A DICHOTOMOUS UNIVERSE: GRAHAM GREENE'S *BRIGHTON ROCK*

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I

Brighton Rock (1938) is the first of Graham Greene's religious novels and at the same time it is the best and most important of his thrillers; it is representative of both his earlier and masterful work. It is both an "entertainment" and a "novel"; there are two fictional worlds which parallel the dichotomy in the author's universe. It is a thriller, a genre in which action is important for its own sake, without any necessary relationship to life outside the work, and in which characters are liable to be flat, and to exist mainly for the sake of the action. This type of story is generally like the game of monopoly which is played for its own sake, and when it is over time has passed and life goes on the same, unaffected by the game. At the same time, however, *Brighton Rock* is a serious novel in which the characters are important and in which the action of the characters has a significance outside the work itself. This is an important and revealing paradox; the characters are important and not important, their actions are significant and not significant. Ida Arnold is an important character in the novel; what she does in the story has a fatal effect on Pinkie Brown, the protagonist of *Brighton Rock*; but in real life, according to the Roman Catholic view, where the stakes are absolute because of their relationship to the supernatural, her activity is meaningless. She perhaps saves Rose, Pinkie's wife, from death or a miserable life, but she can do nothing for her soul, and in the end Rose, like everyone else, will die anyway. Pinkie's activity in the secular world is

insignificant. Like the American gangster in *The Power and the Glory*[1] Pinkie does "no real harm," but the game he plays has great value; it is only for real money. His relationship with Rose may make a difference in the life or death of her soul.

Greene has made the very form of his novel a metaphor of his universe. An "entertainment" is a despiritualized novel just as Ida and her friends occupy a despiritualized universe. Pinkie and Rose live in "real" life with absolute and spiritual meaning and therefore belong to the book-as-novel. Ida and her friends live in a limited, material world and belong to the book-as-entertainment. The entertainment does not harm, but it makes no attempt to meet the higher demands of the serious novel, to get at the meaning of human existence. In *Brighton Rock*, Greene has brought together the two forms, novel and entertainment, as a formal image of his vision which depicts life on two levels, material and spiritual. This vision might be compared to T.S. Eliot's who contrasted the modern "Hollow Men" to the medieval "lost violent souls" of Dante's *Inferno*. Thus, to explain Greene's idea of the world in *Brighton Rock*, in this paper I will attempt to clarify the dichotomy in *Brighton Rock*, and reveal the essential elements of what Greene calls "my universe."

II

The chief character of *Brighton Rock*, Pinkie, is certainly violent. He is a Roman Catholic who believes in the supernatural, but he has real faith only in Satan, and he is convinced that after death he will spend endless time in the fires of Hell. He looks forward to his eternal destination with a perverse relish, as R. W. B. Lewis writes:

> As Pinkie pursues his dream of damnation, the tragic dimension of *Brighton Rock* turns into a sort of saint's life in reverse. The seven sections of the book dramatize one by one an inversion of all or most of the seven sacraments, dramatize what we might call the seven deadly

> sacraments: as Pinkie is confirmed in the habit of murder ("Hell lay about him in his infancy. He was ready for more deaths"), is ordained as a priest of his satanic church ("When I was a kid, I swore I'd be a priest ... What's wrong with being a Priest? They know what's what"), performs the act of matrimony (which here is a mortal sin), and receives the vitriolic unction in the moment of his death. The entire reversal accomplished in *Brighton Rock*, haphazard though it is, manages to dignify the repellent protagonist on the principle indicated to Rose, at the very end, by the sniffling old priest: *Corruptio optimi est pessima.* The worst is the corruption of the best. Only the potentially very good can become so very evil, and only the sacraments that save can so effectively become the sacraments that blast.[2]

The Gothic novel has given us examples of corrupt churchmen, but with this priest of Satan, Pinkie, Greene mixes evil and the trappings of the Church with intense ferocity.

Opposed to Pinkie in the novel is Ida Arnold who represents the monopoly set. She is affiliated with the secular world and to her the supernatural has no relevance. God is the policeman of the game of monopoly. Her favourite world is the holiday universe of Brighton, where vendors sell "brighton rock," a candy, which no matter how it is cut always bears the name Brighton; and no matter how you slice it, the secular world is Ida's world, its ideals are her ideals, its rights are hers. Kenneth Allott and Miriam Farris, in *The Art of Graham Greene*, describe Ida as follows:

> The men she befriends, Phil Corkery, Hale and the rest, belong to the same bowler-hatted tribe that Greene visualizes lined up behind Mae West in the homely rowdy world of smoke-filled bars and Guinness advertisements. The big vague abstractions, which are anathema to Greene, provide Ida with all the spiritual sustenance she needs. She identifies Hale from the newspaper reports of "Kolly Kibber's" death, attends his cremation and is moved to easy tears by the oration—itself a nice specimen of Greene's malicious satire.

Ida is genuinely shocked by death:

> She didn't believe in heaven or hell, only ghosts, ouija boards, tables that rapped. . . . Let Papists treat death with flippancy: life wasn't so important perhaps to them as what came after; but to her death was the end of everything.

The miserable chance acquaintance made on holiday in Brighton, who had clung to her for dear life and then disappeared, remains in her memory as a supreme figure of pathos. She weeps again outside the crematorium:

> . . . the twin towers above her head fumed the very last of Fred. . . . Fred dropped in indistinguishable grey ash on the pink blossoms: he became part of the smoke nuisance over London, and Ida wept.

The strength of her passionate belief in life and her "eye-for-an-eye" philosophy render her a formidable adversary.[3]

The story begins in "thriller" fashion: "Hale knew they meant to murder him before he had been in Brighton three hours."[4] A tense situation is set up for the reader. Hale works for a newspaper; he is "Kolly Kibber" and is to give a prize to the first person to recognize him. He has to be at certain places at definite times and his pursuers can read his schedule in the newspaper.

He belongs to the "thriller" world, the unreal world, the "unreal City" of "The Waste Land." He is another "good Joe" in Ida's secular world. "Kolly Kibber always played fair, always wore the same kind of hat as in the photograph the *Messenger* printed, was always on time" (p. 2). Hale is the familiar Greenian figure who always plays fair in the meaningless game of monopoly. But when he is forced to the real game, he is scared, but he tells himself, "I'm not going to die" (p. 10).

Soon Hale is confronted by Pinkie in a bar. "Fred," a voice says behind

Hale. A boy of about seventeen watches Hale. "'Who are you Freding?' Hale said. 'I'm not Fred.' 'It don't make any difference,' the boy said" (p. 4). Being afraid that he may be murdered, Hale tries to soothe Pinkie with a drink. But Pinkie answers sharply: "'You know I don't drink, Fred'" (p. 4). Hale, then, tries to bribe Pinkie, but he is not interested in money. Later we find out that Pinkie doesn't smoke and that he hates sex. He is an ascetic. Diametrically opposed to Ida, Pinkie is a complete puritan, detesting the things of the world, like a fanatic monk who insists on the strict letter-of-the-law observance of every rule, but who forgets that the purpose of penance is the purging of the body of evil, not the masochistic purging of the body.

Recognizing a comrade, Hale seeks refuge with Ida. He thinks that she can save his life, if she lets him stick to her.

> His eyes turned to the big breasts; she was like darkness to him, shelter, knowledge, common-sense; his heart ached at the sight; but, in his little inky cynical framework of bone, pride bobbed up again, taunting him, "Back to the womb . . . be a mother to you . . . no more standing on your own feet." (p. 8)

Later Hale is accosted again by Pinkie and Hale feels positively that he will be murdered. "But even then common pride, the instinct not to make a scene, remained overpoweringly strong; embarrassment had more force than terror, . . ." (p. 14). Hale had been content to play the game. To move himself around the periphery of the monopoly board, he was paying out when he had to and he was collecting his money as he passed. But when he was confronted with Pinkie, he was struck with the awful realization that there is more pain in life than having to go to jail for three throws of the dice. Pinkie forced Hale to look in the eye the incomprehensible absolute death. Hale's attraction to Ida is more than an accident; they are allies, they believe in the same things: survive as best you can and have a bit of fun. Ida would possibly

protect him. But she had to go to the ladies' lavatory to wash her face, and before she returns Hale is dead.

Nature, after all, betrayed them both; but Ida has already been introduced to Pinkie's violent world, and she has scented the fact that something is not quite right. Something has disturbed "the even tenor of her ways," and she will go to any length to right a wrong. She will make everyone unhappy and miserable to insure that people play the game. The world is a good place—"a bit of fun"—and the rules are not to be broken by the impolite.

In order to cover themselves after the murder, the killers distribute Kolley Kibber's cards which he was supposed to drop as clues to his whereabouts. Spicer, one of the killers, left one in a restaurant under a table-cloth, and Pinkie feels that a waitress might remember the face of the man who left it, and that she may reveal to the police that it was not the murdered man. Pinkie goes to retrieve the card; he meets Rose, a waitress, and she becomes involved. Rose, like Pinkie, is a nothing in the world of Brighton. Even to Pinkie she is simply a "buyer" who must be watched because she may expose his gang to the police. But later Pinkie and Rose find that they have a great deal in common.

III

In the meantime, in Part Two of *Brighton Rock*, the reader is introduced to Colleoni, who, like Pinkie, is a criminal. But unlike Pinkie, Colleoni is a big-time operator who looks upon the physical world as a place peculiarly suited to his temperament and talents. He is quite at home in Brighton. He belongs to Ida's world: survive as best you can and have a bit of fun. Both Pinkie and Colleoni realize at once that they are not in the same class. Colleoni says to Pinkie as follows:

> "Yor are wasting your time, my child," Mr Colleoni said. "You can't

> do me any harm." . . . "If you want a job though, come to me. I like push. ... The world needs young people with energy." The hand with the cigar moved expansively, mapping out the World as Mr Colleoni visualised it. (p. 76)

Now the reader has a list of important characters: Colleoni the wrong, Ida the right, in the natural world of Brighton; Pinkie the evil, Rose the good, in the Roman Catholic world which these two characters believe they inhabit. There are, then, two societies in *Brighton Rock* which represent two societies in the human world. Life presents an opportunity to the characters to throw their allegiance one way or the other, to the natural or the supernatural. Pinkie and Rose, although hardly an ideal couple, soon discover that they have in common fundamental assumptions, and they establish each other's identity at their second meeting as follows:

> "You a Roman?" the Boy asked.
> "Yes," Rose said.
> "I'm one too," the Boy said.
>
> "Do you go to Mass?" he asked.
> "Sometimes," Rose said. "It depends on work. . . ."
> "I don't care what you do," the Boy said sharply. "I don't go to Mass."
> "But you believe, don't you," Rose implored him, "you think it's true?"
> "Of course it's true," the Boy said. "What else could there be?" he went scornfully on. "Why," he said, "it's the only thing that fits. These atheists, they don't know nothing. Of course there's Hell. Flames and damnation," . . . "torments."
> "And Heaven too," Rose said with anxiety. . . .
> "Oh, maybe", the Boy said, "maybe." (pp. 61–62)

Later in the novel the two recognize a common bond. Rose, particularly, sees herself united to Pinkie against the world of Ida, and Pinkie, much as he despises Rose, must reluctantly accept the fact that she is one of his kind.

Rose talks to Pinkie about Ida as follows:

> "A woman. A big one with a laugh. You should have heard the laugh. Just as if she'd never had a care. I didn't trust her. She wasn't our kind."
> "Our kind": he frowned again towards the shallow wrinkled tide at the suggestion that they had something in common and spoke sharply. (p. 108)

> Rose said suddenly, "*She's* never lived there."
> "Who?"
> "That woman asking questions. Never a care."
> "Well," he said, "we can't all 'ave been born in Nelson Place."
> "You weren't born there—or somewhere round?"
> "Me. Of course not. What do you think?"
> "I thought—maybe you were. You're a Roman too. We were all Romans in Nelson Place. You believe in things. Like Hell. But you can see she don't believe a thing." She said bitterly, "You can tell the world's all dandy with her." (pp. 109–110)

Pinkie and Rose come from the same place, and are going to the same place, or at least the same kind of place, Heaven or Hell.

Pinkie and Rose finally marry. Although they are on opposite sides, they have a kinship. Just as they are of two different sexes, both sharing the same human nature, so each is aligned with a different spiritual force but both share in the supernatural. Greene uses a metaphor involving enemy troops at war. They fraternize at the front lines when they discover that they have something in common—Christmas. The soldier has some respect for the enemy soldier but scoffs at the man who stays home and pronounces platitudes about how to fight a war. Greene devoted a novel entitled *The Quiet American* (1956) to the theme of commitment. Pinkie and Rose are committed to the ultimate importance of the supernatural. They are on opposite sides of the war, but they are both in the same battle.

Colleoni and Ida, on the other hand, are both committed to the natural.

They, too, are on opposite sides, but, to continue the war analogy, they are engaged in a conflict that in the end makes no difference. They are fighting for the goods of the world in a losing battle to be comfortable while life lasts. Colleoni is an outlaw; Ida looks on the law as essential for stability so that she may be comfortable, but both are entirely dependent on the world of goods for which they exist. When evil or corruption appears in the carnival world of Brighton, Colleoni and Ida soothe themselves with the palliatives at hand; a little sex, a little gin, flowers, grapes, and a nice funeral. "You can't do me any harm," Colleoni says to Pinkie, and Colleoni is quite right. Pinkie is not adept at the ways of the world and that is why he is unsuccessful. He has only one effective weapon which he uses against others even more unsuccessful than himself, and that typically is an absolute weapon—death. But he cannot reach Colleoni, the master at staying alive, with that weapon. Staying alive is very important to Colleoni and not important enough to Pinkie, for Hell on earth and Hell in eternity seem all the same to Pinkie.

Pinkie is offered one opportunity to succeed in the world. Colleoni offers him a job, and a hint that he might do quite well in the organization. He would no doubt have been given a good salary, protection from rivals and arrest, and of course, if he did find himself in the hospital, there would be flowers and grapes. Colleoni took care of his own. Pinkie, of course, refuses the offer. His motivation is clear, although hopelessly irrational; he wants to be independent; he will have his own gang or none at all. Thematically, for Pinkie to become a servant of Colleoni would be impossible; it would mean not so much going over to the other side as changing from a meaningful to a meaningless existence. Pinkie would lose his identity and importance in two ways. First as a criminal, he would become lost in the organization; he would, as it were, settle for being a low civil servant and give up his ambition to be Prime Minister. Secondly, as a person, a moral being, he would suffer the insult of being a servant in a world of no consequence after giving up

plans to be a leader in a world of ultimate consequence. In other words, there is more dignity in being discovered, murdered, and damned than in being nothing.

Rose, too, is offered comfort and protection by Ida. But Ida's proposal means nothing to her. Ida says to Rose:

> "I don't want the Innocent to suffer."
> "As if you knew," the soft voice [Rose] accused her, "who was innocent."
> [Ida says,] "it's in my hand: the girdle of Venus. But I've always been on the side of Right." (pp. 149–150)

In another conversation Ida says:

> "I know one thing you don't. I know the difference between Right and Wrong. They didn't teach you *that* at school."
> Rose didn't answer; the woman was quite right: the two words meant nothing to her. Their taste was extinguished by stronger foods—Good and Evil. The woman could tell her nothing she didn't know about these—she knew by tests as clear as mathematics that Pinkie was evil—what did it matter in that case whether he was right or wrong? (p. 248)

The world of comfort and protection, this side of death is, to Rose, quite incomprehensible. Pinkie is of the same opinion as Rose. After Ida went away, in Part Four, Rose says to Pinkie:

> "I'm bad." She implored him, "I want to be bad if she [Ida] is good and you—"
> "You'll never be anything but good," the Boy said. . . .
> "Is *she* [Ida] good?"
> "She?" The Boy laughed. "She's just nothing." (pp. 156–157)

"Good" and "Evil," then, mean a great deal to Pinkie and Rose.

IV

There are two groups of people in the world of *Brighton Rock.* The first group (Pinkie and Rose) are Greene's realists who recognize life for what it is. Life for them is characterized by the fact that human beings are born cursed with original sin and therefore life is a constant struggle to be good. (In Pinkie's case it is a struggle to be evil for the forces in Brighton tempt him to give up evil and settle for wrong. In Greene's world, in order to have a chance at being good one must be caught between the appropriate dichotomies.) The other group of people are outsiders, who pretend that life has only a natural dimension, not really a serious matter, and that the object of life is to survive, to have a bit of fun and to be comfortable.

Society is of course significantly defined by the nature of the individuals of which it is composed; and since heroic effort is necessary to escape sin, then any group of people, a family, an office staff, a university faculty, a nation, an international organization will be riddled with evil; for heroism is a rare quality and only a few will be blessed with it. Failure, then, is the inevitable lot of institutions in society because they are composed of humans with a majority destined to failure.

There is one hope of salvation, however, both for the individual and for society. Since it is impossible to succeed naturally, one can hope for success through the agency of an outside force. In Greene's work this is the force of supernatural grace. One is doomed to failure in the natural world, but accepting the grace of God one can achieve a moral victory over evil. In this way one can exploit the possibility in human nature for dignity, and it is dignity which is the essential difference between the world of good and evil and the world of right and wrong.

Many writers have severely criticized Greene's good-evil/right-wrong dichotomy. The most revealing critic, perhaps, and most challenging is

Kathleen Nott:

> Good and Evil are distinct from Right and Wrong ("Mr. Howard Spring," says Allen. . . "Did not see any difference between good and evil on the one hand and right and wrong on the other," when he reviewed *Brighton Rock*). I cannot understand why Mr. Allen does not tell us what the difference is. He is a secular critic, therefore he is unlikely to be referring merely to the theologically orthodox view. But his main duty as a critic is to discuss common experience which can be imaginatively conceived. To accept, without examining, this cliche-dichotomy into Good-Evil on the one hand and Right-Wrong on the other, is to impute an overriding value to one kind of imaginative experience, the religious, and therefore to beg the question of the particular value of Mr. Greene's work.[5]

Miss Nott has put her finger on the problem. The basis of Greene's world is revealed in his good-evil/right-wrong dichotomy. The distinction is constantly implied or expressed in Greene's work, particularly in *Brighton Rock*, and a critic who evaluates the book has a responsibility to at least attempt an explanation.

The difficult thesis to accept is that Pinkie, a murderer and gangster, a boy entirely insensitive to the feelings of others, is somehow superior to Ida Arnold, not by any means a great woman, but harmless, who likes to enjoy herself and is willing to protect Rose from her murderous husband. There are many people in the world superior to Ida, but why should Pinkie be favorably compared with her? This question may be illuminated somewhat by theology.

Pinkie's case may be compared to the case of the fallen angel, Satan, a creature often referred to by critics when they discuss *Brighton Rock*. Satan rebelled against God, and rather than be a servant of God in Heaven he chose to be the leader in Hell. Satan refused to stay in Heaven under the required conditions but he remained in the supernatural, absolute sphere (the

corruption of the best is the worst, Rose is reminded by her confessor).[6] Instead of remaining entirely good, Satan chose absolute evil. But he remained an angel and by dint of his angelic powers he is superior to all creatures, excepting other angels and God. Other angels are the equal of Satan by nature, superior to him in that their natures are directed to their proper purpose, that is, serving God. Satan is inferior in nature to God, as a plant is inferior in nature to an animal. Next down in the traditional scale –the "Chain of Being"– to the angels are human beings. Human powers are less than the angels' (human beings are restricted by time, space, and matter, but their powers are more than the animals'). A human being is an animal but a human being is self-conscious and free and a human being is therefore a moral being. Allott and Farris preface a chapter entitled, "The Fallen World," with a quotation from T. S. Eliot's essay, *Baudelaire*, in *The Art of Graham Greene.* In the essay Eliot writes as follows:

> So far as we are human, what we do must be either evil or good; so far as we do evil or good, we are human; and it is better, in a paradoxical way, to do evil than to do nothing: at least, we exist. It is true to say that the glory of man is his capacity for salvation; it is also true to say that his glory is his capacity for damnation.[7]

This quotation explains to some extent the implications of original sin in the human world. Herein lies human dignity, the fact that a human being is by nature a moral being.

"It is better to do evil than to do nothing." When one acts morally–does evil or good, one exists as a human being and does not lose one's power as a human being. One thus retains one's dignity as a human being because one is, by one's act, peculiarly human. If one does not act morally, if one guides one's life by a (presumably) lesser standard, then one is descending, not in one's act necessarily but in one's nature. Needless to say, one does not have

to be a Roman Catholic to have dignity as a human being, and the dichotomy is not between the Roman Catholic versus everyone else's point of view but between the religious and the secular. The religious view is associated with ceremony, and is not simply a matter of having a belief in Heaven and Hell.

To clarify the meaning of ceremony I mentioned above, I find an example in *King Lear*. It is part of the theme of *King Lear*, who admonishes his daughters to "reason not the need," that one does not live for one's material needs. King Lear is astounded that Goneril and Regan would strip him of his hundred retainers, because they are part of the ceremony to dignify his life as a king. Without ceremony, King Lear realizes that he is like a mere animal, not kingly, not human. King Lear realizes, too late, that by surrendering himself to his daughters, he placed himself in the hands of materialists who would treat him as if he were a thing instead of a person.

Whereas King Lear is astounded at his daughters' conception of human existence, Rose, in her naivete is simply bewildered, but quite aware that the world she lives in after her marriage is a life that was inconceivable before. Section One in Part Seven of *Brighton Rock* is devoted to her picking her steps through territory where people acted as if they belonged to a world unknown to her. Rose finds herself in a house where the stove is seldom lit, where people eat meat from tin cans, and drink milk straight from the bottle. The stove is not like either the one at the restaurant, clean and polished, or the one at home where people cooked and ate and "had moods and warmed themselves on bitter nights and dozed in chairs" (p. 236). Then Rose opens the kitchen door and she finds that Dallow (one of Pinkie's companions) and a woman called Judy stand at the head of the stairs "with lips glued together in an attitude of angry passion" (p. 238).

Rose, though bewildered, is not altogether surprised, for she feels that her new environment is a result of her non-religious marriage at the registry office. She is aware that without ceremony human acts are meaningless.

Pinkie, too, thinks the same as Rose does. His lawyer, Prewitt, asks him:

> "Do you want to be married in a church?"
> "Of course I don't," the Boy said. "This won't be a real marriage."
> "Real enough."
> "Not real like when the priest says it."
> "Your religious feelings do you credit," Mr. Prewitt said.
> (p. 144)

As his reply shows, even Pinkie is aware that human acts are meaningless without ceremony.

It is a lack of the sense of ceremony, of the necessity of the religious, that separates Ida from the Good/Evil world. Ida is "cheery," she is "healthy," her "big breasts bore their carnality frankly," she is reliable, honest, and kindly. She has a zest for biological existence, a passion to satisfy her small material needs. Ida has a well-developed sense of fair-play, a boy scout-like desire to see that the world conform to her narrow demands for social justice.

Ida's view of life is not wrong but inadequate. A human being *is* a social animal. But in Greene's view of life a human being is more than a social animal, and Pinkie, perverse though he is, has a sense of a human being as a moral animal, and Rose, naive as she is, has a feeling of unreality about her unceremonious marriage, and her new world where people drink milk from bottles. It is not simply that they are Roman Catholics, but their training as Roman Catholics gave them a dim sense, at least, of the need for the religious and ceremonious in human existence. Therefore, it is in his awareness of the reality of human nature (a human being is not only a social animal, but also a moral animal) that Pinkie is superior to Ida, who never realizes how important it is.

V

In *Brighton Rock* Greene invites the reader to compare the behaviour of Ida,

the sleazy, sexy, good-hearted interfering embodiment of ordinary morality with the puritanical, fastidious, murderous Pinkie, and especially to compare them in terms of their awareness of God and the Devil. *Brighton Rock* is concerned with the omnipresence of sin in a world of evil, where every human being, because of the very nature of human existence, is powerless to live in righteousness and to follow the commands of God. Righteousness, in Greene's eyes, is so impossible that anyone who claims it is a hypocrite. In *Brighton Rock*, the self-righteous are shown to be the worst of human beings. Those who admit their sinfulness are at least aware of the reality of human nature.

Greene's idea of the world naturally follows from his idea of human nature. If one believes that a human being is born free, one has a different idea of society than if one believes that a human being is born imprisoned. If one believes in the real existence of the supernatural, then one has a view different from one who admits of nothing beyond the apprehension of the senses. Pinkie and Ida in *Brighton Rock* represent two distinctly different views of the nature of the individual and of society in the present world; one based on a belief in the condition of original sin, and the existence of the supernatural, the other based on a rejection of religious beliefs, and the acceptance of a secular view of human nature and society. This dichotomy in various guises recurs in Greene's other works.

However, there are difficulties in understanding Greene's world in *Brighton Rock*. One difficulty is the fact that Pinkie, Rose, and Ida are not fully developed, and are too much caricatures to carry the burden of the message. But the narrowness of the characters is part of the message. The novel is concerned with people who are in real life almost caricatures: people like Pinkie, Rose, and Ida who have inherited from their experience only one facet of humanity. Ida comes alive as a social being, Pinkie as evil, and Rose as good. The novel is something of a medieval morality and it would take a

combination of the three characters to make one complete human being with an everyman quality which gives to a character in a novel his universality.

Another difficulty in understanding Greene's world is that critics, for some reason or other, think the author associates Ida with Protestantism, and the implied conclusion from this association is that Roman Catholics are superior to Protestants because they are moral beings, whereas Protestants are merely social animals. This conclusion may be inevitable, if one sees Greene as a narrow propagandist. But it neglects the complexities we have seen; it seems more likely that Greene is more generally contrasting the worldly and the religious view of human existence. And to be on the superior side of the famous dichotomy one need not belong to the Roman Catholic Church or any other formal religion.

Notes

1 In *The Power and the Glory* (1940), the lieutenant compares the American gangster with the whiskey priest, and says, "He [the American gangster] is a man at any rate, and a man like that does no real harm." Graham Greene, *The Power and the Glory* (London: William Heinemann and The Bodley Head, 1971), p. 21.

2 R. W. B. Lewis, *The Picaresque Saint* (New York: Lippincott, 1959), p. 246.

3 Kenneth Allott and Miriam Farris, *The Art of Graham Greene* (London; Hamish Hamilton, 1951), p. 151.

4 Graham Greene, *Brighton Rock* (London: William Heinemann and The Bodley Head, 1970), p. 1. Subsequent references to the novel will be to this edition, and will be noted in the text.

5 Kathleen Nott, *The Emperor's Clothes* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1958), pp. 301–302.

6 When Rose mentions that Pinkie was a Catholic and knew that he was doing wrong, that is, explicitly damning himself, the priest answers: "*Corruptio optimi est pessima.*" Then he continues: "I mean—a Catholic is more capable of evil than anyone. I think perhaps—because we believe in Him—we are more in touch with the devil than other people. But we must hope," he said mechanically, "hope and

pray" (p. 309). He claims that Pinkie's love, no matter what kind it was and no matter how filled with shreds of hatred and revulsion, is an indication of some goodness.

7 T. S. Eliot, *Selected Essays* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1950), p. 380.