a Catholic nature. Furthermore, Greene implies that his characters' longings for commitment can only be fully satisfied by religious belief, as other forms of secular dedication – especially political commitment – are shown ultimately to be unfulfilling.

Along with establishing the individual nature of the religious perspectives held by Waugh and Greene in the inter-war period, my thesis identifies two key areas in which their perspectives correspond: they both believe in a supernatural reality that is set apart from earthly reality, and they both accept the Roman Catholic concept of Original Sin. I maintain that Greene refers to the notion of supernatural reality from the beginning of his writing career, as I suggest that he designates specific 'supernatural' spaces in his early fiction. His belief in supernatural reality is also manifest in his theory of literary production. In the thirties Greene articulates his concept of writing with a 'religious sense', through which authors acknowledge a religious frame of reference in their texts by alluding to 'eternal' issues.¹⁶ According to Greene, characters and novels will suffer from being vacuous if their authors fail to convey this sense of a religious dimension.

Regarding Waugh's stance on the issue of supernatural reality, David Wykes states: 'the spiritual and supernatural became the true reality for Waugh. They were literally and not just metaphorically the highest order of reality, and much of human life could be seen as frantic

¹⁶ Greene defines the 'religious sense' in his essay 'Henry James: the Religious Aspect' (1933) (*CE* 41) and he refers to 'eternal issues' – 'the struggle between good and evil' – in 'Frederick Rolfe: Edwardian Inferno' (1934) (*CE* 131).

aimlessness in comparison with the certainty and stability of the eternal order'.¹⁷ In my thesis, I suggest that Waugh's inter-war fiction satirizes Western society for becoming increasingly introverted and shallow due to living without reference to (and thus becoming detached from) the supernatural realm. I propose that one reading of Waugh's satirical methods is that they imply that society (specifically English society) needs to acknowledge and to reconnect with this religious reality, and that this can be achieved by incorporating Catholic values into England's social structure. I am indebted here to Jeffery Heath's study *The Picturesque Prison: Evelyn Waugh and His Writing* (1982), in which he maintains that Waugh's satires 'expose incompetence and corruption, pretentiousness and fraud, but not without implying alternatives'.¹⁸ In this way, Heath claims that Waugh's novels insist on 'order, taste, responsibility, reason, and faith'.¹⁹ More specifically, I suggest that Waugh associates these qualities with Catholicism, as he implies that it is a religious alternative that is needed to remedy the dire condition of secular English society.

The second Catholic principle that Waugh and Greene endorse in their fiction is that of the reality of Original Sin. David Lodge claims that the core of Waugh's faith is 'his sense of mankind exiled from a state of pre-lapsarian happiness, needing some providential guidance and institutional order'.²⁰ My thesis develops this view by tracing the ways in which Waugh's belief in man's innate fallibility informs his conservative viewpoint. For Waugh, man is inherently barbaric, and the cultural values and social boundaries which are associated with the Catholic Church are required to restrain this barbarism. Without such boundaries, Waugh thought that society would collapse into

¹⁷ David Wykes, *Evelyn Waugh: A Literary Life* (London: Macmillan, 1999), 76.

¹⁸ Jeffrey Heath, *The Picturesque Prison: Evelyn Waugh and His Writing* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1982), xiv.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ David Lodge, 'The Fugitive Art of Letters', in David Pryce-Jones (ed.), *Evelyn Waugh and His World* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1973): 183-218, 214.

chaos. In particular, Waugh believed that it was the duty of the ruling classes to maintain the values associated with his faith. In such novels as *Black Mischief* (1932), *A Handful of Dust*, and *Work Suspended* (1939), Waugh depicts some of the dire consequences which arise when members of the upper classes fail to protect, and to live by, these religious values.

The concept of Original Sin informed Greene's account of what he saw as the inherent evil and cruelty of man. In his novels I suggest that he associates a belief in Catholicism with a form of refuge from this pervasive corruption. Interestingly, Bosco claims that 'Greene's paradoxical literary expression of Catholic faith is never offered as a comforting way out of the discomfiting realities of modernity'.²¹ Rather, Bosco states that Catholicism only serves to 'heighten the awareness of the fallen sense of the world'.²² While I agree that Greene associates faith with the recognition of mankind's innate evil, I propose that in many of his inter-war texts religious faith is associated with a means of accessing a transcendental realm of reality in which peace, justice, and happiness can be experienced. In this way, Greene's Catholic vision both highlights the corrupt state of human life and identifies a form of religious refuge from it. Following this, in contrast to Waugh's conservative criticism of a government that was not providing religious boundaries and forms of order within society, Greene's left-wing sympathies were engaged with criticizing the government (chiefly in England) for worsening the oppression of society's most vulnerable members. In his inter-war fiction, Greene criticizes bodies of power (including the government, political parties, and business empires) and implies that the experiences of the socially oppressed are worsened when their relationship with religion is damaged by their terrible living conditions. In this way, I view Greene's fiction as suggesting that Western society is failing in its duty of providing its members with access to the sanctuary offered by faith.

²¹ Bosco, *Graham Greene's Catholic Imagination*, 4.

²² *Ibid.*

Another outcome of believing in Original Sin was that Waugh and Greene were opposed to totalitarian regimes and secular ideologies. These authors feared that the individual soul was being overlooked by such centralizing regimes as Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia. Waugh and Greene both regarded with cynicism political aims which were detached from religious beliefs, and they expressed similar anti-humanist criticisms of secular ideologies in their fiction. I recognize that 'humanism' is a complex and multifaceted term, as its meaning changes according to the period in which it is used and according to the individual who employs it. For the purposes of this thesis, I take this term to be religious in nature. Consequently, 'humanism' defines a situation in which man (not God) is the highest being in the universe, and – to quote Douglas Patey – one in which 'the denial of sin' is coupled with a 'utopian belief in a satisfying order achievable by purely human means'.²³ For certain intellectuals who held an anti-humanist stance, humanism was a false doctrine that maintained that the stability of society depended on forms of tradition and social order which incorporated religious values. Lodge insists that 'dogmatic anti-humanism' was a 'consistent point of view' in Waugh's fictional world, a point I extend to include Greene's dealings with certain aspects of various political institutions.²⁴ While Waugh ridiculed and satirized totalitarian political ideologies in some of his novels – notably *Scoop* (1938) – Greene exposed in his fiction the hypocrisy and failings of communism and socialism, along with the destructive nature of capitalism.

As well as examining the political implications of Waugh's and Greene's Catholic perspectives, my thesis tackles some of the unsavoury and controversial aspects which have been associated with their Catholic views. In the following chapters I demonstrate that these authors have been accused of promoting racist and imperialist ideas in their travel writing. In short, I suggest that

²³ Douglas Patey, *The Life of Evelyn Waugh: A Critical Biography* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), 118.

²⁴ David Lodge, *Columbia Essays on Modern Writers: Evelyn Waugh* (Columbia: Columbia University Press, 1971), 12.

such views ultimately reflect their commitment to Catholicism and, especially in Waugh's case, a belief in Catholicism's cultural superiority. Both have also been charged with portraying anti-Semitic stereotypes in their fiction. Although Wykes contends that Waugh's anti-Semitism is 'less visible in his novels than are the other racisms', there are distasteful references to 'yids' in some of Waugh's texts.²⁵ References to Jewish characters are more prevalent in Greene's fiction, and his anti-Semitism has consequently received more critical attention than Waugh's. Andrea Freud Loewenstein devotes an entire chapter of her study to Greene's early works, acknowledging that he makes no references to Jews in his post-war fiction.²⁶

There is a historical connection between Catholicism and anti-Semitic thought, which dates back to the crucifixion of Christ and the idea that the Jews were to blame for Christ's death. Robert Michael states that it is 'almost impossible to find examples of antisemitism that are exclusively racial, economic, or political, and free of religious configuration'.²⁷ Moreover, Michael claims that Catholics have been encouraged by their Church to view Judaism as 'little more than the work of Satan and the Antichrist, and to regard Jews with sacred horror'.²⁸ According to Wykes, Waugh's anti-Semitism 'existed before he became a Catholic, but Catholicism seems if anything to have

²⁵ Wykes, *Evelyn Waugh: A Literary Life*, 82. For example, there are references to a 'Dirty Yid' in *Vile Bodies* (VB 157), and a 'highbrow yid' in *Scoop* (S 119)

²⁶ As critics have noted, Greene edited and re-wrote sections of his pre-war novels in light of the Holocaust, obviously aware that his anti-Semitic references were unpalatable in the post-war era. See Andrea Freud Loewenstein, *Loathsome Jews and Engulfing Women: Metaphors of Projection in the Works of Wyndham Lewis, Charles Williams, and Graham Greene* (New York: New York University Press, 1993), 266.

²⁷ Robert Michael, *A History of Catholic Antisemitism: The Dark Side of the Church* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 1

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 6.

strengthened it'.²⁹ However, Loewenstein concludes that the anti-Semitic references in Greene's fiction reflect personal problems rather than Catholic sentiments.³⁰ In my view, anti-Semitic references within Waugh's and Greene's writings are inescapably connected to this Catholic view of Jews, though it may well be that neither writer was fully conscious of this fact.³¹

While I acknowledge that Greene and Waugh make anti-Semitic comments in their writing, I do not explore this issue in further detail. This is mainly because there is no evidence to support the idea that these authors' anti-Semitism is exclusively motivated by Catholic doctrine or even prejudice – though I recognize that there is a latent historical link between the two discourses. Furthermore, these anti-Semitic elements (however despicable) are very small aspects of the writing and thinking of these authors. Indeed, there was a wider context of anti-Semitism in the thirties, with which Waugh and Greene did not engage.³² Writers including T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, and Wyndham Lewis were at different times, and for different reasons, drawn to anti-Semitic views and (unlike Waugh and Greene) their prejudices were an essential aspect of their literary output in this decade.³³ In all, this

²⁹ Wykes, *Evelyn Waugh: A Literary Life*, 82.

³⁰ Loewenstein argues that Greene's anti-Semitic thoughts were 'the production of a young and troubled man' for whom 'the Jew offered a convenient symbolic receptacle into which to deposit his split-off pain and self-loathing'. See *Loathsome Jews and Engulfing Women*, 266.

³¹ Michael, *A History of Catholic Antisemitism*, 5-6.

³² For more on this topic, see Hyam Maccoby, *Antisemitism and Modernity: Innovation and Continuity*, Routledge Jewish Studies Series (New York: Routledge, 2006); Gary Levine, *The Merchant of Modernism: The Economic Jew in Anglo-American Literature 1864-1939* (New York: Routledge, 2003); Bryan Cheyette (ed.), *Between "Race" and Culture: Representations of the Jew in English and American Literature* (Stanford Series in Jewish History and Culture) (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996).

³³ I do not mean to suggest that these authors' anti-Semitic views were straightforward or that they did not develop over time. On the contrary, these authors' complex views have been examined in detail and debated by critics. For discussions of T. S. Eliot's prejudices, see Anthony Julius, *T. S. Eliot, Anti-Semitism, and Literary Form*

thesis concentrates on tracing evolving Catholic thought in writings by Greene and Waugh. I focus on how these writers are predominantly concerned with criticizing their secular modern society, rather than with Semitic conspiracies (as, say, was Pound).

My thesis also acknowledges that Waugh's and Greene's Catholic thinking reflected their recognition that, as Roman Catholics, they belonged to a minority sector of society in the inter-war period. Adrian Hastings confirms the predominantly secular nature of British society that these authors were writing in, and responding to, with their fiction: 'the principal intellectual (as distinct from social) orthodoxy of England in the 1920s was no longer Protestantism, nor was it Catholicism or any other form of Christianity. It was a confident agnosticism'.³⁴ While Waugh is explicit about being made to feel like an outsider due to his faith, I suggest that Greene's recognition of his marginalized status as a Catholic implicitly informs his concern with outcasts in his fiction. An awareness of Catholicism's minority position in their culture did not prevent Waugh and Greene from believing that their faith was defined by qualities of intransigence and unity. Martin Conway explains that for Catholics the Church offered a model of ideological coherence which was supported by an authoritarian structure: 'The Church presented itself as an exclusive source of truth, derived from scripture and more especially from the teachings of the papacy'.³⁵ A key suggestion of my thesis is that both authors implicitly present faith in their fiction as a source of permanence and

(Cambridge University Press 1995) and Christopher Ricks, *T. S. Eliot and Prejudice* (California: University of California Press, 1992). For Pound, see Tim Redman, *Ezra Pound and Italian Fascism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991) and Alex Houen, 'Anti-Semitism', in Ira B. Nadel (ed.), *Ezra Pound in Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010): 391-401. For Lewis, see Andrea Freud Loewenstein, *Loathsome Jews and Engulfing Women: Metaphors of Projection in the Works of Wyndham Lewis, Charles Williams, and Graham Greene* (New York: New York University Press, 1993).

³⁴ Adrian Hastings, *A History of English Christianity: 1920-1990* (London: SCM Press, 1991), 221.

³⁵ Martin Conway, *Catholic Politics in Europe 1918-1945* (London: Routledge, 1997), 2.

refuge within a rootless and confused modern environment (both in England and abroad). Indeed, Waugh and Greene chose to convert to Roman Catholicism rather than Anglo-Catholicism because they believed that the former was more ideologically coherent than the latter.³⁶

Richard Overy uses the phrase 'morbid age' to describe the inter-war period in which Greene and Waugh were writing. Overy states that these years (which were haunted by past, and threatened by future, war) were defined by 'anxiety, disillusionment, sterility, nihilism and danger'.³⁷ In their fiction it can be seen that Waugh and Greene depict their contemporary environment in these terms of cultural decay. In particular, I draw attention to when these writers engage with contemporary historical, political, and social issues in their fiction. These issues include such national problems as economic depression, industrial decline, the rise of slum housing estates, and the decay of a particular social class, as well as the following international events: the Spanish Civil War (1936-39), the Italian invasion of Abyssinia in 1935, the rise of totalitarian regimes in Russia and Germany, the socialist persecution of Catholics in Mexico in the thirties, and the apprehension of another world war.

Greene and Waugh, already linked by their faith and by the period in which they were writing, came from the same social class and belonged to the same generation. During a 1948 radio broadcast in which he compared these writers, W. Gore Allen stated that 'Faith is their only common

³⁶ Norman Sherry reports that in 1925 Greene was 'turning away from his parents' religion'. Sherry cites a letter written by Greene on the 4th December 1925 in which Greene states that he had gone to his last Anglican service: 'If anything would confirm me in Catholicism, it would be this morning. What a service, and what a sermon. The most awful sticky sentiment'. See *The Life of Graham Greene: Volume 1 1904-1939* (London: Penguin, 1989), 260. In 'Converted to Rome: Why it Has Happened to Me' (1930), Evelyn Waugh admitted to similarly finding Anglicanism not dogmatic enough: 'If its own mind is not made up, it can hardly hope to withstand disorder from outside' (*EAR* 104).

³⁷ Richard Overy, *The Morbid Age: Britain Between the Wars* (London: Allen Lane, 2009), 363.

ground'.³⁸ My thesis demonstrates that this is simply not true. Both Waugh and Greene were born into respectable and professional middle-class families, were educated at private schools, and studied at the University of Oxford.³⁹ Crucially, they were contemporaries. Waugh was born on the 28th of October 1903 and Greene on the 2nd of October 1904. They belonged to a unique generation that was too young to participate in the First World War and that came of age in the unstable inter-war period. In subsequent chapters I pay attention to the ways in which Waugh and Greene diagnose the spiritual longings and the anxieties of their particular generation. Throughout their inter-war novels, they both depict dissatisfied English characters – mostly young men – who have been brought up on pre-war ideals which are no longer suitable for their post-war environment. These characters are shown to be in search of forms of belief and sets of values that can provide them with the stability and meaning which are absent from their lives. In short, my thesis proposes that Waugh and Greene imply that religious faith will provide these missing qualities.

So as to establish the personal contexts in which Waugh and Greene produced their writing, I refer to the various biographies written about them. Martin Stannard has produced the most extensive biography on Waugh, and other notable biographies include those by Selena Hastings and Christopher Sykes.⁴⁰ Greene appointed Norman Sherry to be his official biographer in 1975. In doing

³⁸ W. Gore Allen, 'Evelyn Waugh and Graham Greene', *The Irish Monthly*, 77.907 (January, 1949): 16-22, 17.

³⁹ Waugh attended Lancing College, followed by Hertford College, Oxford. Greene attended Berkhamsted School and later Balliol College, Oxford.

⁴⁰ Martin Stannard, *Evelyn Waugh: The Early Years, 1903-1939* (London: Paladin Grafton Books, 1988). This was followed by a second volume entitled *Evelyn Waugh: No Abiding City, 1939-1966* (London: J.M. Dent & Sons, 1992). Two other significant biographies include Selina Hastings, *Evelyn Waugh: A Biography* (London: Minerva, 1995) and Christopher Sykes, *Evelyn Waugh: A Biography* (London: William Collins, 1975). At times Sykes makes reductive and potentially misleading comments about Waugh's beliefs, but Sykes's biography is still useful because he includes personal statements from Waugh that at the time of publication had not been published elsewhere.

this, Greene gave Sherry permission to incorporate extracts from previously unpublished writings, such as private letters and diary entries.⁴¹ The most recent biography of Greene by Michael Shelden is characterized by its author's evident animosity towards his subject, as well as his interest in unearthing the unsavoury aspects of Greene's life in graphic detail.⁴² Alongside these biographies, the publication of private letters and diaries in the seventies and the eighties created a wave of bio-critical readings.⁴³ For Waugh in particular, much criticism became 'character'-driven. Stannard maintains that enemies were able 'to project a negative image of the writer as intolerant, snobbish and sadistic, with pronounced fascist leanings'.⁴⁴ Greene bemoaned such attacks on Waugh's reputation and stated: 'Evelyn's diaries have been joyfully exploited by the media, a word that has come to mean bad journalism. Journalists have always been intent on transforming a fine writer into a "character"' (WE 201). With Greene, many concentrated on his fascinating – and at times sordid –

Another essential Waugh biography is Douglas Patey's *The Life of Evelyn Waugh: A Critical Biography* (2001), which I have referred to throughout this thesis. Patey states that he attempted to 'reconstruct mainly from published sources some of the ideological and social matrix in which Waugh's own character was formed'. See *The Life of Evelyn Waugh: A Critical Biography* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), xvii-xviii.

⁴¹ Sherry famously tracked Greene's movements all over the world in order to get a sense of what the author would have experienced and witnessed. The first volume of the biography, published in 1989, is thus very detailed and provides a wealth of biographical information. See Norman Sherry, *The Life of Graham Greene: Volume 1 1904-1939* (London: Penguin, 1989).

⁴² See Michael Shelden, *Graham Greene: The Man Within* (London: Heinemann, 1994).

⁴³ Evelyn Waugh's diaries were first published in 1976 by Weidenfield & Nicolson, and edited by Michael Davie. Waugh's letters were edited by Mark Amory and first published in 1980 by Weidenfield & Nicolson. In 2007, a selection of Greene's letters were edited by Richard Greene. See Richard Greene, *Graham Greene: A Life in Letters* (London: Little, Brown, 2007). Hitherto, critics have had to rely upon Norman Sherry's citations.

⁴⁴ Martin Stannard, 'Waugh, Evelyn Arthur St John (1903-1966)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (May, 2007). See <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/36788> (accessed 17/3/11).

personal life.⁴⁵ In this thesis, I take the route of closely analysing the writings of Waugh and Greene, as opposed to focusing on incidents of biographical scandal. I draw upon biographical information only when appropriate in order to contextualize the Catholic thinking in their work.

As a way of emphasizing that Waugh and Greene were not isolated religious thinkers, I allude to, and situate their writings within, the matrix of religious thought that was articulated in the inter-war period. In particular, I note when ideas within the inter-war texts written by Waugh and Greene correspond with features which can be identified in texts by such English Catholic revivalists as Christopher Dawson and Hilaire Belloc. Though I do not argue that Waugh or Greene were members of the revival in this era (since their fiction is not explicitly 'Catholic'), I suggest that their thinking corresponds on such issues such as anti-humanist responses to secular ideologies and the need for Catholicism to be at the heart of society. I also maintain that elements of Greene's fiction share features with French Catholic revival literature. Leading figures of the French Catholic revival include Joris-Karl Huysmans, León Bloy, Charles Péguy, Georges Bernanos, François Mauriac, and Paul Claudel. Although Mark Bosco contends that it is more appropriate to discuss the French Catholic revival in relation to Greene's explicitly 'Catholic novels' from *Brighton Rock* onwards, I propose that Greene's inter-war fiction engages with some of the revival's main characteristics.⁴⁶ These features include an authorial concern with the impoverished, an exploration of the tension between a character's sexual and spiritual desires, and a depiction of the presence of God in the text as a form of 'Hound of Heaven' that hunts souls. Bosco also reveals that these French writers perceived Catholicism to be 'a reactionary critique of the state of religious decline in modernity and

⁴⁵ Bernard Bergonzi deliberately chose to analyse closely Greene's fiction rather than his personal life. Thus, *A Study in Greene: Graham Greene and the Art of the Novel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006) marked a return to a critical awareness of the literary and intellectual contexts of Greene's writing.

⁴⁶ Bosco, *Graham Greene's Catholic Imagination*, 7.

also a powerful theological, philosophical, and artistic alternative to this seeming decline'.⁴⁷ I suggest that Greene implies similar sentiments in his fiction, as he criticizes forms of secular society in the modern world, and he alludes to the numerous problems (social and moral) which stem from this state of secularity. Philip Stratford has written a comparative study of Greene and François Mauriac, in which he argues that Greene was aware of Mauriac's writing in the nineteen thirties and that there are similarities between the two writers.⁴⁸ However, Stratford makes an important point when he states that while 'a case might be made for Greene's debt to Mauriac', during the same period 'Greene also came under the influence of Webster, James, Ford, Aiken and Eliot'.⁴⁹ My thesis is more concerned with establishing the nature of Greene's religious vision in his fiction, rather than with tracing the myriad influences which informed it. For this reason, I do not explore in detail Greene's debt to the French Catholic revival. However, I acknowledge Greene's associations with the movement because they represent a notable difference between his and Waugh's literary presentations of Catholic themes. Whereas Waugh predominantly focuses on the cultural and traditional values associated with his faith, Greene explores the psychological longings and questionings behind religious belief, as well as such themes as religious evil and sin.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 7-8. Patey confirms that Waugh's 'French was intolerable' and that 'there is no evidence to suggest that Waugh engaged with any of the French Catholic literature of this period'. See Patey, *The Life of Evelyn Waugh*, 370. As Stratford points out, Greene was not fluent in French either, but he read French novels 'in English translation'. See *Faith and Fiction: Creative Process in Greene and Mauriac* (Notre Dame/London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1964), x.

⁴⁸ Stratford recognizes that Greene was aware of Mauriac's writing in the nineteen thirties: 'He read *Thérèse* in 1930, *The Knot of Vipers* in 1933, *God and Mammon* in 1936, and *The Life of Baby Jesus* in 1937, all in English translation'. See Stratford, *Faith and Fiction*, xiii.

⁴⁹ Ibid., x.

The perspectives of Waugh and Greene differ in other significant ways. Throughout the inter-war period they employ completely different genres and styles of writing. Greene's body of fiction is broadly realist (and mainly comprises thrillers), whereas Waugh's novels are predominantly satirical and humorous.⁵⁰ Their novels focus on different social classes. Over the course of the nineteen thirties, Greene becomes increasingly fascinated with the lower-class members of society (both abroad in Africa and Mexico, and at home in England), whereas Waugh maintains a steady interest in recording the demise of the English upper-classes. Furthermore, as has been mentioned, their political beliefs develop along different tangents. Waugh's conservative stance strengthens over the course of the period, and Greene's left-wing sympathies likewise become increasingly explicit. Despite these significant differences, my thesis highlights important correspondences between their criticisms of Western secular society which have not before been examined in detail.

While there is no monograph dedicated to the study of Greene's and Waugh's Catholic perspectives in relation to each other in the inter-war years, there have been a few articles and chapters on this topic. Robert Murray Davis has written an excellent comparative essay on these authors' shared experiences in Mexico.⁵¹ In this essay, Davis defines the individual nature of

⁵⁰ Another point for consideration is that Greene originally differentiated between his publications, labelling some 'entertainments' (such as *A Gun for Sale*) and others 'novels' (such as *England Made Me* (1935)). Greene deemed the novels to be more serious than the entertainments, which he felt did 'not carry a message'. See Graham Greene, 'The Art of Fiction', *The Paris Review*, (Autumn 1953): 24-42, 32. Years later he abandoned this labelling, recognizing that it was redundant. My thesis supports Brian Diemert's contention that the 'entertainments' (also known as thrillers) are as critically important as the 'novels', and like Diemert I make no distinction between the publications. See *Graham Greene's Thrillers and the 1930s* (London: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996), 11-12.

⁵¹ Robert Murray Davis, 'The Rhetoric of Mexican Travel: Greene and Waugh', *Renascence* 38 (Spring, 1986): 160-69.

Greene's and Waugh's Catholic visions as presented in their travel books. I refer to Davis's findings in my final chapter. In 'Graham Greene and Evelyn Waugh: "Catholic Novelists"' (1989) Donald Green outlines these authors' similar backgrounds and upbringings, their growing friendship, and their different political beliefs; but he gives more of a brief overview of these issues rather than a detailed examination of them in relation to these authors' fiction.⁵² Another illuminating essay, written by Ben Granger, focuses more generally on the nature of the authorial perspectives held by Waugh and Greene over the course of their writing careers:

Greene's every fibre was tuned with sympathy for the underdog, siding with the rebellious and the forgotten, his narrative home the sleazy underbelly of life. Not so Waugh. His territory was the landed estates of the southern counties and their intersection with the cold elites of London high society.⁵³

My thesis elaborates upon and endorses Granger's observations in relation to the inter-war writings of Waugh and Greene. I explore in detail the idea that while Greene was concerned with various forms of social injustice, Waugh was interested in recording what he perceived to be the degradation of morals, aesthetics, and decorum in the upper-class sector of modern society. Granger also observes that there are similarities in the religious thinking of these authors which transcend politics: 'what both seemed to take from the Faith in their writing was a sense of the complete fragility and frailty of

⁵² Donald Green, 'Graham Greene and Evelyn Waugh: "Catholic Novelists"', in Jeffrey Meyers (ed.), *Graham Greene: A Revaluation, New Essays* (Macmillan, London, 1990): 5-37.

⁵³ Ben Granger, 'The Literary and Political Catholicism of Graham Greene and Evelyn Waugh'. See <http://www.spikemagazine.com/the-literary-and-political-catholicism-of-graham-greene-and-evelyn-waugh.php> (accessed 17/3/11).

the human condition, the essential *unworthiness* of people gained from Original Sin'.⁵⁴ Granger claims that this 'sense of the tragic' both 'under-writes and illuminates the drama' in Greene's work and 'the sharp satire' in Waugh's fiction.⁵⁵ Granger attributes this correlation between viewpoints to the authors' growing friendship, claiming that the notion of Original Sin 'served to solidify the bond which grew between the two'.⁵⁶ While I agree that the fiction produced by Waugh and Greene is motivated by a shared belief in innate human fallibility, I suggest that this perception of Original Sin informs Waugh's and Greene's criticisms of modern secular society from the beginning of their writing careers. It is not dependent upon their relationship to each other, but, rather, is a fundamental aspect of their religious perspectives.

My thesis engages with all the novels and travel books written by Waugh and Greene between 1928 and 1939. Both were prolific writers of short stories in this period, but, while I allude to some of these, my main focus is on their novels.⁵⁷ Where relevant, I draw upon the primary source

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ See Evelyn Waugh, *Evelyn Waugh: The Complete Stories*, ed. Anne Anne Pasternak Slater (London: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998), and Graham Greene, *Complete Short Stories* (London: Penguin, 2000). I have used first editions of the novels because I am interested in these authors' thinking at the time of publication. I am aware that they retrospectively emended their work after the Second World War. However, they did not retrospectively change their travel books, which is why I have used later editions. Kenneth Allott and Miriam Farris confirm that William Heinemann published a revised collection of Greene's novels in the 1960s: 'Revision of the novels in this collected edition is mainly stylistic, but extends to the reconstruction of whole episodes – an example is the Communist meeting in *It's a Battlefield*'. See Allott and Farris, *The Art of Graham Greene*, 35. Waugh's texts were republished as uniform editions by Chapman & Hall in 1960. Robert Murry Davis states: 'in 1960, Chapman and Hall began to issue the second uniform edition of Evelyn Waugh's novels with new prefaces and some alterations in the text by the

material that has been made available in the form of autobiographies, letters, diaries, articles, essays, reviews, and interviews.⁵⁸ I have also conducted archival research into some of their unpublished review work for *The Spectator*, in which they reveal fascinating insights into their aesthetic, political,

author'. See 'Some Textual Variants in *Scoop*', *Evelyn Waugh Newsletter and Studies* 1.2 (Autumn 1967), <http://www.abbotshill.freeserve.co.uk/EWN2.htm> (accessed 17/3/10).

⁵⁸ Donat Gallagher edited *The Essays, Articles, and Reviews of Evelyn Waugh* (London: Methuen, 1984). Waugh's only autobiography is entitled *A Little Learning: The First Volume of an Autobiography* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1963). Greene wrote two autobiographies: *A Sort of Life* (London: Penguin, 1971) and *Ways of Escape* (1980) (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1981). Greene also undertook extensive interviews with Marie-Françoise Allain, which were collected in *The Other Man: Conversations with Graham* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1983). Greene's essays, reviews, and articles have been collected in various forms over the years. See Greene, *Collected Essays* (London: Penguin, 1978). For a selection of Greene's film reviews see *The Pleasure Dome: Graham Greene, The Collected Film Criticism 1935-49*, ed. John Russell Taylor (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1980). Greene's contributions to *Night and Day* have been published in Christopher Hawtree (ed.), *Night and Day* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1985). There is also *The Graham Greene Film Reader: Reviews, Essays, Interviews and Film Stories*, ed. David Parkinson (New York: Applause Books, 1993). Most recently, Greene's contributions to the Catholic journal *Tablet* have been published in *Articles of Faith: The Collected Tablet Journalism of Graham Greene*, ed. with intro. Ian Thomson (Oxford: Signal Books, 2006). I have also conducted archival research into Greene's numerous reviews for *The Spectator*, which can be found in the British Library. See Greene, *Collected Essays* (London: Penguin, 1978). For a selection of Greene's film reviews see *The Pleasure Dome: Graham Greene, The Collected Film Criticism 1935-49*, ed. John Russell Taylor (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1980). Greene's contributions to *Night and Day* have been published in Christopher Hawtree (ed.), *Night and Day* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1985). There is also *The Graham Greene Film Reader: Reviews, Essays, Interviews and Film Stories*, ed. David Parkinson (New York: Applause Books, 1993).

and religious thinking in the nineteen thirties.⁵⁹ In structuring my thesis, I begin by devoting an entire chapter to Waugh's pre-conversion writing, followed by a chapter that is focused on Greene's first three novels. I want to explore Waugh's and Greene's respective viewpoints as expressed in their early fiction because I suggest that these perspectives become developed in their later writings. In the subsequent two chapters, the first section of each is focused on Waugh's work, followed by a section on Greene's writing, before comparative conclusions are drawn. Again, this is in order to determine Waugh's and Greene's individual perspectives before examining the ways in which they correspond and diverge. In the final chapter, which focuses on the year 1939, I read their work in direct relation to each other. Both Waugh and Greene travelled to Mexico in order to write about the persecution of Catholics there, and they reviewed each others' travel books in which they charted their responses to the repercussions of the persecution.

Chapter One examines Waugh's early novels *Decline and Fall* and *Vile Bodies* in detail, and briefly refers to his biography *Rossetti: His Life and Works* (1928) and his travel book *Labels* (1930). This chapter explores the idea that the beginnings of Waugh's religious perspective can be interpreted as being present in these satirical texts, even though he had not yet converted. I start by suggesting that Waugh criticizes contemporary English society for its secularity and consequent vacuity via the characterization of irreligious Bright Young People. These upper-class members of a post-war generation engage in hedonistic and escapist behaviour by committing themselves to a social circuit. One possible interpretation of Waugh's depiction of this commitment to socializing is that it indicates his view that the Bright Young People are desperately (and unconsciously) seeking a form of religious permanence. Indeed, I examine Waugh's use of a 'cycle' motif to capture the sense

⁵⁹ The *Evelyn Waugh Newsletter and Studies* has been another major source of critical information that I have used in my thesis. Set up in 1967, the newsletter continues to publish detailed essays on Waugh's writing, as well as reviews of current criticism. See <http://www.lhup.edu/jwilson3/newsletter.htm> (accessed 17/3/11).

of a repetitive and degenerative secular lifestyle and I indicate the religious connotations seemingly implicit within this 'cycle' motif. More generally, I explore some of the possible reasons – and the implications – behind the fact that Catholic themes or views are not explicit within Waugh's pre-conversion texts.

Tyrus Miller's concept of 'late modernism' provides the theoretical underpinning of this chapter. Miller outlines three defining aspects of late modernist texts: they are written after 1926, they employ a biting satire to criticize their context, and they undermine earlier modernist aesthetics. My thesis indicates the ways in which Waugh's fiction, which criticizes numerous aspects of post-war society, corresponds with these aspects of Miller's theory. Wyndham Lewis, an archetypal late modernist, is a key comparative figure in this chapter. I refer to Lewis's Vorticist theories when I examine what I deem to be Waugh's implicit criticism of avant-garde aesthetics. In short, I propose that Waugh's depiction of a social circuit shares general characteristics with the pre-war avant-gardes, as his fiction draws upon and also criticizes various aspects of Futurist, Vorticist, and Bauhaus aesthetics. I propose that Waugh criticizes these movements' quasi-religious suggestions for structuring society and, in the cases of Futurism and Vorticism, what he saw as their fanatical praise for technological innovation. In my view, Waugh implies in his fiction that such features of the avant-garde are as self-destructive – and as spiritually lost – as the social cycle that they influence.

Furthermore, I suggest that Waugh's socialites are depicted using a form of satire that shares similarities with Lewis's external satiric method. I maintain that both satiric models can be read as representing a form of anti-humanist critique of an unstable Western civilization. More generally, I assess Waugh's fictional contributions to the critique of modern society that was being enacted by other writers in the late nineteen twenties. While I examine some of the implications behind Waugh's authorial decision to refrain from explicitly dealing with Catholic issues in these texts, I ultimately suggest that Waugh implies in his satirical fiction that English society needs to be structured on the basis of traditional values. I then locate this reading of Waugh's early fiction within a matrix of anti-

humanist/pro-classicist thought that was advocated by such contemporary writers as Lewis, T. E. Hulme, and T. S. Eliot among others, and I draw parallels between their thinking.

My second chapter focuses on Greene's first three novels: *The Man Within*, *The Name of Action* (1930), and *Rumour at Nightfall*. Miller's thesis is not appropriate here because Greene does not concentrate on employing satire or humour in these texts, nor does he engage with avant-garde aesthetics. Instead, my underlying argument in this chapter is that Greene can be viewed as representing the disillusioned mindset of his generation via his portrayal of young male protagonists in search of 'peace'. Drawing parallels with my interpretation of Waugh's depiction of the Bright Young People, I suggest that Greene similarly criticizes what he understands as the vacuous and secular state of post-war English society through unfulfilled protagonists who display a longing for permanence, which, I argue, Greene indicates is spiritual in nature. In contrast to Waugh's focus on the outward behaviour and dialogue of his characters, Greene employs free indirect discourse to convey the anxious mindset and vacillating thoughts of his protagonists. Indeed, Greene explicitly reveals the spiritual dilemmas faced by his protagonists and their anxieties over the issue of converting to Christianity.

Another key issue in this chapter is the relationship between male protagonists and female characters. I propose that Greene depicts his protagonists' views of faith by portraying their desire for devout virginal women and their rejection of sinful promiscuous women. I reinforce this idea that Greene engages with religious issues in these texts by referring to elements of spatial theory (as outlined by Joseph Frank). I maintain that Greene depicts specially designated 'religious' space in the texts in which his characters partake in spiritual debates with female characters, contemplate the idea of life after death, envisage transcendent realms of reality that are related to God, and, in one case, experience God's presence. To conclude, I compare Greene's views with Waugh's in order to demonstrate my opinion that there are important similarities between their criticisms of a spiritually confused post-war secular society, despite their use of different styles and genres of writing.

My third chapter is concerned with examining these authors' similar anti-humanist views, their developing Catholic perspectives, and their emerging political identities. In particular, I make reference to the English Catholic revival. I draw comparisons between Waugh's and Greene's writings and those of such revivalists as Christopher Dawson and Hilaire Belloc, who also posit anti-humanist responses to a range of increasingly secular environments. In terms of Waugh's work, I examine his novels *Black Mischief* and *A Handful of Dust*, and I make reference to his travel book *Ninety-Two Days* (1934). In his non-fiction, Waugh explicitly states his belief in the need for religious boundaries to structure deteriorating and increasingly chaotic forms of secular society (within Europe and Africa), and I propose that such thinking implicitly informs his novels. Consequently, in my discussion of *Black Mischief* I suggest that Waugh depicts the regressive nature of modern forms of progress which are detached from religious ideals. These themes are continued in *A Handful of Dust*, in which, I argue, the protagonist Tony Last is tragically unable to withstand the destructive forms of secular modernity due to the shallowness of his faith. In the subsequent section I examine Greene's novels: *Stamboul Train* (1932), *It's a Battlefield* (1934), and *England Made Me* (1935). In these texts Greene's left-wing sympathies become evident when he attacks corruption within large organizations – from political parties to international business empires – which ignore or subjugate vulnerable individuals. He reveals that these organizations do not provide their followers with a sense of fulfilment or comfort. I propose that Greene's political disillusionment, together with his depiction of characters who have a warped view of faith, indicates his criticism of a European society that is suffering from an absence of religious belief. I conclude this chapter by comparing the similarly pessimistic views of modern secular society held by Waugh and Greene, along with what I deem to be their implicit portrayal of the need for religious values to be re-integrated within European society (and, for Waugh, within civilization in general).

The fourth chapter examines Waugh's work between 1935 and 1938, before analysing Greene's writing between 1936 and 1938. This chapter is significantly longer than the previous ones

due to the number of texts covered and the lengthy discussion of Greene's first 'Catholic' novel, *Brighton Rock*. There were also many important international events in this period, from the Spanish Civil War (1936-39) to the Italian invasion of Abyssinia in 1935. Such events prompted Waugh and Greene to reflect upon their personal political beliefs and to explore how these views related to their Catholic faiths. Beginning with Waugh's biography *Edmund Campion* (1935), I assess his depiction of the Reformation and analyse his stance with regard to the ideal relationship between the Church and society. I move on to examine his travel book *Waugh in Abyssinia* (1936), which critics have often accused of articulating fascist and imperialist sentiments. I address these by now familiar accusations and I suggest that such critics have failed to take into consideration the potential religious underpinnings of Waugh's thinking (underpinnings which have a significant bearing on how Waugh's alleged fascism and pro-imperialism are to be understood). Finally, I maintain that in *Scoop* Waugh satirizes political totalitarianism and depicts the social instability that results from relying upon secular political regimes to provide order within society.

The next section begins with an analysis of Greene's travel book *Journey Without Maps* (1936), in which he reflects upon the nature of man and the state of civilization while travelling through Liberia. I then examine Greene's subsequent two novels, *A Gun for Sale* and *Brighton Rock*, in which he directs his left-wing sympathies towards some of the social problems in England. In these texts Greene depicts impoverished protagonists who have warped spiritual views. Consequently, I suggest that Greene implies in his fiction that England's government is failing society's weaker members both socially and spiritually. I maintain that Greene explores the spiritually oppressive living conditions in his fiction using a form of documentary realism, which was inspired by the documentary film movement of the period. I draw attention to the fact that Greene reviewed many of these documentaries in the thirties, and that he admired their methods of presenting social problems. While critics have noted the cinematic aspects of Greene's fiction, they have not discussed the influence of these documentaries on his fiction. I propose that Greene

incorporated aspects of documentary realism into his fiction in order to suggest the spiritual debasement of his characters and to highlight their need for the refuge that can be offered by faith. This chapter ends by comparing the diverging political beliefs held by Greene and Waugh in this period, as well as their views on the role of faith in contemporary England: for Waugh, faith is related to culture and order; for Greene, faith is associated with qualities of refuge and peace.

My final chapter discusses the travel books *Robbery Under Law* (1939) by Waugh, and *The Lawless Roads* (1939) by Greene. I maintain that these authors' respective visits to Mexico were forms of pilgrimage because they felt a renewed sense of solidarity with their persecuted fellow-believers and they reflected upon what Catholicism meant to them personally. Both authors set out their thoughts on how faith should be integrated within Mexico's political structure, and from this position they analysed the role of faith in secular civilizations in general and in English society in particular. This chapter then compares Waugh's unfinished novel *Work Suspended* (1939) with Greene's thriller *The Confidential Agent* (1939), and reads these texts as autobiographical representations of the authors' responses to the imminent Second World War. Both novels depict English society in terms of decline, but whereas Waugh is focused on cultural, aesthetic, and social forms of decay, Greene is more concerned with moral vacuity. This chapter concludes by evaluating and defining the authors' respective religious and political beliefs in relation to each other prior to the outbreak of the Second World War.

In conclusion, I chart the development of the individual religious perspectives held by Waugh and Greene over the course of the inter-war period, before drawing deductions about the correspondences and differences between their perspectives. I analyse, among other things, the authors' differing conceptions and representations of 'God' in their fiction; their differing interpretations of 'hell' and divine punishment; and their decisions to focus on the individual soul in Greene's fiction, as opposed to sets of people in Waugh's work. Finally, I indicate that my thesis has

promoted the significance – and examined the nature – of Waugh’s and Greene’s so-called Catholic perspectives in the period prior to the publication of their ‘Catholic’ novels.

CHAPTER ONE: 'ON THE WAY TO ROME'

Evelyn Waugh was part of a generation that was too young to fight in the First World War and that reached adulthood in a post-war period of unprecedented socio-cultural upheaval. Wyndham Lewis maintained that this generation 'spiritually suffered most in the War' because 'the War lasted too long to be an adventure: it withered something in them that had never come to full growth, something that had never been hardened by the gentler trials of life'.¹ Waugh belonged to the upper-class sector of this cohort, which was represented by the Bright Young People, of whom Waugh 'was a member rather on the fringe than in the centre'.² As Waugh indicates, he remained on the sidelines of the social set, which allowed him to record the behaviour of his peers without becoming too absorbed in their way of life. The terms 'Bright Young People' and 'Bright Young Things' are often conflated but D. J. Taylor reveals that there is a key distinction between them: 'in the last resort a Bright Young Thing was a stereotype, a Bright Young Person an identifiable individual whose footprints could be tracked all over the landscape of the London Society magazines'.³ Waugh's fiction portrays Bright Young People in particular and while these socialites are on the periphery of his first novel, *Decline and Fall* (1928), they form the focus of his second novel, *Vile Bodies* (1930).

Decline and Fall is set in the late nineteen twenties and follows the adventures of a twenty-year-old student named Paul Pennyfeather. Unfairly expelled from Oxford, Paul seeks work as a schoolmaster in Wales, where he meets an assortment of eccentric characters and falls in love with a

¹ Wyndham Lewis, *The Old Gang and the New Gang* (London: Desmond Harmsworth, 1933), 57.

² Evelyn Waugh, 'Appendix: The 1965 Preface', in Evelyn Waugh, *Vile Bodies*, intro. Richard Jacobs (London: Penguin, 2000): 191-92, 192.

³ D. J. Taylor, *Bright Young People: The Rise and Fall of a Generation, 1918-1940* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2007), 19.

pupil's mother, a notorious socialite, Margot Beste-Chetwynde. When Paul becomes engaged to Margot he is unwittingly embroiled in a prostitution ring and is consequently incarcerated. While in prison, he fabricates his own death and is then released with an alternate identity. The novel comes full circle as Paul returns to his college in Oxford to resume his theological studies. *Decline and Fall* is a comedy that gently mocks educational, juridical, and religious institutions, while it humorously exposes the irresponsible and hedonistic lifestyle of the upper classes. Waugh's second novel, *Vile Bodies*, is a weary, caustic, and bleak text in comparison to *Decline and Fall*, as references to suicide, mental collapse, and death are made throughout. Waugh went through a bitter divorce from his first wife during the composition of *Vile Bodies*, which undoubtedly contributed to the novel's darkened tone. In a 1929 letter to Henry Yorke (Green), Waugh described how 'infinitely difficult' he found it to complete *Vile Bodies*: 'It all seems to shrivel up & rot internally and I am relying on a sort of cumulative futility for any effect it may have'.⁴ Set in London, *Vile Bodies* depicts the destructive social escapades of the protagonist Adam Fenwick-Symes, his on-off girlfriend Nina Blount, and their circle of friends. The narrative is more fragmented than that of *Decline and Fall* as numerous short scenes are juxtaposed to create a dizzying and disorientating effect. *Vile Bodies* concludes with a description of an apocalyptic world war, which reveals Waugh's mounting frustration with what he saw as a deadly modern civilization that was spinning out of control.

In *Decline and Fall* and *Vile Bodies* Waugh uses an external form of satire and a method of authorial detachment, both of which enable him to record the novels' events and to satirize contemporary modern society without voicing explicit authorial judgements. This chapter explores some of the possible reasons behind Waugh's decision not to expound explicitly moralistic views in his fiction, and how this style complicates (but does not necessarily rule out) any specific interpretation of religious themes in his fiction. Furthermore, this chapter draws stylistic and thematic

⁴ Evelyn Waugh, *The Letters of Evelyn Waugh*, ed. Mark Amory (London: Penguin Books, 1982), 39.

parallels between Waugh's texts and Tyrus Miller's theory of 'late modernism'. *Decline and Fall* and *Vile Bodies* certainly belong within Miller's chronology, as he states that a form of satirical late modernist literature first appeared 'around 1926' and continued to be published in the thirties. Miller's study focuses on works by Wyndham Lewis, Djuna Barnes, and Samuel Beckett, but he guards against considering late modernism an official movement. In his view, there was no sense among the above writers of 'having self-consciously formulated goals and formal organization to implement those goals'.⁵ Instead, the writers shared a 'significant set of family resemblances' since 'each understood "modernism" in somewhat different but nonetheless related ways'.⁶ Miller identifies numerous features which are definitive of late modernist texts, and this chapter analyses the extent to which Waugh's fiction conforms to three of them: an acknowledgment of the troubled post-war context in which the fiction was written, a tendency for such fiction to undermine and satirize modernist aesthetics, and an inherent pessimism. In this chapter I also seek to expand Miller's thesis by exploring the idea that there is an implicit religious perspective which informs Waugh's criticisms of his secular modern society.

The issues of how 'religious' Waugh's first two novels are, and of how he conceptualized his developing faith in the late twenties, are thus central questions in this chapter. Moreover, they continue to be highly contentious topics in Waugh studies. Martin Stannard is adamant that Waugh does not engage with religious debates at all in his early work, referring to *Decline and Fall* as 'the one novel written while [Waugh] was still living in faithless optimism, confident and aggressive'.⁷ Conversely, Jeffrey Heath suggests that Waugh's early novels are 'satires rooted in a Christian and ultimately a Roman Catholic vision of history, in which the contemporary world is a hollow

⁵ Ibid., 21.

⁶ Ibid., 22.

⁷ Martin Stannard, *Evelyn Waugh: The Early Years 1903-1939* (London: Paladin Grafton Books, 1988), 169.

caricature of an unseen realm'.⁸ My own perspective is similar to Douglas Patey's, as he claims that Waugh was 'on the way to Rome from the mid-twenties, long before the failure of his first marriage, even before the publication of his first novel'.⁹ Like Patey, I do not consider Waugh's early fictions to be explicitly 'Catholic'. He had yet to convert to Catholicism while writing *Decline and Fall* and his mockery of religious institutions is only one aspect of the novels' satirical treatment of modern society. However, by the time he wrote *Vile Bodies*, there is evidence to suggest that Waugh was contemplating religious issues and that he associated religious values with qualities of boundaries and stability, qualities which he felt modern English society detrimentally lacked.

As has been mentioned, Waugh's writing style is not dogmatically religious at this stage in his writing career, nor does he explicitly indicate religious solutions to the problems that he depicts in his fiction. Thus, other readings are plausible due to the non-explicit form of Waugh's writing (e.g. the socialites could be haunted by a Freudian 'death drive', which is why they embark upon such self-destructive behaviour; they could be seeking forms of escapism from contemporary problems; or they could be behaving out of pure disillusionment). Furthermore, it is quite possible that Waugh found contemporary life unfulfilling without knowing that it would be religious faith that could fulfil the socialites, even if he came to this conclusion after his conversion. Or that, prior to conversion, Waugh's religious views may still have been in embryonic form, meaning that it was through the act of writing that he developed and strengthened them. Indeed, many questions can be posed in relation to Waugh's act of not explicitly stating his authorial intentions or views. Did Waugh want his readers to think about why the socialites in his fiction are so inadequate, and thus did he use these texts as a kind of spiritual exercise that would inspire Catholic principles and seeds of faith in his readers? Did

⁸ Jeffrey Heath, *The Picturesque Prison: Evelyn Waugh and His Writing* (London: Weidenfield & Nicolson, 1982), xiii.

⁹ Douglas Patey, *The Life of Evelyn Waugh: A Critical Biography* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), 38.

Waugh feel that this literary form might be more effective for not preaching his beliefs directly? Another possibility is that Waugh believed that it was necessary to allow readers their free will in choosing to read *Decline and Fall* and *Vile Bodies* as implicitly ‘religious’, rather than being coerced into doing so, and thus he implemented a Christian framework of judgement in the very act of not stating his moral views. In all, for the purposes of my thesis, I suggest that Waugh’s act of not explicitly making his authorial views clear forms part of his aesthetic in this period. I tease out the religious imagery and the Christian connotations behind Waugh’s use of the ‘cycle’ motif in order to suggest that in *Decline and Fall* he is dealing with spiritual issues (among other themes), and that in *Vile Bodies* he is focused upon the religious status of its socialites. Accordingly, I suggest that in *Vile Bodies* – when read in line with Waugh’s writings on the socialites of his generation and what he deems to be their problems with religious belief – the socialites are presented as being spiritually lost and unconsciously seeking a form of religious permanence.

Bright Young People and Modern Society: “all they seem to do is to play the fool”

Evelyn Waugh wrote *Decline and Fall* and *Vile Bodies* during a period in which the traumas of the First World War were resurrected in the publication of memoirs, collections of poetry, novels, and plays. These publications include *Memoirs of a Fox-Hunting Man* (1928) by Siegfried Sassoon, *Goodbye to All That* (1929) by Robert Graves, and *Death of a Hero* (1929) by Richard Aldington, to name but a few. Whereas these texts deal explicitly with the horrors and implications of the First World War, Waugh’s early novels register the conflict in more subtle ways, through oblique references to its legacy. *Decline and Fall* alludes to the destructive consequences of the conflict by

contrasting the unstable post-war period with the affluent and settled pre-war years.¹⁰ An apt example is the description of the Hotel Metropole, which was ‘built in the ample days preceding the war, with a lavish expenditure on looking-glass and marble’ (*DF* 126). However, by the late twenties the condition of the hotel has disintegrated: ‘To-day it shows signs of wear [...] There are cracks in the cement on the main terrace, the winter garden is draughty, and one comes disconcertingly upon derelict bathchairs in the Moorish Court’ (*DF* 126). As well as creating an atmosphere of post-war deterioration, *Decline and Fall* registers the depressing realization that the First World War was most probably not the “war to end all wars”. During a school sports day, the protagonist Paul Pennyfeather converses with a pupil’s father, Lord Circumference, and alludes to a sense of ominous foreboding regarding the next war. Paul announces that such sporting events are ““So useful in the case of a war or anything”” (*DF* 84). Circumference responds anxiously: ““Do you think so? D’you really and truly think so? That there’s going to be another war, I mean?”” (*DF* 84). To which Paul replies: ““Yes, I’m sure of it; aren’t you?”” (*DF* 84). The threat of imminent war is also referred to in *Vile Bodies*. The Prime Minister is shown to be completely out of touch with current affairs when he discovers, via a character named Father Rothschild, that another war is looming. The Prime Minister asks bemusedly: ““what do they want a war for anyway?””, to which Rothschild replies: ““That’s the whole point. No one talks about it, and no one wants it. No one talks about it *because* no one wants it. They’re all afraid to breathe a word about it”” (*VB* 144). This reference to a war that no-one talks about supports David Craig’s and Michael Egan’s argument regarding the threat of war in the nineteen twenties:

¹⁰ As numerous scholars have identified, the years leading up to the First World War were fraught with political tension and social unrest. However, due to the horrific onslaught of 1914-1918, the earlier period was idealized by those who survived the war – including Waugh’s generation – as a time of innocence and peace that was then cruelly shattered. For more on this see Samuel Hynes, *A War Imagined: The First World War and British Culture* (London: The Bodley Head, 1990), and Sarah Cole, *Modernism, Male Friendship, and the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

‘What runs through it in the literary record is a feeling that some menacing, savage, or alien thing hung over or underlay the civilised and orderly, like an animal prowling in the darkness around the favoured space with its bright lights’.¹¹ This menacing presence ultimately erupts into the narrative of *Vile Bodies* in the form of the apocalyptic world war that concludes the novel (discussed in further detail below). By engaging with the legacy of the First World War and with anxieties concerning a future one, Waugh establishes in his early fiction the troubled context to which his characters respond.

Like Waugh, the protagonists of *Decline and Fall* and *Vile Bodies* belonged to the ‘younger generation’ that came of age in the post-war period. In 1930 Richard Aldington reflected upon the difficult position inhabited by this cohort:

schoolboys were growing up under the apparently certain menace that they, too, would be roped in for the slaughter [...] And then it was all cancelled. We, at least, had seen something, been something, done something. But they couldn’t do anything or be anything. They were ushered into life during one of the meanest and most fraudulent decades staining the annals of history.¹²

In addition, the younger generation faced the prospect of having few immediate elders from whom to take their bearings, as an appalling number of them had been slaughtered in Europe. Waugh recognized that the onus to successfully reconstruct society, and to ‘get adulthood right’, was placed upon his generation. In ‘Why Glorify Youth?’ (1932), Waugh recalled the pressure he felt at school:

¹¹ David Craig and Michael Egan, *Extreme Situations, Literature and Crisis from the Great War to the Atom Bomb* (London: Macmillan, 1979), 117.

¹² Richard Aldington ‘Sunday Referee’ (9 February, 1930), in Martin Stannard (ed.), *Evelyn Waugh: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge, 2002): 102-5, 103.

'I hardly remember a single speech or sermon made to us at school which did not touch on this topic. "You are the men of tomorrow," they used to say to us. "You are succeeding to the leadership of a broken and shaken world. The cure is in your hands," etc., etc.' (EAR 126). Waugh explained that his generation's response to these 'glowing expectations' came in the form of its subversive and hedonistic behaviour: 'the period which will no doubt presently be known as the "roaring twenties"' (EAR 126). Instead of confronting their social responsibilities, the Bright Young People withdrew into a constant round of party-going.

Martin Stannard identifies an important link between the Bright Young People's desire to socialize and their attitudes towards the elder generation: 'if those who were too young to have shared in the ordeal were prevented from joining the adult world on equal terms then they would make a virtue of their youth and use this as their weapon'.¹³ In *Vile Bodies*, the Prime Minister condemns the juvenile and irresponsible behaviour of the younger generation. In his view the young should help to rebuild the society they have inherited, rather than escape from their duty: "They had a chance after the war that no generation has ever had. There was a whole civilization to be saved and remade – and all they seem to do is to play the fool" (VB 142). The child-like behaviour of the younger generation was similarly noted with disgust by Wyndham Lewis. In a pamphlet entitled *The Doom of Youth* (1932) he bemoaned the 'widespread peter-panism' which he felt was corrupting modern society and hindering its progress.¹⁴ Earlier, in *The Art of Being Ruled* (1926), Lewis had deemed this endemic infantilism to be problematic, primarily because it represented a 'movement of retreat and discouragement' that led to unreflecting subservience: 'To *grow up*, to do what Peter Pan so wisely refrained from doing, is to think and struggle; and all thinking is evil, and struggle is

¹³ Stannard, *Evelyn Waugh: The Early Years*, 177.

¹⁴ Wyndham Lewis, *The Doom of Youth* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1932), 126.

useless. Give up your will; cease to think for yourself'.¹⁵ In *The Doom of Youth*, Lewis directly attacked Waugh's characterization of the Bright Young People, as he accused Waugh of being a "'Youth"' agitator' whose work had started a "'Youth"' Racket' that encouraged and glamorized regressive behaviour.¹⁶

Waugh explicitly associated himself with the younger generation during the composition of *Decline and Fall* and *Vile Bodies*. Waugh suggested to his publisher on the 27th of November 1928 that it 'would be so convenient if the editors could be persuaded that I embodied the Youth Movement so that they would refer to me whenever they were collecting opinions'.¹⁷ A few years later, in his aforementioned essay 'Why Glorify Youth?' (1932), Waugh confessed that he had indeed made a living out of the 'youth boom' (*EAR* 128). However, Waugh was certainly not a propagandist on behalf of youth in the way that Lewis's criticism implied, as he asked: 'Who but the muddle-headed, mist-haunted races of northern Europe would ever commit the folly of glorifying incompleteness and immaturity?' (*EAR* 126). Contrary to Lewis's opinion, Waugh's fiction is not a straightforward celebration of the Bright Young People, nor does it suggest that their childish conduct is something to be admired and copied. Rather, Waugh's fiction exposes the disillusionment underlying the childish attitudes of his socialites, as he implies that their juvenile behaviour is a response to their troubled post-war context. The socialites' inherent scepticism is revealed in *Vile Bodies* during a typical conversation between Adam Fenwick-Symes and his fiancée Nina Blount: "'I don't believe you really think we are going to be married, Nina, do you, or do you?'"'; to which she replies: "'I don't know ... it's only that I don't believe that really divine things like that ever do happen'" (*VB* 82). This dialogue echoes Patrick Balfour's discussion of the archetypal outlook of a

¹⁵ Wyndham Lewis, *The Art of Being Ruled* (1926), ed. Reed Way Dasenbrock (Santa Rosa: Black Sparrow Press, 1989), 166.

¹⁶ Lewis, *The Doom of Youth*, 109, 99.

¹⁷ Waugh, *The Letters of Evelyn Waugh*, 34.

‘post-war young man’ in his memoir *Society Racket* (1934): ‘where was the sense in idealism, of what use were causes and ambition, why take life seriously when at any moment human nature was capable of plunging you into another bloodthirsty massacre? The post-war young man could hardly be blamed for his cynicism’.¹⁸ In accordance with Balfour’s observation, I suggest that it is implied in Waugh’s fiction that the younger generation saw no point in remaking a broken society that promised them nothing but further instability, which is why the socialites of that era preferred to regress into childish roles.

Another escapist feature of the socialites’ conduct is evident in their desperation to be ultra-fashionable. At one point in *Vile Bodies*, Adam becomes a newspaper reporter under the pseudonym ‘Mr Chatterbox’, and he begins to invent people so that ‘his page became almost wholly misleading’ (*VB* 125). One of these fabrications is a modern sculptor called Provna. The socialites’ longing to become involved in the latest fads is so strong that they are willing to lie to themselves and to each other in order to appear up-to-date: ‘Mrs Hoop announced to her friends that Provna was at the moment at work on a bust of Johnny, which she intended to present to the nation’ (*VB* 120). The characters’ desire to be fashionable correlates with aspects of Theodor Adorno’s theory regarding the desire for the ‘new’, which he outlined in *Minima Moralia* (1951).¹⁹ According to Adorno, people seek the ‘new’ because they crave a ‘stimulus’ that will contrast the ‘dread and despair’ of their everyday lives.²⁰ Such terms relate to Waugh’s portrayal of socialites and their desire to escape the pressures of an unstable post-war environment. Adorno argues that a defining feature of this desire

¹⁸ Patrick Balfour, *Society Racket: A Critical Survey of Modern Social Life* (London: John Long Limited, 1934), 158.

¹⁹ Adorno’s study deals with culture in the post-Second World War period, but, as I suggest, his theory of the ‘new’ is applicable to Waugh’s portrayal of socialites who are desperate for new and fashionable experiences.

²⁰ Theodor Adorno, *Minima Moralia: Reflections from Damaged Life* (1951), trans. E. F. N. Jephcott (London: NLB, 1974), 235.

for the new is that it will never be satiated: ‘the veil of temporal succession is rent to reveal the archetypes of perpetual sameness’.²¹ In *Vile Bodies* the narrator exposes the socialites’ comparably futile search for original experiences by listing the seemingly endless array of parties which they attend:

(...Masked parties, Savage parties, Victorian parties, Greek parties, Wild West parties, Russian parties, Circus parties, parties where one had to dress as somebody else, almost naked parties in St John’s Wood, parties in flats and studios and houses and ships and hotels and night clubs, in windmills and swimming-baths, tea parties at school where one ate muffins and meringues and tinned crab, parties at Oxford where one drank brown sherry and smoked Turkish cigarettes, dull dances in London and comic dances in Scotland and disgusting dances in Paris – all that succession and repetition of massed humanity...Those vile bodies...). (VB 132-33)

Samuel Hynes describes this passage as ‘an image of endlessness as depressing as the processions in Dante’s Hell, an endlessness that even the syntax mimes, on and on, phrase after phrase, until it dribbles off, still not a sentence, only a catalogue of meaningless events’.²² As Hynes has noted, the meaningless, damaging, and repetitive lifestyles being depicted in Waugh’s early texts can be related to Dantesque themes of the damned abiding in an inferno. Indeed, Adam Fenwick-Symes’s copy of *Purgatorio* is burned in the opening of *Vile Bodies*, and, as numerous critics have noted, the *Inferno*

²¹ Ibid., 236.

²² Samuel Hynes, *The Auden Generation: Literature and Politics in England in the 1930s* (London: Pimlico, 1992), 58.

would have been a more apt symbol, since the socialites appear to be existing in a form of living hell.²³

Waugh's letters and diary entries written during the twenties attest his personal sense of frustration and boredom with his social life. He reported going 'to bed, as always, with a rather heavy heart' and admitted to feeling that he could 'see no hope of anything ever happening'.²⁴ In his travel account *Labels* (1930), he referred disparagingly to London society as 'lifeless and numb' (L 8), and he stated: 'During an evening's amusement in London one suffers almost every kind of boredom' (L 20). The social life of the Bright Young People outlined in *Decline and Fall* and *Vile Bodies* is similarly defined by themes of boredom, despair, and misery. In *Vile Bodies* Waugh refers to how parties are peopled by 'all the same faces' (VB 131), which are invariably 'bored' (VB 50). Waugh's fictional portrayal of a depressingly repetitive social scene implies that such a lifestyle merely makes the Bright Young People's lives more unstable and unrewarding. The destructive consequences of becoming embroiled within the hedonistic and escapist social circuit become evident at the end of *Decline and Fall* when Paul Pennyfeather and Peter Beste-Chetwynde partake in a poignant conversation. Paul gently points out to the younger man: "'You're drinking rather a lot these days, aren't you Peter?'" to which the boy 'said nothing, but helped himself to some whiskey and soda' (DF 285). We learn of Peter's fate in *Vile Bodies* when a party-goer mentions that the boy "'was at dinner, of course, and, my dear, *how* he drank ... He can't be more than twenty-one'" (VB 104-5).

²³ For example, Alan Dale states: 'based on what follows, the *Inferno* would have been more apt', Alan Dale, 'To Crie Alarme Spiritual: Evelyn Waugh and the Ironic Community', *Modernist Cultures* 2.2 (2006): 102-14, 103. Similarly, Humphrey Carpenter argues that the reference to *Purgatorio* represents 'a strong hint that *Vile Bodies*, like its predecessor, is a modern *Inferno*', Humphrey Carpenter, *The Brideshead Generation: Evelyn Waugh and His Generation* (London: Faber and Faber, 1989), 186.

²⁴ Evelyn Waugh, *The Diaries of Evelyn Waugh*, ed. Michael Davie (London: Phoenix, 1995), 208, 214.

In *Vile Bodies* themes of decay do not just underlie events, they dominate the novel. The social gatherings in general are also described with references to discomfort and physical pain: ‘inside, the saloons were narrow and hot [...] there were protrusions at every corner, and Miss Runcible had made herself a mass of bruises in the first half-hour’ (VB 131). These allusions to injury foreshadow the numerous deaths scattered throughout the narrative, which signify that the Bright Young People are falling apart as a group. Prior to her own demise, Agatha Runcible exclaims: “‘How people are *disappearing*’” (VB 209). These references to social decay are historically accurate, as Taylor reports that by the early thirties the ‘original Bright Young People groupings had all but disintegrated’.²⁵ Waugh’s socialites are depicted as withdrawing into a cyclical lifestyle in order to evade contemporary problems, but themes of disintegration, repetition, and dissatisfaction reveal that such withdrawal does not bring relief or escape. Instead, Waugh implies, the Bright Young People are trapped in a lifestyle that is both falling apart around them and destroying them as they try to live within it.

Suffering from an Almost Fatal Hunger for (Religious) Permanence

In *Vile Bodies* Waugh implies that the post-war socialites are unable to envisage an alternative way of life, and that they eventually will become trapped within their disintegrating and unrewarding lifestyles. He represents the repetitive and futile nature of society by depicting it as cyclical; indeed, a character in *Decline and Fall* tellingly refers to the modern social circuit as a form of “‘social vortex’” (DF 109). Lewis makes a corresponding argument in his short essay ‘Inferior Religions’ (1917), as he proposes that people inhabit cyclical routines which come to govern their behaviour: ‘a man is made drunk with his boat or restaurant as he is with a merry-go-round: only it is the staid,

²⁵ Taylor, *Bright Young People*, 30.

everyday drunkenness of the normal real, not easy always to detect'.²⁶ Lewis argues that due to the 'the complexity of the rhythmic scene', the routines pass as 'open and untrammelled life' and mask the reality that 'we have in most lives the spectacle of a pattern as circumscribed and complete as a theorem of Euclid'.²⁷ When Lewis outlines the mechanism behind an inferior religion, he refers to themes of individual disempowerment and of subordination to a greater system. He likens the social mechanism to that of the 'wheel at Carisbrooke' which 'imposes a set of movements' upon a donkey inside it.²⁸ Initially, the donkey has to power the wheel by pushing it forward, but the creature is soon entrapped within the cyclical motion and is eventually pushed around by the dynamics of the wheel itself. The donkey's conduct shares parallels with Waugh's socialites, as they initially desire to move from party to party but they soon become caught up within the social cycle and are unable to break away from it.

In January 1925, Waugh watched a production of Noel Coward's play *The Vortex* (1923), the title of which refers to the embroiling social life of its protagonists. Waugh wrote in his diary: 'In the evening Mrs G. took me to dinner and to Noel Coward's *Vortex*. Not really a very good play but fun'.²⁹ Even though Waugh refers to Coward's play with disdain, it is significant that Waugh was aware of Coward's work, as there are parallels between their depictions of young socialites. A major theme of *The Vortex* is the strained relationship between the young Nicky Lancaster and his mother Florence, who is an aging socialite. Nicky, a cocaine addict, resents his mother for her extra-marital affairs with younger men and for her inability to give up her damaging lifestyle. In the final scene of

²⁶ Wyndham Lewis, 'Inferior Religions' (1917), in Wyndham Lewis, *The Wild Body: 'A Soldier of Humour' and Other Stories* (1927), intro. Paul O'Keeffe (London: Penguin, 2004): 149-55, 149.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid. The wheel referred to is a waterwheel traditionally driven by donkeys. It can be found at Carisbrooke Castle on the Isle of Wight.

²⁹ Waugh, *Diaries*, 197.

The Vortex Nicky recognizes that he and his mother are enmeshed within their social routine, and he argues that they behave in a self-destructive manner because that is what is demanded of them by their shared lifestyle: “How can we help ourselves? – We swirl about in a vortex of beastliness”.³⁰ He maintains that his acknowledgment of the ‘truth’ of their situation is only momentary, and he urges his mother to change her ways before they both relapse into their old bad habits: “To-morrow morning I *shall* see things differently. All this will seem unreal – a nightmare – the machinery of our lives will go on again and gloss over the truth as it always does – and our chance will be gone forever”.³¹ The play ends with Florence’s weak promise that she will ‘try’ to change, but there is no firm indication that she will be able to do so.³² Waugh’s characters in *Vile Bodies* are similarly imprisoned within a social vortex, but they never reach an awareness of their entrapment. However, they do admit to feeling discontented with and bored by their routine. Adam expresses his restlessness during a conversation with his fiancée:

“Adam, darling, what’s the matter?”

“I don’t know ... Nina, do you ever feel that things simply can’t go on much longer?”

“What d’you mean by things – us or everything?”

“Everything.”

“No – I wish I did.”

“I dare say you’re right ... what are you looking for?”

“Clothes.”

“Why?”

³⁰ Noel Coward, *The Vortex* (1923), in Coward, *Three Plays: The Rat Trap, The Vortex, Fallen Angels* (London: Ernest Benn Limited, 1926): 89-192, 185.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 186.

³² *Ibid.*, 192.

“Oh, Adam, what *do* you want ... you’re too impossible this evening.”

“Don’t let’s talk any more, Nina, d’you mind?” (VB 214)

Adam’s vague and ambiguous complaints voice a general sense of dissatisfaction with his unrewarding life, but he is not able to apprehend the deeper reasons behind these feelings and so terminates the conversation. Adam’s inability to recognize why he is unhappy corresponds to Lewis’s depiction of the figures in ‘Inferior Religions’, who do not realize that they live within restrictive cycles of behaviour.

Lewis argues that those living within inferior religions are so absorbed by their routines that they become ‘only shadows of energy, not living beings’ because ‘their mechanism is a logical structure and they are nothing but that’.³³ Waugh’s socialites are similarly vacuous and shadowy; as Meg Greenfield notes, they are ‘abstractions, reflections, counterfeits – sometimes no more than voices’.³⁴ At one point in *Decline and Fall*, the narrator reflects upon the character of Paul: ‘the whole of this book is really an account of the mysterious disappearance of Paul Pennyfeather, so that readers must not complain if the shadow which took his name does not amply fill the important part of hero for which he was originally cast’ (DF 160). Paul’s disintegration is triggered by his entry into the modern social scene, as he becomes embroiled in Margot Beste-Chetwynde’s hectic social life. While observing Margot’s friends at a party Paul realizes that they lack any sense of individuality, as they copy each other to such an extent that he cannot tell them apart: ‘Paul never learned all their names, nor was he ever sure how many of them there were. He supposed about eight or nine, but as they all wore so many different clothes of identically the same kind, and spoke in the same voice, and appeared so irregularly at meals, there may have been several more or several less’ (DF 168). Paul’s

³³ Lewis, ‘Inferior Religions’, 151.

³⁴ Meg Greenfield, ‘Half People in a Double World’, *Reporter* 18 (28 June, 1958): 38-61, 38.

individuality is similarly ambiguous. He is a passive and naïve character who is pushed from scene to scene, without any sense of direction or choice, and at the end of the novel he even assumes an altogether different identity (having fabricated his own death). Waugh's characterization complies with Tyrus Miller's argument that during the late modernist period individual subjectivity was 'pulverized'.³⁵ Miller claims that late modernist writers depicted a new form of consciousness, which 'took collective shape in the metropolis', and that these writers 'doubted that the process of metropolization could give rise to a stable, abstractly rational, collective subject'.³⁶ In *Vile Bodies* a whole range of socialites, who inhabit London and represent a collective metropolitan mentality, are portrayed as shallow and vacuous. There is very little description of internal thought processes, as the characters have lost the ability to connect with one another on an emotional level. A prime example is when Nina declares enthusiastically to Adam: "Darling, I am glad about our getting married" (*VB* 41). Adam is uncomfortable with such a display of affection and pulls back: "so am I. But don't let's get intense about it" (*VB* 41). The socialites' inability to express profound feelings hints at a darker theme of the novel: the socialites are empty and have no emotional depths to plumb.

In *Society Racket* Patrick Balfour suggests that his peers of the nineteen twenties had to 'seek sensation' because they were 'incapable of emotion'.³⁷ He argues that such epicurean behaviour indicated that the socialites were 'not happy', and he concludes that this was because their 'souls [were] dead'.³⁸ In a related observation, Lewis's theory of inferior religions suggests that those inhabiting cyclical routines do so because they are unconsciously aware of their spiritual shallowness. Lewis describes the inhabitants as 'carefully selected specimens of religious fanaticism', and he claims that their lifestyles are symptomatic of a deep desire for the 'immense

³⁵ Miller, *Late Modernism*, 40.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ Balfour, *Society Racket*, 268.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

refuge and rest' offered by the 'big religions'.³⁹ Although there is no explicit evidence to suggest that Waugh was aware of Lewis's essay, it is fruitful to read the social circuit in Waugh's fiction as a form of inferior religion, and to interpret the socialites' conduct as indicative of their craving for religious permanence. In *Decline and Fall* a modern architect named Otto Silenus uses a simile of the spinning wheel in Luna Park to explain his premise that people essentially seek stability within their social lives:

You pay five francs and go into a room with tiers of seats all round, and in the centre the floor is made of a great disc of polished wood that revolves quickly. At first you sit down and watch the others. They are all trying to sit in the wheel, and they keep getting flung off, and that makes them laugh, and you laugh too. It's great fun. (*DF* 277)

Silenus suggests that the 'aim' of this ride is to reach a place of permanence in the centre of the whirling motion: "“You see, the nearer you can get to the hub of the wheel the slower it is moving and the easier it is to stay on [...] of course at the very centre there's a point completely at rest, if one could only find it”" (*DF* 277). Silenus's description of tourists struggling upon a moving wheel can be read as a metaphorical representation of the social cycle in *Decline and Fall* and *Vile Bodies*.

There is, perhaps, an implicit religious significance behind Waugh's use of 'wheel' imagery in his novels. T. S. Eliot makes use of such imagery in his religious poems 'Ash-Wednesday' (1930) and 'Burnt Norton' (1936).⁴⁰ In the former poem, Eliot depicts a mind turning in religious indecision before describing how the world exists in a state of detachment from religious meaning: 'Against the

³⁹ Lewis, 'Inferior Religions', 150.

⁴⁰ 'Burnt Norton' was originally published on its own in 1936, before being re-published as part of the collection of poems in *Four Quartets* (1943).

Word the unstilled world still whirled/ About the centre of the silent Word'.⁴¹ In 'Burnt Norton', the spinning imagery is repeated and expanded upon:

At the still point of the turning world. Neither flesh nor fleshless;
Neither from nor towards; at the still point, there the dance is,
But neither arrest nor movement. And do not call it fixity,
Where past and future are gathered.⁴²

Silenus's reference to socialites aiming to reach the 'still point', or, as he terms it, "the point completely at rest" (*DF* 277), can be read in line with this Eliotian idea of seeking religious meaning. Taking into consideration the religious symbolism that could be present within the wheel and cycle imagery, Waugh's socialites can be viewed as unconsciously searching for places of religious permanence within their revolving, irreligious lifestyles.

The search for religious stability is alluded to in *Vile Bodies* when Father Rothschild tries to explain the younger generation's hedonistic behaviour: "I know very few young people, but it seems to me that they are all possessed with an almost fatal hunger for permanence. I think all these divorces show that" (*VB* 143). The term 'fatal' indicates the self-destructive manner in which the socialites seek 'permanence' and corresponds to Waugh's portrayal of a damaging social life. Some critics refuse to recognize the importance of this speech. Frederick Stopp describes Rothschild as 'too, too bogus' and for William Myers the concept of hungering for permanence is a 'sub-

⁴¹ T. S. Eliot, *The Complete Poems and Plays* (London: Faber and Faber, 1969), 96.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 173.

Chestertonian paradox that fails to develop'.⁴³ In Robert Garnett's view, Rothschild's speech represents the 'less interesting moralizing that insinuated itself into Waugh's fiction: the vital mythmaking imagination eclipsed by mere opinions and preaching'.⁴⁴ Yet, throughout the text, Rothschild is depicted as having a superior form of perception, as he is 'endowed with a penetrating acumen in the detection of falsehood and exaggeration' (*VB* 33). He is a learned and mysterious figure, and in my view he recognizes the key reason behind why the socialites behave the way that they do. Rather than dismiss Rothschild as a comical or irrelevant figure, I suggest that, since he is a priest, his speech indicates his view that the socialites are unconsciously seeking a form of religious permanence. Thus, one reading of the hedonistic lifestyle of the Bright Young People is that they are living without recourse to religious values, but, as Rothschild recognizes, their irreligious behaviour is also symptomatic of their unconscious 'hunger' for a form of religious permanence. The futility and the irony that characterize the social cycle become clear: the socialites unconsciously seek religious permanence within a lifestyle that is characterized by its absence.

Although Waugh did not convert to Catholicism until the 30th September 1930, and thus after the publication of *Vile Bodies* in January of that year, he spent time prior to his conversion reflecting upon and researching his faith. He admitted in a 1964 television interview: "I was under instruction – literally under instruction – for about three months, but of course I'd interested myself in it before, reading books independently and so on".⁴⁵ Early diary entries attest Waugh's interest in religion. On the 6th July 1924 he heard 'Ronnie Knox preach at Westminster', and by the 20th February 1927 he

⁴³ Frederick J. Stopp, *Evelyn Waugh: Portrait of an Artist* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1958), 73; William Myers, *Evelyn Waugh and the Problem of Evil* (London: Faber and Faber, 1991), 16.

⁴⁴ Robert Garnett, *From Grimes to Brideshead: The Early Novels of Evelyn Waugh* (London: Associated University press, 1990), 67.

⁴⁵ Cited in Heath, *The Picturesque Prison*, 3.

mentioned that he had visited 'Father Underhill about being a parson'.⁴⁶ Various letters and articles written in the late twenties also reveal that Waugh was specifically interested in the relationship between his contemporaries and religious belief. Writing to his publisher in 1929, Waugh asked: 'Could you get the *Express* to take an article on the Youngest Generation's view of Religion? – very serious & Churchy'.⁴⁷ In the same year, on confirming his imminent divorce, Waugh declared to his brother Alec: 'the trouble about the world today is that there's not enough religion in it. There's nothing to stop young people doing whatever they feel like at the moment'.⁴⁸ Waugh's comment confirms that during the late twenties he associated religious belief with themes of restraint and order, and that he felt his contemporaries' dissipated behaviour was a consequence of their lack of faith. Related to this comment, Waugh asserted in his essay 'War and the Younger Generation' (1929) that 'freedom produces sterility' (*EAR* 62). In my view he illustrates this statement with his depiction of bored, unambitious, and dissatisfied socialites in *Vile Bodies*. Instead of feeling liberated by the absence of traditional boundaries, and by the absence of religious beliefs, Waugh's characters are shown to be trapped within a destructive and stagnant social cycle.

There is textual evidence which indicates that the traditions and boundaries ignored by the socialites in *Decline and Fall* are in part religious in nature, and that Waugh reveals the detrimental consequences of choosing to disregard them. *Decline and Fall* is peopled by characters who relate ineffectively to religious principles. A prime example is when an incarcerated religious lunatic admits: "I keep reading the Bible. There's a lot of killing in that" (*DF* 237). The lunatic ends up beheading a character named Prendergast, who worked in the prison as a "Modern Churchman", which means that he drew 'the salary of a beneficed clergyman' without having to 'commit himself

⁴⁶ Waugh, *Diaries*, 67, 281.

⁴⁷ Waugh, *The Letters of Evelyn Waugh*, 30.

⁴⁸ Alec Waugh, *My Brother Evelyn and Other Profiles* (London: Cassell, 1967), 191-92.

to any religious belief" (DF 185). Prendergast admits that he was unable to commit wholly to a particular faith because he had "'Doubts'" (DF 34), which stemmed from the fact that he could not understand "'why God had made the world at all'" (DF 36). Prendergast's bloody demise suggests Waugh's disdain for Modern Churchmen and their lack of religious dedication.

By the time Waugh wrote *Vile Bodies*, his interest in religious issues had increased and the themes of religious disaffection are consequently more prominent in his second novel. Indeed, the socialites are established as irreligious from the beginning. The opening scene is set on a ship during a tumultuous sea-crossing, and the narrator reports that the Bright Young People, in an effort to avert 'the terrors of sea-sickness', had 'indulged in every kind of civilised witchcraft, but they were lacking in faith' (VB 3). Such flippancy regarding religion is echoed by Mrs Hoop: "'Well," she thought, "I'm through with theosophy after this journey. Reckon I'll give Catholics the once over'" (VB 15). The only time the socialites experience religious passion is when they observe a show put on by a fraudulent figure named Mrs Ape, who manipulates religious sentiments in order to extract 'donations' from the socialites: "'She kind of draws it out of you, damned if she doesn't'" (VB 21). The only sincere representation of religious values is Father Rothschild, but he is ignored by the Bright Young People and he eventually leaves the text altogether when he drives off into the night. As has been mentioned, Waugh never explicitly states his view that society suffers from a lack of religious boundaries in *Vile Bodies*. It is by reading *Vile Bodies* alongside his non-fictional exploration of religious issues, and by taking into consideration the religious symbolism within the text, that I put forward the idea that Waugh's religious criticisms are implicit within his satirical technique.

The issue of 'free will' could be a significant factor in Waugh's decision only to imply religious themes in his fiction. It is possible that Waugh wanted his readers to come to conclusions by themselves, rather than have him preach to them. Such a method would be in keeping with the ideas of aesthetics and morality being discussed in this period by such writers as Ford Madox Ford

and D. H. Lawrence, among others. Ford in 'On Impressionism' (1913) states: 'The artist can never write to satisfy himself – to get, as the saying is – something off the chest. He must not write propaganda which it is his desire to write' and he 'must not write to improve' the reader.⁴⁹ In an essay entitled 'Morality and the Novel' (1925), Lawrence refers particularly to religious ideas when he writes: 'If you try to nail anything down, in the novel, either it kills the novel, or the novel gets up and walks away with the nail'.⁵⁰ Here, Lawrence argues that the novel should not be used to explicate morals in the same way as 'Philosophy, religion, science'.⁵¹ Instead, the novel should be free to develop its own internal morality, because 'the novel is the highest complex of subtle inter-relatedness that man has discovered. Everything is true in its own time, place, circumstance, and untrue outside of its own place, time, circumstance'.⁵² Maybe Waugh kept his religious views out of sight because he did not want to mar his book with dogma. Waugh in his essay 'Ronald Firbank' (1929) claimed that a novel should be 'directed for entertainment' (*EAR* 59). He also states in his 'Author's Note' to the first edition of *Decline and Fall*: 'Please bear in mind throughout that IT IS MEANT TO BE FUNNY' (*DF*, unpaginated).

In a 1930 review of a collection of Lawrence's assorted articles, Waugh refers to Lawrence's later fiction and criticizes him for moralizing in it (ironically, considering Lawrence's 'Morality and the Novel'). In Waugh's opinion, Lawrence's art suffers in these later novels because of his tendency to propagandize: 'But when he is not on the heights, in those flat periods of his writing when he is resting from an outburst or painfully working himself up for another, this propagandist inclination is

⁴⁹ Ford Madox Ford, 'On Impressionism' (1913), in *Critical Writings of Ford Madox Ford*, ed. Frank MacShane (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1964): 33-55, 54.

⁵⁰ D. H. Lawrence, 'Morality and the Novel' (1925) in *D. H. Lawrence Selected Critical Writings*, ed. Michael Herbert (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998): 173-79, 174

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² *Ibid.*

a bore' (*EAR* 71).⁵³ In keeping with this anti-didactic stance, it is possible that in *Vile Bodies* Waugh was implying religious criticisms about contemporary society rather than openly propagandizing them. Alan Dale has argued that Waugh was aware that not all of his readership would respond to, or understand, such implicit criticisms: by 'leav[ing] his values unstated throughout', Waugh 'must know that they will not be assumed by his readers'.⁵⁴ Thus, Waugh could have been leaving it up to the 'free will' of his readers to choose whether or not there is a religious message in his fiction. In other words, he refrains from preaching his beliefs directly, even though his work, in my view, investigates such beliefs.

This absence of an explicitly religious moral message in the novels has led such critics as Malcolm Bradbury to argue that Waugh's 'early novels' are written 'from a position of moral uninterest', and that they offer 'no secure centres of value and no real substantiation of any interpretive statements'.⁵⁵ Yet, as David Wykes notes, Waugh's contemplation of the aesthete Dante Gabrielle Rossetti reveals some telling insights into Waugh's own aesthetics. In the biography *Rossetti: His Life and Works* (1928), Waugh concluded that there was a 'spiritual inadequacy' and a 'sense of ill-organization' about all that Rossetti did (*R* 226). Wykes maintains that to 'point to the absence of 'essential rectitude' and to 'spiritual inadequacy' indicates the critic's certainty that art has a moral basis'.⁵⁶ Consequently, such critics as David Dooley have suggested that in Waugh's early novels 'the immorality implied a concept of morality, the faithlessness (as in Eliot's *Waste*

⁵³ It must be noted that in the review Waugh does not specifically refer to the titles of any of Lawrence's novels, nor does he refer to the issues about which Lawrence is accused of being 'propagandist'.

⁵⁴ Dale, 'To Crie Alarme Spiritual', 110.

⁵⁵ Malcolm Bradbury, *Evelyn Waugh* (London: Oliver & Boyd, 1964), 7.

⁵⁶ David Wykes, *Evelyn Waugh: A Literary Life* (London: Macmillan, 1999), 57.

Land) implied the need for faith'.⁵⁷ Indeed, Dale specifically refers to *Vile Bodies* when he argues that Waugh's technique should be viewed as a 'classically modernist (some might say "post-modern") phenomenon', as it is one of 'intentional miscommunication' or, to use Justus Nieland's term, Waugh used a strategy of 'negative comic signification' to make his religious criticisms of his contemporary society.⁵⁸

An implicit religious perspective might also be detected within Waugh's actual satirical style, which could represent his endorsement of firm, traditional values. Furthermore, Waugh's satirical methods share similarities with Lewis's theory of satire. Waugh enthusiastically reviewed Lewis's pamphlet *Satire and Fiction* (1930) in October 1930; he described Lewis's satirical style as 'the finest controversial style of any living writer' and stated: 'no novelist and very few intelligent novel readers can afford to neglect this essay' (*EAR* 102). Although *Satire and Fiction* was published after Waugh had written *Vile Bodies*, his praise suggests that he concurred with Lewis's methods. According to Lewis, the characters most 'suitable for satire' are '*machines, governed by routine* – or creatures that stagnate'.⁵⁹ Waugh's characterization of socialites (especially in *Vile Bodies*) corresponds to Lewis's argument, as the Bright Young People are governed by their social circuit, which drains them of individuality and intent. Furthermore, Lewis felt that the 'outer' method was most suited to portraying these characters: 'Dogmatically, then, I am for the *Great Without*, for the method of *external* approach, for the wisdom of the eye'.⁶⁰ Waugh found these 'observations about

⁵⁷ David Dooley, 'Waugh's Road to Affirmation', in Andrew A. Tadie, Michael H. Macdonald and William B. Eerdmans (eds), *Permanent Things: Toward the Recovery of a More Human Scale at the End of the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Grand Rapids, 1995): 48-65, 49.

⁵⁸ Alan Dale, 'To Crie Alarme Spiritual', 110 and 112; Justus Nieland 'Editor's Introduction: Modernism's Laughter', *Modernist Cultures* 2.2 (2006): 80-86, 81.

⁵⁹ Wyndham Lewis, *Satire and Fiction* (London: The Arthur Press, 1930), 45.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 53.

the “Outside and Inside” method of fiction’ to be ‘immensely interesting’ (*EAR* 102) and he used a similar form of external satire to depict his shallow and vacuous socialites.

A key aspect of Lewis’s external satirical method, which also applies to Waugh’s satirical style, was its association with ‘the “classical” manner of apprehending’.⁶¹ Lewis outlined a detailed interpretation of classicism in *Men Without Art* (1934), in which he specifically referred to T. E. Hulme’s writings on the subject.⁶² Decades earlier, in ‘A Tory Philosophy’ (1912), Hulme described the classical attitude as having ‘a great respect for the past and for tradition, not from sentimental, but on purely rational grounds’.⁶³ In an argument later echoed by Waugh, Hulme maintained in ‘A Notebook’ (1915-16) that man ‘can only accomplish anything of value by discipline – ethical and political. Order is thus not merely negative, but creative and liberating’.⁶⁴ For Hulme, these traditional values were to be found outside the human self, as they had to be ‘absolute and objective’ and ‘*not* relative to human desires and feelings’.⁶⁵ In Lewis’s version of classicism, outlined in *Time and Western Man* (1927), man’s relationship to these objective values was best represented by the Catholic Church’s conception of God. According to Lewis, the Catholic Church kept the ‘supreme divinity’, which epitomized absolute principles, away from earth, ‘instead of exacting jealously its democratic descent to where we are’.⁶⁶ Although Lewis maintained that ‘we should support the

⁶¹ Wyndham Lewis, *Men Without Art* (1934), ed. Seamus Cooney (Santa Rosa: Black Sparrow Press, 1987), 103.

⁶² Lewis also referred to ‘classicism’ in such works as *Time and Western Man* (1927), *Hitler* (1931), and *Blasting and Bombardiering* (1937).

⁶³ T. E. Hulme, ‘A Tory Philosophy’ (1912), in T. E. Hulme, *Selected Writings*, ed. Patrick McGuinness (Manchester: Carcanet Press, 1998): 157-72, 160.

⁶⁴ Hulme, ‘A Notebook’ (1915-16), *Selected Writings*: 180-222, 209.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 208.

⁶⁶ Wyndham Lewis, *Time and Western Man* (1927), ed. Paul Edwards (Santa Rosa: Black Sparrow Press, 1993), 365.

catholic church [*sic*] perhaps more than any other visible institution’, he did not commit himself to all aspects of Catholicism.⁶⁷ Rather, he suggested that society should ‘make a new world of Reason’ that was ‘more elastic than the roman cult [*sic*]’, by ‘employing all the resources of the new world’.⁶⁸ Thus, Lewis admired the ‘secular and non-religious’ aspects of the Catholic consciousness; its ‘objective hardness’, rather than its dogma.⁶⁹ Hulme was similarly uncommitted to the faith aspect of religion, as he stated: ‘I am not [...] concerned so much with religion, as with the attitude, the “way of thinking”, the categories, from which religion springs, and which often survive it’.⁷⁰

Despite their reserved attitude to faith, Lewis and Hulme argued that the religious system provided the most suitable framework with which to structure society. Lewis maintained that the alternative, ‘the spectacle of an ethical system adrift, wandering helplessly about in search of Authority, of a God’, was not ‘edifying’ – it was ‘absurd’.⁷¹ These writers also placed the Christian doctrine of Original Sin at the centre of their conceptualizations of classicism, because it epitomized the fallibility of man. In Lewis’s words, the concept of Original Sin meant that man was fundamentally flawed and incapable ‘of “unlimited” advance’.⁷² Consequently, man required outside help in the form of objective traditions and values by which to live, or, as Hulme put it: ‘only by tradition and organization’ can ‘anything decent’ be achieved by man.⁷³ This stance on the fallibility of man and the need for boundaries and tradition, which was endorsed by Lewis and Hulme, indicates an anti-humanist perspective that is inseparable from a belief in classical values. As Daniel

⁶⁷ Ibid., 367.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 365.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 380.

⁷⁰ Hulme, ‘A Notebook’, 208.

⁷¹ Lewis, *Men Without Art*, 169.

⁷² Wyndham Lewis, *Blasting and Bombardiering* (1937) (London: Calder & Boyars, 1967), 102.

⁷³ Hulme, ‘Romanticism and Classicism’ (1912), *Selected Writings*: 68-83, 70.

Schenker recognizes, Lewis's 'aesthetic of deadness' represents 'his disenchantment with humanism'.⁷⁴ I suggest that Waugh's comparable use of an external form of satire, with which he criticizes the irreligious Bright Young People, implies his anti-humanist belief in firm boundaries and the need for 'classical' (and associated with these, religious) values in his contemporary English society.

“Faster, faster!”: Caught Within an Avant-Garde Social Life that is Heading for a Crash

The argument that Waugh implicitly criticized his post-war society by suggesting that it should return to classical principles is strengthened when read together with his rejection of avant-garde values. Andrzej Gasiorek maintains that the 'retreat from avant-gardism to the conservative values of order, authority, and tradition' was a defining feature of most conceptualizations of post-war classicism.⁷⁵ Prior to the war, the avant-garde comprised numerous groups that competed and conflicted with each other as they promoted their different aesthetics. In general, the groups represented a collective drive 'to be ahead of one's time, to break with conventions and forge new styles in the arts'.⁷⁶ The avant-garde accordingly was associated with anti-traditional values and with a humanist belief in man's (and art's) potential for re-ordering society in the modern era. However, after the First World War, the avant-garde's 'tremendous energy' became deflated and the 'thrilling sense of a powerful, all-sided development of the arts' had broken down.⁷⁷ The avant-garde's

⁷⁴ Daniel Schenker, *Wyndham Lewis Religion and Modernism* (London: The University of Alabama Press, 1992), 95.

⁷⁵ Andrzej Gasiorek, *Wyndham Lewis and Modernism* (Devon: Northcote House, 2004), 59.

⁷⁶ David Graver, *The Aesthetics of Disturbance: Anti-Art in Avant-Garde Drama* (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1995), 1.

⁷⁷ Miller, *Late Modernism*, 29.

overwhelming desire to be ‘modern’ led to the judgement that it was in fact ‘enslaved to a shallow notion of innovation for innovation’s sake’.⁷⁸

It is a critical commonplace that Waugh engaged with and criticized avant-garde principles in *Decline and Fall* and *Vile Bodies*.⁷⁹ Following this, it could be said that Waugh portrays the social circuit inhabited by the doomed socialites in these texts as having avant-garde features, and that his condemnation of the avant-garde is evident in his portrayal of a disintegrating modern social life. In *Vile Bodies* Waugh establishes a direct link between the avant-garde and the social gatherings of the Bright Young People in a footnote; it informs the reader that some invitation cards are influenced by Vorticist and Futurist manifestoes:

there was the sort that Johnnie Hoop used to adapt from *Blast* and Marinetti’s *Futurist Manifesto*. These had two columns of close print; in one was a list of all the things Johnnie hated, and in the other all the things he thought he liked. Most of the parties which Miss Mouse financed had invitations written by Johnnie Hoop. (VB 51)

⁷⁸ Graver, *The Aesthetics of Disturbance*, 1.

⁷⁹ In George McCartney’s view, Waugh developed ‘an alternative modernism’ by his ‘ironic re-working of Bauhaus and Futurist theories’. See *Evelyn Waugh and the Modernist Tradition* (New Jersey: Transaction, 2004), 6-7. For Archie Loss, Waugh’s fiction is ‘one of the best examples of Vorticist and Futurist principles in English prose’. See ‘*Vile Bodies*, Vorticism and Italian Futurism’, *Journal of Modern Literature* 18.1 (1992): 155-64, 158. In an article about *Vile Bodies*, Brooke Allen argues that Waugh parodies ‘individual motifs and techniques’ taken from Futurism in particular, in order to ‘infuse his own scepticism into the aesthetic’ and ‘to emphasize its absurdity and, even more seriously, its philosophical error’. See ‘*Vile Bodies* A Futurist Fantasy’, *Twentieth Century Literature: A Scholarly and Literary Journal* 40.3 (Fall 1994): 318-28, 322.

Moreover, throughout both *Decline and Fall* and *Vile Bodies* Waugh criticizes the avant-garde in general and, more specifically, he satirizes and exposes what he sees as fundamental problems inherent in Vorticist, Futurist, and Bauhaus aesthetics. These novels convey the destructive consequences of endorsing an avant-garde way of life in their dystopian depiction of machinery and modern technology, and in references to dehumanization within an increasingly mechanized society.

Waugh was fascinated by aesthetics and by modern art from an early age. As a boy of fourteen he wrote an essay entitled 'In Defence of Cubism' (1917) in which he argued that Cubism was 'an unsurpassed medium for portraiture' (EAR 7). He attacked those who looked upon Cubism with 'prejudice and contempt' (EAR 7), and he predicted that the early Cubists would 'take their well-deserved place among the masters who paved the way for their coming' (EAR 8). Around the time he wrote this essay, Waugh formed an important relationship with his brother's fiancée Barbara Jacobs. She directly influenced his knowledge of modern art because she took him to numerous galleries in order to look at the Futurist and Cubist exhibitions.⁸⁰ Patey reveals that in 1917 Waugh and Barbara 'produced their own versions of cubist paintings on the walls of the Underhill day-nursery, renamed the "studio"'.⁸¹ In his school diary of 1919, Waugh recorded that he and some fellow students wanted to establish a new society: 'our ideas about Dick's Society are that it should be divided into groups – literary, artistic, political, musical etc. – who should read papers, exchange criticism on work, and hold informal discussions'.⁸² The next day he asserted that he particularly wanted to be head of the art group: 'I know several subjects I would like to read papers on', one being 'The Tendencies of Modern Painting'.⁸³ By the time Waugh went to Oxford University he had

⁸⁰ Patey describes how Barbara 'educated Waugh in the basic tenets of Futurism'. See Patey, *The Life of Evelyn Waugh*, 53.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁸² Waugh, *Diaries*, 34

⁸³ *Ibid.*

developed his own artistic talent, and Selina Hastings reports that Waugh was ‘much in demand, designing covers for magazines, for OUDS programmes’.⁸⁴ According to Carlos Villar Flor and Noelia Domínguez Carballo, some of these designs ‘clearly show the influence of Vorticism and Futurism’.⁸⁵ Following Oxford, Waugh signed up for various art courses at Heatherley’s School of Fine Art in London. One of the School Administrators, Richard Thorneycroft, describes how the ethos of the school during Waugh’s time there would have been influenced by the artist Henry Massey, who ‘kept his students in touch with all the latest developments in art, making the Heatherley’s a thoroughly modern art school, while maintaining all its old traditions’.⁸⁶ In the late twenties Waugh’s continuing interest in art was indicated by his decision to write the biography of Dante Gabriel Rossetti, and by his act of personally illustrating the first edition of *Decline and Fall*. In 1929 he even admitted his preference for art over writing when, prior to a cruise around the Mediterranean, he told awaiting reporters: “‘I hope I can bring back enough sketches to hold an

⁸⁴ Selina Hastings, *Evelyn Waugh: A Biography* (London: Minerva, 1995), 103. Donat Gallagher reveals that Waugh ‘published approximately seventy caricatures, wood engravings, dust jacket designs, book plates, column heads and magazine covers, some of which continued to be used for many years. This was twice his output of stories, poems, articles and other miscellaneous pieces of writing’ (*EAR* 4).

⁸⁵ Carlos Villar Flor and Noelia Domínguez Carballo reveal that Waugh, in his Oxford years, ‘contributed articles and drawings to the undergraduate publications *Cherwell* and *Oxford Broom*’, and the critics maintain that ‘examples such as the 1924 cover for the short-lived *Oxford Broom* clearly show the influence of Vorticism and Futurism’. See Carlos Villar Flor and Noelia Domínguez Carballo, ‘Lewisian Footprints in Evelyn Waugh’s early Satires’, in Carmelo Cunchillos Jaime (ed.), *Wyndham Lewis The Radical: Essays on Literature and Modernity* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2007): 187-218, 188.

⁸⁶ Richard Thorneycroft of Heatherley’s notes that Waugh enrolled for a one month course in September 1924, then again on the 20th October for one month and three weeks, and again on the 4th January for the art school’s ‘Coupons’ course (personal email, 4 February 2008).

exhibition in June, and, if successful, abandon writing for painting”⁸⁷. Waugh’s artistic background suggests that he would have been *au fait* with the main features of such avant-garde movements as Futurism, Vorticism, and the Bauhaus.

Futurism was an artistic and social movement defined by a passionate rejection of the past – ‘we intend to know nothing of it, nothing of the past’ – as it valued youth, the future, and modernity instead.⁸⁸ Originally founded by the Italian born Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, the Futurists famously associated progress and empowerment with technological innovation. The regenerative effects of machinery were discussed in Marinetti’s ‘Technical Manifesto of Futurist Literature’ (1912):

After the reign of the animal, behold the beginning of the reign of the machine. Through growing familiarity and friendship with matter, which scientists can know only in its physical and chemical reactions, we are preparing the creation of the mechanical man with interchangeable parts. We will liberate man from the idea of death, and hence from death itself, the supreme definition of the logical mind.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ Stannard, *Evelyn Waugh: The Early Years*, 172. Waugh’s experiences on the cruise provided the content of his travel book *Labels* (1930).

⁸⁸ F. T. Marinetti, ‘The Founding and the Manifesto of Futurism (1909)’, in Lawrence Rainey (ed.), *Modernism: An Anthology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005): 3-6, 5. For more information on Futurism, see Cinzia Sartini Blum, *The Other Modernism: F. T. Marinetti’s Futurist Fiction of Power* (London: University of California Press, 1996); Gunter Berghaus, *Futurism and Politics: Between Anarchist Rebellion and Fascist Reaction* (Oxford: Berghahn, 1996); Caroline Tisdall and Angelo Bozzola, *Futurism* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1977); and John J. White, *Literary Futurism: Aspects of the First Avant-Garde* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990).

⁸⁹ F. T. Marinetti, ‘Technical Manifesto of Futurist Literature’ (1912), in Rainey (ed.), *Modernism*: 15-19, 19.

This quotation evokes a spiritual aspect in the Futurists' technophilia, through which they articulated a God-like desire to create new life in the form of a human-machine hybrid and to overcome death itself. A religious element also informs the aims of the Bauhaus.⁹⁰ Lasting between 1919 and 1933, the Bauhaus was an architectural school in Germany that was characterized by a determination to reform art education and to create a new kind of society. The school's leader, Walter Gropius, outlined his intentions for the group in his 'Manifesto of the Bauhaus' (1919):

Let us together desire, conceive and create the new building of the future, which will combine everything – architecture *and* sculpture *and* painting – in a *single form* which will one day rise towards the heavens from the hands of a million workers as the crystalline symbol of a new and coming faith.⁹¹

The allusion to the future and to faith corresponds to Futurism, as both movements were not only offering new ways of thinking about art but were also proposing new ways of living in society.

Aesthetically and socially revolutionary ideas also defined the Vorticist movement. Created mainly by Lewis and Ezra Pound, Vorticism first entered the public domain in the 1914 issue of the magazine *Blast*, which was edited by Lewis. Paul Edwards explains that a predominant aim of Vorticism was to replace 'an old culture with a new one'.⁹² According to Edwards, while Pound saw the movement 'in terms of a renaissance', Lewis saw it 'more in terms of a revolution', but together they 'shared a belief [...] that the art and literature prized by the cultural powers of the time was

⁹⁰ For more on Walter Gropius and the Bauhaus see Walter Gropius and Arthur S. Wensinger (eds), *The Theatre of the Bauhaus*, trans. Arthur S. Wensinger (London: John Hopkins Press, 1996).

⁹¹ Frank Whitford, *Bauhaus* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1984), 202.

⁹² Paul Edwards, 'Afterword', in Lewis, *Time and Western Man*: 455-508, 457.

second or third-rate' and that it needed to be 'replaced by their work'.⁹³ The Vorticists rejected the Edwardian and Victorian pasts and its traditions, instead favouring the promise inherent within their present moment: 'With our Vortex the Present is the only active thing'.⁹⁴ The Vorticists were also convinced that a form of maximum power could be harnessed through the restraint and control of kinetic energy. Gasiorek reveals that Lewis used this concept to distance his aesthetic from that of Futurism, so that although *Blast* was 'obsessed with energy', Vorticism 'sought to control' such energy rather than 'abandon the self to its force' as did the Futurists.⁹⁵ The image of a vortex with its whirling dynamics and its centre of stillness symbolized these ideas of powerful forces held in control. Karen Orchard recognizes that the calm centre of the vortex represented the place from which the Vorticists could 'concentrate on the chaos raging around them, and control it', as Lewis had suggested that the Vorticist would be 'at his maximum point of energy when stillest'.⁹⁶ Furthermore, the Vorticists' concept of attaining a place of stillness amid cyclical motion shares parallels with Waugh's depiction of socialites who unconsciously seek a place of permanence within their cyclical social whirls.

The most markedly 'avant-garde' character in *Decline and Fall* is the German architect Otto Silenus. He is employed by the notorious socialite Margot Beste-Chetwynde to modernize and redesign her country house, Kings Thursday. A minor character reveals Silenus's avant-garde credentials when he mentions that the architect 'was in Moscow at one time and in the Bauhaus at Dessau' (*DF* 160). The Bauhaus (as mentioned above) was predominantly concerned with architecture, and its first full-scale exhibition involved building an 'experimental house' in 1923:

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Wyndham Lewis (ed.), *Blast* 1 (1914) (Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow Press, 1981), 147.

⁹⁵ Gasiorek, *Wyndham Lewis and Modernism*, 20.

⁹⁶ Karen Orchard, "'A Laugh Like a Bomb'": The History and the Ideas of the Vorticists', in Paul Edwards (ed.), *Blast: Vorticism 1914-1918* (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2000): 14-23, 17; Lewis, *Blast* 1, 148.

The Haus an Horn was a simple cubic construction made of a steel frame with a concrete infill. At the centre of the house was a large living-room, twenty feet square, which was taller by the height of a window than the rooms surrounding it. These rooms accommodated every need. Those for the children, for example, had walls covered with a material that served as a blackboard.⁹⁷

Kings Thursday is made from similar materials of 'ferro-concrete and aluminium' (*DF* 154), and it represents a form of experimental architecture. Its chaotic interior comprises a mixture of materials: 'the glass floor, and the pneumatic rubber furniture, and the porcelain ceiling, and the leather-hung walls' (*DF* 182). In a review Le Corbusier's *The City of Tomorrow* (1929), which was entitled 'Cities of the Future' (1929), Waugh articulated his distaste at such modern building materials: 'One cannot help feeling that iron furniture bent out of shape would be more offensive than worm-eaten wood, and discoloured concrete and rusted metal than mellowed brick and stone' (*EAR* 65). The disordered and hyper-modern appearance of Kings Thursday, which was informed by Bauhaus aesthetics, would have been abhorrent to Waugh.⁹⁸ Furthermore, Kings Thursday is not only owned by a key social figure, but it becomes the 'Mecca of week-end parties' (*DF* 149). The Bright Young People visit it regularly, thus establishing a link between the avant-garde house and their social life.

The architectural theory behind Silenus's renovation of Kings Thursday also reflects Futurist and Vorticist thinking, particularly in terms of Silenus's stance on technology and machines. In

⁹⁷ Whitford, *Bauhaus*, 143.

⁹⁸ Waugh's stance on modern architecture, particularly with regards to Le Corbusier's creations, remained the same throughout the nineteen thirties. The final chapter of this thesis reveals that Waugh continued to criticize Le Corbusier's work. Waugh bemoaned the gradual destruction of ancient buildings and traditional forms of architecture, and he linked their creation to the decline of culture in modern society.

Silenus's opinion: "Man is never beautiful, he is never happy except when he becomes the channel for the distribution of mechanical forces" (*DF* 157), which is why "the only perfect building must be the factory, because that is built to house machines, not men" (*DF* 154). A key feature of Futurist thinking is its praise for the revitalizing potential of machinery and technology. In Marinetti's 'The Founding Manifesto of Futurism' (1909), for instance, the speaker describes a violent scene in which he has been brought back from the brink of death because he was 'revived at once under the steering wheel' as 'a guillotine blade [...] menaced' his 'stomach'.⁹⁹ The Futurists maintained that this potential for technological revitalization should be harnessed in order to help reform modern society. Gasiorek argues that the Vorticists similarly 'identified the potential of modern English life in the machine'.¹⁰⁰ In contrast to the Futurists, the machines involved in this 'mission of national regeneration' were specifically 'industrial megaliths', as they 'embodied the control required by the Vorticist aesthetic'.¹⁰¹ Brooke Allen adopts the term 'pseudo religion' to describe the way followers of the avant-garde were encouraged to put their faith in technological and mechanical progression.¹⁰² Waugh expresses his condemnation of such machine-worship by depicting Silenus in terms of dehumanization, as the architect has become so consumed with his avant-garde appraisal of machinery that he becomes mechanized:

Two hours later [...] he had not moved from where the journalist had left him; his fawn-like eyes were fixed and inexpressive, and the hand which had held the biscuit still rose and fell to and from his mouth with a regular motion, while his empty jaws champed rhythmically; otherwise he was wholly immobile. (*DF* 158)

⁹⁹ Marinetti, 'The Founding Manifesto of Futurism', 3.

¹⁰⁰ Gasiorek, *Wyndham Lewis and Modernism*, 15.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² Allen, 'Vile Bodies: A Futurist Fantasy', 322.

Waugh's depiction of a semi-robotic Silenus correlates with Tyrus Miller's argument that late modernists portrayed characters that had 'a bit of the automaton about him or her'.¹⁰³ Like Silenus, these late modernist characters often failed to 'complete this mechanization of the body through to its end' and consequently represented the 'comical inability of humans to consummate the man-machine'.¹⁰⁴ Waugh expresses his concern about the detrimental effects of Europe's technological advances in his portrayal of Silenus, whose robotic behaviour typifies the late modernists' anxiety about how the 'distinction between the vital and the mechanical had become less sharp in the interwar years'.¹⁰⁵

The theme of entrapment within a dehumanizing and mechanical rhythm is symbolized in *Vile Bodies* by a circular racing track, in which the drivers become overpowered by their automobiles. The depiction of the track picks up the cyclical motifs running throughout the novel and, with these, the religious implications behind them. From the outset the race is defined by violence – 'it was nothing more or less than a death trap' (*VB* 174) – and the most notoriously dangerous driver is 'Marino', who drives an 'Italian Omega' (*VB* 190). Marino is 'a real artist' (*VB* 187), and, due to his Italian name as well as his association with cars, speed, and art, he is clearly a satirical portrait of Marinetti. In his depiction of a deadly racetrack, Waugh condemns the maniacal celebration of speed endorsed by the Futurists, who affirmed the 'beauty of speed' and maintained, in Marinetti's words, that 'a roaring automobile that rides on grape-shot [...] is more beautiful than the *Victory of Samothrace*'.¹⁰⁶ There is nothing beautiful about the automobiles on Waugh's race track. The cars are sinister and dominating, as the narrator notes that the relationship between driver and

¹⁰³ Miller, *Late Modernism*, 24.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ Marinetti, 'The Founding Manifesto of Futurism', 4.

machine is inverted; the cars become ‘masters of men’ and leave the drivers ‘clinging precariously at the steering-wheel’ (VB 178). The racing drivers in this scene also symbolize the fate of the socialites trapped within their destructive social cycles. At one point in the novel, a pig simile is used to describe the socialites: ‘they came popping all together, out of someone’s electric brougham like a litter of pigs, and ran squealing up the steps’ (VB 97). This same simile is later applied to the racing cars, which were ‘running all jammed together like pigs being driven through a gate; one by one they shook themselves free and disappeared round the bend with a high shriek of acceleration’ (VB 186).

The link between the race track and the life of the English socialites is strengthened by Agatha Runcible’s association with both contexts. Agatha is one of the leading Bright Young People. She is present at all the parties described in the novel and she is known by all of their attendees. Agatha drunkenly volunteers to drive one of the racing cars but it spins out of control and smashes into a market cross miles off the course. She is consequently hospitalized and in her disintegrating mental state the racing circuit becomes merged with her social circuit:

She was sitting bolt upright in bed, smiling deliriously and bowing her bandaged head to imaginary visitors. “*Darling,*” she said. “How *too* divine ... *how* are you? ... and how are *you?* ... how angelic of you all to come ... only you must be careful not to fall out of the corners ... ooh, just missed it. There goes that nasty Italian car ... I wish I knew which thing was which in this car...” (VB 213)

Agatha’s condition deteriorates dramatically and she becomes detrimentally absorbed with the idea of going as fast as she can during a car race:

there was rarely more than a quarter of a mile of the black road to be seen at one time. It unrolled like a length of cinema film. At the edges was the confusion; a fog spinning past;

“*Faster, faster,*” they shouted above the roar of the engine. The road rose suddenly and the white car soared up the sharp ascent without slackening of speed. At the summit of the hill there was a corner. Two cars had crept up, one on each side, and were closing in. “Faster,” cried Miss Runcible, “Faster.” (VB 223-24)

Agatha’s yearning to go faster and to continue onwards signifies her entrapment within a cycle that can never satisfy her, as there is no end point to her mental race track: she will never reach a still point. Fittingly, she eventually suffers a mental breakdown and dies. Such chronic unfulfilment correlates with what the novel presents as the Bright Young People’s futile desire to experience the ‘new’ by moving from one party to the next. The social circuit (like the race track) offers only an experience of repetition and deterioration to the point of self-destruction.

The doomed fate of English society (and of civilization in general) is confirmed in the final chapter of *Vile Bodies*. Set in ‘the biggest battlefield in the history of the world’ (VB 247), it is ironically entitled ‘Happy Ending’ (VB 247). Earlier in the novel, Father Rothschild concludes that there is ‘a radical instability in our whole world order’ and he predicts that, as a consequence of this, ‘soon we shall all be walking into the jaws of destruction again’ (VB 144). In the novel’s final scene the tone of the writing loses all its humorous connotations and becomes a depressing description of a ruined landscape ravaged by war: ‘the scene all around [Adam] was one of unrelieved desolation; a great expanse of mud in which every visible object was burnt or broken. Sounds of firing thundered from beyond the horizon, and somewhere above the grey clouds there were aeroplanes’ (VB 248). This description of muddied desolation links to the recent past, as it is an allusion to the trench warfare that characterized the First World War, and it is also a dark premonition of an even worse war to come. Waugh’s final condemnation of avant-garde technophilia is evident in his depiction of surroundings that are littered with violent weaponry, which include ‘a liquid-fire projector’ and a ‘Huxdane-Halley bomb’ that disseminates leprosy germs (VB 248). The advancement of technology,

previously endorsed by Silenus, has led to sadistic methods of eradicating life. Allen views the overall anti-war message of this chapter as Waugh's final stab at Futurist rhetoric, which famously asserted: 'we intend to glorify war – the only hygiene of the world'.¹⁰⁷ There is no mention of cleansing in this scene. Instead, images of degradation abound: 'strands of barbed wire' are strewn like 'drifting cobweb' (VB 248) over the 'wasted expanse of the battlefield' (VB 252). As well as references to physical deterioration, Waugh emphasizes the presence of moral decay. He portrays an uncomfortable and sordid image of a decrepit General seducing a 'woebegone fragment of womanhood' (VB 250).

The final scene in *Vile Bodies* ends with a description of the sounds of battle returning 'like a circling typhoon' (VB 252), which suggests that the war represents the ultimate example of a deadly modern cycle that has overpowered those within it. Waugh's cultural cynicism correlates with a predominant theme of late modernist literature: the 'growing skepticism' towards 'modernist sensibility and craft as a means of managing the turbulent forces of the day'.¹⁰⁸ Although Miller's framework concentrates on the late modernist's disillusionment with high modernism in general (as opposed to the avant-garde in particular), Waugh's disillusionment with avant-garde aesthetics can still be aligned with Miller's thesis. Along with the late modernists' work, Waugh's fiction can be interpreted as rejecting a confident belief in technological progress and opposing an optimism regarding the future of society, two attitudes endorsed by some of the groupings within the avant-garde. To sum up, the nihilistic conclusion of *Vile Bodies* marks the end-point of Waugh's early fiction. This novel confirms his perspective that civilization was set on a path to destruction and it implies, more specifically, that English society needs to look outside itself in order to avert such an apocalyptic fate.

¹⁰⁷ Allen, 'Vile Bodies: A Futurist Fantasy', 322; Marinetti, 'The Founding Manifesto of Futurism', 4.

¹⁰⁸ Miller, *Late Modernism*, 21.

Conclusion: Late Modernism?

This chapter has suggested that *Decline and Fall* and *Vile Bodies* correspond to Miller's theory of late modernism in numerous ways: the novels criticize the traumatized post-war period from an anti-humanist perspective, they employ a caustic form of satire, and they engage with and call into question avant-garde aesthetics. Miller also argues that an inherent pessimism is a predominant feature of late modernist texts, as the narratives refuse to offer any hope of release from the traumatized context in which they are set: 'Sinking themselves faithlessly into a present devoid of future, into a movement grinding to a halt and an aesthetic on the threshold of dissolution, the writers of late modernism prepared themselves, without hope, to pass over to the far side of the end'.¹⁰⁹ As this chapter has shown, corresponding themes of hopelessness and despair are evident in Waugh's early novels. However, critics are divided as to whether Waugh uses these themes in order to emphasize that English society needs to make drastic changes, or whether the themes predominantly reinforce his disillusionment regarding the doomed future of this society.

In Lisa Colletta's view, Waugh's novels offer 'nothing salutary in their stinging satire': he 'never advocates any principles that would save the individual or society' and the reader is presented with 'no other option from the narrator in the novel' but to 'laugh in the face of tragedy and chaos'.¹¹⁰ According to Colletta even religious values are rendered void in the texts: 'Christianity, with its complicity in the transgressions of Western culture, has become as bankrupt as the societal, political and familial institutions to which it has been historically linked'.¹¹¹ Colletta also claims that

¹⁰⁹ Miller, *Late Modernism*, 14.

¹¹⁰ Lisa Colletta, *Dark Humour and Social Satire in the Modern British Novel: The Triumph of Narcissism* (New York: Palgrave, 2003), 82, 87, 84.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 82.

Waugh presents Christian values as ‘unknowable, unavailable, and therefore unhelpful, to all’.¹¹² As this chapter has shown, Waugh explored his religious beliefs during the late twenties. He made links between religious values, tradition, and order in numerous essays and articles, and he noted that these qualities were missing from an increasingly secularized English society. However, I am not suggesting that Waugh’s early novels should be considered explicitly Catholic in any way. There is no mention of Catholicism in these texts and Waugh had yet to convert when he wrote them. Although these texts are not ‘Catholic texts’, I propose that they represent the beginnings of Waugh’s Catholic response to the problems which he felt were marring contemporary English culture, and, as I have suggested, they can be read as offering a critique of the spiritual hollowness and confusion of his generation.

In all, Waugh’s work should remain situated – albeit uneasily – within the framework of late modernism, as the presence of religious themes signals the beginnings of his move away from the world-view typically associated with the concept. While themes of failure, collapse, and death are present within his novels, they are used differently from other late modernists, as they could act as a warning to certain readers who wish to discern that these themes signal what will happen if modern society continues to live without recourse to traditional religious values. Indeed, this concept of religious transformation amid deathly circumstances could be alluded to in the very title of *Vile Bodies*, which takes its name from the Burial Service in the Book of Common Prayer. The message of the prayer can be said to relate to the fate of Waugh’s vile bodies trapped within their doomed social circuit:

We look for the Saviour, the

Lord Jesus Christ:

¹¹² Ibid., 83.

Who shall change our
vile body, that it may be
fashioned like unto his glorious
body.¹¹³

¹¹³ Philippians, 3.21, *The Authorized King James Version of The Holy Bible*, eds Robert Carroll and Stephen Prickett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 247.

CHAPTER TWO: 'SOMETHING TO CATCH HOLD OF IN THE GENERAL FLUX'

In the late nineteen twenties and early nineteen thirties Graham Greene published three novels: *The Man Within* (1929), *The Name of Action* (1930), and *Rumour at Nightfall* (1931). These texts are generally considered to be poor literary specimens due to their implausible and melodramatic plots, stilted dialogue, and overly romanticized characterization.¹ When reviewing *The Name of Action* in 1930, even a young Evelyn Waugh found many features of Greene's style 'a little repugnant', because it was 'all metaphor and simile' (EAR 101). On reflection, Greene thought that his first novel was 'embarrassingly romantic', but he allowed it to be republished without amendments for nostalgic reasons: 'perhaps an author may be allowed the sentimental gesture towards his own past, the period of ambition and hope'.² However, he notoriously disowned his second and third novels on the grounds that they were 'of a badness beyond the power of criticism properly to evoke' (WE 15). A cursory glance at recent criticism of Greene's work reveals that many critics followed Greene's lead in ignoring these early texts. Brian Diemert devotes a chapter of *Graham Greene's Thrillers and the 1930s* (1996) to *Rumour at Nightfall*, but he makes only passing allusions to *The Man Within* and

¹ Georg M. A. Gaston brands all three novels 'overwrought, schematic, repetitive, and romantically self-indulgent'. See *The Pursuit of Salvation: A Critical Guide to the Novels of Graham Greene* (New York: The Whitson Publishing Company, 1984), 10. In Brian Diemert's view, Greene's 'clumsy attempts to construct fine prose, mar his first three novels'. See *Graham Greene's Thrillers and the 1930s* (London: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996), 41. Kenneth Allott and Miriam Farris point out that these novels fail 'as much for their self-conscious attempts to be "serious" literature as for their weak plots and unconvincing characterizations'. See *The Art of Graham Greene* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1963), 73-74.

² Graham Greene, 'Author's note' (1947), in Graham Greene, *The Man Within*, intro. Jonathan Yardley (London: Penguin Books, 2005), xxiii.

The Name of Action. In *Graham Greene's Fictions: The Virtues of Extremity* (2000), Cates Baldrige does not even mention the three novels, and while Mark Bosco fleetingly alludes to *The Man Within* in *Graham Greene's Catholic Imagination* (2005), he does not acknowledge Greene's subsequent two works.³ Bernard Bergonzi typifies the stance of those who have decided against analysing Greene's early fiction when he argues that he does not focus at all on *Rumour at Nightfall* or *The Name of Action* because 'in practical terms these books are unavailable for critical discussion. So, having acknowledged their existence, I shall say no more about them'.⁴ This chapter examines Greene's critically neglected early fiction in detail. I propose that Greene can be seen to criticize his contemporary English society for its secularism through his portrayal of dissatisfied and spiritually hollow English protagonists. These protagonists, in various ways, seek forms of significance and peace in their lives, which they come to associate with religious faith. Furthermore, Greene's focus on the spiritual longings and religious questionings experienced by his main characters reflects his own complex thinking on issues of Catholicism and faith during the late twenties and early thirties.

Michael Brennan notes that the 'range and impact' of Greene's Catholicism upon his writing in the nineteen twenties remains 'very much underestimated'.⁵ Indeed, Ian Ker maintains that Greene 'only introduced Catholic themes incidentally and occasionally' in his early novels, and John Atkins argues that despite Greene's conversion in 1926, 'spiritually speaking, there is practically no

³ Diemert, *Graham Greene's Thrillers*; Cates Baldrige, *Graham Greene's Fictions: The Virtues of Extremity* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2000); S. J. Mark Bosco, *Graham Greene's Catholic Imagination* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

⁴ Bernard Bergonzi, *A Study in Greene: Graham Greene and the Art of the Novel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 24.

⁵ Michael G. Brennan, 'Graham Greene's Catholic Conversion: The Early Writings (1923-29) and *The Man Within*', *Logos: A Journal of Catholic Thought and Culture* 9.3 (2006), 149.

evidence of it in his early writing'.⁶ In general, critics have failed to establish just how preoccupied with issues of faith, conversion, and secular belief Greene's early fiction really is. Even though Greene converted to Catholicism before writing these novels, his early fiction refers to Christianity in general rather than Catholicism in particular. In *The Man Within* Catholicism is not even mentioned, and, while it is present in the subsequent two novels in the form of Catholic characters, the religion is dealt with in very vague terms. The indistinct nature of Catholicism in these texts could reflect Greene's own hesitant relationship with faith during this period, as prior to and after his conversion he veered from moods of hopeful belief to severe doubt. For example, Norman Sherry cites some letters in which Greene described to his fiancée Vivien Dayrell-Browning (who became his wife in 1927) his stance on religion. In a letter dated 13th December 1925, Greene wrote: 'If we were shoved together in March, only to lose you in December or January or February, whatever the purpose, the means were extraordinarily cruel. If there's a God who does that sort of thing, he'd be pretty impossible to love. Infinite cleverness, all right, but not much of Infinite Mercy'.⁷ Yet by the end of December he assured Vivien that he did 'believe ... firmly for long periods', and he admitted: 'I have a constant layer of Catholicism at the bottom of me now, because I feel up in arms directly I hear any argument against Catholics ... I'm a good way on the road'.⁸ Despite his uncertainties, Greene associated Catholicism with the concept of permanence. He explained to Vivien that one of his main reasons for converting was because he desired stability in his life: 'I do all the same feel I want to be a Catholic now, even a little apart from you. One does want fearfully hard, something fine & hard &

⁶ Ian Ker, *The Catholic Revival in English Literature, 1845-1961: Newman, Hopkins, Belloc, Chesterton, Greene, Waugh* (Herefordshire: Gracewing, 2003), 118; John Atkins, *Graham Greene* (London: Calder & Boyars, 1966), 22.

⁷ Cited in Norman Sherry, *The Life of Graham Greene: Volume 1, 1904-1939* (London: Penguin, 1989), 260. For examples of Greene's early opinions on faith, and how they develop during the twenties, see Sherry, *The Life of Graham Greene: Volume 1*, 254-62.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 260.

certain, however uncomfortable, to catch hold of in the general flux'.⁹ In this chapter I consider the idea that Greene presents faith in terms of its association with themes of peace and permanence in his early texts, and that he suggests faith can offer a refuge from the 'general flux' of an increasingly secular post-war English society.

Furthermore, I propose that Greene engages with both contemporary England and his personal situation at the time of writing *The Man Within*, *The Name of Action*, and *Rumour at Nightfall*, even though not one of the novels is set in contemporary British society. It is implied that *The Man Within* is set in England in the late eighteenth century. The novel focuses on a smuggler named Francis Andrews who is on the run from his old smuggling group because he betrayed them to the authorities. During his escape he encounters a pious woman named Elizabeth, who lives in an isolated country cottage, and he falls in love with her. Elizabeth encourages Andrews to take a moral stance by testifying against his former smuggling group, which he duly does. On returning to the cottage he declares his love for Elizabeth, and she returns these sentiments. However, the novel ends with Elizabeth bravely sacrificing herself for him. She commits suicide when the enraged smugglers invade her cottage, seeking revenge, as they demand to know the whereabouts of Andrews. *The Name of Action* is set in the German city of Trier in the nineteen twenties. The novel concerns a young Englishman named Oliver Chant who travels to the foreign city in search of political action. Chant wants to commit himself to the cause of local activists by helping them to overthrow an oppressive dictatorship. He gradually becomes disillusioned with the cowardly actions of the revolutionaries, and he comes to sympathize with and respect the dictator, Paul Demassener. During his stay in the city, Chant has an affair with Demassener's beguiling wife, Anne-Marie, only to discover that she is manipulative and immoral. The novel ends with Chant travelling away from Trier, utterly disillusioned in both politics and love. Greene's third novel, *Rumour at Nightfall*, is set

⁹ Ibid., 256.

in Spain during the Carlist wars of the late eighties. The novel portrays a young journalist named Francis Chase, who pursues the rebel leader, Caveda, in the hope of interviewing him. An old friend, Michael Crane, joins Chase on his mission. A devout character named Eulelia Monti was once the lover of Caveda and she subsequently is betrothed to Crane, who is willing to become a Catholic in order to marry her (though his conversion is never confirmed). After Crane's murder, Eulelia and Chase then appear to enter into a relationship with one another.

In his autobiography Greene admitted that he purposely did not write about contemporary England and focused instead on events in the past: 'was it that I was half consciously aware I knew too little of the contemporary world to treat it? That the past was more accessible because it was contained in books, such as the history of smuggling which I read in my hospital bed?' (*WE* 13-14). Contrary to Greene's self-assessment, it is arguable that in these novels he engages with his 'contemporary world' by displacing his perception of the problems in a secular post-war England onto other historical periods. The young male protagonists all experience feelings of instability and purposelessness and in this way they share affinities with the general condition of Greene's generation of Englishmen, which was trying to come to terms with its role in a disillusioned post-war society. Below, I explore the idea that it is through these protagonists' specifically spiritual questionings that Greene alludes to a religious dimension to the problems faced by what he deems to be a spiritually confused post-war context.

The Monotony of Endless Days

In a critical reading of *The Man Within* (which equally applies to *The Name of Action* and *Rumour at Nightfall*), Kenneth Allott and Miriam Farris maintain that Greene's early work suffers from 'a lack

of psychological distance' and gives 'the feeling that the author is too personally involved'.¹⁰ Greene agreed that his early fiction was too closely related to his personal life, and he admitted as much in an interview with Marie-Françoise Allain: 'I realised later, for instance, that my two books *Rumour at Nightfall* and *The Name of Action* were bad because I had left too little distance between them and myself. The umbilical cord was left unbroken, you might say'.¹¹ A defining feature of Greene's experiences in the nineteen twenties was his struggle with severe depression, which recurred throughout his life. In *A Sort of Life* (1971) Greene revealed that he felt a profound sense of entrapment within a repetitive and meaningless existence, and he described the 'agonizing cries of boredom' which he endured during his adolescence: 'Boredom seemed to swell like a balloon inside the head; it became a pressure inside the skull: sometimes I feared the balloon would burst and I would lose my reason'.¹² It was the 'interminable repetitions' in his life that finally 'broke' him down, and caused him to experiment with deadly games of Russian roulette, and to embark on self-destructive alcohol binges.¹³

As well as dealing with a debilitating and potentially deadly sense of boredom, Greene was concurrently grappling with his spiritual identity. In 1926 he decided to take instruction in the

¹⁰ Allott and Farris, *The Art of Graham Greene*, 44.

¹¹ Marie-Françoise Allain, *The Other Man: Conversations with Graham*, trans. Guido Waldman (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1983), 46-47.

¹² Graham Greene, *A Sort of Life* (London: Penguin, 1971), 86.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 64. This autobiography is rich with detailed descriptions of Greene's adolescent troubles, including his forays into Russian roulette, and his self-destructive drinking habits. See *A Sort of Life*, 93-94, 87. Due to his depressive and damaging behaviour, Greene underwent psychoanalytical treatment when he was sixteen. Norman Sherry provides a lucid and detailed account of Greene's distressing experiences. He discusses Greene's nervous breakdowns and attempted suicides, as well as his treatment by Kenneth Richmond. See *The Life of Graham Greene: Volume 1*, 85-99.

Catholic faith, first because he wanted to please his devout fiancée and second because he thought it would 'kill the time'.¹⁴ Greene stressed that he was an atheist when he decided to undergo instruction: 'I had no intention of being received into the Church. For such a thing to happen I would need to be convinced of its truth and that was not even a remote possibility'.¹⁵ He claimed that his 'primary difficulty was to believe in a God at all', because he thought that if he 'were ever to be convinced in even the remote possibility of a supreme omnipotent and omnipresent power' then 'nothing afterwards could seem impossible'.¹⁶ However, during numerous intellectually intense meetings with his priest, Father Trollope, Greene became drawn towards the Catholic faith and he officially converted in the same year: 'I became convinced of the probable existence of something we call God'.¹⁷ Reminiscing about his conversion, Greene stressed that his decision 'was not in the least an emotional affair. It was purely intellectual. It was the arguments of Fr. Trollope at Nottingham that persuaded me that God's existence was a probability'.¹⁸ Despite his conversion, Greene's faith was by no means stable or assured during this period. He took the confirmation name of 'Thomas' after 'St. Thomas the doubter and not Thomas Aquinas', which portended the religious doubts and misgivings he would continue to experience throughout his life.¹⁹

Themes of unbearable boredom, claustrophobic entrapment, and fervent spiritual questioning dominate Greene's first three novels, as the protagonists all articulate a related desire to experience stability and peace within their unsatisfactory lives. *The Man Within* opens with Francis Andrews fleeing from his former smuggling gang, which he betrayed to the authorities because he wanted to

¹⁴ Greene, *A Sort of Life*, 118.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid., 120.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Allain, *The Other Man*, 384.

¹⁹ Ibid., 254.

escape the bonds of a restrictive lifestyle that he felt ‘would have gone on for always and always’ (MW 221). Instead of experiencing a sense of release on leaving the group, Andrews realizes that he has become caught within another form of imprisonment: perpetual flight from vengeful pursuit. He is ‘friendless and alone, chased by harsh enemies through an uninterested world’ (MW 23), and he is afflicted by ‘a sense of overwhelming desolation’ (MW 29), which leads him to experience a ‘desperate longing for peace’ (MW 161). In *The Name of Action* Oliver Chant also endures a monotonous lifestyle that he is keen to abandon. His life is dominated by tedious social engagements and he longs for ‘the chance of release’ from ‘the round he knew and hated – lunch with Peter Remnant, dinner at Mrs. Meadmore’s, breakfast with himself’ (NA 7). Chant admits that his ‘vacant life’, of which he has ‘grown inexpressibly tired’, is not only dissatisfying but it is also ‘without meaning, without risk and without beauty. In that life there had been nothing worthy of reverence or defence’ (NA 79). These themes of dissatisfaction, emptiness, and boredom correspond with Evelyn Waugh’s portrayal of the repetitive social circuit in *Decline and Fall* (1928) and *Vile Bodies* (1930). Chant endeavours to break free from his stultifying social round by travelling to Trier. He hopes to become politically active by supplying financial and political support to a group of dissenters that is trying to overthrow a repressive dictatorship. Journalist Francis Chase, the protagonist of *Rumour at Nightfall*, also makes an expedition abroad because he desires a ‘sense of action, something done at last to break the monotony of endless days’ (RN 3). Chase travels to Spain in order to track the progress of a rebel leader in the Carlist struggles. He is joined by his friend Michael Crane, who is similarly plagued by a sense of the unrelenting, arduous nature of life: ‘His life was taped out with terrors, and each new terror he could foresee. They were like a succession of peaks. As soon as he had climbed one, he grew aware of the next, but he could not, as a climber could, turn back’ (RN 100). Crane yearns for an end to his earthly struggles and refers to this longing in terms of ceasing to fight: ‘a desire for mutual disarmament, of a laying down of swords in silence’ (RN 126).

The protagonists of these novels are from different eras and different social backgrounds, but they are all young men who share a similar sense of discontent and they all attempt to secure meaning in their lives, be it through political and journalistic means, or simply fugitive escapism. In their quest for peace and purpose within hostile environments the plight of Greene's protagonists corresponds with the general situation faced by his disenchanted generation in England, which was 'set adrift in a post-war world that had changed beyond recognition'.²⁰ In John Lucas's terms, the war 'made for a deep psychic wound, a sense of catastrophe' which became expressed in a 'new sense of rootlessness'.²¹ Greene's depiction of the yearnings for stability experienced by the male characters in his fiction relates to this sense of a 'psychic wound' that characterized his generation, but it also corresponds with Greene's personal experiences of depression and anxiety. Indeed, Greene explores the psychological dimensions of his characters in great detail. He charts their complex thought processes, reflections, longings, and anxieties using a method of free indirect discourse, which represents the thoughts of the characters '*in situ*, undergoing the experience, and talking and thinking their way through that experience in frank and uninhibited ways'.²²

These protagonists are also connected by their states of faithlessness. Andrews's dissociation from religious belief is revealed when he witnesses a priest conducting a funeral service. He remains adamantly unaffected by the priest's Biblical incantations concerning death and the afterlife: 'the words meant no more to him than did the dead man. It was a mechanical ritual less conscious than the act of brushing teeth' (*MW* 47). However, Andrews admits to Elizabeth that he envies those who have faith because they seem "so certain, so sane, at peace", and he explains: "I've never been like

²⁰ D. J. Taylor, *Bright Young People: The Rise and Fall of a Generation 1918-1940* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2007), 16.

²¹ John Lucas, *The Radical Twenties: Aspects of Writing, Politics and Culture* (Nottingham: Five Leaves Publications, 1997), 79.

²² Michael Toolan, *Narrative: A Critical Linguistic Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2001), 133.

that” (MW 297). During conversations with Elizabeth, Andrews discloses to her that he had a troubled upbringing and a difficult relationship with his father, who used to beat him. Andrews reveals that he is literally haunted by his father: ““I thought my father was dead ... but I soon found out that he had followed me”” (MW 107), as he believes that the ghost has ‘housed itself’ in the ‘son he had created’ (MW 343). Andrews’s father was violently irreligious and would beat his wife if he caught her reading the Bible to their son. This father’s ghostly presence could symbolize the irreligious part of Andrews’s mind, as it impairs Andrews’s relationship with faith, which could explain why he is so detached from religion.

The themes of antipathy and conflict which characterize the relationship between Andrews and his father correspond to those identified by Sigmund Freud as indicative of the early stages of the Oedipus complex. In *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900), Freud describes the basic premise of the complex as ‘falling in love with one parent and hating the other’, which fits with Andrews’s animosity towards his father and his intense love for his mother: ““My mother died a couple of years before. I think he broke her heart, if there’s such a thing as a broken heart. He broke her body anyway.” Andrews’ face grew white as though from the blinding heat of an inner fire. “I loved my mother”” (MW 104-5).²³ Jealousy is the defining emotion of Freud’s thesis and Andrews admits that he betrayed the smugglers to the authorities because of his ““jealousy of a dead man”” (MW 182). He recalls to himself that his father, as leader of the smuggling group, was revered by the crew, who considered him to be ‘a hero, a king, a man of dash, initiative’ (MW 268). Andrews holds a contradictory opinion of his father, which he tells Elizabeth: ““I knew all the time things they didn’t know, how he had beaten my mother, of his conceit, his ignorance, his beastly bullying ways”” (MW 104). The difficulty of growing up in the shadow of such a false token of male power and leadership

²³ Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900), trans., A. A. Brill (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Classics of World Literature, 1997), 155.

is made clear when Andrews cites with bitterness the constant comparisons which inevitably occurred between himself and his dead father: “I could do nothing which was not weighed up with my father and found wanting. They kept on telling me of his courage, of what he would have done, what a hero he was” (MW 104). Andrews not only felt that he was being unfavourably compared to his father but he believed that the crew was comparing him to an ideal that did not exist.

Andrews’s situation corresponds with circumstances faced by Greene’s generation of post-war young men in England, as these men felt that they were judged against the heroic example set by their dead forebears. Patrick Balfour claims that the twenties were to some extent defined by the legacy of the war dead: ‘Memoirs and letters flooded the market – memoirs which gave the impression that British manhood had opened out into a flawless efflorescence in the millennium of 1914, only to be struck down in the perfect fulfilment of its being. But was this in fact the case?’²⁴ Balfour is keen to stress that he does not seek ‘in any way to disparage’ the ‘heroism’ of these dead soldiers, but he wishes to point out that ‘people have come to invest them with superlative qualities which they may not have possessed’.²⁵ According to Balfour, the post-war young men felt demeaned because ‘from the outset’ they were ‘at a disadvantage, for a still hysterical public was bound *a priori* to contrast [them] unfavourably with [their] counterpart of 1914’.²⁶ In Chapter One of this thesis I discussed Waugh’s depiction of this sense of inter-generational antagonism, as his early satires reveal the pressure his generation was put under to rebuild post-war society. Greene could be alluding to similar generational pressures in *The Man Within*, which take the form of a troubled father/son dynamic.

²⁴ Patrick Balfour, *Society Racket: A Critical Survey of Modern Social Life* (London: John Long Limited, 1934), 154.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 155.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 153.

In *The Name of Action* Chant's initial secularity is made evident when he visits a cathedral. On entering the building he is 'beaten at last by a pervading holiness': he attempts to pray, but he finds this impossible because 'he has no clear beliefs round which to form his words and he remembered no form of prayer' (NA 291). In *Rumour at Nightfall* Crane and Chase have differing responses to their Catholic Spanish environment. Chase indignantly refers to the Spanish population as a 'race untouched by scientific knowledge' (RN 6), and he labels them 'barbarians' who are 'behind the times' (RN 10). He confirms his secular perspective when he thinks to himself that he is 'certain of things too': 'I am certain of what I want from life – success, money, friends – I am certain of what death is – the end' (RN 21). Crane similarly lacks religious faith to begin with, but he regards Catholicism more sympathetically than Chase and is able to recognize that for some people faith is 'a recipe for peace, an ingredient of courage' (RN 129). In all three novels Greene's protagonists experience entrapping, tedious, and – most significantly – secular lifestyles. Since Greene associated religion with themes of permanence and stability in this period – faith offered something 'hard and certain' within the disorientating 'flux' of life – I suggest that these characters' frustrations and experiences of restlessness are related to their lack of faith.²⁷ Following this, the protagonists' quests for peace and 'meaning' in their lives could represent their unconscious search for religious permanence. My reading corresponds with S. K. Sharma's view that the 'search for belief lies at the heart of Greene's major preoccupations as a novelist', as well as Atkins's identification of a 'bewildered search for some form of faith' within all of Greene's fiction.²⁸

Along with being linked by their discontent and their secular perspectives, the four protagonists of Greene's early novels inhabit correspondingly debased and secular landscapes – or,

²⁷ Sherry, *Graham Greene: Volume 1*, 256.

²⁸ S. K. Sharma, *Graham Greene: The Search for Belief* (New Delhi: Harman, 1990), 25; John Atkins, *Graham Greene*, 79.

as critics have been wont to term them, forms of ‘Greenland’.²⁹ Peter Mudford describes these landscapes as ‘arena[s] of human consciousness’ and he claims that they reflect the psychological state of Greene’s characters.³⁰ An anonymous reviewer for the *Times Literary Supplement* makes a related point by arguing that Greenland symbolizes ‘an image of a spiritual condition – a world abandoned by God’, as Greene tries to express the ‘absence of belief’ in contemporary society.³¹ The writer argues that Greene makes ‘a correlation between the banality and ugliness of this world and the spiritual emptiness of it’, which is epitomized in the novels’ violent and seedy terrains.³² Following this, the landscapes in Greene’s fiction could act as metaphorical reflections of his characters’ secular states of mind: their sense of futility and ennui can be viewed as manifested in their seedy and depressing surroundings. Furthermore, in their states of secularity and their discontent, Greene’s protagonists share parallels with Waugh’s *Bright Young People*. Unlike those socialites in *Decline and Fall* and *Vile Bodies*, whom I suggest unconsciously seek a spiritual form of fulfilment, Greene’s characters explicitly and consciously embark upon a search for meaning in their lives. This search, I am going to argue, becomes religious in nature, as these characters reflect on spiritual issues (which include exploring the possibility of life after death) and they engage in discussions about faith and God.

²⁹ According to Cedric Watts the term ‘Greenland’ was first coined by the writer Arthur Calder Marshall, who claimed in *Horizon* (May 1940) that this landscape’s predominant feature was its seediness. See Cedric Watts, *A Preface to Graham Greene* (London: Longman, 1996), 142.

³⁰ Peter Mudford, *Graham Greene* (Plymouth: Northcote House Publishers, 1996), 50.

³¹ Anonymous, ‘Graham Greene: *The Man Within*’, *Times Literary Supplement* (17 September, 1971), in Samuel Hynes (ed.), *Twentieth Century Views: Graham Greene, A Collection of Critical Essays* (London: Prentice-Hall International, 1973): 8-16, 13.

³² *Ibid.*

Virtuous Virgins and Promiscuous Whores

It is through their relationships with female characters that the male protagonists of *The Man Within*, *The Name of Action*, and *Rumour at Nightfall* come to reflect upon their faith and their attitudes towards religion. The women in these novels can be broadly divided into two groups: those who are lustful and irreligious, and those who are chaste and devout. Greene portrays sexual desire in relation to sin and temptation, and he links religious belief with chastity and restraint. Throughout the twenties and thirties Greene personally experienced a conflict between his sexual longings and his desire to remain chaste. According to Michael Shelden, Greene developed ‘some sort of relationship with no less than forty-seven prostitutes during the 1920s and 1930s. Some he saw repeatedly, some were nothing more than brief encounters’.³³ This frequenting of prostitutes occurred despite Greene’s ardent promises to his devout fiancée that he would endure a chaste marriage for her sake: ‘what I long for is a quite original marriage with you, companionship & companionship only, all that Winter evenings part, & to have someone worth fighting for [...] & you’d always keep your ideal of celibacy, & you could help me to keep the same ideal’.³⁴ Greene’s infidelities indicate that he was unable to abide by such vows. His experiences inform his portrayal of male characters who condemn – and yet at times surrender to – potent sexual desire, and who crave relationships with religious and virtuous women.

Bosco summarizes the reductive characterization of women in Greene’s early novels when he refers to the ‘Madonna/whore complex’.³⁵ He states: ‘with few exceptions, women are drawn as

³³ Michael Shelden, *Graham Greene: The Man Within* (London: Heinemann, 1994), 114.

³⁴ Graham Greene, *Graham Greene: A Life in Letters*, ed. Richard Greene (London: Little, Brown, 2007), 19.

³⁵ Bosco, *Graham Greene’s Catholic Imagination*, 33.

repositories of goodness or as egotistical temptresses for Greene's male protagonists'.³⁶ Roger Sharrock prefers to use the terms 'siren' and 'angel', and he criticizes Greene's characterization of women for 'smack[ing] too much of subjective allegory'.³⁷ However, these critics fail to appreciate that Greene's portrayal of women is actually more complex than it first appears. The religious women are shown to struggle with their sexual desires and they are not the paradigms of sexual propriety that the male protagonists assume them to be. Greene's men, in various ways, fail to accept the sexual fallibility of their female counterparts, and it is they who reductively view the women as virtuous virgins or promiscuous whores, rather than Greene (as author and narrator) presenting the women in this way. Despite the discrepancy between the views of the male characters and those of the author, when Greene depicts women in his early novels he does associate sexuality with themes of sin and temptation, and virginity with religious belief.

A related criticism of Greene's characterization of female characters is that the women are simplistic and underdeveloped. Regarding *The Man Within*, Lisa Schwerdt surmises: 'There is no development of a fully realized woman in the novel'.³⁸ Michael Brennan supports this reading when he argues that women 'lack solidly fleshed out and convincing characters' in Greene's early texts.³⁹ In light of Greene's detailed descriptions of his male characters' views of women, along with his decision not to explore his female characters' internal thoughts, I suggest that his women are not as complex as his men because the women serve as mere bodies onto which the men project their anxieties and longings. Writing with regards to Freudian theory, Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan

³⁶ Ibid., 39.

³⁷ Roger Sharrock, *Saints, Sinners and Comedians: The Novels of Graham Greene* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), 43.

³⁸ Lisa M. Schwerdt, 'Graham Greene's Search for Faithfulness', *EAPSU Online: A Journal of Critical and Creative Work* 2 (Fall, 2005): 149-75, 160.

³⁹ Brennan, 'Graham Greene's Catholic Conversion', 138.

maintain that the act of splitting women into virgin/whore categories reflects a deep insecurity within the viewer. These critics explain that the perceiver wishes to divide the 'object of anxiety in two' so that one bears 'all the negative feelings' while the other 'embodies all the positive feelings one wishes to substitute for the anxieties the object or the situation provides'.⁴⁰ On the surface, the object of anxiety explored within Greene's texts is that of male sexual desire, because the men fear being led into an engulfing and debasing cycle of lust. They consequently either revere or deride the women around them according to whether the women encourage sexual restraint or not. On further examination, the male perception of female sexuality could serve as a metaphor for their view of faith and religious commitment. Greene's protagonists venerate, and want to have a relationship with, religious female characters, which could indicate their longings for the faith that the women embody. Related to this longing for devout women, the men feel threatened by sexually promiscuous and irreligious women, believing that they could be enticed into sexual and sinful behaviour (which would act as a barrier to possible religious commitment).

Cedric Watts and Brennan have both noted that Greene's portrayal of sexually threatening women corresponds with aspects of the religious doctrine of Manichaeism. This doctrine maintains that 'the world is almost entirely subject to the Prince of Darkness [...] Woman is the gift of demons, sent to lure men to fornication. Procreation serves the ends of darkness, because each birth entails an

⁴⁰ Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan, 'Strangers to Ourselves', in Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan (eds), *Literary Theory: An Anthology* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing 2004): 389-96, 390-91. The theory of 'splitting' originally derives from Melanie Klein's important work involving psychoanalysis and infants. Klein theorized that the infant's early experiences of primal love and hatred are projected onto the mother's breast (the primal object): 'Idealization is bound up with the splitting of the object, for the good aspects of the breast are exaggerated as a safeguard against fear of the persecuting breast'. See Melanie Klein, 'Notes on Some Schizoid Mechanisms' (1946), in Paul du Gay, Jessica Evans, and Peter Redman (eds), *Identity: A Reader* (London: Sage, 2000): 130-141, 134.

increase of matter and a further dispersal of the light'.⁴¹ The view that sexual desire is evil also features in Catholic teaching. Marina Warner notes that lust is perceived to be 'the principal impulse of the devil in the soul' and that 'Christian ideas about the dangers of sex' are portrayed in terms of their 'special connection with women'.⁴² Accordingly, Warner states that for 'the Fathers of the Church after Augustine, woman is the cause of the Fall, the wicked temptress, the accomplice of Satan, and the destroyer of mankind'.⁴³ The Catholic cult of the Virgin Mary draws directly upon this opposition between divine sexual restraint and sinful lust, as Mary's virginity represents 'the power of chastity over the devil'.⁴⁴ The Virgin Mary's symbolic opposite is the prostitute Mary Magdalene (who eventually reforms under Jesus' guidance), and together they 'form a diptych of Christian patriarchy's idea of the woman'.⁴⁵ Having surveyed the representation of women in Catholic teaching, Warner concludes that there is 'no place in the conceptual architecture of Christian society for a single woman who is neither a virgin nor a whore'.⁴⁶ Whether consciously or unconsciously, Greene appears to draw upon these Catholic tropes when he depicts the male protagonists in his early

⁴¹ Watts, *A Preface to Greene*, 102. Michael Brennan suggests that 'some of Greene's sexually seductive female characters seem to conform to this crude stereotype', which maintains that 'women were sent by the devil specifically to tempt mankind'. See *Graham Greene: Fictions, Faith and Authorship* (London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2010), 3.

⁴² Marina Warner, *Alone of All Her Sex: The Myth and the Cult of the Virgin Mary* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1976), xxi.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 58.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 67. For more information on the representation of the Virgin Mary from medieval times through to modern, see Sarah Jane Boss, *Empress and Handmaid: On Nature and Gender in the Cult of the Virgin Mary* (London: Cassell, 2000), and Jaroslav Pelikan, *Mary Through the Centuries: Her Place in the History of Culture* (Yale University Press, New Haven: 1996).

⁴⁵ Warner, *Alone of All Her Sex*, 225.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

novels as predominantly viewing their female counterparts through a sexual 'lens'. Indeed, I want to put forward the idea that these men reveal their attitudes towards faith via their judgement of female sexual behaviour: the men feel disgust towards promiscuous and, it seems, sinful women, and they venerate what they deem to be virginal and religious females. In this way, these male characters could be indicating their rejection of sinful behaviour and their admiration for the religious faith embodied by the devout women.

When Andrews, Chase, and Crane first encounter devout women they presume that the women embody a sense of spiritual superiority and sexual innocence. Andrews is initially hostile towards Elizabeth. He is 'infuriated' by the 'white serenity' (*MW* 12) of her face, and he uses sexual insults to embarrass her: 'He described what he would do to her in a brief, physiological sentence, and rejoiced at the flush which it fetched to her face' (*MW* 12). However, Andrews subsequently admits to experiencing a 'curiosity tinged with longing' (*MW* 70) when he contemplates Elizabeth's religious beliefs. He refers to her as a 'firm comforting wall beside his own shifting waters' (*MW* 27), and he feels that, unlike himself, she possesses a 'permanent happiness' (*MW* 306). In *Rumour at Nightfall*, Chase similarly accuses the devout Eulelia of having 'an unbearable air of rectitude' (*RN* 80), but he soon associates her with themes of refuge and relief when he describes her as an 'oasis of reliability and peace' (*RN* 89). Crane echoes this sentiment when he reflects upon how he feels in Eulelia's company: 'but for those two minutes he had been isolated on an oasis, wonderfully safe, of altruism' (*RN* 116-17). Although they initially feel threatened, these male characters recognize that the devout women are associated with qualities of peace and constancy which are absent in their own lives.

The male praise of religious women develops into outright religious worship within these texts. For Andrews, Elizabeth is 'a saint' (*MW* 87) and she is as 'holy as a vision' (*RN* 69). In response to Elizabeth's religious beliefs, Andrews maintains to himself that his feelings towards her are no longer based on purely sexual attraction: 'But this is not the old lust. There is something holy

here' (MW 122). Elizabeth responds with frustration when Andrews venerates her, and she refuses to be put on a pedestal: "But I'm not holy. I'm ordinary like anyone else. I'm no fanatic. Only my heart wants to be good. But my body, this common, ordinary body, doesn't" (MW 319). She explains that her decision to restrain herself sexually and to distance herself from the behaviour of 'harlots' is directly informed by her religious beliefs: "You don't understand," she said. "It's not what you call respectability. It's a belief in God. I can't alter that for you" (MW 311). She also reveals that she is not as morally resolved as Andrews thinks she is. She confesses that despite her strong religious beliefs she experiences sexual desire, and she admits to having "most unsaintly thoughts" (MW 304) about him while he was away. Elizabeth's confession undermines Andrea Freud Loewenstein's argument that in 'Greene's system' the 'virgins, by their very nature, cannot feel lust or reciprocate desire. They are holy, but not very sexy'.⁴⁷ Brennan also misinterprets Elizabeth when he refers to her as a 'self-contained and morally resolute woman of unassailable and almost saint-like purity'.⁴⁸ Instead, Greene implies that she is a fallible human who relies on her Christian faith to provide her with the impetus to combat lustful temptation.

In *Rumour at Nightfall* Crane initially thinks that Eulelia has an 'unbearable air of rectitude' (RN 80), until she confesses to him that she has already lost her virginity. When she reflects upon her sexual past she exhibits 'some quality of fury and disgust', and she is adamant that she derived no satisfaction from the act: "Do you call that pleasure? It may be for the man, but for me, for all of us, it's pain, pain" (RN 151). Crane responds to her remorseful admission with condemnation. He feels that she has deceived him about her true nature: 'I do not love her now, he thought. My love was a feeling of passionate admiration for a rectitude she does not possess' (RN 152). In his view, virginity

⁴⁷ Andrea Freud Loewenstein, *Loathsome Jews and Engulfing Women: Metaphors of Projection in the Works of Wyndham Lewis, Charles Williams and Graham Greene* (New York: New York University Press, 1993), 272.

⁴⁸ Brennan, 'Graham Greene's Catholic Conversion', 138.

is precious and irreplaceable: ‘every whore once had it and traded it for a higher price than her body was ever to earn again’ (*RN* 152). In their warped perspectives, Crane and Andrews cannot accept that seemingly virtuous women have sexual feelings or sexual pasts. Whereas Andrews chooses to ignore Elizabeth’s sexual feelings by idealizing her, Crane is forced to recognize Eulelia’s fallibility and he consequently reviles her.

The yearning for female chastity experienced by Andrews and Crane is reinforced by their belief that sexually active females harbour a degrading and potent sexual appetite. Martin Turnell rightly labels Greene’s early treatment of sex as ‘defective’, because there is something ‘obsessive, something unbalanced’ about its presence in *The Man Within* and *Rumour at Nightfall*.⁴⁹ Andrews’s fear of a devouring and base female sexuality is exemplified in the scene in which he sleeps with a prostitute named Lucy. He initially compares Lucy to Elizabeth and relishes the former’s sexuality: ‘Here was no love and no reverence. The animal in him could ponder her beauty crudely and lustfully, as it had pondered the charms of common harlots, but with the added spice of reciprocated desire’ (*MW* 186). After sleeping with Lucy, Andrews explicitly imparts blame onto her by accusing her of ensnaring him in depraved behaviour: “‘you’ve made me feel myself dirtier’” (*MW* 263). He then insinuates that there is something spiritually base – even evil – about her: “‘are you a devil as well as a harlot?’” (*MW* 264). Responding to Andrews’s self-disgust, Lucy wearily explains that such feelings will not last: “‘For a day we are disgusted and disappointed and disillusioned and feel dirty all over. But we are clean again in a very short time, clean enough to go back and soil ourselves all over again’” (*MW* 264). In contrast to Lucy’s nonchalance, Andrews responds to his post-coital guilt in a way that suggests he feels ensnared within a sinful cycle of lust: ‘He felt no fear of death, but a terror of life, of going on soiling himself and repenting and soiling himself again. There was, he felt, no escape’ (*MW* 265). Significantly, Andrews locates the threat of sexual debasement primarily

⁴⁹ Martin Turnell, *Graham Greene: A Critical Essay* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967), 20-21.

within promiscuous womanhood, which he views as enabling and encouraging him to partake in self-destructive and sinful behaviour.

Mark Bosco notes that François Mauriac, a French Catholic novelist in this period, employed similar themes of sex, sin, and faith in his fiction. Bosco explains that Mauriac's novels 'fixate on the struggle to overcome the temptations of the lower, natural order because they stand in the way of grace', and that, for Mauriac, 'this meant creating characters who, in their weakened state, are attracted to sin and evil, usually embodied in overt sexual passions'.⁵⁰ Similarly, Andrews associates sleeping with promiscuous women with a lack of control and a sinful form of behaviour. He struggles to overcome these sexual temptations in the novel and he desires to form a relationship with the devout Elizabeth in order to reach a state of psychological and (it is implied) spiritual peace. Although there is no explicit link between the writings of Greene and Mauriac at this point in Greene's career, it is interesting that they are both Catholic writers who refer to similar tropes of sexual desire and guilt in relation to spiritual issues.⁵¹ Accordingly, in Andrews's condemnation of a sexually threatening woman, he can be seen as symbolically denouncing sinful behaviour. In this act of rejection, Andrews can be viewed as reinforcing his desire to embrace a less sinful, and a specifically Christian, relationship with Elizabeth. The speaker in T. S. Eliot's poem 'Ash-Wednesday' (1930) connects with these themes of desiring faith by rejecting sexual temptation and by yearning for 'pure' religious female characters. In the poem Eliot portrays his speaker on a journey towards religious conversion, which involves having to confront and overcome sexual temptation. Greene admitted to admiring Eliot's poetry during this period – 'T. S. Eliot and Herbert Read were the two great figures of my young manhood' (*WE* 33) – but there is no explicit evidence

⁵⁰ Bosco, *Graham Greene's Catholic Imagination*, 44.

⁵¹ Philip Stratford's *Faith and Fiction: Creative Process in Greene and Mauriac* (Notre Dame Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1964).

to suggest that Greene had 'Ash-Wednesday' in mind when writing his early novels. However, Eliot's and Greene's depictions of women, sexuality, and faith share important similarities, a point which strengthens my view that there is an implied religious frame behind Greene's representations of sexual desire. In Part III of 'Ash-Wednesday', the speaker's journey to religious conversion is symbolized by the ascension of a staircase that leads to religious commitment. The speaker is required to pass by sexual temptation, which is embodied in an enigmatic figure 'drest [*sic*] in blue and green'.⁵² This figure, who is situated in a fertile 'pasture scene' and is visually arresting, entices the aural senses of the speaker by enchanting 'the maytime with an antique flute'.⁵³ The figure's hypnotic magnetism and sexual potency is displayed in the way that the speaker's language breaks down in the figure's presence:

Blown hair is sweet, brown hair over the mouth blown,
Lilac and brown hair;
Distraction, music of the flute, stops and steps of the mind over the
third stair,
Fading, fading; strength beyond hope and despair
Climbing the third stair.⁵⁴

This faltering language suggests the strength required for the speaker to overcome carnal yearning. In this part of the poem it is implied that the speaker needs to move past this temptation in order to renounce 'base' sexual desire and thus continue an ascent to the 'peak' of conversion.

⁵² T. S. Eliot, *The Complete Poems and Plays* (London: Faber and Faber, 1969), 93.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

Eliot's distressed speaker calls upon religious women – 'blessed sister, holy mother' – to help on the journey away from sin and temptation. These women are affiliated with themes of spiritual strength and renewal: 'made strong the fountains and made fresh the / springs'.⁵⁵ As has been noted, in *The Man Within* and *Rumour at Nightfall* Andrews and Crane correspondingly perceive Elizabeth and Eulelia in relation to religious themes of protective strength and regeneration. Moreover, the men admit to reassessing their sexual desires in the presence of these devout women. For Andrews, his sexual impulses become weakened when he is around Elizabeth – 'strangely even his lust seemed less strong' (MW 251) – and he begins to view sex differently in her company. He regrets that he tried to persuade her to sleep with him – "I was a fool and a brute" (MW 315) – and he explains that because he loves her as he has "never loved anyone or anything in the world before" (MW 318), he will respect her religious views and will ask to sleep with her "only when we're married and that as a favour which I don't deserve" (MW 318). He also credits Elizabeth with encouraging him to persevere in trying to overcome his tendency to sin sexually. She 'reawakened' his 'defeated but persistent longing to raise himself from the dirt' (MW 277), and he begs her to remain with him: "You must possess me, go on possessing me, never leave me to myself" (MW 306). Without her, Andrews thinks he will "fall away" (MW 301) from his intentions. Greene expressed similar sentiments during his courtship with Vivien: 'Darling, I could worship *with* you, if you had your arms round me ... You see, when I see that Catholicism can produce something so fine all through, I know there must be something in it'.⁵⁶ Like Vivien's influence over Greene, Elizabeth's strong faith inspires Andrews to behave more virtuously and encourages him to contemplate – and later desire – religious belief.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 98.

⁵⁶ Cited in Sherry, *The Life of Graham Greene: Volume 1*, 220.

In *Rumour at Nightfall*, Crane states that the ““exhilaration”” and ““freedom from the body”” experienced when sleeping with a prostitute is not a permanent source of peace, since it lasts ““perhaps for an hour”” (RN 165). When a pimp retorts that the momentary peace attained through sex is ““the best one can do””, Crane disagrees: ‘the position of Evangelist seemed reversed. It was he now who bore a message and the young man who listened with doubt’ (RN 165). Crane reveals that he has ““found another way”” (RN 165) to secure lasting peace and the reader infers that this is located in his relationship with Eulelia. A little while after this confrontation with the pimp, Crane meets Eulelia in a church, hoping to ‘kiss and touch and hold’ (RN 213) her. Yet, once he is in her presence, he finds that he becomes spiritually rather than sexually awakened: ‘now all he felt was the inclination to pray, to beseech God on his knees’ (RN 213). She promises him that he will experience ““peace without end, conscious peace”” (RN 213) through faith, and although he desperately wishes to believe in God, he feels that this can only happen in a relationship with her: ““If I love you, I love faith. I can believe in mystery with you here, in God upon the altar, in God upon the tongue”” (RN 217). Crane’s love for Eulelia has led him to desire her religious faith, but, like Andrews, he believes that it is only with the support of a religious woman that these religious feelings can be kept alive.

In *The Name of Action* Anne-Marie also affects Chant’s relationship with faith by influencing his view of sexual desire. To begin with Chant eulogizes Anne-Marie, claiming that she represents ‘the chief beauty of life and the chief attraction of a death which promised a deeper and an eternal communion’ (NA 65); he even blasphemes by comparing her to God: ‘I love you as men have loved God’ (NA 286). Having slept with her, he arranges to meet her in the Church of Our Lady. While waiting for her arrival he says aloud: ““They talk of marriage as a sacrament, and I want to marry her. I am here for that. There is something holy in my purpose”” (NA 292). However, Anne-Marie’s entrance into the church shatters this religious atmosphere: ““What are you doing? Praying?”” asked a voice with incredulity’ (NA 293), and Chant finds that ‘in the dark of the church her voice sounded less lovely than shrill’ (NA 293). She was ‘not abashed at all by the shadows or effigies of holiness’

(NA 295), and her behaviour contrasts with the respectful devotion of some elderly women who are quietly praying with their rosaries: ‘Click, click, click. The old women were reaching the end of their hard and difficult journey to Calvary. Soon they would be at the foot of the cross, raising eyes with an understanding of pain, tenderness and mystery to the dim sacrifice above’ (NA 294). Anne-Marie confirms her irreligiousness when she laughs disdainfully at Chant’s offer of matrimony and states: “‘I will marry you again as I married you last night, but I will not be your wife’” (NA 296). When he presses her to explain, she tells him that their time together is epitomized by “‘lust’” (NA 297) rather than by love and commitment. Anne-Marie stands in stark contrast to Elizabeth and Eulelia. She holds no strong faith and she is unconcerned by sexual morality. Chant decides against having a relationship with her because he believes that the secular nature of their union is ultimately pointless: ‘at the end – if they lived together so long – they would have no expectation but decay, no claim to any sentient eternity’ (NA 284). By rejecting Anne-Marie on account of her view of sex and because of her secularity, Chant suggests that he would rather have a relationship with a more virtuous and religious woman. Thus, I propose that Greene represents the spiritual longings of Andrews, Chant, and Crane by depicting their reactions to female characters. In their desire for sexually restrained and devout women, along with their rejection of sexually liberal and ‘sinful’ women, these male characters indicate their longing for a religious way of life.

Varieties of Religious Experience

The fact that Greene explicitly portrays his protagonists’ thinking on issues of faith reinforces my view that in *The Man Within*, *The Name of Action*, and *Rumour at Nightfall* he alludes to his protagonists’ desires for religious belief in his depiction of their relationships with female characters. In all three novels, Greene depicts ‘epiphanic’ moments which occur within specifically designated religious spaces, in which the male characters experience varying forms of religious awakening.

Daniel Diephouse makes a related argument when he states that ‘the religious dimension is never far from the visible world for Greene’, and in certain ‘spatial arenas’ the author reveals an ‘intimation of the religious’.⁵⁷ I propose that these religious spaces indicate more than an ‘intimation’ of religious themes. They are areas in which the characters perceive, and articulate a longing to inhabit, different realms of reality which are set apart from the earthly sphere and which can only be accessed via faith. The exploration of different forms of space within literary texts has a long critical history and one of the most renowned theorists is Joseph Frank, author of ‘Spatial Form and Modernist Literature’ (1945). To summarize Frank’s argument in brief, he maintains that the presence of spatial form should be regarded as a literary response to the complex and confusing modernist era: ‘if there is one theme that dominates the history of modern culture since the last quarter of the nineteenth century, it is precisely that of insecurity, instability, the feeling of loss of control over the meaning and purpose of life amidst the continuing triumphs of science and technics’.⁵⁸ In light of Frank’s argument, I suggest that Greene designates specific religious spaces in his texts in which his protagonists come to terms with their feelings of being overwhelmed by their various environments.

In *The Man Within*, Elizabeth is associated with the space of her solitary cottage, which is situated in the depths of the countryside. Due to her strong religious beliefs her domestic space can be considered religious in nature, which explains why it represents a place of ‘shelter and a sense of mystery’ (*MW* 36) for Andrews when he enters it. As well as providing refuge for Andrews the

⁵⁷ Daniel Diephouse, ‘The Allusiveness of Space in Graham Greene’s Novels’, in William Thomas Hill (ed.), *Perceptions of Religious Faith in the Work of Graham Greene* (Oxford: Peter Lang Press, 2002): 29-80, 33.

⁵⁸ Joseph Frank, *The Widening Gyre: Crisis and Mastery in Modern Literature* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1963), 55. There is a mass of literature on Frank’s theory, which has proven to be a controversial one, and he addresses his critics in the work *The Idea of Spatial Form: Essays on Twentieth Century Literature* (Rutgers University Press, 1991). While I am aware that his theory develops between 1945 and his reassessment of it in 1991, I am predominantly interested in his initial thoughts on spatial form for the purpose of this section of my thesis.

cottage also represents a 'confessional space' in which he grapples with his faith.⁵⁹ According to Diephouse, such spaces are often 'closed-in, occasionally claustrophobic, highly disciplined spaces that have the quality of the confessional about them', because within them characters are able to 'reveal themselves in order to renew themselves'.⁶⁰ After standing trial in Lewes, where he attempted (and failed) to convict his former smuggling gang, Andrews returns to Elizabeth's cottage because he realizes that he is in love with her. They have an intense conversation in which they reveal their ideas about the future, and Elizabeth confirms her belief in an afterlife where they will have "eternity" (*MW* 300) together. At this point Andrews is saddened because he thinks that he will 'enter a blank eternity' (*MW* 342) after death and will never see her again. Elizabeth then sends him outside to fetch some water, knowing that the enraged smugglers are on their way to her cottage to revenge themselves on Andrews. She chooses to commit suicide in front of the smugglers rather than betray Andrews, and he is devastated to discover her corpse on his return. Confronted with Elizabeth's dead body, Andrews reveals that he was on the verge of believing in God before she died. He thinks to himself while looking at her corpse that he needed just a little more time in her influential presence before he could fully embrace faith, and he makes it clear that, despite not fully believing, he aspires one day to experience faith: 'if you had waited one month more, one week more, I might have believed. Now I hope' (*MW* 351).

The novel ends with the strong suggestion that Andrews decides to commit suicide, which he ambiguously refers to as 'an errand of supreme importance' (*MW* 354). In preparing to take his own life, he realizes that he will be killing the 'man within' him by destroying his father's oppressive presence. Having decided to take his Oedipal impulses to their deadly conclusion, Andrews finally

⁵⁹ Diephouse uses this term in his aforementioned essay 'The Allusiveness of Space in Graham Greene's Novels', 63.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 63, 64.

experiences a form of earthly peace and a new degree of sensitivity: 'To his own surprise he felt happy and at peace, for his father was slain and yet a self remained, a self which knew neither lust, blasphemy nor cowardice, but only peace and curiosity for the dark, which deepened around him' (MW 353). These references to his ignorance of blasphemy, along with his curiosity 'for the dark', could signify that Andrews's true self is now open to religious experiences which were previously repressed by his father – both in his childhood (as his father would beat his mother for trying to read the Bible aloud) and in his mind (in the form of the dominating ghost). Schwerdt maintains that Andrews wants to kill himself out of guilt because he betrayed his smuggling friend Carlyon: 'the one man he shared so many interests with, who gave him guidance and love'.⁶¹ In my reading, Andrews dies because he wants to be with Elizabeth. He envisages Elizabeth waiting for him in another realm and sees her face set 'between the two candles', which regarded him from afar 'without pity and without disapproval, with wisdom and sanity' (MW 354). This image of Elizabeth implies that Andrews hopes to join her after his death, and thus signals the beginnings of his belief in a religious realm of reality in which he can be reunited with his devout lover.

The religious space designated in *The Name of Action* is more obviously 'religious' than the cottage in *The Man Within*, as Chant's spiritual questionings take place in the Church of Our Lady. While waiting to meet Anne-Marie, Chant becomes strangely affected by his surroundings. He is especially captivated by a statue that depicts Christ being prepared for entombment by his apostles: 'The smoky last flicker of the candles shifted the shadows continually, until the figures seemed in truth to move to their task. Even the dead Christ stirred as if at a prescience of resurrection' (NA 290). The allusions to resurrection and to the stirring of a dead body correspond with Chant's own previously redundant faith coming to life within him; his spiritual awakening is confirmed when he concludes that 'God was not a cloudy aspiration but a concrete hope or fear' (NA 291). He

⁶¹ Schwerdt, 'Graham Greene's Search for Faithfulness', 158.

subsequently expresses his desire to be heard by God when he murmurs: ““O God, O God”” (NA 291), but he apprehends that ultimately he is trapped within his secular perspective when he finds that he is ‘conversing with himself’ rather than ‘praying to the figure before him’ (NA 291). A few moments later, Chant encounters the body of a dead priest and he becomes filled with ‘bitterness’ at the thought that the man had died ‘in possession of a belief’ (NA 296). He considers the priest to be the ‘happier man’ because ‘the thing which he had loved best he had carried with him’ (NA 297). Chant admits that he wants to be connected to the priest and, it can be assumed, to the religious man’s faith: ‘in his heart he longed to be able to share the coffin with the priest’ (NA 297-98).

Part of Chant’s yearning stems from his realization that the priest – according to his Christian beliefs – would become resurrected in another realm of reality, as Chant perceives that the ‘seed of new life’ (NA 298) lay within the decaying corpse. Chant experiences ‘pain and despair’ when he reflects upon his inability to share such faith: ‘there seemed no such seed within him’ (NA 298). Despite his longings for the promise of life after death he cannot embrace such a mysterious belief system: ‘Chant shared the doubts and excuses. If only, he thought, I could share the belief, how happy I should be even now. But he knew that he could never share it without the intervention of a miracle, and a miracle was one of the innumerable things in which he did not believe’ (NA 336). Bosco maintains that Greene’s fixation on ‘the tension between belief and unbelief’, which is embodied in Chant’s confused spiritual condition, reflects the ‘epistemological and existential dilemmas’ of Greene’s century, and in this way Chant is ‘a product of the Enlightenment and liberal establishment, choosing doubt as the premier virtue of humanity’.⁶² Chant’s religious status can be interpreted as a comment upon the limiting and entrapping nature of secularism (according to Greene). Chant mourns the fact that when he dies he will not enter another realm of reality in the form of an afterlife because he lacks the faith to believe in it.

⁶² Bosco, *Graham Greene’s Catholic Imagination*, 26.

Rumour at Nightfall represents Greene's most developed exploration of faith in his early novels. Perhaps, having written the two previous novels, Greene felt confident in dealing more explicitly with religious themes in his fiction. He sets *Rumour at Nightfall* in a Catholic country and includes a specifically Catholic protagonist in the form of Eulelia. In a key scene, which takes place in a church, Crane is portrayed as contemplating his personal views on faith in the presence of Eulelia. Prefiguring the characterization of the hell-obsessed Pinkie in *Brighton Rock* (1938), Crane advances towards a belief in heaven via his acceptance that there is such a thing as hell: 'If Hell means pain, fear, mistrust of oneself and everyone, then I believe in Hell, and why should there not be Heaven too' (RN 180). He maintains that although God is 'said to be all-good', he believes that God is 'qualified by evil' (RN 213). Sherry reveals that Greene's own initial attraction towards Catholicism similarly stemmed from his belief in hell. In December 1925 Greene described how hell represented 'something hard, non-sentimental and exciting', which contrasted with his rather vague apprehension of God.⁶³ Following this, Crane's contemplation of hell indicates the beginnings of faith, which becomes strengthened when he subsequently experiences the manifestation of God within the church: 'There was the sound of a voice muttering in a corner, and a suspended light, like a star seen between the forest leaves, revealed to Crane the presence of his fear. God was upon the altar' (RN 212). While looking at the altar Crane contemplates Christ's sacrificial crucifixion and acknowledges that Christ's death is made present by way of transubstantiation every time mass is performed:

If there is a God, he thought, if that wafer is flesh and blood, enduring at every communion the actual pain of Calvary, the torture of the nails and the torment of the thief's mockery, a thousand years foreshortened into this moment, may one be allowed to pity God? [...] he felt

⁶³ Cited in Sherry, *The Life of Graham Greene: Volume 1*, 260.

the inclination to pray, to beseech God on his knees to put an end to His eternal torment, to cease to overwhelm man with such an enormous debt. (RN 213)

In the above passage, Greene uses free indirect discourse with extended sentences punctuated by commas to chart Crane's on-going thought processes about how he should relate to God. Crane focuses on the crucifixion, which is a recurring theme in Greene's novels of the thirties, but he is only able to consider the pain, blood, and torture affiliated with the act, rather than the theme of resurrection and renewal it also connotes. Although he feels burdened by faith's legacy of violence, death, and sacrifice, Crane is willing to share Eulelia's religious beliefs because he wants to be permanently united with her in marriage. Moreover, he comes to the conclusion that by denying faith he is basically rejecting the chance of being joined with Eulelia in an afterlife, and this realization reaches him 'like a spark from the lamp burning its sharp way to his brain' (RN 218). He even suggests that this 'spark' of comprehension is sent by God: 'I am dying, I know that I am dying. If God is a thief in the night, He has allowed me to hear His fumble at the latch' (RN 219). The combination of surety, 'I know that I am dying', and hedged uncertainty, 'if God is a thief in the night', captures the unstable status of Crane's belief at this point in the novel. As with Greene's treatment of religious belief in *The Man Within* and *The Name of Action*, Crane contemplates his stance on faith in relation to the concept of life after death and his hope for an eternal union with his lover.

In his depiction of Crane's contemplation of faith, Greene also explores the idea that faith alters one's perception of reality on earth. Initially, Crane asks himself: 'what difference would [faith] make to me? My body would have the same desires, my mind the same fears, life would be the same' (RN 223). This stance is countered by an inner religious voice, 'as if it had been spoken by Eulelia Monti', which checks his 'false reasoning' and suggests that faith provides meaning to life itself: 'your death would be different. It would not be purposeless. You would pay back to-morrow if

you should die with pain and with faith, the sacrifice of your God' (RN 224). The voice maintains that after death the faithful will 'join the endless circle of God and the Mother of God' (RN 224), forming part of an infinite movement. While listening to these arguments Crane undergoes a supernatural experience, as he perceives this circle of God gradually encompassing him in the church:

For the moment he saw it with the outer eye, a visible ring of white light roaring through the darkness of the church, first as small as a wedding ring, its orbit growing like the circle of a stone in a pool, enclosing the altar, enclosing the pillars, enclosing the priest, brushing his own face with the wind of its movement, dazzling his eyes with its light. (RN 224)

Within the earthly realm of the church, Crane has become encircled by another dimension of reality, and his thoughts about joining an 'endless circle' become physically realized. Greene's description of Crane's supernatural experience corresponds with certain aspects of Frank's theory of spatial form. Frank maintains that spatial form is present in specific parts of modernist texts when 'for the duration of the scene, at least, the time-flow of the narrative is halted' and 'attention is fixed on the interplay of relationships within the immobilized time-area'.⁶⁴ Such freedom from the temporal occurs in the above scene: Crane inhabits a space in which 'time did not enter' (RN 212), and his thoughts on the threatening political fighting taking place around the church are superseded by his sense of an enveloping circle of light. Daniel Diephouse recognizes that 'Greene often depreciates the novel's penchant for time passing in order to emphasize space and its revelatory possibilities', and Crane's religious experiences in the church correspond with this view.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ Frank, *The Widening Gyre*, 15.

⁶⁵ Diephouse, 'The Allusiveness of Space in Graham Greene's Novels', 40.

After the supernatural occurrence in the church, Crane marries Eulelia and confirms that he is prepared to share her faith. However, he does not officially convert and he recognizes how tentative his religious belief is when he exclaims to Chase: ““I have married her, and God knows whether I don’t share her faith”” (RN 240). Despite the hesitant nature of his newfound faith, Crane’s religious stance proves to be a deciding factor in the breakdown of his friendship with Chase, who is aggressively secular. In Chase’s view, Crane’s marriage to the devout Eulelia means that he has joined ‘the conspiracy of superstition against him, to make league with spirits, fires, crucifixes, priests, damnation’ (RN 239). Chase deduces that faith fundamentally changes one’s perception of reality so that even ‘words would have a different meaning to each of them’; consequently, he thinks that he and Crane ‘could never speak, even quarrel, with equality, with a modicum of understanding’ (RN 240). Chase likens religious belief to walking into a ‘strange land’ and he recognizes that Eulelia provides companionship for Crane. He concludes that since Eulelia shares ‘the same perception’ as Crane, their religious understanding ‘will be like a flame between them, warming them with its heat in however cold and solitary a region of the mind’ (RN 241). In a letter to Vivien in August 1925, Greene explicitly discussed the concept of faith enabling entry into a new landscape. He described how the prospect of believing in God would allow them to ‘strike out together across this new country’ and perhaps enter ‘the kind of promised land to which people have really been aiming, though they didn’t know it, & they’ll follow us in’.⁶⁶ In *Rumour at Nightfall* it is possible that Greene similarly implies the linked ideas that faith enables individuals to enter a new realm of reality after death and that faith opens up new dimensions in their minds.

Chase realizes that he is envious rather than contemptuous of Crane’s relationship with Eulelia and of his friend’s newfound view of faith. When he tries to imagine himself in his friend’s place, Chase does so ‘with a degree of envy that shocked himself and caused him to cry, in the

⁶⁶ Greene, *Graham Greene: A Life in Letters*, 19.

moment of impulse, “I hate you both” (RN 245). In Chase’s resentful thought processes, Greene alludes to the concept that those with faith are perceived as having access to a desirable form of comfort and companionship, as well as a means of coping with the difficulties of life on earth, because their faith provides ‘beauty in the midst of barrenness and danger in ease’ (RN 241). Soon after this confrontation with Chase, Crane is caught in a battle between political activists and is shot dead. When Chase approaches Crane’s corpse, he notes that ‘the face was at peace’ and that ‘no mark remained of the terror, or the pain, or the disappointment’ (RN 294). Eulelia interprets Crane’s serenity as proof that he has moved away from earth into another realm, “‘He’s gone”” (RN 297). Brought together due to Crane’s death, Chase and Eulelia form a fragile union characterized by themes of sacrifice: ‘If it was [Crane’s] tomb, they were the grains of corn lest his body wake and hunger, they were the pitcher of wine lest his body should feel thirst, they were slaves for its service’ (RN 300). Although there is no indication that Chase shares Eulelia’s religious belief at this point in the novel, there is the lingering presumption that he too could be influenced by her piety and, like Crane, he may reconsider his religious position in her presence.

Greene’s description of characters exploring faith, and his allusion to supernatural space in his first three novels, undermine the arguments made by critics who regard these texts as predominantly concerned with secular issues. Robert Hoskins cautiously refers to the presence of spiritual themes in *The Man Within* and *The Name of Action*; he maintains that ‘the primarily secular redemptions of Greene’s first two novels acquire religious overtones’.⁶⁷ Roger Sharrock similarly plays down the importance of religious issues in Greene’s early novels when he states that ‘one can pick up some interesting rumours of religious preoccupations’ if you tune ‘to the right wavelength’.⁶⁸ Having explored the epiphanic moments which occur in these texts, I would encourage a

⁶⁷ Robert Hoskins, *Graham Greene: An Approach to the Novels* (London: Garland Publishing, 1999), 12.

⁶⁸ Sharrock, *Saints, Sinners and Comedians*, 170.

reading that regards Greene's early fiction as saturated with religious questionings and experiences. As Brennan insists, Greene's 'new-found faith, along with some poignant echoes of his Anglican past', form a 'central and insistent strand of his creative impulse' in *The Man Within*, and this reading equally applies to *The Name of Action* and *Rumour at Nightfall*.⁶⁹ Finally, Greene's depiction of religious spaces could be viewed as representing the beginnings of his concept of the 'religious sense', the theory of which he outlined in subsequent essays written in the thirties about Henry James. Greene argued that James showed an awareness of another spiritual dimension to reality in his fiction, which added a depth to his texts that was absent in secular works.⁷⁰

Conclusion: 'the hope only of empty men'

Greene does not confirm the exact status of the faith of his male protagonists in any of his early novels. Sharma rightly perceives that the protagonists are 'denied the consolation of stumbling upon a positive belief' and are thus 'engaged in an interminable quest' for meaning.⁷¹ Although Andrews, Chant, Crane, and Chase profess their longing for faith and associate it with those themes of peace and permanence they feel are absent in their lives, none of them is depicted as having that unquestioning faith held by the devout women they encounter. In a related vein, Philip Stratford argues that one must 'inevitably doubt the sincerity of Greene's endings' because the 'conversions of his heroes' are 'unconvincing'.⁷² In my view, Greene deliberately depicts his protagonists as suffering from the inability to commit fully to faith because he wants to explore this state of doubt in his fiction; the conversions are 'unconvincing' precisely because none of the protagonists fully

⁶⁹ Brennan, 'Graham Greene's Catholic Conversion', 136.

⁷⁰ Chapter Three of this thesis discusses the concept of 'the religious sense' in more detail.

⁷¹ Sharma, *The Search for Belief*, 217.

⁷² Stratford, *Faith and Fiction*, 179.

convert. The incapability of accepting religious belief is epitomized in a telling scene from *The Man Within*. On one level the scene depicts Elizabeth urging Andrews to testify against his former smuggling ring, but it can be inferred that she is actually confronting his failure to make the leap of faith:

“You hesitate and hesitate and then you are lost,’ she replied. ‘Can’t you ever just shut your eyes and leap?’”

“No, no,” Andrews said. He got to his feet and moved restlessly about the room. “I can’t. You are trying to drive me and I won’t be driven”. (*MW* 128)

As I have shown, Chant from *The Name of Action* and Crane and Chase from *Rumour at Nightfall* are similarly unable to wholly commit to religious belief, as they are held back by their doubts and reservations.

Although none of Greene’s characters is shown to experience lasting peace in their earthly realms, they all sense moments of peace while contemplating religion, which makes their inability to dedicate themselves to faith all the more distressing. Indeed, Greene’s protagonists are able to recognize the potential benefits of faith yet none of them is shown to officially convert; only Andrews and Crane harbour a tentative form of religious belief. Greene indicates that for those who long for faith it is a psychologically painful state to be trapped within a secular perspective. In their condition of unrealized religious desire, Greene’s protagonists share the same predicament faced by characters in T. S. Eliot’s ‘The Hollow Men’ (1925). Eliot’s poem opens with the dry and rasping voices of a group of men devoid of hope; they neither embrace nor fully denounce faith, and find themselves hovering on a Lethean shore, paralyzed by their indecision: ‘We grope together / And

avoid speech / Gathered on this beach of the tumid river'.⁷³ The hollow men have been left behind by those who were able to make a religious commitment and who 'crossed / With direct eyes, to death's other Kingdom'.⁷⁴ In their incapability of fully committing themselves to religious belief, Andrews, Chant, Crane, and Chase typify the unfulfilled state of Eliot's hollow men: 'Paralysed force, gesture without motion'.⁷⁵ Greene confirms the association between *The Name of Action* and *The Hollow Men* by using an extract from the poem as the novel's epigraph:

Between the idea
And the reality
Between the motion
And the act
Falls the Shadow⁷⁶

David Ward defines the Eliotian 'Shadow' as representing 'the interval of unsatisfied desire' which 'delays the fulfilment'.⁷⁷ A similar 'Shadow' of doubt inhibits Greene's protagonists from committing themselves to faith, despite their professed longing for it. In the end, alone and dejected, Eliot's faithless speakers are left to enunciate a repetitive and monotonous chant that characterizes the emptiness of their lives:

⁷³ Eliot, *The Complete Poems and Plays*, 85.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 83.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 85.

⁷⁷ David Ward, *T. S. Eliot Between Two Worlds: A Reading of T. S. Eliot's Poetry and Plays* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973), 144.

Here we go round the prickly pear

Prickly pear prickly pear

Here we go round the prickly pear

*At five o'clock in the morning*⁷⁸

This version of a common nursery rhyme creates an atmosphere of futility and entrapment within a never-ending circuit, which corresponds to Waugh's depiction of a disintegrating social cycle and – more relevantly – to Greene's characters and their repetitive secular lives.

As well as possibly drawing upon his personal difficulties with faith and doubt in his characterization of the male protagonists, Greene also uses his male characters to explore the relationship between gender, sexuality, and purity. While critics have generally maintained that Greene himself speaks with a single Madonna/whore dichotomy when he presents his male protagonists' perceptions of women, I have demonstrated that Greene's fiction is more complex than this. Although Greene's personal letters to his wife appear to endorse this binary (he idealizes Vivien and promises her that he will be chaste), in his fiction he exposes the reductive nature of his male protagonists' mindsets, as he depicts the devout female characters struggling with their sexual desires. Even though there is a difference between the authorial presentation of women and the depiction of the view of women held by the male protagonists, it is clear that Greene associates sexual promiscuity with sinfulness in these texts.

Furthermore, I would like to put forward the idea that Greene presents the spiritually confused male characters as exemplars of a stagnant secular English culture in the same way that Waugh uses the Bright Young People. Both sets of young characters lack firm religious beliefs and are shown to inhabit entrapping and dissatisfying environments. In the previous chapter I suggested

⁷⁸ Eliot, *The Complete Poems and Plays*, 85.

that the Bright Young People are driven by an unconscious hunger for religious permanence. It is arguable that a comparable desire is articulated in Greene's texts, as the protagonists yearn for 'peace' (which they subsequently associate with faith) and meaning in their empty, secular lives. Greene explores the psychological interiors of his characters, as he unveils their conflicting and complex religious longings along with their vacillating attitudes towards religious commitment. In contrast to Greene's psychological characterization, Waugh employs an external form of satire in his early fiction in order to portray the outward behaviour of his socialites. As I have argued in the previous chapter of this thesis, Waugh's style can be interpreted as suggesting that the Bright Young People are so caught up in their social whirl that they are unable to reflect on deeper thoughts or address feelings of spiritual dissatisfaction. For Waugh, it could be said that the tragedy of the Bright Young People is that they are lost and yet do not realize that they are in need of faith; for Greene, his protagonists are shown to be equally lost, but their problems stem from an inability to overcome their deep scepticism towards faith.

Despite their dissimilar approaches to depicting faith in their early fiction, I propose that both Waugh and Greene imply that a belief in God will provide the antidote to the troubles faced by their characters. Faith, implicitly in Waugh's work and explicitly in Greene's fiction, is associated with themes of stability, peace, and release from secular entrapment. At the end of Chapter One, I put forward the idea that Waugh advocates the hope for change via 'negative comic signification', as he reveals the destructive consequences of remaining detached from religion.⁷⁹ Greene's work is less dramatic. There is no apocalyptic scene. There is merely the implicit hope that one day, over time, the living protagonists (Chant and Chase) might build upon their recognition that faith is detrimentally absent in their lives and they may possibly turn to God. However, since Chant and

⁷⁹ Justus Nieland 'Editor's Introduction: Modernism's Laughter', *Modernist Cultures* 2.2 (2006): 80-86, 81.

Chase fail to articulate a firm faith at the conclusion of the novels, their hope for imminent conversion remains ‘the hope only of empty men’.⁸⁰

⁸⁰ Ibid.

CHAPTER THREE: DISCOVERING THE GROUNDS OF FAITH

In a review of Arthur Calder-Marshall's novel *At Sea* (1934), Graham Greene mentioned some of the defining features of English fiction written in the nineteen twenties. He claimed that the literature of the period left 'an impression of despair' and that it was written in a form of 'desiccated satire'.¹ As I argued in my first chapter, these features correspond with the hopelessness and cynicism in Evelyn Waugh's early satirical fiction. In the review Greene also discussed the ways in which fiction in the thirties had changed in relation to fiction from the twenties. He perceived a renewed faith in belief systems, as he referred to the 'succeeding generation who are discovering grounds of faith', whether through psychoanalysis ('Mr. Calder-Marshall from Freud') or communism ('as others from Russia').² Greene alluded to why people had begun to seek solace in various forms of belief systems when he referred to the 'most devastating fear of our generation', which was – as Calder-Marshall states in his novel – 'the fear that evil has the last say'.³ This fear was a direct response to the troubled historical context of the period. According to Samuel Hynes, in the years 1933 and 1934, 'history had taken on a new and terrible momentum: Hitler was in power, and it was clear not only that a war would come, but who the Enemy would be'.⁴ The anticipation of another world war, combined with memories of its devastating predecessor, formed, in Valentine Cunningham's words, 'one of the peculiar burdens of the 'thirties generation''.⁵ Compounding concerns over an imminent war were financial worries: the Wall Street Crash of 1929 led to a world-wide economic slump, and

¹ Graham Greene, 'Fiction', *The Spectator* (7 September, 1934), 336.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Samuel Hynes, *The Auden Generation: Literature and Politics in England in 1930s* (London: Pimlico, 1992), 140.

⁵ Valentine Cunningham, *British Writers of the Thirties* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 55.

the collapse of the gold standard in 1931 irreparably damaged Britain's standing as a leading world power. In response to this sense of widespread cultural decay and imminent crisis, writers sought refuge in a range of political systems (including fascism, communism, and socialism) and religious beliefs (including Anglo-Catholicism, Roman Catholicism, and Protestantism). In his introduction to *England Made Me* (1935), Greene explained that 'it was impossible in those days not to be committed' while 'the enormous battlefield was prepared around us'.⁶

This chapter makes a case for the view that Waugh and Greene implicitly enact comparable anti-humanist criticisms of secular societies in their novels of the early to mid-nineteen thirties. Furthermore, I suggest that their respective examinations of modern society, both in England and abroad, are informed by their Catholic beliefs. In this period a group of dogmatic Catholic writers developed anti-humanist arguments regarding the condition of modern English society. Christopher Dawson, Karl Adam, Hilaire Belloc, G. K. Chesterton, and Ross Hoffman formed what is now regarded as the 'Catholic intellectual revival of the 1930s'.⁷ Conor Cruise O'Brien, Albert Sonnenfeld, and Martin Green all maintain that the Catholic revivalists represented a pessimistic, anti-humanist response to what was perceived as an increasingly secular and humanist modern environment.⁸ Humanism was problematic for these writers for the following reasons: they did not agree that fallible man – morally weak and liable to sin – should be placed as the highest being in the

⁶ Graham Greene, 'Author's Introduction' (1970), in Graham Greene, *England Made Me* (London: William Heinemann and The Bodley Head, 1976): vii-xi, vii.

⁷ Christina Scott, 'The Vision and Legacy of Christopher Dawson', in Stratford Caldecot and John Morrill (eds), *Eternity in Time: Christopher Dawson and the Catholic Idea of History* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1997): 11-24, 16.

⁸ Conor Cruise O'Brien, *Maria Cross: Imaginative Patterns in a Group of Modern Catholic Writers* (London: Academy Guild Press, 1963); Albert Sonnenfeld, *Crossroads: Essays on the Catholic Novelists* (London: Summa Publications, 1982); Martin Green, *Essays on Literature and Religion: Yeats's Blessings on von Hügel* (London: Longmans, 1967).

universe; nor did they accept that society would progress incrementally over time, as they argued that boundaries and structure were needed in order to compensate for man's inherent failings. These Catholic writers ultimately placed their faith in God; they proposed that men and society in general should live in relation to God's laws. In their fictions of the early to mid thirties, Waugh and Greene can be viewed as implicitly disapproving of humanist systems of living when they portray various political and secular lifestyles as destructive and entrapping. While these authors' novels do not form part of a Catholic revival (because their explicitly 'Catholic' literature does not materialize until the late thirties and early forties), I suggest that their anti-humanist condemnations of secular societies resonate with contemporary Catholic views on the subject.

The non-fictional work produced by Waugh in the years immediately after his conversion sets out his view that secular societies need to adhere to Catholic values in order to prevent the collapse of civilization as a whole. Waugh exposes the disintegrative state of African civilization in his satire *Black Mischief* (1932). The novel is set in Azania, a fictional island off the West coast of Africa that is ruled by King Seth. Waugh depicts the disastrous consequences of Seth's attempts to modernize his barbaric country using secular methods based on Western ideas of progress. I propose that Waugh reveals his condemnation of those forms of 'progress' which are detached from religious belief, and he shows that secular modernization merely perpetuates social disintegration and barbaric behaviour. In *A Handful of Dust* (1934), Waugh criticizes English society in his portrayal of the shallow lives of the Bright Young People. The protagonist, Tony Last, tries to distance himself from his wife's socialite friends, but they intrude into his old-fashioned home, Hetton Abbey, and disrupt his routine. Following the tragic death of his only son, Tony is then abandoned by his wife (who admits to her on-going affair with a somewhat despicable acquaintance). In response to these events, Tony decides to join an expedition going to South America, which ends disastrously when he becomes imprisoned by a lunatic. Although Tony harbours praiseworthy morals, he does not have strong religious beliefs (despite routinely attending church). Accordingly, Tony could characterize

Waugh's belief – stated in his non-fiction – that men need faith in order to withstand the destructive forces of secular societies (both in England and abroad). Tony's tragic end reflects the disastrous consequences of his shallow faith. I recognize that in *Black Mischief* and *A Handful of Dust* Waugh does not explicitly refer to either his religious or his political beliefs. In what follows I explore some of the possible reasons behind Waugh's decision not to deal with these themes explicitly in his fiction, but I also suggest that his views are implied within his writing. In particular, I consider the idea that Waugh's political perspective is informed by his Catholicism. Thus, I suggest below that any seeming reference to the need for boundaries within modern society is informed by his belief that these boundaries be Catholic in nature.

Greene admitted to dramatically revising his writing style from *Stamboul Train* (1932) onwards: 'there was nothing for me to do but dismantle all that elaborate scaffolding built from an older writer's blue print, write it off as apprentice work and start again at the beginning'.⁹ This transformation was needed in order to facilitate his new authorial intention: a serious and sober examination of his contemporary context. Norman Sherry affirms that Greene's aim in the thirties was to write 'realism not melodrama'.¹⁰ Unlike Waugh, Greene explicitly deals with political movements in his fiction, and he admitted in his autobiography that 'politics since 1933' had become increasingly present in his novels (*WE* 10). In a 1934 article Greene emphasized the importance of using fiction to engage with current issues, and he stated that he can 'imagine no prose [...] which does not suffer by its divorce from social consciousness'.¹¹ True to this view, his novels studied in this chapter display a range of social classes and political systems, and in certain characters Greene explores the strained relationship between political and religious belief.

⁹ Graham Greene, *A Sort of Life* (London: Penguin Books, 1971), 151.

¹⁰ Norman Sherry, *The Life of Graham Greene: Volume 1, 1904-1939* (London: Penguin, 1989), 459.

¹¹ Graham Greene, 'The Seedcake and the Lovely Lady', *Life and Letters* X (August 1934): 517-24, 522.

Stamboul Train is a thriller set on the Orient Express. The novel examines the ways in which the lives of various characters – including a businessman, a journalist, a chorus girl, and a political revolutionary – interact. In particular, socialism is explored in the flawed idealist Dr Czinner, who yearns for religious belief but is unable to embrace it due to his political loyalties. Communism becomes the predominant concern of *It's a Battlefield* (1934), in which Greene portrays its leadership as anti-individualistic and self-serving. A bus driver named Jim Drover is a member of the Communist Party and during a communist rally he kills a policeman in self-defence. The reader is kept in suspense as to whether Drover will be sentenced to a lifetime in jail or to death by hanging. The repercussions of Drover's incarceration are explored in relation to his devastated family and to his communist colleagues, who want him to hang because it would be great publicity for the Party. There is also a Catholic character, Jules Briton, who explicitly denounces communism in favour of Catholicism when he is in church, but, as soon as he leaves, finds that his religious fervour dissolves into an uncomfortable state of doubt. In *England Made Me* (1935), which is set in Stockholm, Greene focuses on the rapacious nature of capitalism, as symbolized by Erik Krogh's international business empire. Kate Farrant, Krogh's lover and business partner, persuades her unreliable and feckless twin brother Anthony to work for the company. Tragically, Anthony is murdered for attempting to blackmail Krogh, as he wanted to make a stand against the immorality of Krogh's corrupt and fraudulent enterprise.

Overall, taking into consideration the fact that Greene and Waugh were very different in this period (in terms of their writing styles and the topics covered in their fiction), and acknowledging that neither author explicitly expresses his Catholic beliefs in his novels, this chapter puts forward the idea that their fictions are written from similar anti-humanist and (related to this) Catholic perspectives.

Waugh's Catholicism: Christianity Versus Chaos

Waugh felt the need to defend his conversion in an article entitled 'Converted to Rome: Why it Has Happened to Me' (1930). This essay provides a key insight into Waugh's thinking in the early thirties, as it reveals his reflections on his personal faith and establishes his stance on how Catholicism should relate to European civilization. Waugh explained that he decided to convert out of his own free will: 'there is no coaxing or tricking people into acquiescence', and he added that he was not merely 'captivated by the ritual' (*EAR* 103). Furthermore, Waugh did not view his conversion as a case of simply accepting doctrine and having 'his mind made up for him' (*EAR* 103), nor did he think his new faith had limited his perspective in terms of his literary work or intellectual explorations. On the contrary, Waugh insisted that if one 'has an active mind, the Roman system can and does form a basis for the most vigorous intellectual and artistic activity' (*EAR* 103).

Having confronted some misconceptions about religious conversion and having established his Catholic perspective, Waugh outlined his argument regarding the nature and the future of European civilization. According to Waugh, the problems afflicting the modern world were inextricably linked to religious issues: 'in the present phase of European history the essential issue is no longer between Catholicism, on one side, and Protestantism, on the other, but between Christianity and Chaos' (*EAR* 103). By contrasting religion with chaos, Waugh confirmed his belief that Christianity represented order, stability, and permanence, which he arguably alluded to in his earlier satires. Another key aspect of the article is Waugh's examination of the concept of 'civilization'. He defined it as 'the whole moral and artistic organization of Europe' which was, in his opinion, inextricably related to Christianity: 'it is no longer possible [...] to accept the benefits of civilization and at the same time deny the supernatural basis upon which it rests' (*EAR* 104). Waugh's reference to his belief in the supernatural 'basis' of civilization corresponds with my argument in Chapter One, in which I maintained that Waugh alludes to a supernatural dimension

beyond reality that is being ignored by the irreligious socialites of the twenties. By 1930 he explicitly discloses his certainty about the existence of such a religious dimension to reality.

Regarding the relationship between civilization and religion, Waugh also contended that civilization ‘came into being through Christianity’, and that, without religion, civilization ‘has not in itself the power of survival’ (*EAR* 104). T. S. Eliot articulated a similar argument in ‘The Humanism of Irving Babbitt’ (1928) when he stated: ‘If you mean a spiritual and intellectual coordination on a high level, then it is doubtful whether civilization can endure without religion, and religion without a church’.¹² Whereas Eliot wrote from an Anglo-Catholic standpoint, Waugh asserted that ‘Christianity exists in its most complete and vital form’ (*EAR* 104) in Roman Catholicism, and he maintained that Catholicism should be the fundamental component of civilization. Following this belief, Waugh argued that the widespread loss of faith was responsible for the vulnerable state of European civilization at the beginning of the nineteen thirties, which was why it was ‘in greater need of combative strength than it ha[d] been for centuries’ (*EAR* 104). He posited Roman Catholicism as the most suitable form of faith through which to strengthen civilization, because the teaching was ‘coherent and consistent’ and the faith was supported by ‘competent organization and discipline’ (*EAR* 104). His respect for order, authority, and regulations corresponds to his conservative political stance, which he later defines in his travel book *Robbery Under Law* (1939) (discussed in detail in Chapter Five).

Waugh outlined his stance on humanism alongside his discussion of the relationship between Catholicism and civilization in this period. In an article for the *Daily Express*, entitled ‘Was He Right to Free the Slaves?’ (1933), Waugh accused the humanist perspective of comprising ‘fallacies’ which included ‘the idea of a perfectible evolutionary man, of a responsible democratic voter’ and ‘above

¹² T. S. Eliot, ‘The Humanism of Irving Babbitt’ (1928), in T. S. Eliot, *Selected Essays* (London: Faber and Faber, 1951): 471-80, 479

all' the 'sentimental belief in the basic sweetness of human nature' (*EAR* 135). In contrast to the humanist outlook, Waugh believed in the innate fallibility of mankind – epitomized by the Catholic conception of Original Sin – from which the problems of society stem. David Wykes puts this view well: 'The eternal war of civilization against the chaos and anarchy that originate in man's originally corrupt nature is the foundation theme of all of Waugh's fiction'.¹³ Waugh maintained that the inherent sinfulness and weakness of man could only be addressed by embracing the discipline of the Church. He praised the possession of firm beliefs in an article entitled 'Tolerance' (1932), in which he argued that it was better to be 'narrow-minded' and to hold 'limited and rigid principles' than to have 'no mind' and 'no principles whatsoever' (*EAR* 128).¹⁴ The alternative, he warned, was to have 'too much tolerance' (*EAR* 128). Indeed, Waugh portrays the consequences of not having strong principles in a short story entitled 'Too Much Tolerance' (1932). The story concerns a character whose downfall is a direct result of his naïve trust in human goodness, as he cannot perceive when he is being taken advantage of by others. He is described as a 'jaunty, tragic little figure' who has been 'cheated out of his patrimony by his partner, battered on by an obviously worthless son, deserted by his wife'.¹⁵ The story concludes with the view of this 'irrepressible, bewildered figure striding off under his bobbing topee, cheerfully butting his way into a whole continent of rapacious and ruthless jolly good fellows'.¹⁶ In Waugh's opinion, succumbing to the humanist view of finding 'good in everything' merely led to 'an inability to distinguish between good and bad', and consequently forced one to 'put up with what is wasteful and harmful' (*EAR* 128). Waugh's belief in Original Sin,

¹³ David Wykes, *Evelyn Waugh: A Literary Life* (London: Macmillan, 1999), 80.

¹⁴ This article was Waugh's contribution to a series of articles entitled 'The Seven Deadly Sins of Today by Seven Famous Authors' in *John Bull*.

¹⁵ Evelyn Waugh, 'Too Much Tolerance' (1932), in Evelyn Waugh, *Evelyn Waugh: The Complete Short Stories*, ed. Anne Pasternak Slater (London: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998): 67-71, 71.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

in addition to his related conviction that religious boundaries are needed in secular societies, forms the foundation of his political thinking in the early thirties, which became increasingly right-wing over time.

Christopher Sykes fails to appreciate the political dimension of Waugh's thinking in this period, as he states that 'in common with most of his generation [Waugh] took little if any interest in politics'.¹⁷ In one respect it is true that Waugh did not explicitly outline his political theories until later in the decade. Indeed, on examining Waugh's essays and articles in the early thirties, Donat Gallagher maintains that it was not until 'after 1935' that Waugh 'became much more interested in politics and in religion than he had been', and that he turned into 'something of a propagandist for causes he believed in' (*EAR* 113). Waugh even wrote in his essay 'One Way to Immortality' (1930) that 'nobody wants to read other people's reflections on life and religion and politics, but the routine of their day, properly recorded, is always interesting, and will become more so as conditions change with the years' (*EAR* 317). Moreover, his diary entries, letters, and articles produced in the early thirties attest his decision not to explicitly engage with contemporary political events. However, Waugh's conservative political leanings can be detected in his fiction of the early thirties in his examination of the detrimental effects caused by the lack of religious boundaries in English, South American, and African societies. Furthermore, Waugh's travel book *Remote People* (1931) and his novel *Black Mischief* bear out his fascination with foreign political regimes, as they reveal among other things his interest in the relationship between systems of government, religious beliefs, and social order.

Black Mischief draws on and satirizes some of Waugh's experiences in Abyssinia, where he had witnessed Haile Selassie's efforts to modernize the country. Waugh recorded his observations in *Remote People*, in which he described the 'tangle of modernism and barbarity' (*RP* 220) that was

¹⁷ Christopher Sykes, *Evelyn Waugh: A Biography* (London: William Collins, 1975), 133.

born out of Selassie's wish to 'impress on his European visitors that Ethiopia was no mere agglomeration of barbarous tribes open to foreign exploitation, but a powerful, organised, modern state' (RP 203). Having exposed the badly-thought-out and disorganized efforts of the Emperor, Waugh bemoaned the pernicious (humanist) influence of the 'expansive optimism of the last century', which 'would not have left Africa alone' but instead heaped onto it 'all the rubbish of our own continent' (RP 342).¹⁸ In *Black Mischief*, Waugh specifically satirizes Selassie's attempts at modernization in the depiction of King Seth, who wants to develop his African island, Azania, using Western ideas. Martin Stannard rightly describes Seth as 'obsessed by humanist ideology', as the character announces: "We are Progress and the New Age. Nothing can stand in our way" (BM 52).¹⁹ Seth also employs Futurist rhetoric when he rapturously declares: "We are Light and Speed and Strength, Steel and Steam, Youth, To-day and To-morrow" (BM 52). This speech indicates Waugh's continued disdain for Futurism (which he had expressed in *Vile Bodies*), as Seth's ambitious plans for future progress lead to cultural disintegration and social chaos.

While planning various renovations, Seth decides that he needs to appoint "a man of culture, a modern man ... a representative of Progress and the New Age" (BM 129). Basil Seal soon takes up this position. Basil is indeed a modern man; not in terms of any visionary perspective but because he

¹⁸ Waugh gave the following examples: 'mechanised transport, representative government, organised labour, artificially stimulated appetites for variety in clothes, food, and amusement were waiting for the African round the corner. All the negative things were coming to [Selassie] inevitably' (RP 342).

¹⁹ Martin Stannard, *Evelyn Waugh: The Early Years 1903-1939* (London: Paladin Grafton Books, 1988), 301. This could also be a reference to the well-known weekly periodical *The New Age*, which was edited by A. E. Orage between 1907 and 1922. The periodical provided a forum for discussion of contemporary political, social and literary ideas, and it was renowned for its forward-thinking journalism. According to Wallace Martin, *The New Age* represented 'the most vital intellectual currents of its time'. See *The New Age Under Orage: Chapters in English Cultural History* (Manchester: Manchester University Press 1967), 4.

represents the typical post-war male of the nineteen thirties. David Lodge describes Basil as ‘a true child of *l’entre-deux-guerres*, so devoid of principle that deception and fraud are reflex responses to him and he is incapable of seeing through his own lies’.²⁰ Waugh’s portrayal of Basil’s hectic lifestyle back in England reads like a summary of *Vile Bodies*, with its references to car crashes, drunkenness, hedonism, and to characters from the earlier novel: “‘He and Alastair Trumpington and Peter Pastmaster and some others had a five day party up there and left a lot of bad cheques behind and had a motor accident and one of them got run in’” (*BM* 90). This incident was one among many that contributed to Basil’s dismissal from his job as a political candidate. A few years earlier, Basil had been considered a young man of promise. He had ‘enjoyed a reputation of peculiar brilliance among his contemporaries’ (*BM* 141) because he ‘travelled all over Europe, spoke six languages, called dons by their Christian names and discussed their books with them’ (*BM* 142). Basil’s failure to live up to his potential is deprecated by his mother during a long rant about her son’s financial irresponsibility and general misbehaviour: “‘spent all the money his Aunt left him on that idiotic expedition to Afghanistan ... give him a very handsome allowance ... all and more than all that I can afford ... paid his debts again and again ... no gratitude ... no self-control ... no longer a child, twenty-eight this year’” (*BM* 102). In Waugh’s unfinished novel *Work Suspended* (1939), the narrator reveals that Basil’s predicament does not improve over time: ‘He never got in’ to Parliament and ‘he was still unmarried’ (*WS* 146).²¹ Basil’s rootless lifestyle also remains the same: ‘it was bitter for him to be still living at home, dependent on his mother for pocket money, liable to be impelled by her into unwelcome jobs two or three times a year’ (*WS* 146).²² In *Black Mischief*, Waugh compounds

²⁰ David Lodge, *Columbia Essays on Modern Writers: Evelyn Waugh* (Columbia: Columbia University Press, 1971), 23.

²¹ Evelyn Waugh, *Work Suspended* (1939) in Evelyn Waugh, *Work Suspended and Other Stories* (London: Penguin, 2000): 106-91, 146.

²² *Ibid.*

Basil's juvenile irresponsibility by associating him with childishness, as he refers to Basil's 'childish mouth' (*BM* 91) and his 'insolent, sulky and curiously childish' (*BM* 156) demeanour. Rather than face up to his problems, Basil decides to escape – ““You see I'm fed up with London and English politics. I want to get away”” – and he settles on Azania as ““the obvious place”” (*BM* 108) to escape to. In Basil's immature act of running away, Waugh once again implicitly criticizes the idea of ignoring domestic political problems. Chapter One of this thesis noted that in *Vile Bodies* Waugh's immature Bright Young People escape into their social life rather than face up to their social responsibilities; in Basil's case he abandons England altogether.

Waugh employs similar themes of immaturity and childlike irresponsibility when he portrays some of the British officials in Azania. Sir Samson Courteney, 'His Britannic Majesty's minister' (*BM* 61), is depicted sitting in a bath playing with 'an inflatable rubber sea serpent' (*BM* 78). He becomes 'rapt in daydream about the pleistocene age' (*BM* 79) and experiences 'crude disillusionment' (*BM* 79) when William Bland, 'honorary attaché' (*BM* 65), interrupts him with work duties. Bland announces:

“Apparently there's been a decisive battle at last.”

“Oh, well, I'm glad to hear that. Which side won, do you know?”

“He did tell me, but I've forgotten.”

“Doesn't matter”. (*BM* 79)

Waugh draws a parallel between the political indifference of the English officials living in Azania and the similarly nonchalant attitudes held by socialite characters in London. Sonia and Alistair Trumpington were once at the forefront of the social gatherings held by the Bright Young People, but by the nineteen thirties they have become impoverished and socially withdrawn. Sonia's blasé political attitude typifies the laconic mindset of the Bright Young People, as she explains her lack of

funds to Basil: ““There was a general election and a crisis – something about gold standard”” (*BM* 295). Sonia also refers to the decline of her social set when she bemoans how ““everyone’s got very poor and it makes them duller”” (*BM* 294). Patey maintains that Waugh’s focus on the upper classes in this text is an affront to the socialist and communist sympathies which featured in the literature of the thirties, and that Waugh uses his ‘well-to-do’ characters as a ‘form of provocation’ in order to signal his ‘opposition to the Left’.²³ In my view, Waugh is simply continuing to present and satirize a social class that he knew intimately, rather than making a specific political point in his characterization; as George McCartney points out, Waugh’s ‘acquaintance with privilege made him one of its finest critics’.²⁴ Furthermore, *Black Mischief*’s focus on the upper classes is important because it registers the continuing decline of the Bright Young People. In *Vile Bodies* Waugh suggests that the socialites withdraw from social responsibility by immersing themselves within a destructive social cycle; in *Black Mischief* he reveals that they cannot escape in this way when the effects of the Depression intrude upon their lifestyle.

In Azania there is a parallel ‘smart set’, which is composed of ‘cosmopolitan blacks, courtiers, younger sons and a few of the decayed Arab intelligentsia’ (*BM* 183). In one scene the Azanian Bright Young People are discussing Seth’s anticipated Birth Control Pageant. Though ‘not actively antagonistic’ towards the idea of a pageant, the Azanians ‘were tepid in their support’ and ‘for the most part, adopted a sophisticated attitude maintaining that of course *they* had always known about these things, but why invite trouble by all this publicity; at best it would only make contraception middle-class’ (*BM* 183). The ‘smart set’ is evidently just as indifferent about contemporary social issues as are their counterparts in London. Moreover, Patey notes the racist

²³ Patey, *The Life of Evelyn Waugh*, 84. Patey suggests that Waugh was opposing the following leftist works: J. B. Priestley’s *English Journey* (1933), Walter Greenwood’s *Love on the Dole* (1933), and George Orwell’s *The Road to Wigan Pier* (1937).

²⁴ George McCartney, *Evelyn Waugh and the Modernist Tradition* (New Jersey: Transaction, 2004), xi.

connotations of this scene, as he states: 'Waugh invites laughter at the spectacle of black natives in top hat and tails, as barefoot savages given the titles earl and viscount'.²⁵ Patey excuses this inherent racism by arguing that the larger joke is on European civilization because Waugh 'insists even more on European barbarity'.²⁶ However, Wykes remains uncomfortable with Waugh's representation of native characters. In particular he focuses on Waugh's 'liberal use of the late twentieth century's great obscenity, "nigger"' and deems it to be 'unredeemable'.²⁷ According to Wykes, the depiction of black society in *Black Mischief* is 'perhaps unmitigated by the fact that European characters are treated more severely, since generalized judgements tend to apply to blacks and not to whites'.²⁸ My own view lies somewhere between these positions. Waugh's portrayal of black characters is distasteful and unacceptable when judged by today's standards, but I agree with Patey that Waugh is trying to insist that Europe's barbarity is worse than that displayed by the native inhabitants of Azania.²⁹ Consequently, it is ironic that in Seth's naïve eyes Basil represents 'the personification of all that glittering, intangible Western Culture to which he aspired' (*BM* 142), because Western

²⁵ Patey, *The Life of Evelyn Waugh*, 99.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Wykes, *Evelyn Waugh: A Literary Life*, 82.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ While there is no evidence to suggest that Waugh had read Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1902), there are fascinating parallels between the critical approaches to the depiction of African natives in both these texts. Conrad has also been taken to task for his de-humanized portrayal of black characters. Chinua Achebe has offered the most famous postcolonial reading in: 'An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*', *The Massachusetts Review*, 18 (1977): 782-94. Like Waugh, Conrad also has his defenders who point out that the author's aim was to present the white characters as the true barbarians of the novel. In Chapter Four of this thesis I argue that Graham Greene's stance in his travel book *Journey Without Maps* (1936) shares interesting parallels with Conrad's novella. I also explore both Greene's and Waugh's attitudes towards colonialism and again touch upon the accusations of racism that have been levied at them.

culture – epitomized by the impecunious Trumpingtons and the irresponsible Basil – is in the midst of disintegration. Earlier, in 1931, Waugh had stated his belief that Europe had ‘only one positive thing which it could offer to anyone’, which was ‘what the missionaries brought’ (*RP* 342).

Unfortunately, Basil is what Jerome Meckier terms a ‘parodic missionary’, as he arrives with a message of destructive modernization instead of regenerative religious renewal.³⁰

Waugh seems to refer to the conflicted religious status of Azania when he describes the varied belief systems which vie for the attention of its inhabitants: ‘[there] were soon three Bishops in Debra Dowa – Anglican, Catholic and Nestorian – and three substantial cathedrals’; there were also ‘Quaker, Moravian, American-Baptist, Mormon and Swedish-Lutheran missions handsomely supported by foreign subscribers’ (*BM* 17). While these institutions have ‘brought money into the new capital’ and ‘enhanced [Seth’s] reputation abroad’ (*BM* 17), there is no mention of how they have affected the spiritual life of Azania. Indeed, the ‘centre of Azanian spiritual life’ (*BM* 220) is meant to be a monastery that is located many days journey away from the city. In *Remote People* Waugh described a visit to a similarly rural convent, and he enthused about how it represented a ‘little island of order and sweetness in an ocean of rank barbarity’ (*RP* 344). The monastery in Azania fails to provide such religious sanctuary. Instead, this monastery (and the faith it represents) is defined by superstition and corruption, as it is renowned for its extraordinary collection of ludicrous relics: ‘David’s stone prised out of the forehead of Goliath (a boulder of astonishing dimensions), a leaf from the Barren Fig Tree, the rib from which Eve had been created’ (*BM* 220).

Waugh could be alluding to Azania’s spiritual bankruptcy in more subtle terms when he portrays the disastrous Birth Control pageant, which is organized by Seth to promote sterility. A street procession ensues with banners declaring: ‘WOMEN FROM TOMORROW DEMAND AN

³⁰ Jerome Meckier uses this phrase in his article ‘Aldous Huxley, Evelyn Waugh, and Birth Control in *Black Mischief*’, *Journal of Modern Literature* 23.2 (Bloomington: Winter 1999/2000): 277-90, 281.

EMPTY CRADLE' (*BM* 241) and 'THROUGH STERILITY TO CULTURE' (*BM* 242). Waugh discussed his thoughts on birth control during a talk for the BBC in 1932, in which he argued: 'Physical sterility, whether artificial or organic, results from sterility of spirit'.³¹ In light of this statement, Seth's desire to encourage physical sterility could symbolize the relationship between the growth of modernization and the spread of spiritual emptiness. Members of the 'Nestorian Catholic Action' (*BM* 243) object to the pageant and start a riot. The rest of the crowd joins in and the situation escalates into outright warfare, with shootings and arson attacks. Seth's attempts to support secular modern innovation have led to chaos. In the end, foreign military intervention is required to restore social order, and Waugh refers to the presence of British and French troops: 'Among the dhows and nondescript craft in the harbour lay two smart launches manned by British and French sailors, for Azania had lately been mandated by the League of Nations as a joint protectorate' (*BM* 297). Bernard Schweizer argues that Waugh's reference to the 'English and French police' who are 'patrolling the water-front' (*BM* 301) indicates a 'reactionary wish-fulfilment fantasy', as Waugh alludes to an 'innocuous' form of imperialism.³² Waugh's controversial stance on imperialism is discussed in further detail in the next chapter of this thesis, but it is important here to note his support for a civilizing form of imperialism in the early thirties.

Soon after publishing *Black Mischief*, Waugh's novel was given a damning review by Ernest Oldmeadow in the Catholic *Tablet* magazine. Oldmeadow accused Waugh of hypocritically portraying himself as a 'co-religionist' and yet writing a novel that was full of 'outrageous lapses' in the form of 'coarseness and foulness'.³³ Oldmeadow stated: 'Whether Mr. Waugh still considers

³¹ Cited in Patey, *The Life of Evelyn Waugh*, 104.

³² Bernard Schweizer, *Radicals on the Road: The Politics of English Travel Writing in the 1930s* (Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 2001), 49.

³³ Evelyn Waugh, 'An Open Letter to His Eminence The Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster' (1933), in Evelyn Waugh, *The Letters of Evelyn Waugh*, ed. Mark Amory (London: Penguin Books, 1982): 72-78, 72.

himself a Catholic, the *Tablet* does not know; but, in case he is so regarded by booksellers, librarians, and novel-readers in general, we hereby state that his latest novel would be a disgrace to anybody professing the Catholic name'.³⁴ In response to this scathing review, Waugh wrote to 'His Eminence The Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster' in order to defend himself and his novel.³⁵ In the letter, which was never actually sent, Waugh expressed humiliation at being 'forced into this embarrassing explanation' of his 'artistic motives', but he wanted to defend himself from charges against his 'personal honour' and 'moral conduct'.³⁶

A significant point of contention for *Oldmeadow* was the 'dozen silly pages' which were 'devoted to a Birth Control Pageant'.³⁷ The birth control movement in the thirties was a contentious issue for many Roman Catholics because it maintained that without the prevention of 'undesirable' births, the quality of English society (and of civilization in general) would be lowered.³⁸ In his letter to the Archbishop, Waugh defended the inclusion of the pageant by stating that birth control 'is accepted and discussed as one of the normal developments of modern society'.³⁹ He claimed that he referred to this issue in order to satirize it because 'like all Catholics' he regarded 'Birth Control as a practice which is a personal sin and an insidious social evil'.⁴⁰ Waugh explained that there were 'two ways of meeting an evil of the kind – either by serious denunciation which is fitting for the clergy

³⁴ Ibid., 77.

³⁵ Ibid., 72.

³⁶ Ibid., 77.

³⁷ Ibid., 73.

³⁸ Richard Overly details the history and the ideas of the birth control movement and, related to it, the eugenic movement, in his chapter 'A Sickness in the Racial Body', in Richard Overly, *The Morbid Age: Britain Between the Wars* (London: Allen Lane, 2009): 93-135.

³⁹ Waugh, 'An Open Letter', 76.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

(and possibly for the journalists who regard Catholic employment as giving them authority to speak as though in the pulpit) or by ridicule'.⁴¹ He admitted to using the latter because it was 'more becoming to a novelist'.⁴² Waugh concluded his correspondence by once more aligning himself with Catholics, as he claimed that he 'regarded and still regard[s]' his novel as representing 'an attempt, however ineffectual, to prosper the cause which we all have so closely at heart'.⁴³ This letter is significant for two main reasons: it suggests that Waugh considered himself to be a Catholic author at this time; and it indicates that he wanted to use his fiction to criticize from a Catholic perspective examples of contemporary 'social evil' and 'personal sin'; failings which, in his view, were corrupting modern civilization. Thus, despite the fact that Waugh's Catholic views are not explicitly stated in *Black Mischief*, he firmly maintained that they informed this novel. His differentiation between speaking 'as though in the pulpit', on the one hand, and writing in a style that 'was more becoming to a novelist', on the other, indicates his view that literature should not be dogmatic or didactic and that humour and 'ridicule' can just as effectively 'prosper' the cause of Catholicism. This technique can be said to inform his subsequent texts (*A Handful of Dust*, *Scoop*, and *Work Suspended*), until the point at which he decided to alter his aesthetic by explicitly exploring Catholic characters and themes within his fiction.

I suggest that Waugh's Catholic perspective can also be perceived in his portrayal of modern theories of progress in *Black Mischief*. Seth's motto is that 'Progress must prevail' against 'Barbarism' (*BM* 22), but, for Waugh, there is no opposition: progress and barbarism are interrelated and indistinguishable when both are detached from religious ideals. I propose that this relationship is repeated in terms of modern man and his innate savagery in *A Handful of Dust*. In 1932 Waugh

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

described the scheme of his novel in a letter to his fellow novelist Henry Yorke (Green): ‘a Gothic man in the hands of savages – first Mrs Beaver etc. then the real ones, finally the silver foxes at Hetton’. To this Waugh added: ‘You must remember that to me the savages come into the category of people one has met and may at any moment meet again’.⁴⁴ Jeffrey Heath argues that Waugh reverses the humanist belief in the progressive potential of man in his fiction by depicting an ‘insidious savagery at the heart of civilization and in the core of each “modern man”’.⁴⁵ Consequently, at the end of *Black Mischief*, Basil is mistaken when he announces that he has decided to move back to London because he has ‘had enough of barbarism for a bit’ (*BM* 296). I consider this failure to perceive and to deal with the endemic barbarism and savagery of mankind, both at home and abroad, to be a key part of Waugh’s satirical response to this period.⁴⁶

In *A Handful of Dust* Waugh concentrates on conditions in England. He continues to focus on upper-class characters, as the protagonist Tony Last is a member of the landed gentry. From the beginning Tony is set apart from his socialite contemporaries. While he lies in bed ‘for ten minutes very happily planning the renovation of his ceiling’, socialites throughout England are waking up ‘queasy and despondent’ (*HD* 30). In *Vile Bodies* Waugh examined the futile existence of the modern socialites and in *A Handful of Dust* he continues this portrayal when the narrator describes a typical social event: ‘Polly’s party was exactly what she wished it to be, an accurate replica of all the best parties she had been to in the last year; the same band, the same supper, and, above all, the same

⁴⁴ Waugh, *The Letters of Evelyn Waugh*, 88.

⁴⁵ Jeffrey Heath, *The Picturesque Prison: Evelyn Waugh and His Writing* (London: Weidenfield & Nicolson, 1982), 93.

⁴⁶ This perception of endemic savagery is a common trope of inter-war literature. In Richard Overy’s study of the inter-war period, he states that many people suspected that ‘beneath the thin veneer of civilization there lurked a monstrous other self whose release would spell the end of civilized life and the triumph of barbarism’. See *The Morbid Age*, 165.

guests' (*HD* 77). The repetitive sentences enforce Waugh's point that the social scene has not progressed in any way, and it is commendable that Tony wishes to dissociate himself from such parties: "But I don't happen to want to go anywhere else except Hetton" (*HD* 234). Hetton Abbey is Tony's refuge from the modern world, and its Arthurian décor symbolizes its antiquated nature:

the bedrooms with their brass bedsteads, each with a frieze of Gothic text, each named from Malory, Yseult, Elaine, Mordred and Merlin, Gawaine and Bedivere, Lancelot, Perceval, Tristram, Galahad, his own dressing-room, Morgan le Fay, and Brenda's Guinevere. (*HD* 28)

While Tony's attachment to his home is touching – 'there was not a glazed brick or encaustic tile that was not dear to Tony's heart' (*HD* 27) – critics have recognized that such regard is rather obsessive, as his home dominates his time, money, and thoughts. James Carens suggests that Tony's esteem for Hetton should be likened to a 'kind of religion', and Malcolm Bradbury refers to Tony's 'Hetton cult'.⁴⁷ Tony's dedication to his home is in contrast to his relationship with his Anglo-Catholic faith, which is habitual and superficial. It is implied that Tony's religious values are flawed from the start because Waugh presents them as Anglo-Catholic instead of Roman Catholic. As Tony J. Sutton suggests, Waugh believed that Tony's faith was the 'inevitable offspring of the illegitimate and uninformed faith planted by Elizabeth'.⁴⁸ The next chapter of this thesis discusses in detail Waugh's biography *Edmund Campion* (1935), which is set in the Elizabethan period at the time when Catholicism was made illegal.

⁴⁷ James F. Carens, *The Satiric Art of Evelyn Waugh* (Washington: The University of Washington Press, 1966), 28; Bradbury, *Evelyn Waugh*, 59.

⁴⁸ Tony J. Sutton, *Catholic Modernists, English Nationalists* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2010), 143.

The narrator of *A Handful of Dust* explains that Tony's church-going forms 'the simple, mildly ceremonious order of his Sunday morning', which 'he adhered to with great satisfaction' (*HD* 51). His ritualistic form of attendance is reflected in his rather mechanical behaviour during the service: 'he performed the familiar motions of sitting, standing, and leaning forward' (*HD* 53). Even when Tony is shown to pray – a time for reflection and communication with God – Waugh does not describe his character's internal thoughts, but instead indicates the shallowness of Tony's faith by depicting only his physical motions: 'He leant forward for half a minute with his forehead on his hand' (*HD* 53). The reader is also informed that Tony's church-going routine had 'evolved, more or less spontaneously, from the more severe practices of his parents' (*HD* 51). It is Tony's sense of tradition, rather than his religious devotion, that propels him to church each week, as he wants to continue the routine that was set in place by his parents.

In his aforementioned essay 'Converted to Rome: Why it Has Happened to Me', Waugh claimed that a significant consequence of Western secularism was a 'lack of confidence in moral and social standards' (*EAR* 104). Christopher Dawson, Waugh's 'friend and admirer', made a similar point in 'The Modern Dilemma' (1932).⁴⁹ Dawson stated that the Christian tradition 'lies at the base not only of Western religion, but also of Western morals and Western social idealism', and he argued that 'if Europe abandons Christianity, it must also abandon its moral code'.⁵⁰ It is probable that Waugh was aware of Dawson's work, since he knew the latter well and, as Patey notes, 'visited [him] in the thirties, stopping at Dawson's home in Yorkshire en route to Stoneyhurst' (in Lancashire).⁵¹ It is possible that a weakening of moral values is explored in *A Handful of Dust* in the

⁴⁹ Patey, *The Life of Evelyn Waugh*, 54.

⁵⁰ Christopher Dawson, 'The Modern Dilemma' (1932), in *Christianity and European Culture: Selection from the Work of Christopher Dawson*, ed. Gerald J. Russello (Washington D. C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1998): 118-31, 118, 119.

⁵¹ Patey, *The Life of Evelyn Waugh*, 121.

form of Tony Last, as I suggest that Waugh implies in his portrayal of Tony that morality and civilized virtues can only survive if they are supported by religion. Tony represents decent social values (such as fairness towards one's tenants and family, as well as respect for tradition). His innate decency and his reverence for past conventions are symbolized by Hetton, a place of old-fashioned décor and traditional routines. Accordingly, the vulnerable state of Tony's ideals is initially evoked in the disintegrating condition of Hetton – 'the ceiling of Morgan le Fay was not in perfect repair [...] damp had penetrated into one corner, leaving a large patch where the gilt had tarnished and the colour flaked away' (*HD* 29). Hetton's decay is aggravated when Tony's socialite acquaintances begin to make themselves at home there most weekends. The socialites gradually alter the physical state of the building. They encourage its renovation – "I'd blow the whole thing sky-high" (*HD* 128) – and Tony is forced to watch with dismay as his wife, Brenda, starts ordering walls to be torn down and sections of the house to be blocked off. The redecoration and refurbishment of the building undermines Humphrey Carpenter's view that 'Hetton is the one thing in the novel that has proved permanent and indestructible'.⁵² Waugh's point is that the decent values embodied within Hetton need to be actively protected precisely because the house, and Tony's way of life, is susceptible to modernity's destructive influence. Tony cannot fight back, and in this way I suggest that he embodies Waugh's view that Western civilization does not have 'the power of survival' (*EAR* 104) if it is unsupported by Christianity.

Tony's way of life is transformed when tragedy strikes and his only son is killed in a riding accident. While in mourning Tony shuns the advances of the Reverend of his local church: "I only wanted to see him about arrangements. He tried to be comforting. It was very painful ... after all the last thing one wants to talk about at a time like this is religion" (*HD* 181-82). Having rejected

⁵² Humphrey Carpenter, *The Brideshead Generation: Evelyn Waugh and His Generation* (London: Faber and Faber, 1989), 255.

religious aid, all Tony has to fall back upon during his personal crisis are social conventions and habit. He adheres to a rigid code of behaviour that focuses on his guests:

“They had better have some luncheon before they go. I will have it with them ... And will you put a call through to Colonel Inch and thank him for coming? Say I will write. And to Mr Ripon’s to enquire how Miss Ripon is? And to the vicarage and ask Mr Tendril if I can see him this evening? (*HD* 169-70)

T. S. Eliot made a comparable point about Matthew Arnold’s relationship to faith in *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism* (1933), in which he wrote: ‘like many people the vanishing of whose religious belief has left behind only habits, he placed an exaggerated emphasis on morals’.⁵³ Soon after the death of their son, Brenda admits to being in love with another man (John Beaver) and she ends their seven-year marriage. It simply does not enter Tony’s head that this could or would ever happen: ‘But it was several days before Tony fully realized what it meant. He had got into a habit of loving and trusting Brenda’ (*HD* 196). Tony’s habits not only define his daily routine, they also inform the way he thinks and feels. Waugh suggests that Tony’s morals and values are not strong enough to support him in this difficult time, as he is left utterly disorientated and forlorn. Everything Tony had ‘experienced or learned to expect’, the ‘whole reasonable and decent constitution of things’, has vanished, leaving him in a world ‘suddenly bereft of order’ in which he is surrounded by an ‘all encompassing chaos that shrieked about his ears’ (*HD* 216). The description of Tony’s inner turmoil represents a divergence from Waugh’s usual external methods of characterization, as he chooses to emphasize Tony’s mental distress. Waugh intimates that a humanist attitude such as

⁵³ T. S. Eliot, *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism* (1933) (London: Faber and Faber, 1986), 106.

Tony's is ultimately flawed, as it relies upon decency and reason without the influence and support of religious belief. Hence Tony's inability to cope with a disorientating modern environment.

Tony's sense of disillusionment is completed when he realizes that his old way of life, which he refers to as 'a gothic world', has irreparably changed: 'there was now no armour glittering through the forest glades, no embroidered feet on the green sward; the cream and dappled unicorns had fled ...' (*HD* 236-37). Uncertain of what to do next, Tony falls back on conventional behaviour when he decides to embark upon a journey to Brazil in search of a mythical city: 'it seemed to be the conduct expected of a husband in his circumstances' (*HD* 247).⁵⁴ Tony's expedition reveals that he cannot break out of his old way of thinking, as he simply transfers his yearnings for his old 'gothic world' onto this mythical city, which he imagines to be 'Gothic in character, all vanes and pinnacles, gargoyles, battlements, groining and tracery, pavilions and terraces' (*HD* 253). His travelling companion, Dr Messinger, explains that this city holds a different meaning for each person: "Every tribe has a different word for it. The Pie-wies call it the 'Shining' or 'Glittering,' the Arekuna the 'Many Watered,' the Patamonas the 'Bright Feathered,' the Warau, oddly enough, use the same word for it that they use for a kind of aromatic jam they make'" (*HD* 251). Patey recognizes that the fabled City is 'merely the embodiment of each quester's appetites and desires', which is why Tony hopes to find a 'transfigured Hetton' (*HD* 253).⁵⁵ In seeking a place of refuge and enlightenment – a 'radiant sanctuary' (*HD* 253) – I suggest that Tony conforms to a humanist way of thinking that T. E. Hulme had described as 'Romantic': 'you don't believe in a God, so you begin to believe that man is a god. You don't believe in Heaven, so you begin to believe in a heaven on earth'.⁵⁶ Patey notes that, as a

⁵⁴ Tony's expedition was inspired by Waugh's own trip to Brazil and New Guinea, which he records in his travel book, *Ninety-Two Days* (1934). This text will be discussed briefly in the next chapter.

⁵⁵ Patey, *The Life of Evelyn Waugh*, 122.

⁵⁶ T. E. Hulme, 'Romanticism and Classicism' (1912), in T. E. Hulme, *Selected Writings*, ed. Patrick McGuinness (Manchester: Carcanet Press, 1998): 68-83, 71. Patey, *The Life of Evelyn Waugh*, 122

Catholic, Waugh believed that ‘there is no earthly paradise of perfected human nature and satisfied desire’.⁵⁷ In Waugh’s terms, Tony’s humanist quest is doomed to fail from the start.

Instead of encountering a gothic sanctuary, Tony enters the domain of Mr. Todd, whom the reader (like Tony) might initially view as a form of saviour. After all, Tony is found wandering, delirious, in desperate need of food, water, and clothing. However, Todd’s role gradually changes from that of rescuer to captor when Tony finds himself imprisoned within the camp. Tony is drawn into a monotonous regime that involves – perversely – endlessly reading aloud novels by Charles Dickens. When Todd explains his passion for Dickens he states: “‘there is always more to be learned and noticed, so many characters, so many changes of scene, so many words’” (*HD* 329). In actuality, Todd is trapped in a repetitive cycle of thinking, in which he wants Tony to partake: “‘we will not have any Dickens to-day ... but to-morrow, and the day after that, and the day after that. Let us read *Little Dorrit* again’” (*HD* 340). Stannard claims that Waugh’s references to Dickens represent an implicit criticism of the Victorian author’s work, which Waugh associated with ‘the ‘old men’ and their concepts of progress’.⁵⁸ Consequently, the ludicrous, repetitive, and sinister use of Dickens’s novels in this scene could indicate that Waugh perceived Dickens’s humanist faith in social progress to be similarly dangerous and misleading. The irreligious nature of Todd’s regime is confirmed when God is dismissed by both Tony – “‘I’ve never really thought about it [belief in God] much’” – and Todd: “‘I have thought about it a *great* deal and I still do not know’” (*HD* 328).

By the end of the novel Tony realizes that he is imprisoned indefinitely within this cyclical lifestyle, and, as Patey argues, this predicament represents Waugh’s way of portraying the ‘living death’ that ‘all Humanism amounts to’.⁵⁹ This idea of a ‘living death’ can be also be interpreted as

⁵⁷ Patey, *The Life of Evelyn Waugh*, 122.

⁵⁸ Stannard, *Evelyn Waugh: The Early Years*, 329.

⁵⁹ Patey, *The Life of Evelyn Waugh*, 122.

Waugh's depiction of a form of Christian punishment. Indeed, Tony's fate could be viewed in relation to a Dantean form of *contrapasso*, whereby Tony is aptly punished for his hollow faith and his dedication to Victorian ideals by being imprisoned within an irreligious camp, in which he is forced to perpetually re-tell Victorian narratives. The cyclical and repetitive nature of this punishment ties in with Dante's depiction of the 'circles' of hell occupied by the damned. Thus, there is a sense that such a sinister form of 'punishment' faced by Tony is fitting in some way; it is a penance which implies that there is a Christian order (albeit in terms of punishment) behind Waugh's writing.

A related form of limbo could be said to be inhabited by Tony's successors when they inherit Hetton. The building is in a worse state of decay than it was at the beginning of the novel. Staff numbers have been dramatically cut and the rooms in the house are shut off to save money. Although the family continue Tony's church-going routine, they show no respect for the weekly outing and instead openly mock it, as the children casually refer to the service as the "*Jamboree*" (*HD* 344). The novel concludes with the new heir, Teddy, surveying his silver fox farm from which he hopes to earn a living. The farm represents the commercialization of an old tradition, as Teddy is interested in supplying foxes for money rather than in maintaining a long-established sport. He naively believes that his commercial scheme will help him to restore Hetton 'to the glory that it had enjoyed in the last days of his cousin Tony' (*HD* 348). By emphasizing the disintegrating state of Hetton, Waugh could be suggesting that Teddy and his family are merely trying to sustain a fundamentally irreligious way of life that will continue to decay along with the building they inhabit.

In an article entitled 'Fanfare' (1949), Waugh explained that *A Handful of Dust* 'was humanist and contained all I had to say about humanism' (*EAR* 134). This statement bemuses some critics, including Malcolm Bradbury, who finds it misleading and ambiguous: 'what has Waugh to

say about humanism? It is hard to know'.⁶⁰ Others concur with Waugh's self-assessment. Stannard states: 'God, of course, is the key that has been thrown away in this purely secular world. What Waugh offers us in *A Handful of Dust*, as in *Black Mischief*, is the humanist *reductio ad absurdum*, life without (or at least in ignorance of) God'.⁶¹ I have put forward the view that the ending of *A Handful of Dust* confirms Waugh's anti-humanist stance. I propose that Waugh, via his portrayal of the doomed Tony Last, offers a damning indictment of how a once valuable and civilized way of life in England has been condemned to deteriorate due to the absence of religious belief. Furthermore, I suggest that Waugh implies that this lifestyle will be replaced eventually by a destructive and irreligious modern social scene that is populated by vacuous socialites.

The Desire for Religious Belief in a Secular World

Between 1932 and 1942 Greene reviewed a variety of novels, plays, and films for *The Spectator*.⁶² These publications provide an insight into Greene's critical appreciation of literature and – more importantly for this chapter – they reveal some of his thoughts on the ways in which Catholicism should be related to literature and society. In a review published in 1933, Greene showed that he was

⁶⁰ Bradbury, *Evelyn Waugh*, 66.

⁶¹ Stannard, *Evelyn Waugh: The Early Years*, 379.

⁶² According to Philip Stratford, Greene published forty-four essays and short stories, and three hundred and eighty-four review articles, which covered eight hundred and sixty books, films, and plays. See Philip Stratford, *Faith and Fiction: Creative Process in Greene and Mauriac* (Notre Dame/London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1967), 138. Some of the articles have been collected in Graham Greene, *Collected Essays* (London: Penguin, 1978). The film reviews have been collected in Graham Greene, *The Pleasure Dome: Collected Film Criticism 1935-1940* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), and Graham Greene, *The Graham Greene Film Reader: Reviews, Essays, Interviews and Film Stories*, ed. David Parkinson (New York: Applause Books, 1993).

aware of the important contemporary Catholic thinkers Hilaire Belloc and G. K. Chesterton. He criticized them for doing ‘a good deal of harm to English Catholicism’ because they associated ‘religious faith with beer-drinking, with local patriotism, with sentimental Irish men’.⁶³ Greene defended himself from the charge of being anti-religious towards Belloc and Chesterton, as he clearly aligned himself with Catholicism when he stated: ‘I speak as a Catholic’.⁶⁴ He made it clear that different interpretations of Catholicism were at stake, and that he was wary about being linked with the ‘sentimental’ and patriotic form of Catholicism popularized by Belloc and Chesterton. In another review, written in 1934, Greene indicated that his religious beliefs were intrinsically part of his writing: ‘It is impossible to accept so completely another author’s technique without accepting his spiritual outlook, for the one was only made to express the other’.⁶⁵ By claiming that an author’s writing style is inextricably linked to his religious beliefs – ‘his spiritual outlook’ – Greene makes it apparent that his Catholic views are present in his own written work. Accordingly, Greene’s fiction can be viewed as having been written from an implicitly Catholic perspective.

Part of a Catholic perspective, as we have seen with Waugh, involves the recognition of supernatural reality. Greene differentiated between supernatural and material reality when he discussed the presence of a ‘religious sense’ in Henry James’s fiction. In ‘Henry James: The Religious Aspect’ (1933), Greene described James’s religious sense as a ‘spiritual quality which the materialist writer can never convey, not even Dickens, by the most adept use of exaggeration’ (*CE* 42). In ‘Frederick Rolfe: Edwardian Inferno’ (1934), Greene elaborated upon this distinction between religious and materialist writers when he stated that men who are ‘not concerned with eternal damnation’ – and are, by implication, secular – consequently inhabit ‘a quite different’ and ‘much

⁶³ Graham Greene, ‘Fiction’, *The Spectator* (11 August, 1933), 198.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ Graham Greene ‘Short Stories’, *The Spectator* (16 March, 1934), 424.

thinner reality' (CE 132). T. S. Eliot made a related point in *After Strange Gods: A Primer of Modern Heresy* (1934), which Greene reviewed in April 1934 for *Life and Letters*. Eliot's premise was to discuss how writing in 'an age of unsettled beliefs and enfeebled tradition' was a 'dangerous' situation for men of letters and their readers, because it rendered fiction shallow:

with the disappearance of the idea of Original Sin, with the disappearance of the idea of intense moral struggle, the human beings presented to us both in poetry and prose fiction to-day, and more patently among the serious writers than in the underworld of letters, tend to become less and less real.⁶⁶

Eliot expanded his view to encompass life more generally. He contemplated the effects of living in a secular environment in which the 'rejection of Christianity – Protestant Christianity – was the rule rather than the exception':

If you do away with this struggle, and maintain that by tolerance, benevolence, inoffensiveness, and a redistribution or increase in purchasing power, combined with a devotion, on the part of an élite, to Art, the world will be as good as anyone could require, then you must expect human beings to become more and more vaporous.⁶⁷

Eliot argued that the diminishing power and presence of Christianity in modern society was inextricably related to the increasingly ethereal identity of humans. Greene's concept of the 'religious sense' shared similarities with the explicitly religious thinking of Eliot, and in this way Greene's

⁶⁶ T. S. Eliot, *After Strange Gods: A Primer of Modern Heresy* (1933) (London: Faber and Faber, 1934), 42.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

literary notion represents a means by which he criticized his secular society from a religious point of view.

Greene's concept of 'religious sense' is predominantly rooted in his firm belief in evil. In the aforementioned essay 'Henry James: The Religious Aspect', Greene claimed that James wrote with 'religious intensity' precisely because he portrayed the 'evil of the world' as 'very present' (CE 41). Greene referred to his own convictions on this matter in a review of *The Maniac* (1934), written by an anonymous author. The novel concerns the fate of a female protagonist who endures a form of demonic possession: 'a fiend had seduced her and she was bearing a fiend child. Someone was writing a novel in which she was a character, and every pain of that character she had to endure. She was cremated, buried alive, she had to swallow her own tongue'.⁶⁸ Reflecting upon the difference between the version of 'hell' presented in the novel and the version described by medieval theologians, Greene concluded that the latter's concept was 'a logical Hell with torments of an almost mathematical nicety'.⁶⁹ According to Greene, the type of hell described in *The Maniac* is 'far more horrible because it is meaningless and malicious', and it is this form that 'unfortunately [...] certainly exists'.⁷⁰

Eugene Goodheart recognizes that Greene's belief in the reality of hell and evil informs his conception of Catholicism during this period: 'it is not the existence of evil that makes problematic the existence of an all-powerful, all-good God; rather it makes it necessary. If sin did not exist, God would be unnecessary'.⁷¹ Greene explored the relationship between a belief in 'supernatural evil' and Catholicism in his essay on James's fiction. Greene inferred that James may have been attracted to

⁶⁸ Graham Greene, 'Casanova and Others', *The Spectator* (9 July, 1932), 55.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Eugene Goodheart, 'Greene's Literary Criticism: The Religious Aspects', in Jeffrey Meyers (ed.), *Graham Greene, a Revaluation: New Essays* (London: Macmillan 1990): 38-46, 43.

Catholicism rather than to Anglicanism because the ‘Anglican Church had almost relinquished Hell’, whereas in the Catholic Church: ‘no day passed [...] without prayers for deliverance from evil spirits “wandering through the world for the ruin of souls”’ (CE 40-41). Michael Shelden perceives that in this review Greene was ‘intent on portraying religion as a way of reaching a deeper awareness of evil’ and that the ‘Catholic Church is made to seem more like a satanic cult than a religion devoted to Christian principles’.⁷² Greene’s belief in man’s ability to commit evil corresponds with the Catholic conception of Original Sin, and consequently represents his refutation of the humanist belief in innate goodness. Greene and Waugh shared similar anti-humanist views on the inherent goodness of man, and there is a correlation between Greene’s apprehension of inherent evil and Waugh’s perception of innate savagery within man. Both writers, in distinct ways, emphasized their belief in man’s flawed condition, and from this belief they developed their views concerning the need for religious values to accommodate, or at least to recognize the reality of, man’s fallibility.

Greene’s anti-humanist perspective is evident in his portrayal of the corrupt aspects of various political systems which are detached from, or directly in conflict with, religious values. In the previous chapter I examined the longing for ‘peace’ felt by Greene’s protagonists in his early novels. His characters in subsequent texts similarly yearn for purpose in response to their unstable environments. In his essay ‘Inside the Whale’ (1940), George Orwell examined the confused and disorientating social context of the nineteen thirties, in which the ‘debunking of western civilisation had reached its climax’, and he asked: ‘how many of the values by which our grandfathers lived [can] now be taken seriously?’⁷³ Orwell argued that the loss of these values – which included ‘patriotism and religion’ – did not mean that you ‘necessarily got rid of the need for *something to*

⁷² Michael Shelden, *Graham Greene: The Man Within* (London: Heinemann, 1994), 126.

⁷³ George Orwell, ‘Inside the Whale’ (1940), in *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell – Volume 1: An Age Like This 1920-1940*, eds Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus (London: Penguin, 1970): 540-78, 564.

believe in'.⁷⁴ The desire to believe in 'something' is a predominant motif of *Stamboul Train*, *It's a Battlefield*, and *England Made Me*. In these novels characters are shown in various stages of political commitment, as they yearn for a better world and for an organization that will satisfy their hopes.

Considering the political focus of this chapter, it is important to establish Greene's own political affiliations during this period. Sherry provides a succinct assessment of them:

he had canvassed for the Conservatives in Oxford in 1923; was close to the Liberals in 1924; joined the Communists in 1925 – though that was a joke membership; had been a special constable during the General Strike, and had now [in 1933] become a member of the Independent Labour Party – more extreme than the modest Labour Party.⁷⁵

Sherry's mention of Greene's 'joke membership' of the Communist Party refers to Greene's short-lived experience as a Party member: 'I had only once in my life attended a large Communist meeting, and that was in Paris in 1923, at a time when I held for four weeks a Party card at Oxford' (*WE* 28). Greene's vacillating political beliefs were all centred on the same desire to help vulnerable members of society, and he most likely joined the I. L. P. because, as Sherry states, there was 'a general feeling at the time that by becoming active in a political party one could do something about the terrible social conditions [of the period]'.⁷⁶ Greene's thoughts regarding the predicament of the working classes can be ascertained from his review of Walter Greenwood's novel *Love on the Dole* (1933). Greenwood's novel is set in an industrial slum, and it charts the emotional and financial hardships endured by a working-class family. Greene, deeply affected by the novel, described it as presenting

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Sherry, *The Life of Graham Greene: Volume 1*, 461.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

‘a devastating picture of unemployment’ caused by ‘the irresponsible workings of State economy’.⁷⁷ I suggest that Greene’s fiction in the mid-thirties discloses his belief that those in positions of power in society are not protecting its most helpless members. In addition, Greene’s left-wing concerns for the oppressed represent a major way in which he differs from Waugh, despite sharing the same faith. Evidently, a commitment to Catholicism in this highly politicized period did not necessarily entail a straightforward commitment to right-wing beliefs.

Richard Johnstone highlights Greene’s complex position as a Catholic with leftist sympathies: ‘his Catholicism prevented subscription to the left-wing orthodoxy of the period, but his socialist instincts placed him outside conventional Catholicism’.⁷⁸ It is more accurate to say that Greene reveals a social awareness in his novels, as opposed to a commitment to socialism or communism. Johnstone accurately identifies why Greene ‘felt the pull of Communism’ and yet refrained from committing to a party when he states that Greene ‘had no corresponding belief in the essential goodness of man’.⁷⁹ Due to Greene’s pessimistic view of man and, from this, man-made systems, the political parties in his novels are portrayed as failing those who desperately need their help. Indeed, I argue below that Greene associates aspects of humanist political regimes with themes of entrapment and futility. Accordingly, the irreligious political parties in his novels do not fulfil – and for Greene, I think, *cannot* fulfil – the needs of the people who want to support them.

In *Stamboul Train* Greene explores the incompatibility between religious faith and political belief within Dr. Czinner, the politically ineffective socialist. When he was head of the Social Democrats in Belgrade, Czinner gave evidence against a senior member who was charged with raping an underage girl. The member was acquitted and Czinner fled to England, in fear for his life.

⁷⁷ Graham Greene, ‘Fiction’, *The Spectator* (30 June, 1933), 956.

⁷⁸ Richard Johnstone, *The Will to Believe: Novelists of the Nineteen-Thirties* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 13.

⁷⁹ Johnstone, *The Will to Believe*, 70.

The novel charts his rail journey from England to Belgrade, where he intends to partake in a socialist uprising. While on the train, Czinner learns that the uprising has started prematurely and has failed miserably. He decides to continue to his destination because he intends to make a rousing speech that will spread his socialist ideas to a mass audience: 'I must have every word perfect, remember clearly the object of my fight, remember that it is not only the poor of Belgrade who matter, but the poor of every country' (*ST* 145). Despite Czinner's apparent dedication to a political cause, his strong political beliefs are shown to conflict with his Christian upbringing, as he vacillates between states of religious faith and scepticism. One moment he contemplates God from a socialist perspective, describing Him as 'a fiction invented by the rich to keep the poor content' (*ST* 156). The next moment, he reflects upon whether political parties have actually 'twisted' (*ST* 157) and misinterpreted Christ's message. Czinner even considers the possibility that some of Christ's 'words might have been true', but he immediately refrains from pursuing this thought further: 'He argued with himself that the doubt came only from the approach of death, because when the burden of failure was almost too heavy to bear, a man inevitably turned to the most baseless promise. "I will give you rest"' (*ST* 157). At this point, Czinner associates faith with groundless pledges, and he insinuates that the faithful are weak-minded for letting themselves become anxious about their inevitable death.

Although Czinner tries to repress his faith, he cannot rid himself fully of his desire for purification, which he believes only a religious confession can offer. He sneers at the idea of confessing his sins to 'the treasurer of the Social-Democratic party' or 'to the third-class passengers' (*ST* 162). When Czinner comes across a priest named Mr Opie, he admits to watching the priest 'with a kind of ashamed greed' (*ST* 162), as 'his lips felt dry with a literal thirst for righteousness' (*ST* 163). An internal struggle ensues, as Czinner does not know whether he should 'surrender to a belief which it had been his pride to subdue' or to confess his sins and experience a form of longed for 'peace' (*ST* 162). In Czinner's psychological struggle Greene suggests that Czinner is not fully

satisfied by his political beliefs, which implies that socialism can never provide the peace, reassurance, and security which Greene associates with faith.

Czinner's strained relationship with faith becomes even more warped when he is portrayed comparing himself to Christ. When Czinner is arrested before he manages to reach Belgrade, he describes – out loud – his situation in terms which are applicable to Christ's trial by Pontius Pilate:

“This wasn't a trial. They had sentenced me to death before they began.

Remember, I'm dying to show you the way. I don't mind dying. Life has not been so good as that. I think I shall be of more use dead”. (*ST* 235)

Jae-Suck Choi makes a direct connection between the Passion of Christ and Czinner's 'sacrificial ideals' by claiming that both provide 'the world with a vision of hope'.⁸⁰ On the contrary, I would argue that Greene's implicit reference to the Passion is ironic. Although Czinner likens himself to Christ, the reader is aware that Czinner is morally flawed and self-serving:

He himself was not without dishonesty, and [...] he was guilty of vanity, of several meannesses; once he had got a girl with child. Even his motives in travelling first class were not unmixed; it was easier to evade the frontier police, but it was also more comfortable, more fitted to his vanity as a leader. (*ST* 159)

These weaknesses emphasise Czinner's inherent fallibility, despite his best intentions and his good qualities, and they confirm how laudable it is for him to try and compare himself to Christ.

⁸⁰ Jae-Suck Choi, 'Graham Greene's Vision of Hope', in William Thomas Hill (ed.), *Perceptions of Religious Faith in the Work of Graham Greene* (Oxford: Peter Lang Press, 2002): 549-76, 558.

Moreover, unlike Christ, Czinner ultimately fails in his sacrificial attempt to make an impact on society. He is prevented from making his political speech in front of a large crowd due to being arrested, and he has to make do with addressing only a few uninterested policemen with his socialist ideas:

When all were poor, no one would be poor. The wealth of the world belonged to everyone. If it was divided, there would be no rich men, but every man would have enough to eat, and would have no reason to feel ashamed beside his neighbour. (*ST* 235)

His audience is clearly indifferent and remains unmoved: ‘Colonel Hartep lost interest’ (*ST* 235), and of the two guards, ‘one stared past him, paying him no attention’ and the other ‘watched him with wide stupid unhappy eyes’ (*ST* 234). Even Czinner’s death loses any semblance of heroic persecution, as he is shot while attempting to escape. He expires in a small shed with only a poor chorus girl for company and, as Shelden notes, ends his life ‘not [as] a revolutionary hero’, but as a ‘sad failure’.⁸¹ In Czinner’s inability to make a political impression on his audience and on wider society, Greene could be alluding to the futility of those who try to change society by dedicating themselves only to secular political regimes.

In *Ways of Escape* Greene explained that he wrote *Stamboul Train* with a certain naivety that derived from his youth and from the period he was writing in: ‘Hitler had not yet come to power when *Stamboul Train* was written. It was a different world and a different author – an author still in his twenties’ (*WE* 25). Greene’s next novel, *It’s a Battlefield*, is a bleaker text that reflects an increasingly troubled political environment. Greene’s social awareness is more obvious in this novel than it was in *Stamboul Train*, as he portrays how contemporary London is racked by injustice, poverty, loneliness, and misery. Indeed, V. S. Pritchett praised *It’s a Battlefield* for its careful

⁸¹ Shelden, *Graham Greene: The Man Within*, 168.

depiction of helpless individuals caught within an oppressive social system: 'it is hard to find any novel of quality which presents the social problems of today or even draws men and women as they are conditioned by industrial life'.⁸² In the novel Greene describes the terrible working conditions of a factory, and he makes a link between them and the entrapping and repetitive routine in the local prison.⁸³ Moreover, the predominant motif of the novel is that of the battle, as Greene suggests that the individuals struggling within the warfare of life can neither comprehend nor control their surroundings:

In so far as the battlefield presented itself to the bare eyesight of men, it had no entirety, no length, no breadth, no depth, no size, no shape, and was made up of nothing except small numberless circlets commensurate with such ranges of vision as the mist might allow at each spot. (Epigraph)

The reference to 'small numberless circlets' corresponds with Greene's presentation of a range of humanist characters in the novel, who try to construct their own meaning and lifestyle within an overwhelming and incomprehensible context. These characters construct ways of life that are set apart from others, which intensifies the feelings of isolation and detachment these characters experience throughout the text.

As has been mentioned, *It's a Battlefield* explores the fate of an incarcerated working-class communist named Jim Drover. The leader of the Communist Party, Mr Surrogate, does not try to

⁸² V. S. Pritchett, 'A Modern Mind', *The Spectator* (9 February, 1934), 20.

⁸³ Michael G. Brennan reveals that Greene had 'diligently researched prison conditions at Wormwood Scrubs and Wandsworth Prison and had visited the Moreland match factory at Gloucester, notorious for the exploitative conditions of its largely female workforce'. See *Graham Greene: Fictions, Faith and Authorship* (London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2010), 29.

defend or aid Drover. Instead, Surrogate admits that he wants Drover to sacrifice himself as a martyr in order to show up democracy as evil, thus making the Communist Party look more appealing: ““There is no cause for grief. Every faith demands its sacrifice. When Drover dies, the Communist Party in Great Britain will come of age”” (B 42). However, Greene makes clear that Drover’s ‘sacrifice’ does not alter the standing of the Communist Party whatsoever, as the Assistant Commissioner – who compiles a report on the case – concludes: ““I’m simply writing that it will have no effect, whether he hangs Drover or reprieves him [...] Everybody’s too busy fighting his own little battle to think of the, the next man”” (B 188). The Communist Party is guilty of acting in a self-serving and heartless manner. This is confirmed when Surrogate reveals that he ‘resented’ Drover’s ‘intrusion as an individual to be saved and not a sacrifice to be decked for the altar’ (B 44).

Furthermore, Surrogate’s aforementioned reference to the Communist Party as a ‘faith’ that demands ‘sacrifice’ relates to wider debates in the period concerning the relationship between political and religious belief. Religious writers such as Christopher Dawson and T. S. Eliot maintained that communism (more so than socialism) was in direct conflict with Christianity. In ‘The Modern Dilemma’ (1932), Dawson argued that communism attempts to fill the role of faith in the secular modern world: ‘The Communist Party is a religious sect which exists to spread the true faith [...] It employs the weapon of excommunication against disloyal or unorthodox members. It possesses in the writings of Marx its infallible scriptures and it reveres in Lenin, if not a God, at least a saviour and a prophet’.⁸⁴ Dawson returned to this argument a few years later in *Religion and the Modern State* (1935), in which he maintained that the ‘vital issue’ of the thirties had become ‘the conflict between Christianity and Marxism – between the Catholic Church and the Communist party’, because it was a ‘conflict of rival philosophies and rival doctrines regarding the very nature of

⁸⁴ Dawson, ‘The Modern Dilemma’, 120-1.

man and society'.⁸⁵ Writing for *The Criterion* in 1933, T. S. Eliot also likened communism to 'the faith of the day' and claimed that it had 'come as a godsend (so to speak) to those young people who would like to grow up and believe in something'.⁸⁶ George Orwell supported Eliot's statement when he explained in 'Inside the Whale' that the 'young writers of the thirties flocked into or towards the Communist Party' because it represented 'a church, an army, an orthodoxy, a discipline' and was 'simply something to believe in'.⁸⁷ In place of religion, Greene implies that his characters satisfy their craving for the order and support of an organization by dedicating themselves to the Communist Party. Drover's belief in this Party, and his hope that it would ease his social and economic worries, is shown to be sadly misplaced. The Party fails to aid one of its most vulnerable members, and the novel ends tragically as Drover is sentenced to life in prison.

In *It's a Battlefield* a Catholic named Jules Briton vents his frustration at the inherent injustice of society. He specifically attacks the baseless promises of communism: 'Men would be making speeches to a late hour, reconstructing England in theory, abolishing poverty on paper' (*B* 40). For Jules, communism 'was all talk and never action' (*B* 40). In contrast to this form of political ineffectiveness, Jules believes that when he is praying in church he is actively accomplishing something for men like Drover: 'As his emotion welled out between his fingers, he felt the satisfaction of doing all he could for someone he had never seen; he was ready for incredible sacrifices, feeling a kinship with the crude Christ in plaster' (*B* 139). Within the confines of the church Jules admits to feeling 'confidence, an immense pride, a purpose', because in the building 'while the wine was made blood, the most unlikely things seemed possible' (*B* 140). However, his hopefulness and sense of purpose dissipate as soon as he leaves the church. Once again he becomes

⁸⁵ Christopher Dawson, *Religion and the Modern State* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1935), 59.

⁸⁶ T. S. Eliot, 'A Commentary' (1933), cited by Peter McDonald, 'Believing the Thirties', in Keith Williams and Steven Matthews (eds), *Rewriting the Thirties: Modernism and After* (London: Longman, 1997): 71-90, 78.

⁸⁷ Orwell, 'Inside the Whale', 565.

frustrated with ‘all the useless suffering he could do nothing to ease’ (B 40). Jules wishes that there was ‘something he could follow with passion’ (B 40), and he admits to feeling ‘desperate for a place in the world, a task, a duty’ (B 150).

In Jules’s conflicted thoughts Greene represents the difficulty of having faith in a predominantly secular environment, because outside of the church Jules feels that his beliefs have no currency in society. The church scene suggests why Greene felt the need to combine his Catholicism with left-wing sympathies: he shows via Jules’s feelings of helplessness that having Catholic faith is not enough to make a viable difference in the modern world, as one’s society also needs to change. Chapter Five of this thesis refers to Greene’s support for Liberation Theology in the nineteen sixties and seventies, as it was a movement that combined religious faith (with its merciful dedication to the vulnerable) with socialist plans for reform. Although references to Liberation Theology are not explicitly made in Greene’s earlier texts, the idea that faith is not effective enough on its own to influence social change is alluded to in *It’s a Battlefield*.

In *England Made Me* Greene portrays Capitalism as the dominant faith of modern European society via his characterization of the Swedish financier Erik Krogh and the presentation of Krogh’s vast business empire. The phenomenal success of Krogh’s business is summed up by Anthony Farrant: ‘Krogh like God Almighty in every home; impossible in the smallest cottage to do without Krogh; Krogh in England, in Europe, in Asia, but Krogh, like Almighty God, only a bloody man’ (EMM 23). Anthony’s statement alludes to the spread of capitalism throughout civilization and its encroachment upon Christianity’s territory; it also confirms his disbelief in God. Krogh himself epitomizes the capitalist system’s dissociation from religious belief when he is shown idly examining the palms of his hands and pondering his destiny: ‘A man is born with what is marked on the left palm; on the right palm is what he makes of life’ (EMM 45). Krogh looks only to himself for meaning and not to any higher power, and his self-entrapment is symbolized when he secludes himself within his office: ‘E. K., on the ash-tray; E. K. on the carpet; E. K. flashing on above the

fountain while he watched, above the gateway; he was surrounded by himself' (*EMM* 66). He reveals the extent to which he is bound to his business by confessing that he 'would never hesitate to kill himself' if his 'company failed' (*EMM* 46). Failure is a real possibility, as there are continual references to strikes and risky deals which are undermining the reputation of the business. Indeed, Greene indicated that one of the novel's major themes was 'the economic background of the thirties and that sense of capitalism staggering from crisis to crisis' (*WE* 31).

One of these crises involves a socialist character named Andersson who is employed by Krogh. Andersson threatens to organize a strike because he objects to Krogh's workers in America being forced into accepting low wages. Even though Krogh meets with him and promises not to fire him, Andersson is dismissed from his job. In a naïve attempt to redress his father's unfair dismissal, Andersson's son tries to talk with Krogh and explain the situation, telling himself: 'Herr Krogh just doesn't know, he'll put it right' (*EMM* 226). Young Andersson has faith in the justice of the capitalist regime; he 'had seen it working, the idle man dismissed, the industrious rewarded' (*EMM* 224) and he firmly 'believed in the greatness of Krogh's' (*EMM* 223). However, Krogh is not interested, and young Andersson is blocked from seeing him by an employee named Hall, who then viciously and violently attacks the younger man. Working as Krogh's henchman, Hall embodies the brutal and oppressive aspects of the capitalist system.

The communist writer John Strachey examined the relationship between capitalism and violence in *The Coming Struggle for Power* (1932). Strachey claimed that the capitalist system was 'dying' and had to resort to 'direct, open terror against the workers' and 'violent aggression against its rivals' in order to 'maintain itself'.⁸⁸ Strachey's dire prophecy is fulfilled in *England Made Me* when young Andersson is struck 'on the point of the jaw' (*EMM* 266) and floored by Hall: 'Young Andersson's mouth was full of blood; blood was in his eyes, he couldn't see clearly. "I don't

⁸⁸ John Strachey, *The Coming Struggle for Power* (1932), cited in Patey, *The Life of Evelyn Waugh*, 84.

understand,” he said, his breath bubbling on his lips, “understand, don’t understand.” Hall [...] raised his boot and kicked him in the stomach’ (*EMM* 267). There is no room for pity in the capitalist way of life; Andersson is not only physically damaged but his ideals are ruined.

Krogh gradually loses control over his business empire when a major deal concerning the sale of a company named Batterson’s is shown to be entrenched in fraud. Krogh’s business partner is Kate Farrant, and she is fully aware of the situation. She invites her twin brother, Anthony, to work for the company and it is he who objects to the deal with Batterson’s. Anthony decides to blackmail Krogh by gathering condemnatory information about the business deal, which is soon noted by Hall: “‘He’s been poking around, talking to clerks about short-term loans’” (*EMM* 287). Kate tries to dissuade her brother, recognizing that he is not powerful enough to hold an entire business empire to ransom: “‘He’d break you before you could open your mouth. He’d have you in prison, he wouldn’t stop at anything’” (*EMM* 219). Anthony’s vulnerability stems from the way he perceives the world: he judges Krogh’s dealings with a ‘schoolboy gravity’ (*EMM* 215) and he is unable to comprehend the danger in which he is putting himself.

The reference to Anthony’s childish and rather naïve perspective is a key part of his character. He is unsuitably prepared for the hostile post-war European environment, typified by Krogh’s corrupt empire, because he is ‘full of the conventions of a generation older than himself’ (*EMM* 29). In this respect, Anthony is very much like Tony Last, as both characters try to live by anachronistic pre-war values which are no longer relevant to the modern world. Kate reflects upon the ‘maxims’ which her brother has been brought up on: ‘Do not show your feelings. Do not live immoderately. Be chaste, prudent, pay your debts. Don’t buy on credit’ (*EMM* 89). Despite these principles, Anthony has grown up to be a failure and a fraud; rather like Basil Seal in *Black Mischief*, he is continually fired from jobs and is constantly travelling in search of new work. Anthony essentially lives off his lies. He moves from one social club to the next, re-inventing his past in order to gain approval and acceptance from his peers, and wearing the old school tie of a public school that

he had never attended. Anthony's sense of displacement is reinforced when he becomes associated with a seedy journalist named Ferdinand Minty, as together they represent 'the refuse of a changing world' (*EMM* 272). Both men come from similar public school backgrounds and they are both caught in the no-man's land of modern society: 'They were neither one thing nor the other' (*EMM* 273). Weary and rootless, Anthony recognizes that he and Minty are 'not fresh enough, optimistic enough, to believe in peace' and, in a reference to the socialist hopes of many during this period, they do not believe in 'co-operation, the dignity of labour' (*EMM* 273). They are condemned to live within a post-war world to which they cannot relate and in which they can make no progress.

In his portraits of Anthony and Minty, Greene criticizes the public school system that had instilled this generation of inter-war Englishmen with unsuitable and obsolete pre-war values. Anthony had tried to escape from such an upbringing when he ran away from his school, but he was forced to return and endure it. Minty is also an unhappy product of his upbringing, having been mercilessly bullied at school: 'the steel nibs dug into his calf, the spilt incense and the broken sacred pictures. It had indeed been a long and hard coition for Minty' (*EMM* 121). The sexual imagery emphasizes the way in which Minty eventually became penetrated and defined by his upbringing. Greene confirmed his interest in the lasting influence of education when he edited *The Old School* (1934), which was a collection of essays written by various writers concerning their experiences at school. In his preface, Greene described the book as 'a premature memorial' for 'so odd a system of education'.⁸⁹ In sum, the dire situations faced by Anthony and Minty represent Greene's concern for the middle- and upper-class sectors of his generation in England which were burdened by anachronistic educational backgrounds.

⁸⁹ Graham Greene, 'Preface', in *The Old School: Essays by Divers Hands*, ed. Graham Greene (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985): vii-viii, vii.

Kate recognizes how 'hopelessly lost' Anthony is in the modern 'world of business' (*EMM* 7) and she sums up his predicament: "'My dear,'" she said with irritation, "you're out of date'" (*EMM* 8). As a result of his lack of understanding and foresight, Anthony is eventually murdered by Hall – a macabre demise that is a damning indictment of an English society that has educated its young men and rendered them unfit for the modern world. However, as Brian Diemert recognizes, 'if Anthony's nationalism is untenable in the modern world, Krogh's internationalism of economic imperialism is equally unattractive for Greene'.⁹⁰ As an emotionally sterile and morally ambivalent atheist, Krogh represents the most inhumane and anti-individualistic features of capitalism. Under his regime, desire for money and profit supersedes issues of morals and loyalty; there is simply no room for spirituality. In these critical portraits of flawed characters, Greene could be suggesting that Anthony and his generation, along with Krogh and the capitalist system, need different values by which to live. Taking into account Greene's Catholicism and his aforementioned association between faith and permanence, it is possible that Greene is depicting his secular character as suffering predominantly because of their lack of religious values.

In contrast to Anthony and Krogh, who show no consideration of faith whatsoever, Minty is a practising Anglo-Catholic. However, his religious beliefs are clearly perverted. Minty is 'sickened' at the thought that 'God himself had become a man' (*EMM* 125). Such repulsion stems from Minty's loathing of the human body in general, which exacerbates his isolation and his disconnection from others: 'Yes, it was ugly, the human figure. Man or woman, it made no difference to Minty. The body's shape, the running nose, excrement, the stupid postures of passion' (*EMM* 124). Minty also practices his faith in a disturbing manner; he enters a church 'with the caution and the dry-mouthed excitement of a secret debauchee' and believes that the building has 'claimed him' (*EMM* 132). In Greene's early novels (discussed in Chapter Two of this thesis), when his characters visit churches

⁹⁰ Brian Diemert, *Graham Greene's Thrillers and the 1930s* (London: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996), 58.

they are overwhelmed and humbled by a spiritual atmosphere; they yearn to be part of the peace and unity that the church represents. No such thoughts are shown to occupy Minty's mind.

When alone in his flat, Minty reflects upon his conception of God. Minty likens himself to a half-dead spider that is held captive within a glass and is looked down upon by God: 'he turned out his own lamp and lay in darkness, like the spider patient behind his glass. And like the spider he withered, blown out no longer to meet contempt; his body stretched doggo in the attitude of death, he lay there humbly tempting God to lift the glass' (*EMM* 168). The spider imagery refers to an earlier scene in which Minty traps a spider under a glass and releases it after a few days, presuming that it has died. On closer inspection, Minty realizes that the spider is merely pretending to be dead and he watches with fascination as it tries to escape. While he observes the creature, Minty's 'hunting teasing instinct' is awakened and he re-traps it, noting that it has 'lost a second leg' (*EMM* 167). By likening himself to the mangled and imprisoned spider, Minty alludes to the idea that God is a detached observer who has the same malevolent and callous feelings for mankind. Accordingly, although he is the only character in the novel who has a belief in God, Minty's faith is neither conventional nor comforting. He is like Jules and Czinner because he does not derive any form of lasting peace or refuge from his faith; instead he is isolated, embittered, and lonely. Greene's depiction of unfulfilled religious characters implies that Catholicism cannot be considered a straightforward solution to social problems or to human dilemmas; secular modern societies in England and Europe also need to change. Greene indicates the extent to which these modern societies have become morally corrupt and detached from religious values, inasmuch as he makes it clear that even his religious characters are confused and helpless.

Conclusion: 'Catholic by omission'

In Waugh's and Greene's novels of the early to mid nineteen thirties, religious faith is predominantly present in the form of characters who either ignore it altogether or who have a shallow or warped understanding of it. Waugh neither explores Catholicism as a faith in his fiction of this period, nor does he represent Catholic characters, despite explicitly stating in articles and essays that Catholicism needed to be reintegrated into Western civilization. In particular, the absence of obvious religious themes within *A Handful of Dust* has led some critics to dismiss the idea that the novel is written from a Catholic perspective. For Robert Murray Davis, 'the religious theme is at most implied', and Peter Quennell was relieved that Waugh had finally abandoned his pose as 'Catholic moralist', because it 'marred' *Vile Bodies* and *Black Mischief*.⁹¹ Both critics fail to recognize the possibility that Waugh's Catholicism informs his depiction (and criticism) of a destructive and corrupt modern secular environment in England and abroad. Indeed, as has been mentioned, Waugh explicitly stated that he intended *Black Mischief* to 'prosper the cause' of Catholicism.⁹² I suggest that this statement equally applies to *A Handful of Dust*. It is precisely in his disparaging presentation of irreligious characters that Waugh can be viewed as emphasizing the need for religious belief and Catholic values within secular societies.

Critics have similarly dismissed the presence of Catholicism in Greene's texts due to the absence of obvious Catholic themes and protagonists. For example, A. A. DeVitis describes the 'controlling temper' of Greene's fiction in this period as 'secular', and he argues that the 'religious

⁹¹ Robert Murray Davis, 'Introduction', Evelyn Waugh, *A Handful of Dust*, ed. Robert Murray Davis (London: Penguin Books, 1997): ix-xxvii, xii; Peter Quennell, *The New Statesman* (1934), cited by Stannard, *Evelyn Waugh: The Early Years*, 376.

⁹² Waugh, 'An Open Letter', 76.

note' is only 'tentatively sounded'.⁹³ On the contrary, Greene's fiction can be viewed as informed by his Catholicism. It is possible that he uses themes of corruption, misery, and loneliness to characterize secular England and modern societies in Europe in order to indicate that these societies are pervaded by forms of social evil. According to Greene, in his aforementioned essay about Henry James, the awareness and presentation of incidences of social evil was indicative of a 'religious sense'.

In those novels by Waugh and Greene which have been discussed in this chapter, the majority of characters are essentially irreligious and they are shown to cling to humanist or secular ways of living (whether these take the form of a dedication to irreligious political systems or more generally of following a lifestyle that is disconnected from faith in God). The characters' dedication to these routines (for example Tony Last rigidly abiding by his daily habits, or Erik Krogh completely absorbed by business matters) implies that they harbour an inherent desire for order and meaning in their lives, or – as Orwell put it – they have a 'need for something to believe in'.⁹⁴ In my view, Waugh and Greene allude to the idea that this desire for belief is tragically misplaced, as they incorporate disturbing and pessimistic endings into their fiction: Basil Seal leaves Azania having realized that he has ingested his former lover; Tony Last is condemned to perpetual imprisonment in the jungle; Dr Czinner dies from a gunshot wound while trying to escape his captives; Jim Drover is sentenced to life imprisonment; and Anthony Farrant is drowned. These morbid conclusions could reflect Waugh's and Greene's cynical belief that purely humanist and secular lifestyles are essentially futile and deadly.

Greene focuses on political corruption in his texts. He illustrates how certain aspects of various secular political systems – socialism, communism, and capitalism – actually contribute to,

⁹³ A. A. DeVitis, *Graham Greene* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1964), 79.

⁹⁴ Orwell, 'Inside the Whale', 564.

rather than alleviate, unjust conditions and human misery. His left-wing sympathies become evident when he attacks the elements of heartlessness and corruption within large organizations, from political parties to international business empires which ignore and oppress vulnerable individuals. While Waugh shares Greene's social pessimism, he is more concerned with how a once-civilized way of life in England has been gradually destroyed and replaced by a vacuous modern social scene. Tony's disturbing fate can be interpreted as typifying Waugh's horrified response to the idea that traditional morality and civilized values are not strong enough to survive in secular societies (either in England or abroad) due to their being detached from religious values. Like Tony, Anthony Farrant is similarly unable to cope with his modern environment due to harbouring anachronistic (and, I suggest, irreligious) maxims. In this way, Waugh and Greene can be seen to imply that they live in a period in which the pre-war values on which they have been brought up are no longer suitable, especially since these values are not grounded in faith.

In this period the fiction of Greene and Waugh diverges in terms of the genres they use, the topics of their novels, and their styles of writing. Greene employs a socially realist form of writing, which is based upon sober and detailed description, in his thriller (*Stamboul Train*) and his novels of social criticism (*It's a Battlefield* and *England Made Me*). However, Waugh uses comedy and satire to depict and censure various societies in his novels. As with *Decline and Fall* and *Vile Bodies*, he predominantly uses an external satiric form with which he concentrates on depicting the revealing and self-damning dialogue of his characters, as opposed to explicitly stating his authorial stance in his work. Aside from these differences between the writings of Greene and Waugh, I would like to put forward the view that there are significant parallels between their anti-humanist responses to secular forms of society in this period. I suggest that both authors allude to the fallibility of man, from which the need for Catholicism derives, as the religion not only explains man's inner evil but offers a way with which to deal with it (by following Catholic beliefs). This innate fallibility is the predominant reason why these two authors believe that secular and humanist systems cannot work.

Following Greene's belief in man's innate evil and Waugh's related view of man's innate savagery, I propose that they both suggest in their fiction that religious values need to be taken into account when thinking about social order.

As has already been stated, Waugh's and Greene's texts are not explicitly 'Catholic' at this stage in their writing careers, and, despite the texts' parallels with works of the aforementioned Catholic revival (in terms of criticizing secular society from a Catholic perspective), they cannot be considered part of the Catholic revival. However, because I argue that their critique of modern societies is informed by their Catholic perspectives, Waugh's and Greene's novels can be considered, in Stratford's phrase, 'Catholic by omission'.⁹⁵ Indeed, Stratford maintains that Greene's fiction displays 'not only a vestigial sign of Christian conscience but, in opposition to the apathy and hostility of the irreligious world, a positive footing for a religious attitude'.⁹⁶ Arguably, it is this religious attitude that is behind the novels written by Waugh and Greene in the early to mid thirties, an attitude developed in their subsequent 'Catholic' works.

⁹⁵ Stratford, *Faith and Fiction*, 188.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 192.

CHAPTER FOUR: NEGOTIATING BELIEFS AND THE RISE OF POLITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS

Between 1935 and 1938, Evelyn Waugh and Graham Greene began to praise each other's work in reviews and to collaborate together on publications. Under Greene's editorship, Waugh reviewed fiction on a fortnightly basis for *Night and Day* magazine in 1937.¹ Along with Greene, Waugh also wrote regularly for a variety of publications – particularly for the *Tablet* and for *The Spectator*. Greene generally concentrated on film and book reviews, whereas Waugh chose to review books. These reviews form an integral part of these authors' respective *oeuvres* in this period. In them, Waugh and Greene reveal their personal political inclinations, as well as their thoughts on the role of the writer in an increasingly politicized era. While Waugh endorsed a right-wing political stance in his writing, which supported strong governments and forms of social order, Greene's left-wing sympathies focused on how the English government was failing vulnerable members of society, both spiritually and socially. Despite the obvious political leanings of each writer, neither author officially belonged to a political party at this time; it is more appropriate to talk of 'sympathies' and 'strains' in their work, rather than reductively labelling them either of the Left or the Right.

Loyalty to Catholicism complicated issues of political identity for Waugh and Greene, and formed the predominant reason why they did not publicly commit themselves to a specific party. The Spanish Civil War in particular thrust the issue of faith and political duty into the spotlight, and writers in general were called upon publicly to announce with which political division they sided. Beginning in 1936, the conflict involved Francisco Franco's forces – which were sympathetic to Catholicism and were supported by fascist Germany and fascist Italy – and secular Republicans. The latter retaliated against Franco's aggressive attempts to gain power, and they instigated a brutal

¹ The magazine was founded in 1937, but it had to close down six months later due to financial problems. See Michael Shelden, *Graham Greene: The Man Within* (London: Heinemann, 1994), 227.

regime of Catholic persecution. Prior to the outbreak of war, Greene noted: ‘My professional life and my religion were contained in quite separate compartments, and I had no ambition to bring them together’ (WE 59). However, Greene (and Waugh) soon found that the civil war ‘inextricably involved religion in contemporary life’ (WE 59). The majority of Catholic opinion sided with Franco (it was, as Mary Vincent explained, ‘a foregone conclusion’ that Catholics would do so), but neither Waugh nor Greene publicly gave their full support to either side.² Neither author can be simply aligned with the prevailing consensus of their fellow Catholics at this point in time.

This chapter continues to approach each author separately, and marks parallels between their thinking where relevant. The first section discusses Waugh’s biography, *Edmund Campion* (1935), which charts the life and martyrdom of the Elizabethan Catholic priest. In writing the biography, Waugh signalled to his readership that his Catholicism was integral to his life and work. Waugh was conscious of having been overlooked as a serious Catholic writer due to his earlier satirical forms of writing. This sober and highly respectful biography represented his desire to be read alongside such important Catholic writers as Christopher Dawson, Ronald Knox, G. K. Chesterton, and Hilaire Belloc. According to Martin Stannard, Waugh’s biography made a good impression on the Catholic press and he was ‘delighted’ to receive favourable reviews from renowned Catholic periodicals.³ Furthermore, as will be explored below, some of the ideas outlined in *Edmund Campion* correspond with aspects of Belloc’s Catholic apologist thinking. For example, Waugh and Belloc shared similar views on the destructive consequences of the Reformation, a conviction in the spiritual order and the

² Cited in Martin Conway, *Catholic Politics in Europe 1918-1945* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), 68.

³ Martin Stannard, *Evelyn Waugh: The Early Years 1903-1939* (London: Paladin Grafton Books, 1988), 410. Stannard also reports that ‘*Commonweal*, *Blackfriars*, the *Catholic Historical Review*, *Catholic World*, *G. K.’s Weekly*, *Pax* – even the *Homiletic and Pastoral Review* and the *Irish Ecclesiastical Record* – all came down in favour of it’. See Stannard, *Evelyn Waugh: The Early Years*, 410.

authority of the Roman Catholic Church, and a belief that Catholicism would provide the necessary organization within a deteriorating, secular West.

In 1935 the *Daily Mail* sent Waugh to Addis Ababa to report upon the developing conflict between Abyssinia and Italy, and he wrote up his experiences in the form of a travel book, *Waugh in Abyssinia* (1936). In this publication, I suggest that Waugh explored Bellocian ideas regarding the civilizing benefits of Roman imperialism, and that he approved the need for a strong Italian government in Abyssinia. These views led to Waugh being condemned by critics and reviewers for having fascist tendencies. This chapter explores Waugh's response to the Italian invasion in detail. His discussion of the invasion suggests that he viewed Italy as representing a civilizing power that could transform the 'barbaric' Abyssinia. Rather than exclusively endorsing Italy's fascist politics, Waugh's support is complicated by numerous issues: he approved of Italy's Roman roots; he arguably valued Italy's implicit connection with the concept of *Romanitas*; and, I suggest, he agreed with Italy's association with Catholic values. Indeed, Waugh refused to be categorized as a fascist. His faith meant that he valued the unique quality within each individual soul, which he argued was overlooked by totalitarian ideologies.

Waugh in *Scoop* (1938) satirizes irreligious totalitarian political ideologies (including fascism). Reading this novel in line with his non-fiction (in terms of his aforementioned association of Catholicism with tradition, permanence, and order), Waugh's satiric attack on political regimes can be said to incorporate his implicit belief that Catholic values will provide the moral and social order which, in his view, are absent from overly politicized societies. Ostensibly a satire on journalism, *Scoop* draws upon Waugh's experiences as a war correspondent in Abyssinia. In the novel, the owner of the *Daily Beast* accidentally commissions William Boot, a naïve young writer of nature columns, to cover the developing civil war in an East African country called Ishmaelia (which Waugh invented). Russian and German forces are fighting over Ishmaelia's gold mineral resources as well as political control of the government, and the country is consequently divided between warring

communist and fascist parties. Due to a series of misadventures and lucky coincidences, William manages to score a 'scoop', and he returns to London as a world-renowned reporter. Instead of taking up an eminent position on the paper, William leaves London and returns to his aged family in their dilapidated country home of Boot Magna. This chapter examines Waugh's focus on the upper-class Boot family in terms of their political passivity and disregard of wider political issues, as they shut themselves away from modern England.

The second section of this chapter examines Greene's work, beginning with his travel book *Journey Without Maps* (1936). This text chronicles Greene's four-week expedition into the unmapped interior of Liberia. Taking a stance that diverges from Waugh's, Greene criticizes European civilization and concludes that the white settlers in Liberia have essentially damaged rather than benefited its native life. Greene's anti-imperialism reflects his hatred of dominating and corrupt authorities and his left-wing sympathies for the socially oppressed in England, which are evident in *A Gun for Sale* (1936) and *Brighton Rock* (1938). Despite his leftist stance, Greene objected to political didacticism in fiction. He believed that writers should use accurate descriptions in order to fulfil their primary role in society: that of telling the truth. This chapter maintains that the concept of 'truth' is a predominant feature of Greene's realist fiction in this period. Greene's method of realism was undoubtedly influenced by the cinema and a major cinematic influence on his work, which has not been sufficiently recognized by critics, is the documentary film movement of the era.⁴ Greene employs 'documentary' methods of presentation to depict a variety of social problems in his texts (including poor housing, industrial waste lands, impoverishment, and unemployment).

⁴ As has been mentioned earlier, Greene was a committed reviewer of films, writing predominantly for *Night and Day* and *The Spectator*. For more on Greene's relationship with the cinema, see Judith Adamson's *Graham Greene and Cinema* (Norman, Okla: Pilgrim Books, 1984).

James Raven, the protagonist of *A Gun for Sale*, is a physically deformed assassin who is hired by Sir Marcus, the owner of a large steel plantation, to kill a European Minister of War. Raven is paid with counterfeit money and is then framed for murder. He goes on the run from the police and tries to track down Sir Marcus in order to enact revenge and to obtain his fee. Raven's journey brings him into contact with a chorus girl named Anne Crowder, whom he abducts. Through Anne, Raven learns that the assassination has led to a world war (because the European Minister was a pacifist and a key figure in international politics). Sir Marcus wanted to initiate war in order to ignite the armament trade and consequently revitalize the steel industry, which would lead to massive profits for his capitalist enterprise. Although Raven manages to murder Sir Marcus, he is surrounded by police and decides to commit suicide. The main character in *Brighton Rock* is a seventeen-year-old Roman Catholic named Pinkie Brown, who grew up in appalling social conditions in the slums of Brighton. Pinkie runs a gang of small-time crooks and he soon gets in trouble with the authorities when his mob murders an ex-gang-member called Fred Hale. Pinkie sets about covering the gang's tracks, but two women threaten to undo his work: Ida Arnold, who briefly met Hale and wants to avenge his murder; and Rose, a young waitress who recognizes that Pinkie's alibi is false. In order to guarantee Rose's silence over her potentially incriminating knowledge, Pinkie marries her. He soon finds that he cannot cope with being intimately coupled and plans to rid himself of Rose by persuading her to commit suicide. Ida manages to direct the police to Pinkie before he implements this plan, and the novel ends with his death as he tries to flee from them.

In *A Gun for Sale* and *Brighton Rock* Greene is highly sensitive to the social and economic backgrounds of his underprivileged protagonists. As well as portraying the terrible conditions of social deprivation, Greene examines how these conditions affect the protagonists' religious views: Raven's traumatic upbringing has led him to associate faith with themes of betrayal and torture, and Pinkie – who has never experienced goodness or peace in the slums – has a faith that is fixated with evil, sin, and punishment. I propose that Greene implies the idea that Raven's and Pinkie's

impoverished upbringings have alienated them from the potential security and peace which are implicitly embodied in religious belief, and that such isolation worsens their already dire circumstances. In this way, Greene suggests that the government is responsible for neglecting vulnerable members of society both economically and spiritually. Greene explicitly signals his interest in the religious status of his characters when he introduces Pinkie as his first Roman Catholic protagonist. Despite being his first 'Catholic' novel, Greene refused to be thought of as a Catholic author (unlike Waugh) and he was irritated when critics tried to label him a 'Catholic novelist' after the publication of *Brighton Rock* (1938). He referred to the term as 'detestable' and instead declared himself 'not a Catholic writer but a writer who happens to be Catholic' (*WE* 58). Greene did not want his writing to be restricted by having to adhere to the expectations of a Catholic readership, and he objected to being considered a 'promulgator' of either religious or political beliefs in this period. This stance offers a reason for why Greene's possible 'Catholic' interest in the spiritual conditions of his characters prior to *Brighton Rock* is implied rather than explicitly stated.

The conclusion of this chapter acknowledges the significant differences between Greene's and Waugh's respective writing styles and the genres of their fiction. It also takes into consideration their diverging views regarding their faith and their identity as writers, as well as their varying political sympathies. Despite these dissimilarities, this chapter makes the claim that Greene's social realism and Waugh's comic satire can be perceived to be informed by related religious perspectives. Thus, I compare what I deem to be their anti-totalitarian attitudes, which stem from their Catholic perception of Original Sin, and their similar belief in the need for faith (specifically Catholicism) in modern societies that are dominated by secular political ideologies.

Political Controversy and Catholic Commitment

In writing *Edmund Campion* Waugh fulfilled his ambition to research the life of an iconic Catholic priest who was martyred during the Reformation. The biography is very different in style compared to Waugh's earlier satirical fictions, which have an implicit narrative stance, employ minimal description, and focus more on dialogue. *Edmund Campion* is soberly written, it employs detailed description, and its narrative stance is made explicit as Waugh praises Campion and his legacy. This biography is set in the Elizabethan era, in which the English Establishment finally broke with Rome. In this text, Waugh refers to the rise of the Church of England – which left the Catholic Church 'scattered and broken' (EC 144) – and the ensuing persecution of Catholics. Waugh describes in detail Campion's escape from England and his arrival at a renowned seminary in Douai, which was run by William Allen. From this seminary, priests were sent over to England in order to try and sustain the Catholic faith that was being repressed there, and, because of the persecutions, they faced likely death. Waugh maintains that it was due to the work of the seminary and priests like Campion that Catholicism was kept alive and was able to 're-emerge' centuries later: 'not as an alien fashion brought in from abroad, but as something historically and continuously English, seeking to recover only what had been taken from it by theft' (EC 54). In this statement Waugh confirms his belief that the Catholic faith is inextricably related to English identity, and that it had been wrongly repressed centuries earlier.

Selina Hastings states that *Edmund Campion* represents Waugh's 'personal affirmation of his new-found faith'.⁵ Indeed, Waugh indicated his allegiance to Catholicism and his loyalty towards

⁵ Selina Hastings, *Evelyn Waugh: A Biography* (Minerva: London, 1995), 324.

Campion's legacy when he responded in an impassioned letter to a hostile review of the biography.⁶ The reviewer in question, J. A. Kensit, accused Waugh of failing to take into consideration recent evidence which suggested that Campion may have entered England on political grounds. In Kensit's view, such evidence indicated that Campion desired to ignite a recusant rebellion and, consequently, deserved to be arrested for treason. Rose Macaulay similarly attacked Waugh's bias when she described *Edmund Campion* as 'like a barrister's brief, omitting all that does not support his case'.⁷ She claimed that Waugh's naturally 'ironic and detached' style was detrimentally affected because he chose to 'come down on a side'.⁸ To use Selina Hastings's phrase, the biography is indeed 'passionately partisan', but Waugh's bias serves to reveal the extreme loyalty he felt towards those who had suffered for Catholicism.⁹ Furthermore, Waugh genuinely believed that Campion was apolitical and posed no threat to Elizabeth's monarchic rule. Having already studied the documents which Kensit had accused him of neglecting, Waugh concluded that Campion had been unfairly persecuted. As a result, in his response 'Edmund Campion' (1936), Waugh stated that he would not stand for Kensit's 'fouling a name which all of my Faith and countless others, who know the true marks of heroism and sanctity, hold in the highest honour' (EAR 183). Waugh ended the letter by accusing Kensit of being biased himself: 'I am forced to the conclusion that Mr. Kensit has not read it and that his rage is aroused, not that an inaccurate work should be unjustly commended, but that any book by a Catholic about a Catholic should be mentioned at all by anyone anywhere. What a

⁶ Kensit had protested against Desmond MacCarthy's favourable review of *Edmund Campion* during a radio show, and a long argument developed. The argument in its entirety can be found in J. A. Kensit, *The Campion-Parsons Invasion Plot, 1580* (London: Protestant Truth Society, 1937).

⁷ Rose Macaulay, extract from 'Evelyn Waugh' (*Horizon*, December 1946), in Martin Stannard (ed.), *The Critical Heritage: Evelyn Waugh* (London: Routledge, 2004): 173-75, 174.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 173.

⁹ Hastings, *Evelyn Waugh: A Biography*, 324.

funny man he must be' (*EAR* 185). Waugh's barbed response suggests his sensitivity towards modern anti-Catholic predispositions, which most likely stemmed from his awareness that his faith was not the main religion in inter-war England.

Waugh reflected upon the minority position of Catholics in the late thirties when he wrote about his visit to the 1938 international Eucharistic Congress in Budapest. In his article, 'Impression of Splendour and Grace' (1938), Waugh extolled the importance of worshipping alongside other Catholic believers. He argued that the most 'valuable part of the pilgrimage' was the experience of living 'for a few days entirely surrounded by people leading a specifically Catholic life' (*EAR* 237). This was because the Catholic community in England was very much in the minority, and he felt that there was 'a danger that we look on ourselves as the exceptions, instead of in the true perspective of ourselves as normal and the irreligious as freaks'.¹⁰ As *Edmund Campion* discloses, Catholics in the Elizabethan era had to endure far worse than feeling marginalized: they were 'defenceless at law, for their whole inherited scheme of life had been dubbed criminal; they lived in day-to-day uncertainty whether they might not suddenly be singled out for persecution, their estates confiscated, their families dispersed and themselves taken to prison or the scaffold' (*EC* 111-12). The prevailing mood in England at this time was consequently one of resignation: 'All despaired the restoration of the Church, and only begged sufferance to die with the aid of her sacraments' (*EC* 145). It was into this despondent environment that the missionaries from Douai were sent. These 'men of new light' (*EC* 131) taught the faithful an alternative to despair. Rather than choosing apostasy or political conspiracy, the missionaries presented martyrdom as 'their own example of a third, supernatural solution' (*EC* 113). Moreover, during the 'shabby pantomime' (*EC* 204) of Campion's trial, having endured torture and imprisonment, he admirably defended his faith by arguing that it was 'absolutely satisfactory to the mind, enlisting all knowledge and all reason in its cause' (*EC* 126). Waugh

¹⁰ Ibid.

indicates his agreement with this description of Catholicism when he maintains that Campion's conviction 'lies at the root of all Catholic apologetics' (EC 126). Waugh also refers to Catholicism as an 'ancient and indestructible creed' (EC 113). This depiction of the Catholic faith in terms of reason and permanence informs Alain Blayac's suggestion that *Edmund Campion* should be read as Waugh's own effort to 'recapture hope' at a time when Catholicism was threatened by totalitarian and anti-religious regimes in Nazi Germany and Stalinist Russia.¹¹

Waugh establishes his view that Catholicism should be an integral part of English society when he describes the destructive and lasting effects of the Reformation, as he examines how the repression of Catholicism irreparably damaged England. Waugh employs images of expansion and enlightenment when he claims that prior to the Reformation places like Oxford were emerging into 'the spacious, luminous world of Catholic humanism' (EC 13). This development was halted and 'the aspect and temper of England' was transformed when the official Anglican Church decided to 'cut itself off' from the Catholic faith (EC 26). In Waugh's terms, the Reformation led to the implementation of 'a new aristocracy, a new religion, a new system of government' (EC 5). Waugh's depiction of the disruptive consequences of the Reformation correlates with earlier arguments made by his fellow-Catholic Hilaire Belloc. According to Belloc, the 'central catastrophe' that was the Reformation permanently altered the state of England for the worse and played a key role in forming the present-day character of English society.¹² The Reformation and its social consequences are referred to in many of Belloc's writings, but his most detailed discussion occurs in *Europe and the Faith* (1920). Ian Ker maintains that Belloc's text credits the Reformation with being 'the single ultimate cause of all the cultural, economic, moral, political and social problems that beset Western

¹¹ Alain Blayac, 'Evelyn Waugh, Biographer', in Carlos Villar Flor and Robert Murray Davis (eds), *Waugh Without End: New Trends in Evelyn Waugh Studies* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2005): 91-102, 95.

¹² Hilaire Belloc, *Europe and the Faith*, intro. Douglas Woodruff (London: Universe Books, 1962), 155.

society'.¹³ Belloc concludes his text by outlining the 'sole vital formula of our time': '*Europe must return to the Faith, or she will perish*'.¹⁴ This sentiment corresponds with a statement made by Waugh in his aforementioned essay 'Converted to Rome: Why it Has Happened to Me' (1930): 'in the present phase of European history the essential issue is no longer between Catholicism, on one side, and Protestantism, on the other, but between Christianity and Chaos' (*EAR* 103). Both writers associate the loss of faith in Europe (which began with the Reformation) with themes of social disintegration, and they are convinced that modern society should be based upon Catholic values or else it will continue to fall apart.

Waugh's support in *Waugh in Abyssinia* for Italy's imperialistic domination of Abyssinia can be seen to resonate with aspects of Belloc's thinking and particularly with Belloc's endorsement of *Romanitas*, inasmuch as the travelogue contains references to the civilizing benefits of ancient Rome. Waugh's approval of Italian imperialism is a contentious issue because of the fascist leadership from which that imperialism is inseparable. I want to put forward the view that in *Waugh in Abyssinia* Waugh associates Italian culture with what he sees as the values of ancient Roman civilization rather than solely with modern fascism; when Waugh praises the 'order' and 'culture' being spread in Abyssinia by Italy, he could be suggesting that the Catholic values of *Romanitas* are at the heart of this newly formed culture. I recognise that Waugh does not explicitly state that he supports the invasion on the grounds that Italy is introducing Catholicism into the African country. However, and despite the lack of explicit references to Catholicism in *Waugh in Abyssinia*, I will demonstrate in what follows that Waugh's specific references to Italy in relation to Roman civilization in this text could indicate a link between his views and those of Belloc.

¹³ Ian Ker, *The Catholic Revival in English Literature, 1845-1961: Newman, Hopkins, Belloc, Chesterton, Greene, Waugh* (Herefordshire: Gracewing, 2003), 59.

¹⁴ Belloc, *Europe and the Faith*, 186.

The predicament was complex: if Italy invaded Abyssinia then the League of Nations would be pressured into retaliating in support of the African country, and another world war could be initiated. The issue was further complicated by the increasing aggressiveness of Hitler's fascism, which was threatening the stability of Europe at the time. Donat Gallagher explains that in 1936 Mussolini was not yet allied with Hitler and he appeared to be 'Hitler's rival', rather than 'the embodiment of fascism' (*EAR* 158). Consequently, many people (including Waugh) believed that Italy's military strength seemed 'the only barrier preventing Nazi Germany's annexing Catholic Austria' (*EAR* 158). Waugh thought it more sensible to side with Italy and allow her to increase her empire, rather than to 'drive Mussolini into an alliance with Hitler' (*EAR* 158). In actuality, the Abyssinian invasion proved a huge financial strain on Italy. According to Michael Salwen, Italy 'could no longer check Nazi aggression in Central Europe and the Balkans, and Mussolini was forced to enter into an imprudent alliance with Germany'.¹⁵ Waugh's travel book was published prior to this alliance and before the disastrous financial implications of the invasion became evident.

Waugh supported the Italian invasion of Abyssinia because he believed in the benefits of European colonization and, arguably, because he endorsed the civilizing powers of Italian culture. He presented Abyssinia prior to its occupation by Italy as a waste land in which all resources were exploited rather than developed under the rule of a 'deadly and hopeless system' (*WA* 569). Waugh concluded that since Abyssinia 'was obviously unable to develop' her natural resources by herself, 'it must be done for her' by 'a more advanced Power' (*WA* 578). For Waugh, the invasion ensured that 'waste lands have been made fertile, hunted peoples have been made secure, [and] vile little tyrannies have been abolished' (*WA* 568-69). Here Waugh is clearly contemptuous of the Abyssinians and their

¹⁵ Michael B. Salwen, *Evelyn Waugh in Ethiopia: The Story Behind 'Scoop'* (New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2001), 255.

supposed inability to govern themselves, and it is because of the prevalence of disorder in their nation that he supported Mussolini's attempts to colonize their country. Waugh adopted an explicitly pro-Italian stance in the concluding chapter to *Waugh in Abyssinia*, a chapter entitled 'The Road'. In this section he described the road network built through Abyssinia by the Italians as 'the symbol and the supreme achievement of the Italian spirit' (WA 705). In Waugh's view the road brought 'order and fertility' (WA 705) into the country. He also asserted that the 'eagles of ancient Rome, as they came to our savage ancestors in France, Britain and Germany' (WA 712) would pass along it. This reference to Rome suggests an implicit approval of Roman imperialism and highlights the fact that Waugh has chosen to refer to an ancient conquest rather than to praise Mussolini's fascist army.

Waugh's act of connecting the Italian road with the ordering powers of ancient Rome has led critics to make comparisons between his thinking and Belloc's theory of *Romanitas*. According to Belloc, *Romanitas* encapsulates the belief that the Roman Empire, its institutions, and its 'spirit' represent the 'sole origin of European civilization'.¹⁶ John J. Mulloy recognizes the significance of Rome to Belloc's thinking and explains that Belloc believed 'it was only through Rome that the Christian Faith was able to become universal'.¹⁷ In paraphrasing Belloc's attitude towards Julius Caesar, Douglas Woodruff notes that the Roman leader was 'a forerunner sent ahead to subdue wild country and drive straight roads through it and make smooth the path along which first the messengers of the Christian revelation, and then the officials of the Catholic Church, were to come'.¹⁸ Waugh's aforementioned description of the Italian road bringing order and fertility into the

¹⁶ Belloc, *Europe and the Faith*, 3.

¹⁷ Jerome J. Mulloy, 'Hilaire Belloc's View of History', *Caelum Et Terra* (Spring, 1995).

See http://www.freivald.org/~jake/library/john-mulloy_hilaire-bellocs-view-of-history_html/index.html (accessed 17/3/11).

¹⁸ Douglas Woodruff, 'Introduction', in Belloc, *Europe and the Faith*: v-xxvi, xii-xiii.

‘barbaric’ Abyssinia corresponds with Woodruff’s depiction of Caesar’s road introducing a Christian and civilizing presence into ‘wild country’. Waugh similarly admired Caesar in this period.

Christopher Sykes recalls that a year after publishing *Waugh in Abyssinia* Waugh entered into a discussion with publishers about his desire to write *In the Steps of Caesar*. This publication was to be in the same style as *In the Steps of St. Paul*, by H. V. Morton, a best-selling book about the life of Christ. Several publishers suggested that Waugh write about either ‘St Peter, St Francis Xavier, or St Patrick’, but Waugh chose the Roman Emperor.¹⁹ Although nothing came of the book, Waugh’s readiness to write about Caesar clearly confirms his interest in Rome in this period.

There are other indications that Waugh was influenced by aspects of Belloc’s polemical thinking at this time. In 1936 Waugh recorded several meetings with this prominent Catholic.²⁰ In 1938, Waugh outlined an idea for a guide book about ‘the most interesting parts of Europe’, and he explained to his publisher that he wanted that book to include: ‘Ideology – part Belloc belief in the permanence of the Roman conquest, part anti-pacifist’.²¹ In Sykes’s view, Waugh ‘shared’ Belloc’s belief that ‘unless a country had undergone the ferocities of a Roman conquest, it could never be accounted civilized’.²² Stannard articulates a more balanced evaluation of the relationship between the writers when he discusses *Waugh in Abyssinia*. He claims that although Waugh ‘appears in his book to have accepted entire’ Belloc’s theory of *Romanitas*, ‘this was not the case’.²³ Stannard argues that Waugh clearly admired Italian culture because its civilization was inextricably associated

¹⁹ Christopher Sykes, *Evelyn Waugh: A Biography* (London: William Collins, 1975), 173.

²⁰ Waugh mentions meeting Belloc on the 12th September 1936 and again on the 28th November 1936. See Evelyn Waugh, *The Diaries of Evelyn Waugh*, ed. Michael Davie (London: Phoenix, 1995), 405, 414.

²¹ Unpublished letter to A. D. Peters, written on the 26 January 1938, cited in Stannard (ed.), *The Critical Heritage*, 29.

²² Sykes, *Evelyn Waugh: A Biography*, 173.

²³ Stannard, *Evelyn Waugh: The Early Years*, 426.

with its Catholic faith, and he claims that Waugh consequently relished the ‘chance for Catholicism to regain lost territories’.²⁴ Indeed, the Vatican itself was interested in ‘fostering Italian immigration to oppose the spread of the Protestant faith’ and to ‘expand the Vatican’s influence’ in Abyssinia.²⁵ However, while Waugh appeared to support the idea that Italy was introducing their Italian civilization into a barbaric land, he never explicitly stated that Italy would implement Catholic values, and nor did he state that is *only* via an Italian (and by implication, Roman) invasion that Abyssinia could be civilized. As Stannard suggested, Waugh’s endorsement of *Romanitas* was not absolute.

Overall, I recognise that Waugh’s attitude towards the Italian invasion is a complex issue, since the support of Italy’s colonization is inseparable from Mussolini’s presence as a political influence upon Italian expansionism. However, there is the possibility that Waugh made a distinction between Mussolini’s politics and Italian culture’s civilizing potential. For example, when Waugh praises Italy’s introduction of order and organization he refers to these qualities as ‘Roman’, as opposed to ‘fascist’, which could indicate his implicit endorsement of *Romanitas*. Inextricably related to this praise for ‘Roman’ ideals, and possibly for *Romanitas*, is an approval of the Catholic faith held by a significant number of Italians at this time. It is too simplistic to label Waugh’s perspective ‘fascist’, as Rose Macaulay did, when there is the possibility that he is alluding to wider issues of Italian Catholic culture and Roman heritage.²⁶

²⁴ Stannard (ed.), *The Critical Heritage*, 29.

²⁵ Alberto Sbacchi, *The Legacy of Bitterness: Ethiopia and Fascist Italy, 1935-41* (Lawrenceville, N. J.: The Red Sea Press, 1997), 324.

²⁶ In her oft-quoted assessment, Rose Macaulay dismisses *Waugh in Abyssinia* as a ‘fascist tract’ (‘Evelyn Waugh’: 192-93, 193). *Waugh in Abyssinia* was deemed controversial and reactionary by reviewers from the outset. In Douglas Patey’s opinion, Waugh’s defence of Italy’s invasion ‘won him more enemies than ever before’ and his reputation ‘never fully recovered’ (*The Life of Evelyn Waugh*, 132).

Waugh's political loyalties again came under public scrutiny during the Spanish Civil War of 1936-39. Along with many other writers, Waugh publicly announced his stance on fascism and communism by responding to the conflict in print. He answered a questionnaire composed by Nancy Cunard, W. H. Auden, and Stephen Spender, which was sent to numerous British writers. The responses were published by the *Left Review* in a pamphlet entitled *Authors Take Sides on the Spanish War* (1937). In his article 'Spanish Civil War' (1937), Waugh answered the question 'Are you for or against Franco and Fascism?' in a single paragraph:

I know Spain only as a tourist and a reader of the newspapers. I am no more impressed by the 'legality' of the Valencia government than are English Communists by the legality of the Crown, Lords and Commons. I believe it was a bad government, rapidly deteriorating. If I were a Spaniard I should be fighting for General Franco. As an Englishman I am not in the predicament of choosing between two evils. I am not a Fascist nor shall I become one unless it were the only alternative to Marxism. It is mischievous to suggest that such a choice is imminent. (*EAR* 187)

This response was placed in the 'Against the Government' (and, by implication, pro-fascist) section of the book, which is misleading because such positioning fails to take account of the anti-fascist sentiments in Waugh's reply. Although Waugh suggested that Franco's regime represented a corrective to a deteriorating republican government, he made it clear that he did not want to be considered either a supporter of fascism or of communism. Instead, he described both parties as 'evil' and plainly stated that he would choose fascism only if it was the *sole* alternative to communism.

In another article, entitled 'Fascist' (1938), Waugh criticized *Authors Take Sides* because he objected to the idea that writers should identify themselves 'categorically, as supporters of the Republican Party in Spain, or as "Fascists"' (*EAR* 223). Waugh also addressed what he saw as the

misuse of the term ‘fascist’, which he felt had weakened its ‘concrete’ meaning. Mentioning his own faith, he listed the numerous ways in which ‘fascism’ had been incorrectly used to signify any firm opinions or belief in discipline: ‘When rioters are imprisoned it is described as a “Fascist sentence”’; the Means Test is Fascist; colonization is Fascist; military discipline is Fascist; patriotism is Fascist; Catholicism is Fascist [...] Is it too late to call for order?’ (EAR 223). Despite Waugh’s disinclination to be labelled a fascist, he evidently favoured Franco’s fascism over Republican communism (‘if I were a Spaniard I would be fighting for General Franco’). This choice can be explained in terms of Waugh’s Catholicism. Patey recognizes that communism appeared ‘the greater evil’ to Catholics in this period because of its ‘longer record of religious persecution and its totalist world-view’.²⁷ Waugh’s anti-communist thinking is explicit when he reviewed Arthur Calder-Marshall’s novel *A Date With the Duchess* (1937). In the review, entitled ‘Art from Anarchy’ (1937), Waugh dismissed the idea of writing from a Marxist stance because he claimed that ‘the Marxist can only think in classes and categories’ (EAR 206). Instead, Waugh stated that ‘a writer’s material must be the individual soul (which is the preconception of Christendom)’ (EAR 206). According to Adrian Hastings, the ‘majority judgement of the English Catholic intelligentsia’ shared Waugh’s suspicion of communism, and Joseph Pearce refers to some of these Catholic figures when he states: ‘Arnold Lunn, Alfred Noyes, Ronald Knox, Christopher Hollis, Christopher Dawson and a host of other Catholic writers came out in support of the Nationalists, even though many found Hitler’s support for Franco disquieting’.²⁸ Pearce’s statement indicates the complexity of the ‘Catholic’ response to the

²⁷ Patey, *The Life of Evelyn Waugh*, 145.

²⁸ Adrian Hastings, ‘Some Reflections on the English Catholicism of the late 1930s’, in Adrian Hastings and Anthony Clarke (eds), *Bishops and Writers: Aspects of the Evolution of Modern English Catholicism* (Hertfordshire: Wheathampstead, 1997): 107-25, 119; Joseph Pearce, *Literary Giants, Literary Catholics* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005), 100.

Spanish Civil war. He recognizes that these writers, like Waugh, remained troubled by Nazism, but that they were willing to support a form of fascism, as opposed to any form of communism.

While promoting *Scoop* in 1937, Waugh made light of his growing association with far-right views by promising ‘No more Fascist Propaganda’.²⁹ Despite this pledge, William Myers recognizes that Waugh’s novel turned out to be ‘more explicitly political than any of his earlier fictions’.³⁰

Although the light-hearted narrative represents a change from the dark humour and tragically bleak ending of *A Handful of Dust*, I suggest that Waugh continues to use his fiction to make serious points about the failings of his contemporary environment. In particular, *Scoop* satirizes the way in which political opinion in the late thirties had seemingly been divided solely into either communist or fascist views. The most obvious criticism of these totalitarian ideologies occurs when William Boot visits the offices of *The Daily Beast* to learn about the political background of Ishmaelia. The foreign editor, Mr Salter, explains that the country is torn between communism and fascism, and his speech ridicules both regimes:

“You see, they are all Negroes. And the Fascists won’t be called black because of their racial pride, so they are called White after the White Russians. And the Bolsheviks *want* to be called black because of *their* racial pride. So when you *say* black you mean red, and when you *mean* red you say white and when the party who call themselves blacks say traitors they mean what *we* call blacks, but what *we* mean when *we* say traitors, I really couldn’t tell you”.

(S 43)

²⁹ Patey, *The Life of Evelyn Waugh*, 147.

³⁰ William Myers, *Evelyn Waugh and the Problem of Evil* (London: Faber and Faber, 1991), 51.

It becomes clear that the Ishmaelian government is being exploited by foreign powers which are eager to gain ownership of the country's gold mineral ore. Both Russia and Germany are embroiled in the affair. Waugh's awareness of the damaging and manipulative nature of imperialist projects in this novel is perhaps a reflection of his disillusionment regarding the aforementioned failings of Italian imperialism, which were evident by the late thirties. In *Scoop*, the Germans subsidize an alternative fascist Ishmaelite leader, while the Russians attempt to stir up internal rebellion in order to establish a Marxist state. The depiction of these two political parties battling for authority resonates with the contemporary struggle between the fascist Nationalists and the communist Republicans in the Spanish Civil War. In *Scoop*, both fictional parties are deemed to be as bad as each other, whereas Waugh had previously admitted to favouring (if he had to make the choice) the Nationalists over the Republicans. Waugh's authorial disinterest suggests that he is not concerned with establishing his political stance in this novel. Rather, he wants to focus on satirizing the destructive and, in his opinion, ridiculous nature of extremist ideologies which, by their very nature, are disconnected from Catholic values.

The political status of Ishmaelia switches from Republican rule by the native Jackson family, to a Russian ascendancy (Ishmaelia is declared a Soviet State) which lasts for one day, before a coup returns the Jacksons to their original position of power. The narrator of *Scoop* reports on the social and political chaos in a detached manner; there is no explicit commentary upon the ludicrous nature of the political changes, and, in line with Waugh's satirical style, the events are left to speak for themselves. Since Ishmaelia is the victim of what Patey terms 'chaotic, meaningless circular change', William Cook Jr. interprets *Scoop* as 'a political spoof aimed at the absurd vacillations of the African governments'.³¹ I suggest that Waugh is satirizing secular politics in general rather than those of a

³¹ Patey, *The Life of Evelyn Waugh*, 160; William J. Cook Jr., *Masks, Modes, and Morals: The Art of Evelyn Waugh* (Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1971), 157.

specifically African nature. The rapidly vacillating political status of Ishmaelia attests the inconstancy of its political regimes, as Waugh implies that they cannot provide the necessary structure and values essential for social stability. Furthermore, these political regimes fail to take into consideration the importance of religious belief, and in this way they try to usurp the role of faith in modern society. Indeed, Richard Johnstone maintains that Waugh was ‘contemptuous of any attempt to raise politics to the status of a belief, with immutable rules and values’.³² Although Waugh continues not to state explicitly his Catholic values in this text, I suggest that his religious beliefs nevertheless inform his novel. Thus, it can be argued that one of the implicit criticisms made within *Scoop* is that societies become unstable when they lack the tradition and permanence associated with Catholic values, regardless of the political organizations of those societies. Accordingly, Catholicism’s glaring absence from the text can be viewed as the key to the political mess being depicted by Waugh. Remaining true to his earlier satirical style, I propose that Waugh continues to employ ‘negative comic signification’, rather than didactically stating his beliefs, in order to make his criticisms of modern society.³³

Scoop also addresses Waugh’s concerns about the ineptitude of those who hold influential positions of power. He describes a comically puerile newspaper proprietor, Lord Copper, who is completely detached from the workings of his business, as well as a Prime Minister who has to ‘muddle along, as best he [can]’ because Downing Street ‘[is] understaffed’ (S 182). Another example is Julia Stitch, who epitomizes the political insouciance of the Bright Young People previously alluded to in *Vile Bodies* (1930) and *Black Mischief* (1932), as she declares: ‘Why should I go to Viola Chasm’s Distressed Area; did she come to my Model Madhouse?’ (S 7). Any desire of

³² Richard Johnstone, *The Will to Believe: Novelists of the Nineteen-Thirties* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 85.

³³ Justus Nieland ‘Editor’s Introduction: Modernism’s Laughter’, *Modernist Cultures* 2.2 (2006): 80-86, 81.

Julia's to help the socially vulnerable stems from wanting to keep up with her peers rather than from feelings of genuine philanthropy. The main example of members of the upper classes failing to respond to the political grievances of their country is that of William's family. The Boots confine themselves within their family home of Boot Magna, which, like Hetton in *Decline and Fall*, represents a flawed sanctuary from modernity.

William is deeply attached to his home, a place he calls his 'deserted Eden' (S 61). However, as the narrator makes clear, this isolated and decaying building is simply a refuge for invalids, and 'decay, rather than change, was characteristic of the immediate prospect' (S 17). Furthermore, the family lives in a form of time warp; William is a grown man who should be making his way in the world, yet he is treated like a child. His old nanny orders him about during a game of dominoes – "Just you stay where you sit" – and rebukes him: "You always were a headstrong, selfish boy" (S 205). James Carens misses the point when he claims that Waugh 'sentimentalizes childhood and youth' and 'loses satirical detachment' when dealing with the Boot family.³⁴ On the contrary, as Jeffrey Heath perceives, Boot Magna is 'infected by the false permanence of grotesquely prolonged childhood' and the home consequently represents an 'atrophied world'.³⁵ I propose that such themes of decay and isolation are Waugh's way of commenting upon the family's role in wider society, as the Boots can be viewed as 'regressive isolationists' who do not engage with their political or social environment in England, but instead hide themselves away.³⁶ Another problem with the Boot family's situation is that its members do not hold any Christian religious beliefs. When William does pray, it is to the 'great crested glebe' rather than to God, and even then he prays 'without hope' (S 166). Of the novel in general, Macaulay notes that 'religion does not throw its fatal apple of discord

³⁴ Carens, *The Satiric Art of Evelyn Waugh*, 40.

³⁵ Jeffrey Heath, *The Picturesque Prison: Evelyn Waugh and His Writing* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1982), 130.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 131.

among the *dramatis personae*'.³⁷ There is no sign of Christian faith in the decaying upper-class section of English society (epitomized by the Boot family), and the only belief system in Ishmaelia is that of political ideology, which has dominated the country and caused a civil war.

Scoop concludes with William's return to Boot Magna, as he retires from the chaotic life of London journalism. Cook Jr. maintains that this is a hopeful ending and that William's homecoming should be considered 'a kind of victory'.³⁸ However, Waugh undermines any sense of optimism in the final lines of the novel: 'Before getting into bed [William] drew the curtain and threw open the window. Moonlight streamed into the room. Outside the owls hunted maternal rodents and their furry brood' (S 222). Themes of predatory relationships – of the powerful seeking to destroy the helpless – correspond with what Samuel Hynes has termed 'the sense of crisis, of powerful and active evil at work in the world' that 'dominated consciousness' in 1938.³⁹ Indeed, Hynes maintains that in the same year as *Scoop*'s publication: 'England made preparations for war; trenches were dug in London parks [...] Gas-masks were issued to civilians, and the evacuation of children began'.⁴⁰ The rather ambiguous and subtly sinister ending of Waugh's satiric novel registers the troubled context in which he was writing.

Some critics disagree with the idea that Waugh is commenting upon his contemporary context in *Scoop*. Carens claims that the 'wild improbabilities' in *Scoop* 'are too distant to remain true', and that 'Waugh seems to have lost contact with the issues of the conflict taking place in the thirties'.⁴¹ Contrary to these views, my chapter suggests that Waugh expresses his disdain towards his overly politicized era by presenting irreligious political regimes in terms of corruption and social

³⁷ Macaulay, 'Evelyn Waugh', 202.

³⁸ Cook Jr., *Masks, Modes, and Morals*, 165.

³⁹ Samuel Hynes, *The Auden Generation: Literature and Politics in England in 1930s* (London: Pimlico, 1992), 296.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 335

⁴¹ Carens, *The Satiric Art of Evelyn Waugh*, 148.

anarchy. As the next chapter of this thesis discusses, Waugh clearly states that these political regimes need to have Catholic values at their heart. Without such religious values, individuals (and their souls) are overlooked and there is nothing to account for the fact of Original Sin, the existence of which needs to be recognized if there is to be the possibility of beneficial change and social progress. Waugh's willingness to outline his beliefs concerning the political and religious failings of countries in his non-fiction suggests that he deliberately refrained from doing this in his fiction. Evidently, the idea that Waugh disdained the presence of didacticism in 'entertainment' continues to be a possible aspect of *Scoop*, as his Catholic views of this time are not made explicit in his fiction of the late 1930s.

Greene's Catholic Social Consciousness

Greene's visit to Liberia in 1935 shared similarities with Waugh's journey to Abyssinia: both authors wanted to explore politically unstable situations in Africa, and both reflected upon and examined the relationship between Europeans and the native population. Greene's expedition was funded by his uncle Sir Graham Greene, a member of the Anti-Slavery and Aboriginal Protection Society.⁴² In response to a damning League of Nations report on the appalling conditions of slavery in Liberia, the society commissioned Greene to visit Liberia and gather evidence about the situation.⁴³ David Craig

⁴² For more on this issue see Randall Stevenson, *The British Novel Since the Thirties: An Introduction* (London: B. T. Batsford, 1986), 66.

⁴³ Malcolm Muggeridge discusses the report in his critical study of the nineteen thirties. He cites an extract from *The Times*, which states that the report 'exposed a maladministration so cruel and so corrupt, and an exploitation of native workers by their negro masters so shameless, that the civilised world will not be satisfied until effective measures have been taken to substitute a system of justice for a régime of brute force and to establish decent conditions of labour'. See *The Thirties* (London: Fontana, 1971), 109.

and Michael Egan explain that the circumstances in Liberia were ‘extreme’ because the country had been founded as an example ‘to all of Africa of a Christian and self-governing state, peopled by freed slaves’, and yet: ‘Now it was swarming with yellow-fever, malaria, elephantiasis, yaws, and smallpox, and in the whole country there were six doctors’.⁴⁴ The resulting travelogue, *Journey Without Maps*, ostensibly describes Greene’s observations as he travels through Liberia, but it also represents his reflections on his place in history, his views on imperialism, and his assessment of the nature and worth of civilization in general. As Judith Adamson notes, Greene’s journey to Africa should not be considered an act of escapism from ‘the large political issues of the decade’.⁴⁵ Rather, it was Greene’s way of exploring ‘himself and his culture’ at a time when all civilization was under threat from international warfare.⁴⁶

At the beginning of *Journey Without Maps*, Greene admitted that in the interior of Liberia he hoped to experience the ‘heart of darkness’, which he defined as: ‘one’s place in time, based on a knowledge not only of one’s present but of the past from which one has emerged’ (*JWM* 7). In Greene’s view, the uncivilized regions of Africa represented ‘an older more natural culture’ (*JWM* 289), in which the instincts worked ‘below the cerebral’ (*JWM* 9). Because of this, he believed that Africa held the key to understanding how far Western civilization had progressed away from its basic instincts, and how ‘centuries of cerebration’ had led to its current state of ‘unhappiness’ and the ‘peril of extinction’ (*JWM* 9). In short, Greene hoped to discover ‘from what we have come, to recall at

⁴⁴ David Craig and Michael Egan, *Extreme Situations, Literature and Crisis from the Great War to the Atom Bomb*, (London: Macmillan 1979), 126. Craig and Egan also report that the country had degenerated into brutal violence, as the army ‘had been “pacifying the interior” by burning down the banana villages, hacking children to pieces and throwing them into burning huts’. See *Extreme Situations*, 126.

⁴⁵ Judith Adamson, *Graham Greene: The Dangerous Edge: Where Art and Politics Meet* (London: Macmillan, 1990), 8.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

which point we went astray' (*JWM* 9). The religious dimension to Greene's thinking is perceived by S. E. Ogude, who notes that Greene portrays the uncolonized parts of Africa as 'the picture of the world as it should be, or as it was conceived. It is the nearest thing to the Paradise which Adam lost, and this to Greene, means the world of innocence, of altruistic generosity'.⁴⁷ Indeed, when Greene alluded to the 'religious fascination' of Liberia, he claimed that it derived from the fact that it was a place 'on which the dead hand of the white has never settled'.⁴⁸ Here, Greene associated the undeveloped interior of Liberia – the most primitive area – with religious qualities, and he intimated that this fragile spiritual state was under threat from the civilizing presence of White Europeans.

As has been mentioned, Waugh in *Waugh in Abyssinia* associated white Europeans with a beneficial civilizing influence. In contrast, Greene was struck by the corrupting influence of Europeans when he arrived in Freetown, as he noted that they had failed to benefit African culture. He described how the natives 'were as worn out with fever as before the white man came' because 'we had introduced new diseases and weakened their resistance to the old' (*JWM* 61). The use of the pronoun 'we' in the above description indicates Greene's personal sense of cultural guilt, and suggests that as a white European he felt implicated in the abuse of the natives. Further comparisons between Waugh's and Greene's versions of colonization reveal that while Waugh praised the building of an Italian road through Abyssinia (because it brought the benefits of Western civilization – order, education, welfare – into a culturally stagnant land), Greene associated a European road with disorder and moral corruption: 'The beach is the most dangerous road in all Liberia to travellers, because its people have been touched by civilisation, they have learned to steal and lie and kill' (*JWM* 265). In an analysis of Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1902), Robert Hampson makes a

⁴⁷ S. E. Ogude, 'In Search of Misery: A Study of Graham Greene's Travels in Africa', *Odu: A Journal of West African Studies* (14 July, 1976): 45-60, 46.

⁴⁸ Graham Greene, 'Three Travellers', *The Spectator* (8 December, 1939), 838.

point which is applicable to Greene's thinking here: 'one might argue that, instead of bringing light into darkness as it claims, the "civilizing" mission actually uncovers the "darkness" at its own heart'.⁴⁹ In his unfinished novel, *The Other Side of the Border* (1936), Greene draws upon his travelling experiences to expose the corrupt and deadly nature of European imperialist ambitions in Africa. In brief, the protagonist, Mr Hands, secures a job with a gold-mining company and journeys to West Africa in search of gold. At the beginning of the text a member of the expedition (who has prematurely returned) informs the expedition's investor of terrible happenings: "'The whole business – it's fantastic. The gold – and Hands himself – so many deaths'" (*OB* 199). The narrative then leaps back in time to Hands's earlier departure, and the investor is shown to demand that a journalist portray Hands as "'the ambassador of Europe, of civilization'" (*OB* 219). The reader has been forewarned that awful events will follow, which will be caused by the immoral civilized Europeans who want to exploit African resources. In all, Hands is an apt representative of the European corruption that Greene had noted with disgust in *Journey Without Maps*.

The four-week journey through Liberia also provided Greene with an opportunity to reflect upon his faith in an alien environment. He established his religious stance from the start: 'I am a Catholic with an intellectual if not an emotional belief in Catholic dogma' (*JWM* 3). This announcement undoubtedly informs his later bemusement at being labelled a 'Catholic Novelist' on the publication of *Brighton Rock*. He admitted in his autobiography: 'I had become a Catholic in 1926, and all my books, except for the one lamentable volume of verse at Oxford, had been written as a Catholic, but no one had noticed the faith to which I belonged before the publication of *Brighton*

⁴⁹ Robert Hampson 'Introduction' in Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, ed. with intro. Robert Hampson (London: Penguin Books, 1995): xvii-xxxvi, xi. Hampson argues that Conrad destabilizes the opposition between light and darkness, civilization and savagery, by presenting the African people as 'innocent victims of European greed and will-to-power', and by implying that 'darkness is located at the heart of the 'civilizing' mission'. See Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, xxxiv.

Rock' (WE 58). Greene's respect for Catholic values is evident in his description of the work undertaken by the Order of the Holy Cross, which had established a mission and a monastic order within the Liberian interior. According to Greene, the mission was 'gentle, devout, childlike and unselfish, it didn't even know it was courageous', and he admitted that 'for the first time' he was 'unashamed by the comparison between white and black' (JWM 86). In contrast to the selfless work of the mission, Greene contemplated the hypocrisy of such political groups as the communists (a theme discussed in Chapter Three in relation to *It's A Battlefield*), whose members did not fight for those who were being exploited in Africa:

“Workers of the World Unite”: I thought of the wide shallow slogans of political parties, as the thin bodies, every rib showing, with dangling swollen elbows or pock-marked skin, went by me to the market; why should we pretend to talk in terms of the world when we mean only Europe or the white races? (JWM 61)⁵⁰

Michael Brennan suggests that Greene predominantly praises the mission's work because its priests and nuns 'promulgate their faith not through doctrinaire preaching but simply by expressing standards of "gentleness" and "honesty"'.⁵¹ Brennan recognizes an important aspect of Greene's own relationship to Catholicism in this period (which is discussed in detail below): Greene had a non-didactic attitude towards presenting his faith in his fiction, which also informed his authorial stance on the portrayal of social issues.

⁵⁰ Ironically, Greene himself knowingly exploited his own employees and purposefully paid them less than they deserved for their work: 'I was exploiting them like all their other masters, and it would have been no comfort to them to know that I could not afford not to exploit them and that I was a little ashamed of it' (JWM 171).

⁵¹ Michael G. Brennan, *Graham Greene: Fiction, Faith and Authorship* (London: Continuum, 2010), 37.

Journey Without Maps was published in the same year that the Spanish Civil War broke out, and Greene's response to the conflict was as complex as Waugh's. Although Greene did not contribute to *Authors Take Side*, he reviewed it for *The Spectator* in an article entitled 'The Apostles Intervene' (1937). However, rather than analyse the opinions within the publication, Greene chose to discuss how Alfred Lord Tennyson and his friends formed 'an earlier group of English writers who intervened in Spain a hundred years ago' (CE 230). Greene subtly criticized his English contemporaries when he described Tennyson's group as 'certainly less melodramatic' and a 'good deal wiser' than their modern counterparts (CE 230). His failure to comment on the civil war in his review reflects his decision not to commit himself to either the Republican or to the Nationalist cause. Later, he explained that his reticence partly derived from torn loyalties, as he admitted that he was 'wholeheartedly against Franco' and yet not 'wholeheartedly for the Republic'.⁵² Incidentally, the only group to which Greene gave his full support was the Basque Republic, which was in the unique position of being both Catholic and in league with the secular Republicans, and consequently satisfied Greene's religious and leftist sympathies.⁵³

Norman Sherry suggests that Greene's refusal to support the Republicans in general was due to their 'brutality and the murder of nuns'.⁵⁴ Martin Conway reports that 'thirteen bishops, more than 4,000 parish priests and 2,648 members of religious orders (including 283 nuns) were murdered in the summer of 1936', and he explains that this 'anti-clerical violence, without parallel in the history of twentieth-century Europe, only served to render even more emphatic the Catholic identification with Franco'.⁵⁵ In a review of Ignazio Silone's novel *Bread and Wine* (1937) Greene acknowledged

⁵² Cited in Couto, *Graham Greene on the Frontier*, 208.

⁵³ For more information about Greene's desire to visit the Basque region, see Norman Sherry, *The Life of Graham Greene, Volume 1: 1904-1939* (New York: Penguin Books, 1989), 612.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ Conway, *Catholic Politics in Europe*, 68

the ‘cruel and indiscriminating retribution’ endured by the Catholics in Spain.⁵⁶ The brutality inflicted upon Spanish Catholics also made Greene reassess his relationship with his faith. Prior to the Civil War he had been an ‘intellectually convinced’ Catholic who was not ‘emotionally moved’ (WE 58) by his faith. However, on learning of the religious persecution abroad, he admitted that he realized ‘Catholicism was no longer primarily symbolic’, but was ‘closer now to death in the afternoon’ (WE 59).⁵⁷ As a result of his changed perspective, he wanted to ‘examine more closely the effect of faith on action’ (WE 59) and consequently used Catholic protagonists in *Brighton Rock*. Even though Greene did not make any explicit public statement regarding his political loyalties in the Civil War, the event arguably affected how he referred to Catholicism in his fiction.

Greene’s decision not to declare publicly his allegiance to a particular party in the Spanish Civil War stemmed from his view of the writer’s role in modern society. He explained his stance in conversation with Marie-Françoise Allain: ‘I don’t believe that political action is part of a writer’s function. In my view he is no more than an observer and I don’t think I’ve gone outside the framework of my functions’.⁵⁸ Greene maintained that the act of observation should be free from didacticism and that literature should not be used for political or religious ends. Responding to Greene’s dismissal of the term ‘Catholic writer’, Michael Brennan claims that Greene felt that such a label was misleading because it seemed to mean ‘a conformist promulgator of established devotional truths’.⁵⁹ According to Brennan, Greene viewed himself as a writer ‘who happened to be a convert to

⁵⁶ Graham Greene, ‘Fiction Chronicle’ (30 January, 1937), in *Articles of Faith: The Collected Tablet Journalism of Graham Greene*, ed. with intro Ian Thomson (Oxford: Signal Books, 2006): 102-7, 103.

⁵⁷ This recognition also drew Greene to Mexico in 1939, where he reported upon the effects of the anti-Catholic socialist regime. The resulting travel book, *The Lawless Roads* (1939), is discussed in detail in the next chapter.

⁵⁸ Marie-Françoise Allain, *The Other Man: Conversations with Graham*, trans. Guido Waldman (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1983), 116.

⁵⁹ Brennan, *Graham Greene*, xi.

Catholicism and who was intellectually fascinated by the demands, paradoxes and spiritual solaces of Catholic communities, theology and liturgy', rather than as a spokesman for the faith.⁶⁰

Although Greene avoided using his fiction explicitly to enunciate his personal political or religious views, he believed that his faith rationalized the flawed condition of man, and in this way provided the key to understanding contemporary political and social problems. According to Nathan A. Scott Jr., Greene viewed these contemporary troubles as indicative of 'something in the nature of man which could not be grasped by the mathematically precise assignations of guilt and innocence characteristic of leftist liberal thought'.⁶¹ Greene criticized Liberalism in this way in a 1937 film review, in which he denigrated the 'kindly optimistic Liberal temperament' for failing to 'recognize the Fall of Man'.⁶² Consequently, despite Greene having leftist sympathies, as shown when he wrote that some authors 'are on the right (that is to say the Left) side', he disagreed with relying solely on political ideology to explain contemporary problems.⁶³ Furthermore, Greene considered religious belief to be a crucial aspect of the creative mind. In 'Some Notes on Somerset Maugham' (1935-38), Greene suggested that secular authors were unable fully to depict humankind because their perspective on life was rendered less significant and less complex due to the absence of a Christian framework. He argued that the agnostic writer was 'forced to minimize – pain, vice, the importance of his fellow-men. He cannot believe in a God who punishes and he cannot therefore believe in the importance of a human action' (CE 154). Related to this, Greene concluded that characterization itself was affected by the author's faith: 'Rob human beings of their heavenly and their infernal

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Nathan A. Scott, Jr., 'Graham Greene: Christian Tragedian', in Robert O. Evans (ed.), *Graham Greene: Some Critical Considerations* (Kentucky: University of Kentucky Press, 1963): 28-45, 27.

⁶² Graham Greene, 'Rhodes of Africa' (1937), in *The Pleasure Dome*: 61-62, 61.

⁶³ Cited in a review of Winifred Williams' *Fellow Mortals* (1936), Graham Greene, 'Short Stories', *The Spectator* (9 October, 1936), 606.

importance, and you rob your characters of individuality' (*CE* 154).⁶⁴ There is clearly a distinction for Greene between writing as a Catholic, and writing to promote Catholic views.

Instead of writing political or religious propaganda, Greene maintained that a writer's duty was to 'act as the devil's advocate, to elicit sympathy and a measure of understanding for those who lie outside the boundaries of State approval'.⁶⁵ To do this, Greene recognized that he must not be pigeon-holed according to political leanings or religious beliefs. In 1948 he outlined this position in a series of letters to Elizabeth Bowen and V. S. Pritchett: 'You remember the black and white squares of Bishop Blougram's chess board. As a novelist, I must be allowed to write from the point of view of the black square as well as of the white: doubt and even denial must be given their chance of self-expression, or how is one freer than the Leningrad group?'⁶⁶ According to Greene, loyalty – be it political or religious – 'forbids us to comprehend sympathetically our dissident fellows', whereas disloyalty 'encourages us to roam experimentally through any human mind: it gives to the novelist the extra dimension of sympathy'.⁶⁷ By focusing on marginalized individuals, Greene believed that writers could act as 'a piece of grit in the State machinery' and could make 'the work of the State a

⁶⁴ Here, Greene's views correspond to his aforementioned definition of the 'religious sense' – the recognition of a more complex form of reality that cannot be depicted by agnostic writers – that was outlined in Chapter Three of this thesis.

⁶⁵ Elizabeth Bowen, Graham Greene, and V. S. Pritchett, *Why Do I Write? An Exchange of Views Between Elizabeth Bowen, Graham Greene & V. S. Pritchett* (London: Percival Marshall, 1948), 46.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 32.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 48. Orwell makes a related point in his essay 'Inside the Whale' (1940), as he contends that the 'atmosphere of orthodoxy is always damaging to prose' because 'any writer who accepts or partially accepts the discipline of a political party is sooner or later faced with the alternative: toe the line, or shut up'. George Orwell, 'Inside the Whale' (1940), in *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell, Volume 1: An Age Like This 1920-1940*, eds Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus (London: Penguin Books, 1970): 540-78, 568.

degree more difficult'.⁶⁸ Although Greene did not write these letters until the late forties, his fictional presentation of vulnerable and overlooked figures in the thirties corresponds with his later remarks. Consequently, his characterization in *A Gun for Sale* and *Brighton Rock* becomes a political act without being political propaganda.

The protagonists of *A Gun for Sale* and *Brighton Rock* – James Raven and Pinkie Brown respectively – are outcasts from mainstream society. At one point in *A Gun for Sale*, a steel magnate tellingly refers to Raven as a 'waste product' (*GS* 152) that needs to be removed from society. Greene's focus has shifted away from the portrayal of middle-class types like Anthony Farrant, whose shabbiness and habit of scrounging for jobs is not in the same league as Raven's and Pinkie's desperate poverty. In this period, the plight of underprivileged members of society was also being portrayed in films by the documentary film movement. The movement was primarily established to 'service campaign for political and cultural reform', which it did by combining a variety of media, including speeches, lectures, publications, and the films themselves.⁶⁹ Greene was aware of documentary films because he reviewed many of them, and he always praised them highly. For example, though he conceded that *Night Mail* (1936) '[wasn't] a complete success', he described it as 'extraordinarily exciting' and asserted that it was one 'of the best films to be seen in London'.⁷⁰ The documentary film movement shared Greene's stance on politics because, like Greene, it 'did not

⁶⁸ Bowen, Greene, and Pritchett, *Why Do I Write?*, 48.

⁶⁹ Ian Aitken, *Film and Reform: John Grierson and the Documentary Film Movement* (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), 1.

⁷⁰ Greene, *The Pleasure Dome*, 60. Greene reviewed the following documentaries between 1935 and 1940, which are collected in *The Pleasure Dome: Song of Ceylon* (1935): 25; *The March of Time* (1935): 34-35; *Night Mail* (1936): 58-61; *Housing Problems* (1936): 108-9; *Nutrition* (1936): 108-9; *Children at School* (1937): 173-74; *Men in Danger* (1939): 223-24; *Spare Time* (1939): 223-24; *The Lion Has Wings* (1939): 249-50.

attach itself to any political party during the inter-war period, nor to any political movement'.⁷¹ One director, Edgar Anstey, recognized that presenting situations in a realistic light was in itself a political statement: 'we were all in a way politicians, but we were operating very indirectly. We were trying to show things as they were, people as they were'.⁷² Anstey's statement resonates with Greene's belief in the need to portray accurately the neglected members of society in order to highlight their plight.

Ian Aitken maintains that a number of literary works during the thirties 'used a documentary format to represent contemporary social problems'.⁷³ Greene confirmed this affinity between film and literature in his essay 'Subjects and Stories' (1937), in which he described the cinema as having 'the same purpose as the novel'.⁷⁴ Greene's essay explored a remark by Anton Chekhov regarding novelists: 'the best of them are realistic and paint life as it is, but because every line is permeated, as with a juice, by awareness of a purpose, you feel, besides life as it is, also life as it ought to be'.⁷⁵ Greene wrote: 'this description of an artist's theme has never, I think, been bettered: we need not even confine it to the fictional form: it applies equally to the documentary film'.⁷⁶ I propose that Greene employs aspects of documentary realism in *A Gun for Sale* and *Brighton Rock* in order to depict the protagonists and their backgrounds. In my view, Greene follows Chekhov's concept by

⁷¹ Aitken, *Film and Reform*, 172.

⁷² Arthur Elton, 'Realist Films Today' (1937), in Patrick Deane (ed.), *History in Our Hands: A Critical Anthology of Writings on Literature, Culture and Politics from the 1930s* (London: Leicester University Press, 1998): 319-23, 319.

⁷³ Aitken, *Film and Reform*, 174.

⁷⁴ Graham Greene, 'Subjects and Stories', in Charles Davy (ed.), *Footnotes to the Film* (London: Lovat Dickson, 1937): 57-70, 57.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

presenting awful social situations, and in this presentation he indicates the problems within society and implies that they should be changed for the better. Indeed, Judith Adamson notes that Greene wanted his fiction to ‘expose, to shake people out of their indifference’.⁷⁷ The founder of the documentary movement, John Grierson, reveals that he had similar ambitions for his films, which he referred to as ‘instruments for “consciousness-raising” on a variety of social issues’.⁷⁸ In terms of writing style, Samuel Hynes recognizes that Greene developed a cinematic technique of narration that was ‘at once intimately probing and detached, observing and recording’ but which allowed ‘the observed circumstances to be their own judgments’.⁷⁹ Waugh similarly perceived that Greene employed a cinematic form of narration in his fiction. In ‘Felix Culpa’ (1948) Waugh claimed that Greene had become ‘director and producer’ in his work, and he noted how the ‘the camera’s eye’ recorded ‘significant detail’ and had become ‘the modern way of telling a story’ (*EAR* 362). As has been mentioned in relation to *Scoop*, Waugh used a similar method of letting events speak for themselves in his depiction of the ludicrous political chaos in *Ishmaelia*, although his humorous satirical methods differed in tone from Greene’s sober and realist descriptions.⁸⁰

⁷⁷ Adamson, *Graham Greene*, 64.

⁷⁸ John Baxendale and Chris Pawling, ‘Representing the People: The Documentary Film Movement and Mass Observation in the Thirties’, in John Baxendale and Chris Pawling (eds), *Narrating the Thirties, A Decade in the Making: 1930 to the Present* (London: Macmillan Press, 1996): 17-45, 32.

⁷⁹ Samuel Hynes, ‘Introduction’, in Samuel Hynes (ed.), *Twentieth Century Views: Graham Greene, A Collection of Critical Essays* (London: Prentice-Hall International, 1987): 1-7, 3.

⁸⁰ Greene’s relationship with film was not confined to reviewing in this era. In 1937 he wrote a screenplay entitled *Future’s in the Air*, which was directed by Alexander Korda. A copy of the screenplay can be found in Graham Greene, *The Graham Greene Film Reader: Reviews, Essays, Interviews and Film Stories*, ed. David Parkinson (New York: Applause Books, 1993): 499-504.

Despite the parallels between the documentary film movement's perspective and Greene's approach to fiction, there are some significant differences between them. The documentary film movement received sponsorship from the English State, which it hoped to persuade to reform, whereas Greene wanted to confront the State and to make his work act as a 'piece of grit' in its machinery.⁸¹ The movement also aimed to depict members of the working class in a positive light in order to 'convey a sense of beauty about the ordinary world'.⁸² There is no sense of 'beauty' in Greene's presentation of working-class life in *A Gun for Sale* and *Brighton Rock*, only themes of entrapment, frustration, and misery. There could also be a religious aspect to Greene's focus on the disenfranchised, which is not present in the documentary films. Mark Bosco suggests that Greene's focus on social outcasts has its roots in the French Catholic revival, in which such writers as Leon Bloy and François Mauriac showed a 'theological preference for the prodigal and social outcast' because they wanted to 'express the principle that Christ came to save "that which is lost"'.⁸³ Waugh made a parallel argument in his aforementioned essay 'Felix Culpa' (1948), as he maintained that Greene focused on the dispossessed – or the 'charmless' as Waugh termed them – because of a religious recognition that 'the children of Adam are not a race of noble savages who need only a divine spark to perfect them. They are aboriginally corrupt' (*EAR* 361). It was due to this corruption, Waugh wrote, that 'the compassion and condescension of the Word becoming flesh [were] glorified in the depths' (*EAR* 361). Moreover, as I noted in the Introduction to this thesis, Greene possibly would have experienced a sense of marginalization from mainstream society due to Catholicism being a minority religion in England; on some level this understanding could have informed his interest in marginalized characters in his fiction. Other critics assert that Greene was concerned more

⁸¹ Bowen, Greene, and Pritchett, *Why Do I Write?*, 48.

⁸² Here, Aitken cites John Grierson's *I Remember, I Remember* (1970), taken from the Grierson Archive Papers (1957-72), in Aitken, *Film and Reform*, 11.

⁸³ S. J. Mark Bosco, *Graham Greene's Catholic Imagination* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 48.

with how his characters were produced by their social environments than with their religious significance. Andrzej Gasiorek argues that Greene saw Raven and Pinkie as ‘products of a specific and historically locatable social environment’, which ‘is not to absolve them of responsibility for their actions but to explain what motivates them’.⁸⁴ In my view, Greene’s focus on his characters’ social backgrounds indicates his concern with the intersection between distressed social environments and spiritual impoverishment. The issue of social backgrounds arguably is important to Greene because of how it informs the characters’ warped relationships with religious belief.

Greene emphasizes the presence of adverse social conditions in *A Gun for Sale* by describing surrounding industrial landscapes using references to warfare. In one instance, a policeman named Mather watches his girlfriend Anne being led away by Raven: ‘[he] stared across a dark desolate waste of cinders and points, a tangle of lines and sheds and piles of coal and coke. It was like a No Man’s Land full of torn iron across which one soldier picked his way with a wounded companion in his arms’ (*GS* 142). Greene’s presentation of the hostile industrial environment indicates his awareness of the struggle faced by the dying coal and steel industries in England. Noreen Branson and Margot Heinemann explain that, throughout the twenties, ‘the old industries [...] were fighting a losing battle’ and that the thirties ‘merely continued and intensified the tragic failure of the twenties’.⁸⁵ Sir Marcus is the elderly owner of one of these industries, Midland Steel, and in his decrepitude he represents ‘an image of modern capitalism in its decline’.⁸⁶ He is ‘one of the richest men in Europe’ (*GS* 150) and, because he is corrupt and consumed by his wealth, he is reminiscent of Erik Krogh from *England Made Me* (1935). While Greene was not by any means a committed

⁸⁴ Andrzej Gasiorek, ‘Rendering Justice to the Visible World: History, Politics and National Identity in the Novels of Graham Greene’, in Marina MacKay and Lyndsey Stonebridge (eds), *British Fiction After Modernism: The Novel at Mid-Century* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007): 17-32, 28.

⁸⁵ Noreen Branson and Margot Heinemann, *Britain in the Nineteen Thirties* (Frogmore: Panther Books, 1973), 55, 58.

⁸⁶ Neil McEwan, *Macmillan Modern Novelists: Graham Greene* (London: Macmillan, 1988), 116.

communist, his portrayal of such figures as Krogh and Sir Marcus can be read as a left-wing criticism of capitalist greed. Greene's use of warfare imagery also reflects the prevalent belief that the excesses of capitalism would be directly responsible for the next war. Richard Overy describes how 'the idea that imperialist capitalism caused war percolated into the stock of standard ideas in Britain in the 1930s', and he claims that this stance was held 'particularly but certainly not exclusively among those on the left'.⁸⁷ Accordingly, Greene's vivid descriptions of war-torn industrial waste lands suggest his criticism of a flawed capitalist society that has produced such terrible living conditions, and they also foreshadow how an industrial enterprise is related to the next war (as Sir Marcus essentially triggers war to boost his company's profits).

Raven becomes embroiled in Sir Marcus's corrupt business plans when he is commissioned to undertake an assassination job. Raven is the perfect choice for such a ruthless act. He is characterized by iciness and noxiousness, which reflect his sense of emotional detachment from others and his embittered attitude towards society as a whole. His hare-lip is a source of resentment because he could not afford to get it treated properly, which attests to his low social status. In addition, Raven is haunted by disturbing childhood memories from his traumatic upbringing, memories which have contributed to his callous and untrusting adult state. When Raven was a child his father was hanged for stealing and his mother slit her own throat, leaving her body for her young son to discover. He was subsequently brought up in an institutional 'home', which he left to join a race-course gang before becoming a lone assassin. However, as the narrative progresses, Raven evolves from an embittered and alienated young man into someone who learns to open up emotionally and spiritually through his friendship with Anne Crowder. Anne's surname signifies her relationship to the 'crowd' – general society – from which Raven has been disconnected throughout

⁸⁷ Richard Overy, *The Morbid Age: Britain Between the Wars* (London: Allen Lane, 2009), 91.

his life. Consequently, their developing friendship represents the possibility that Raven might gradually become reintegrated into mainstream society.

Raven first encounters Anne at a railway station, from which he decides to travel to a town named Nottwich in order to track down Sir Marcus. He decides to steal her ticket and take her hostage in order to make it harder for the police to track his journey. Having reached Nottwich, Raven manages to construct a hideout where he can stay with Anne the night before he confronts Sir Marcus. In Anne's company Raven's icy interior gradually melts and he is able to open up emotionally in a way that is simultaneously cathartic and painful: 'it was as if something sharp and cold were breaking in his heart with great pain' (*GS* 59). He shares with her his disturbing memories of childhood and begins to reflect upon his religious beliefs. Earlier in the novel, Raven's hostile attitude towards religion is established when he encounters some Christmas nativity figures in a shop next to a Catholic Cathedral. He is symbolically marginalized from the family scene and the faith it represents, as he presses 'his face against the glass' (*GS* 121) and looks in from outside. On contemplating the nativity scene, Raven reveals that he has been 'educated' about religion during his time in the state home. He announces bitterly to himself that he has learned all about 'Love, Charity, Patience, Humility', and that he has 'seen what they were worth' (*GS* 122). Raven also voices his scepticism regarding the divinity of Christ, as he claims that others have made Christ into a God only out of guilt for persecuting Him: 'they didn't have to consider themselves responsible for the raw deal they'd given him. He'd consented hadn't he?' (*GS* 122). He then stares 'at the swaddled child with a horrified tenderness', and he envisages the terrible fate in store for the newborn: 'the damned Jews and the double-cross Judas and only one man to draw a knife on his side when the soldiers came for him in the garden' (*GS* 122). Christ's birth is traditionally a moment of joy and hope in the Christian calendar, yet when Raven reflects upon it he thinks only of the future betrayal and isolation Christ will face in the garden of Gethsemane.

Back in the hideout, Raven explains to Anne that his relationship with faith has been damaged due to his upbringing. He admits that anything connected with religion evokes painful memories of his childhood and that he gets ‘sort of mad when everything reminds you of what’s over and done with’, because ‘sometimes you want to begin fresh, and then someone praying or a smell or something you read in the paper, and it’s all back again’ (GS 171). Anne also clarifies her religious stance and, although she is a good person, she is not holy or spiritual in the same way as such characters as Elizabeth in *The Man Within* (1929) and Eulelia in *Rumour at Nightfall* (1931). Anne believes “‘in Fate and God and Vice and Virtue, Christ in the stable, all the Christmas stuff” (GS 71). But when she is asked the key question “‘Do you believe in God?””, she answers hesitantly: “‘I don’t know”” and “‘sometimes maybe”” (GS 171). Her faith has deteriorated into a form of superstition, and she declares: “‘It’s a habit, praying. It doesn’t do any harm. It’s like crossing your fingers when you walk under a ladder”” (GS 171). Despite her lack of genuine belief, Anne’s benign presence awakens Raven’s spirituality, because in her company he is able to explore his personal religious views. Anne is also responsible for informing Raven that the War Minister was murdered because he “‘wouldn’t have gone to war”” (GS 168). In response to this information, Raven experiences a ‘low passionate urge to confession’ (GS 174). He wants Anne to know of his guilt in order for her to recognize, and hopefully accept, his true self. After admitting his crime he experiences a sense of relief: “‘it feels good to trust someone with everything”” (GS 179). However, unlike a forgiving priestly figure, Anne’s response to his confession is one of repulsion. She feels ‘no pity at all’ and immediately distances herself from him: ‘He was just a wild animal who had to be dealt with carefully and then destroyed’ (GS 182). Despite this, she helps Raven reach the headquarters of Midland Steel because she wants him to kill Sir Marcus and to stop the war from progressing.

When Raven eventually tracks down Sir Marcus, he prepares to take his revenge, but first asks: “‘Don’t you want to pray?”” (GS 233). Sir Marcus manages to raise the alarm and a commotion

breaks out that unsettles Raven: ‘they seemed to be disturbing some memory of peace and goodness which had been on the point of returning to him when he had told Sir Marcus to pray’ (GS 234). At this point, Raven associates prayer with peace rather than with punishment and bitterness, but these feelings are not fully realized as they are only ‘on the point of returning’. He then symbolically rejects them by shooting Sir Marcus. Following the murder, Raven turns to Sir Marcus’s employee, Mr Davis, and accuses him of trying to hurt Anne. Raven refers to Anne as “‘My friend’” (GS 235), which undermines Robert Hoskins’s claim that ‘Greene’s grotesque characters express such radically alienated and distorted views of life that in the end they cannot learn or change’.⁸⁸ Indeed, the poignancy of the narrative derives from the way Raven’s original misanthropy dissolves into a desire to care for another person. However, Raven’s illusions of friendship are destroyed when Davis retorts: “‘She wasn’t a friend of yours. Why are the police here if she didn’t ... who else could have known?’” (GS 235). On realizing that he has been betrayed by the one person he trusted, Raven responds by murdering Davis and by rejecting any nascent religious belief altogether: ‘there was no other way [...] he had tried the way of confession, and it had failed him for the usual reason. There was no one outside your own brain whom you could trust: not a doctor, not a priest, not a woman’ (GS 236). Soon after the murder, ‘the church bells’ break ‘into a noisy Christmas carol’ (GS 236), and his mind replays a variety of memories: ‘his mother’s suicide, the long years in the home, the race-course gangs, Kite’s death and the old man’s and the woman’s’ (GS 235-36). These disturbing reminiscences lead him to contemplate the fate of the baby Jesus, ‘lying in its mother’s arms, awaiting the double-cross, the whips, the nails’ (GS 236). The juxtaposition of Raven’s painful memories with his view of Jesus indicates a latent connection between how this troubled background has informed his faith. This connection is confirmed when Raven then likens himself to Christ, believing that he too ‘had been marked from birth for this end, to be betrayed in turn by everyone

⁸⁸ Robert Hoskins, *Graham Greene: An Approach to the Novels* (London: Garland Publishing, 1999), 62.

until every avenue into life was safely closed' (GS 238). He reacts to this overwhelming sense of persecution, alienation, and entrapment by committing suicide. There is no indication that he enters into a supernatural dimension of peace and security, as was hinted at with Francis Andrews in *The Man Within* (1929). On the contrary, he is described as wandering into 'a vast desolation' (GS 238). This image epitomizes Raven's sense of abandonment and it is a tragic end for someone who had finally managed momentarily to connect with and to care for another person.

In *Brighton Rock*, Greene represents another form of social outcast in the character of Pinkie, who lives in the seedy urban underworld of Brighton. Pinkie and Rose grew up in neighbouring housing estates in the slums (named Paradise Piece and Nelson Place respectively), and Pinkie joined a race-course gang in order to escape from his life there. John Stevenson reports that wretched living conditions were a major social issue in the thirties: 'areas of squalid housing, rotting with damp and infested with vermin, sprawled over the whole country'.⁸⁹ The general public was informed of these dreadful circumstances because the government planned to eradicate the slums and it 'launched a sort of propaganda campaign suggesting that the battle against the slums was a great new adventure'.⁹⁰ In addition to this campaign, the BBC and numerous newspapers undertook 'special investigations' and 'published horrifying revelations' about the slums.⁹¹ In line with these reports, Greene portrays appalling living conditions in *Brighton Rock* and, similar to *A Gun for Sale*, he uses warfare imagery to denote themes of social decay. Accordingly, images of bombardment and destruction are used to describe Pinkie's return to his birthplace (he is visiting Rose's parents in order to ask for her hand in marriage): 'there he was, on the top of the hill, in the thick of the bombardment – a flapping gutter, glassless windows, an iron bedstead in a front garden the size of a table top. Half Paradise Piece had

⁸⁹ John Stevenson, *The Penguin Social History of Britain: British Society 1914-45* (London: Penguin Books, 1990), 228.

⁹⁰ Branson and Heinemann, *Britain in the Nineteen Thirties*, 210.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

been torn up as if by bomb bursts; the children played about the steep slope of rubble' (*BR* 202-3). The references to hardened materials – iron, rubble– and the allusions to breakage – ‘torn’, ‘bombardment’, ‘glassless’– evoke the image of a hostile and ruined waste land.

Greene’s account of the damaged slum area corresponds with the images he would have seen when he reviewed the documentary film *Housing Problems* (1935).⁹² The film combines stark camera shots with interviews from tenants who tell of the main problems of living in the slums. In particular, the tenants discuss the rat infestations, the cramped space, the deterioration of their homes, and the lack of fresh water. In his review, Greene described the film’s presentation of houses, and he referred to ‘the terrible tiny peeling rooms’, ‘the broken stairways’, ‘the airless courts’, and the women who ‘talk in their own way about the dirt and rats and bugs’.⁹³ A comparably sordid atmosphere pervades Rose’s home, as she and Pinkie walk through an ‘awful passage which stank like a lavatory’ (*BR* 203-4) and observe a staircase that is ‘matted with old newspapers’ (*BR* 204). One of these newspapers brandishes the disturbing story of a murdered child, who was ‘violated and buried under the West Pier’ (*BR* 204). Consequently, the environment in Rose’s home is defined by allusions to damaged moral and psychological states, as well as to physical deterioration. *Housing Problems* also presents the slums as a resolvable problem. Aitken describes how the film ends with ‘an over-optimistic vision of “ideal” housing estates, which replace the slums’.⁹⁴ In contrast, when

⁹² Clips from *Housing Problems* can be viewed at: <http://www.screenonline.org.uk/film/id/513807/> (accessed 17/3/11).

⁹³ Graham Greene, ‘Nutrition’ (1936), in Greene, *The Pleasure Dome*: 108-9, 108.

⁹⁴ Aitken, *Film and Reform*, 139. According to Danny Birchall: ‘*Housing Problems* is both a propaganda piece and a document of optimism. With its iconic image of new flats rising behind an old row of slum terraces in Stepney, it shows what has been done to improve living conditions by the most “enlightened” local authorities and planners, and provides an exhortation to others to follow suit’. See the British Film Institute website: www.screenonline.org (accessed 11/03/11).

Greene refers to the development of new housing in *Brighton Rock*, he does so in terms of absence, as Pinkie looks upon the ‘smashed and wasted ground in front where houses had been pulled down for model flats which had never gone up’ (BR 125). This failure to construct alternative housing could be Greene’s way of undermining the social optimism propagated by films like *Housing Problems*.

Pinkie abhors Rose for bringing him back to his roots. He realizes that if they marry he will be associated with the slums forever: ‘he had to take Nelson Place with him like a visible scar’ (BR 271). Later, when shaken ‘by an appalling resentment’, Pinkie records a malicious message to Rose: “‘God damn you, you little bitch, why can’t you go back home for ever and let me be?’” (BR 256-57). As well as emphasizing Pinkie’s bitterness towards his upbringing, Greene explores how such an impoverished background has shaped Pinkie’s character and influenced his despicable behaviour. Greene alludes to the psychological effects of poverty in a film review of *Underworld* (1937), in which he criticized the film’s sanguine portrayal of deprivation and claimed that it did not account for the true devastation of economic hardship: ‘This isn’t what poverty does – tatter the clothes and leave the mind unimpaired’.⁹⁵ With regards to Pinkie’s mindset, Greene has stated that Pinkie is a product of his environment, and that his diabolical actions ‘arose out of the conditions to which he had been born’.⁹⁶ Sherry disagrees. He argues that Pinkie’s predicament transcends social issues altogether: ‘Pinkie is not merely a victim of the slums. Central to this novel is the Boy’s passionate desire to commit evil. This is his private temperament and thus there is never a sense that Pinkie is Pinkie because of his social background’.⁹⁷ In my view, Greene indicates throughout *Brighton Rock* that Pinkie’s evil nature is a direct consequence of his troubled and depraved upbringing. According

⁹⁵ Graham Greene, ‘Un Carnet de Bal/Underworld’ (1937), in Greene, *The Pleasure Dome*, 184

⁹⁶ Allain, *The Other Man*, 158-59.

⁹⁷ Sherry, *The Life of Graham Greene: Volume 1*, 638.

to Pinkie: ‘a brain was only capable of what it could conceive, and it couldn’t conceive what it had never experienced’ (*BR* 332). Since Pinkie did not experience goodness, benevolence, or kindness in his upbringing, he is unable to envisage these qualities. Indeed, he describes life itself as harsh and debased: “‘It’s gaol, it’s not knowing where to get some money. Worms and cataract, cancer. You hear ‘em shrieking from the upper windows – children being born. It’s dying slowly’” (*BR* 330). These themes of imprisonment, disease, and death not only inform Pinkie’s worldview, they also shape his Catholicism: ‘Heaven was a word’ for Pinkie, but ‘Hell was something he could trust’ (*BR* 332). Consequently, the thought of hell and damnation ‘[doesn’t] horrify’ Pinkie, because he feels that such conditions are ‘easier than life’ (*BR* 300).

In ‘Henry James: The Religious Aspect’ (1933), Greene made a key statement about the nature of evil that is applicable to Pinkie’s situation: ‘[James’s] religion was always a mirror of his experience. Experience taught him to believe in supernatural evil, but not in supernatural good’ (*CE* 43). Pinkie’s inability to comprehend religious goodness becomes apparent when he tries to envisage spiritual peace. As Chapter One of this thesis argues, when earlier characters such as Francis Andrews from *The Man Within* and Michael Crane from *Rumour at Nightfall* contemplate peace, they refer to the idea of a transcendent realm defined by themes of release and refuge. However, Pinkie can only imagine ‘a grey darkness going on and on without end’ (*BR* 217). There are times when Pinkie is pained at being unable to experience the religious peace that he longs for. At one point, he becomes overwhelmed by his circumstances (the murders, his plan to get Rose to commit suicide, his fears for the future of his gang), and he breaks down in tears. While weeping, he pictures ‘a limitless freedom: no fear, no hatred, no envy’, and likens the experience to ‘remembering the effect of a good confession, the words of absolution’ (*BR* 260). These references to confession signify that Pinkie specifically desires a form of religious peace. According to Catholic theology, Pinkie can only atone for his evil and experience the peace of forgiveness if he genuinely repents before he dies. He is given this opportunity to do so when he is attacked by a rival gang, and he is

shocked into recognizing his mortality. Yet, while attempting to atone for his sins, he realizes that 'his thoughts would carry him no further than the corner where his pursuers might reappear: he discovered he hadn't the energy to repent' (BR 152-53). Pinkie concludes that he 'couldn't break in a moment the habit of thought', because 'habit held you closely while you died' (BR 154). Greene suggests that Pinkie's way of thinking (which has been shaped by his environment) ultimately prevents him from envisaging and reaching spiritual peace.

Pinkie misses another opportunity for possible salvation when he rejects the spiritual goodness embodied within Rose. She represents Pinkie's spiritual opposite: she is as 'bounded by her goodness' (BR 197) as he is by his hatred, and her firm belief in heaven contrasts with his commitment to the existence of hell. Unlike Raven, who revels in his developing friendship with Anne, Pinkie feels trapped by Rose's love, and he is horrified at the thought of a long marriage: 'Sixty years: it was like a prophecy – a certain future: a horror without end' (BR 326-27). The only time Pinkie experiences something akin to affection for Rose is when he decides to convince her to commit a mortal sin by killing herself, and he experiences an emotion that 'was like a love of life returning to a blank heart' (BR 296). Adam Schwartz identifies that in Greene's earlier novels, such as *A Man Within*, 'an unbelieving man is drawn to a believing woman, not just for her own merits, but also for her faith's ability to supply something absent from his psyche'.⁹⁸ Pinkie abuses this chance to experience a sense of fulfilment from Rose's faith when he tries to use her love for him to destroy her.

In my view, the presence of the Holy Spirit is alluded to in *Brighton Rock*, and I propose that Greene suggests that Pinkie further isolates himself from spiritual goodness when he spurns this spirit. The Holy Spirit's presence arguably is implicit from the beginning of the novel because the

⁹⁸ Adam Schwartz, *The Third Spring: G. K. Chesterton, Graham Greene, Christopher Dawson, and David Jones* (Washington D. C.: The Catholic University of American Press, 2005), 139.

action is set during Whit Monday, which commemorates the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles. Initially, it is implied that the Holy Spirit passively observes Pinkie from outside a window – ‘tenderness came up to the very window and looked in’ (BR 346) – but at the end of the novel it forcibly strikes against Pinkie’s windscreen: ‘An enormous emotion beat on him; it was like something trying to get in, the pressure of gigantic wings against the glass. *Dona nobis pacem* [Grant us peace]’ (BR 349). The bird imagery is in accordance with the Biblical conceptualization of the Holy Spirit as a dove, and it also corresponds to one of the main features of the French Catholic Novel, as identified by David Lodge: ‘the tireless pursuit of the erring soul by God, “the Hound of Heaven” in Francis Thompson’s famous metaphor’.⁹⁹ Pinkie imagines what would happen if the glass broke and the Holy Spirit was able to reach him: ‘He had a sense of a huge havoc – the confession, the penance, and the sacrament – an awful distraction’ (BR 349). However, Pinkie’s life experiences prevent him from connecting with the Holy Spirit, as he ‘withstood it’ with ‘all the bitter force of the school bench, the cement playground, the St Pancras waiting-room, Dallow’s and Judy’s secret lust, and the cold unhappy moment on the pier’ (BR 349). Having resisted the Holy Spirit and its affiliations with confession and forgiveness, Pinkie is confronted by secular justice in the form of Ida Arnold and the police. While running away from them, Pinkie accidentally smashes a bottle of vitriol over himself and Rose watches in horror as his face steams with acid. Dazed and scarred, Pinkie turns and he either falls from or jumps off a nearby cliff – it is not made clear in the text. Either way, as Hoskins notes, Pinkie ends the novel ‘not with the leap of faith but with the terrible, fatal leap into the sea’.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ David Lodge, ‘Introduction’, François Mauriac, *The Viper’s Tangle*, trans. Gerard Hopkins, intro. David Lodge (New York: Carroll & Graf, 1987): 5-8, 7.

¹⁰⁰ Hoskins, *Graham Greene*, 24.

Ida's desire to punish Pinkie for murdering Hale highlights a major theme of the novel: the difference between secular and religious values. Ida maintains that if you believe in God 'you might leave vengeance to him' (*BR* 48), but as an atheist she is unable to accept a religious system of justice. John Atkins suggests that the 'moral leader' of Ida's world is George Bernard Shaw, who did 'not believe in evil' and who claimed that man 'could be guilty of nothing graver than "wrong"'.¹⁰¹ In 1937 Greene described Shaw as 'quite ignorant of the nature of evil' when he reviewed a biography of the writer.¹⁰² Although Greene conceded that Shaw was 'an ethical man', he concluded that 'the ethical is much further from the good than evil is'.¹⁰³ This argument echoes T. S. Eliot's discussion of Charles Baudelaire:

So far as we are human, what we do must be either evil or good; so far as we do evil or good, we are human; and it is better, in a paradoxical way, to do evil than to do nothing: at least, we exist. [...] The worst that can be said of most of our malefactors, from statesmen to thieves, is that they are not men enough to be damned.¹⁰⁴

Pinkie regards the irreligious Ida from this Eliotic perspective; he dismisses her as "just nothing" (*BR* 180). Likewise, Rose contends that Ida is not woman enough to be damned: "Oh, she won't burn. She couldn't burn if she tried" (*BR* 161). As well as discounting Ida's significance, the Catholic characters in *Brighton Rock* maintain that her ethical valuations of 'right' and 'wrong' are

¹⁰¹ John Atkins, *Graham Greene* (London: Calder & Boyars, 1966), 99.

¹⁰² Graham Greene, review of J. P. Hackett's *Shaw: George Vs. Bernard* (1937), cited in Atkins, *Graham Greene*, 99.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ T. S. Eliot, 'Baudelaire' (1930), in T. S. Eliot, *Selected Essays* (London: Faber and Faber, 1951): 419-30, 429. Greene cited this extract from Eliot's essay in 'Henry James: The Religious Aspect' (1933) (*CE* 41).

inferior to their religious versions of 'good' and 'evil'. Rose admits to knowing 'by tests as clear as mathematics that Pinkie was evil', and she dismisses secular frameworks of morality: 'what did it matter in that case whether he was right or wrong?' (*BR* 289). Some critics have objected to this perspective because, as Atkins suggests, 'we are led to believe that a bad Catholic, though not morally better than a good Protestant, actually lives on a superior level of being'.¹⁰⁵ Whether the Catholic characters are correct in their assumption of superiority is not the issue. Rather, Greene is providing an insight into how such beliefs inform his Catholic characters' perception of people 'outside' their faith as unreal. Greene suggests that he shares aspects of this Catholic view of secularity in his aforementioned concept of 'the religious sense', which encapsulated the notion that religious writers could depict a deeper reality compared to secular authors.

In the final pages of *Brighton Rock* Rose visits an elderly priest for confession, at which point she admits to fearing for Pinkie's soul. The priest confirms the religious view that Catholics are different from secular persons, as he explains that they are "'more capable of evil than anyone'" (*BR* 360) due to their awareness of God. This theory corresponds with another of Eliot's statements: 'to awaken them to the spiritual is a very great responsibility: it is only when they are so awakened that they are capable of real Good, but that at the same time they become first capable of Evil'.¹⁰⁶ In earlier novels, Greene associated faith with an awareness of another realm of reality, as he alluded to a transcendent realm of peace and refuge. In *Brighton Rock*, Greene explores the more subtle idea

¹⁰⁵ Atkins, *Graham Greene*, 93. George Orwell epitomizes this critical stance. He condemned 'the cult of the sanctified sinner' in Greene's work because he objected to having characters like Pinkie presented as somehow superior to non-Catholics: 'But all the while – drunken, lecherous, criminal, or damned outright – the Catholics retain their superiority since they alone know the meaning of good and evil'. See 'The Sanctified Sinner', in Hynes (ed.), *Graham Greene*: 105-9, 107.

¹⁰⁶ T. S. Eliot, *After Strange Gods: A Primer of Modern Heresy* (1933) (London: Faber and Faber, 1934), 65. This extract from Eliot's essay is cited in Greene's essay 'Frederick Rolfe: A Spoiled Priest' (1935) (*CE* 137-38).

that faith enables entry into a wider dimension of morality, which encompasses both religious goodness and evil. Related to this, Greene intimates in this final scene that even the most evil soul is not automatically barred from the power of God's mercy, because, as the priest explains to Rose, the human mind is not capable of evaluating the fate of another soul: "You can't conceive, my child, nor can I or anyone – the ... appalling ... strangeness of the mercy of God" (*BR* 359).

Rose is comforted by the priest but, as A. A. DeVitis notes, 'once the drama is ended, evil seems the order of the universe, as continuous as life itself'.¹⁰⁷ This sense of prevailing evil is due to Greene's depiction of Rose walking 'rapidly in the thin June sunlight towards the worst horror of all' (*BR* 361): the devastating realization that Pinkie's love for her was false, which will be confirmed when she eventually listens to his malicious recorded message. Rose represented a point of genuine religious goodness in the novel and yet even she is not immune from the pervading evil and cruelty which define earthly life for Greene.

Conclusion: Catholic Critiques of Secular Societies

Despite the diverging political stances of Waugh and Greene, their contrasting views on the benefits of imperialism, and their use of different forms and styles of fiction, similarities can be drawn between these authors' criticisms of secular modern societies (in England, Europe, and Africa) and of totalitarian political regimes. Furthermore, as I have demonstrated, these criticisms can be viewed as informed by both writers' similar anti-humanist and Catholic perspectives. Thus, implicit in Waugh's and Greene's fiction is the idea that Catholic values are missing from modern civilization in general and that prevalent social and moral degradation are consequences of this absence. In *Scoop*, Waugh arguably employs humour and satire to undermine humanist optimism, as the novel is defined by

¹⁰⁷ A. A. DeVitis, *Graham Greene* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1964), 86.

themes of non-progression both in terms of English and African societies and in terms of the political environment in Ishmaelia. Furthermore, the elderly and sickly Boot family represents the gradual dying out of the upper-classes in England, which is a continuous theme in Waugh's novels in the thirties. Chapter Five discusses how Waugh explicitly states that the upper classes should act as cultural ambassadors in English society and that Catholicism needs to be integral to this culture. Thus, his concern with the demise of the upper classes in *Scoop* represents his fear for the decaying cultural (and religious) status of England itself. In terms of political parties, Waugh satirizes the selfish and disruptive nature of political ideologies when he depicts fascist and communist factions struggling for control of Ishmaelia. As well as trying to exploit the country's natural resources, the parties are shown to contribute to – rather than to redress – social instability in the country. Possibly underlying Waugh's presentation of these totalitarian ideologies is the idea that societies need a unifying belief system that can only be provided by the Catholic Church.

In terms of Greene's anti-humanism, in *The Other Side of the Border* (1936) he portrays an elderly humanist whose beliefs are no longer sustainable in the modern world. Mr Hands (the protagonist's father) is a 'Liberal' who, for nearly seventy years, 'had been believing in human nature, against every evidence' (*OSB* 202-3). Having put his faith in the goodness of man, rather than in God, Mr Hands 'thought men could govern themselves if they were left alone to it, that wealth did not corrupt and that statesmen loved their country' (*OSB* 203). Yet, even this staunch optimist finds it difficult to maintain these views in his current environment, and he admits that his image of the world is 'breaking up now' (*OSB* 203). In *A Gun for Sale* and *Brighton Rock*, Greene's portrayal of a corrupt and decrepit capitalist system, and his presentation of powerful forces exploiting vulnerable members of English society, attests his scepticism regarding Mr Hands's liberal beliefs. While the Boot family in *Scoop* are rather hard-up, their material discomfort is not in the same league as the social depravity faced by Greene's protagonists. Greene thus focuses on a completely different sector

of modern English society to Waugh, and he concentrates on exposing the reality of life for individuals in a non-didactic manner by using methods of documentary realism.

Waugh's and Greene's relationship to their identities as Catholic authors also differed in this period. Although Waugh was wary of political categorizations and of having his views reductively labelled, he willingly and explicitly associated himself with the Catholic Church in his non-fiction – unlike Greene. Waugh also valued Catholicism's cultural identity. Like Christopher Dawson and Hilaire Belloc, Waugh believed that Catholicism offered the solution to modern society's manifold problems and, in Timothy Sutton's terms, that it was 'a relevant social force'.¹⁰⁸ However, as I have mentioned already, Waugh was not yet explicitly incorporating Catholic themes and characters into his fiction at this stage; perhaps continuing to keep his 'entertainments' free from didacticism and preaching. There is no sense in Greene's work that Catholicism offers an organizational antidote to the modern societies he depicts. Instead, Greene associates faith with themes of refuge, peace, and hope for an afterlife in a transcendent realm. In this way he suggests that Catholicism can provide a form of escape from social problems and implicitly criticizes English society – and more specifically the government – for cutting off vulnerable individuals from this place of refuge. Accordingly, it is the governmental institute that ruins Raven's conception of faith and it is Pinkie's horrific experiences in the slums which influence his acts of evil. Raven's and Pinkie's predicaments reflect the fact that the government fails to provide the weakest members of society with economic, social, and spiritual welfare. In sum, Greene seems to suggest that the corruption of the protagonists' faith is the tragic consequence of their low status in English society.

Another key feature of Greene's authorial stance is that he did not want to be restricted by orthodoxy, either in terms of his religious or his political beliefs. However, he did vent his frustration

¹⁰⁸ Timothy J. Sutton, *Catholic Modernists, English Nationalists* (Newark, University of Delaware Press, 2010),

at the way religious issues were eclipsed by political ones in fiction, and he emphasized the importance of writers having religious perspectives. In a 1936 review of Djuna Barnes's *Nightwood*, Greene admitted that 'it is rare in contemporary fiction to be able to trace any spiritual experience whatever' and he praised the 'spiritual condition' in Barnes's work, despite it being a 'sick' one.¹⁰⁹ The following year, in a review of Somerset Maughan's novel *Theatre* (1937), Greene described how 'refreshing' it was in 'a period of Left Wing heroics' to have 'a pleasantly astringent dose of Original Sin'.¹¹⁰ Greene's representation and exploration of Pinkie's 'sick spiritual condition' and Raven's warped relationship to faith can thus be read in part as an affront to dogmatically political works published at the time. Waugh displayed a similar abhorrence of political didacticism in 'Present Discontents' (1938) – a review of Cyril Connolly's *Enemies of Promise* (1938) – in which he referred to 'the cold, dank pit of politics' as 'the most insidious of all the enemies of promise' (*EAR* 241). Despite the authors' disinclination to write overtly political fiction, this chapter has revealed the different political strains within their perspectives: from Greene's leftist sympathy for the socially deprived, through to Waugh's right-wing admiration for strong government and for social order buttressed by Catholicism. Overall, although Greene's and Waugh's political views and their relationships to their Catholic faith continue to diverge in this era, they are in agreement with each other in terms of their anti-totalitarian stances and in terms of their fears that their increasingly politicized and secularized civilization has lost touch with religious ideals, to its enduring detriment.

¹⁰⁹ Graham Greene, 'Fiction Chronicle' (14 November, 1936), in Greene, *Articles of Faith*: 90-95, 93.

¹¹⁰ Graham Greene, 'Fiction Chronicle' (27 March, 1937), in Greene, *Articles of Faith*: 114-19, 116.

CHAPTER FIVE: ON THE BRINK OF WAR

By 1938 British Catholics had accepted that their faith was seriously threatened by the rise of totalitarian regimes in Russia, Italy, and Germany. The Munich crisis of the same year exposed the territorial power of fascism and confirmed that another world war was inevitable. Martin Conway argues that the menace posed by extremist politics and the threat of imminent war ‘appeared to reinforce the need for Catholics to present their own alternative to the problems facing European society’.¹ Such works as *Beyond Politics* (1939) by Christopher Dawson and *The Idea of a Christian Society* (1939) by T. S. Eliot are just two examples of writers presenting their views on the role of religion in Western civilization. These publications propose that religious belief should be a fundamental component of societies – Roman Catholicism in Dawson’s view, and Anglo-Catholicism in Eliot’s – as the writers draw a connection between the increasingly vulnerable condition of Western civilization and its growing secularity. This chapter maintains that Evelyn Waugh and Graham Greene tackle corresponding issues in their writings of the late thirties, and that their views are informed by their examinations of the troubled religious and political situation in Mexico. The South American country was a problem area for Catholicism in this period because the country’s socialist government had spent the previous decade outlawing Catholicism, as well as persecuting priests and laypeople. In 1938 Waugh and Greene travelled separately to Mexico in order to report on the consequences of this widespread religious discrimination.² Their respective visits

¹ Martin Conway, *Catholic Politics in Europe 1918-1945* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), 8.

² Greene visited Mexico in late February, and he stayed for six weeks. See Norman Sherry, *The Life of Graham Greene, Volume 1: 1904-1939* (New York: Penguin Books, 1989), 668, 695. Waugh visited Mexico for three months, from August until October in 1938. See Martin Stannard *Evelyn Waugh: The Early Years, 1903-1939* (London: Paladin Grafton Books, 1988), 479.

were in the nature of pilgrimages, as they felt a renewed sense of solidarity with their persecuted fellow-believers and they explored what Catholicism meant to them personally. The results of their expeditions were published as travelogues: *Robbery Under Law: The Mexican Object-Lesson* (1939) by Waugh, and *The Lawless Roads* (1939) by Greene. In these texts both authors set out their thoughts on how faith should be integrated within Mexico's political structure, and from this position they reflect upon the role of faith in British society and modern civilization in general.

In *Robbery Under Law*, Waugh continued to associate Catholicism with culture, tradition, and order. In contrast to what he saw as the cultivating and stabilizing framework of his faith, Waugh maintained that secular left-wing politics had transformed Mexico into a barren waste land. He aptly described his travelogue as a 'political book' (*RUL* 719) because in it he examined in detail the failings of Mexico's socialist political structure and outlined his own conservative beliefs. This chapter discusses the ways in which Waugh's conservative and democratic political stance can be seen to derive from his Catholic view of human nature. Waugh argued that societies must be organized in such a way as to contain the potentially destructive traits which stemmed from what he saw as the innate barbarism of man, which he believed was caused by Original Sin. He consequently admitted to fearing for Mexico's social stability due to the absence of religious order, and he believed that civilization in general would be damaged by the repercussions of Mexico's problems.

In *The Lawless Roads* Greene also examined the destructive consequences of outlawing Catholicism in Mexico. Compared with Waugh's ostensibly historical account of the situation, Greene's travelogue is the more personal and descriptive piece of writing. Another significant difference between their texts concerns the nature of their Catholic perspectives. Robert Murray Davis suggests that Waugh's faith is presented as 'spacious, open, [and] logical', whereas the world

of Greene's faith is 'claustrophobic, decaying, [and] full of violence'.³ Indeed, Murray Davis claims that Greene gives 'an occasional glimpse of goodness that is far more inexplicable and mysterious than the evil that surrounds it'.⁴ Greene established the pessimistic and cynical nature of his Catholic perspective in the epigraph to *The Lawless Roads*, in which he cited a passage from John Henry Cardinal Newman's *Apologia Pro Vita Sua* (1864). In this extract, Newman outlines the tragic and 'heart-piercing' condition of mankind: 'the defeat of good, the success of evil, physical pain, mental anguish, the prevalence and intensity of sin, the pervading idolatries, the corruptions, the dreary hopeless irreligion' (LR 6). Newman maintains that this pitiful state is 'a profound mystery, which is absolutely beyond human solution' (LR 6). He also believes that man's inherent corruption is a reflection of God's judgment: 'since there is a God, the human race is implicated in some terrible aboriginal calamity' (LR 6).⁵ Greene similarly regarded man as irreparably marred by Original Sin; he was convinced that man's inherently evil condition was worsened, rather than alleviated, by the political structure in Mexico. This chapter reveals that despite the different character of their Catholic perspectives, Waugh and Greene concurred on the point that Mexico had suffered both socially and morally due to the socialist government's repression of Catholicism.

The second section of this chapter compares Waugh's unfinished novel *Work Suspended* (1939) and Greene's thriller *The Confidential Agent* (1939).⁶ Although the texts are very different in

³ Robert Murray Davis, 'The Rhetoric of Mexican Travel: Greene and Waugh', *Renascence* 38 (Spring, 1986): 160-69, 161.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ For original, see John Henry Cardinal Newman, *Apologia Pro Vita Sua: Being a Reply to a Pamphlet Entitled 'What, Then, Does Dr. Newman Mean?'* (1864) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 377-78.

⁶ *Work Suspended* has a complicated publication history. The version discussed in this chapter was written in September 1939. For more information about the history of *Work Suspended*, see Stannard, *Evelyn Waugh: The Early Years*, 34.

form and style, both authors employ similar themes of decay and deterioration in order to depict the fragility of secular English society (in Waugh's text) and that of European civilization (in Greene's) on the brink of war. In *Work Suspended* Waugh experiments with a first-person narrator – named John Plant – and he uses descriptive, metaphorical, and lyrical language. This style of writing differs from his previous fictional methods, which were generally characterized by external satirical techniques, objective narration, and less emotive language. Moreover, the writing style anticipates that of his first 'Catholic' novel, *Brideshead Revisited* (1945), which is told from the perspective of a first-person narrator named Charles Ryder. *Work Suspended* concerns John Plant's reflections upon the death of his father, his writing career, and his growing feelings for his friend's wife, Lucy. Plant and Lucy embark upon a platonic but emotionally intense affair, which ends as soon as she becomes pregnant by her husband. Plant also forms a strange friendship with Arthur Atwater, the man who killed his father. Their relationship epitomizes the uneasy alliance between an old social class, represented by Plant, and the rise of a new class of man symbolized by Atwater. This new social rank is brash, uncultured, and lacking in good manners. Waugh predicts that this class will survive the Second World War and will represent the future of England. Other aspects of social decline in England are alluded to in the form of political decay (in the representation of anti-individualist socialists) and aesthetic decay (in allusions to the destruction of classic architecture). This chapter maintains that Waugh voices his personal concerns about social, political, and aesthetic deterioration in the late thirties through Plant. However, while I agree with Robert Garnett that 'Plant's ideas and opinions are almost invariably Waugh's', I acknowledge that Plant is an atheist and that his lack of faith signals a major divergence from Waugh's own thinking.⁷ Furthermore, I propose that Plant's

⁷ Robert R. Garnett, *From Grimes to Brideshead: The Early Novels of Evelyn Waugh* (London: Associated University Press, 1990), 139.

faithlessness is implicitly related to his inability to survive the modern age and to protect certain values from extinction.

The Confidential Agent is similarly told from 'inside' the main character's brain. The protagonist is a middle-aged former academic, who works as a secret agent and is known only as D. He travels from his unspecified European homeland (which is in the midst of a civil war) to England, in order to secure a coal contract from a prosperous coal magnate. D. works for the Republican Party, which is fighting the fascists. He requires coal because in his country it is 'more valuable than diamonds' (CA 12) and it will enable his side to continue fighting. Robert Hoskins claims that D. is the first of Greene's 'second-phase protagonists', because the character's 'age, experience, education, and culture' make him 'closer to the novelist himself'.⁸ In this respect Greene's novel, like *Work Suspended*, can be considered a form of autobiographical response to the troubled times just prior to the Second World War. The references to a civil war between republicans and fascists also suggest that Greene was inspired by events in Spain. In fact, he later admitted that the Spanish Civil War 'furnished the [novel's] background' (WE 68). Greene added that he did not give the secret agent a full name or a specific country of origin because he 'did not wish to localise the conflict' (WE 68). Instead, Greene had a 'vague ambition to create something legendary out of a contemporary thriller: the hunted man who became the hunter, the peaceful man who turns at bay, the man who has learned to love justice by suffering injustice' (WE 68). As an atheist, D.'s experiences of being violently attacked, pursued, framed for murder, and condemned to certain death confirm his belief that humanity is inherently corrupt and that there is no God. While Greene's sympathetic portrayal of D. suggests an empathy with this pessimistic perspective, he simultaneously alludes to the limitations of D.'s secular belief-system, which can perceive no form of religious refuge in the world.

⁸ Robert Hoskins, *Graham Greene: An Approach to the Novels* (London: Garland Publishing, 1999), xvii.

This chapter concludes by evaluating Waugh's and Greene's respective religious and political beliefs in relation to each other prior to the outbreak of the Second World War. I assess their differing political sympathies, from Greene's leftist concerns for the socially oppressed through to Waugh's right-wing interest in strong social order and the preservation of culture and tradition. I suggest that their diverging political views reflect the way that they perceive Catholicism's relationship to political regimes and their view of Catholicism's role in modern societies. Finally, I establish the ways in which their thinking corresponds, as they both believe in the permanence of the Catholic Church and they share the view that Catholicism must be an integral part of civilization.

Mexican Pilgrimages

Robbery Under Law and *The Lawless Roads* were classified as 'travel books' on publication. However, these texts are more valuable for providing insights into the authors' criticisms of the Mexican political system and the effects of outlawing Catholicism, than as records of an individual's journey. Michael Brennan recognizes the significance of having two books by Catholic authors published in the same year on similar topics, as he states that Greene and Waugh 'briefly stood together at this period as a unified voice of British Catholic writing'.⁹ Their travel books differed enormously in many respects (such as the political bias of each author, the areas of Mexico in which they travelled, and the conditions of each journey), but Waugh and Greene responded with a shared disgust towards the atrocities committed against Mexican Catholics, and both criticized Mexico's socialist government. At the time of the authors' visit to the country, the Revolutionary Party of

⁹ Michael G. Brennan, *Graham Greene: Fiction, Faith and Authorship* (London: Continuum, 2010), 264.

Mexico was the country's sole political party; it was ostensibly a socialist regime defined by strong anti-religious policies.¹⁰

Although Waugh and Greene were fascinated by the treatment of Catholics abroad, the reasons behind their decisions to write about Mexico differed. Waugh was commissioned by Clive Pearson (whose father had founded the Mexican Eagle oil company) to write an account of the nationalization of all oil companies by Cárdenas (the President of Mexico). This account contributed to a wider 'campaign of anti-Mexican propaganda' being enacted by English-owned oil companies in response to Cárdenas's schemes.¹¹ It may appear odd that Waugh decided to write about oil companies instead of about the Catholic persecutions, but, as David Wykes suggests, Waugh connected the two forms of injustice: 'both Church and companies had been plundered from the same motive, human greed and cupidity. It is no hyperbole to say that for [Waugh] oil expropriation and

¹⁰ In 1925 General Álvaro Obregón Salido and Plutarco Elias Calles ordered the closure of churches throughout the country and officially supported the persecution of its Catholic priests and laymen. In 1928 Obregón was assassinated and General Lázaro Cárdenas was appointed to support Calles. With the help of General Cedillo, Cárdenas expelled Calles from office and executed him, before forcing Cedillo into rebellion by demanding his removal from his own territory. Cárdenas consequently became leader of Mexico, where he ran an anti-Catholic socialist regime with Vicente Lombardo Toledano. This regime was still operating by the time Waugh and Greene visited the country. For more on this topic see Jean A. Meyer, *The Cristero Rebellion: The Mexican People Between the Church and State, 1926-1929*, trans. Richard Southern (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976) and, more recently, Ross Hassig, *Mexico and the Spanish Conquest* (Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 2006).

¹¹ David Wykes, *Evelyn Waugh: A Literary Life* (London: Macmillan, 1999), 117. Bernard Schweizer reports: 'the effect of Waugh's *Robbery Under Law* on the course of Mexico's oil expropriation was virtually nil, partly because the outbreak of World War II shortly after its publication posed much more urgent threats than the economic fate of the Cowdray petroleum estate'. See *Radicals on the Road: The Politics of English Travel Writing in the 1930s* (Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 2001), 176.

the persecution of the Church were both consequences of Original Sin'.¹² Waugh also believed that the oil situation in Mexico threatened the stability of the rest of the world. He maintained that Mexico's governmental regime was 'an odd mixture of Nazism and communism representing most of the worst features of both systems', and that in the 'next few years, perhaps months' the regime was 'likely to throw in its lot definitely with one or another of the two extremes'.¹³ Such a choice, according to Waugh, would be 'of world significance'.¹⁴ Indeed, on observing the political and religious situation in Mexico, Waugh asked: 'is civilization, like a leper, beginning to rot at its extremities?' (*RUL 720*). *Robbery Under Law* is consequently a wide-ranging text that is not solely focused on issues to do with the oil industry. The text features sections on the political history of Mexico, an analysis of its current regime and how it evolved, and an examination of the nation's religious persecutions. In Waugh's thinking, Mexico becomes a paradigm of what would happen to a society that outlawed faith. As his text shows, he thought the repercussions of such a development would be dire.

The Lawless Roads was born from Greene's desire to witness for himself the maltreatment of Catholic Mexicans. However, he was still wary of being pigeon-holed as a 'Catholic writer', even when reporting on the abuse of his fellow believers. The Catholic publishers Sheed & Ward were initially approached to publish Greene's travel book, but Longman's eventually took over the publication process (much to Greene's satisfaction).¹⁵ Greene informed his London agent:

¹² Schweizer, *Radicals on the Road*, 118.

¹³ Letter to A. D. Peters, cited in Douglas Patey, *The Life of Evelyn Waugh: A Critical Biography* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), 166.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Despite showing initial interest, Sheed & Ward eventually refused to commission the book, on account of Mexico being too far away and that public interest in the persecutions (which were beginning to cease) could not be relied upon. See Sherry, *The Life of Graham Greene: Volume 1*, 658.

‘Personally, I would much rather be published by Longman’s – it would brand one less in the public eye as a Catholic writer’.¹⁶ Despite this disinclination to be overtly associated with the Catholic press, Brennan reports that the first instalments of *The Lawless Roads* ‘appeared in the Catholic periodical the *Tablet* on 14 May, 2 July, 13 August and 31 December 1938’.¹⁷ Greene’s public association with Catholicism remained complicated. Waugh was aware that his own account of Mexico was to be published soon after *The Lawless Roads* and when reviewing Greene’s text he emphasized the ways in which their journeys were dissimilar. A main difference was that their routes ‘seldom coincide[d]’.¹⁸ Greene crossed the frontier of the United States at Laredo and travelled to Mexico City; from there he ‘set out into the wilds’ through the state of Tabasco and subsequently entered Chiapas.¹⁹ He then journeyed through Oaxaca and Puebla, before returning to England. While Greene ‘covered the length and breadth of Mexico’ and travelled ‘alone’ as ‘a poor man’, Waugh stayed in the Hotel Ritz in Mexico City, and his trip ‘was confined to the relatively prosperous central tableland and excursions from the capital’.²⁰ Waugh admired the scope of Greene’s ‘heroic’ journey (compared to his more ‘homely’ one).²¹ He felt that Greene’s account was

¹⁶ Cited in Ian Thomson, ‘Graham Greene, Uneasy Catholic’, *TLS* (August 22, 2006). See <http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/others/article1888542.ece> (accessed 11/3/11).

¹⁷ Brennan, *Graham Greene*, 59.

¹⁸ Evelyn Waugh, ‘The Waste Land’, *The Spectator* (10 March, 1939): 413-14, 413.

¹⁹ Waugh, ‘The Waste Land’, 414.

²⁰ Stannard, *Evelyn Waugh: The Early Years*, 480. Despite taking predominantly dissimilar routes through Mexico, Waugh and Greene managed to visit a couple of the same tourist spots. They both journeyed to the shrine of the Virgin Mary in Guadalupe, and they visited the same secret convent of Santa Monica in Puebla (which had only recently been exposed and disbanded).

²¹ Waugh, ‘The Waste Land’, 413.

‘of great value’ because it provided an insight into such areas as Tabasco and Chiapas, which no ‘responsible traveller ha[d] visited’.²²

Furthermore, while Waugh considered his own publication to be ‘political’, since he ‘tried to give a more solid and general account’ of conditions in Mexico, he maintained that *The Lawless Roads* was more of a ‘day-to-day account’ of Greene’s movements.²³ Nonetheless, Waugh recognized that Greene’s style of writing appeared to reflect a political stance. He suggested that Greene’s ‘cinematographic shots of present conditions’ provided evidence of ‘the manifest follies and iniquities’ of Cárdenas’s regime, and he claimed that these images were all ‘the more damning’ because they were ‘not linked by any political thesis’.²⁴ As noted in Chapter Four, Greene’s documentary style of writing meant that he presented stark images and allowed them to speak for themselves. He consequently refrained from making any detailed criticisms of the Mexican government in *The Lawless Roads*, and instead implied his condemnation by accurately describing a decaying society. Waugh agreed with aspects of Greene’s view regarding the role of a writer, as he explained that his duty in Mexico was to ‘notice things which the better experienced accept as commonplace’, rather than to act as a ‘benevolent dictator who can put right troubles which perplex the statesman’ (*RUL* 720). Despite this, Waugh set down in detail his personal criticisms of the political framework within Mexico and he used his perceptions of his surroundings to inform and support these views.

Waugh accused the Mexican government of practising a form of ‘merciless, fanatical atheism – an atheism that at the moment adopts Marxist language’ (*RUL* 864). Greene used similarly condemnatory terms to describe the regime, as he felt that it was out of control and dangerous, ‘like

²² Ibid., 414.

²³ Evelyn Waugh, ‘In Defence of Mexico’, *The Spectator* (24 June, 1939), 1095.

²⁴ Waugh, ‘The Waste Land’, 414.

an electric tram gone wild, sparking and jabbing down the Embankment' (LR 99). In Greene's view, social conditions in Mexico were characterized by 'complete irresponsibility' and 'lawless roads' (LR 52), and he noted with disgust the effects of the ruthless atheism taking hold there. In one instance, he employed a striking metaphor to describe the irreligious conditions in the southern state of Chiapas: 'There is a kind of cattle-tick you catch in Chiapas, which fastens its head in the flesh; you have to burn it out, otherwise the head remains embedded and festers' (LR 138). According to Greene, the locked-up churches, which stand 'shuttered and ruined and empty', similarly 'fester' (LR 138), along with the rest of the village. Despite Waugh's and Greene's agreement as to the extent of the repression of Catholicism, Bernard Schweizer maintains that by 1938 'the church had in most places almost recovered its former functions, if not all of its property assets', and that Cardenas 'had started the country on a return to religious "normality" three years before Greene visited Mexico'.²⁵ Consequently, Schweizer charges both Waugh and Greene with distorting their findings in Mexico.²⁶ Other critics have similarly accused the authors of manipulating their material. Judith Adamson finds fault with *The Lawless Roads* and claims that 'everything to do with the state is set in an atmosphere of violence and hopelessness while the stories about the Church are shaded in gentleness and excuse'.²⁷ For Stannard, Waugh reconstructs 'the information at his disposal into a right-wing polemic'.²⁸

²⁵ Schweizer, *Radicals on the Road*, 58, 75.

²⁶ Schweizer also indicates that Greene misrepresented the facts behind the religious persecution: 'What Greene describes as a one-sided religious persecution under President Calles was in fact a tripartite conflict in which the militant peasants who took up arms in defense of their religion (the so-called Cristeros) stood in opposition both to the state, which fought them, and to the church'. *Ibid.*, 75.

²⁷ Judith Adamson, *Graham Greene: The Dangerous Edge: Where Art and Politics Meet* (London: Macmillan, 1990), 52.

²⁸ Stannard, *Evelyn Waugh: The Early Years*, 480.

Stannard also maintains that Waugh was ashamed of his book – ‘it was a mistake and Waugh knew it’ – because he deliberately cut it from *When the Going Was Good* (1946), which was a collection of his travel writings.²⁹ Stannard concludes his harsh assessment of *Robbery Under Law* by stating that it may be ‘of interest to scholars as a period piece’ but is ‘perhaps best left in its dust’.³⁰ This sentiment is echoed by Richard Johnstone’s description of the text as ‘an otherwise forgettable book’.³¹ Contrary to this stance, Christopher Sykes argues that *Robbery Under Law* holds an extremely important place in Waugh’s body of work in this period. Sykes suggests that Waugh used his text as a platform upon which he outlined his position on several key issues: ‘Nowhere in his writings did he state with greater clarity his political convictions and preferences, and he expressed both within the context of his faith and his view of human destiny’.³² Baron Alder concurs. He states that *Robbery Under Law* provides ‘Waugh’s fullest, most frank elucidation of his faith’ and ‘perhaps the most beneficial insight into Waugh’s guiding philosophy’.³³ Sherry makes a parallel argument for *The Lawless Roads* and deems it to be Greene’s ‘personal credo’.³⁴ In all, disregarding the issue of historical accuracy, the travel books are important because of what they reveal about these authors’ thoughts on the relationship between faith, political regimes, and civilization in this period.

Even though some critics have accused Greene and Waugh of exaggerating the problems faced by Catholics in Mexico, both authors firmly believed that the country was suffering greatly

²⁹ Ibid., 487.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Richard Johnstone, *The Will to Believe: Novelists of the Nineteen-Thirties* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 96.

³² Christopher Sykes, *Evelyn Waugh: A Biography* (London: William Collins, 1975), 184.

³³ Baron Alder, ‘Evelyn Waugh’s Immortal Souls’, *Evelyn Waugh Newsletter and Studies* 33.2 (Autumn 2002). See http://www.lhup.edu/jwilson3/Newsletter_33.2.htm (accessed 17/3/11).

³⁴ Sherry, *The Life of Graham Greene: Volume 1*, 696.

from the effects of religious repression. Years later Greene recounted his experiences: 'I had seen the devotion of peasants praying in the priestless churches and I had attended Masses in upper rooms where the Sanctus bell could not sound for fear of the police' (*WE* 60). Having witnessed these scenes, he expressed his frustration with those who failed to take the repression seriously. Greene was especially angered by J. B. Trend, author of *Mexico: A New Spain with Old Friends* (1939), who maintained that he saw no sign of religious persecution whatsoever. Greene discussed Trend's book in a review entitled 'Don in Mexico' (1940), in which he referred to Trend as 'handicapped' by his 'ignorance of and antipathy to the religion of the country' (*CE* 252). He asked Trend to put aside his 'detestation' for Roman Catholic belief and to try and remember 'that those who held it were human' (*CE* 252). Waugh was comparably outraged to discover that Alexander Martin had accused him of misleading the public regarding Mexico's religious status. Martin wrote to the editor of *The Spectator* about Waugh's review of *The Lawless Roads*, and he dismissed the argument that Mexico was a Catholic country: 'Actually Mexico has never been a Roman Catholic country. There is all the formal apparatus of Catholicism. But spiritually the Church, that at one time owned half the capital wealth of Mexico, never existed'.³⁵ Waugh retaliated by asserting that 'the bulk of the population are devoutly Christian and have died in great numbers for their faith'.³⁶ In this statement, Waugh substantiated Greene's reports on conditions in Mexico and simultaneously defended Greene's work.

Furthermore, Waugh and Greene both drew parallels between conditions of religious repression in Mexico and those in England during the Reformation. Waugh claimed that the 'physically defenceless' Church was 'reduced to a state of bankruptcy' (*RUL* 791) by a greedy government that was in need of funds. In conjunction with the 'great steal', there was 'inevitably, the campaign of justification, of slander', which culminated in 'the firing-squads and the massacres'

³⁵ Alexander Martin, 'In Defence of Mexico', *The Spectator* (16 June, 1939), 1034.

³⁶ Waugh, 'In Defence of Mexico', 1095.

(RUL 869). Waugh suggested that Calles's establishment of an alternative National Church mirrored a process that 'had worked very well in similar circumstances in Tudor England' (RUL 873). Accordingly, Calles offered Catholic priests 'official favour and advancement' if they transferred their allegiance from the Pope to him, and he warned that 'persecution to the death' (RUL 873) was the alternative. The young priest Miguel Agustín Pro-Juárez (Father Pro) became one of Calles's most famous victims when he was executed in public in 1927. Greene likened Pro's death to Edmund Campion's martyrdom, in so far as Greene reported that Pro had returned to Mexico from a foreign seminary 'much as Campion returned to England from Douai', and that he had met with the 'fiercest persecution of religion anywhere since the reign of Elizabeth' (LR 16).³⁷

In line with his criticisms of Elizabethan England, Waugh argued that by outlawing Catholicism the Mexican government had 'obliterated the single common bond which united the heterogeneous population' (RUL 791-92). He maintained that the Church represented an 'extra national force', and that it had provided 'such unity as the country ever enjoyed', in a land where 'nationality, colour and race are so confused' and 'the divisions of class so artificially emphasized' (RUL 898). Johnstone recognizes that the suppression of Catholicism 'is equivalent in Waugh's mind to the destruction of order'.³⁸ Waugh was also concerned with the population's morality. He felt that future generations were 'growing up without any intellectual or moral standards' (RUL 861), and that

³⁷ Greene's interest in Elizabethan martyrdom began in the nineteen twenties. According to Brennan, Greene had 'considered compiling a life of the Elizabethan Catholic poet and martyr Robert Southwell', and his 'preliminary researches during late-1926 into Southwell's heroic death [...] stimulated a sustained interest in the heroism of Jesuit martyrology'. See *Graham Greene*, 7. Instead, Greene ended up writing *Lord Rochester's Monkey: Being the Life of John Wilmot, Second Earl of Rochester*. Although this text was written in 1934, it was not published until 1974.

³⁸ Johnstone, *The Will to Believe*, 96

every year Mexico became 'hungrier, wickeder, and more hopeless' (*RUL* 862) in tandem with the waning presence of religious belief.

Greene fictionalizes the social effects of Catholic persecution in a short story entitled 'The Lottery Ticket' (1938). The story explores a European response to the Mexican situation and criticizes the notion that a politically progressive regime replaced a regressive and superstitious Catholic way of life. The British protagonist, Mr Thriplow, stays in a 'grim little tropical state' (*LT* 126) in Mexico. He notices that churches 'had been destroyed throughout the state and the priests hunted out' (*LT* 128), but he does not explore this issue further. Thriplow wins a small fortune from the Mexican lottery and he decides to donate the money to the local government because he 'should like to do good' for the country (*LT* 129). He feels his 'old Liberal traditions' (*LT* 131) stirring when he presents the money to the Governor, at which point he is told that it will be used to fund 'progress' (*LT* 132). However, Thriplow discovers that the government's idea of 'progress' is to repress any chance of a religious revival. The Governor claims that the Catholics pose a threat to social stability because they are 'plotting rebellion' and are 'getting arms from Germany, Italy, Japan' (*LT* 132). Thriplow soon encounters a proprietor who represents the local Catholic response to the situation. The proprietor passionately explains that the 'progress' promised by the government has led only to social disorder and an increase in gunmen and murderers: "Progress." The electric light went out completely, and then went on again showing the proprietor's face convulsed. He screamed, "Pistoleros. Asesinos" (*LT* 135). Thriplow is horrified. He realizes that by donating his lottery money to the Governor, he has inadvertently helped to keep a violent regime in power.

Thriplow subsequently overhears a crowd of soldiers on their way to arrest the head of the Catholic opposition. He rushes to the candidate's home in order to alert him, and he is met by the candidate's daughter. In response to Thriplow's warnings, she claims ambiguously that "it doesn't matter" (*LT* 136) because her father is in no real danger, unlike the soldiers and Thriplow: "they are in danger ... and you" (*LT* 137). Gradually, the girl reveals that she had been a nun: "I was in a

convent, but they destroyed it” (LT 137). She then informs Thriplow that her father has already been arrested and is probably dead by now. She gently asks Thriplow for money – “perhaps I can bribe someone and get a priest to bury him” – but she is far from bitter: “I can see you are a kind man. Only ignorant ... of life I mean,” she added with the devastating pride and simplicity of the convent (LT 138-39). Thriplow is distraught: ‘hate spread across his Liberal consciousness’ (LT 139), and he leans against a wall, weeping. In his distressed and powerless condition he becomes symbolic of the general state of local religious Mexicans. He is mistaken ‘for a fellow-countryman’ (LT 139) by a passer-by, and he is addressed in Spanish. To begin with, Thriplow had regarded Catholicism with ‘faint disapproval’ (LT 128) and he was unaffected by its suppression. By the end of the story, he empathizes with the injustice and violence involved in the anti-Catholic regime, as he witnesses firsthand the emotional pain and the physical punishments suffered by the locals who are prevented from practising their faith.

In *Robbery Under Law*, Waugh depicted the Mexican political system in similarly unflattering terms. He noted the widespread social decay in the country and described Mexico as a ‘waste land’ that was ‘part of a dead or, at any rate, a dying planet’ (RUL 720). He attributed this decay to politics, which, ‘everywhere destructive’, had ‘dried up the place, frozen it, cracked it and powdered it to dust’ (RUL 720). In particular, Waugh made a direct link between the failings of the Mexican government and its leftist ideology: ‘Every marked step in her decline, in fact, has corresponded with an experiment towards “the Left”’ (RUL 919). Interestingly, Waugh conflated communism and socialism when discussing the Mexican government. He described the regime as communist in nature when in fact it followed more of a socialist framework. Despite these inaccuracies, Waugh’s disparaging attitude towards leftist ideology in general is apparent. Unlike the socialists and communists of his time, Waugh believed that ‘inequalities of wealth and position’ were ‘inevitable’ and that it was ‘therefore meaningless to discuss the advantages of their elimination’ (RUL 730). He also applied this perspective to the class system. He argued that class distinctions

were an innate part of human society – ‘men naturally arrange themselves in a system of classes’ – and he maintained that they in fact ‘keep a nation together’, because ‘such a system is necessary for any form of cooperative work’ (*RUL 730*). He consequently failed to show any sympathy towards the incidences of injustice, oppression, and inequality experienced by those within the disadvantaged classes. Waugh’s attitude derived from his Catholic belief in a supernatural reality. He was convinced that justice could only be attained in the ‘next’ world and he dismissed the idea that secular political systems could improve society. Moreover, Waugh believed that man was tainted by Original Sin and had ‘no claims to an existence of uninterrupted bliss’ in ‘this world’ (*RUL 729*). Accordingly, since man will ‘never be self-sufficient or complete on this earth’ (*RUL 729*), any ideology that aimed to provide such earthly fulfilment was fatally flawed: social inequality should just be accepted as an intrinsic part of fallen human society. Waugh’s passive attitude to social inequality is completely at odds with Greene’s social awareness and concern for vulnerable members of societies, and it represents a key difference in their conceptions of Catholicism at this time.

Greene recognized the desperate impoverishment of many Mexicans when he described his visit to the West Side: ‘Nowhere in Mexico did I see quite so extreme a poverty’ (*LR 24*). Greene praised the efforts of a local Catholic priest, Father López, who confronted the government over these conditions. López organized a strike in protest against the government’s attempt to cut the wages of workers in a shelling factory. Greene suggested that the strike ‘was the first example [he] had come across of genuine Catholic Action on a social issue’, as this ‘old, fiery, half-blind Archbishop’ attempted to ‘put into force the papal encyclicals which have condemned capitalism’ (*LR 25*). Greene stated that the Bible contained inspirational ‘words of revolution’ which should be heeded, and he cited St. James’s damning indictment of wealth and greed: ‘Go to now, ye rich men: weep and howl in your miseries which shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted’ (*LR 26*). Unfortunately, López was ‘out-manoeuvred’ because the communists soon took over the strike, and he had to make do with the ‘the dim promise that account books shall be inspected’ (*LR 26*).

Reflecting upon López's rather 'pathetic' attempt to make a difference to the lives of the poor, Greene concluded that Catholicism 'had to rediscover the technique of revolution' (*LR* 26). Greene believed that Catholics should actively seek to confront and to redress social injustice in order to fulfil the Bible's teachings regarding poverty and oppression.

Greene's interest in the social and political work of Catholic priests anticipated his connection with Liberation Theology in the nineteen sixties and seventies.³⁹ Patrick Sherry explains that this theology, which was developed in parts of the Third World (especially South and Central America) during the nineteen sixties, viewed sin as 'embodied in oppressive social structures, which produce exploitation and domination'.⁴⁰ Liberation Theologians consequently called upon the Church 'to take a vigorous role in denouncing oppression and fighting for justice'.⁴¹ The theologians argued that Christ's work with the vulnerable and the oppressed should be followed because 'the search for social justice is part of the very essence of the gospel'.⁴² Speaking to Maria Couto in 1988, Greene discussed his view of Liberation Theology. He claimed that he was "'all for it'" if it meant that priests were "'allowed to play their part in politics in defence of the poor"'.⁴³ He also maintained that

³⁹ This is especially evident in the character of Dr Magiot in Greene's *The Comedians* (1966), a Marxist who believed that Catholicism should be associated with communism in order to fight against social oppression. Furthermore, in *The Honorary Consul* (1973), there is a sympathetic portrait of a revolutionary priest called Father Rivas. For more about the history and specific theological arguments behind Liberation Theology, see Patrick Sherry, *What is Liberation Theology?* (London: The Incorporated Catholic Truth Society, 1985).

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 1.

⁴² Thomas Woodman, *Faithful Fictions: The Catholic Novel in British Literature* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1991), 37.

⁴³ Maria Couto, *Graham Greene on the Frontier: Politics and Religion in the Novels* (London: Macmillan Press, 1988), 213.

in South America (at the time of his conversation with Couto) Christianity was “as it always should have been – with the Church actively involved in the struggle for justice”⁴⁴

Sherry recognizes that there are strong connections between the beliefs of Liberation Theologians and Marxist arguments for social equality, as many ‘Liberation Theologians sympathize with the Marxist position that a change in social structures is needed to transform people’.⁴⁵ However, Marxism’s atheism and materialism meant that Greene (and Liberation Theologians in general) did not look to it as being the solution to problems within modern societies. Greene’s anti-totalitarian stance (and consequently anti-Marxist position) was explicit when he stated that ‘perhaps the only body in the world today which consistently – and sometimes successfully – opposes the totalitarian State is the Catholic Church’ (*LR* 79). Greene felt that the Church should take inspiration from, but not be dominated by, Marxist ideals, and that it should form a social force unto itself, working for the greater good of mankind. In contrast, Waugh made no mention of Catholicism in relation to social justice, and his only engagement with Marxist ideals was in terms of disparagement. In Waugh’s view, communists believed that man’s real duty in life was to ‘get through the largest possible amount of consumable goods and to produce those goods in the largest possible quantities so that he may consume them’ (*RUL* 891). Expanding on this, Waugh believed that Marxism did not take into account spiritual issues and instead viewed human nature reductively, as it proposed: ‘the only real good of which man is capable is the enjoyment of consumable goods’ (*RUL* 916).

By analysing the Mexican political context, Waugh was able to examine his own views about the relationship between a government and its people. According to Patey, ‘nowhere else did Waugh argue so fully his belief that the thirties presented three models of government’: the choice between

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 212.

⁴⁵ Sherry, *What is Liberation Theology?*, 11-12.

individuals, fascism, and communism.⁴⁶ As I discussed in my previous chapter, Waugh preferred fascism to communism, but ultimately he would choose democracy over a totalitarian regime. In *Robbery Under Law* he outlined his conservative democratic beliefs, and he established his political position from the beginning: ‘Let me, then, warn the reader that I was a Conservative when I went to Mexico and that everything I saw there strengthened my opinions’ (*RUL* 729). Waugh’s conservative stance was inextricably related to his Catholic perspective. His faith informed his belief in the innate barbarism of mankind that would manifest itself as violence and civil unrest if left unrestrained. In Waugh’s view, ‘men cannot live together without rules’ (*RUL* 730), and the ‘anarchic elements in society’ make it a ‘whole-time task to keep the peace’ (*RUL* 730).⁴⁷ At the end of the travelogue he concluded that civilization was ‘under constant assault’ (*RUL* 917), and, as a consequence of this, most of a government’s energies should be taken up by trying to maintain order.⁴⁸ Waugh believed that such secular political regimes as communism were fundamentally flawed because they failed to take into account the fact that ‘barbarism is never finally defeated’, and ‘given propitious circumstances, men and women who seem quite orderly, will commit every conceivable atrocity’ (*RUL* 917). Stannard acknowledges that Waugh’s contemporaries felt such statements were ‘hyperbolic misanthropy’, but, as Stannard argues, they are ‘fair comment’, since ‘Auschwitz and

⁴⁶ Patey, *The Life of Evelyn Waugh*, 167.

⁴⁷ It needs to be noted that Waugh was not against all forms of dissidence. He believed that ‘one of the good effects of discipline should be to provoke a healthy resistance in the more enterprising and self-reliant spirits’ (*RUL* 861). He felt such ‘disobedience’ was valuable to society in the form of a ‘Bohemian student body’ (*RUL* 861), but only if it was a product of stable social conditions.

⁴⁸ Chapters One and Three of this thesis discussed the corresponding political beliefs held by T. S. Eliot and T. E. Hulme, whose versions of conservatism were similarly informed by Christian concepts of Original Sin and the need for boundaries to maintain social order.

Belsen were yet to come'.⁴⁹ Even though Waugh believed in the necessity of a democratic government because of his Catholic view of man, he admitted that his faith did not dictate the form of democracy which he should support: 'there is no form of government ordained from God as being better than any other' (*RUL* 730), which is why 'at elections some Catholics vote Conservative and some of them vote Labour' (*RUL* 866). For Waugh, the most important aspect of political regimes was that religious principles were an essential component of them, because without such principles, 'no political programme has any value' (*RUL* 900).

In *The Lawless Roads*, Greene developed a similar perspective on human fallibility in relation to Original Sin. He believed that 'there is no peace anywhere where there is human life' (*LR* 31), and he admitted to 'expecting the worst of human nature' (*LR* 161). Corresponding with Waugh's perception that all humans are capable of behaving abominably, Greene described growing up and gradually becoming aware that 'appalling cruelties could be practised without a second thought' (*LR* 10). It was because of this recognition of pervasive evil that Greene came to believe in God:

And so faith came to one – shapelessly, without dogma, a presence above a croquet lawn, something associated with violence, cruelty and evil across the way. One began to believe in heaven because one believed in hell, but for a long while it was only hell one could picture with a certain intimacy. (*LR* 10)

The parallels with Pinkie from *Brighton Rock* are clear: Greene approached religious belief through his recognition of humanity's innate evil, which confirmed for him the existence of hell and consequently led him to believe in heaven. Greene's fear of human evil was especially evident when he discussed his concerns about the lack of baptisms in Mexico. He believed that the Catholic

⁴⁹ Stannard, *Evelyn Waugh: The Early Years*, 483.

Sacrament of Baptism established the ‘holiness of the child’ and helped parents to ‘shelter innocence’ in their homes. In Greene’s view, Mexican society would suffer dire social repercussions without these sacraments: ‘It is not inconceivable that the worst evil possible to natural man may be found years hence in Mexico’ (*LR* 181). In Greene’s thinking, the innate evil within human beings would become overpowering if there were no Catholic structures put in place to help to contain it.

Waugh noted the pessimism within Greene’s religious perspective when he reviewed *The Lawless Roads*. He described Greene as ‘an Augustinian Christian’ who was ‘a believer in the dark age of Mediterranean decadence when the barbarians were pressing along the frontiers and the City of God seemed yearly more remote and unattainable’.⁵⁰ John Stinson defines the Augustinian view of humankind as one that ‘emphasizes our propensity to sinfulness because of the inheritance of original sin’.⁵¹ Waugh understood that Greene distrusted the notion of widespread human goodness and that he believed in man’s propensity for evil: ‘Contemplation of the horrible ways in which men exercise their right of choice leads [Greene] into something very near a hatred of free-will’.⁵² In Bernard Bergonzi’s view, this Augustinian stance also informs Waugh’s writing of the period: ‘this may have been true of Greene at that time; it was certainly the way Waugh liked to think of himself’.⁵³ Waugh and Greene were in agreement about the fallibility of man. They believed that Catholicism should be a vital part of any society because it recognized mankind’s innate barbarism and its ability to commit evil, and it provided a system of religious justice to deal with such fallibility.

⁵⁰ Waugh, ‘The Waste Land’, 414.

⁵¹ John Stinson, ‘Evelyn Waugh and Anthony Burgess: Some Parallels as Catholic Writers’, *Evelyn Waugh Newsletter and Studies* 39.2 (Autumn 2008). See http://www.lhup.edu/jwilson3/Newsletter_39.2.htm (accessed 17/3/11).

⁵² Waugh, ‘The Waste Land’, 414.

⁵³ Bernard Bergonzi, *A Study in Greene: Graham Greene and the Art of the Novel* (Oxford: University of Oxford Press, 2006), 110.

Waugh's and Greene's respective positions on Catholicism also aligned with regards to their shared belief in its universality. It was because of this belief that Waugh rejected the argument that Mexicans should be allowed to worship their own pagan gods. He condemned the attitudes of such writers as Philip Terry, whom he accused of thinking that 'it is absurd to pretend that [the Indians] are worshipping the same God as well-fed, expensively educated Americans and Europeans' because 'the Indian is a subhuman creature; if he once thought a heathen goddess was his mother, he does still' (*RUL* 879-80). On the contrary, Waugh stated that Indians were 'men and women and souls', and that God was the father 'of all humankind' (*RUL* 879). Greene made a similar argument when he claimed that 'if one believes in Christianity at all, one must believe in its universal validity. A Christian cannot believe in one God for Europe and another God for Africa' (*LR* 88). Despite Greene's inclusive language, he could not hide his contempt (and at times, hatred) for the Mexicans.

Greene's animosity towards the Mexican population was especially apparent when discussing his experiences in Tabasco. He recognized that Mexican states endured different degrees of religious persecution and that the general populations responded with varying degrees of rebellion. While Churches were allowed to re-open in some of the states Greene travelled through, a policy of repression was still operating in Tabasco. This policy involved the destruction of every church, along with the organization of a militia of Red-Shirts that prevented illegal church services and hunted priests in order to imprison them.⁵⁴ Tabasco fascinated and thrilled Greene; he sensed that he would be able to experience the full ramifications of life in an essentially 'Godless' state. On entering Tabasco, he described his awareness of 'drawing near to the centre of something – if it was only of darkness and abandonment' (*LR* 126). Greene's initial enthrallment soon changed to frustration. He

⁵⁴ Greene mentioned the fate of one priest who had managed to escape the militia and who had existed 'for ten years in the forests and swamps, venturing out only at night' (*LR* 117). This priest became the inspiration for the protagonist of Greene's novel *The Power and the Glory* (1940).

felt that the local Catholics were apathetic in their response to the repression of their religion: 'There were no secret Masses in private houses such as are found in the neighbouring state, only a dreadful lethargy as the Catholics died slowly out' (*LR* 137). Greene confessed to experiencing an 'almost pathological hatred' (*LR* 163) towards the Mexican population, as he admitted that he began to 'hate these people' for their religious indifference, and because they never appeared to 'help each other in small ways [...] they just sit about' (*LR* 227). Indeed, he came worryingly close to justifying the mass murder of Catholics in Spain during the Spanish Civil War: 'If Spain is like this, I can understand the temptation to massacre' (*LR* 227). Waugh recognized that Greene's account of Mexico and its inhabitants 'becomes savage' in places, but he defended Greene by confirming that even 'the most buoyant' soon 'feel crushed by the weight of sheer, hopeless wickedness'.⁵⁵ Michael Shelden is less forgiving of Greene's statements about the Mexicans. Shelden claims that Greene's racist message was clear: 'Mexicans are less than human, and the urge to hate such people is understandable, even if that urge leads to thoughts of murder'.⁵⁶ In my view, Greene's bitterness is significant because it reveals the strength of his Catholic feelings and the sincerity of his belief that religious commitment needed to be reignited in Tabasco. Nevertheless, his underlying attitude of racist superiority and his embittered condemnation of certain Mexicans cannot be elided from his way of thinking. These remain uncomfortable aspects of his text.

Waugh articulated a comparable form of racism when he discussed Mexican culture and its Spanish heritage. He maintained that the 'traditions of Spain are still deep in Mexican character and I believe that it is only by developing them that the country can ever grow happy' (*RUL* 764). He thought that Mexico should focus on cultivating its Spanish heritage instead of 'squandering' (*RUL* 732) money on reconstructing its Aztec past. Waugh's stance reflected his belief that the Spanish

⁵⁵ Waugh, 'The Waste Land', 414.

⁵⁶ Michael Shelden, *Graham Greene: The Man Within* (London: Heinemann, 1994), 260.

invasion in the sixteenth century transformed Mexico into a 'land of magnificent architecture and prosperous industry', a place characterized by 'civil peace and high culture'.⁵⁷ However, Waugh contended that Mexico 'became dry and dusty' (*RUL* 764) once its 'European source was cut off' (*RUL* 764). Dan Kostopulos states that 'Waugh's Rightist sympathies and apologies for imperialism [...] reach some of their fullest and most direct expression' in *Robbery Under Law*, and he criticizes Waugh for being incapable of 'envisioning a "Mexican" culture distinct and autonomous from its Western heritage'.⁵⁸ Kostopulos also paraphrases Waugh's stance in *Robbery Under Law*: 'like the rest of the so-called Third World, the Mexicans are incapable of acting for themselves. They must [...] be acted for and upon by white Europeans'.⁵⁹ For Selina Hastings, Waugh believed 'the horror' of the Spanish invasion 'transcended politics', as he felt that the final result of the colonization made the invasion worthwhile.⁶⁰

My previous chapter outlined the problematic aspects of Waugh's imperialistic thinking in relation to the Italian invasion of Abyssinia. Like his discussion of the Italian colonizers, Waugh failed to mention the appalling injustices committed by the Spaniards when they invaded Mexico. In his study on the Spanish Conquest, Hugh Thomas lists some of these atrocities: 'the enslavement of numerous Indians, forced labour extracted from others, the execution of leaders, the destruction of native monuments, sculptures and books as works of the devil, as well as the trauma of military defeat'.⁶¹ Furthermore, when Waugh described the conversion of Mexico to Catholicism, he did so in

⁵⁷ Waugh, 'The Waste Land', 414.

⁵⁸ Dan S. Kostopulos, 'Mexico Imagined: *Robbery Under Law* and the Lessons of Mexican Travel', in Carlos Villar Flor and Robert Murray Davis (eds), *Waugh Without End: New Trends in Evelyn Waugh Studies* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2005): 115-30, 119.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 120.

⁶⁰ Selina Hastings, *Evelyn Waugh: A Biography* (Minerva: London, 1995), 376.

⁶¹ Hugh Thomas, *The Conquest of Mexico* (London: Pimlico, 1994), 592.

terms of gradual and logical change. He did not consider the natives' bereavement at the destruction of their traditional way of life, as he made no mention of the 'despair' that was 'caused by the death of the old gods and beliefs'.⁶² Waugh even suggested that the Mexicans were already approaching Christian ideas by themselves, and that the Spaniards simply helped guide them in the right direction: 'They had, for instance, the conception of sacrifice in a highly developed but monstrous form. For the mass butchery of the Aztec temples the missionaries substituted the conception of a single, unique human sacrifice, daily consummated on the new altars' (*RUL* 875). Waugh's discussion of Mexico's conversion demonstrated his belief that a Christian civilization was better than a pagan one, regardless of how it was established.

Greene shared Waugh's view of the need for Catholicism within Mexican society. Greene felt that faith's 'enormous supernatural promise' rendered life 'happier' than any secular alternative, because life on earth was ultimately vacuous and meaningless without the belief in the possibility of heaven or hell to give importance to human actions. Greene suggested that the alternative to a religious lifestyle could be found in modern secular America, which 'wasn't evil' – in fact, 'it wasn't anything at all', it was just a 'sinless empty chromium world' (*LR* 209) that was based upon 'the petty social fulfilment, the tiny pension and the machine-made furniture' (*LR* 51).⁶³ J. P. Kulshrestha refers to this section of *The Lawless Roads* as a 'plea for faith', because Greene presents his fear that if Catholicism continues to be repressed in Mexico, the country could evolve into a society 'based on

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Greene's equation of nothingness with secularity links back to Chapter Four, in which Pinkie and Rose concur that the irreligious character Ida Arnold is "just nothing" (*BR* 180). Indeed, this concept has been a key idea throughout my discussion of Greene's thinking in the inter-war period, as Chapter Three discussed Greene's essay on Henry James and the "religious sense", which similarly associated religious belief with the acknowledgment of a deeper, more complex reality.

material prosperity untouched by grace'.⁶⁴ Greene's condemnation of the inherent hollowness of material satisfaction represented a denunciation of Mexico's secular socialist government, which he believed could never provide for the Mexicans in the same way as Catholicism. Waugh's prediction for the future of a secular Mexican society was more apocalyptic than Greene's sense of a developing hollowness. As I have mentioned, Waugh believed that the 'fall' of Mexico would have disastrous repercussions for the rest of the world: 'we shall see not merely the dissolution of a few joint-stock corporations, but of the spiritual and material achievements of our history' (*RUL* 917). It is an emphatic ending, and it caused Stannard to label *Robbery Under Law* 'hysterical'.⁶⁵ In Waugh's defence, the text was written on the eve of the Second World War, and, as Samuel Hynes notes, 'a commonplace of the time' was an 'apocalyptic sense of an end of everything – of the world and history and the private self'.⁶⁶

Despite Waugh's and Greene's fears for the future of Mexico, both retained a sense of hope that derived from their awareness that there were still Mexican Catholics who cared about their faith. Although Greene was frustrated by the religious apathy of some Mexicans, he was also humbled by the strength of commitment shown by others. He concluded that a 'courage and a sense of responsibility had revived with the persecution' (*WE* 66). Greene's discernment of religious dedication informed his belief that the Church could eventually re-establish itself: 'there were always catacombs where the secret rite could be kept alive until the bad times passed' (*LR* 39). Greene also recognized and valued the work of 'underground' Catholics who secretly educated the next generation in Catholic beliefs, and he revealed that their efforts were being rewarded: 'A training-college for girls started at the time of the worst persecution to instruct leaders among the laity

⁶⁴ J. P. Kulshrestha, *Graham Greene: The Novelist* (London: Macmillan, 1977), 74.

⁶⁵ Stannard, *Evelyn Waugh: The Early Years*, 487.

⁶⁶ Samuel Hynes, *The Auden Generation: Literature and Politics in England in 1930s* (London: Pimlico, 1992), 297.

numbered six in 1926; now fifty-six thousand have been trained in theology and dogma' (*LR* 80).

Waugh was similarly hopeful about the permanence of faith and the survival of Catholicism in Mexico. He praised the educational work of Catholics who were 'out of sight' (*RUL* 897) and referred to the collaboration between laypeople and their bishops as a 'religious revival', because they worked to 'train and maintain teachers' in order to 'counteract the official atheism' (*RUL* 898).

I suggest that Waugh's and Greene's shared conviction in faith's ability to survive partly derives from their aforementioned investigations into the Elizabethan persecution of recusants. The Reformation revealed to these authors that Catholicism could endure in even the direst of circumstances. Indeed, Waugh argued that the rise and fall of religious belief was an integral characteristic of the Church: 'here seeming to lie fallow, there bursting into sudden flower; a Christian civilisation dies in the Eastern Mediterranean, another rises in the forests of the North; she has her fount of continual renewal' (*RUL* 871). Greene used analogous images of renewal when he stated: 'History tends to prove that Faith is reborn from its own embers'.⁶⁷ However, Waugh indicated that faith cannot survive forever under repressive conditions, because Catholicism was 'not a mere system of philosophic propositions and historical facts' (*RUL* 890); it was 'a habit of life and a social organisation' (*RUL* 891). Waugh suggested that the Church would never be eradicated as long as there were believers to carry on its traditions and to live out its teachings. Greene's frustration with apathetic Mexicans implied that he also felt that faith must be fought for by its believers, else it would die out. Thus, although Waugh and Greene believed in the eternal nature of faith, nonetheless they recognized that Catholics needed to work at keeping faith alive.

In all, Waugh's and Greene's experiences in Mexico awakened them to the social consequences of religious repression and made them sensitive to the increasing secularity of their

⁶⁷ Marie-Françoise Allain, *The Other Man: Conversations with Graham*, trans. Guido Waldman (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1983), 162.

own culture. They concurred that the absence of religion in Mexico had led to a pervasive sense of hopelessness and to forms of social disintegration. Greene even felt that the country had in places become tangibly evil. Furthermore, in their separate evaluations of Mexico, Waugh and Greene cited Catholicism as having provided qualities of hope, order, and meaning within a society that would be otherwise vacuous, disordered, and barbaric.

The Nightmare World of Modern Secular Society

The outbreak of the Second World War in September 1939 caused many writers to reflect on the nature of civilization that was under threat and to consider its future. According to Hynes, by 1939 the 'deceased' decade had effectively become a 'subject for discussion, to be analyzed, simplified, generalized about, and judged'.⁶⁸ George Orwell was a key writer who examined the nature of English society in the late thirties. He described the atmosphere as that of a '*shrinking world*' and solemnly concluded that the 'democratic vistas' had ended in 'barbed wire', and that there was 'less emphasis on the cradle, endlessly rocking, more and more emphasis on the teapot, endlessly stewing'.⁶⁹ This sense of stagnation and claustrophobia is echoed by Waugh in his introduction to *When the Going Was Good* (1946). Waugh contemplated the changing tone of his travel writing during the thirties and concluded: 'each book, I found on re-reading, had a slightly grimmer air, as, year by year, the shades of the prison house closed'.⁷⁰ Andrzej Gasiorek perceives that Greene's novels in the thirties evoke a comparable sense of 'a shrinking world', because they 'document a

⁶⁸ Hynes, *The Auden Generation*, 382.

⁶⁹ George Orwell, 'Inside the Whale' (1940), in *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell, Volume 1: An Age Like This 1920-1940*, eds Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus (London: Penguin Books, 1970): 540-78, 548.

⁷⁰ Evelyn Waugh, *When the Going Was Good* (1946) (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1976), 10.

slow slide into hopelessness'.⁷¹ Indeed, Waugh's *Work Suspended* and Greene's *The Confidential Agent* represent these authors' evaluations of English and European societies in the late thirties, which they felt were disintegrating in various ways.

Work Suspended is set in England just before the outbreak of the Second World War. The novel establishes an atmosphere of deterioration by opening with a theme of death, as Plant learns that his father has been run down by a motor car. Prior to his demise, Plant's father claims to be the 'sole survivor' of a special social class: 'the moneyless, landless, educated gentry' (WS 235). Waugh uses the motif of destructive modernity in the form of a motor car to symbolize the eradication of this outmoded way of life. The culprit responsible for the old man's death is Arthur Atwater, a travelling salesman who epitomizes the new social class in England. Sykes describes Atwater as a 'lost soul of the aspiring middle class, lower public school, lower intelligentsia, lower human being'.⁷² Atwater's insolence and insensitivity become apparent when he bursts into Plant's life unannounced and confesses to the manslaughter of Plant's father. In a moment of astounding audacity, Atwater asks Plant for a loan because he lost his job due to the car accident, and he wants to move to Africa in order to start over. Plant addresses Atwater in a wryly amusing passage: "have I misunderstood you, or are you asking me to break the law by helping you to evade your trial and also give you a large sum of money?" (WS 263). Plant's one concession is to reimburse the money Atwater spent on sending flowers to the funeral of Plant's father. However, Atwater is keen to defend his honour and turns 'with a look of scorn' before announcing haughtily: "Those flowers were a sacred thing. You wouldn't understand that, would you? I'd have starved to send them. I may have sunk pretty low, but I have some decency left" (WS 264). The decency of his gesture does not last long, as Atwater

⁷¹ Andrzej Gasiorek, 'Rendering Justice to the Visible World: History, Politics and National Identity in the Novels of Graham Greene', in Marina MacKay and Lyndsey Stonebridge (eds) *British Fiction After Modernism: The Novel at Mid-Century* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007): 17-32, 18.

⁷² Sykes, *Evelyn Waugh: A Biography*, 306-7.

quickly returns to accept the monetary offer. In the novel's 'Postscript' (written in 1942), Plant reflects upon the rise of Atwater's class once war has broken out. Plant notes that while the lives of his class 'came quietly to an end', Atwater 'prospered and the Good-scout predominated' (WS 320). Waugh suggests that Atwater (and his despicable values) survive the war and symbolize the new dominant social class of England.

Along with charting the demise of a particular class, Waugh records other forms of decay, including the destruction and hideous renovation of London's buildings and architecture. At the time of his father's death, Plant notes the 'painfully evident' transformation of the buildings encircling his family home: 'The skyline of the garden was broken on three sides by blocks of flats' (WS 242). This peripheral destruction soon imposes itself upon his home, as Plant realizes that it would have to be sold so that someone could essentially 'pull it to pieces' (WS 244). He visualizes the renovation of the house in terms of a destructive cycle in which the house is replaced by an inferior version: 'another great, uninhabitable barrack would appear, like a refugee ship in harbour; it would be filled, sold, emptied, resold, refilled, re-emptied, while the concrete got discoloured and the green wood shrank' (WS 244). George McCartney recognizes that the destruction of ancient housing in order to make way for functional modern buildings is a recurring theme in Waugh's novels: 'This is Waugh's image of a rootless modernity'.⁷³ The rebuilding of homes signifies the restless search for the 'new', which was epitomized by Otto Silenus's renovation of Kings Thursday in *Decline and Fall* (1928) and the chromium-plated flats (which were made by splitting-up houses) in *A Handful of Dust* (1934).

In *Work Suspended* ancient forms of architecture have become so rare that they are idealized by Plant and his contemporaries, who 'professed a special enthusiasm for domestic architecture' (WS 270). Significantly, it is the buildings 'in the classical tradition, and, more particularly, in its decay'

⁷³ George McCartney, *Evelyn Waugh and the Modernist Tradition* (New Jersey: Transaction, 2004), 73-74.

(WS 271) which appeal to them the most. In 'A Call to the Orders' (1938), Waugh associated classical forms of architecture with 'correct' aesthetics, because they were founded upon the classical 'Orders' of design. As stated by Waugh, the Orders were a set of design rules 'based on that of Imperial Rome' that valued 'exact measurement and proportion' (EAR 218). Waugh's aforementioned Bellocian esteem for Imperial Rome is evident in his description of the Roman-inspired tradition as 'civilized', as well as in his claim that it represented the ideals of 'grace' and 'decency' (EAR 215). He also asserted that 'the monuments of our Augustan age of architecture' were 'strewn over England', and that these 'civilized buildings' provided 'convalescence from the post-war Corbusier plague' (EAR 215), which 'passed over' England and left its face 'scarred and pitted' (EAR 216). According to Waugh, during the 'plague' of modern architecture, 'horrible little architects crept' around Europe 'explaining their "machines for living"' (EAR 216). The phrase 'machines for living' was used by Le Corbusier (born Charles-Édouard Jeanneret-Gris) to describe his buildings, and Waugh seemed to refer to the architect's work when he discussed the ludicrous design of modern architecture: 'Villas like sewage farms, mansions like half-submerged Channel steamers, offices like vast bee-hives and cucumber farms sprang up round their feet' (EAR 216). Waugh also deemed these buildings to be inimical to their inhabitants, as they were 'furnished with electric fires that blistered their ankles' and with 'windows that blinded the eyes' (EAR 216), which suggests that, for Waugh, the new architecture was harmful and impractical (as well as ugly).

Le Corbusier outlined some aspects of his aesthetics in *Toward an Architecture* (1928). In one section of the text he wrote:

We must create a mass-production state of mind:

A state of mind for building mass-production housing.

A state of mind for living in mass-production housing.

A state of mind for conceiving mass-production housing.⁷⁴

This extract supports Kenneth Frampton's description of Le Corbusier as someone who was committed 'to the needs of mass society, both technically and ideologically'.⁷⁵ Le Corbusier's thinking was also characterized by his contempt for the past. Theodore Dalrymple asserts that the architect repeatedly 'talks of the past as a tyranny from which it is necessary to escape, as if no one had discovered or known anything until his arrival'.⁷⁶ Le Corbusier's aesthetics were defined by a prevalence of concrete materials, the idealization of mass production, and the disparagement of past architecture – all of which were abhorrent to Waugh's classical aesthetics. The destruction of old-fashioned houses in *Work Suspended*, including Plant's family home, consequently symbolizes an analogous destruction of order, as the classical and cultured aspects of English society are eradicated by invasive and unrefined modern methods.

Work Suspended also reveals Waugh's view of the damaging elements within modern political attitudes, as he satirizes the dehumanizing character of leftist ideology. One of Plant's closest friends is a socialist playwright named Roger Simmonds, who outlines his aesthetic approach to the representation of humans on the stage: "The usual trouble with ideological drama [...] is that they're too mechanical. I mean the characters are economic types, not individuals, and as long as

⁷⁴ Le Corbusier, *Toward an Architecture* (1928), intro. Jean-Louis Cohen, trans. John Goodman (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2008), 254.

⁷⁵ Kenneth Frampton, *Le Corbusier* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2001), 99.

⁷⁶ Theodore Dalrymple, 'The Architect as Totalitarian: Le Corbusier's baleful influence', *City Journal* 19.4 (Autumn 2009), n.p. http://www.city-journal.org/2009/19_4_otbie-le-corbusier.html (accessed: 11/3/11). For a more celebratory interpretation of Le Corbusier's influence, see Nicholas Fox Weber, *Le Corbusier: A Life* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2008).

they look and speak like individuals it's bad art" (WS 258). Roger's solution is to "cut out human beings altogether" (WS 258). As my previous chapters have indicated, Waugh believed that leftist writers were guilty of reducing men to types – especially to economic types – which, in his view, signified a 'denial of individuality to individuals'.⁷⁷ Waugh's Catholic perspective meant that he regarded every human as having an individual soul uniquely important to God. Indeed, in a review of Aldous Huxley's novel *Ends and Means* (1937), entitled 'More Barren Leaves' (1937), Waugh stated: 'Men and women are only types – economic, psychological, what you will – until one knows them' (EAR 214). Roger's wife, Lucy, shares her husband's political convictions. Her beliefs are referred to using terms analogous to those used for religious faith: 'her conversion had coincided with her falling in love. She and Roger had been to meetings together, and together had read epitomes of Marxist philosophy. Her faith, like a Christian's, was essential to her marriage' (WS 298). In this description of political belief, Waugh implies that those who have firm political convictions are treating them like a religion and they are consequently missing out on the true faith of Catholicism.⁷⁸

Waugh claims that he did not complete *Work Suspended* because of the Second World War: 'the world in which and for which it was designed, has ceased to exist' (WS 227). Patey insists that the novel was not actually worth finishing because it was 'structureless' and 'overwritten'.⁷⁹ Stannard also focuses on Waugh's style of writing when he suggests that Waugh may have been dissatisfied with his own aesthetics: 'perhaps it was simply because he felt that he had failed to

⁷⁷ Evelyn Waugh, 'New Books: Strange Rites of Islanders' (1937), in Christopher Hawtree (ed.), *Night and Day* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1985): 171-72, 171.

⁷⁸ The description of the Simmonds' relationship to their political beliefs also links back to Chapter Three, in which I mentioned Christopher Dawson's and T. S. Eliot's views that a dedication to communism was replacing religious faith.

⁷⁹ Patey, *The Life of Evelyn Waugh*, 178.

resolve the aesthetic problem of rendering the subjective objectively'.⁸⁰ According to Stannard, 'objectivity' in Waugh's post-war work relied on the assumption of 'a higher reality ultimately governing the action', but 'no such dimension had been built into *Work Suspended*'.⁸¹ This absence of a higher reality – or, in other words, a religious structure – is similarly identified by Wykes, who claims that the lack of a religious theme 'left a great void in *Work Suspended*'.⁸² It was not until the publication of *Brideshead Revisited* that Waugh explicitly introduced Catholic protagonists and themes. However, I suggest that the absence of an explicitly religious dimension in the text is an integral part of *Work Suspended*'s aesthetic. Like the socialites in *Vile Bodies* (1930) and the protagonists of *Scoop* (1938), the main characters in *Work Suspended* are avowedly irreligious: Plant admits that 'participation in a "religious ceremony of an unostentatious kind" was neither in my line nor my father's' (WS 223). The absence of Catholicism in the novel reflects Waugh's perception of the increased secularity of English society, and – in line with his earlier works – I suggest that it directly relates to themes of disintegration and decay. As McCartney maintains, *Work Suspended* is very different in style from Waugh's previous novels but it shares 'the same philosophical premises' as the earlier texts.⁸³ Indeed, I consider *Work Suspended* to represent a culmination of Waugh's thinking prior to the outbreak of war, as the novel establishes his cultural pessimism regarding what he deems to be the deteriorating and increasingly secular condition of English society.

In *The Confidential Agent*, Greene employs themes of pervasive violence and melodrama to register his anxieties about the corrupt state of England (and, more generally, Europe) and the threat of war. For Nathan Scott Jr., Greene also uses violence to awaken 'his age out of its lethargies', to destroy society's 'specious securities', and ultimately to reveal 'its underlying nightmare and

⁸⁰ Stannard, *Evelyn Waugh: The Early Years*, 501.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² Wykes, *Evelyn Waugh: A Literary Life*, 121.

⁸³ McCartney, *Evelyn Waugh and the Modernist Tradition*, 169.

tragedy’.⁸⁴ Accordingly, the novel acts as both a criticism of and a warning to secular English society. *The Confidential Agent*’s protagonist, D., comes from a European country that is immersed in a violent civil war. He feels inescapably haunted by the conflict – ‘He carried the war with him’ (CA 4) – and he has had to endure numerous traumatic incidences, including the murder of his wife. Prior to the war, D. was a scholar in Medieval French Literature. He admits to having been sheltered from wider social realities in his academic position, and he recognizes that the civil war awakened him to the truth about the corruptibility of human nature: ‘he had been too absorbed in the old days [...] to notice it’ (CA 83). Presently he believes that ‘the whole world lay in the shadow of abandonment’ (CA 83), and he is shocked to learn that ‘there were people who talked of a superintending design’ despite inhabiting a ‘warring, crooked uncertain world’ (CA 203). These references to abandonment and darkness reflect D.’s pessimistic perspective, and they also relate to Newman’s aforementioned description of fallen humankind (which Greene used as an epigraph to *The Lawless Roads*). Incidentally, although D. is an atheist, his cynicism shares parallels with Greene’s religious perception of the innate corruptness of human nature, which strengthens the link between Greene’s views and those of his character.

Along with fuelling his religious scepticism and misanthropy, D. believes that living in conditions of perpetual warfare has ruined his emotional life. His emotional deadness becomes especially evident during his growing acquaintance with a young woman, Rose, who turns out to be the daughter of a coal magnate named Lord Benditch. D. confesses to her: “‘I don’t think I shall ever feel anything again except fear. None of us can hate any more – or love’” (CA 16). He believes that he has sacrificed his sexuality for political duty to his country and that he has made himself “‘a eunuch for his people’s sake’” (CA 201). D. concludes that his loss of sexual desire reflects his

⁸⁴ Nathan Scott Jr., ‘Graham Greene: Christian Tragedian’, in Robert O. Evans (ed.), *Graham Greene: Some Critical Considerations* (Kentucky: University of Kentucky Press, 1963): 26-45, 26.

pessimism and faithlessness: ““Every lover was, in his way, a philosopher: nature saw to that. A lover had to believe in the world, in the value of birth. Contraception didn’t alter that. The act of desire remained an act of faith, and he had lost his faith”” (CA 201). Rose confirms their common atheism when she states: ““We are unlucky. We don’t believe in God. So it’s no use praying. If we did I could say beads, burn candles – oh, a hundred things. As it is, I can only keep my fingers crossed”” (CA 214). Similar to the belief held by Anne in *A Gun for Sale* (1936), religious faith in *The Confidential Agent* has weakened into a form of insipid superstition, which fails to provide Rose or D. with any comfort or hope.

Instead of religious faith, D. is committed to his leftist political beliefs, which focus on those ““who’ve had the lean portion for quite some centuries now”” (CA 77). Unlike his leaders, who willingly betray their ideals for monetary gain – ‘he recognized sadly, *they* had their price: the people had been sold out over and over again by their leaders’ (CA 30) – D. refuses to be ‘bought’ by his enemies, and he represents a rare oasis of integrity within the novel. D.’s stance corresponds with Greene’s aforementioned sense of loyalty to the socially oppressed, which again suggests an affiliation between Greene and his character. Furthermore, D. explains to Rose that he harbours a strong sense of commitment to his political party because he needs to have something to believe in – to have ““some line of action and live by it”” – or else ““nothing matters at all”” (CA 77). In Chapter Three of this thesis I noted that similar sentiments informed Greene’s earlier novels, as he depicted characters who yearned for a belief system to provide them with a form of significance in their lives. Greene also mentioned this concept in *The Lawless Roads*, in which he suggested that ‘people must have something outside the narrow world to live for – whether it is the idea of the inevitable progress of the proletarian revolution or just that a black cat will bring them luck if it crosses their path’ (LR 93). In Greene’s case, his Catholic faith fulfilled his need for such a belief system.

D.’s already cynical view of humanity is reinforced by the murder of a young maid named Else. From D.’s perspective, any hope for human goodness has been quashed by the death of this

innocent child: 'treachery darkened the whole world: He thought, this is the end' (CA 140). Having been emotionally numb for so many years, he experiences a revitalizing rage and swears that 'from now on he would be the hunter, the watcher, the marksman in the mews' (CA 149). He becomes transformed from a passive agent into an active avenger, and he is desperate to revenge Else's death. While looking at the girl's corpse, D. reflects upon how his decision to seek retribution relates to his disbelief in God. He argues that if he was someone who had faith then he could 'believe that it [the body] had been saved from much misery and had a finer future. You could also leave punishment, then, to God ... Just because there was no need of punishments when all a murderer did was to deliver...' (CA 159). However, D. is not satisfied with the idea of obtaining justice after death, nor can he accept that, because a dead child will be delivered unto God, a murder can be deemed beneficial in some ways. In Chapter Four of this thesis I mentioned Ida Arnold's similar secular perspective: 'If you believed in God, you might leave vengeance to him' (BR 48). Like Ida, D. maintains that he has to rely upon himself in order to secure earthly justice, as he believes that 'unless people received their just deserts, the world to him was chaos' (CA 189). Consequently, D. tracks down and kills the rival agent responsible for Else's murder, and he then goes on the run from the authorities.

In the midst of escape, D. learns that his opposition has obtained the precious coal contract instead of him. He journeys to the coal mining town of Benditch in order to persuade the miners not to produce coal for his enemies. D. knowingly puts himself in danger in order to try and help his underprivileged countrymen, as he risks being attacked by rival agents and being arrested by the police. In Benditch, D. manages to prevent his rivals from obtaining any coal, but he fails to acquire a contract for his own party. Due to this failure, D. recognizes that he is returning home to certain death: either at the hands of his political enemies or at the hands of his own leaders, who already suspect that he is a traitor. In a way, D. becomes a political martyr because he is willing to die for his beliefs; yet, in contrast to religious martyrdom, he cannot derive the comfort that comes from the

belief in heaven. When Rose joins him on his journey home, she appreciates the inevitability of his demise: ““You’ll be dead very soon: you needn’t tell me that, but *now...*” (CA 286). Through his friendship with Rose, D. finally manages to achieve a momentary form of peace, as the novel concludes with the line: ‘To the confidential agent trust seemed to be returning into the violent and suspicious world’ (CA 286). According to Brennan, this passage signifies the ‘unorthodox idea that by rediscovering his physical desire for a woman, D. may ultimately open himself up to the processes of faith and religious belief’.⁸⁵ However, unlike the female protagonists in Greene’s early novels – such as Elizabeth in *The Man Within* (1929) and Eulelia in *Rumour at Nightfall* (1931) – Rose does not offer a route to spiritual enlightenment. Although D. admits that his bond with Rose brings him a sense of peace and protection, because in her company he feels ‘shut out for a little while from the monstrous world’ (CA 157), Greene indicates that this sanctuary is momentary and impermanent: it lasts only ‘for a little while’ (CA 157). I suggest that the underlying implication at the end of the novel is that the only way for D. to attain a lasting sense of security is through a relationship with God, because it is implied that faith enables one to believe in a supernatural form of justice and it provides hope for a future happiness after death. However, Greene makes it clear that D. is an unwavering atheist, and there is no indication at the end of the novel that he will convert. Thus, despite D.’s good qualities (such as his loyalty to the poor and his desire for justice), Greene implies that this agent will only be able to experience fleeting contentment due to his secular outlook.

Conclusion: Catholicism and Civilization in the Face of War

This chapter has established that Waugh and Greene depict English society and civilization in the late nineteen thirties in terms of its deterioration and decay. Furthermore, I have argued that these authors

⁸⁵ Brennan, *Graham Greene*, 68.

imply in their fiction that part of English society's increasing debasement is inextricably related to its growing secularity. Greene's and Waugh's pessimism is enhanced by their shared belief in Original Sin, which means that they distrusted any humanist notion that society could incrementally progress and develop. Instead, they felt that mankind was innately evil and capable of great and lasting damage if left to its own devices. Waugh was concerned about the need for strong social order to contain man's inner barbarism, and, related to this, Greene was preoccupied with man's ability to commit cruel and evil acts as a consequence of innate fallibility. These writers felt that their views of man were validated by their experiences in Mexico (where they witnessed how society would function without religion), and they concluded that life without faith would be lived in a spirit of hopelessness and pessimism.

Despite their similar views that Catholicism should be an integral part of civilization, Waugh and Greene interpreted some aspects of their faith differently and consequently had diverging political sympathies. Waugh essentially argued that a government should take into account religious values in order to provide stability within a society. In his criticism of *Robbery Under Law*, Dan Kostopulos fails to appreciate the significance of religion in Waugh's political thinking: 'he allows himself to be disengaged from the global realities of capitalism and imperialism (in this case corporate) by series of smaller issues such as religion, "civilization" and "barbarism" which are, in fact, mere distractions'.⁸⁶ The issue of religion was not 'small' to Waugh, as it informed his opinions on governmental regimes, his view of English society, and his definition of Western civilization. Stannard similarly misreads Waugh's political beliefs, as he describes Waugh's propositions in *Robbery Under Law* as those 'of a pragmatic aesthete rather than those of the right-wing Conservative'.⁸⁷ Stannard maintains that Waugh only regarded politics as 'useful in so far as they

⁸⁶ Kostopulos, 'Mexico Imagined', 128.

⁸⁷ Stannard, *Evelyn Waugh: The Early Years*, 481.

maintained traditional moral and aesthetic standards'.⁸⁸ In my view, Waugh was more concerned about the state of English society (and, indeed, of wider civilization) than Stannard gives him credit for. Waugh's firm rebuttal of totalitarian regimes, his analysis of man's inclination for disharmony and unrest, and his consequent belief in strong forms of conservative government suggest that it is not a case of being either conservative or an aesthete, but of being a conservative whose predilection for order and restraint infuses his aesthetics.

Robbery Under Law also confirmed Waugh's association of Catholicism with culture and tradition, and his belief that religious values should be a fundamental part of any society. However, an uncomfortable aspect of Waugh's thinking was his support for imperialist conquest by Catholic nations. He argued that such colonization led to civilizing benefits, and he failed to mention the idea that the colonizers were seeking economic gain and territorial empowerment. In *Work Suspended*, Waugh identified the upper classes as the arbiters of these civilizing values. For example, Plant recognizes the worth of classical architecture and he expresses disdain towards modern renovation and rebuilding. However, *Work Suspended* indicates that this class has failed in its role of protecting these values: old-fashioned architecture is being torn down and replaced by modern flats, and Plant soberly reports that his way of life 'came quietly to an end' (WS 320). A possible underlying theme of the novel is that the irreligiousness of Plant and his contemporaries is partly responsible for their inability to halt the disintegration of their society. In *A Handful of Dust*, Tony Last is similarly implicated in the demise of his class, as, like Plant, it is arguably implied that he is unable to withstand the destructive onset of modernity because of his lack of firm religious beliefs.

At the end of *The Lawless Roads*, Greene reflected upon the deteriorating state of civilization and he concluded: 'How could a world like this end in anything but war?' (LR 255). Greene suggests that the corrupt nature of civilization, which he has witnessed in Mexico and England, has

⁸⁸ Ibid., 482.

contributed to its deadly fate. Damien Marcel DeCoste makes a similar observation when he discusses the portrayal of warfare in Greene's novel *The Ministry of Fear* (1942). DeCoste argues that Greene deems the Second World War to be 'predictable, indeed inescapable, because it is the very culmination of our cultural traditions'.⁸⁹ Accordingly, Greene's view of warfare in *The Lawless Roads* signifies his condemnation of both past and present sins, and it simultaneously confirms his pessimism regarding human potential and ideas of secular social progress.

Although Greene's political views and his criticisms of the Mexican government are not as explicitly outlined in *The Lawless Roads* as Waugh's are in *Robbery Under Law*, Greene's loathing for the country and his disgust at the religious persecution which took place there represent an implicit critique of the socialist regime that ruined Mexican society. However, unlike Waugh's outright disdain for Marxism, Greene did not associate all aspects of leftist beliefs with political decline (although he was opposed to any form of totalitarianism). Greene expressed left-wing sympathies for the impoverished, which contrasted with Waugh's acceptance of the presence of social and economic inequality. Furthermore, Greene's concern for the 'underdog' possibly reflected his sense of Christian duty to those members of society he felt were overlooked by their governments. In *The Lawless Roads* he articulated a desire for Catholicism to become politically involved in social justice because he felt it to be one's Christian duty to help those in need on earth, whereas Waugh trusted that equality and justice would be granted for all in the next world. Thus, although both Waugh and Greene desired an interconnection between faith and politics, by the end of the decade Greene argued for the formation of a more socially aware faith which actively sought to address injustice, whereas Waugh was more concerned with the idea of a political system that worked to preserve Catholicism within societies.

⁸⁹ Damien Marcel DeCoste, 'Modernism's Shell-Shocked History: Amnesia, Repetition, and the War in Graham Greene's *The Ministry of Fear*', *Twentieth Century Literature* 45.4 (Winter 1999): 428-51, 434.

CONCLUSION

This thesis is the first study to analyse in detail, and in relation to one another, the nature and the development of Evelyn Waugh's and Graham Greene's inter-war Catholic perspectives. I have put forward the view that the novels produced by Waugh and Greene between 1928 and 1939, although not categorizable as 'Catholic' in the same way that their later novels are, were written from perspectives informed by Catholic values. I have suggested that these perspectives shared three main similarities: a belief that forms of modern society in England and abroad (such as in Europe, Africa, and Mexico) were suffering in myriad ways due to their growing secularity; a belief in Original Sin and the fallen state of mankind, which informed Waugh's and Greene's similarly anti-humanist responses to secular ideologies and methods of living; and a belief that secular societies would benefit from engaging with Roman Catholic values. Indeed, by the end of the 1930s Waugh and Greene expressed a similar fear in their writings: namely, that if modern society in England continued to develop along secular lines, it would become progressively more vacuous until it was just a materialistic shell disconnected from the remedial principles embodied in the Church. This pessimism was compounded by their fear for the stability of modern society, a fear which stemmed from their corresponding belief in the innate fallibility of man. Waugh and Greene were convinced that if man's instincts were left unchecked by religious values they would become manifest in barbaric (Waugh) or evil (Greene) forms of behaviour, modes of being which would ultimately lead to social and moral chaos.

As well as highlighting the similarities between Waugh's and Greene's Catholic perspectives, my thesis has acknowledged some of the areas in which their thinking differed. It is apparent that Waugh's Catholicism gradually strengthened over time. He maintained in articles and, as I have argued, implied in his fiction, that the Church offered an ideal framework for secular forms of society in the thirties. It was following his conversion in 1930 that Waugh first explicitly stated in articles

and reviews that he deemed the Roman Catholic Church to be a beacon of culture, tradition, and order, and that these values were becoming increasingly absent from Western civilization. In this way, Waugh's thinking corresponds with that of such English Catholic revivalists as Christopher Dawson and Hilaire Belloc, who argued that Western society needed to incorporate a religious framework in order to combat the forms of social and cultural decline associated with secularism. By drawing similarities between Waugh's and the revivalists' articulations about the role of Catholicism in modern society, my thesis has highlighted the context of Catholic thinking to which Waugh was contributing in this period.

The ways in which Waugh articulates his Catholic beliefs in his non-fictional writing during the inter-war period are very much focused on the social and cultural ramifications of Catholicism, rather than with intimate questions about individual souls and their connections with God. This palpable absence of 'God' in those essays, articles, and reviews in which Waugh deals explicitly with issues of faith and Catholicism is certainly thought-provoking. These writings raise a number of questions, including: Is Waugh predominantly interested in the Roman Catholic Church because of its history of tradition, order, and organization, rather than because of the kind of God embodied within its teachings? Would Waugh rather the Church act as a means of organizing society, and that it act as a source of religious and traditional values around which society could be structured, rather than as a means of accessing God? Furthermore, Waugh neither directly articulates his conception of God in terms of what he deems God's nature to be (or in terms of the role that He should play in society), nor does he define his personal relationship with God in any detailed or extended way. Instead, what we find are numerous writings about the history of the Roman Catholic Church, as well as Waugh's belief in the benefits of modern society being structured around this Church. Such benefits include the idea that modern societies could have access to a source of traditional, eternal values which will provide forms of permanence within an increasingly unstable modern world.

There is no mention of God's presence in Waugh's fictional writings, which explains why the idea of Waugh conducting religious criticisms of modern society continues to be a controversial one in Waugh criticism. In Chapter Three it was noted that Waugh stated: 'a writer's material must be the individual soul (which is the preconception of Christendom)' (*EAR* 206). Yet, the only instance of a character explicitly engaging with the idea of faith is that of the protagonist of *A Handful of Dust*, Tony Last, who is defined by his distinct lack of reflection upon, or engagement with, his faith: "I've never really thought about it much" (*HD* 328). This absence of detailed exploration of characters' conceptions of faith and God highlights an interesting discrepancy in Waugh's thinking: Waugh praises Catholicism for its attention to the significance of the individual soul, and yet he does not explore in detail (in either his fiction or non-fiction) the very concept of the individual soul in his inter-war writings. Instead, Waugh's predominant focus in his fiction is on sets of people rather than individuals, as he explores the (religious) shortcomings of the Bright Young People in *Decline and Fall*, *Vile Bodies*, *Black Mischief*, and *A Handful of Dust*; and those of such upper-class families as the Lasts in *A Handful of Dust*, the Boots in *Scoop*, and the Plants in *Work Suspended*. In this thesis I have suggested that the Bright Young People are too shallow to engage with complex metaphysical questions involving their religious beliefs, and that Waugh's fictional secular upper-class families symbolize the fading of religious beliefs that in his eyes came to define English society in the thirties. Thus, as my thesis has maintained, the absence of God in these texts, and the lack of explicitly religious themes, can be interpreted as Waugh's way of depicting modern society and its increasing secularity, rather than as a reflection of his disengagement with religious issues.

In Greene's fiction, explorations of the individual's relationship with religious belief and with God are present from his first novel. Indeed, Greene's novels in the inter-war period deal with religious themes much more explicitly than do Waugh's, as Greene's texts explore in psychological detail the spiritual longings and doubts experienced by their characters. However, over the course of the thirties, Greene's characters become less 'conventionally' religious and more warped in their

conceptions of faith. Accordingly, Francis Andrews from *The Man Within* (1929), Oliver Chant from *The Name of Action* (1930), and Michael Crane from *Rumour at Nightfall* (1931) articulate longings for conversion into, and commitment to, a Christian form of religion, and they associate faith with themes of permanence, transcendence, fulfilment, and peace. In contrast, Ferdinand Minty in *England Made Me* (1935), James Raven in *A Gun for Sale* (1936), and Pinkie Brown in *Brighton Rock* (1938) all have perverted relationships with religious belief. My thesis has shown that for these later characters religious faith is associated with themes of sin, guilt, incomprehension, and with memories of traumatic upbringings. These themes possibly reflect Greene's view that 'faith' had become increasingly difficult to embrace in the modern world. Indeed, my thesis has explored the idea that Greene expresses the consequences of such disengagement in his fiction via the presentation of incidents of social and moral corruption.

At this point, it is worth exploring in detail Robert Murray Davis's comment regarding Waugh's and Greene's contrasting conceptualizations of the nature of faith in their writings. Although referring specifically to the Mexican travelogues, Davis's remark that Waugh's faith is 'spacious, open, logical', while Greene's is 'claustrophobic, decaying, full of violence', resonates with these authors' depictions of faith in their earlier novels.¹ The idea of Waugh's faith being logical is an apt one when considering Waugh's outlook in general, given that he consistently repeats the idea that having a faith involves abiding by 'systems'.² In *Robbery Under Law*, for instance, Waugh

¹ Robert Murray Davis, 'The Rhetoric of Mexican Travel: Greene and Waugh', *Renascence* 38 (Spring, 1986): 160-69, 161.

² In 'Converted to Rome: Why it Has Happened to Me' (1930), Waugh states: 'it would be a very superficial person who would accept a whole theological and moral system on these grounds alone' (*EAR* 103). In *Remote People* (1931), Waugh refers to the 'Christian system' (*RP* 248), and, again, in a 1938 review he refers to the 'basic teaching of the Christian system'. See Waugh, 'Felo De Se, Review of *Suicide: A Social and Historical Study*, by Romilly Fedden', *The Spectator* (15 April 1938), 224.

outlines what his faith means to him when he states: ‘The Catholic believes that in logic and in historical evidence he has grounds for accepting the Church as a society of divine institution, holding a unique commission for her work, privileged on occasions by special revelation, glorified continually by members of supernatural sanctity’ (*RUL* 865). These references to ‘logic’ and ‘evidence’ correspond with Davis’s account of Waugh’s faith, in that they confirm the rational, rather than emotional, nature of Waugh’s approach to belief. Father D’Arcy, who instructed Waugh in his conversion to Catholicism in 1930, reiterates this idea that Waugh’s relationship with faith was based upon rationality: ‘Evelyn never spoke of experience or feelings. He had come to learn and understand what we believe to be God’s revelation and this made talking with him an interesting discussion based primarily on reason. I have never myself met a convert who so strongly based his assents on truth’.³

A recurring theme in this thesis has been the recognition that Waugh sought in Catholicism a form of order and structure by which he could live. Throughout his non-fiction, Waugh repeatedly refers to the comfort and the security he gains from believing in what he deems to be a logical faith system, because such a system, in his view, provides a set of rules to follow and beliefs by which to abide. Referring to Catholics in general, Waugh explains in *Robbery Under Law* that they find in Catholicism ‘a philosophy which explains his own peculiar position in the order of the universe, a way of life which makes the earth habitable during his existence there and, after that, according to his merits, the hope of Heaven and the fear of Hell’ (*RUL* 865). Waugh recognizes that from the perspective of a non-believer such Catholic values and rules may appear entrapping and ‘tedious’, and he accepts that ‘the Catholic’s life is bounded and directed by his creed at every turn’ (*RUL* 864). However, Waugh argues that these incidences of being restrained, governed, and circumscribed by faith actually enable a valuable form of freedom. He maintains that his faith allows ‘within its

³ Evelyn Waugh, *The Letters of Evelyn Waugh*, ed. Mark Amory (London: Penguin Books, 1982), 45.

structure [...] measureless diversity', which, he states, 'is a fact which those outside it find difficult to realise' (*RUL* 865). Here, Waugh's use of the term 'fact' reinforces his firm belief (by presenting that belief as objective truth) in his ability to experience liberating forms of variety as a product of his devotional attitude.

Waugh believed that abiding by the Catholic system led to a form of emancipation, and that the alternatives to this way of life would be entrapping and restricting, since 'freedom produces sterility' (*EAR* 62). My thesis has argued that Waugh explored this association between secularism and entrapment in his inter-war fiction. Accordingly, I put forward the idea in Chapters One and Three that Waugh explored this concept of sterility in his depiction of the futile and aimless lives led by his Bright Young People, who choose to shun forms of authority (parental, religious, political) and to immerse themselves in socialising. As *Decline and Fall*, *Vile Bodies*, *Black Mischief*, and *A Handful of Dust* indicate, Waugh implies that these socialites were trapped within a self-destructive – and irreligious – way of life which made them unfulfilled and miserable.

Furthermore, I suggested that Waugh alludes to the idea that his socialites yearn for forms of religious permanence. Although Waugh does not address these characters' reflections on faith in detail, I have proposed that he depicts longings for religious permanence as retreats into cyclical forms of behaviour, which suggests that these characters unconsciously seek a form of stability within their spiralling lives. In Chapter One, I established the idea that Waugh specifically signals the destructive, disorientating, and chaotic effects of the absence of faith in society by using 'negative comic signification'.⁴ In alluding to the destructive consequences of faithlessness, Waugh arguably refers to the idea that the stability unconsciously sought by the socialites can be found in religious belief. Waugh's upper-class families – the Lasts, the Boots, the Plants – can be interpreted similarly as implicitly longing for the order and stability Waugh associated with faith, because they are defined

⁴ Justus Nieland 'Editor's Introduction: Modernism's Laughter', *Modernist Cultures* 2.2 (2006): 80-86, 81.

by themes of decay and entrapment which could be viewed as a reflection of their secularism. Accordingly, the Lasts inhabit a decaying family home with little money, the Boots look set to die out imminently, and the Plants are left with a single son who admits that his social class has not survived the Second World War. Such themes of social transience and familial impermanence contrast with Waugh's association between Catholicism and eternal values. Thus, while Waugh does not explore in detail individual responses to faith in his fiction, he can be said to investigate lives that are lived without recourse to religious values and to record the implicit yearning for religious belief which informs these lifestyles.

In contrast to Waugh's decision not to depict his characters' views of God, Greene explores the despair, confusion, and, at times, hatred that his characters are shown to feel towards the deity. From 1932 onwards, the characters in Greene's texts who are shown to contemplate God generally consider Him in relation to themes of unintelligibility and violence, rather than justice and logic. For Raven from *A Gun for Sale*, God is associated with injustice and a lack of pity, as he articulates a sense of incomprehension towards God's actions. Raven alludes to the idea that God has let him down, abandoned him, and for this reason has become untenable as an object of individual belief. Another pertinent example is that of Minty in *England Made Me*, as he refers to himself as being 'like the spider patient behind his glass' (*EMM* 168): a trapped insect at the mercy of the (possibly malicious) whims of an all-powerful God. Pinkie in *Brighton Rock* is unable to contemplate a religion divorced from punishment, as he can only envisage the reality of hell and earthly pain, rather than the idea of heaven and peace. In these texts Greene portrays warped religious characters whose relationships with God are defined by feelings of ensnarement, punishment, and torment. Indeed, the idea of Godly punishment is at the forefront of Greene's explorations of Catholicism in this period. In Chapter Three I noted that Greene articulated his interpretation of hell when he claimed that the form of hell which 'certainly exists' is 'meaningless and malicious' as opposed to being 'logical'

with ‘an almost mathematical nicety’.⁵ Greene alludes to these notions of inconsequential malevolence in the form of characters (Minty, Raven, and Pinkie) who espouse feelings of incomprehension and persecution in relation to God.

Greene’s statements about the meaningless nature of hell offer a stark contrast to Waugh’s references to a more logical form of religious punishment which is enacted in some of his texts. While Waugh does not explicitly explore conceptions of Godly punishment in either his fiction or his non-fiction, he does make a telling statement in *Robbery Under Law* about accepting ‘a God who treats human beings in a way they will understand’ (*RUL* 882). Waugh seems to allude to such logical treatments in his novels. Chapter Three mentioned the possibility of Waugh alluding to a Dantesque form of *contrapasso* in *A Handful of Dust*. Thus, Tony’s fate of being eternally imprisoned within a secular setting by an unbalanced captor and forced to perpetually re-read Victorian novels can be perceived as a logical punishment for his harbouring ludicrous Victorian sentiments alongside a hollow faith. As discussed in Chapter One, the concept of God punishing the Bright Young People in *Vile Bodies* and *Black Mischief* is also a possibility. Accordingly, the socialites’ repetitive, self-destructive, and unfulfilling lives can be interpreted as an apt reprimand for their irreligious lifestyles. The wheel and hub motif noted in *Vile Bodies* can be viewed as developed into cyclical themes elsewhere in Waugh’s texts. For example, cyclical themes abound in Waugh’s depiction of Tony’s rigid and repetitive routine in *A Handful of Dust*; cyclical changes in government are referred to in *Scoop*; and the repetitive demolition and reconstruction of buildings is noted in *Work Suspended*. These incidences of cyclicity within secular (or, in Tony’s case, Anglo-Catholic) environments can be seen to represent a form of ordered punishment within Waugh’s novels, which is markedly absent from Greene’s dealings with Godly punishment.

⁵ Graham Greene, ‘Casanova and Others’, *The Spectator* (9 July, 1932), 55.

As well as depicting characters who feel resentful towards and victimized by God, it is likely that Greene makes his characters feel this way because they essentially inhabit a realm that has been abandoned by God altogether. Critics have noted that Greene's novels of the thirties take place in debased and corrupt landscapes ('Greenland'), and that these settings symbolize 'an image of a spiritual condition – a world abandoned by God'.⁶ In *The Lawless Roads* Greene even refers to Tabasco (a place where Catholicism has been outlawed) in terms of 'darkness and abandonment' (*LR* 126). In *The Confidential Agent* Greene employs the phrase 'the whole world lay in the shadow of abandonment' (*CA* 83) in order to articulate D.'s sense of incomprehension at the sheer evil of the world. Pinkie from *Brighton Rock* believes that hell and earth have become one, as his description of life on earth attests: "'It's gaol, it's [...] Worms and cataract, cancer [...] It's dying slowly'" (*BR* 330). Here, Pinkie refers to images of claustrophobic imprisonment, inescapability, and inevitable pain, which tie in with this idea of being abandoned by God.

Rather than focusing on the idea of God abandoning human life, Waugh's concern throughout the thirties is with bringing man back into a relationship with His values by connecting with an ever-present Catholic Church. This idea is most clearly expressed in *Robbery Under Law* when Waugh states that the Church is 'a society of divine institution, holding a unique commission for her work' and that it 'makes claims and imposes restrictions which many men find onerous' (*RUL* 866). Thus the issue for Waugh is not whether God is present on earth but whether man chooses to engage with God and His values via the Catholic Church. I have suggested that Waugh in his fiction alludes to the idea that men have 'free will' and can decide whether to engage with God or not. In Chapter One I outlined the view that Waugh incorporates man's free will into the very form

⁶ Anonymous, 'Graham Greene: *The Man Within*', *Times Literary Supplement* (17 September, 1971), in Samuel Hynes (ed.), *Twentieth Century Views: Graham Greene, A Collection of Critical Essays* (London: Prentice-Hall International, 1973): 8-16, 13.

of his writing, as the detached stances of his narrators, alongside the ambiguous natures of his texts, suggest that Waugh accepts man's right to 'free will' in choosing whether to perceive religious issues in his fiction and, consequently, whether or not to abide by religious values. While it is evident in Waugh's non-fiction that he disagrees with living an irreligious life (referring to those without faith as 'freaks'), in his fiction he is not openly hostile about this right to choose whether or not to have faith.⁷

By contrast, Greene implies in his writings that he is frustrated with man's ability to freely choose to live without God, as he perhaps deems that this freedom is being abused and used to perpetuate forms of evil. Waugh recognized this characteristic of Greene's perspective, noting that the '[c]ontemplation of the horrible ways in which men exercise their right of choice leads [Greene] into something very near a hatred of free-will'.⁸ In this statement, Waugh refers to *The Lawless Roads* in which he perceives that Greene is disgusted by man's ability to damn himself and worsen his already fallen situation by choosing to reject God. David Lodge maintains that in this review of Greene's work, Waugh 'must have been one of the earliest critics to remark the Jansenist flavour of Greene's Catholicism'.⁹ Jansenism, among other things, emphasized the fact of human depravity (which was a consequence of Original Sin), and it claimed that due to Original Sin, 'man's will without divine help is only capable of evil'.¹⁰

Aspects of this Jansenist thinking can be said to correspond with Greene's portrayal of corrupt, immoral, and irreligious characters in his fiction of the nineteen thirties. Such figures as

⁷ Waugh, 'Impression of Splendour and Grace' (1938), *EAR* 237.

⁸ Evelyn Waugh, 'The Waste Land', *The Spectator* (10 March, 1939): 413-14, 414.

⁹ Lodge, David, 'The Fugitive Art of Letters', in David Pryce-Jones (ed.), *Evelyn Waugh and His World* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1973): 183-218, 192.

¹⁰ Father Anthony Chadwick, 'Jansenism', see: <http://www.theanglocatholic.com/2010/04/jansenism/> (accessed 12/12/11).

Minty, Raven, Pinkie, and D. can be viewed as doomed to find no release from their tormented lives since none of them is depicted as using their free will to embrace God's grace. Raven, Czinner, and D. can be viewed as having chosen to reject faith altogether, whereas such characters as Minty and Pinkie can be said to have rejected Roman Catholicism in favour of a subjective form of faith – one in which they feel persecuted (Minty) and in which they are unable to believe in Heaven and goodness (Pinkie). Pinkie can even be viewed as explicitly rejecting God's grace in *Brighton Rock* when he arguably spurns the Holy Spirit.¹¹ However, whereas Jansenists take the view that most people are essentially born to be damned (because it is only by the grace of God that man can escape this predicament), Greene's thinking suggests that humans have a choice in whether to embrace faith and, as Waugh suggested, Greene is frustrated with man's misuse of this free will.¹²

Despite Greene's focus on the seemingly innate cruelty and violence within human society, he implies in his writings that a belief in God prevents this pessimistic view of human nature from becoming overwhelming. In my thesis I have shown that Greene alludes to the idea that human life would be unbearable without God inasmuch as cruelty, unfairness, and violence would have no antidote in faith. Thus, it is possible that while Greene empathizes with an atheist's view of human society (in terms of human life being defined by meaningless cruelty), if Greene himself was unable to believe in God, then his outlook could develop into complete nihilism. Yet, as my thesis suggested, Greene presents faith in his inter-war fiction as being in part a refuge from the sordid and corrupt environments explored in his novels. Greene can be viewed as suggesting in his fiction that

¹¹ For a more detailed explanation of Jansenism, see William Doyle, *Studies in European History: Jansenism* (London: Macmillan Press, 2009).

¹² William Doyle explains: 'Jansenists followed the doctrines and venerated the memory of Cornelius Jansen, a Dutch-born theologian who died as Bishop of Ypres in 1638' and he believed of men that God had already 'predestined them to be saved or damned'. See William Doyle, *Jansenism: Catholic Resistance to Authority from the Reformation to the French Revolution* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000), xi.

the dire situations faced by some of his characters would be alleviated if they were able to embrace the peace and stability offered by religious belief. In this way, Greene associates religious belief with themes of security, sanctuary, and hope. Such thinking would explain Raven's sense of abandonment and isolation because he is unable to believe in an afterlife; Pinkie's anguish at being unable to visualize any form of Heaven; and D.'s pessimistic sense that his life on earth will end imminently and that there is nothing – no transcendent realm – which follows it.

Evidently there is a tension within Greene's conception of religious belief: on the one hand, Greene portrays the idea of a meaningless, cruel, and incomprehensible religious system (where such characters as Minty feel victimized by God); on the other he depicts faith in his fiction as representing forms of refuge and access to a transcendent realm of peace, the absence of which is painfully felt by such characters as Pinkie and Raven. These simultaneous representations of both the malicious and the peaceful aspects of religious belief could reflect the conflicted and divided attitudes felt by Greene towards Catholicism. Adam Schwartz maintains that Greene's 'acceptance of God and Roman Catholicism as probable rather than absolute truths demonstrates that a tension between belief and doubt existed in his thought from his earliest Catholic days'.¹³ Indeed, by the end of his life, Greene doubted whether he could call himself a Catholic at all due to the strength of his scepticism. Writing for the *Tablet* on the 23rd September 1989, Greene stated: 'lack of belief is not something to confess. One's sorry, but one wishes one could believe. And I pray at night ... that a miracle should be done and that I *should* believe'.¹⁴

¹³ Adam Schwartz, *The Third Spring: G. K. Chesterton, Graham Greene, Christopher Dawson, and David Jones* (Washington D. C.: The Catholic University of American Press, 2005), 145.

¹⁴ Cited in Joseph Pearce, *Literary Converts: Spiritual Inspiration in an Age of Unbelief* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1999), 421.

Unlike Greene's uneasy relationship with Catholicism, Waugh's beliefs – first explicitly expressed in 'Converted to Rome: Why it Has Happened to Me' (1930) – did not change dramatically over the years leading up to the Second World War. Instead, they strengthened. Many of the issues Waugh addresses in 'Converted to Rome' are discussed in *Robbery Under Law*, which suggests that his experiences during the nine years between these publications confirmed his beliefs rather than changed them. Thus, Waugh's reference to the effects of the diminishing belief in Christianity leading to an 'active negation of all that western culture has stood for' (EAR 104); his belief that civilization needs to be connected to Christianity in order to survive and escape from becoming a 'mechanized, materialistic state' (EAR 104); his recognition of Catholicism's universality; and his view that 'however imposing the organization of the Church, it would be worthless if it did not rest upon the faith of its members' (EAR 105) are all discussed in *Robbery Under Law*.

Overall, while I recognize that Waugh and Greene most likely did not influence each other at the beginnings of their careers, my thesis nonetheless has established that their criticisms of secular societies disclose many similarities which stem from their shared Catholicism. Furthermore, I have argued that these authors' criticisms are informed by, and indeed reflect, their Catholic beliefs, meaning that both figures can be viewed as having written from religious perspectives in this inter-war period (despite not writing explicitly Catholic novels). Such similarities between these authors' religious perspectives are present in their writings despite their dissimilar relationships with their personal faith and notwithstanding their diverging presentations in fictional form of religious issues. As my thesis has demonstrated, by the end of the inter-war period, both Waugh and Greene had come similarly to regard the necessity of incorporating Catholic values within modern society, and both associated Catholicism with themes of transcendence, order, and eternal values. Adam Schwartz's summary of Greene's approach to Catholicism at the end of the thirties equally applies to Waugh's inter-war Catholic perspective:

Believing that Roman Catholicism restored the absent religious and humanistic dimension to literature, offered a more accurate reading of the human condition, and provided a set of countercultural principles and practices to affirm when refuting contemporary culture, especially a particular sympathy for victims, gave Greene continuity with his life's central event while providing a foundation for adult reflections.¹⁵

Though Waugh was more concerned with the upper classes and the rulers of society than its 'victims', he believed, like Greene, that Catholicism offered the ideal cultural framework through which to structure modern society. As they conceived it, Catholicism restored a supernatural dimension to life and gave an honest reading of man's innate fallenness. Both Greene and Waugh ultimately concurred upon their perception of the inherent barbarism and sinfulness of human nature, and they consequently believed in man's ability to commit morally and socially destructive acts. It is within this shared recognition of the fallibility of man that their religious perspectives are most similar, as it makes their Catholicism necessary both to explain and to deal with man's flawed condition.

¹⁵ Schwartz, *The Third Spring*, 160.

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