Religious paradoxes in Graham Greene's novels

I began to believe in heaven because I believed in hell
(Graham Greene)

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Abstract

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Graham Greene's work, especially his major novels, reveals his probing interest in religious matters. His writing indicates that throughout his career he has found himself involved in essential - and often paradoxical - questions concerning religious faith, particularly as these questions impinge on the twentieth-century mind. In this article some of Greene's paradoxical views on religious matters are explored in a more universal and anti-institutional context than the strictly Roman Catholic one in which his work is usually examined. As exemplars of Greene's work in which religious paradoxes are central, Brighton Rock, The Power and the Glory and Monsignor Quixote are discussed.

This article underscores the fact that Greene has almost single-handedly redefined twentieth-century Roman Catholic notions on piety with his constant revelation that pious people often lack charity while salvation is possible for sinners. It also shows that Greene's novels radically question the doctrines on morality espoused by conventional churches, thereby displaying his own religious sensitivity and courage.

1 Graham Greene (1904-1992) established his reputation as an entertaining and accomplished writer, known for his literary adroitness and flair for story-telling. His career was long and prolific. Greene published for more than half a century, a rare achievement indeed. In all, over forty works in different genres, flowed from his pen. He is in feet one of the few twentieth-century authors with an international audience.

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1. Contextualization

Greene's work, especially his major novels, reveals his probing interest in religious matters. His writing indicates that throughout his career he has found himself involved in essential - and often paradoxical - issues concerning religious faith, particularly as these issues impinge on the twentieth-century mind. His major novels thus constitute a substantial documentation of man's spiritual condition in the twentieth century. They portray people who, caught in the turmoil and flux of modern events, and wrought to the limits of their spiritual strength, exist in states between belief and unbelief, hope and despair, commitment and uncommitment, and who solitary, and unsure, victims of their times as they are, seem often to be echoing D.H. Lawrence's cry of anguish and despair: "Give us gods, O give them us".

Although most of Greene's major characters are or were Catholics, this does not make the author a "Catholic writer", one who expounds or promotes the doctrines of Catholic teaching, as many critics have tended to label him. Greene himself repeatedly and adamantly denied being a "Catholic writer", because such a classification limits the scope of his vision and casts doubt on the objectivity of his work. Despite Greene's own protestations about not being a Catholic writer, Owen Williams (1997:7) in a recent review still maintains that "[although this was very far from his intention, he became in his lifetime the best-known English-language layman of the Catholic Church]."

Nevertheless, Greene's career can usefully be divided into three periods: the pre-Catholic period, the Catholic period, and the post-Catholic period, a tripartite arrangement, however, that is neither clear-cut nor exclusive. The belief, held by many critics, that the novels reflect Greene's own religious stance and coincide with his active participation in Roman Catholicism or his withdrawal from it, is refuted by the fact that all the novels of the so-called "pre-Catholic period" appeared after Greene had joined the Catholic church in 1926. On the other hand,
the first of the “Catholic novels”, Brighton Rock, was published in 1938 - twelve years after Greene had become a Catholic.

2 The extremely brief introduction to the obituaries to Graham Greene in Contemporary Literary Criticism (Anon., 1992:285) singles out religious interest as the hallmark of Greene’s work: “Greene was renowned for exploring religious themes in his work”.


“Greene was often labelled a Roman Catholic writer, a description which annoyed him but nevertheless coloured understanding of his work Hy was indeed a convert to Catholicism and he did deal with doctrinal issues, but he insisted that he was not a church publicist.”

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The division into these three periods may, nevertheless, be made because of discernible differences in Greene’s approach to religious matters in the various periods. In the novels of his pre-Catholic period, religious concerns do not play as prominent a part as in, for instance, the four major novels of the Catholic period. The delineation of religious concerns, often of a paradoxical nature, finds its fullest and most varied expression in the so-called Catholic period. In the novels of the so-called post-Catholic period the conflict widens to encompass a conflict between commitment and uncommitment, involvement and uninvolvment, or vacuity as opposed to the need for some kind of faith. Paradox strongly underpins even Greene’s last works, as Travels with my Aunt (1969) and the shorter novel, Monsignor Quixote (1982), amply demonstrate.

2. Religious paradoxes in three novels by Graham Greene

In her doctoral thesis, Paradox in the Novels of Graham Greene (1991 :iii) Ingrid Bonanni traces in Greene’s autobiographical works his “lifelong interest in paradox and his duality on most issues”, a duality which she rightly ascribes to his unhappy youth. Greene’s first twelve years were relatively happy until he became a boarder at Berkhamsted school where his father was headmaster. He could not adapt to a situation where home and school were under one roof. Bonanni (1991:1) usefully defines paradox, and especially Greene’s “use” of it, as follows:

... this is the nature of paradox: as an apparent contradiction in terms, to use the well-worn definition, it raises issues that defy simple resolution. Paradox, specifically the often clashing paradoxes that Greene employed in his novels, finds its end, not in any reconciliation of opposed issues, but rather in realising the irreconcilability of fundamental conflicts. The final answer, then, is that there is no final answer. Or if there is one, only God knows it.

In this article I intend exploring some of Greene’s paradoxical views on religious matters in a more universal and anti-institutional context than the strictly Roman Catholic one in which his work is usually examined. As exemplars of Greene’s work in which religious paradoxes are central Brighton Rock, The Power and the Glory and Monsignor Quixote will be discussed.

2.1 Brighton Rock (1939)

Although Brighton Rock, the first novel of Greene’s so-called Catholic period, can be read as a detective story, it is “almost belligerently religious in theme” (Stratford, 1967:166). This novel was a turning point for Greene in that he had discovered that “a Catholic is more capable of evil that anyone” (BR:309), since, in Brighton Rock - henceforth referred to as BR.

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in the words of McGowan (1955:27), “he reached the distinction of good and evil from right and wrong”, in itself a paradoxical metaphysical statement, underpinning once again Greene’s profound, but essentially anguished, wrestling with (paradoxical) religious concepts.

In Brighton Rock, like in the novels of the pre-Catholic period, Greene again depicted a fallen world and unheroic characters without condemning them for their forfeit of grace. The plot centres in the actions of the seventeen year-old Pinkie Brown, the leader of a racing gang, and his efforts to conceal a murder. In the process he marries an innocent girl, Rose, to prevent her from giving evidence against him in court. He makes a suicide pact with Rose from which he intends withdrawing after her death. Ida, a goodtime girl, catches up with the couple in time to save Rose. This causes Pinkie to commit suicide by throwing vitriol over himself and then jumping over the cliffs, dying a terrible death.

The three main characters themselves reflect conflicting attitudes. Ida believes in life. Rose in religion, while Pinkie reveals a conscious willed unbelief. Pinkie, however, constitutes the novel’s real religious paradox. He believes, but sets himself up against his belief. His is the tragedy of a Faustus, though on a smaller scale, a man who knows which way salvation lies and yet deliberately opposes
himself to Divine injunctions. He tries to assert his own individuality, his own ego and personality, against Divine authority. For example, he believes in hell rather than in heaven: “Heaven was a word: hell was something he could trust” (BR:284). Greene ironically adapting Wordsworth, states: “hell lay about him in his infancy” (BR:81). Yet, despite all Pinkie’s efforts to deny his faith, he cannot get rid of his Roman Catholicism, which in its music and rituals, for instance, constantly affects his thoughts and deeds.

Greene himself regarded the mysteriousness of Divine grace as the theme of this novel:

Brighton Rock is written in such a way that people could plausibly imagine that Pinkie went to hell, and then I cast doubt upon it in the ending. The real theme... is embodied in the priest’s phrase at the end of Brighton Rock: ‘You can’t conceive, my child, nor can anyone, the... appalling strangeness of the mercy of God’ (Philips, 1973:173).

A reader who understands Greene’s preoccupation with the paradoxical nature of religion, as well as with the anti-hero, a man stripped of all his finery and superficial civilisation, will not regard Pinkie as beyond God’s mercy. It may therefore be conceded that, however evil his life might have been, his earthly destruction may lead to his spiritual resurrection. In this regard Greene shows an affinity with the seventeenth-century Jansenists, whom McEwan (1988:14) regards as “somewhat heretical Catholics” who stressed that only the “completely mysterious workings of divine grace” can save human beings from hell. The 316

To conclude, Brighton Rock marked a new literary direction for Greene. Here, more distinctly than in the previous novels, the conflicts between belief and unbelief come into focus, and the many facets of these conflicts, the ironic ambiguities and paradoxes, are examined and evaluated more intensely and satisfyingly than ever before.

2.2 The Power and the Glory

Greene’s next novel, The Power and the Glory, “a pre-eminently religious novel” (Lamba, 1987:58), exposes conditions in Tabasco, a small state in Mexico, where priests were persecuted with pitiless cruelty by the totalitarian, anti-religious regime which took over the province in 1917. The central opposing characters are an unnamed Whisky Priest, who sometimes assumes the name Montez, and a similarly unnamed Lieutenant of the Police. The Power and the Glory is divided into four parts. The first introduces the Whisky Priest, who has been a fugitive for eight years, while trying to escape from the country where he has remained as the last priest, following the execution or defection of the others. The second part shows the Priest’s return to his native village, where he meets his illegitimate daughter, Brigitta, and narrowly escapes arrest by the Lieutenant. The Priest is later arrested for breaking the anti-liquor laws and spends a night in prison. The third part chronicles the Priest’s betrayal by the mestizo who wants to get a reward promised by the Lieutenant. The fourth part of the novel reports the last conversation between the Priest and the Lieutenant before the Priest is executed. Significantly, The Power and the Glory resembles Greene’s preceding works, especially Brighton Rock. The theme of pursuit is again developed against a vividly authentic background which, because of the violence and poverty that are to become increasingly typical of Greene’s fallen world, critics have dubbed “Greeneland” - much to Greene’s own dismay. Nevertheless, in The Power and the Glory the theme of pursuit takes on a deeper significance than in Brighton Rock.

In the later novel the Priest serves as the main embodiment of belief and the Lieutenant of unbelief or atheism. The fact that both are nameless indicates the universality of the conflict they represent. In his early criticism of the novel De 5 The Power and the Glory - henceforth referred to as PG.

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Vitis (1964:89) rightly regarded The Power and the Glory as a consistent allegory on the theme of Everyman, while Karl Patten (1957:233) commended Greene for his increasing symbolism: “if the priest is an Everyman who is to be related, by suggestion, to Christ, then the Lieutenant is to be understood as a Saul of Tarsus”.

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The Priest himself is a paradoxical figure. Friedman (1990:136), for instance, notes in him a “double rhythm of hope and despair, action and passivity, vaunting ambition and victimization, longing for escape and for capture, obsession equally with the diurnal and the transcendent moment”. In addition, Greene convincingly makes use of sustained paradox to contrast the Priest, an earthly, fallible human being, prone to the sins of all his parishioners and tending to relapse in performing his religious duties, with the Lieutenant, who leads a puritanical life and is dedicated to his secular ideals. No better description of the Priest’s fall from grace can be given than that presented in his confession to the Lieutenant: “I am a very poor priest. It was when he left I began to go to pieces. One thing went after another. I got careless about my duties. I began to drink. It would have been much better, I think, if I had gone too. Because pride was at work all the time. Not love of God ... Pride was what made the angels fall. Pride’s the worst thing of all” (PG: 235-236).

Greene compounds the irony of the Priest’s confession in that it is to the Lieutenant, the Priest’s arch enemy, himself a proud man, and a committed unbeliever. Indeed, the Lieutenant is much more like an ideal priest than the Priest himself. Greene emphasizes the Lieutenant’s chastity, honesty, asceticism, and dedication: his room is like “a monastic cell” (PG:23), “[h]imself he felt no need of women” (PG:21); and there “was something of a priest in his intent observant walk - a theologian going back over the errors of the past to destroy them again” (PG:23).

The creation of the Lieutenant is one of Greene’s finest achievements. Dedicated, high-minded, he is a worthy opponent of the Priest. His actions are selfless and in a paradoxical sense impeccably moral, as an abstract of his aims illuminates: ... it was for these [the children] he was fighting. He would eliminate from their childhood everything which had made him miserable, all that was poor, superstitious and corrupt. They deserved nothing less than the truth - a vacant universe and a cooling world, the right to be happy in any way they chose. He was quite prepared to make a massacre for their sakes - first the Church and then the foreigner and then the politician (PG:65).

However, even in the moments of the Priest’s degradation, as in the prison scene, Greene underscores the indestructibility of the Priest’s faith, as opposed to the awareness of lack of faith in the Lieutenant: 318 Koers 63(4) 1998:313-325

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It infuriated him to think that there were still people who believed in a loving and merciful God. There are mystics who are said to have experienced God directly. He was a mystic, too, and what he had experienced was vacancy - a complete certainty in the existence of a dying, cooling world, of human beings who had evolved from animals for no purpose at all. He knew (PG:23).

The Lieutenant’s noble idea to create a just society is in itself paradoxical: his endeavours to establish a just and peaceful society simply lead to suffering and cruelty. The Lieutenant, however, cannot be regarded as unfeeling. His harshness results from his belief that the church is directly accountable for the unjust society. He sees in the priesthood a corrupt system which favours only the few, and because he wants to wipe out clericalism, he orders the taking and shooting of hostages. Yet he is simultaneously capable of charity, as in his offer to allow Padre Jose hear the Priest’s confession. The Priest, on the other hand, expresses the theodicy of the novel when he argues in a sermon to the persecuted Christians that suffering and pain have to be endured on earth to move us nearer to the ultimate and all-inclusive good: “He was talking about heaven, standing between them and the candles in the ragged peon trousers and tom shirt ... He said: ‘One of the Fathers has told us that joy always depends on pain. Pain is part of joy’” (PG:79).

Conversely, the Lieutenant’s pursuit of the church arouses a feeling of compassion in the Priest; for example when in the darkness and stench of the prison, “[h]e was moved by an enormous and irrational affection for the inhabitants of this prison. A phrase came to him: ‘God so loved the world (PG:151). He is no longer proud and smug: “He had a sense of companionship which he had never experienced in the old days when pious people came kissing his black cotton glove” (PG:153). Then he felt “no pity at all” (PG:157), but “in his corruption” (PG:166) he learns.

Significantly, the Lieutenant serves to ennoble the Priest by stopping the latter’s further degradation and forcing him to recognize his own weaknesses. Moreover, in his last moments the Priest realizes that he has failed his mission on earth, but in this realization he achieves his spiritual apotheosis: “Tears poured down his face; he was not at the moment afraid of damnation - even the fear of pain was in the background. He only felt an immense disappointment because he had to go to
God empty-handed, with nothing done at all” (PG:253). With the Priest’s death at the end of the novel, Greene deftly resolves the conflict between the two protagonists. When the Priest dies and the Lieutenant seems to be victorious, we have the inversion, the arrival of a new priest. The church triumphs and the title of the novel asserts itself: for Thine is the Kingdom, the Power, and the Glory. The Power and the Glory is a remarkable achievement, in the words of John Updike (1990:16): “The Power and the Glory is generally agreed to be Graham Koens 63(4) 1998:313-325
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Greene’s masterpiece, the book of his held highest in popular as well as critical esteem”. There is not perhaps any development of character: the Whisky Priest and the Lieutenant are fixed in their mould from the beginning. They are, however, convincingly drawn and their actions motivated. The Whisky Priest comes alive as a tenacious man of God, despite his frailties and abject condition, while the Lieutenant is presented as a high-minded ascetic, dedicated to his radical mission in life. It is indeed a moving and thought-provoking novel.

2.3 Monsignor Quixote (1982)
The short later novel, Monsignor Quixote, recalls many aspects of Greene’s earlier work. It shows a close affinity with especially The Power and the Glory in that it again allows a degraded priest to triumph over his rivals, in this instance over high-minded and learned clergymen who lack real compassion. Moreover, paradox may once more be regarded as this novel’s cornerstone. In the words of Amaracheewa (1982:iii), this novel evinces the paradoxical fact that “Greene’s good characters are explicitly the ones who are guided by an inner love and ethic despite the surface appearance of despair and damnation, whereas his bad characters consciously appear to seek moral conduct in conventional piety”. Greene’s use of the Shakespearean quotation as an epigraph to the novel - “There is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so” - underscores his intention to reveal religious paradoxes in the novel. In the words of Bonanni (1991:84) “sinful mankind reads evil into the motives of others; appearance is interpreted as reality and the outward shown as the inward intention”. In Monsignor Quixote Greene examines the “antithetical compromise” (Bonanni, 1991:4) between the Communist ex-mayor, Sancho, and his friend, an ordinary but widely read village Priest who is promoted to monsignor as a result of his charity to an Italian bishop. The novel relates how Quixote and Sancho embark on a journey in Rocinante, the Priest’s old ramshackle car, his only passion in life. When the novel opens the Bishop scorns Quixote’s lack of nobility, mediocre religious instruction and ridiculous claim to be a descendant of a fictional character. On the journey Quixote and Sancho are constantly in trouble with the authorities. Moreover, Quixote enrages the Bishop by his remark “Bugger the Bishop” (MQ:156) and is ordered to return to El Toboso to account for his deeds. The second part of the novel relates how Sancho rescues Quixote from the Bishop’s arrest and depicts the continuation of their journey during which the Priest performs a couple of courageous deeds, like his fictional ancestor. The Guardia recapture them, in the process seriously injuring Mon-6 Monsignor Quixote - henceforth referred to as MQ.
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signor Quixote and gunning down his beloved Rocinante. Quixote is taken to a Trappist monastery where he, in his delirium, insists on performing a strange mass for Sancho. The novel ends with the Priest dying at the altar, leaving Sancho, the hitherto staunch Communist, experiencing an unusual feeling of love for the Priest who has so radically changed his life. The ensuing discussion of religious paradox in this novel will examine two areas - first the paradoxical nature of both religion and Communism, and second, religious paradoxes in Catholic officials. It is, however, always clear that Greene distinguishes between his clergy and the Church itself - while Catholic clergymen are often corrupt in the execution of their duties, the Church is not shown as such. The literary discussions between Quixote and Sancho reveal that Quixote understands and sympathizes with Marx, while Sancho in turn reveals an interest in the Priest’s often scorned and outdated Christian authors. Because they are both seeking answers and are willing to question accepted beliefs, they have empathy with each other, as the following passage reveals:
Finally, under the ruined wall of an outhouse, which belonged to an abandoned farm, they found what they needed. Someone had painted a hammer and sickle crudely in red upon the crumbling stone.
‘I would have preferred a cross,’ Father Quixote said, ‘to eat under.’
‘What does it matter? The taste of cheese will not be affected by cross or
hammer. Besides, is there much difference between the two? They are both protests against injustice.'

'But the results were a little different. One created tyranny, the other charity.'

'Tyranny? Charity? What about the Inquisition and our patriot Torquemada?'

In the early stage of the journey the Priest reflects on the strange, paradoxical bond between them:

It’s odd, he thought, as he steered Rocinante with undue caution round a curve, how sharing a sense of doubt can bring men together even more than sharing a faith. The believer will fight another believer over a shade of difference: the doubter only fights with himself (MQ:52).

He even tells Sancho: “perhaps a true Communist is a sort of priest” (MQ:91).

Neil McEvan (1988:134) regards Monsignor Quixote as “a good innocent because he is an unsuccessful, unambitious priest, who lives humbly with the knowledge that he is somewhat ridiculous”. For the Priest, like for so many of Greene’s characters, faith is constantly shadowed by doubt as he admits to Sancho: “Oh, despair I understand. I know despair too, Sancho” (MQ:43).

The Priest possesses the qualities which Greene views as essential for a good man: the ability to acknowledge humility and doubt, coupled with a sense of compassion for other people. He himself tells Sancho: “I know I’m a poor priest errant, travelling God knows where. I know that there are absurdities in some of my books ... [but] I still have faith,” Father Quixote’s compassion for mankind is evinced in his willingness to say a prayer even for Judas or Stalin.

In Greene’s framework, Sancho should paradoxically also be seen as a good man because he admits that he has weaknesses while simultaneously showing understanding for another person’s beliefs, as his attitude towards the Priest constantly exhibits. After the strange Mass, Sancho explicitly tells Father Leopoldo: “But I’m afraid in the eyes of your Church I’m a very unworthy recipient. I am a Communist. One who has not been to confession for thirty years or more. What I’ve done in those thirty years - well, you wouldn’t like me to go into details” (MQ:219).

However, no trace of Greene’s usual comic tone which characterises the conversations between the Priest and Sancho, is found in his descriptions of the so called “intellectual Catholic activists” (MQ:61), as the incident relating the buying of the purple socks indicates. Father Quixote’s dismay with the exuberance of the shop is only too obvious:

His heart sank as he took in the elegance of the shop and the dark well-pressed suit of the assistant who greeted them with the distant courtesy of a church authority. It occurred to Father Quixote that such a man was almost certainly a member of the Opus Dei - that club of intellectual Catholic activists whom he could not fault and yet whom he could not trust. He was a countryman, and they belonged to the great cities (MQ:61).

The Priest’s own Bishop and Father Herrera, the ambitious young clergyman clearly marked as the Monsignor’s successor, are also used as vehicles of Greene’s paradoxical views on religion. The Bishop displays neither compassion nor understanding. When he is instructed to inform the Priest that he has been promoted to monsignor on the recommendation of the Italian Bishop, Quixote immediately senses that “the letter seemed to have been written in a cold rage” (MQ:25). The letter reveals this Bishop as self-seeking and cold: he writes that he has been asked...

Greene’s irritation with uncharitable dogma is evident in Monsignor Quixote’s recollection of a “rather silent dinner” (MQ:64) he had spent with Father Herrera when he had felt “that he could never communicate with Father Herrera on anything which touched the religion they were supposed to share” (MQ:64J. Greene compounds the irony inherent in the situation by remarking: “Perhaps Father Herrera was hoping for a truly heretical reply which could be reported - of course by the proper channels - to Rome” (MQ:65). This arrogant young clergyman who flaunts his Doctorate in Moral Theology also lacks humanity. On his arrival he is immediately offended by Teresa’s behaviour, refuses to drink coffee because it keeps him awake at night but ”...
armchair without hesitation” (MQ:65).

It is thus evident that in Monsignor Quixote Greene constantly applies paradox to reveal inconsistencies in the attitude of clerics, thereby advocating a reconsideration of religion which relies solely on doctrine but which lacks Christian compassion.

3. Conclusion

To conclude, this article has underscored that Greene has almost single-handedly redefined twentieth-century Roman Catholic notions on piety with his constant revelation of the essential paradox that “the greatest saints are the people with more than a normal capacity for evil, and the most vicious people only escaped sanctity with the greatest difficulty” (Simon, 1952:75). Simon’s early observation may be extended to view Pinkie, the Whisky Priest, and to a lesser degree Monsignor Quixote and Sancho, as characters who are touched with grace, while the Lieutenant as well as the Bishop and Father Herrera should be seen as devoid of charity and compassion. This paradoxical view of characters is quite convincing, although “uncomfortable” (McEwan, 1988:14). Greene has thus contributed to the idea of a new humble, “imperial” Roman Catholic Church. These novels also reveal that Greene’s commitment is to life, life lived to the full and not to a sterile, dogmatic kind of life. Greene constantly attacks selfishness, thereby displaying his own religious sensitivity and courage.

Greene’s novels thus radically question the doctrines on morality espoused by conventional churches. I agree also with Sharrock’s (1984:82) view that in Greene’s novels “there is always a tension, a peculiarly English tension, not simply between the world and the spirit, but between two equally balanced and desperately antagonistic points of view”. This tension between paradoxical values is noticeable in the work of a vast number of English writers, for instance Joseph Conrad, D.H. Lawrence, James Joyce, and William Golding. In other words, Greene has throughout his literary career employed paradox to reveal the density and duality of morality and ethics. His novels thus “extend and clarify our understanding of the world of his imagination ... [while] they furnish a coherent view of human nature in all its paradoxes and contradictions” (Sherry, 1989:228). In the words of Salvatore (1988:15) Greene’s “characters speak so that the reader may perceive and weigh the advantages and disadvantages of many different life categories”. That paradox lies at the heart of Greene’s artistic portrayal of life is vindicated by the fact that Greene himself suggested the following lines from Bishop Blougram’s Apology as an epigraph for all his novels:

Our interest’s on the dangerous edge of things
The honest thief, the tender murderer,
The superstitious atheist, demi-rep
That loves and saves her soul in new French books -
We watch while these in equilibrium keep
The giddy line midway.

Bibliography

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2011-5

Hell, Flames and Damnation : Graham Greene's
"Brighton Rock"

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Recommended Citation

'Hell, Flames and Damnation':
Graham Greene's 'Brighton Rock'

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Dublin. His most recent book is 'The Church and its Spirit'
John McGahern and
the Catholic Question
(The Columba Press
2Gu).
... how evil can take
hold of a person's spirit
and drag other
innocent souls into a
downward spiral to
damnation.

Published in 1938, Brighton Rock is the first novel by Graham Greene
to deal in an overt manner with Catholic themes. Because of his infatuation
with Vivien Dayrell-Browning, a convert to Catholicism to
whom he was engaged, Greene started taking instruction in Catholic
doctrine, which led to his being received into the Catholic Church in
1926. Throughout his writing career, Catholic themes continued to
preoccupy him, culminating in such masterpieces as The Power and
the Glory (1940), The Heart of the Matter (1948) and The End of the
Affair (1951). The release of a new film version of Brighton Rock has
had the effect of reigniting interest in this early dramatisation of how
evil can take hold of a person's spirit and drag other innocent souls
into a downward spiral to damnation.

At the beginning of the novel a newspaper employee called Hale, who
has run foul of a local gang of criminals, wanders nervously around
Brighton. Chief among his tormentors is a 17 year-old psychopath,
Pinkie, who is intent on exacting revenge for the accidental murder of
his former benefactor, Kite. Hale had some involvement in this murder,
which is why he is being pursued. He attaches himself to the
kind-hearted Ida who will become suspicious when she subsequently
discovers that Hale, whose body was discovered later that day, is found
to have died from natural causes. Ida rightly suspects that Pinkie had
something to do with Hale's death. She sets about getting to the root
of what really happened to her friend and ends up embroiled in a
potentially dangerous situation. She also manages to endanger the
young girl working in a tea shop, Rose, who has information that
could prove damaging to Pinkie and his gang.

In order to ensure that she does nothing that might incriminate him,
Pinkie befriends Rose. After a short time, she falls helplessly in love
with him and they end up being married in a registry office - the
shrewd, self-serving Pinkie knows that a wife cannot give evidence
against her husband in court. During their first encounter, he spots a
rosary beads in her hand bag and realises that she is a Catholic: Agnus
dei qui tolis peccata mundi, dona nobis pacem, he intones, before being
transported back to his time as an altar boy: 'In his voice a whole lost
world moved - the lighted corner below the organ, the smell of incense
and laundered surplices, and the music.' Unlike Rose, Pinkie
has strayed very far from the piety of his youth. When asked by Rose
if she believes in religion, he replies: 'What else could there be? ... Why,
it's the only thing that fits. These atheists, they don't know nothing.

Spirituality
... Pinkie recognises
that there is an equal
amount of goodness in
Rose as there is evil in
him.
... if they damned
him, they'd got to
damn her, too:

Of course there's Hell. Flames and damnation ...

Rose likes to believe there is also a Heaven, but Pinkie only sees the
evil in the world and in himself His one consolation is his Catholic
belief: 'You could be saved between the stirrup and the ground, but
you couldn't be saved if you didn't repent and he hadn't time... '
Childhood memories of the confession box, the priest's voice, the bright
lights burning in the pink glasses before the statues of the saints, the
feeling of safety one encountered in a church, all come flooding back.
Although he is disgusted at the thought of sexual concourse, influenced
no doubt by witnessing the weekly coupling of his parents with
whom he had to share a room, Pinkie recognises that there is an equal
amount of goodness in Rose as there is evil in him. He tells her: 'It's in
the blood. Perhaps when they christened me, the holy water didn't
take. I never howled the devil out.' As a child, he swore he would
become a priest. The celibate state would have suited him in one important
aspect: it would have meant he could avoid what he refers to
as 'Married Passion.'

When Rose informs him that she entered a church before joining him
in the registry office in the hope of going to confession, he is reminded
of the gravity of what they are about to do. The two murders he has
committed up to this point 'were trivial acts, a boy's game... Murder
only led up to this - this corruption'. Pinkie's Puritanism colours his
view of his wife: 'She was good, but he'd got her like you got God in
the Eucharist - in the guts. God couldn't escape the evil mouth which
chose to eat its own damnation.' With the words 'It's a mortal sin', he
takes possession of Rose. On hearing his wife declare her love for him,
he reflects: 'This was hell then... ' Hell for him is being stuck with a
woman for whom he feels nothing but revulsion, a revulsion made all
the worse because he associates her with his initial experience of sinful
sex. Rose is similarly aware of the enormity of what has passed between
them: 'What was the good of praying now. She'd finished with
all that: she had chosen her side: if they damned him, they'd got to
damn her, too'.

Greene provides a forensic exploration of the consequences of sin in
Brighton Rock. The two young characters are conscious of going deeper
and deeper into an abyss from which there may well be no return.
The gap between 'the stirrup and the ground' becomes more and more
narrow as Pinkie comes up with the idea that the only way of finding
peace is for them to agree a suicide pact. He has no intention of killing
himself, however. His plan is for Rose to shoot herself first and then
he will claim to the police that she wrote him a note (which is true)
saying she could not bear the thought of living without him. Rose is

The recent film version
is unsatisfactory in
many respects.
The major issue in
the novel... is the
nature of God's
mercy.

'HELL, FLAMES AND DAMNATION'
aware that suicide is one of the most abhorrent sins in the eyes of the
Catholic Church, but she is told: 'You can't be damned twice over,
and we're damned already.' Pinkie's crooked solicitor Prewitt had earlier
quoted Mephistopheles' comment to Faustus: 'Why, this is Hell,
nor are we out of it', a statement that resonated with Pinkie, who
knows that he is inhabiting a Hell on earth. The arrival of Ida and a
policeman before Rose pulls the trigger to the gun that is placed in her
ear results in Pinkie inadvertently breaking the bottle of vitriol he
carries in his jacket, which has horrendous consequences: '... it was as
if the flames had literally got him'. His earthly Hell comes to an abrupt
end as, blinded by pain, he inadvertently steps over the cliff to his
death.
The recent film version of the novel is unsatisfactory in many respects. Firstly, Pinkie does not come across as the fearfully evil character he is in the novel. Similarly, his conflicted sexuality is not nearly as pronounced in the film version. But it is in the ending of the film that the most glaring discrepancy can be found. One day as they were walking along the promenade, Rose had asked Pinkie to record his voice in a booth. He spoke, not of love, but of his loathing for his new bride. At the end of the novel, Rose is heading 'towards the worst horror of all', the playing of the record which will reveal his true sentiments for her. In the film, the record sticks on the words, 'What you want me to say is I love you...' which plays over and over to the great consolation of the young woman. The significance of Rose discovering the deep aversion she inspired in her husband stems from her discussions with a priest who emphasises that if Pinkie was capable of love, that at least showed he could not have been completely evil.

When questioned in an interview about his character's fate in the afterlife, Greene replied: 'I don't think that Pinkie was guilty of mortal sin because his actions were not committed in defiance of God, but arose out of the conditions to which he had been born.' The major issue in the novel, as far as I am concerned, is the nature of God's mercy. While Pinkie is undoubtedly a great sinner, it is difficult to ascertain what exactly transpired between the 'stirrup and the ground': it is not impossible that Pinkie last thoughts were of repentance. In Greene's view, such theological issues were beyond the ken of mere mortals and always remain couched in mystery. What I recommend is that everyone get a copy of *Brighton Rock* and make up their own mind as to Pinkie's fate.

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-ABSTRACT-
Convergent Critical Traditions in Graham Greene’s Work. Non-English Influences and Romanian Reception
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SIBIU, 2012
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2. Key words
Graham Greene, psychoanalytic tradition, catholic tradition, Existentialism, Romanian reception, French reception, cultural context, censorship, translations

3. Abstract
The aim of this thesis is to focus on Graham Greene’s literary fiction and its impact on Romanian as well as various international audiences of English, American and French readers. One of the most popular British novelists of the twentieth century, Graham Greene is also one of the most fascinating examples of misreading and critical contention in literature. The cause of this critical contention could reside in the dilemma in placing the British author given the complexity of his writing and its protean nature.

Hence, in light of critics’ and audiences’ hesitations in deciding whether Graham Greene is a catholic writer or just “a writer who happens to be a catholic”, an agile storyteller or a fine psychoanalyst of the human soul, a classic (in the tradition of Conrad or Dostoyevsky) or a modern writer (whose cinematic writing and modern anti-heroes go beyond tradition into innovation), we have endeavoured to try to trace to what extent the elements of various critical
traditions such as the Psychoanalytical, Catholic and Existentialist have influenced Graham Greene’s artistic creation. Thus, one of the aims of the present dissertation was to make an investigation of each of the three critical approaches that have been made to the British author’s work.

It is our conviction that one cannot grasp the complexities of Graham Greene’s world unless one acknowledges the crucial role that religion played in shaping the author’s artistic vision. It is obvious that our perception of the author’s religious dimension depends greatly upon the position assumed within each of the Psychoanalytic; the Catholic or Existentialist traditions as we consider that this approach would help us better comprehend the evolution itself of Graham Greene’s spiritual dimension. Psychoanalysis, Catholicism and Existentialism, all provide us with a context to analyse the author’s religious dimension.

Taken separately the critical stances assumed in each of the three traditions are not sufficient to offer a comprehensive explanation of Graham Greene’s complex universe but together they manage to frame a dialectical approach to his writings.

Thus, after placing Graham Greene within the context of late modernist fiction, the chapter entitled **Freudian Readings in the Biographical- Psychoanalytical Tradition** invites to a reading centred on the relationship that exists between the author’s traumatic childhood experiences and his literary creation.

In subchapter 2.1, *Berkhampsted, Betrayal, Deceit and the Birth of an Author*, I have presented major biographical data on Graham Greene in order to emphasize the similarities but also the differences that exist between Graham Greene’s literary universe and the major events in his life. Graham Greene’s fiction, as well as his criticism, undoubtedly shows that he is one of the most autobiographical authors in modern British literature. The critic Adam Schwartz in his book *The Third Spring* rightfully sees how for Greene “fiction became his chief means of keeping his personal equilibrium, as Greene’s characters frequently succumb to his own temptations”.

Subchapter 2.2 points to the fact that the author’s complex fictional work reflects a widespread knowledge of psychology mainly Freudian and Jungian concepts. We have therefore endeavoured to trace to what extent psychoanalytic influences and theories can be detected in Graham Greene’s writings. Of course, analyzing characters from a psychoanalytical stand proves 5
a risky pursuit, yet, one immediately notices how Graham Greene’s young or mature protagonists always follow the same pattern based upon their struggle to bring together their divided selves or loyalties. Therefore, we have opined Graham Greene’s artistic merit lies in the imaginative power with which he creates a fictional world in which he restores and integrates memories of his past. Given the aforementioned considerations we have also pointed out that we find the psychoanalytical tradition to be most appropriate in helping us to identify and decode the major recurrent themes and motives emerging in Graham Greene’s literary universe as well as the way in which they evolve into recognizable patterns. Thus, in the following we have provided a short analysis of the major dominant themes and preoccupations in Graham Greene’s work and we have discussed the way in which they are illustrated in the author’s most representative novels. Accordingly, we have identified three dominant preoccupations which shape Graham Greene’s artistic outlook. The first preoccupation is articulated in the theme of the lost childhood and the subsequent motives of childhood innocence versus adulthood corruption and lack of communication. The second direction in Graham Greene’s fiction concerns the catholic themes of evil and original sin versus the themes of redemption, possibility of salvation and pity, while finally the last preoccupation in Graham Greene’s work finds expression in the themes of betrayal and loyalty versus disloyalty. The next subchapter entitled The Heart of the Matter. A Psychoanalytical Reading of the Concept of Pity is a case study which explores the way in which the theme of pity permeates Graham Greene’s modern writing. The focus on the “subtle nuances of the human psyche” in the portrayal of the main character makes us discover the reality behind the apparent, the thin line separating sinners from saints in Greene’s novels. Furthermore, we consider The Heart of the Matter is most representative of Graham Greene’s literary universe as it re-enacts most of its thematic concerns and preoccupations.

In the third chapter entitled Moral Experiments in the Catholic Tradition we have examined Graham Greene’s preoccupation with the religious dimension and dogmas and the way in which cultural context influenced his artistic creation. In subchapter 3.1 The Catholic Novel Today we have attempted to define the concept of “Catholic author” which takes on different meanings as it seems to approach two kinds of attitudes or directions. Thus, as critics note, on the one hand we have classic literary Catholic 6
writings which illustrate doctrines of Catholic faith while on the other we have a new kind of Catholic writing which is the expression of a personal vision of human life, imbued with sacramental symbolism. Although these Catholic writings draw on elements of Christian doctrine their purpose is rather artistic than apologetic. They don’t paint an idealized picture of what a man should be rather their role is to show life through the eyes of their character’s inner spiritual life. Thus, most of the novelists we associate with Catholicism - Evelyn Waugh, Flannery O’Connor, Muriel Spark, Graham Greene are those belonging to the second category which refuses to separate the sacred from the secular.

Another distinction we felt compelled to do is that between traditional pre-Vatican II Catholic prose and that arriving after the Council’s proclamation characterized by a growing rapprochement with secularity. Traditional Catholic novelists defined themselves in opposition to a number of values such as the Word Wars, industrialism, materialism or modernity itself. Catholicism’s relationship to the word changed after Vatican II as the church no longer expressed the same monolithic and uniform worldview as it once did.

Nowadays Catholic novelists have incorporated recent developments in Church and society into their work in ways that highlighted new possibilities for Catholic fiction. Their novels are nuanced treatments of the problem of religious belief in today’s society often built upon absurd situations. The works of Graham Greene, David Lodge, Heinrich Boll, J.R Tolkien, to name only a few, catches the comic spirit of those ridiculous aspects of Catholic life.

Our study of Catholic literary culture has brought us to the question of whether it is possible to be both a major writer and a Catholic at the same time. The writer who best typifies the struggle between one’s calling to be a novelist and one’s calling to be a believer in the Church is English novelist Graham Greene. His work can be considered as a prototype for the Catholic writer’s rebellious and ambivalent relationship with the Church and with modernity. Moreover his work typifies both the religious themes and patterns present in the early twentieth century Catholic revival which structures his artistic vision through the lens of Catholic dogmas as well as Post Vatican II treatment of themes which enabled the dialogue between modernity and the Church. His religious imagination reflects through his novels the inherent dilemmas of twentieth century. Thus, one of the aims of this thesis was to assess the importance of the religious aspect in Graham Greene’s work, by trying to determine to what extent Graham Greene’s cultural
context has influenced his literary work. Consequently, we aimed to delineate the author’s ambivalent relationship towards the values of modernity as well as the tremendous influence of the French Catholic Revival, the imaginative discourses of the catholic scholar John Newman and the development of the Vatican II Council had upon his artistic vision.

We have tried to delineate the contours of Graham Greene’s religious geography by situating his writing career within the English Catholic Revival. We have also tried to trace Graham Greene’s appropriation of the French Catholic Literary Revival in his attempts to stand against Protestant discourse and modern secular thought. I have showed how Graham Greene’s Catholic novels draw their thematic substance and doctrines from French literature.

The classic ingredients of the French Catholic novel appear in many of Graham Greene’s novels such as The Power and the Glory, The Heart of the Matter and The End of the Affair and illustrate his familiarity with the French writers. In terms of thematic content David Lodge in the introduction to François Mauriac’s novel The Viper’s Tangle describes some of the key features which help us identify the ingredients of the classic Catholic novel as the following: “the idea of the sinner at the heart of Christianity, the idea of the mystical substitution, the pursuit of the erring soul by God and the conflict between the corrupt flesh and the transcendent spirit”. This is more than evident in Graham Greene’s novels The Power and the Glory, The Heart of the Matter and The End of the Affair whose main characters are representative for the ingredients discussed above.

Besides the obvious French Catholic revival themes another powerful influence on Graham Greene’s Catholicism was played by the Victorian thinker and leading figure of the Oxford movement, the English scholar and apologist John Henry Newman. Moreover, many critics repeatedly linked Graham Greene and Newman in their ideological battle against the experience of suffering and the human predicament. Newman’s writings as much as those of Graham Greene echo concerns about incertitude and personal doubt, being constructed on a vision of God based on Descartes’ views presenting divine reality as subjected to one’s own mental ideas.

In the fourth subchapter, Vatican II Context and Graham Greene’s Perspective on Faith we have tried to focus on the second Vatican’s influence upon the development of Catholicism and the way in which it was reflected the author’s literary works. We have highlighted the fact that since the Council’s proclamation the very history of the Church was to
be divided into pre Vatican II and post Vatican II periods. Similarly, literary criticism often analyzed Graham Greene’s writings in terms of a Catholic and a Post-Catholic or social period which coincided with the proclamation of the Council. Last but not least throughout this section we have tried to situate Graham Greene’s writings within the historical and theological context of the Vatican II concerns in order to show how Graham Greene’s Catholicism evolved throughout his literary journey by incorporating new developments which allowed his writing to find its appeal to non religious writers also. In light of the strong connection between the British author and the French literary milieu another important aim of this chapter was that of presenting A Brief Outlook on Graham Greene’s Reception in France. (subchapter 3.2) We have praised French critic’s merits in being among the firsts to uncover the value of Graham Greene’s work, however we have found the weak point of their literary endeavours as being constituted specifically by the fact that they tend to fit his work into all sorts of philosophical discussions and trends specific for the French novel. Subchapter 3.3 The Power and the Glory as a Modern Catholic Novel: A Case Study continues our exploration of Graham Greene’s religious dimension proceeding with a case study of the way in which the author blends catholic aesthetics with modern narrative devices in his masterpiece The Power and the Glory. We have analysed Graham Greene’s innovative narrative and his unconventional style as it is evinced in the representation of God’s voice and the way in which mythical elements blend with Catholic themes in order to create irony. The conclusion is that Graham Greene’s writing is both traditional and innovative in the sense that it employs modern narrative techniques specifically woven into a fabric of classic Catholic thematic ingredients. Graham Greene’s unorthodox approach to the religious dimension becomes more evident along with our exploration of the Existential dimension in Graham Greene’s novels. Along with the publication of the novels The Quiet American, A Burnt Out Case and The Comedians we can clearly discern the way in which religious dogmas so powerfully evoked in his Greene’s middle novels are transfigured into a more subtle exploration of the religious or spiritual dimension in the fourth chapter entitled Myths of Liberal Humanism in the Existentialist Tradition. Here we have placed Graham Greene’s writing in the tradition of Kierkegaard, Camus and Sartre arguing that one must look beyond Catholicism in order to
comprehend the profundity and complexity of Greene’s artistic creation. Within this tradition it is easy to notice how all of Graham Greene’s later characters engage in an existentialist struggle with the evil forces around them. The mastery with which the author portrays their efforts, their intense doubts and moral dilemmas reminds us of the existentialists’ view of life as a “metaphysical joke” but also of their liberal opinions and intrinsic humanism. All of these ingredients also correspond to Graham Greene’s artistic vision. They form his personal and unorthodox approach towards the spiritual dimension which represents the real substance of Graham Greene’s writing as Samuel Hynes rightly assesses: “For Greene, truth is religious, not always specifically Catholic, or even Christian in any exact doctrinal sense, but concerned with a vision of human life that postulates the reality of another world.” The dramatic force driven from the author’s depictions of the tensions between human and divine values in Greene’s earlier novels diminishes much along with the author’s focus on a different, wider, less dogmatic vision in his late novels. Yet, it is through his late novels that the author’s reputation will consolidate as they offer a more balanced vision which aims to unite faith and reason in an existentialist, humanitarian approach. The best exemplification of is the new existentialist direction in Graham Greene’s novels is illustrated in *The Quiet American*, the anti-war, anti-American novel which uses political situation in order to portray moral and ethical dilemmas. Another important aim of this chapter was that of presenting a brief outlook on Graham Greene’s reception in America (Subchapter 4.3) in an attempt to go beyond the European label of his writings into reinforcing the author’s position as a cosmopolitan writer. In what concerns Graham Greene’s reception in American which is inevitably linked to the novel *The Quiet American*, we notice that the novel has raised a high number of controversies within critics which ultimately points to the pluri-perspectiveness but also appreciation of his fiction. Finally, in what concerns Graham Greene’s impact on the Romanian cultural environment, the second objective of this thesis, chapter 5 Lost in Translation, Graham Greene’s Reception in Romania represents our main contribution to this research paper and tries to present a variety of perspectives which does justice to Graham Greene’s complex universe. Consequently, we have divided our research into three time periods, namely translations issued prior to 1989; translations issued after this year and reception peaks.
Graham Greene’s massive reception through translations unquestionably took place in the communist period. In order to evaluate Graham Greene’s reception during this period it we have presented a brief overview of the Communist policy regarding translations and the general orientation of the Romanian cultural life at the time.

We have highlighted the fact that the cultural atmosphere in Romania during the Communist years is inevitably linked to the concept of world literature which testifies to the opening of Romanian cultural life to the outside world. The promotion of a new educational reform by the communist political regime with emphasis on the acceptance of foreign literary values constituted a new cultural direction which expanded rapidly from the 1960’s on. This process as Rodica Dimitriu claims resulted in the setting up of a “clearly outlined translation policy with precise objectives to fulfil.” The new translation policy according to the same author facilitated younger generations’ access to foreign literary values and a more tolerant position on foreign literary writings which was not concerned with politics. However, along with this broadening of cultural horizons the manipulation of literary production in a certain direction never ceased to exist. All literature which was judged inappropriate such as literary productions which relied too heavily on sex, religion or politics was banned.

Within this context and knowing that an author’s process of reception into another culture depends to a large extent on the criteria of selection of the author’s most representative creations and on the accuracy of translations received, we have presented Graham Greene’s case as being illustrative for the distinct attitudes which were manifest in relation to translation policies during the communist period.

On the one hand, considering the fact that censors preferred books which were ideologically acceptable, we can fully understand why Graham Greene’s spy novels had little trouble getting published while most of what the English critical canon considers his best writing, novels such as The Power and the Glory, The End of the Affair or Brighton Rock were never translated until after the 1989 revolution.

This strategy which favoured translations which suited the interest of the regime helped create a distorted image of the author’s personality and art which overshadowed the religious and psychological dimension of his work.

Among Graham Greene’s novels with a political or psychological setting which were admitted for translation were Our Man in Havana, The Quiet American, A Burnt Out Case, The 11
Heart of the Matter and The Comedians. We have at this point attempted to point out that this was due to the fact that on the one hand there is a very thin line separating politics from deeper humanistic concerns in Graham Greene’s novels while on the other all literature with an anti-bourgeois label which warned against alienation in capitalist society was considered acceptable by Romanian authorities.

Having delineated some aspects necessary to the understanding of the Romanian socio-cultural context, we have proceeded with an analysis of the translators’ critical opinion on Graham Greene’s work as it is expressed in the foreword or afterword of the novels translated. Since only five of Graham Greene’s Romanian translations were accompanied by critical studies namely A Burnt Out Case, The Ministry of Fear, The Confidential Agent and Travels with my Aunt, four of them translated by Petre Solomon while for the fifth, Our Man in Havana, Radu Lupan provided the translation, we have continued our analysis by briefly highlighting the critical opinions expressed in them.

We can conclude that in spite of the impressive amount of translations and reviews published before 1989, Graham Greene’s worth as a major writer has remained largely unknown to the Romanian public due to the lack of translations of a large majority of his novels censored by the political regime. We have to note however the momentous impact the translations of Romanian critics Petre Solomon and Radu Lupan played in shedding a positive light on Graham Greene’s reception in our country. A relevant proof of their high standards and quality is given by the fact that they have been republished in several editions many years after the Communist period.

After the 1989 Revolution, Graham Greene’s novels rediscovered by the Romanian readership and critics inevitably lead to a framework for the reconsideration of the author’s role and importance in our cultural environment. Along with this period of time, we witness the emergence of an important number of critical studies and re-editings of earlier translations as well as translations of works previously banned.

We can easily observe the most productive period which marked Graham Greene’s reception after the fall of the Communist dictatorship spans from the years 2000 up to 2009 when Polirom publishing house supported the translation for the first time of the novels generally considered by critics as Graham Greene’s catholic masterpieces namely The Power and the Glory, Brighton Rock and The End of The Affair.
We cannot help but notice that the material which constitutes the starting point of this second approach focusing on the British author’s post-Communist reception is based mainly on periodical publications because unfortunately there are very few literary history books and only one monograph which contain valuable criticism on Graham Greene’s position within the Romanian milieu.
A general view of the critical studies and translations published during these years lets us conclude that the British author’s image was rehabilitated while the approaches focusing mainly on Graham Greene’s figure as a writer whose works justify a political system were abandoned in favour of a modernist Liberal Humanist, Post-Christian, Post-Colonialist one. It is the period which marks the beginning of a new level of complexity in assessing the reception of the British writer in our country regardless of any political constrains of ideological nature.
The conclusion is that we can witness many divergent views among Graham Greene’s critics while the evaluations of his position as a writer fall mainly into three distinct categories. The first one is centred upon Graham Greene’s image as a skilled explorer of the human consciousness writing for a Romanian audience in need for moral and Christian values, the second is mostly interested in the writer’s narrative technique and style, his “easy flowing story telling ability” (Vianu) while the third category appraises the cinematic qualities of his writing.
To this category belong Andrei Gorzo and Carmen Diaconu’s critical insights which reveal an obvious tendency towards interpreting Graham Greene’s novels as visual narratives in an attempt to depict one of the vital aspects of the British author’s writing, namely its cinematic dimension. Against these approaches, some critics such as Lidia Vianu favour a restrictive narrative perspective while others such as Mihai Zamfir and Cătălin Sturza base their critical analysis upon highlighting Graham Greene’s search for moral identity in a world governed by anarchy.
As a concluding remark we notice that much of the criticism published during this period tries to reassess the critical literary heritage left by previous generations by offering a complex picture of Romanian criticism conversant with modern and postmodern paradigms. The way in which the author manipulates reader - response through his modern anti-heroes, through irony and cinematic devices is amply dealt with by the new generation of critics.
A testimony to Graham Greene’s positive critical reception in our country was also marked by reception peaks moments which can be defined as decisive moments for the emergence of a writer’s reputation within a certain literary audience. Such a reception peak moment was occasioned by the author’s visit to Romania in 1974 when his reputation as one of the greatest novelists of the twentieth century was consolidated.

The most substantial contribution to this moment was that of the critics Petre Solomon and Radu Lupan who offered the Romanian reading public a complex image of the author in their provoking articles and interviews published in the reputed quarterly Secolul XX. They offer a complex insight into the British author’s main achievements also insisting upon matters of interest to the Romanian public such as film adaptations after Graham Greene’s novels, his attitude towards modern civilisation as well as his openly expressed dislike for labels.

The next periods which represent a peak in Graham Greene’s reception in Romania are the years 1991 respectively 2004 marked by the author’s death and the centennial anniversary of the author’s birth, on the 2nd of October 2004.

The Romanian press would most notably mark these events with numerous critical contributions out of which Romanian exegete Mihai Zamfir’s article suggestively entitled Cel mai iubit dintre romancieri (The most beloved of novelists) may best epitomize the writer’s legacy expressed through the never changing relationship of affectionate, unconditional friendship with his readers.

To sum up we can state that Graham Greene enjoys a complex critical reception in our country although if his message is not yet fully deciphered. The controversies and differences of opinions made to his fiction, the very fact that critics tend to view his fictional world from different angles testify to the profundity of his thought. Finally we hope that our evaluation of the writer’s work would serve as a basis for a future more elaborate re-evaluation and reception of Graham Greene’s universe in our country. 14